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DEPARTEMENT D'HISTOIRE

**WATER MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICTS IN THE
BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS OF CAMEROON, 1902-1998**

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By:

Charlotte MISSEM FAI

B.A., M.A. (History)

Supervisor

Gabriel Maxime DONG MOUGNOL, Ph.D.

(Professor of History)



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To my parents, Joseph FAI CHILA and Orpah BERYEN

and

My Brothers, Dr. Karl FAI, Dr. Balten FAI and Junior Nji FAI



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**ABSTRACT**

This study discusses water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. The Republic of Cameroon just like many African countries continues to suffer as a result of conflicts over water, which has always been a constant nightmare. The study argues that, before the advent of the Fulani into the Bamenda Grassfields, water conflicts existed, but they were not as when they arrived in 1916 and factors that drove such conflicts were; population growth, climate change, pollution and poor agricultural practices. Conflicts are inevitable in human societies because these have variations in interests. The main research question that guided this thesis was: what has been the contributions of stakeholders to the understanding and resolution of conflicts related to water management in the Bamenda Grassfields? To better appreciate the problem posed in this study, we adopted the historic-deductive method that consisted of a critical review of primary and secondary sources. This embodied the identification of sources in the form of books, articles and journals, which had some information on certain aspects of the study. Following the critical analysis of diverse sources, the main fact emerged that many reasons accounted for the numerous water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon. Although much has been done by stakeholders such as the Government, Traditional Authorities and NGOs to manage this phenomenon; there still continue to be some challenges, which need to be addressed immediately. This has prompted us to propose some solutions which will go a long way to ameliorate the situation in the Region.



RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude traite des conflits liés à la gestion de l'eau dans les Grassfields de Bamenda au Cameroun. La République du Cameroun, comme de nombreux pays africains, est encore en proie à des conflits liés à l'eau et qui affectent le quotidien des populations. L'étude soutient que ces conflits liés à l'eau ont commencé dans la région avec l'arrivée des Peuls en 1916, et que les facteurs à l'origine desdits conflits semblent s'intensifier, notamment la croissance démographique, le changement climatique, la pollution et les mauvaises pratiques agricoles. Ainsi, les conflits sont inévitables dans les sociétés humaines parce que celles-ci ont des intérêts variables. La question principale qui sous-tend cette recherche est la suivante : quelle a été la contribution des parties prenantes à la compréhension et à la résolution des conflits relatifs à la gestion de l'eau dans l'actuelle région du Nord-Ouest ? Pour mieux apprécier le problème posé, nous adoptons la méthode historico-déductive qui consiste à un examen critique des sources primaires et secondaires. Cela comprend l'identification de nouvelles sources sous forme de livres, d'articles et de revues, qui contiennent des informations sur certains aspects de l'étude. Suite à l'analyse critique de diverses sources, le fait principal est ressorti que de nombreuses raisons continuent d'expliquer les nombreux conflits liés à l'eau dans l'actuelle région du Nord-Ouest au Cameroun. Bien que beaucoup ait été fait par les parties prenantes telles que le gouvernement, les autorités traditionnelles et les ONG pour gérer ce phénomène, il reste encore des défis à relever immédiatement. Cela a incité à proposer des solutions qui pourraient contribuer grandement à améliorer la situation dans ladite Région.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADO	Assistant Divisional Officer
BCA-USA	Cultural Association-USA
BCWC	Bali Community Water Committee
CAMWATER	Cameroon Water Utilities Corporation
CARE	Cooperation for American Relief Everywhere
CDE	<i>La Camerounaise des Eaux</i>
CEPC	Colonial Electric Power Company
CIACC	Cameroon industrial and Civic Contractors
CRA	Cameroon Representative Assembly
CTA	Cameroon Territorial Assembly
DEDE	Department of Rural Engineering
DOs	District Officers
EAD	External Affaires Delegate
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FUSUDA	Fulani Social Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GWE	Global water Partnership
HC	High Commissioner
IAD	Internal Affairs Delegate
ICWE	International Conference on Water and the Environment
ITBSO	Intertribal Boundary Settlement Ordinance
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
KNDP	Kameroun National Democratic Party
MINAGRI	Le Ministère de L'Agriculture
MBOSCUDA	The Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association

MINEE	Ministère de L'Eau et de L'Energie
MINSANTE	Ministère de la Santé Publique
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NWC	National water cooperation
NCFAR	National Center for Atmospheric research
SDO	Senior Divisional Officer
SED	Social and Economic Delegate
SGE	Secretary General of the Colony
SNEC	<i>Societe Nationale des Eaux du Cameroun</i>
NA	Native Authorities
RAB	Regional Archive Bamenda
RAB	Regional Archive Buea
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNWWAP	United Nations Water Assessment Programme
NSODA	Nso Development and Cultural Organisation
PWD	Public Works Department
SCC	Supreme Chief of Community
SHUMAS	Strategic Humanitarian Services
VC	Village Councilor
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

WMC	Water management committees
WSUP	Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor
WWDR	World Water Development Report



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Glossary

Local appellations/Nso, Fulbe**English**

<i>Duiy</i>	Cadet royal lineages
<i>Felaata</i>	Feel free
<i>Fulbe</i>	Cattle herders
<i>Gamagari</i>	<i>Rinderpest outbreak</i>
<i>Kabenkendong</i>	Cultural festival
<i>Keteji</i>	Cattle
<i>Lum-nyam</i>	Sun or source of light
<i>Mbili</i>	To sleep
<i>Mtaar</i>	Thirty
<i>Ngonnso</i>	First queen of the nso people
<i>Ngwerong, Kwifor, Ntem, Tifoang, Nwose</i>	Regulatory society
<i>Nt-su'fu, tsi Matoa, Tsi Munggaka, Tsi Matua</i>	Rivers
<i>Nyuy Kindzev</i>	god of waterfall

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. Historical Context

During the History of humanity, numerous water conflicts, accidental and/or deliberate, have been reported and in some instances, water has been used as a weapon of war.¹ The United Nations recognizes that water disputes result from opposing interests of water users, public or private.² Since prehistoric times, water conflicts have occurred as a result of a wide range of tensions and/or violence, which have rarely taken the form of traditional warfare waged over water resources alone³. Water has historically been a source of tension and a factor in conflicts that start for several reasons including territorial disputes, fight for resources and strategic advantage. In some cases, water was used directly as a weapon through its ability to cause damage through deprivation or erosion of water resources of enemy populations.

A comprehensive data online based on water related conflicts, (The water conflict chronology), has been developed by the Pacific Institute. This data base lists violence over water going back to nearly 6000years ago.⁴The conflict occurred over both fresh and salt waters and between and within nations. However conflicts occur mostly over freshwater, because it is necessary, yet scarce, they are the centre of water disputes arising out of need for potable water, irrigation and energy generation.⁵ As freshwater is a vital yet unevenly distributed natural resource, its availability often impacts the living and economic conditions of a country or region.⁶

Further more, the lack of cost-effective water supply options in areas like the Middle East among other elements of water crisis have put severe pressure on its users, whether corporate, government or individual, leading to tension and possibly aggression.⁷ Recent humanitarian

¹ J. Tulloch, "Water conflicts: fight or flight?", <https://archive.vn/20080829171957/http://knowledge.allianz.co>, 2008, 23/11/2021, 7:39pm.

² The UN Water Development Report, "Water and climate change", <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/water/wwap/>, 2020, 23/11/2021, 8:00pm.

³ A.N Angelakis, M. Valipour, T.A Abdelkader, V. Tzanakakis and N.V Paranychianakis, "Water conflicts: From ancient to modern times and in the future", <https://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability>, 2021, 22/12/2021, 20:31pm.

⁴ Pacific institute, "water conflict chronology", <http://www.worldwater.org/water-conflict/>, 24/11/2021, 4:43am.

⁵ P.H Gleick, "water and conflict", *International security*, Vol.18, No.1, 1993, pp.79-112.

⁶*Ibid*, pp.115-124.

⁷ M. Murakami, *Managing water for peace in the Middle East: Alternative strategies*, United Nations, United Nations University Press, 1995, p.320-330.

catastrophes such as the Rwandan genocide, or the war in Sudanese Darfur, have been linked to water conflicts⁸.

Water is a vital resource. Not only is it a font of life, it often helps to bring people together. But access to water is highly unequal between and within countries. Much of the world's population lives in places where demand of water exceeds supply or poor-quality limits its use⁹. Scarcity of water and inequalities in access, use and decision making, threatens life itself, diminishes the quality of life, and impedes integral human development. Water scarcity and inequalities are also risk factors of violent conflicts¹⁰. Water-related violence is already common in many parts of the world, the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive, and it is generally expected to increase in the years ahead¹¹. Water-sharing arrangements lead to a continuous tussle by each party to maximize their share of the water. This leads to a great deal of water wastage and environmental damage¹².

Water is life and life on earth is linked to water¹³. Our existence is dependent on water, or the lack of it in many ways, and one could say that our whole civilization is built on the use of water¹⁴. Some 10000 years ago, when people adopted an agrarian way of life, mankind established permanent settlements¹⁵. This new type of livelihood spread everywhere and population began to expand faster than ever before. Sedimentary agriculture life made it possible to construct villages, cities and eventually states, all of which were highly dependent on water¹⁶. This created a brandnew relation between humans and water. Pathogens transmitted by contaminated water became a very serious health risk for the sedimentary agriculturalists¹⁷.

Thus, in this world, guaranteeing pure water for people became a prerequisite for successful urbanization and state formation. The earliest known permanent settlement, which can be

⁸ Murakami, *Managing water for peace in the Middle East*, pp. 330-335.

⁹ B.S Levy and V.W Sidel, "Water rights and water fights; preventing and resolving conflicts before they boil over", *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol.101, No.5, 2011, pp.778-780.

¹⁰ Interview with S. Mboulav Nsoyuni, 58, Nurse, Kumbo, 13/08/2020.

¹¹ A.T Wolf, "Conflict and cooperation over transboundary waters", Human Development Report, USA, 2006, pp.123-126.

¹² *Ibid*, pp.145-150.

¹³ H. Munk Ravnborg, "Water and conflict. Conflict prevention and mitigation in water resources management", *Danish Institute for International Studies*, Copenhagen, 2004, pp.1-100.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.102-107.

¹⁵ J. Bulloch and A. Darwish, *Water wars: Coming conflicts in the Middle East*, London, Victor Gollancz, pp.10-115.

¹⁶ T. Homer-Dixon, "Environmental scarcity and violent conflicts: Evidence from cases", *International Security*, Vol.19, No.1, pp.5-40.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp.60-65.

classified as urban is Jericho from 8000-7000B.C., located near springs and other bodies of water¹⁸. In Egypt, there are traces of wells and in Mesopotamia of stone rainwater channels from 300 B.C. From the early Bronze Age City of Mohenjo-Daro, located in modern Pakistan, archaeologists have found hundreds of ancient walls, water pipes and toilets¹⁹. The first evidence of the purposeful construction of the water supply and drainage in Europe comes from Bronze Age Minoan Crete in the second millennium B.C.

The experience of humankind from the very beginning testifies to the importance and safety of groundwater as a source particularly springs and wells²⁰. The way in which water supply and sanitation was organized was essential for early agricultural societies. If wells and toilets were in good shape, health problems and environmental risks could be avoided²¹. The realization of the importance of pure water for people is evident already from the myths of ancient cultures. Religious cleanliness and water were important in ancient cults. Ideas of the salubrity of water were connected to the general scientific level of the society²².

Further more, water was the center of life in many ancient cultures. In Greek mythology, one of the most powerful gods was Neptune, the god of the sea²³. In India, the Ganges River was considered sacred from historical accounts over 3000 years old. To the ancient Egyptians, the Nile was the political, economic and life-sustaining center of their kingdom²⁴. Without the Nile, Egypt would be as barren as its nearby deserts, as it is always said no Nile no Egypt²⁵. When the Greek Historian Herodotus wrote that the ancient Egyptians' land was given them by the River, he was referring to the Nile whose waters were essential to the rise of one of the world's earliest

¹⁸ L. Oyebande, "Water problems in Africa-how can sciences help?", *Hydrological Sciences Journal*, Vol.46, No.6, 2001, pp.1-17.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.30-40.

²⁰ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

²¹ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional Changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands: The case of Bali, Kumbo and Bafou Small Cities", PhD Thesis in Geography, University of Toulouse, 2014, pp.18-20.

²² S.L. Barry and V.W Sidel, "Water rights and water fights: Preventing and resolving conflicts before they boil over", 2018, pp.20.

²³ G. Abdallah, "Water culture in Egypt", *National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences*, Egypt, 2008, pp.86-96.

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp.98-100.

²⁵ Angelakis, Valipour, Abdelkader, Tzanakakis and Paranychianakis, "Water conflicts: From ancient to modern times", p.25-35.

great civilizations. Ancient civilizations' respect for water grew from their absolute need for water²⁶.

The Nile which flows northward for 4160 miles from east-central Africa to the Mediterranean, provided ancient Egypt with fertile soils and water for irrigation as well as a means of transporting materials for building projects²⁷. Its vital waters enabled cities to sprout in the midst of a desert. Life in Ancient Egypt depended on the Nile River. The banks of the Nile were lush with vegetation. Silt deposited on farm fields by yearly floods provided crops with fertile soils²⁸. Although its waters were heavy with silt, the Nile was the largest source of drinking water in the desert region. Most of Egypt's cities grew along banks of the Nile²⁹. This notwithstanding, Egypt's extreme reliance on the Nile for water, food security and electricity is the major source of conflict in the River Basin. In 1988, Egypt's Foreign Minister, Boutros Boutros-Ghali hypothesized that, the Nile River would undoubtedly spark Egypt's next war³⁰. Conflict over the Nile has been as a result of political tensions among stakeholders, lack of all-inclusive agreement on the management of the Nile water and states' unilateral actions³¹.

More so, water is a natural resource produced at unpredictable, unstable and uncontrollable rates. That is why Article one of the Council of Europe Directive (EU/60/2000/EU) Water Resources Management Directive³² stipulates that, "Water is not a commercial product like any other but instead a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such. However, beyond that, it is necessary to ensure the quality of the water supply, even in cases of emergency such as the one the world is going through"³³.

The amount of water that is today economically available for human use is about 4600km³/year, which corresponds today to about 600m³/in. yr³⁴. Total water demand is expected to increase

²⁶ Angelakis, Valipour, Abdelkader, Tzanakakis and Paranychianakis, "Water conflicts", pp50-57.

²⁷ H. Alia, "How the Nile works", <http://history.howstuffworks.com/african-history/nile-river2.htm>, 26/12/2021, 14:25pm.

²⁸ S. Postel, "Egypt's Nile Valley basin irrigation", <http://www.waterhistory.org/histories/nile/t1.html#photo1>, 26/12/2021, 14:31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Angelakis, Valipour, Abdelkader, Tzanakakis and Paranychianakis, "Water conflicts", pp.1-31.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² O. Fritsch, C. Adelle, A. Massot and D. Benson, "Three faces of the European Union Water Initiative: Promoting the water framework directive of Sustainable development", www.water-alternatives.org, 09/08/2021, 3:00 am.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ A. Boretti and L. Rhosa, "Reassessing the projections of the World Water Development Report", <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41545-019-0039-9>, 2019, 22/12/2021, 21:22pm.

from 4600 today to 5500km³/yr in 2050³⁵. This increasing scarcity is made more complicated because almost half the globe's land surface lies within international water sheds. There are 263 rivers around the world that cross the boundaries of two or more nations and untold number of international ground water aquifers³⁶.

Recently, both quantity and quality has been reduced, emphasizing water scarcity. As a result, over 2 billion people live in regions that experience high water stress and the number is expected to increase in the future³⁷. Over one billion people do not have access to clean and safe drinking water³⁸. Five to ten million people die each year from water related diseases or inadequate sanitation³⁹. Furthermore, millions of women and children spend several hours collecting water from an average distance of 6km and polluted spaces and 20% of the world's irrigated lands are salt-laden, affecting crop production and food safety⁴⁰. In addition to water scarcity, many water systems world wide are transboundary for Example Rivers, lakes and groundwater aquifers. Such transboundary or cross-border water systems can always be a cause for competition among countries or regions that share them.

Water is a strategic natural resource and scarcity of potable water is a frequent contributor of political conflicts throughout the world with decreasing availability and increasing demand for water. It does not come as a surprise then that, among the countries with slowest economic development, are those poor of fresh water with high rate of the population living in dry areas. The hydro deficit is as well witnessed in the high industrialized countries especially in the densely populated urban industrial areas. Water is an essential ingredient for man's security and sustainable development. From growing food and supporting economic growth and ensuring disease is kept a bay, water is a fundamental and irreplaceable resource in all societies. Given its centrality to human life, it is not surprising that management is complex and that water-related interests are frequently contested. Access to water in sufficient quantity and quality can drive competition where interests are perceived as incompatible. It can also instigate or encourage

³⁵Boretti and Rhosa, "Reassessing the projections", pp.45-50.

³⁶ Angelakis, Valipour, Abdelkader, Tzanakakis and Paranychianakis, "Water conflicts", 2021, pp.78-100.

³⁷ S. Seckler, R. Barker and U. Amirstarasinghe, "Water scarcity in the Twenty-first century", *International Journal of Water Resource Development*, Vol.15, 1999, pp.29-42.

³⁸*Ibid*, pp.45-50.

³⁹ Angelakis, Valipour, Abdelkader, Tzanakakis and Paranychianakis, "Water conflicts", pp.1-31.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, pp.32-34.

cooperation where mutual interest can be found.⁴¹ There is a pressing need to better understand water as it relates to all levels of conflict.

On 28th July through resolution 64/292, the United Nation World Water Assessment Programme (UNWWAP) estimated that every individual needed 20 to 50 liters of clean water every day⁴². Since water covers nearly three quarters of the globe, we turn to think of it as an abundant resource, but in fact, drinkable water can be very scarce. Drought affects almost every continent and appears to be growing worse. The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCFAR) has found out that the percentage of the earth's land stricken by serious drought has more than doubled since the 1970s.⁴³ In addition, water becomes scarce through pollution or restricted access. According to the United Nations (UN), 1.1 billion people live without clean drinking water and 3900 children die every day from water borne diseases.⁴⁴ As global population continues to rise, some predict a 40 to 50 percent increase within the next 50years.⁴⁵ Water stress (where the demand for good quality water exceeds supply) will become even more of a problem in the future.⁴⁶ Violent conflicts over water resources have broken out in countries as diverse as China (Shandong and Guangdong Provinces 2000), Ethiopia (2006), India (2004), Kenya (2005) and Yemen (1999).⁴⁷ In the Dafur Region for example, much of the unrest is due to water shortages. In the 1950s and 1960s, the animosity between Israel and its neighbors was heightened by disputes over the head waters of the Jordan River⁴⁸. Occasionally, the friction led to arm clashes including Israeli attacks in 1965 and 1966 on Syrian construction sites that were part of a plan to divert water from the Jordan water tributaries.

⁴¹ P. Arun Elhance, *Hydropolitics in the third world: Conflict and cooperation in international River Basins*, Washington DC, US Institute of Peace Press, 1999, pp.5-10.

⁴² World Water Assessment Programme Report, "Meeting Basic Needs", http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/facts_figures/basic_needs.shtml, 21st February 2020, 12:45pm, pp.13-16.

⁴³ National Centre for Atmospheric Research, "A Report on Drought Growing Reach: NCRA study points to Global Warming as key factor," January 10 2005, pp.1-2.

⁴⁴ UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (UNESCO-WWAP): Water for people, water for life (The UN Development Report), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/unesdoc/images/0012/001295/129556e.pdf>, 24th February 2020, 10:45am, pp.5-7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp.8-9.

⁴⁶ M. Flemming, "Hydro-crisis in the Middle East: Water Schemes for a thirsty region", Master of Arts in National Security Affairs, Naval Post Graduate School California, 2001, pp.5-21.

⁴⁷ P. Gleick, "Environmental and Security Water conflict chronology", Pacific Institute, updated 2006, <http://www.worldwater.org/chronology.html>, 28th February 2020, 2:00pm, pp.31-33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.33-34.

Nowadays, water conflicts around the world appear to be much more complicated compared to ancient times. Water stress and scarcity has affected and will continue to affect the stability of communities⁴⁹. An overview of global water security challenges indicates profound difficulties and potential flash points. There are many examples of struggles in supplying clean water throughout the world and how water has been an instrument of ethnic and religious conflict and has recently been used in regional and local clashes⁵⁰. Transboundary water disputes are also potentially dangerous in several regions of the world and stresses from climate change and variability increase the uncertainty of clean water supplies⁵¹.

Laozi the ancient Chinese philosopher wrote⁵², “The sage’s transformation of the world arises from solving the problem of water. If water is united, the human heart will be corrected. If water is pure and clean, the heart of the people will readily be unified and desirous of cleanliness. Even when the citizenry’s heart is changed, their conduct will not be depraved. Therefore, the sage’s government does not consist of talking to people and persuading them, family by family. The pivot (of work) is water”⁵³. To better understand the topic, we shall examine the historical context of this study in the next chapter of our work.

Numerous water conflicts have been recorded around the world. This has been the case in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfields Region in particular with varying intensity of the dominating cultures in the Region. Thus, water conflicts are not a recent phenomenon. It had existed way back in many areas of the world, and the Bamenda Grassfields which is our area of study is not an exception. The Grassfields Region is an area endowed with many ethnic groups namely the Tikars, Bali-Chambas, Widikum, Aghem federation, Mambia, Hausa and the Fulani, Geographical features such as mountains, hills and water bodies such as rivers, lakes and waterfalls⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ D.K. Kreamer, “The past, present and future of water conflict and international security”, *Journal of contemporary WaterResearch and Education*, Vol.149, No.1, 2013, pp.87-95.

⁵⁰ E.D. Breslin, “Rethinking Hydrophilanthropy”, *Journal of Contemporary Water and Education*, Vol.145, 2010, pp.65-73.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp.95-100.

⁵² Angelakis, Valipour, Abdelkader, Tzanakakis and Paranychianakis, “Water conflicts”, pp.1-31.

⁵³ *Ibid*, pp.32-40.

⁵⁴ W. Che-Mfombong, “Bamenda Division under British administration 1916-1961: From Native administration to local government”, Master dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1980, pp.60-70.

Before the coming of the British and subsequently the Fulani, the legal institutions that existed in the Bamenda Grassfields were based on traditional laws⁵⁵. The British came and added the one which was based on British law. Thus between 1916 and 1961,⁵⁶ the existing legal institutions in the Bamenda Grassfields were based on the British and traditional laws evidenced by the existence of a supreme and magistrate courts which administered English laws exclusively and the Native courts which applied traditional laws⁵⁷.

Preference for Bororo-Fulani cattle owners and attempts to settle them permanently on the Southern Cameroons grazing ranges of Bamenda were the underlying sources of tension between the nomads and indigenous communities in the region⁵⁸. There are conflicting accounts about the ethnicity of the Fulani. Whereas some scholars cite India, others link them with the Egyptian Hyksos, and another group connects them with the Gypsies of Europe.⁵⁹ The advent of the Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields increased conflicts related to water in the Region. The British administering their portion of Cameroon as part of Nigeria decided after 1916 to encourage cattle keeping in the Bamenda region⁶⁰. This was to relieve overstrained grazing conditions in Northern Nigeria and to take advantage of disease-free good pastures⁶¹.

The British Conceived that, the introduction of cattle rearing would provide meat, hides and skin and manure to the inhabitants of Southern Cameroons above all, it will constitute an important source of colonial revenue through cattle taxes, known locally as *Jangali*.⁶² The British were also convinced that because of the relatively low population density of Bamenda, coupled with the vast mountainous grasslands, the region could support large herds of cattle⁶³. Thus, they

⁵⁵ Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division under British administration", pp.71-80.

⁵⁶ 1916 is significant here because it marked the end of the First World War in Cameroon and saw the coming of the British and the first wave of Fulani immigrants. 1961 marked the end of British rule in Cameroon and the granting of independence to the British Southern Cameroon. Thus the British Southern Cameroon with the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive, integrated with *La République du Cameroun* and another legal system based on the French law was introduced

⁵⁷ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional Changes", pp.18-179.

⁵⁸ T. Sone-Ngole, "The Fulani of Mount Muanenguba Bangem Sub-Division, Kupe Muanenguba Division 1920-2000", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, pp.45-86.

⁵⁹ A. Mathew Seino, *The History of Cameroon*, Bamenda, Victory Press, 1981, pp.109-120.

⁶⁰ N. Fru Awasom, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands 1903-1960", Doctorat de 3^e Cycle in History, University of Yaounde, 1984, pp.110-116.

⁶¹ Interview with Nacasius Ntutin Kudzebam, 55, Teacher, Kumbo, 15/08/2020.

⁶² *Jangali* was the revenue derived from cattle taxes. It only went up with an increase in the cattle population because the tax was levied on every herd, including calves. Compared to other revenues collected in the region, cattle taxes was the most important source of revenue both for Native Authorities (N.A) and for the colonial administration

⁶³ Fru Awasom, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands", p.120-129.

encouraged the Fulani cattle owners of Northern Nigeria and some in French Cameroon to migrate to the region with their cattle in the years between 1916 through 1950. The Fulani arrival with their cattle caused land disputes between them and indigenous communities. In anticipation of raising revenue from *jangali*, the British attempted to flout native laws using various strategies, including the granting of certificates of occupancy, unwarranted boundary demarcations under the Intertribal Boundary Settlement Ordinance (ITBSO) and issuing of grazing permits to establish security of land tenure for Fulani pastoralists⁶⁴.

The cool well watered highlands of Bamenda were indeed a promised land to these nomad cattle keepers.⁶⁵ By 1940, Fulani migration into the area had reached its peak leading to conflicts over land with the indigenes. The British authorities were unable to reverse the wave of migration. They were more interested in the amount of taxes on cattle paid by Fulani⁶⁶. By the end of British colonial rule in 1961, the colonial government had not agreed on any policy that permitted permanent large-scale settlement of the Fulani; they had also decided not to revoke indigenous rights over grazing land. This continued to trigger conflicts in the region, as the problems still exist till date. Fulani and bororo cows continued to contaminate water sources, making them unfit for consumption.⁶⁷

Serious water accessibility problems started being noticed in these regions in the 1960s and 1970s provoked by rapid population increases and urban growth⁶⁸. This double expansion led to an increase in the demand for lands as farmlands and urban fringe activities increased while also putting pressure on water sources such as streams, rivers and lakes. The major consequence of the rapid population growth on water resources was felt by the drastic increase in the pollution of potable water sources like the yeh catchment as settlements drew closer to water supply points⁶⁹. Persistent and dangerous water borne diseases witnessed in different zones at different periods constituted the main cause of awareness as concerns the hygiene and sanitary conditions of the population.

⁶⁴ R. B. Sikud, "Farmer-Grazier conflicts in Bali sub Division, 1975-2010: A Historical analysis", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.30-43.

⁶⁵ P.M Kaberry, "Report on Farmer-Grazier Relations and the Changing Patterns of Agriculture in Nsaw (South Eastern Federation, Bamenda, Southern Cameroons)," file Ab17, No.10, 1959, pp.125-134.

⁶⁶ Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division under British Administration", pp.60-81.

⁶⁷Ibid.pp.126-130.

⁶⁸ B. Page, "A Priceless commodity. The production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999", PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.116-134.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Bearing in mind the fact that public intervention in the supply of potable water in the North West Region was limited to big and average towns, the population in the rural areas had to develop strategies to solve their water problems⁷⁰. The idea of a common objective brought about the community initiative and the proliferation of small local water supply points which in most cases was supported by international NGOs and the local councils. Although the community water initiative only became popular in Cameroon in the 80s, it can be traced as far back as the 60s with the arrival of international NGOs like HELVETAS (Swiss Association for International Corporation)⁷¹. These independent water schemes were later brought under the control of the Government. This led to conflicts as a result of poor management, such as, Bali and SNEC and the Kumbo water Authority and SNEC⁷². Conflicts over water resources continue to be a common phenomenon in the Bamenda Grassfields, which needs to be addressed before the issue takes a different dimension. Taking into cognizance the historical context of this study, we shall look at what motivated the choice of topic.

II. Motivation of the Choice of Topic

It is no doubt that water conflicts were a common phenomenon and still continuous to pose a treat in Cameroon as a whole and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular. A number of factors have motivated the choice of topic.

Personally, I have lived in the Bamenda Grassfields since I was small and I discovered that water shortage is a major concern in the region especially during the dry season. We used to trek long distances to streams to get water and to wash dresses which was indeed stressful and time wasting. Sometimes the water sources were dirty and we had to wait for the dirt to settle before we could carry water. Moreso, the roads to the streams were not safe and posed a danger to us. I thus thought it wise to study this phenomenon and bring out proposed solutions which will go a long way to help solve this phenomenon in the area under study.

Power and interest are two broad issues of water-related conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. Access of water in urban and rural residents is highly problematic and uneven. Small towns and even rural water supplies are always subsidized, that is, headed by donors, with market principles

⁷⁰Leach M., Mearns R., and Scoones I., "Challenges to Community-Based Sustainable Development: Dynamics, Entitlements, Institutions", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol.28, No.4, 1997, pp 4-14

⁷¹ Interview with I. Yiyen Shang, 67, Retired Teacher, Tobin, 06/08/2020.

⁷² G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional Changes", pp.87-90.

quite difficult to understand and even more complex than in urban environments. This suggests that the problem of water access and control is primarily a question of purchasing power. In other words, water is a function of money then to social power which influences the organization of territories. The relationship between social power and water access is even more acute in societies that are dependent on hydraulic infrastructures and localized water supplies. Obvious conflicts between water users, between local residents and the hierarchy is either as a result of the displacement of people, the subsequent distribution of water which in most cases depends on social power (some quarters are first of all supplied at the detriment of others and in cases where finances are short, the quarters of the poorest are those left out) as well as ineffective and illegitimate governance.

The question of climate change is a topical issue as it has been shown by numerous publications on the subject during the last few years. Cameroon, the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive, have been facing a lot of water challenges as a result of climate change. Increase in temperature dries up water sources leading to water shortages. More so, changing air temperatures and circulation patterns as well affects the rate of precipitation. Heavier rainstorms increase surface runoff. This moving water strip nutrients from the soil and pick up pollutants, dirt and other undesirables, flushing them into nearby bodies of water, thus making water sources unfit for consumption. Climate change changes how we use water and how we need water. Higher temperatures and evaporation rates have increased the demand for water in the Bamenda Grassfields regions and thus subsequent conflicts.

In order to better understand the concept of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, it is necessary to examine related conflict theories. These theories scientifically explain the general contours of conflict in a society and how they vary.

III. Theoretical Background

In the field of conflict studies, there has been much debate on what causes disagreements in the society. These paradigms raise the origin of conflicts in the society as linked to natural resources. In the current global context of increasing consumption, growing populations and declining availability of many natural resources, numerous analysts have predicted that disputes over natural resources such as water, timber and oil will become more common. Conflicts over natural resources are likely to occur in various contexts from local disputes over a shared water hole to

inter-regional disputes over clean air. Theories from social science over the last two centuries provide insight and explanation regarding the sociological, political and economic factors that can be used to understand or perhaps predict the contexts in which conflicts over natural resources is likely to occur. The theories include the Traditional Malthusian theory, T.F. Homer-Dixon theory, the Classical economic theory, Schnaiberg and Gould conflict oriented theoretical and the Marxist Theory.

The first theory is the Traditional Malthusian theory with proponent being Malthus. He suggests that due to population growth, human consumption needs will eventually exceed availability of natural resources causing a myriad of negative social outcomes like war, disease and famine.⁷³ Violence and war from the Malthusian perspective are “Positive Checks” that serve to re-establish the equilibrium that is disrupted by scarcity caused by population growth. According to Price, Malthus’s theoretical statement is simply that population expands to the limits imposed on it by its subsistence.⁷⁴ The inevitable results when society reaches those limits are poverty and disaster. This rightly fits in the context of this work because, most of the conflicts over water in the Bamenda Grassfields, were as a result of the Fulani search for disease-free pasture which were scarce in Northern Nigeria, to take care of their increasing cattle populations. Deficiency in this natural resource, made the British administrators to invite the Fulani in to the region to relieve overstrained grazing conditions in Northern Nigeria, which Led to conflicts.

Also, T.F. Homer-Dixon claims that natural resource scarcity can cause conflict due to the social effects.⁷⁵ His conclusion based on more than a decade of research on environmental causes of acute conflict is that, natural resource scarcity can cause conflict indirectly through its negative consequences. The negative causes of resource scarcity may include human migration and expulsion, receptivity to insurgency, decreased economic productivity and a weakened state. Such effects increase the likelihood of simple-scarcity conflicts, where resources such as fresh water, land or fish become so exhausted that the sheer lack of these resources causes groups to dispute the remaining shares. The second is the group-identity conflicts, due to the large scale movements of populations brought about by environmental change and thirdly relative-

⁷³ T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population as it affects the Future Improvement of Society*, London, J. Johnson, 1798, pp.67-80.

⁷⁴ D. Price, “Of Population and false Hope: Malthus and his Legacy, Population and Environment”, *A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol.19, No.3, 1998, pp.205-219.

⁷⁵ Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, pp.80-81.

deprivation conflicts which may occur as the ability of less developed groups to grow is diminished by environmental problems.⁷⁶ In the Bamenda Grassfields, the different ethnic groups continue to clash against each other, as a result of the quest to own and control natural resource. Examples of such conflicts include the Bali-Nyonga/Bawock crisis and the Babanki-Tungoh/Bambili conflict.

The Classical economic theory on society and natural resources with proponent being Adam Smith emphasizes on the creation of markets as the key to balancing positive development and over-consumption. Smith suggests that, a distributive system based on supply and demand could bring about a dynamic society capable of effectively addressing scarcity.⁷⁷ As resources become scarcer, their price goes up, thereby deterring over-consumption and spurring technological developments and substitutions. Perspective critical of classical economics have pointed out that as natural resources become more scarce and their value goes up, the financial incentive to further exploit these resources also increase to the point where the result is often extinction, disappearance or devastation.⁷⁸ The mad rush for natural resources in the Bamenda Grassfields is a constant cause of conflicts. Over grazing by the Fulani cows leave ground surfaces bare, forcing them to move to other areas in search of pasture for their cattle. This has led to clashes with the indigenous populations. This is the case of farmer/grazer conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, which are a constant phenomenon.

Within environmental sociology, Schnaiberg and Gould in their conflict oriented theoretical approach specify why groups dispute over natural resource issues. According to them, “The wide variation between the levels and types of ecological damage inflicted by the nations of the world guarantees that Nations will come into conflict with one another over solutions to global environment problems. Similarly, the wide variation among nations in terms of the distribution of benefits received from the ecosystem withdrawals and additions will also necessitate conflict in the international arena.”⁷⁹ The theory is rooted in the authors’ belief that the nature of

⁷⁶T.F Dixon-Homer, *scarcity and Violence*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999, pp.51-72.

⁷⁷ A. Smith, *An Inquiry into Nature and causes of Wealth of Nations*, New York, The modern Library, 1937, pp.25-44.

⁷⁸ C.C. Whitcomb, *The Economics of Overexploitation Science*, New York, Published by American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1973, pp.630-634.

⁷⁹ A. Schinaiberg and A. Gould, *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict*, New York. Martin’s Press, 1994, pp.38-67.

contemporary economic production systems causes ongoing environmental disorganization in the form of pollution and other latent impacts as well as inequitable distribution of the benefits of such economic production. This is seen in terms of conflicts that occur within the group or intra-group conflicts, and also in terms of conflicts that occur outside the group or inter-group conflicts. It shall be highly involved when it comes to water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields which saw both the inter-group as well as intra-group aspects.

In this work we shall adopt the Marxist Theory. It raises the origin of conflicts in the society as linked to conflict of interest between groups with more or less control and ownership of natural resources. These approaches argue that free markets create such great disparities between the “Haves” and “Have-nots” that social conflict is inevitable.⁸⁰ Contemporary scholars in the dependency and world-system schools have stated that wealthy nations exploit other countries for their natural resources. This is thus a factor causing conflicts over natural resources. Apart from the social factor that plays a central role in power distinction, Max also talked about political influence. He said, someone could be poor and still hold a lot of power because of social prestige. To Max, it is the distribution of power and authority that is the basis of social conflict. He argues that if subordinates believe in authority, conflict will be avoided and that if authority is recognized as illegitimate, conflict will occur.⁸¹ This is the case of the Bamenda Grassfields whereby, those at the helm of power abuse through poor management and embezzlement of funds meant for water schemes. This constant struggle among different classes of people automatically results into conflicts.

After having examined the theories related to our topic, it will be important for us to understand some concepts and their application in our study.

IV. Conceptual Framework

To better understand the the topic under study, a number of concepts have been discussed. They include the notion of “water”, “conflicts”, “water conflicts” and water management.

⁸⁰ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Manifesto of the communist Party*, New York, International Publishers, 1962, pp.40-50.

⁸¹*Ibid*, pp.61-65.

1. Water

Water is a liquid without colour, smell, taste that falls as rain, is in lakes, rivers and seas, and is used for drinking, washing. Water is the name given to the chemical compound of oxygen and hydrogen with the chemical symbol H₂O.⁸²Water according to the Advanced Level Regional Geography, a Thematic Approach, is a liquid substance as in Rivers, Lakes, Seas and Oceans.⁸³ It is an essential component of the environment and controls the climatic system. It also exists in living organisms and is fundamental to all forms of development, be it economic, social, political or cultural. In summary, water is life. In this thesis, water here shall mean such as in rivers, streams, lakes, boreholes, springs and constructed pipe-borne water schemes found in the different geographical locations in the Bamenda Grassfields.

2. Conflicts

Conflict comes from the Greek word “confligere”, which means to strike together, clash, contend and fight. The word has two parts. The first part “con” means together and the second part is “fligers” which means strike. Ethimologically, we can say that conflict means the coming together of people to strike a common enemy.⁸⁴ Conflict can be defined as the process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected something that the first party cares about. Conflicts can also be caused due to differences in interpretation of facts or issues involved. Conflicts takes an ugly turn and the form of violence due to disagreement based on behavioural expectations. Austin et al⁸⁵ defines conflict as “A disagreement between two or more individuals or groups with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its views or objectives over others.

Solomon Nfor Gwei (former Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedom in Cameroon) defines conflict as “the process of sharp disagreement or collision of

⁸²A.S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English*, 6th edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.1346-1347.

⁸³ A. Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, 3rd ed., Bamenda, Neba Publishers, 1999, p.40-49.

⁸⁴The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th edition, Vol. 27, (30 Vols.), Chicago, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. 1981, pp.198-199.

⁸⁵ D.L Austin, “Conflict: A more professional approach”, personal administration, Vol.21, 1976, pp.1-20.

interest and ideas which may not be accompanied by physical violence”.⁸⁶L. Cosier takes a different dimension by stating⁸⁷ that conflict is “the struggle over values or claims to take power and scarce resources. Here, the aim of the group or individual involved is not only to obtain the desired values but also to neutralize or eliminate rivals. P. Wallenstern differs from Cosier especially on the issue of neutralizing and eliminating rivals. He states that conflict is a severe disagreement between two or more persons or group of persons where their demands cannot be met by the same resources at the same time.”⁸⁸

Inter-group conflict occurs due to group competition and group cohesiveness. This leads to the feeling of “We” and “They”, we are always right and they are always wrong hence the beginning of conflicts. Schein⁸⁹ has pointed out that, the problem exists because as groups become more committed to their goals and norms, they are likely to become competitive with one another and seek to undermine their rivals’ activities. Micheal⁹⁰ states that, conflicts can lead to breakdown in standard mechanism of decision making so that an individual or group experiences difficulty in selecting an action alternative.

Francis M. Deng and Zartman hold that conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions brought on by the presence of several choices.⁹¹As for Shole and Peter, conflict is generally provoked by an immediate or long term enmity where reactions to the slightest hurt results in an open confrontation. He adds that it will lead to a counter attack, a withdrawal, feeling, indifference or dialogue all of which are possible responses to conflicts.⁹²

More so, Jacob Bercovitch and Judith Fretter define conflict as a process of interaction between two or more parties that seek to thwart, injure or destroy their opponent because they perceive

⁸⁶ S. Nfor Gwei “Human Rights, Conflicts and Human Right Development: The Role of Cameroonian Traditional Rulers in the promotion of Human Rights and Conflict management in a Transitional Democracy”, Conference Report in Bamenda, 14-15 February 2000.

⁸⁷ A.L. Coser, *The function of conflicts*, New York, Free Press, 1985, pp.8-20.

⁸⁸ P. Wallenstern, *Understanding Conflict Resolution*, Second Edition, Townrigde Wilshire, Cromwell Press Ltd, 2007, pp.7-46.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰ V.P Michael, *Organisational Behaviour and Manegerial Effectiveness*, New Delhi, S. Chand and Co Ltd, 1989, pp.21-35.

⁹¹ F. Manding Deng, W. Zartman eds., *Conflict Resolution in Africa*, Washington DC, Brooking Institutions, 1991, pp.299-305.

⁹² K. Shole and N.T Peter, *Youth Peace Training Manual*, Nairobi, AAC Publications, 1999, pp.37-47.

they have incompatible interests or goals.⁹³ To them, a relationship marred by conflict is characterized by a set of attitudes and behaviors and this relationship is thought of in terms of three elements which are: specific conflict situations, motives and parties cognitive structure and the behavioral attitudinal dynamics of a conflict process. These elements could either be considered jointly or separately. This however entails that conflict situation arises when two opposing views within an entity or two separate entities do not compromise on the opposing goals.

3. Water Conflict

It is a term describing a conflict between countries, states or groups over an access to water resources.⁹⁴ The United Nations recognizes that water disputes results from opposing interest of water users, public and private.⁹⁵ Water has been a source of tension and one of the causes of conflicts. There is a grozing number of water conflicts that go unresolved, largely at the subnational level and these will become more dangerous as water becomes scarcer, climate changes alter local hydrology and global population increase. More so, water conflicts occur because the demand for water exceeds supply or because control over access and allocation of water may be disputed. Violence associated with water resources has occurred throughout history with water triggering violence and armed conflicts, water or water sytems being used as weapons and water systems becoming casualties during conflicts.⁹⁶

Understanding the causes of water related violence is critical for identifying priority areas for conflict resolution and strategies to reduce the risk of future conflicts.

4. Water Management

Water management is an activity of planning, developing, distributing and managing optimum use of water resources under defined water policies and regulations.⁹⁷ The lack of uniform water policies and institutional structures in the country disables prospective water development

⁹³ J. Bercovitch and J. Fretter, *Regional Guide to International Conflict and Management from 1945 to 2003*, Washington, Copress, 2004, pp.4-10.

⁹⁴ P. Gleick, "Water and conflict", *A Journal of International Security*, vol.18, No.1, 1993, pp.79-112.

⁹⁵ UN World Water Development Report, 2020.

⁹⁶Bercovitch and Fretter, *Regional Guide to International Conflict* pp.4-10.

⁹⁷ S. Baba Oumar and D. Datt Tewari, "The Development of water management institutions and the provision for water delivery in Cameroon: History and Futures", *GDJS*, Vol.9, No.2, 2012, pp.82-90.

schemes. Water is a basic necessity. No living creature can live without water. Thus to avoid scarcity of water, it is saved and managed efficiently. Several groups participate in the management of water resources in Cameroon. Among them is the government, traditional authority, community, water user associations and independent organisations.⁹⁸ In the colonial era, the absolute power of the Supreme Chief of Community (SCoC) was broken down and the colonial government instituted a network for water resources development and management of the country. All the same, the provision of water for the community involved indigenous people but required them to follow documented procedures. Consequently, the SCoC leased part of his prerogatives to the district officers and resident who became prominent in managing and planning water needs of the communities.

At independence, the indigenous government tried to demonstrate its ability to cater for the needs of its population. Three key ministries featured on the government's plan on water resource management for the country, the Ministry of Energy and Water Resource, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture.⁹⁹ This arrangement yielded unsatisfactory results that paved the way to the private sector intervention in water supply business. Following the take over of water supply by the private sector, the National Water Corporation (SNEC), split into the Cameroon Water Utilities and La Camerounaise des Eaux, where the former handled the management, maintenance and networking system of infrastructures of the corporation and the latter undertook the exploitation, treatment, provision, delivery and commercialization of water to private households and the general public in urban centers. Remote areas received little attention from the corporation.¹⁰⁰

From 1902 to present, three approaches with different institutional involvement have been applied in addressing the problems of water development, provision and delivery in Cameroon. Furthermore, it is observed that despite the globalization agenda, the supporting water regulation and water strategy are missing in Cameroon.¹⁰¹ The lack of these sustaining pillars coupled with overreliance on decrees and orders for the management of water resources elevates the vulnerability of water management structures to the whims and caprices of the authority that

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ A.J Njoh, "Barriers to community participation in development planning: Lessons from the Mutengene (Cameroon) self-help water project", *Community Development Journal*, Vol.37, No.3, pp.233-248.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Oumar and Tewari, "The Development of water", pp.82-90.

enacts such declarations in the country.¹⁰² The purpose of conflict management whether undertaken by the parties in conflict or whether involving the intervention of an outside party is to affect the entire structure of the conflict situation so as to contain the destructive components in the conflict process. This helps the parties possessing incompatible goals to find some solution to the conflict. Effective conflict management succeeds in minimizing disruption stemming from the existence of a conflict and providing a satisfactory and acceptable solution.¹⁰³

After having had an understanding of our topic, we shall clarify the boundaries, exceptions and reservations inherent in our study.

V. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study starts from 1902 during the colonial era to 1998, which is the post-colonial rule. It is a historical investigation of the conflicts, which occur as a result of the activities of the colonial masters, Fulani activities, failed political decisions, poor management over water sources and public schemes found in the different geographical spaces in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, from 1902-1998.

The appellation “Grassfields” is a broad term used to refer to the whole Region of West Cameroon (Present North West and Western Regions) between the cross River Basin and the two affluences of the Benue (Katsina Ala and Donga) in the North and Mbam and Nkam in the East.¹⁰⁴ It became known as the Bamenda Grassfields at the dawn of German penetration of the region in 1884. The area was characterized by exposed ridges and unfrosted rocky slopes and galleries along the river valleys. The region is dominated by a vast expanse of grasslands from where it derived the name “Grassfields”. According to Dankler, cited by P.N Nkwi, the Grassfields refers to “A sea of grass which stretches for Hundreds of Kilometers providing one of the most magnificent panoramas on earth.”¹⁰⁵ The Bamenda Grassfields is known today as the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon.

The Bamenda Grassfields formed part of the British Cameroons. The British Cameroon was made up of Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons which included the Bamenda

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ E.E Adomi and S.O Anie, “Conflict management in Nigerian University Libraries”, *Journal of Library Management*, Vol.27, No.8, 2005, pp.520-530.

¹⁰⁴ Che-Mfombong, “Bamenda Division under British Administration”, pp.10-24.

¹⁰⁵ Dankler, cited by P. Nchoji Nkwi, *The German Presence in the Western Grassfields 1891-1913; A German Colonial Account*, Leiden, African Studies Centre, 1989, pp.10-32.

Grassfields- the study area.¹⁰⁶ The Bamenda Grassfields since the German colonization of Cameroon in 1884 have gone through a continuous transformation process and evolution even in name. In the German period, it was called Bezirk and served as a military station from 1902 to 1915. The Bezirk extended to and included parts of Gashaka, Bamoum and Bagam.¹⁰⁷ When the British took over the territory in 1916, parts of the Bezirk (Kentu and part of Gashaka), were placed for administration purposes under Northern Nigeria. Bamoum and Bagam on their part came under the French Mandatory rule after World War I. The British equally made some rectifications on the administered boundary between Northern and Southern Nigeria in the former Gashaka district.¹⁰⁸

The Bamenda Grassfields was part of the British and French Condominium between 1916 and 1922, part of the British Mandate of Cameroon between 1922 and 1945, and part of the British Trusteeship under the supervision of the United Nations Organization, between 1945 to 1961.¹⁰⁹ In 1949, it was raised to a province and sub-divided into three Divisions in 1950 (Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe Divisions). To facilitate the collection of *Jangali* tax, the British Colonial Administration transformed the Bamenda province into five Federations; the South Eastern, the South Western, the North Western, the North Eastern and the Bani (Bali) Federations.

In this study, we shall adopt the appellation “Bamenda Grassfields” given that, it is a term widely used and understood by many people. However, any of the aforementioned particularly “Bamenda Division”, shall be used when reference is made to the region before 1949, while “Bamenda Province” shall be used to refer to it between 1949 and 1960. The names Bamenda Grasslands, Grassfields, Province, North West Province as well as North West Region, refer to

¹⁰⁶ The British Northern Cameroons never had a separate administration. The territory with an area of 17,354 miles (44,928 square kilometres) was administered as an integral part of the three provinces in Northern Nigeria: Benue Province with its capital at Maiduguri, Adamawa with its capital at Yola and Bornu with its capital at Makurdi. (See T. Eyongetah Mbaugbaw and R. Brian, *A History of the Cameroon*, London, Longman, 1979, pp.95-101 for details.)

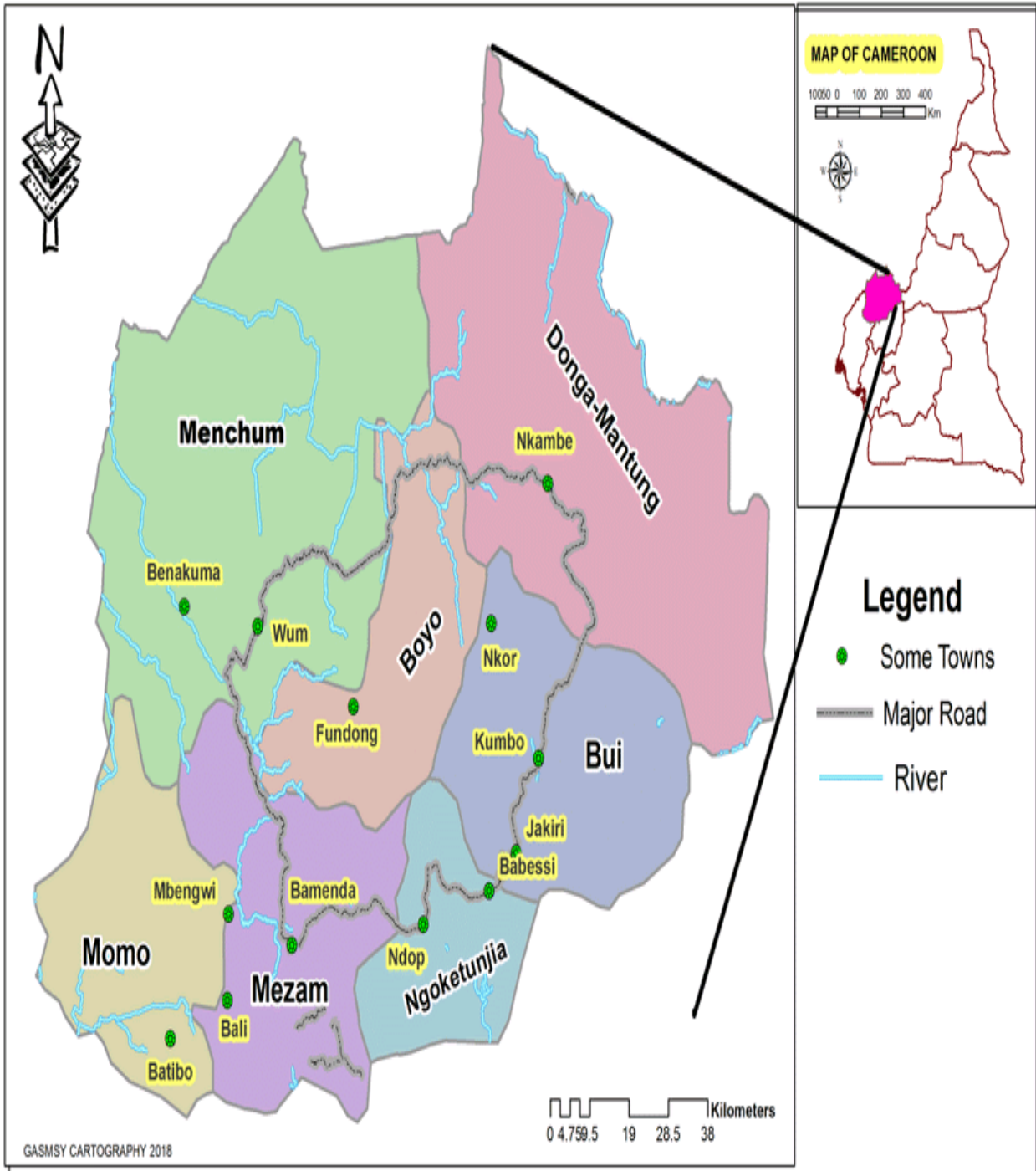
¹⁰⁷ V.J. Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985, A Hundred years of History*, Yaounde, Navi group Publications, 1987, pp.165-166.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ The British Trusteeship and influence over the territory came to an end in 1961, when the people of the entire Southern Cameroons in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular, voted in a United Nations Organization plebiscite, to achieve their independence by joining the Independent *La Republique du Cameroun*. (For more details, see V.G. Fanzo, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and colleges: The Colonial and Post-Colonial periods*, Vol.2, London, Macmillan, 1989, pp.152-153).

the same geographical region. It is important to point out that, in case where each of these appellations is used, the context would be duly explained for the purpose of clarity.

1. Map showing the study Area, Bamenda Grassfields



Source: Adapted from Tata, Yongabi, chinere and Nwoke's spartial distribution, p.7.

The study is restricted to the Bamenda grassfields area. This period dates from 1916 when the British Authorities decided to encourage cattle keeping in the Bamenda Grassfields, to relieve overstrained grazing conditions in Northern Nigeria and to take advantage of the disease-free good pastures right down to 1998 when the water law was passed that is Law N^o 98/005 of 14th April 1998. It stipulates that water is a natural resource within a common heritage of the country. The state is responsible for managing the country's water resources and facilitating access for the entire population. The law expressly contemplates the state's ability to transfer its obligations to manage the water resources to local authorities and other entities. This is a period of 82 years giving us enough time to investigate on the issue of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. To situate our work in relation to existing knowledge, we shall survey scholarly sources such as books, journals, articles and thesis, related to the topic under study.

VI. Literature Review

Water conflicts are a serious threat in Cameroon and notably in the Bamenda Grassfields. This gives us the impression that everything has been researched on the subject which is not the fact. However, a critical and keen perusal reveals a lot of gaps on the subject. Water conflicts continue to fascinate some scholars from all fields of social sciences. To better appreciate the question of water conflict, this section of the study strives to examine preceding studies on the question.

Literature on the Notion of Water Conflicts

Fidelis A. Folifac¹¹⁰ work focuses towards improving knowledge management and collaborative action in potable water delivery. He explains that, the current design and execution of water delivery research leaves a gap between researchers' knowledge and water delivery practices on ground. He uses the water delivery problem in Buea as a case study to develop and try an innovative model or framework known as a Participatory Transformation Advocacy Research (PTAR) to concurrently investigate a problem and support research users' mobilization for interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue and knowledge management.

Flemming in another text, Hydro-crisis in the Middle East¹¹¹ states that in the Middle East, water is becoming far more valuable resource than oil. Access to water has domestic and regional, economic, political and security implications for the Middle East. He states that water is likely to

¹¹⁰ F.A. Folifac, "Towards improving knowledge management and collaborative action in potable water delivery at the local level: case of Buea Cameroon", PhD Thesis, University of MacGill, 2012.

¹¹¹ Flemming, "Hydro-crisis in the Middle East: Water schemes for a thirsty region", Naval Post Graduate School California, 2001.

be an issue that sparks the next conflict in the Middle East. His thesis describes the impact of rapid population growth and urbanization, industrialization and pollution and “self- sufficiency” agricultural policies on the water in the Middle East. This argument is more limited to the Middle East Region.

Nkwi dwells on Traditional Diplomacy.¹¹² He studies the different chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields giving a detail analysis of each and how they inter relate with each other. In this work, he mentions how people interact and circulate freely in order to promote peaceful coexistence among them. Sometimes this peaceful coexistence enables them to carry out developmental projects. The present study seeks to bring out the various conflicts which come about as a result of the poor management of the water resources found in the different geographical locations in the Bamenda Grass Field.

Sanguv examines institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands. She explores the emerging contradiction between on the one hand the water policy conducted in Cameroon since independence and secondly the urban realities of informal water control and use on the other. The concepts of governance and community are used to analyze how people individually and collectively claimed their water rights and how such claims were legitimized. She further states that the informality of institutions and property rights in small town water governance harbor complex socio-economic situations which is a common feature in the three study sites of Bali, Bafou and Kumbo.

Gwaibi¹¹³ provides valuable information on revisiting development in Cameroon. He states that, Bali unlike most towns in Cameroon owns a potable drinking water supply system which was constructed by the community in 1957. The water project has gone through a number of transformations over the years. Before reunification, it was managed as a non-profit scheme by the community. Following reunification, the project fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Mines, Water Resource and Power. He further explains that, in 1984, the water scheme was later handed to a state-owned parastatal: *Société Nationale des Eaux du Cameroun (SNEC)* which

¹¹²P.N. Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A study of interchiefdom in the western Grassfields, North West Region Province of Cameroon*, Yaounde, A Publication of the Department of Sociology, 1987.

¹¹³ Numvi Gwaibi, “Revisiting development in Cameroon: The Bali community water project- A Historical Perspective”, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social science*, Vol.26, No.1, 2021.

Lum¹¹⁴not deviating from Numvi, explores the influence of a community-based project on rural livelihood in Cameroon: The case of the Kumbo Water Authority. Ambe develops four main themes in this study which are participants' perspective of accessibility of water provided by the project, stakeholders and their roles in the management of the project, social and economic factors influencing the livelihood of the Kumbo population and the sustainability of the project. He however states that, stakeholders involved in the management of the project has changed over time since its inception (from the Public Works Department of Urban Development, National Water Supply Company of Cameroon (*SNEC*), Nso Development Association (*NSODA*) and currently Kumbo Water Authority (*KWA*) and Nso Community Water). Other stakeholders of this project include the Senior Divisional Officer of Bui Division, the Paramount Chief of Kumbo and the Mayor of the Kumbo Urban Council. Nevertheless, all these stakeholders have undefined roles and they often make conflicting decisions on how the projects should be managed. She also emphasises on the fact that, the undefined roles of these stakeholders compounded by climate change and population expulsion threatens the sustainability of this water project.

Ngome talks about the Geography of the Muanenguba region. He also talks about the origin of the Fulani and how they got into the Bamenda Grasslands and their impact on this area both positive and negative.¹¹⁵ Waterbury John in his book *Hydro politics*¹¹⁶ of the Nile shows the effects of water resources in the Nile region. This work is vital for the study but is not the focus of this work.

Another interesting work is that of Robert Babila who writes on Farmer- Grazier conflict in Bali Sub Division.¹¹⁷ He brings out reasons for the conflicts such as retardation of water level and contamination of water. He gives the effects of the consumption of the water by the population such as cholera and typhoid. He gives a background history of the Bali Sub Division. Jumbam

¹¹⁴ P. Ambe Lum, "Exploring the influence of a community-based project on rural livelihood in Cameroon: The case of the Kumbo Water Authority project", PhD Thesis in Population Health, University of Ottawa, 2018.

¹¹⁵ T. Ngome sone-Ngole, "The Fulani of Mount Muanenguba, Bangem Sub Division, Kupe- Muannenguba Division, 1920-2000", MA Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2011.

¹¹⁶J. Waterbury, *Hydro politics of the Nile Valley*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1979.

¹¹⁷R.B. Sikud, "Farmer-Grazer conflict in Bali Sub Division, 1975-2010; A historical analysis," Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2012.

vividly provides important information on the Yeh crisis.¹¹⁸ He talks about the factors that led to the Yeh crisis and its manifestation, the consequences and how it came to an end.

Khalid writes on the water issue between Bangladesh and India.¹¹⁹ Bangladesh is a water abundant country with low per capital income. This paper highlights those factors which have so serious concerns that after long term comprehension, bilateral negotiations are still unresolved. It brings about the origin of the dispute and the signing of the memorandum of understanding known as the Ganges water Treaty.

Nkwi and Warnier (Anthropologist),¹²⁰ make allusions to the advent of the Fulani into the Bamenda Grassfields. According to them, the pastoral Fulani had kept moving steadily Eastwards and Southwards into the Grassfield Region from the 14th to the 18th centuries in search of good pastures and political conditions favorable to their way of life. They intermingled more or less peacefully with the populations.

Chilver and Kaberry focuses on Traditional Bamenda.¹²¹ They bring out the History of Bamenda after colonial rule and an inside of the tribes that make up the Grassfields and how they interact with each other leading to development. Also, Eric Koizah Karh, who writes on cattle economy in Wum, brings out the background history of Wum. He also makes mention of the fact that the cattle bring income. He further explains that the rearing of cattle has led to the extinction of wet lands, destruction of crops leading to food shortage.¹²²

Still in the domain, Awasom¹²³ writes on the Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands. He brings out the geographical setting of the Bamenda Grassfields. He further narrates how the Fulani and the Hausa got into the Bamenda grasslands. He explains why the British neglected the

¹¹⁸C. Jumbam Tardzenyuy, "The Yeh crisis of 1975", DIPES II, Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2002.

¹¹⁹ I. Khalid, "South Asian Studies Bangladesh water concern", *A research Journal of South Asian studies*, vol.25, No.1, 2010.

¹²⁰ P.N. Nkwi and J.P. Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, Yaounde, Publication of the Department of Sociology, University of Yaounde, 1982.

¹²¹E.M. Chilver and M.P. Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda: The Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of Bamenda Grassfields*, Buea, Government Printers, 1995.

¹²² E. Koizah Karh, "Cattle Economy in Wum Area 1940-2010: A Historical analysis," Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2012.

¹²³ N. Fru Awasom, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands 1903-1960," Doctorat de 3^e cycle in History, University of Yaounde, 1984.

conflicts between the indigenes of the Bamenda Grasslands and the Fulani. He also talks of the origin of the Fulani.

Green in examining Hydropolitics in the Middle East¹²⁴ discusses the issue, with the most critical example today of the world wide problem of diminishing fresh water resources relative to increasing demands stemming from the growing populations and development. The paper concentrates information essential to understanding Regional hydropolitics including information about past and current US attempts to influence Middle Eastern hydropolitics. The paper as well stresses on the need for peace and this can be done through regional cooperation.

Literature on the Nature and Evolution of Water Conflicts

Charles and Lotsmart,¹²⁵ writes that the Grassfields is a fertile ground for self-efforts. The paper examines the resurgence role Village Development Associations (VDAs) are playing in national and community development. Community members are increasingly shouldering the adverse consequences of the economic downturn and the growing inability of the state to provide economic and social development by initiating, mobilizing and galvanizing their own resources in the quest to improve their standard of living. The reliance on indigenous technology and local human resource has led to overwhelming popular participation in community-driven Projects.

Jacob, Jennifer and Aaron take interest in international water conflict and cooperation.¹²⁶ They made mention of the nature of water conflicts and cooperation has improved over time and that the likelihood of water conflicts could increase as populations continue to grow and climate change continues to manifest. They further discuss how water conflicts can be resolved, how water can be seen as a vehicle for change between states and future directions that can be taken in transboundary water conflict research.

Njoka writes on the Kumbo Water Scheme.¹²⁷ He studies the Kumbo water scheme giving a historical view of it, from construction to present. In explaining the various events, he made

¹²⁴ E.A. Green, "Hydropolitics in the Middle East and US Policy", A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Advanced Research, US Naval War College, 18 June 1993.

¹²⁵ C. Che Fonchingong and L. Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance in Community Development Initiatives in the Cameroon Grassfields", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, No.12. Vol.2, 2003.

¹²⁶ J.D.P Perlman, J.C. Veilleux and A. T, Wolf, "International water conflict and cooperation : Challenges and opportunities", <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2017.1276041>, 14/06/2020, 1:30pm.

¹²⁷ G. Njoka, "Kumbo water supply systems 1968-1992: A Historical perspective, Kumbo central," Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1993.

mention of the displacement of the inhabitants of Yeh from their village and identifies the political events that led to the displacement of the inhabitants and their life after the crisis.

Ngengong provides valuable information on inter-ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields.¹²⁸ She based her information on the fact that ethnic conflicts in the the Bamenda Grassfields became common occurrences at the advent of the Chamba raids in the 1920s. She endeavors to show the ethnic conflicts can be considered a product of fast degenerating arable land against the background of fast-growing population.

Wafula¹²⁹ is interested in the role of the church in water conflict resolution. He evaluates the role of the church played in fostering reconciliation, assess reconciliation processes employed by the church in Kenya 2008-2013 post conflict period and suggest effective strategies that the church could employ in reconciliation. In Kenya, the occurrence of ethnic-related conflicts seems to be recurrent. In this light, the church has a critical call to appreciate and make use of her divine mission of fostering reconciliation in the society. The study establishes that conflict recur because of the adoption of ineffective methods of reconciliation and lack of community involvement. Thus, this work goes along way to show the role played by the church in water conflict resolution.

Wolf writes about the indigenous approaches to water conflict negotiation.¹³⁰ This article investigates how indigenous peoples of two drylands regions- the Berbers of the High Atlas Mountains and the Bedouin of the Negev Desert, approach negotiations brought about by water scarcity and fluctuation and their methods are described in the context of current international hydropolitics. In this work, he brings out the various strategies used to solve conflicts over water. Tsewah¹³¹ study concerns the place and role of women in conflict solving in Cameroon. He analyses the cultural, ethnic and religious background and regions of the country, thus looking at the concept of peace and conflict in Cameroon Cultural area in light of the place and role women

¹²⁸ E. Ngengong Tangie, "From friends to enemies: Inter-ethnic conflicts amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon, 1950-1998)", Masters Dissertation in Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, 2007.

¹²⁹ M. Nyongesa Wafula, "The role of the church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post-election violence Kenya", A Research project of the Degree of Masters of Arts in International Studies, University of Nairobi, 2012.

¹³⁰ A.T. Wolf, "Indigenous approaches to water conflict negotiations and implications for international waters", *International Negotiation*, Vol.5, 2000,

¹³¹ M. Changbun Tsewah, "The role of women in conflict solving in Cameroon: As compared to the role of women in African Philosophy", Masters Dissertation in Religion, Society and Global Issues, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2014.

in that context. The study entails developing a gender perspective of peace building policies and projects at the local level. Thus embarking on the contribution of the African women on the best practices of peace building and mediation techniques, as well as adopting the agenda for the culture of peace in Africa. He further emphasises on the fact that, the Catholic Women Association (CWA) has been able to show some changes that has taken place for the voices and decisions of women to be heard and seen by the African men in the milieu of African culture and philosophy.

Waarde¹³² highlights the activities of HELVETAS in Cameroon as concerns water catchment protection. Helvetas Cameroon has been active for more than 10 years in water catchment protection in the Northwest province. In this report Waarde presents a review of the activities performed by Helvetas Cameroon in water catchment protection. He further says that, for the last 10 years, a more or less standard approach for water catchment protection has been developed. This approach includes sensitization of the population, acquiring the land title of the catchment area, setting up a water management committee, training of caretakers and implementing protective measures. These protective measures worked well in most cases and the technical approach followed by Helvetas can be used as a good basis for any water catchment protection project.

Megdal, Eden and Shamir¹³³ did not close their eyes as they write on water governance, stakeholder engagement and sustainable water resources management. The role of water governance and stakeholder engagement in formulating and implementing solutions to the world's critical water challenges is receiving increasing attention. They further attest to the fact that over the past years, United Nations Organisation, the World Bank, the Global Environment Faculty, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have joined forces with governmental, academic, professional association, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other private sector representatives to explore efforts to improve water governance. These efforts and water projects at multiple geographic scales point to the value of sharing experiences and lessons learned so that good practices can be transferred. They also point to the

¹³² J.J. Van Der Waarde, "Helvetas Cameroon Experiences in catchment protection activities", *Helvetas Cameroon*, Bamenda, 2004.

¹³³ S.B. Megdal, S. Eden and E. Shamir, "Water governance, Stakeholder engagement and sustainable water resources management", *Water*, Vol.9, 2017.

criticality of engaging stakeholders in deliberations on alternative approaches to addressing water scarcity, water quality and water situation issues.

Kiteh¹³⁴ in the same light writes on stakeholders' participation, myth or reality? It has generally been observed that many developing countries lack access to potable water and one reason for this is not just because of shortages but because of mismanagement as well. Because governments of developing countries are unable to maintain supply of potable water in rural areas, participation is introduced to help reduce the burden on government by involving private sector and NGOs as well as the civil society working together in addressing this issue. Chia further explains that, in Bambui-Tubah village in Cameroon, the government, private sector and local community members, work hand in hand in the management of schemes with the government setting the legal framework, the private sector providing technical aspects and the community is responsible for the daily running of the system through a management committee representing the community.

Kaberry, Taylor and Francis¹³⁵ lay emphasis on women in the Grassfields and its implicit message that gender role are contextual and central to understanding. She examines "women's role" in the Nso society. Kaberry found out that women's role, position or status cannot be understood outside of the overall social institutions and political economy. The work describes the structure of Nso politics and kinship. It as well gives a detailed knowledge of the Bamenda Grassfields.

Contrary to what colonial architects advocate, Fashoyin¹³⁶ strongly posits that management in Africa existed and was rooted in the cultural beliefs and traditions of its diverse people. The cultures had evolved over thousands of years and represented successful attempts to integrate themselves with their environment. African institutions were marked by interrelatedness, yet they also exhibited a wide range of diversity. Facts on Africa ought to be told by Africans. However, Martin warns that to suggest that the history of African political ideas is a neglected field of study is a major understatement, as Africa is replete with examples of excellent practices

¹³⁴ C. Chia Kiteh, "Stakeholders participation: Myth or Reality? A case study of community water supply management in Bambui-Tubah village in Cameroon", Masters Dissertation in Sustainable development, Uppsala Universitet, 2011.

¹³⁵ P.M Kaberry, Taylor and Francis, *women of the Grassfields. A study of the economic position of women in Bamenda*, London, e-library, 2006.

¹³⁶ T. Fashoyin, "Management in Africa", *Lagos Organization Review*, 1(1), 2005, pp. 43-45.

of public administration as they existed before the advent of colonialists¹³⁷. He recommends that an instructor wishing to put together a collection of readings on the subject needs to delve into an extremely broad range of sources and materials widely scattered in many books, articles and primary sources dealing with African history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, politics, biography and literature.

We learn from the works of Osei-Hwedie that before colonialism, sub-Saharan African societies were organized around friends and relations, with authority exercised through a system of chieftaincy, clan elders and heads of households¹³⁸. As long as such an arrangement created harmony and a sense of unity among the communities where it existed, the governance apparatus brought about social transformation as understood from the periodic lens of time. Several other practices existed as well. For example, the medical history of Africa, though vital, remains a neglected field. Patterson reports how disease has been a significant factor throughout African history, and attempts to control endemic and epidemic afflictions have been an important aspect of change in the twentieth century¹³⁹. Unfortunately, historians have rarely paid more than cursory attention to issues involving human health; yet they are central to the effectiveness of any governance mechanism.

Lang¹⁴⁰ analyses the role of the justice and Peace Commission (JPC) of the Archdiocese of Bamenda in the management and prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon, it demonstrates that the active participation of this institution in peacebuilding is marked by partial success, there is much belief in the capacity of Faith-based institutions to manage conflicts. He further states that, however the the evidence on the role of this Catholic Comission in terms of engagement and mediation in peacebuilding among warring ethnic communities is not encouraging. The article thus shows the role of the church in conflict resolution in the Northwest Region through the Justice and Peace Commission.

¹³⁷G. Martin, African political thought. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012,p.100.

¹³⁸ K. Osei-Hwedie, Afrocentrism: The challenge of social development. A paper presented at the ASASWEI Conference. 6-7 September, South Africa: Stellenbosch University, 1993-2005,pp.30-98.

¹³⁹D.K. Patterson, Disease and medicine in African History: A bibliographical essay: History in Africa, 1: 141-148 Published, 1974,p.58.

¹⁴⁰ M. Lang Kpughe, "Inter-Ethnic conflict management and prevention in Cameroon's Northwest: Assessing the role of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Bamenda", *Asian Journal of Peace Building*, Vol.7, No.1, 2019.

From the research findings and existing literature, it is evident that no comprehensive study has been designed specifically on the aspect of water Conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. The study is different from the previous works because, it brings out the different aspects of conflicts, especially in a region characterized by population increase, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, fear and ignorance. By examining the key issues on water conflicts and problems based on specific case studies, this work certainly brings out lessons to be learnt from past mistakes, and more promising and appropriate interventions to be adopted by individuals, civil society, organizations, administrators, politicians and the government. The research findings of the work focus on short term and long-term perspectives. Taking into account law No. 98/005 of 14th April 1998, which stipulates that the state is responsible for managing the country's water resources, and that it can as well transfer its obligations to manage the water resources to local authorities and other entities, it will be for the best, if independent village water schemes are allowed to be controlled and managed by their respective village heads or Community Development Authorities. Finally, it is important to note that, water management is a complex issue with far reaching and often contentious effects. Water related tensions emerge on different geographic scales, but it is the interplay of these tensions with a number of political, socioeconomic, environmental and cultural factors that determine whether violence conflicts will result.¹⁴¹

A lot of literature relating to our work has been examined above. This notwithstanding, we shall make a concise description of the issue to be addressed or improved upon in the next part of our work.

VII. Statement of the Problem

With the coming of the colonial masters into Cameroon in the 1980s there were little or no conflicts over water as the water sources such as streams, rivers and lakes were not as polluted as today and were used by the population as sources to get water. The Germans constructed the first water schemes in 1902 which was meant to serve the German offices and homes and one was made to serve the entire population. The British on their part focused on the notion of community help. Thus, before the advent of the Fulani into the Bamenda Grassfields, water conflicts existed, but they were not as when they arrived. They were however never prolonged as

¹⁴¹ B. Greene," A General Model of Natural Resource Conflicts: The case of International Freshwater Disputes", *Keene state College in New Hampshire*, Vol.37, No.3, 2005, p.6.

satisfactory or fairly satisfactory solutions were usually given to each case often by a third party, being the administration.¹⁴²The presence of the Fulani into the Bamenda Grassfields in 1916, led to conflicts with the indigenous population over water. The Fulani cattles polluted water sources and made them unfit for consumption. However, after independence in 1961, the indigenous communities of the Bamenda Grassfields saw the need to construct and own water schemes because, the sources of water used before independence were now polluted and unfit for consumption provoked by rapid population increases and urban growth.

Eventhough with this initiative, water conflicts continued to intensify in the area as a result of poor management, population growth, climate change, pollution and poor agricultural practices. As a result of this, some measures were put in place by stakeholders such as the Government, NGOs, traditional authorities and religious bodies to help curb water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields such as Cameroon's adoption of the Dublin principles, creation of *SNEC* opening of many more catchment areas. Despite their efforts, some challenges such as poor farming methods, corruption and embezzlement, are still being faced as a result of this phenomenon which needs to be completely eradicated. In light of the statement of the problem; this study seeks to answer the question, what has been the contribution of stakeholders to the understanding and resolution of conflicts related to water management in the Bamenda Grassfields?

Besides the main question are secondary questions which our study seeks to answer;

- a. Where did the Fulani originate from and what has been their impact in the Bamenda Grassfields?
- b. After the independence of British Southern Cameroon in 1961, has conflicts over water aggravated or has it been minimized?
- c. How was water governed during the colonial period?
- d. What reason(s) can be given for the constant water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields?
- e. What roles have been played by stakeholders in water conflict resolution?
- f. What challenges have been faced in the resolution of water conflicts in the Region and what can be done to resolve them?

¹⁴² The drastic reduction in wars and intertribal tension in the Bamenda Grassfields was s also explained partly by the role played by Christian Missionaries in the area. The missionaries condemned the wearing of amulets, belief in witchcraft and intertribal wars.

With the formulation of our main research and secondary questions, we shall now bring out the objectives of our study.

VIII. Objectives of the Study

In historical research, one of the main goals is often to expand existing knowledge on a particular subject¹⁴³. Some studies exist on water and more specifically on conflicts related to water in the Bamenda Grassfields region. This of course gives the impression that research has been exhausted in the field of water conflicts, whereas emerging events and evolution of conflicts in relation to water over time proves the contrary. In reality, water conflicts are still a fertile area for varied research in related fields like conflicts, governance and development. The main objective of this study is to look at the contribution of stakeholders to the understanding and resolution of conflicts related to water in the Bamenda Grassfields. Besides the main objective, this study is specifically geared at:

1. Exploring the background of the Bamenda Grassfields relating it to water conflicts.
2. Assess the history of water governance in Cameroon in order to better understand how water was governed during the colonial periods, the laws that governed water in Cameroon as well as the water management framework and structures.
3. Evaluate the various reasons for water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields taking into consideration the economic, social, political and cultural factors.
4. Examine case studies of some water conflicts that have occurred in the Bamenda Grassfields.
5. Underscore the role played by stakeholders, which are the Government, NGOs, traditional authorities and the church in solving conflicts over water in the Bamenda Grassfields.
6. Determine the challenges in resolving water conflicts and bring out propositions through which they can be resolved or avoided.

This study seeks to attain several objectives as enumerated above. Thus, we shall look at what the Bamenda Grassfields inhabitants stand to benefit from the study in particular and the world in general.

¹⁴³M. Bloch, *Apologie pour L'Histoire ou Metier D'Historien*, cahier des Annales, 3 Library Armand Colin, Paris, 2^e éditions, 1952, p. 18.

IX. Significance and Interest of the Study

One of the fundamental aspects of research is ethical. This suggests that results of the research should be capable of contributing significantly towards the amelioration of existent and incomplete knowledge on a specific question. But also, research results could contribute in building society and fostering development. As such, the significance of this study is both scientific and practical. Academically, this study is a modest and innovative contribution to the existent literature of the history of water conflicts in Cameroon. This study questions the past in its own unique way by attempting to establish in a chronological manner the evolution of water conflicts and its degree of integration and adaptation in the modern state.

This study will bring out proposals which can go a long way to solve the water conflicts in the region and also ways to avoid these conflicts in the future. Water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields have long been an issue, taking into consideration the time frame of this study, which is 1902 to 1998. The propositions that will be brought in this work will go a long way to help curb and why not solve the issues of Conflicts over water, which is a constant threat to this region.

Practically, this study is susceptible of contributing towards a better policy formulation by decision makers in Cameroon. The study will be a way for the government as well as those handling water sources in the Bamenda Grassfields to see if they lived up to the expectation of the indigenous population and if not, ameliorate their management over the water sources. Taking into consideration law No. 98/005 of 14th April 1998 giving the Government control over water resources and right to hand management to other entities has been the cause of many water-related conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. This is the case of the conflicts that occurred between the National Water Corporation (*SNEC*) and other ethnic groups such as Bali and Kumbo, because the Ministry of Mines, Water and Energy handed over the water schemes of former West Cameroon to *SNEC* to manage. It is therefore very important for the Government to revise water laws as they are outdated.

It will be a way for other communities out of the Bamenda Grassfields and why not the world at large to learn from the mistakes which have led to conflicts in the area and try always to solve their problems when it's still early to avoid violent confrontations. The issue of water conflicts is not only a threat to the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon. Many other regions and areas

around the world keep on experiencing this phenomenon. This work will be an eye opener to other areas and enable them implement the propositions arrived at, in order to avoid future conflicts over water sources.

After numerating the significance of the study, we shall examine the methodology and sources used in to attain our set objectives.

X. Methodology and Sources

This work was realized through a critical review of primary and secondary sources. These two sources employed the interdisciplinary approach, involving the use of ethnography, sociological, anthropological, legal and historical methods in the realization of this study. We also adopted the chronological and thematic approaches. Secondary sources used included both published and unpublished works. We began by a critical review of secondary sources handling broader themes on water conflicts and the politics of management of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. The published sources consisted of books, newspapers, articles in books, journals, book chapters and magazines. Most of these published works were gotten from libraries, Academic and Research Centers in Yaounde, Bamenda and Buea.

Internet sources were also used. Through this, we were able to read books and question people's ideas and skills on similar subjects throughout the world. We equally identified and criticized a good number of secondary materials dealing with water in the Region from the University of Yaounde I, Central library, *Cercle Histoire Geographie et archeologie* Library and we were able to identify other important sources in the form of articles. Unpublished sources include theses, dissertations, memoires, long essays, seminar papers, projects and memorandum of meetings and conferences.

This was further reinforced by a number of oral information collected through a wide range of interviews based on the issue of water conflicts, in areas where the historical facts were controversial and doubtful in nature. The different interviews were conducted with particular attention focused on ages, from 30 upwards, social status and professions of the informants such as community workers, business owners and farmers. Basic questions were designed based on water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. To maintain a balance, both men and women were interviewed, with special attention given to land owners, landless persons, laborers, farmers, grazers, land officials, civil society, water management teams and representatives of NGOs.

Though we attempted to maintain a balance in the informant age, sex and position ratio, a good number of our informants were identified and interviewed in the town of Bamenda. Others were interviewed in neighbouring towns such as Yaounde and Buea. Our interview approach was qualitative with keen attention paid on in-depth interviews. We introduced broad themes to guide the informants and proceeded by constant probing for emphasis and clarification. Some of our informants were even approached twice.

In the write-up, we adopted a blend of the thematic and chronological approaches. While the former performed the main function of describing themes and aspects of water conflicts with regards to its evolution, the latter situated the issues on discourse according to historical time frame. The framework employed embodied the narrative, explanatory and descriptive approaches. We made an attempt to assure that each of these approaches employed, suited the theme or themes developed. In certain sections, the approaches were used interchangeably with the overall aim of assuring clarity in our expressions in the interpretation of our evidences.

The sources exploited have been variedly acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliographical references. Where the explanation or description of some issues warranted a detailed understanding but were seen to be capable of disturbing the consistent comprehension of our prose construction, we tried as much as possible, to provide explanatory footnotes. We have throughout the construction phase, a varied use of direct quotations with the hope of sustaining our arguments with empirical evidences. This notwithstanding, in the course of our research and construction, we encountered a number of problems.

XI. Problems Encountered

Researching on a topic like water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon was not an easy task. In the course of researching and writing of this thesis, the researcher encountered a series of difficulties. First and foremost, field investigation on this study was carried out at a period when most potential informants had been displaced from their homes and localities of residence because of the socio-political violent situation existent in the North West Region. Despite braving the insecurity challenges and travelling to some areas in the Region, the few informants found were too old or too young to provide us with the necessary information. To overcome this challenge, the researcher had to use other means to get into contact with some

informants who had fled violence from their villages and resident in towns. As such we travelled to Yaounde, Douala and also made use of google forms to get to our informants.

Some informants approached for information were very hostile. They refused answering the questions posed to them, reason being that it will be used to make money. We were driven away immediately we approached them for information. They refused totally to be interviewed and this retarded our work in the field, but some informants gave us their time which enabled us to continue with our work successfully.

More so, we faced difficulty getting valuable information from most of the archives visited. Most of these documentary centers lacked organizational skills and the nature of the preservation of precious historical data were half ruined and covered with dust. Worst still, some precious pages of available documents were slashed off by some ill-intentioned persons. In addition to this, some of the archives were destroyed by the ongoing war in the Region.

Finally, another problem faced by the researcher on the field was that of the sensible nature of the research topic as issue link to water conflicts. All of these greatly slowed the work. However, thanks to our determination, the researcher got all the information contained in this study.

Finally, after having examined the problems encountered, we shall bring out the different chapters of our work.

XII. Organization of the Work

This work has six chapters. It starts with a general introduction and ends with a general conclusion. The general introduction handles the research protocol including the review of general and specific literature and conceptual and theoretical considerations.

Chapter one presents the background to the study. It examines the Geographical setting of the Bamenda Grassfields, its Historical background, socio-political organization in relation to water conflicts. More so, the chapter focuses on the advent and settlement of the Fulani into the Bamenda Grassfields, which has been a cause of conflicts over water in the study area.

Chapter two presents the history of water Governance in Cameroon. Firstly, it looks at the footprints of the colonialists taking into consideration the German development period, British role in water development in the Bamenda Grassfields and community development under the

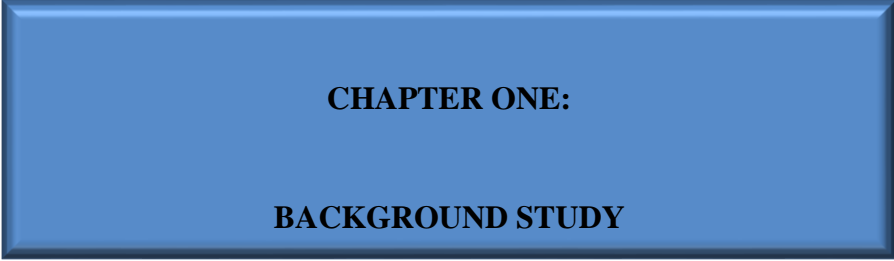
West Cameroon government. It also examines customary laws guiding water in the past and present, water management frameworks in Cameroon and water management structures.

Chapter three examines the reasons for water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. It took into consideration the economic, social, cultural and political factors such as, rapid population growth, unplanned rapid urbanization, industrialization, pollution and agricultural policies, poor management, unequal distribution of water sources, cultural and traditional practices. Thus, the main objective in this chapter is to bring out the root causes of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields

Chapter four focuses on some case studies of water conflicts that have occurred in our area of study, from the earliest to the latest. These include the Babanki-Tungoh/Bambili Conflict from 1950 to 1998, Bali/SNEC from 1968 to 1998, and Kumbo Water Authority crisis from 1965-1994. This part of our work proves the fact that water conflicts has been and continuous to be a major preoccupation in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon.

Chapter five discusses the strategies that have been put in place by traditional authorities, NGOs and religious bodies in the management of conflicts related to water in the Bamenda Grassfields. This part of our work goes to reiterates on the fact that just as no single solution will eliminate water insecurity, a wide variety of solutions has been put in place by the above stake holders to curb the issue of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Finally, chapter six throws light on the challenges faced in resolving water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon and the way forward. To better understand this chapter, it has been divided into two parts, starting with the first part which examines the challenges to water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. The second part examines the way forward. We proposed various solutions to help curb this phenomenon such as the raising of awareness, promoting good governance, encouraging decentralization, improving land tenure systems, research and development, public participation and access to justice.



CHAPTER ONE:
BACKGROUND STUDY

The Grassfields Region of Cameroon is quite a large area both in size and population and it is endowed with many Geographical features such as mountains, rivers, valleys, waterfalls, lakes and Grasslands. This chapter explores the geography of the region, in relation to the present study. It also brings out the origin, movement and settlement of the ethnic groups that make up the region and how their presence has aggravated the issue of water conflicts. The chapter further reviews the socio-political organization of the Bamenda Grassfields during the colonial and post-colonial period taking into cognizance the research topic.

A. Geographical Setting of the Bamenda Grassfields

The Bamenda Grassfields cover the entire present-day North-West Region of the Republic of Cameroon, situated between latitude 5⁰40' and 7⁰ North and longitude 90⁰45' and 11⁰10' east.¹ The region is almost quadrilaterally shaped. This sociopolitical entity covers 17.910km of the Western portion of the Grasslands of Cameroon. It is bounded to the West and North by the Gongola state of Nigeria, to the North East and East by the Adamawa and Bamoum regions respectively, and to the South West and South by the Manyu Division. It extends East wards to the Noun Valley and the Highlands of Bamboutous, North waterly along the Nigerian border and Southwest along the Northern fringes of the Tropical Rain Forest of Manyu Division.² Authors studying this Region have given it a variety of names. Che Mfombong calls it the Bamenda Division, Chilver and Kaberry sometimes refer to it as the Bamenda Grassfields, Sankie Maimolabels the Region the Bamenda Grasslands, while Nkwi and Warnier call it the Western

¹J.A. Ngwa, *A new Geography of Cameroon*, London, Longman, 1978, pp.9-15.

² P. Nchoji Nkwi and J.P. Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, Yaounde, SOPECAM,1982, pp.30-65.

Grassfields.³ The label Bamenda Grassfields shall be made when reference is made to the Region before 1949. In 1949, the Bamenda Division was raised to the status of a province.⁴

The Region is divided into 7 Divisions with 32 Sub Divisions. The Region as far back as the 19th Century was already considered to be densely populated, to go by West African standards.⁵ In 1890, it had an estimated population of 214000 inhabitants which more than doubled in 1953 when it hit a mark of 429038 inhabitants.⁶ Concerning Post-independent population statistics, the Region in 1976 had a population of 980,581 inhabitants. In 1987 and 1995, it was estimated at 1,237,348 and 1,573,910 respectively. The large population accounts for the frequent occurrence of water conflicts in the region as the water sources are becoming insufficient to satisfy the ever growing population.⁷

Bamenda is a highland region consisting of a Plateau which stretches about one hundred miles and varies in breadth between 10 and 40 miles.⁸ The dominant physical structure of the region is the Western Plateau that extends almost horizontally across the Western Grasslands, forming splendid natural divisional and regional boundaries. The average plateau level is approximately 500 feet and from it emerges mountain ranges reaching an altitude of more than 7000 feet.⁹ The Oku Massif for example towers 10000 feet. There are fondoms and chiefdoms found within this region that natural and regional barrier did not stop them from linking with each other through diplomatic marriages. The landforms or relief features of the North West Region are divided into two categories. There are major landforms and minor ones.¹⁰ The major relief features cover extremely large and extensive portions of the region, while the minor features are smaller than the major ones and are found on the major landforms.

³ W. Che-Mfombon, "Bamenda Division under British Administration 1916-1961: From Native Administration to local Government", M.A. Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 1980, pp.45-60.

⁴ E. Mbah, *Environment and identity politics in colonial Africa: Fulani migration and land conflicts*, UK, Taylor & Francis, 2016, pp.21-78.

⁵ Interview with Nacsius Ntutin Kudzebam, 55, Teacher, Kumbo, 15/08/2020.

⁶ J.P Warnier, "Pre-colonial Mankon. The Development of Cameroon Chiefdom in Regional Settings", PhD/Thesis in History, University of Pennsylvania, 1975, pp.65-112.

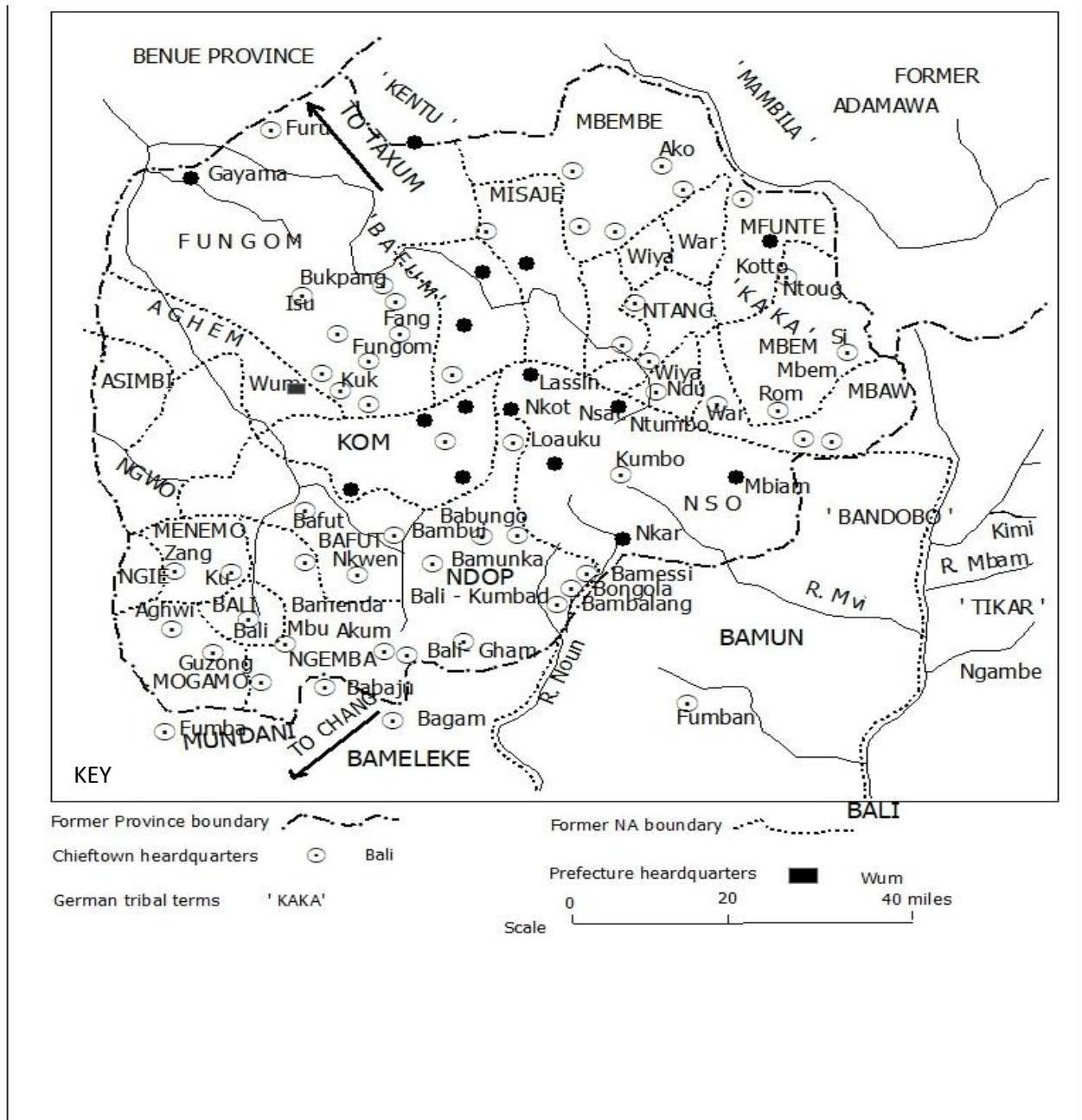
⁷ Interview with Augustine Wara, Teacher, 56, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

⁸ For a detailed study of the Geography of Bamenda, see J.A Ngwa, *A new geography of Cameroon*, London, Longman, 1978, pp.110-116.

⁹ S. Nchangvi Kangang, *21st century applied physical Geography and mapwork for forms 3, 4 and 5*, Yaounde, GRASSROOTS PUBLISHERS, 2018, pp.25-89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.26.

2. Sketch Map of the Bamenda Grassfields Showing the Different Areas



Source: Adapted from E.M. Chilver and P.M. Kabbery., *Traditional Bamenda*, p.112.

The most important major relief in the Bamenda Grassfields is the Mountain Chain, covering the whole of the North West, West and parts of the South West and Littoral Regions.¹¹ Some of these mountains include Mount Lefo 2550m, Fungom 1.804m, and Oku 3011m above sea level. Mount Oku is second to Mount Fako 4095m in terms of height in the whole country.¹²

The region is also having major plains at low altitudes below 400m. These plains have almost flat or gentle undulating sloping surfaces. The major plain of this Region is the Ndop plain. Others include the Mbaw plains in Ngoketunja and Donga Mantung Divisions respectively. There is also the caldera like Wum plain. There also exist the Yemgeh Valleys in Menchum Division.¹³ Relief features like basins are as well present. The Region contains a few fairly extensive depressional Basins such as those of Ndop and Mbaw and the erosional Basin of the Middle Menchum. The Bamenda Grassfields is also made up of Minor relief features such as Lakes, Hills, Slopes, Streams and River Valleys. The region is dominated by Hills, covered by Grassland vegetation giving the appellation “Grassfields” right back to the German times.¹⁴ The beautify relief features of the region with its vast grasslands and many water sources has been an attracting factor to the Fulani, who migrated into the area to benefit from these.

The rocks are Basalt, trachyte and allied types. Because of this, the Bamenda Region is well drained. Streams from the Highlands flow West wards and drain into the Cross Rivers and Katsina Ala through deep valleys and sink to 2000feats above sea level before passing out of the area.¹⁵ To the East, flow tributaries of the Donga and Noun Rivers which join the River systems of the former French Cameroons. The entire Region consists of hills broken by valleys of varying breath with numerous streams and lakes. The main Rivers are the Donga, Bui, Momo, Mezam, Menchum, Katsina and Kimbi from which most of the Divisions derived their names. These water sources serves the population of the Bamenda Grassfields. Most of the Rivers flow

¹¹ M. Nwana, S. Amawa, B. Ban, *Elements of Physical Geography for Junior Secondary School (form one)*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 2005, pp.34-64.

¹²A. Suh Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, Bamenda, Neba Publishers, 1987, pp.166-173.

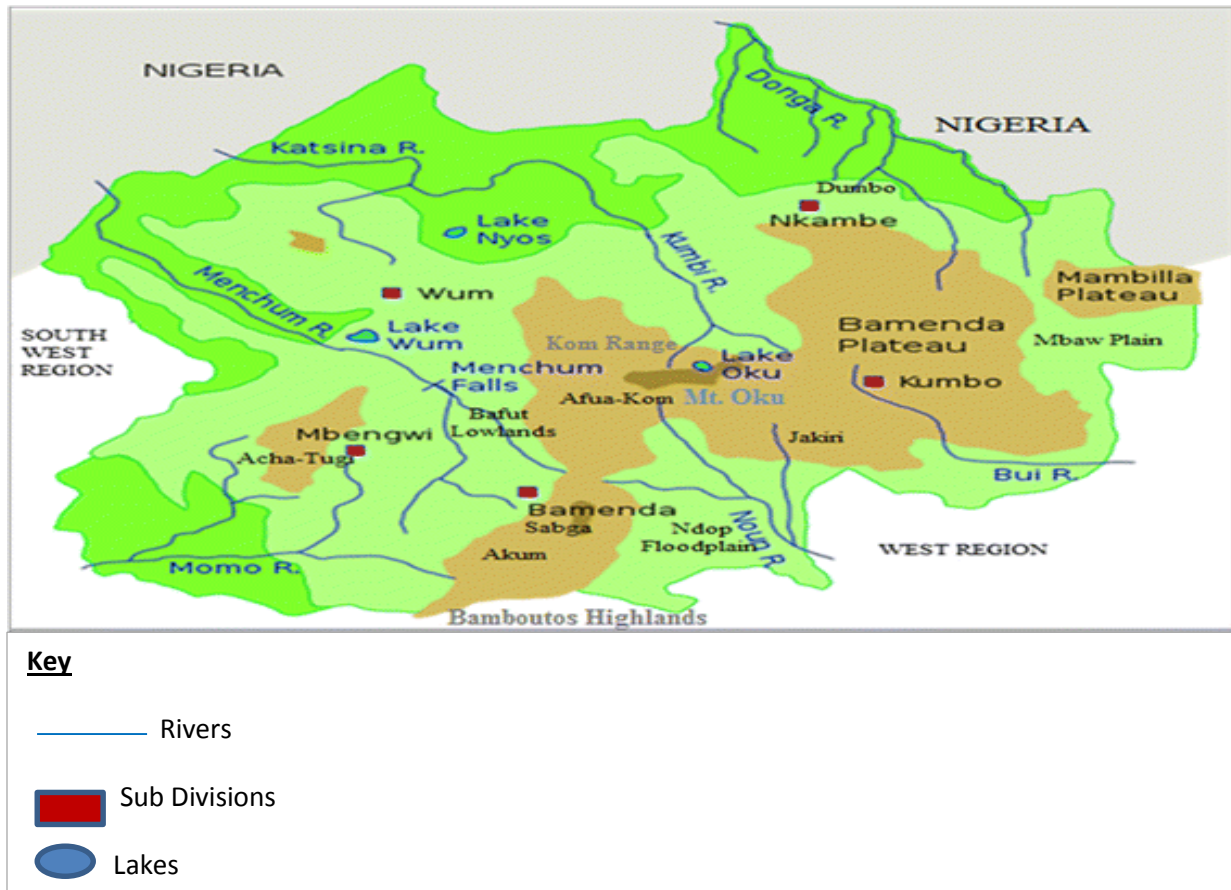
¹³*Ibid*, pp.176-185.

¹⁴P. Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A study of inter chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Yaounde, Department of Sociology, University of Yaounde, 1986, pp.11-26.

¹⁵ A. Ndujji Ndamnsah, *The Millenium wind of success in Geography, Hydrology in Focus*, Bamenda, Baron Computers, 2004, pp.35-56.

west to join the Menchum which flows into Katsina and then to Nigeria, while Momo flows into the tributaries of the Cross River in Manyu Division.¹⁶ However the Rivers are not navigable within the Region, due to the numerous rocks, rapids and waterfalls.

3. Rivers and Divisions of the Bamenda Grassfields



Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?>

Among the major lakes are Lake Oku, Wum, Nyos, Bambili, Benakuma, Kuk and Awing, all of which are crater lakes, formed as a result of volcanic activities centuries ago.¹⁷ The Bamenda Grassfields is a region with many water sources such as lakes, rivers, waterfalls and streams. The arrival of the Fulani into the area with their cattle in 1916 led to pollution of water and

¹⁶*Ibid*, pp57-70.

¹⁷ P. Daigar, "Socio-economic History of the Fulbe (Mbororo) in Mezam Division in the Twentieth century", M.A Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2004, pp.37-67.

subsequently water conflicts. The Fulani grazers brought their cattle into water sources and consequently, cow dung and urine contaminate water thus, the population had to look for alternative means to survive.¹⁸ Also, some of these water sources led to boundary conflicts over ownership. This is the case between Bali Nyonga and the Bawock over the *ntsi-su'fu* stream. The Bawock people refused to allow the Bali to continue performing their annual Lela festival rites at the stream which flowed in between Bali Nyonga and Bawock.¹⁹

The climate of the region is also very important. The Bamenda Grassfields has a humid Tropical climate. It falls within the Equatorial climate zone which is distinguished by two seasons, the dry season which starts in November and ends in March and the rainy season which begins in March and ends in October.²⁰ The rainfall is generally high, with the annual rainfall averaging 2000 millimeters. It is characterized by heavy down pour with major rivers overflowing their banks and causing floods. Even though during this period there is plenty of water, there is also increase in pollution of water sources. The rainy season corresponds to the period of intense farming activities.²¹ During the dry season, low precipitation is experienced of below 10mm at times. It is characterized by extreme dryness and dust laden winds which cause environmental health hazards such as all types of influenzas which include pneumonia, meningitis and most recently cholera.²² Furthermore inhabitants of the Grassfields travel over long distances to get water as the sun dries up water sources. Farming activities usually reduce during this period leading to low output hence, the scarcity in agricultural products.

Given the altitude and the general prevailing climatic conditions, the vegetation of the Bamenda Grassfields can be classified under the Guinea Savannah and it lies immediately adjacent to the Equatorial rain forest.²³ Depressions and low-lying areas produce high temperatures while low temperatures are experienced in the altitudes. This situation produces an average temperature of

¹⁸Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60, Teacher, Bamunka Ndop, 06/08/2020.

¹⁹Interview with Peter Tiydze Fokum, 75, Retired C.S, Bali Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

²⁰ M. Gwanfogbe, A. Meligui, J. Moukam, J. Nguoghui, *Geography of Cameroon*, Hong Kong, Macmillan Education, 1983, pp.8-26.

²¹ Interview with Gabriel Fomonyuy, 45years, Farmer, Kikaikelaki, 08/07/2020

²²Interview with Spellian Mboulav Nsoyuni, 58years, Nursing, Mbve, 13/08/2020.

²³R.Y Mbida, "A study of Inter-Group Relations in the 19th century", Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1999, pp.166-178.

28⁰c in the dry season and 15⁰c in the rainy season.²⁴ Wind and rainfall are the most discriminating ingredients of climate in the region. The duration, intensity and distribution of rainfall is largely determined by the regular North-South pulsation during the year of the junction between the dry continental air mass, the North-East trade winds and the warm moisture laden maritime air mass, the South-West trade winds.²⁵ The convergence zone of the winds is usually marked by conventional rain. From this, it is obvious that the humid Tropical climate in the region influences the nature of vegetation in the region²⁶. The Bamenda Grassfields has a climate which is suitable for cattle rearing. The climate makes trypanosomiasis infection practically non-existence and very easy to eliminate.²⁷ The climate sustains pasture on the highlands for 8 months and green grass for cattle can still be found in the lowlands. The dominant vegetation of the Bamenda Grassfields is grass and the chief specie being *sporobolus pyramidalis*.²⁸ During the rainy season, the area is covered with green grass ranging in height from one to four meters, but during the dry season, it withers and turns brown forcing the Fulani to move with their cattle to the low land areas where green grass still prevails.²⁹ The constant movement of the Fulani has led to conflicts. Furthermore, the long rainy season has been a contributing factor to the many sources of water conflict in the region.

The vegetation of the region cannot be left out. It has been an attracting factor to the Fulani graziers who migrated into the area in 1916.³⁰ It is more variable but mostly of the Savanna type characterized by tall grasses, short trees and shrubs. Occasionally, forests occur towards the Southern part of the region.³¹ The forest are clustered densely in sheltered upland valleys, shrewn along the banks of streams and lakes, palm groves in some mountain regions, cultivated raphia palm groves in marshy valleys, eucalyptus forest grown for fuel, fences, as wind breaks, and oil

²⁴Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, pp.34-35.

²⁵ Kangang, *21st century applied physical Geography*, pp.54-56.

²⁶E. Gwan Achu, "Types, processes and policy implications of the various migrations in Western Cameroon", PhD Dissertation in Geography, University of Carlifornia, 1975, pp.41-45.

²⁷ National Archive Bamenda (NAB), Ab 17(4) file 10068, vol.iii, "Grazing of Cattle, Cameroon Province", 1949.

²⁸D. Waugh, *Geography: An integrated approach*, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1995, pp.44-64.

²⁹ The Bamenda Grassfields unlike the Sahel has a short dry season and a long rainy season. Drought which is harmful to cattle rearing is a typical feature of the Sahel region but it is uncommon in the Bamenda Grassfields.

³⁰Interview with Joseph Fai Chila, 55, Teacher, Misaje, 01/08/2020.

³¹Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, pp.227-232.

palm forest as in Mbo, Ngie, Ndop plains.³² Meanwhile, the grasses which constitute the prevalent vegetation are tallest and most luxurious in the transitional zone with the forest belt where they are intermingled with scattered forest trees. The grasses as well as the scattered trees become progressively shorter away from the forest often patchy and stunted, while the grassy landscape serves as habitat for squirrels, monkeys, snakes, toads and rats, animals like chimpanzees, buffalos, antelopes, leopards and numerous birds are found in the forest.³³

Furthermore, the soil types have also contributed to land tenure and land conflicts. Sometimes, farmers are forced to cultivate their crops around water catchments which pollute them. The distribution of soils in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon is greatly influenced by climate, vegetation, rock type and the flow of rivers.³⁴ Three types of soils dominate in the region which includes volcanic soils, alluvial soils and ferralitic soils.³⁵ Volcanic soil is found on recent volcanic rocks in parts of the Oku Mountain region, Buwum in Bafut and Wum-Befang region in Menchum Division.³⁶ The soils are dark in colour, rather thin in depth but very fertile for agriculture. Traces of alluvial soil are found in flood plains and lowlands where rivers have been depositing materials eroded from highlands. Alluvial soils are found on the flood plain of Menchum valley and the plains of Upper Noun River known as the Ndop plains. The Northern and Western parts of the region have essentially ferralitic soils. These soils are red and brown in colour. They are not quite fertile for agriculture because the nutrients are easily removed by the process of leaching due to constant rainfall.³⁷ The soils are found in Bamessing, Kom, Nso, Sabga and contain a lot of clay.

The traditional economy of the Bamenda Grassfields is based on subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry and craftsmanship.³⁸ There is division of labour along lines of sex. Men are responsible for building houses, hunting, tapping wine and sometimes clearing farmlands.

³²*Ibid*, pp.234-245.

³³H.G Ngwochu, "Chamba warfare in the Western Grassfields, 1891-1998", Post Graduate Diploma in History, University of Yaounde I, 2007, pp.37-46.

³⁴ Kaqngang, *21st century applied physical Geography*, pp.56-74.

³⁵M.Mwana and S. Amawa, *Elements of Physical Geography for Junior Secondary Schools (form one)*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 2005, pp.65-69.

³⁶Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45years, Teaching, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

³⁷ Z. Fogwe Nji, *Macmillan School Atlas of Cameroon*, Cameroon, Macmillan Publishers ltd., 2005, pp.32-49.

³⁸ N.A.B, Ab 17 (14) File 10068, vol. III, 1949.

Women are generally engaged in the cultivation of crops.³⁹ The soil is very fertile and supports the production of food crops such as corn, beans, potatoes, guinea corn, root crops and vegetables, sweet potatoes and cocoyams which have been early introduced, while cassava, yams, potatoes and cocoyams and white beans were introduced in 1889 by Zintgraff.⁴⁰ Edible melon seeds were also highly valued. Palm oil is produced and well preserved in calabashes or finely made bark containers to enable transportation over long distances like from the lower valley of western Bamum to Nsaw, from Mbembe and Mfunte to Nkambe and Nsaw and from Western Fungom to Kom and Bum. Kola trees and raffia palms from which white wine as well as building and basketry materials are derived are the important tree crops controlled by men.⁴¹

Animal rearing is carried out on a small scale by the indigenous peoples. Goats, sheep and fowls among others are kept. Zintgraff reported sheep rearing to be the specialty of the people of South Eastern Moghamo, who still keep pigs in significant numbers.⁴² The traditional Bamenda Grassfields specie of cattle is the dwarf short-horn cattle. They used to be kept in large numbers and they were mostly royal herds that were kept under the supervision of retainers and slaughtered on important occasions. The first mention of dwarf cattle was made by Zintgraff in Bafut. Passarage in the *DeutschesKolonialLexikon* (1920) describing the German period in Kamerun specified that the humped and dwarf cattle in Bafut were not like the Adamawa Fulani type.⁴³ In 1902-1903, German officers such as Menzel and Hirtler made tours of the Bamenda region and reported dwarf cattle in Ndop plain and dwarf and humped cattle at Bali Kumbat. However, Sommerfield in his 1913-1914 annual report stated that, “cattle in the Bamenda region were apparently few and by the time the British took over the Cameroons, most of these local herbs had apparently disappeared”.⁴⁴ According to a German officer Hirtler, there was a demand for meat at the German stations. Consequently, there was a slaughter of cattle by chiefs for the Germans to ensure good relations. P.M Kaberry advances other reasons for the scarcity of local

³⁹ Interview with Joseph Tabiy M., 65years, Farmer/Trader, Baging, 05/08/2020.

⁴⁰ E.M Chilver and P.M Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda: The Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*, Buea, Government Printers, 1995, pp.140-160.

⁴¹ Interview with Jackson Mbinkar B., 40years, Teaching, Mbam, 30/07/2020.

⁴² Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda*, pp.140-150

⁴³ NAB Ab 17/10, P.M Kaberry, “Report on farmer-grazer relations and changing pattern of Agriculture in the Nsaw South –Eastern Federation, Bamenda, Southern Cameroons”, pp.5-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp.13-18.

cattle at the time the British took over the Cameroons. It is also probable that during the early period of German infiltration from 1901-1906, cattle were also requisitioned by troops and that latter cattle were given for tax, owing to the initial difficulties in introducing currency... there could had been the ravages of disease.⁴⁵

When the British took over the administration of the Cameroons, there were no Fulani herds in the Bamenda region. It is not until 1916 that a number of Fulani herds, under Ardo Sabga came over from the French side with a large number of cattle.⁴⁶ There is a difference between the dwarf cattle and Fulani cattle which is worth mentioning. Dwarf cattle consume little grass compared to Fulani cattle and they did not constitute a nuisance to farmer's crops unlike Fulani cattle, the reproduction rate of dwarf cattle was low and village heads hardly held more than 30 at any given moment.⁴⁷

This notwithstanding, it can be gathered that the geography of the Bamenda Grassfields has been a contributing factor to the many water conflicts in the area. This has been seen through the increasing population, the climate, vegetation, soil type and agricultural activities which to an extend each has an impact on water, either directly or indirectly. Man needs water daily for drinking and to carry out his daily activities. Also, agriculture has been and is still a very important economic activity in this region, with much water needed to grow crops. Furthermore, the Fulani needed water for their cattle. Thus, competition over water in the Bamenda Grassfields by the indigenous population, farmers and cattle rearers, was the cause of constant conflicts in the region,⁴⁸ with each one of them striving to satisfy their interests, and do not want their activities to be disturbed.

The Geographical milieu described above attracted various ethnic groups into the Bamenda Grassfields. We shall trace the origin, movement and settlement of these ethnic groups.

⁴⁵ NAB Ab 17/10, P.M Kaberry, "Report on farmer-grazer relations", pp.7-14.

⁴⁶ E. Koizah Karh, "Cattle economy in Wum area 1940-2010: A historical Analysis", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, p.45.

⁴⁷ Interview with Ibrahim Amadou Babangida, 31years, Teacher, Yaounde, 08/08/2020.

⁴⁸ E. Sunjo Sevidzem, "Farmer Grazer conflicts in Kumbo Sub Division 1962-2010: A Historical survey", DIPES Dissertation in History, University of Bamenda, 2012, pp.57-100.

B. Migration and Settlement of the Ethnic Groups

In order to better understand the issue of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, it is necessary to trace the origin of the various ethnic groups under study. This will show their various migratory history and final settlement. The Bamenda Grassfields is a conglomerate of many ethnic groups⁴⁹ of diverse origins. Some of these people had occupied the region centuries before colonial occupation. The indigenous population comprised a variety of ethno-linguistic groups occupying the territory equally known today as the North West Region of Cameroon.⁵⁰ According to the Cameroon 1953 National population census, it was declared that the area under study had the highest number of sub- ethnic groups estimated to be more than 51 ethno linguistic groups that had occupied the area at different moments.⁵¹

Based on their traditions of origin, migration, legends and broad linguistic and cultural similarities, the peoples of the Bamenda Grassfields have been divided into five ethnic groups, the Tikar who constitute the largest ethnic group of the Region, the Widekum who occupy the South Western Area, the Mambia in the North Eastern area, the Chamba, who are in Mezam and Ngoketunjia and the Tiv in Aghem and Menchum.⁵² There are other smaller groups like the Fulani made up of Jafun and the Akos initially pastoralists, but who today have engaged in farming like the case of those residing in Wum.⁵³ The same goes for the Hausa, who initially were cola nuts traders, but today are engaged in different kinds of trading and other forms of activities.⁵⁴ Since the rest of the smaller groups adopted similar customs of dominant groups, only the representative or dominant groups were therefore considered.

The most numerous of these ethnic groups are the Tikars. The traditions of origin and migration of the various Tikar groups hold that they came from Tibati, Banyo, Ndobbo and Kimi all in the

⁴⁹ An ethnic group is a community or population made up of people who share a common cultural background or descent. It is a category of people who identify with each other, usually on the basis of presumed similarities such as common language, ancestry, history, society, culture and nation.

⁵⁰ Interview with Rev. George Anjoambum, 51years, Clergy, Momo, 07/08/2020.

⁵¹ G. Choe Ngwa, "Inter –chiefdom conflicts in the North West Province of Cameroon", Masters Dissertation in Social sciences, Catholic University of Central Africa, 2003, pp.38-100.

⁵² Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.15-36.

⁵³ Interview with Ernest Ndishey, 50years, Teaching, Ntudip-Ndu, 03/08/2020.

⁵⁴ T. Ngome Sone-Ngole, "The Fulani of mount Muanenguba, Bangem Sub Division, Kupe Muanenguba Sub Division, 1920-2000", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2011, pp.56-86.

Northern and Western parts of the former French Cameroon.⁵⁵ To Che-Mfombong, recorded material on their earlier migrations is limited though Hawkesworth states that, the Tikar under a chief called Mbum migrated from Bornu in North Eastern Nigeria, probably around the early part of the 19th century to Ngoundere in former French Cameroon.⁵⁶ See table 1

1: Major Ethnic groups and Associated Polities in the Bamenda Grassfields

Ethnic Group	Chiefdoms
Tikar	Nso, Kom, Oku, Mbiame, Wiya, Tang, Bum, Bafut, Mbaw, Fungom, Mmem, Bamunka, Babungo, Bamessi, Bamessing, Bambalang, Bamali, Baba, Bafanji, Bangolan, Big Babanki, BabankiTungo etc
Widikum	Essimbi, Beba-Befang (Ngemba), Mankon, Ngemba, Ngie, Ngwo, Moghamo, Meta
Chamba	Bali Nyonga, Bali-Kumbat, Bali-Gangsin, Bali-Gashu, bali-Gham
TIV	Aghem Federation
Mambia	Mbembe, Mesaje, Mfunte chiefdoms
Hausa	Hausa
Fulani	Jafun, Akos

Source: Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, p.15.

Note: The table presents the major ethnic groups of the Bamenda grassfields and composition in each case. It shows the Tikar as being the largest, followed by Widikum, Chamba, TIV, and Mambila. The composition of the different ethnic groups equally shows numerous patrilineal groups.

Each of the Fondoms had its own language. Considering the many ethnic groups and numerous human groups (Fondoms) in the Bamenda Grassfields, one could talk of the existence of a multiplicity of languages in the area.⁵⁷ See table 2

⁵⁵ Interview with Chin Aloysius, 102years, Farmer/Tapper, Tobin, 23/07/2020.

⁵⁶ W. Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda division under British administration 1916-1961: From native Administration to local Government", MA Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1980, pp.10-12.

⁵⁷ Interview with Killian Nsaikimo, 56years, Teaching, Tobin, 29/07/2020.

2: Some indigenous languages (Dialects) of the Bamenda Grassfields

Group (ethnic unit)	Language (Dialect)	Ethnic group
Nso	Lamnso	Tikar
Wimbum	Limbum	Tikar
Mankon	Bande	Widikum
Bafut	Bufe	Ttikar
Bambui	Mbele	Tikar
Bamunka	Mukaa	Tikar
Bali	Mumbako	Chamba
Babungo	Ngggu	Tikar
Oku	Eblamebkuo	tikar

Source: Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda*.

Note: The table shows some of the indigenous ethnic groups and their languages spoken in the Bamenda Grassfields. It equally shows the ethnic group to which each unit belongs. This representation shows only a few of the languages.

Tikar traditions further state that, their separation from the Mbum occurred many generations ago at a place situated between Ngoundere and Tibati. From there, they settled in the vast plains of the Mbam and its tributaries, the Mape and the Kimi.⁵⁸ Here, they were joined by Kimi, son of Shehu of Bornu who founded a new royal line. More than 300 years ago, increasing pressure from the Chamba groups provoked splitting of the Tikars into small bands. These bands founded dynasties in the Bamenda Grassfields, each under a leader.⁵⁹

The Tikar who claim Ndobbo origin, were among the first of present time inhabitants to settle in the Bamenda Grassfields.⁶⁰ This group settled to the south of the Bamenda station in the Ndop plain. Here, small politically autonomous chiefdoms were founded. Although the sequence of their migrations to the Ndop plain is obscure, it would appear that they arrived in the area in two

⁵⁸ E. Mahammadou, *Traditions d'origines de peuples du centre et de l'ouest du Cameroun*, Yaoundé, ORSTOM, 1971, pp.73-110.

⁵⁹ Interview with Esau Akoko, 44 years, Teaching, Njikwa, 07/08/2020.

⁶⁰ Interview with Denis Che Nebah, 51 years, Teaching, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

successive waves.⁶¹ The first founded the dynasties of Bafanji, Bamessing, Babessi and Bamali. The latter dynasty gave birth to those of Bambalang, Bamunka and Bamum kumbit. The second group of Tikar immigrants from Ndobu founded Baba1, Babungo and Bangoland.⁶² Some of these villages could dominate the others and their relations were characterized by conflicts over land and slave raids. The only force which threatened the independence of these Ndop chiefdoms was a band of Chamba, which founded the village of Bali-Kumbat meaning Bali in the hills. From here they started attacking the Ndop Chiefdoms and forcing some like Baba 1, Bafanji and Bambalang at times to pay tribute in the form of Leopard skins.⁶³

Other centres of early Tikar migration include the Mbo', Mbem and Mbum (nicknamed Nsungli) in the North East of the Bamenda Grassfields.⁶⁴ This group settled below the escarpment in the area formerly known as Ntem. At a later date, three main groups whose descendants were to form the Tang, Wiya and war groups of Nsungli, moved up to the Plateau and established a number of small chiefdoms, in which each of the village head claimed the title of Fon and supremacy over the others, thereby asserting his supremacy.⁶⁵ From Mbat, the most senior of the war group split off and journeyed south into Nso where some remained to form the villages of Nkor and Djottin and their offshoots Dom, Din, Mbinon and Lassin. The centralized kingdom of Bum was also founded by the main body of these migrants.⁶⁶

Bafut, Nso, Kom and Fungom seem to have been the last of the major tikar migrations into the Bamenda Grassfields. Both McCulloch and Eldridge Mohammadou state that the people of Bafut traditionally considered the oldest and most senior dynasty of the area were the first to leave Ndobu among these groups.⁶⁷ The Bafut group comprised seven chiefdoms which were politically autonomous before German occupation. These included: Bafut, Bambui, Bambili and

⁶¹Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60years, Teacher, Bamunka Ndop, 06/08/2020.

⁶² E. Yenkong Sobseh, "land tenure and conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon 1974-2008: A Historical Analysis", PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2011, pp.41-27.

⁶³ Interview with Yiyen Shang Ivo, 67years, Retired School Teacher, Nso, 06/08/2020.

⁶⁴ P.N. Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy. A Study of Inter-chiefdom relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Yaounde, Publication of the Department of Sociology, 1987, pp.67-80.

⁶⁵*Ibid*, pp.83-98.

⁶⁶ P.M Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields. A study of the economic position of Women in Bamenda, British Cameroon*, London, Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2006, pp.45-67.

⁶⁷Mohammadou, *Traditions d'origines*, pp.74-101.

its offshoot, Babanki-tungoMendankwe and Nkwen.⁶⁸ The second migrants, the Baminyam, who arrived Bamenda, founded the Bambui and Mendankwe chiefdoms. No defensive alliances were formed by these Chiefdoms against the Bali and the Kom, their enemies in the region.⁶⁹ In the central part of the Bamenda Grassfields were the ancestors of the matrilineal dynasty of Kom who traced their migrant route from Ndobbo or Upper Mbam River through Babessi, Nkar, Oku and finally to their present site.⁷⁰

Kom is the second largest chiefdom of the Bamenda Grassfields and it is curious that their first place of settlement in Kom was Ajung which had patrilineal succession and an Ekwu dynasty. While most of the Kom sub chiefdom migrated from nearby Fungom and Oku, the royal clans of Kom were of Tikar origin.⁷¹ Besides, the Kom dynasty owes its formation to three immigrant clans of Ekwu, Achaf and Itinala'a.⁷²

The Nso Fondom is apparently the largest and most powerful of all the Tikar Fondoms in the Bamenda Grassfields. Oral tradition holds that the founders of Nso left Tikar District and moved to Rifem in the North West Region.⁷³ This was as a result of the struggle for the throne by Mbem, Mvem and Nso. Mbem being the first and the strongest succeeded. Then each with his band of supporters went on self-exile following the ascension to the throne of Mbem.⁷⁴ It was even said that before they left, they fled for safety with some stolen royal ornaments of Kingship.⁷⁵ Nso was founded in the 18th century when they moved from Kov-vifem where they had been for many centuries after their emigration from Rifem under the leadership of Ngonso.⁷⁶

⁶⁸Interview with Rev. Moses Nchotu Shu, 52years, Pastor, Bafut, 20/08/2020.

⁶⁹Interview with Emmanuel Fai Kisha, 57years, Pastor, Ndu, 05/08/2020.

⁷⁰Nkwi, *Traditional Bamenda*, pp.24-45.

⁷¹E.M Chilver and P.M Kaberry, *Notes on the Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields: Prefectures of Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe*, Buea, Government Printers, 1966, pp.36-37.

⁷² Interview with Peter Tidze Fofum, 75years, Retired Gerndam Officer, Kumbo, 01/08/2020.

⁷³Interview with Peter Yaah, 50years, Teacher, Kumbo, 05/08/2020.

⁷⁴ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65years, Traditional Authority, Nso, 10/08/2020.

⁷⁵ Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for History of the Western Grassfields*, pp.132-143.

⁷⁶ R.V Mbida, "A study of inter group relations in the 19th centuries", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1999, pp.39-43.

The story goes that Kimi, the *Fon* who ruled Rifem, had many wives. Ngonso', Nchare and Mfoombam were children of Yay, one of Kimi's wives.⁷⁷ Before Kimi died, he had groomed Nchare of Yay to succeed him. But when Kimi died, Nchare was by-passed in favour of his half-brother called Mbwanda. Nchare felt he will be snubbed and mocked, so he decided to leave Rifem. On leaving, he hinted his junior brother as well as Ngonso' his sister who was already married.⁷⁸ Nchare and Mfoombam left unnoticed in the night. Having learnt of this, Ngonso' decided to follow them through a Southwards road, which finally led her to the banks of river Mbam.⁷⁹ The two brothers who arrived first and were resting, on seeing their sister coming with her followers decided to destroy the bridge which they used in crossing the Mbam River.⁸⁰ Shocked by this behavior, Ngonso' vowed not to return. Frustrated, Ngonso took her followers upstream and settled at various sites such as Mbonso', Ndzenso', Kovifem and Tavisia.⁸¹ At Kovifem, Ngonso' and his group met the Visalé people who gave them a warm welcome. Among the visalé, were thirty males, whose main occupation was hunting. Nso eventually became their *Fon*, thereby joining the two people into a nucleus of Nso tribe. It was through a better bargaining power with the thirty males that Ngonso' was made *Fon* (King).⁸²

At Kovifem, they lived a life marked by inter-tribal wars, raids and fights.⁸³ In the late 17th century, the dynasty moved to a temporary site, Tavisia when raiders from Banyo ransacked the capital. After a brief stay at Tavisia, the people of Nso returned to Kovifem.⁸⁴ There were eighteen (18) rulers buried in Kovifem, the reigns of most of who were not up to two years.⁸⁵ Today, one can find almost thirteen (13) grave sites or shelters with eighteen headstones on which sacrifices are made regularly.⁸⁶ From Kovifem, they moved to Tavisia. There, Sango died and was buried. After a brief stay at Tavisia, the new *Fon* was Prince who had been captured and sold to slavery in Nsungli to the North of Nso'. He was rescued by Fai Ndzendzef who was

⁷⁷Interview with Susan Fanfon Yah, 58years, Book-Keeper, Mbiim, 29/07/2020.

⁷⁸Interview with Yefon Ntani, 50years, Teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

⁷⁹ P.N. Mzeka, *Four Fons of Nso*, Bamenda, Spider Press, 1990, pp.18-20.

⁸⁰ Interview with Anthony Kinkoh Bah, 56years, Civil Servant, Nkor-Noni, 29/07/2020.

⁸¹ Interview with Martin Ngala Ndi, 56years, Retired State Agent, Binshua, 03/08/2020.

⁸² Mzeka, *Four Fons*, pp.19-25.

⁸³Interview with Killian Nsai Kimo, 56years, Teacher, Nso, 29/07/2020.

⁸⁴Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.24-27.

⁸⁵Interview with Ezekiel Baijona, 52years, Teacher, Bui, 08/08/2020.

⁸⁶Interview with John Tabah, 60years, Builder, Tourist-Kumbo, 27/07.2020.

rewarded with the title of a great state councilor.⁸⁷ This historical incident was later to alter slightly the structure of Nso. Fai wo Ndzendzef then superseded Fai wo Taakum, Fai wo Ndzendzef, whose original descendants came from Nkambe Plateau, became affiliated to the *fon's* royal lineage through marriage with a princess of Nso'.⁸⁸ Through the marriage, Ndzendzef's successor was ranked *duiy* as the distant descendant of the *Fon*. The Nso two groups fused to form the Nso community and later the son of Ngonso' was made *Fon* while she was still alive. Hence, it was agreed that in future, *Fons* of Nso were going to be of *Mtaar* blood and Nso' proper.⁸⁹

The Mambila were the next group of people though small in numerical terms when compared to the Tikars and Widikums of Bamenda Grassfields.⁹⁰ To Che-Mfombong, the Mambila was Kaberry's classification of the three ethnic groups of Mbembe, Mfunte and Misaje, occupying the low forest regions of the Extreme North and North-Eastern parts of the Bamenda Grassfields.⁹¹ With the exception of the chiefdoms of Bebe-Ketti and BebeJatto, they comprise small patrilineal groups of mixed origin, which settled in the area between the 16th and 17th centuries.⁹² In the same group, the origin of the people of Mesaje is obscure. It is certain that they originated from kentu and were influenced by Tikar culture.⁹³ The early settlers might have come from the Upper Donga and settled in Akwaja. This group was followed by others from Wukari Division, in the Benue Province of Nigeria probably Tigong who crossed the Donga farther to the West and founded the Ako chiefdom of Mdandi, Akonkaw, Andi and Jevi.⁹⁴ Finally, the Mfunte in the same group, namely Lus and Kwaja claim to have originated

⁸⁷ P.N Mzeka, *The core culture of Nso*, Agawam, MA. Paul Radin, 1980, pp.78-93.

⁸⁸ Interview with Gilbert Menyong Sunday, 36years, Civil Servant, Nkambe, 20/07/2020.

⁸⁹ W.V Tangwa, *An Ethymological handbook of some Nso' names (volume one)*, Bamenda, Copy Printing Technology, 1996, pp.20-34.

⁹⁰ Interview Ernest Wirngo Shiytum, 49years, Business Manager at CAMPOST, Meluf, 06/08/2020.

⁹¹ Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division", p.15; Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields*, pp.5-12.

⁹² Interview with Joseph Nsoh Teng, 29years, Prison Warder (GPs), Misaje, 03/08/2020.

⁹³ Interview with Joseph Fai Chila, 55years, Teaching, Mesaje, 01/08/2020.

⁹⁴ National Archive Bamenda (NAB), R. Newton, "An intelligence Report on the Mbembe and Nchanti Areas of the Bamenda Division of the Cameroon Province, 1935, pp.11-17 and 91-97.

from Akwadja in Mbembe to their present site. These Mbembe groups equally have linguistic affinities with the Mbembe speaking people of the Cross Rivers.⁹⁵

The Chamba groups were a loose confederation of raiding bands that evolved into a hierarchically organized mini-state and provoked land conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.⁹⁶ The Bali people were a branch of the Chamba-Leko of Adamawa, who are said to have moved out of Koncha because of Fulani pressure from Yola.⁹⁷ Their oral tradition relate that due to increasing Fulani pressure around 1820, they left the KonchaTigere area under Gawebe's leadership and travelled to Tibati, where they proceeded to make war on the Bamoum and eventually entered Bamenda from Bagam.⁹⁸ Mounted on a few horses and carrying bows and poisoned arrows, they defeated Nkwen, Mankon and Bafut before settling in what was later called Bali-Nyonga, some sixteen kilometers to the West of Bamenda station. Here, Bali conquered a number of Widikum Chiefdoms and made them tributaries. The Bali through their military might have made their influence felt in the Bamenda Grassfields conquering weaker chiefdoms and introducing some of their cultural values which have become the common features of the Grassfields societies.⁹⁹

The Widikum groups were also very important. These groups include the Moghamo, Meta, Ngie, Ngunu, Ngwo, Essimbi, Mankon and Beba-Befang.¹⁰⁰ Their oral traditions indicate that, they came from Mamfe to Widikum- a place off the southern stretches of the Western Grassfields.¹⁰¹ They all claim an origin from an old market site at Ntarenkon in Widikkum, where their ancestors are said to have emerged from the earth.¹⁰² It was from here that they dispersed, climbed the escarpment and settled along the Southern part of Bamenda Grassfields.¹⁰³ In fact, the Ngie and Essimbi seem to represent an earlier wave of settlement. The Ngie acknowledged a common origin with Meta and Moghamo, but claimed that the Widikum split off from Ngie.

⁹⁵Kaberry, *women of the Grassfields*, pp.6-8.

⁹⁶ Interview with Eugene Suilareng kibu, 41years, Teacher, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

⁹⁷Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.28-29; Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division", pp.18-28.

⁹⁸NAB, W.E Hunt, "Assessment report on the Bali clan of the Bamenda Grassfields", 1925, pp.7-17.

⁹⁹Interview with Jonas Kikishiy, 49years, Teacher, Mbiame, 06/08/2020.

¹⁰⁰Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.98-100.

¹⁰¹Interview with Samson Tafu Shei, 60years, Teacher, Ndu, 09/08/2020.

¹⁰²Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45years, Teacher, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

¹⁰³Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.28-33.

The Tiv is one of the most influential ethnic groups in the North West Region of Cameroon, comprising of the Aghem and Menchum. They claim that their ancestors originated from the Benue lands, from Nigeria and that they are Tikars.¹⁰⁴ From here, they came to their present site by way of Esu in the Fungom area before finally reaching Wum. Their arrival forced the original settlers to leave or be integrated into the Aghem Federation. By mid-19th century, the federation had fully developed its military strength, sufficient to harass and subjugate neighboring groups such as Essimbi, Baba-Befang and others. The Fulani raided the federation between 1840 and 1850 and made away with slaves.¹⁰⁵

Finally, to these ethnic groups, must be added the Hausas and Fulani who arrived in the Bamenda Grassfields early in the 20th century. Their presence led to some shortcomings, which substantially complicated the efforts of the traditional authorities and colonial powers to settle them.¹⁰⁶ Hausa traditions in the Bamenda Grassfields relate that the first Hausa arrived in Bamenda, migrated from Kano in Northern Nigeria under Belarabe,¹⁰⁷ by way of Takum, Bango and Fuoumba principally as traders in cattle and other goods. For their part, the Fulani migrated to Bamenda Division in small, but increasing numbers from the French Cameroons in search of better pastures and salt springs for their cattles.¹⁰⁸ According to Fulani traditions in the Bamenda Grassfields, the first group of pastoral Fulani arrived in the region from Banyo in 1916, under Ardo Sabga and settled in Babanki Tungo. ArdoSabga sent words to his fellow Fulanis or Jafen that Bamenda Grassfields was a land of milk and honey.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, the large scale Jafen migration from Northern Cameroon to Bamenda Grassfields started in 1919.¹¹⁰ This provoked other waves of land conflicts that needed to be settled by both the indigenous leaders and colonial mediators, using traditional and colonial mechanisms.

¹⁰⁴Interview with Aloysius Chin, 102years, Farmer/Tapper, Kumbo, 23/08/2020.

¹⁰⁵ M. Njeuma, F. Awasom, *The Fulani and the political economy of the Bamenda Grassfields, 1940-1960*, Leiden, African Studies Centre, 1988, pp.459-463.

¹⁰⁶N. Fru Awasom, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields 1903-1960", Doctorat de 3^e cycle Thesis in History, University of Yaounde, 1984, pp.163-165.

¹⁰⁷Interview with Derrick Ayuni, 32years, Teacher, Yaounde, 09/08/2020.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Ivoline Wirnkar, 33years, Teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

¹⁰⁹ C. Jumbam Tardzenyuy, "The Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields: Social, Cultural, Economic and Political Impact, 1916-2005", DEA Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2007, pp.8-20.

¹¹⁰M. Pelican, "Mbororo claims to regional citizenship and minority status in Northwest-Cameroon", *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol.78, No.4, 2008, pp.542-545.

It is worthy to note here that, as these ethnic groups moved, they searched for areas with good water sources, fertile soils and the security factor was also paramount in choosing a settlement.¹¹¹ The Bamenda Grassfields has been going through difficult times of ethnic diversity and conflicts. Conflicts in the Grassfields began in the 1820s when the disciples of Uthman Dan Fodio, raiding the Adamawa plateau of North Cameroon in an attempt to purify Islam, launched the *Jihad* often known as the Holy War. They forced the Chamba and pagans to migrate south into the Bamenda Grassfields. Ethnic conflicts have become a serious challenge of our time, which perhaps explains why ethnicity is seen as the reigning concept in African studies. Conflicts on ethnic grounds have a tendency to grow and become violent, thus it is no surprise that the Bamenda Grassfields in the North West Region of Cameroon had similar experiences regarding the conflicts among ethnic groups. It is evident that from the study that, ethnic conflicts in the region are as a result of an ever growing population without a corresponding increase in sources of water supply, as well as undefined boundaries.

After studying the migration and settlement of the ethnic groups in the Bamenda Grassfields, it will be important for us to look at how they were socio-politically organized.

C. Socio-political Organization of the Bamenda Grassfields

Pre-colonial African societies differed in size, population and land areas, each with its own political system and government. Traditional authorities played a key role in solving conflicts in their various areas of jurisdiction. Studies of African political systems have classified traditional leadership into two categories; centralized and less centralized political systems.¹¹² Although the main ethnic groups of the Bamenda Grassfields were broadly classified into these two political systems of the centralized and less centralized, the region in general was predominantly controlled by powerful traditional authorities.¹¹³ The less centralized ethnic groups included

¹¹¹Interview with Edwin Visi, 55years, Engineer, Kumbo, 30/07/2020.

¹¹²Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division", pp.21-24.

¹¹³Interview with Esther Shey, 45years, Hostess, Mbankar, 27/07/2020.

those who claimed the Widikum, Mbembe and Aghem origins while the most centralized polities were those claiming Tikar and Chamba origins.¹¹⁴

The less centralized chiefdoms of Meta, Moghamo, Ngie, Ngunu and Ngow of Momo Division, the Bafochu, Banjah of Mezam, the Mbembe lineage of Mesaje, the War, Tang and Wiya of Donga-Mantung Division and those of the Aghem group in Menchum Division have the village as the highest political administrative unit.¹¹⁵ It is composed of a number of families that co-reside with several unrelated lineages. These village lineage settlements were under a village head (Chief) with less domineering powers over the people.¹¹⁶ The village ruling body in Aghem Confederation was composed of a Council of Elders comprising constituent lineage heads who met regularly to decide on village issues.¹¹⁷

The less centralized groups had regulatory societies such as the Kwefo¹¹⁸, but their powers had no great influence like those of Bali, Bafut and NsoFondoms with the most centralized traditional administrations, as such, less centralized societies were often less rigidly wielded together. Many of the small villages of Widikum, Aghem and Mbembe origin with less centralized polities had a less elaborate organization, with the same persons playing different roles. At times, there were more than one chief in a single village. In Momo villages, the chief was the head of the most important lineage and his authority was built on rituals with no strong central authority. The less centralized societies were liable to remain weak and consequently forced to accept the hegemony of those powerful, aggressive and ambitious paramount kingdoms claiming Tikar and Chamba origins surrounding them.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, each of the

¹¹⁴ J. Tazifor Tajoche, *Cameroon history in the 19th and 20th centuries*, Buea, Educational Book centre, 2003, pp.16-36.

¹¹⁵ Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda*, pp.13-37.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.38-41.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Ernest Shinyuy, 48, Nurse/Ultrasound Technician, Nso, 3/08/2020.

¹¹⁸ For a detail information on the names of the secret societies in the Bamenda Grassfields, see P.M Kaberry, "Retainers and Royal Households in Cameroon Grassfields", *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaine*, Vol.111, No.2, Paris, Mouton and Co., 1962, pp.282-298.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Silas Kindzeka, 54, Applicant, Bui, 11/08/2020.

centralized societies of the Bamenda Grassfields, which included Bali-Nyonga, Bafut, Kom and Nso, had a powerful and well established traditional political organization.¹²⁰

In Bali-Nyonga for example, the political system was structured with institutions considered sacred and divine.¹²¹ The *Fon* was at the helm of the whole system where he wielded considerable political administrative powers. Being at the helm of the political, military and cultural institutions, the *Fon* of the most centralized societies exuded omnipotence and omniscience.¹²² As the supreme political figure of the fondom, the *Fon* had the final say in important political questions. The chief or ruler in such a political system was not merely a person but an institution to which was associated a collection of paraphernalia epitomized by concrete representations such as the ancestral or royal stool, the ancestral cup, the royal cap and other traditional regalia. These were all insignia of power and authority.¹²³ Traditional rulers in centralized chiefdoms ruled for life. Upon death of the chief, his powers moved to his son or other close relative who must be of royal blood.¹²⁴ He negotiated corporation agreements with neighbouring chiefdoms as well as arranged the exchange of gifts with them.¹²⁵ Traditional leader are still very influential in mediating conflicts using customary laws. In most cases, the main source of conflict relates to access to land and water resources.

Upon the “passing on” of a *Fon*, power moved to his son or other close relative who must be of royal blood.¹²⁶ Most of the Grassfield societies could be classified as belonging to this category, notably the Nso, Babungo, Bali-Nyonga, Kom, Bafanji and Bafut. Chieftaincy was already a deep-seated institution in these communities long before the advent of colonization. Here, Fonship was not merely a person but an institution to which was associated a collection of paraphernalia, epitomized by concrete representations such as the ancestral or royal stool, the

¹²⁰Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.39-40.

¹²¹H.G Ngwochu, “The Bali Chamba between warfare and perception 1830-2000”, PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2014, pp.35-43.

¹²²Interview with Amos Tume, 38years, Student, Bamenda, 04/08/2020.

¹²³B. Chem-Langëë and G. Fanso Verkijika, *Royal Succession in Nso: Conflict in Modern Perceptions and oral Tradition*, Yaounde, University of Yaounde I, 2003, pp.40-45.

¹²⁴M. Aletum Tabuwe, *Bafut Institutions in Modern Politics*, Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1990, pp.14-28.

¹²⁵Nkwi, *Traditional Bamenda*, pp.41-56.

¹²⁶Jumbam, “The Fulani impact on the Bamenda Grassfields,” pp.29-50.

ancestral cup, the royal cap and other traditional regalia.¹²⁷ These were all insignia of power and authority. Traditional rulers of centralized states ruled for life. This means once a prince has been enthroned as a *Fon*, he could not resign but rule until death.¹²⁸ However, according to grassfields tradition, a *fon* never dies, he is euphemically said to be “missing” or to have “Travelled” which signifies that he is just temporarily absent from public life.¹²⁹ The introduction of democracy in Cameroon in 1990 created conditions for the return of old political actors such as chiefs to the national political scene. The central question was how competent would these chiefs be in national politics, while maintaining their local confidence towards their people? In many case, chiefs claimed they were divine rulers, seeking the good of their people. This dichotomy could be illustrated by the struggle over the community water supply in Bali and Kumbo.¹³⁰

During the period when the *Fon* is “missing” or the “sun is set”, a successor is chosen from among his sons, who should normally be a prince, “Born on a Leopard skin”, an expression which means that he must have been conceived after his father was already crowned *Fon*. When a new *Fon* is enthroned, his father is said to have come back.¹³¹ By virtue of office, the *Fon* was not supposed to be touched, challenged or insulted by his subjects. His sacred nature made it such that he was like a near-deity, revered and obeyed at least publicly. In the event of gross disloyalty, the penalty in some societies was capital punishment or banishment.¹³² The office of the *Fon* was a composite one having many duties, responsibilities and obligations. As head of the traditional government, he was the Chief Executive, Chief Judge, army chief as well as High priest of his polity. Politically, the *Fon* held the highest authority within his polity.¹³³ This gave him the authority to direct, command and to dominate the political life of his society. He also had the responsibility of appointing quarter heads, lineage heads, and sub-chiefs and was the sole

¹²⁷Interview with Anthony Kpunjo Shohfola, 51years, Manager of MUFU BBH, Nso, 01/08/2020.

¹²⁸Interview with Balten Fai Nyuyfoni, 25years, Medical Doctor, Bamenda, 29/08/2020.

¹²⁹Chem-langëë and Fanso, *Royal succession in Nso*, pp.15-20.

¹³⁰ G. Sanguv Ngefor, “Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and Governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands: The case of Bali, Kumbo and Bafou small cities”, PhD Thesis, University of Toulouse”, 2014, pp.256-261.

¹³¹*Ibid*.pp.30-32.

¹³²Interview with Eugene Suilareng Kibu, 41years, Teacher, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

¹³³Interview with Peter Yaah, 50years, Teacher, Nso, 05/08/2020.

dispenser of titles, awards and honours.¹³⁴The influence of individuals in water supply depended on two main reasons. Firstly on their positions occupied in the society, both nationally and locally and secondly, their contribution to the realization of the schemes in these communities, where the political and social organization is characterized by despotic ruling divine chief, surrounded by an elite, stratum of nobles, secret societies, to maintain territorial integrity and the peasant population.¹³⁵ There was therefore that possibility of exercising a centralized control and organization, as was the case in Bali.

As supreme army chief, the *Fon* could declare war and conclude a peace deal after consultation with the war society. As the supreme judge, all justice and verdicts were passed in his name. He served as the court of appeal and adjudicated in matters that needed capital punishment.¹³⁶ As chief-priest, the *Fon* was the spiritual symbol of his people and representative of the ancestors and the gods on earth. He propitiated the spirits of the land by offering sacrifices to the gods and ancestors. The sacrifices he offered and rituals he performed were believed to nourish the people's relations with the Gods and assured continuity.¹³⁷ Owing to his divine functions, the *Fon* was honored with names in Nso such as, *Lum-nyam* (sun or source of light), *NyuyKindzev* (god of waterfall), and so on.¹³⁸ In fact, he had a number of rights, attributes and prerogatives. He was an exalted personality with a mystical office and his person was sacrosanct. He owned all the land in his polity.¹³⁹

By virtue of his office, the *fon* was not supposed to be touched, challenged or insulted. His scared nature made it such that he was like a near deity, revered and obeyed, at least publicly.

¹³⁴ P. Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Government and social change: A study of the Political Institutions among the Kom of Cameroon Grassfields*, Switzerland, University of Fribourg Press, 1976, pp.38-40.

¹³⁵ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.257-260.

¹³⁶ Interview with Mohamadou Gariba Nyaso, 44years, Teacher, Nkambe, 06/08/2020.

¹³⁷ G. Ngwane, *Settling disputes in Africa: Traditional Bases for conflict resolution*, Yaounde, Buma Kor House, 1996, pp.42-49.

¹³⁸ P.N. Mzeka, *The core culture of Nso*, Agawam, MA. Paul Radin, 1980, pp.45-50.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, pp.52-60.

Kaptuéremarksthat, “... *quand le chef ordonne, on execute, quand il commande on obéit, quand il tousse on accourt. On ne le contreditni ne le contrarie jamais.*”¹⁴⁰

In the event of any gross disloyalty, the penalty in some societies was capital punishment or banishment. Amongst the many prerogatives, the *Fon* by tradition was the sole trustee and distributor of all the land in his fondom. He also commanded free labour from his people on his farms, plantations and for the construction of his palace. In addition he received from his people many gifts of tribute and harvest.¹⁴¹ All these put him in a very powerful economic position which indeed made him the wealthiest person in his society. But this was just a principle for as a benevolent and owner of the people and land, he redistributed back the wealth to the many guests that visited the palace.¹⁴²

In view of the functions and prerogatives of the *Fon* indicated above, he could easily be seen as an autocrat. But that was not the case when he executed his military, political, administrative, judicial and religious functions. Various governing bodies, personalities of high moral standing and integrity regulated his powers.¹⁴³ The most powerful of all these were the regulatory societies otherwise referred to as the secret societies. These secret societies were variously called *Kwifor* in Bafut, *Ngwerong* in Nso, *Ntem* in Ndu, *Tifoang* in Babungo, *Nwose* in Bamunka, *Ngumba* in Bali-Nyonga, *No* in Babessi, *Nua* in Bamessing, *Kwifoyn* in Bum and Kom and *Mwarngung* in Papiakum.¹⁴⁴ This governing body was the main custodian of the tradition of the fondom with prerogatives to police the fondom, ensure that the *Fon*'s actions as ruler were in conformity with the customs and traditions of the society. He settled all types of conflicts and ensured that his subjects lived in peace.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ L. Kaptué, “Travail et main d’oeuvre au cameroun sous régime Française 1916-1952 : Approach Historique”, Mémoires de master en Histoire, Université de Yaoundé, 1978, pp.133-135.

¹⁴¹ E.M Chilver and P.M Kaberry, “From Tribute to Tax in a Tikar Chiefdom”, *Africa*, 30:1, 1960, pp.19-21.

¹⁴² Interview with Ernest Wirngo Shiytum, 49years, Business Manager at CAMPOST, Meluf, 06/08/2020.

¹⁴³ K.A. Bamwai, “Influence of community spirit in the process of development of the Nso fondom: A Historical study from 1800-1994”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, pp.52-70.

¹⁴⁴ Kaberry, *Retainers and Royal Households*, pp.182-185.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Mohamadou Nyaso Gariba, 44years, Teacher, Donga Mantung, 06/08/2020.

The assimilated and vassal states in centralized societies existed under the hereditary sub-chiefs called *Atangcho* in Bafut.¹⁴⁶ Such vassals paid annual tribute to the *Fon*. In Bali, this system was further strengthened by the appointment of Tadmanji, who served as the link between the subjected people and the central authority under the *Fon*. Each Tadmanji was actually appointed to take care of a specific number of vassals in the Bali-Nyonga fondom.¹⁴⁷ In addition to the tributes, the subjects of the conquered states supplied labour to the Fon's palace whenever necessary.¹⁴⁸ In view of the dominant influence of the centralized societies in the political, economic and socio-cultural domains of the Bamenda Grassfields, the less centralized societies became less significant in influencing the affairs of the region.¹⁴⁹ They could not therefore withstand the difficult political pressure, military raids and the turbulent atmosphere triggered by the various settling groups in the Bamenda Grassfields especially the Fulani raiders. Thus, they found themselves under the hegemony of the stronger fondoms, either temporarily seeking protection or completely absorbed and assimilated. As a result, the Widikum villages were under the Bali¹⁵⁰, while Bafut expanded her dominion over the Wum people of Menchum valley. Nso dominated all the ethnic groups of the present-day Bui Division.¹⁵¹ It was from this stand point that the Bamenda region was generally described as having powerful traditional political societies. It was the political strength and hegemony of the powerful societies that oriented the colonial authorities in their administration, with regards to the politics of collaboration and resistance in which they confronted in the region.¹⁵²

An examination of the Bamenda Grassfields presented two broad forms of traditional political organizations namely the coercive centralized system and the segmented less centralized system. The possibility of the fondoms headed by the more centralized powerful traditional rulers to

¹⁴⁶ Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division", 1980, pp.36-40.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Jonas Kikishiy, 49years, Teacher, Mbiame, 06/08/2020.

¹⁴⁸ N. Nyamdi, *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon: A Political History*, Paris, Edition Cape, 1988, pp.89-90.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Samson Tafu Shei, 60years, Teacher, Njinkang-Ndu, 09/08/2020.

¹⁵⁰ Bali, Bafut, Kom and Nso emerged as conqueror power states in the Grassfields. There was therefore a high level of competition among them for hegemony; see Nkwi, *Traditional Bamenda*, pp.92-98.

¹⁵¹ G. Fanzo Verkijika and B. Chem-langëé, "Nso' military Organization and warfare in the nineteenth and Twentieth centuries", in *Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn, African Crossroads, intersection between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*, Vol.2, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1996, pp.101-114.

¹⁵² C. Lwanga Ndey Ndifon, "Traditional Authority in Oku from the earliest settlements to 1961", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1992, pp.12-20.

subjugate the less powerful in the less centralized ones in order to increase man power, strength and territorial expansion became very clear. Population was of strategic importance, reason why the Mankon retained refugees even if they committed crimes worth expulsion from their land.¹⁵³ The Bafut on their part tried to attract people, but it had come to a stage where peaceful means were not enough to lure newcomers and the only means was to forcefully expand into neighboring territories. Thus in the second half of the nineteenth century, Bafut and Kom contested over the natural and human resources of the Menchumvalley and went as far as Fongom to get captives and incorporate them into their proper states. As such, at the advent of colonialism, the population of Bafut was estimated at 8.000, the Mankon Confederacy 5000 and Bali-Nyonga proper at 4000.¹⁵⁴

The constant increase in population of the Bamenda Grassfields, without a proportionate increase in water sources has been one of the causes of water conflicts in the Region.¹⁵⁵ The water sources available are not enough to supply the entire population. The powerful traditional and political organization of the Bamenda Grassfields, together with their enormous population, was the determinant factors that influenced conflicts over water in the Region.¹⁵⁶

The centralized chiefdoms had powerful states that were called *Foyn* in Kom, *Mfoin* Bafut, *Mfon* in Bal-Nyonga, *Nfue* in Baba 1 and *Fon* in Nso. He was the head of political, judicial, executive and religious structures of his land. The fon was the incarnation of all traditions and customs of his chiefdoms.¹⁵⁷ He lived in a large palace called *nto*. It provided quarters for his wives and retainers, lodges for ritual and political groups. In former times, some of the *Fon* possessed the powers of life and death over their subjects. In Nso, for instance, he was “Everything but God”¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵³ F.B Nyamnjoh, “Change in the concept of power among the Bum”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1985, pp.70-112.

¹⁵⁴ For details on the expansionist tendencies of the powerful fondoms of the Bamenda Grassfields, see Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, pp.113-114.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Genesis Ngoran Lemnyuy, 53 years, Accountant, Nso, 13/08/2020.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Ignatius Tadzenyuy, 53 years, Businessman, Bamenda, 29/08/2020.

¹⁵⁷ Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp.39-48.

¹⁵⁸ G. Fanzo Verkijika and B. Chem-Langëë, *The transfer of power and authority in Nto Nso in Chem-Langëë and Fanzo's Nso and its Neighbours: Readings in Social History*, Massachusetts, Amherst, 1996, pp.289-290.

For the purpose of communication, the peoples of the Bamenda relied on drums, messages and other means which did not involve writing. The Bamenda people believed in the existence of a supernatural being or God, and ancestral worship was widely practiced, it was strongly believed that, the dead influenced every detail of life on earth.¹⁵⁹ Sacrifices therefore had to be made to supernatural spirits that represented God and other spirits that lived in caves, large trees, in forest or deep pools of water in the ravines. In the event of any mishap, a diviner was consulted, the usual fee being a fowl. The diviner often replied that a certain wrong had been committed and that a certain ancestor must have a specific sacrifice made to him. People therefore feared to go against social norms because of supernatural sanctions.¹⁶⁰

Historically, traditional institution is an institution of antiquity which had existed for centuries. The institution through the traditional rulers served a great deal of importance in regulating and governing behaviors and idiosyncrasies of the people under their jurisdiction. The different ethnic groups in the Grassfields region is under the leadership of a paramount authority known as the *fon*, who play a great role in resolving conflicts in their various areas of jurisdiction alongside secret societies such as the *Nwerongin* Nso and *Ngumba* in Bali-Nyonga. These conflicts were usually settled in traditional courts. This therefore mandated them with the authority of promoting and managing peace, conflict and unity in their domain within a diverse political entity like the Bamenda Grassfields.

The general perception about traditional structures is an image of institutions, whose norms, values and internal organization date back hundreds of years. While this may be true in some cases, traditional societies like all societies change over time. However, in the case of the Bamenda Grassfields, the enforcement of customary laws lies in the hands of customary institutions. The most powerful customary institution that regulates access and control of natural resources is the village head, which are the *Fon* and his entourage.¹⁶¹ This is a very important and respected village network in charge of legislation and adjudication. In many communities in the Bamenda Grassfields, there is little or no individual land or water ownership the allocation of

¹⁵⁹Mbida, "A study of Inter-Group Relations", pp.40-43.

¹⁶⁰ C.G Leinyuy, "Nso traditional political institutions", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2001, pp.10-12

¹⁶¹ G. Sanguv Ngefor, "Institutional changes", pp.45-47.

community land to individuals and the rights and duties related to the allocation of resources is part of the function of traditional authorities. Quarter heads present problems and give their views, and the chief gives a final decision, based on the views of the majority.¹⁶² During the time of water scarcity, communities reinforce rules that regulate the amount of water in public and private water sources. For example, in the dry season when water is scarce, the norm is that, little water is shared by everyone. At this time, communities practice rationing for each household. The village elders make the decision regarding water management rules and then the villagers are in charge of monitoring the water source and making sure that the rules are followed.¹⁶³

Most people in the community cooperate with their quarter heads to monitor those who break rules. Defaulters usually face serious public humiliation and sanctions of fines for minor offences. For serious or repeated offences ostracism is used or the individual is sent on exile. Quarter and village meetings are held to organize communal work for water development and management. Those who do not take part are fined. Traditional societies believe that, water is owned by God, therefore, everyone has a right to access it.¹⁶⁴ Traditional authorities play a great and vital role in conflict resolution, and still continue to do so till date.

After looking at the socio-political organization of the Bamenda Grassfields, it is vital to also have an insight of the colonial socio-political organization.

Colonial Socio-political Organization of the Bamenda Grassfields

The socio-political organization of the Germans and the British in the Bamenda Grassfields was well structured to ease administration and the settlement of conflicts. The arrival of the German explorer, Eugene Zintgraff, in January 1889 and the British Senior Divisional Officer G.S Podevin from Calabar on 1 January 1916 paved the way for the establishment of the representative two alien administrations in the region.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶²*Ibid.* pp.46-50.

¹⁶³Interview with Helen Lawong, 68 years, Former Deputy, Squares-Kumbo, 19/06/2020.

¹⁶⁴ C.K. Chia, "Stakeholder Participation: Myth or Reality? A case study of community water supply management in Bambui-Tubah Village in Cameroon", Masters Dissertation in Sustainable Development, Uppsala University, 2011, pp.44-46.

¹⁶⁵ Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for a History*, pp.215-216.

The political organization of the Germans, from 1884 to 1915 of Cameroon in general and Bamenda Grassfields in particular was headed by the Governor whose powers were derived from those delegated to him by the Kaiser and the chancellor in Berlin. He controlled the colonial courts, settled land and water conflicts and was the highest court of appeal.¹⁶⁶ Those to whom the Government delegated his powers were heads of the exploratory and military expeditions, heads of administrative commissioners and residents.¹⁶⁷ These officers settled conflicts in courts, levied fines and gave punishments like whipping, confinement in irons, flogging and death sentences.¹⁶⁸ It is worthy to note that, during the German colonial rule, there were particular places in the Bamenda Grassfields, where the lack of a suitable drinking water supply was a limiting factor on pre-colonial settlements and later growth.¹⁶⁹ German colonial administration built the first pipe borne water supplies in 1902 in Victoria and later to other areas. The Germans used gravity to distribute water around schemes from spring sources.¹⁷⁰ The water system supplied German colonial officers, Christian missions and some businesses. However, there was only one tap for the indigenous population, and this thus led to frequent conflicts, as it was not sufficient to satisfy the growing population. All dreams of a permanent German administration were shattered when they were defeated by the joint military efforts of the British and the French in 1915.¹⁷¹

During the 45 years (1916-1961) of British colonial administration in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, she was headed by the Governor-General who was resident in Lagos¹⁷², Nigeria. He settled colonial conflicts and was directly responsible for the secretary of state for the colonies in London. Under him were two Lieutenants-Governors at the head of the administration of the

¹⁶⁶ G. Fanso verkijika, *Cameroon History for Secondary schools and colleges: From Colonial to Post-colonial periods*, London, Macmillan, 1989, pp.58-60.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp.61-64.

¹⁶⁸ V.J Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, Limbe, Press book, 1996, pp.80-81.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Aloysius Chin, 102 years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Kumbo, 23/08/2020.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 09/08/2020.

¹⁷¹ Nkwi and warnier, *Elements of a History*, pp.214-215.

¹⁷² Sanguv, "Institutional Changes", pp.72-79.

Southern and Northern groups of Provinces in Nigeria. Under the Lieutenant –Governor, were senior Provincial residents, each at the head of the provincial administration.¹⁷³

Under the Residents were the District Officers who headed the Divisions or Districts. They were answerable to the Residents in Buea. In the Bamenda Grassfields, the Divisional Officer sat as Magistrates to hear criminal and civil cases, endorsed the executive of murderers condemned to death, directed and controlled the work of local prisons and settled boundary and other disputes.

In the Bamenda Grassfields, under British rule, self-help community development efforts took a coercive turn. In exchange for donating their labour and local materials like timber, sand and stones and contributing money, communities received technical assistance and imported materials such as galvanized pipes, valves and zincs. Apparently, this development option was most beneficial to the British since it cost less. Thus, the British colonial governments played a vital role in enabling the indigenous population of the Bamenda Grassfields construct their own water schemes. This reduced conflicts over water sources in the region and where these conflicts could not be diverted, they helped to resolve them. From 1922 on, the British colonial policy of Indirect Rule was introduced in the Bamenda Grassfields to add to the Nigerian Native Authorities Ordinance of 1916. In the 1920s and 30s, fifteen Native Authorities, aided by Advisory clan councils and Native Courts were created to manage and settle conflicts.¹⁷⁴

D. The Advent of the Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields

Fulbe or Fulani is what the largest nomadic pastoral people in the world call themselves. They speak “Fulfude” language which is closely related to Serer, Wolof, Hiafad languages of Senegal.¹⁷⁵ The Fulani have an estimated population of between six and nine million.¹⁷⁶ The area most densely populated by the Fulani is the former British Cameroons and Nigeria with a total population of about 3630000.¹⁷⁷ The Fulani culture is sub characterized by the different ways their language is used, and also the means of economic gains. Some Fulani use vocabulary while

¹⁷³Fanso, *Cameroon history*, pp.85-90.

¹⁷⁴ E. Yenkong Sobseh, “Land Tenure and land conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon 1974-2008, A historical Perspective”, PhD Thesis, University of Yaounde 1, 2011, pp.54-55.

¹⁷⁵Interview with Mohamadu Nyaso Gariba, 44years, Teaching, Donga Mantung, 06/08/2020.

¹⁷⁶www.insightsfulaniculture.htm,05/06/2020, 13:06PM.

¹⁷⁷www.wodhaablepastoralFulaniMelissaYoung.htm, 05/06/2020, 13:30PM.

others do not, which results in a language that is both diverse and constantly changing. Some Fulani are part of the stable farming communities, others are part of urban areas, while the pastoral Fulani are cattle rearers.¹⁷⁸

The Fulani are scattered all over West and Central Africa, almost exclusively within the savannah zone. The Fulani call themselves *fulbe* which is singular. Ahmadou Hampate Bâ, suggest that the name fulbe is derived from the verbal root *Fullude* or to cover with dust, or may however come from the name *Ful* which is found in the Bible as Maurice Dellafose states.¹⁷⁹ The French call them Peuls like the Wolof of Senegal. In the Gambia, the British call them by the Bambara term Fula but in Ghana and Nigeria, the British refer to them by the Hausa word Fulani, Filani or hilani.¹⁸⁰ In German documents, they are simply referred to as Fulbe while the Kanuri and Chadien people call them Felaata.¹⁸¹ In this study, we shall refer to them as Fulani except as otherwise indicated.

The original home of the Fulani was for long a matter of heated controversy among scholars. While some studies claimed that the Fulani descended from the white stock- the Hykos of Egypt or the Gypsies of Europe, others suggested an Arabian or Indian origin.¹⁸² Those who argue in favour of the Arabian or Eastern origin point to the humped-back cattle commonly reared by the Fulani as Asiatic in origin. They also argue that Fulani legend, their complexion and structure, their mental and physical characteristics all point emphatically to an Eastern origin.¹⁸³

According to recent studies, the ancestral Fulani are a product of the mixture of Tukolor Negroes of the Middle Senegal area and the incoming Berbers from the North of Africa.¹⁸⁴ These studies are definite that the cradle of the Fulani as a race and a group is Futa Toro in Northern Senegal. From this site, the Fulani began to expand all over the Western Sudan long before the

¹⁷⁸Interview with Ibrahim Amadou Babangida, 31 years, Teacher, Yaounde, 08/08/2020.

¹⁷⁹A.H. Bâ, "The fulbe or Fulani of Mali and their Culture", *Abbia*, Vol.14, No.15, 1966, pp.55-56.

¹⁸⁰Interview with Mohammadou Sani, 49 years, Businessman, Mbve, 22/08/2020.

¹⁸¹D.J. Stenning, *The Pastoral Fulani of Northern Nigeria in J.L Gibbs, Jr. eds., Peoples of Africa*, Holt, Rincharl and Winston inc., 1966, pp.363-370.

¹⁸²Interview with Eric Wirba Binyuy, 32 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 04/08/2020.

¹⁸³Fanso, *Cameroon History*, pp.28-30.

¹⁸⁴Interview with Micheal Nyuyki Nkuph, 69 years, Retired, Bui, 06/08/2020.

20th century.¹⁸⁵ Their origin in Senegal is supported by the nature of their language which is of the same linguistic stock as languages of Sene-Gambian region.¹⁸⁶ Ardo Sabga Abdulahi Bi Hobba, the first Fulani to settle in the Bamenda Grassfields, declared in his own words “I am Ardosabga, son of ArdoWumme, son of Kura, son of Jibode, son of Nando. He was one of those who migrated to Shelu from the people of Futa Toro at the time by the coming of Jakwallo the grandfather of shehuUsmanu dan Fodio, father of his caravan of Torobe”.¹⁸⁷

The above declaration of Ardo Sabga supports the view that the Fulani of the Bamenda Grassfields particularly the Jafun, originated from the Futa Toro region in Senegal. Since the 14th century, the Fulani migrated East-ward from Sene-Gambia where most of them used to live and by the 18th century, many had reached the Hausa state of Gobir (Northern Nigeria).¹⁸⁸ Among the Fulani who had settled in Gobir were some of the Toronkowa clans who were well educated in Moslemlaw and religion, and were looked up to by other Fulani as wise leaders. Their leader was Uthman, the son of Fodio and his brother Abdulahi.¹⁸⁹ They spent many years as preachers. Besides the Gobir settlement, the majority of the Fulani, particularly those of Jafun extraction settled in Kano in Northern Nigeria. The region was found favourable for human habitation and pastoral nomadism. The Jafun-Kano settlement was founded by Akushi a slave belonging to the Majankeho clan.¹⁹⁰

A series of reasons such as population explosion, the desire for more pasture and the inherent nomadic habit of the Fulani seem to explain the distribution of the Fulani all over the West African Savannah between the 14th and 16th centuries.¹⁹¹ The Fulani distinguish themselves from

¹⁸⁵Interview with Peter Yaah, 50 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 05/08/2020.

¹⁸⁶Fanso, *Cameroon History*, pp.28-34.

¹⁸⁷ NWRAB, File No. Va/b (SAB) 1940/2, “Memorandum from the Residents of Sokoto Province to the resident Cameroon Province Buea, on Ardo Sabga of Bamenda”, 12 April 1930, p.6. Ardo Sabga was presenting himself as requested by the Wajiri of the Sultan of Sokoto on the occasion of his pilgrimage visit to the Wajiri of the Sultan of Sokoto on the occasion of his pilgrimage visit to Sokoto in 1929.

¹⁸⁸ C. Frantz, *Fulbe community and change under five flags Atop West Africa : Territory, Ethnicity, stratification and National integration*, in John Galaty and Philip Salzman eds., *change in Nomadic and pastoral societies*, Netherlands, E.J Bill, 1981, pp.89-115

¹⁸⁹Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45 years, Teacher, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

¹⁹⁰ P. T. Angwafo, “Contesting land and identity: the case of women cultivators and Fulani cattle herders in Wum, Northwest Region of Cameroon”, Masters Dissertation, University of Leiden, 2014, pp.43-45.

¹⁹¹Frantz, *Fulbe community and change*, pp.113-114.

the Hausa and the Sudanese African by their colour which varies from light to reddish-brown. In physique, the Fulani are:

Slender and swinewy, sometimes effeminate, the face oval, the lips thin, the hand dolichocephalic and the forehead rather receding towards the temple, the nose straight or even aquiline and often slightly rounded at the top. There is little or no prognathism, their hair is ringletted and often straight, and never of the Negro peppercorn type. On his chin, a man wears a scraggy tuft of beard. The eyes are almond shaped and overhung by long black silken lashes.¹⁹²

This description is true of the cattle Fulani of Bamenda because, they have until recently remained aloof from society. But the town or settled Fulani are usually robust and sometimes dark in complexion.

In the year 1887 to 1891, a great epidemic decimated herds of cattle. The disease which is said to have started around Darfur spread and reached Chad in 1886 and continued westwards.¹⁹³ In the area known today as Nigeria, cattle died in large numbers and there was general lamentation. Some of the Fulani lost all their cattle, many committed suicide while others roamed the bushes calling imaginary cattle to appear as it is alleged.¹⁹⁴ When the epidemic had spent itself and past on, the Fulani in the Eastern part of Nigeria regained new herds of cattle from their brethren in Adamawa, while those in the West obtained the hump less “Keteji” type of cattle which had always been kept by the Borgu Fulani.¹⁹⁵

The migration of the Jafun people is also explained by their never-ending desire to search for new pasture as well as a strong desire to keep away from the cattle of the settled Fulani which they thought to be responsible for the spread of the cattle disease. This myth kept the cattle Fulani on the run each time they realized that the settled Fulani were frequenting their grazing zone.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² C.K. Meek, *The Northern tribes of Nigeria*, Vol.1, London, Oxford University Press, 1925, pp.25-30.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, pp.31-43.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Richard Vuwe, 62 years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

¹⁹⁵ F.W. St. Croix, *The Fulani of Nigeria*, Lagos, Government Printers, 1945, pp.10-12.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.15-29.

The Jafun cherished freedom. Awasum observed that, a herdsman would prefer to settle in a relatively uninhabited area where the climate is suitable for grazing and where he could watch his herds multiply in a true biblical manner without any form of prohibitions from sedentary people.¹⁹⁷ An increase in cattle population was the top priority of a herdsman, but as his herds increased, a time was eventually reached when there were too many cattle for the area.¹⁹⁸ The top soil became eroded, cattle started to degenerate and the herdsmen moved on.¹⁹⁹ Thus a combination of factors made the Fulani to migrate. One group moved eastwards towards Bornu and Mandara and later took the Southward direction, while another moved South-eastwards to Jos, Wase and Bauchi.²⁰⁰

The Jafuns who took the Eastern direction and turned southwards journeyed to the Adamawa, Mambilla, Tibati and Bongo. It is referred to by the Fulani as *Chabbe*. The first Fulani to ascend the Cameroon Plateau was on *Biji*, a single herdsman of the Rifomanko'en clan in the 1870s or a little earlier. He came on foot to spy out the land, and when he returned he gave reports of good grazing land and this caused the first wave of Jafun to migrate.²⁰¹ In 1937, a British officer, Percival, identified in the Adamawa 19 Jafun clans which migrated from Kano through Bornu in the late 19th century.²⁰² Later on, conditions in the Adamawa indicated that the Jafun had to go.

In 1913, there was a rinderpest²⁰³ outbreak referred to as *Gamagari*, a Hausa word which depicts its widespread nature. The First World War also adversely affected the Jafun people. The supplies of potash from Northern Nigeria which they needed for their cattle were interrupted thus, the cattle of the Jafuns which had more than doubled as a result of almost 20 years of good pasture was threatened.²⁰⁴ Consequently, the Jafuns dispatched scouts Southwards and Westwards for two reasons; to seek natural mineral springs, since they were in dire need of salt

¹⁹⁷N. Fru Awasum, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands 1903-1960", Doctorat de 3^e cycle history, University of Yaounde, 1984, pp.23-40.

¹⁹⁸Interview with Caleb Kigha Njeba, 37 years, Veterinarian, Ndu, 06/08/2020.

¹⁹⁹Fru, "The Hausa and Fulani", pp.24-54.

²⁰⁰Interview with Ernest Wiringo Shiytum, 49 years, Business Manager at CAMPOST, Meluf, 06/08/2020.

²⁰¹NAB, File N°3062, Ab 17(7), H.N. Harcourt, "Fulani Intelligence Report", 1937.

²⁰²*Ibid.*

²⁰³Rinderpest or cattle plague, is a contagious and highly-fatal disease of cattle, Buffaloes, yaks and many other artiodactyls, both domesticated and wild. Rinderpest is caused by a morbillivirus related to human measles, canine distemper and *peste des petits ruminants*.

²⁰⁴Croix, *The Fulani of Nigeria*, pp.13-20.

and to make contact with King Njoya of Bamum who had issued an invitation to the Fulani to come to the country.²⁰⁵

Yaya, Yayi and Kaki went to Fumban while Buba, Lalu and Umaru went further into the Bamenda Grasslands, in the company of Hausa traders. The reports from Fumban could not have been good because of the presence of tse-tse fly in a large part of the territory.²⁰⁶ Those who visited Jakiri, Nsaw, Babanki-Tungo and other parts of the Bamenda Grassfields were overwhelmed with what they saw, the land was full of grass, the air was cold and the breeze was strong to blow away flies. In short, it was a land where everything needed by cattle was found.²⁰⁷

An assessment of the Fulani migration into the Bamenda Grassfields shows two methods, violent (raids) and peaceful (exploring and negotiating settlement grounds). The violent method was the first to be used. This was probably what made them to discover the Grassfields. The Fulani raids into the Bamenda Grassfields took place in the 1830s and were organized from Kontcha, Banyo, Tibati and Ngoundere.²⁰⁸ Their aim was to get more slaves and booty. They raided and ransacked villages and settlements, taking captives as slaves and causing the population to flee. The first raid took place between 1835 and 1840 and was directed towards the Tikar and Nkambe regions. It was led by Dandi Garbdo Herman²⁰⁹ The second raid came in the 1870s and was directed towards the chiefdoms of Bum, Ntem, Mfunte and others. The third and the last raid came in the 1880s and affected Bambili and including other areas of the Bamenda Grassfields.²¹⁰

The raids launched by the Fulani people on the Bamenda Grassfields caused huge human and material loses on the side of the indigenous people.²¹¹ Villages and settlements were attacked and ransacked, captives taken away as slaves and some areas deserted as the population flee. *Fon* Nforambo of Wiya was obliged to form an alliance with the Fulani to raid neighbouring villages

²⁰⁵ C. Jumbam Tardzenyuy, "The Fulani impact on the Bamenda GrassFields, 1916-2008: A Historical investigation", PhD in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.58-69.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Peter Wirba Fomukong, 45 years, Computer Technician, Nso, 08/08/2020.

²⁰⁷ Awasum, "The Hausa and the Fulani", pp.72-76.

²⁰⁸ Diagar, "Socio-Economic History of the Fulbe(Mbororo)" pp.110-118.

²⁰⁹ Jumbam, "The Fulani impact on the Bamenda Grassfields", pp.59-60.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.70-73.

²¹¹ Interview with Yvonne Ndzerem Mendzen, 48 years, Teacher, Nso, 08/08/2020.

on condition that his own people will not be caught. The alliance did not last long as the Wiya village itself was equally ransacked and captives taken away as slaves.

Despite the attack mounted by the Fulani on the Bamenda Grassfields, the region escaped total subjugation by the Fulani warriors. Two principal reasons explain why the Bamenda Grassfields was never brought within the sphere of Fulani influence despite its precarious location, the existence of the powerful Kingdom of Bamoum, which flanks the Bamenda Grassfields in the South-East and the advent of Europeans.²¹²

The second and most successful method which brought the Fulani people to settle in the Bamenda Grassfields was the exploration of peaceful negotiations for settlement.²¹³ The raids for booty and slaves had probably made them to discover this region which to them was virgin.²¹⁴ According to Boutrais, the discovery of the Bamenda Grassfields was “Magical” to the Fulani. Boutrais further remarks that :

*Les Mbororo étaient soucieux de découvrir de nouvelle source non appropriée pas les Foulbé. Leur sortie du Lamidat de Banyo s’explique par cette préoccupation pastorale. Telle est du moins la raison avancée par les Djafun du Bamenda, surtout par le Lignange dominant des Gosi’e.*²¹⁵

Certainly, the Fulani were spurred by the need to acquire more pasture lands. The Bamenda Grassfields with its lush grassy landscape thus attracted the Fulani, particularly the Jafun to begin trickling into the region.²¹⁶ They began by exploring the area. According to a report from one of the Fulani explorers interviewed by Jeffreys and cited by Jean Boutrais, he said,

At Kumbo, we mixed kanwa (Limestone) with water and gave it to the local pagans to taste, saying that we are looking for water with this taste. We were taken to Mbiame and shown a stream of running water. We tasted it and it was not salty at all. So I said “this country has no salt spring, let us try Fumban”. We left Kumbo and reached Jakiri. There, we met a native German speaking road overseer, and he asked us in Hausa what

²¹² D.L Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflicts*, London, University of Carlifornia Press, 1985, pp.25=28.

²¹³ Interview with Mohammed Sani, 49 years, Businessman Mbve, 22/08/2020.

²¹⁴ Interview with Pricilla Chilla Tongle, 39 years, Nursing, Nso, 25/08/2020.

²¹⁵ J. Boutrais, *Hautes terres d’élevage au Cameroun*, Vol.1, Paris, ORSTOM, 1995, pp.73-100.

²¹⁶ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62 years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

we wanted. We did not understand what he said as we did not speak Hausa, but we managed to explain that we were looking for salt water and gave him water mixed with kanwa. He tried it and told us to go to Babanki near Bamessing where we would find salt water...²¹⁷

The above quotation shows that besides raids, the Fulani agents from Banyo could also discuss peacefully with alien peoples in the course of their adventure. The Fulani also contacted local rulers and discussed peacefully with them, negotiating for settlement and land in the Bamenda Grassfields.²¹⁸ It is in this light that Ardo Sabga of the Gosi family contacted the chief of BabankiTungoh-Laiku and negotiated for settlement and land when his chiefdom was discovered with salt springs and rich pasture land.²¹⁹ This can be seen on table 3.

3. Jafun Settlements in the Bamenda Grassfields

Location of Settlements	Clan	Clan Head
Mbwat	<i>Tatanko'en</i>	ArdoOsmanu
Mbwat	<i>Tatanko'en</i>	Ardo Kara
Tala	<i>Tatanko'en</i>	ArdoYakene
Mbem	<i>Tatanko'en</i>	Ardo Sambo
Mbem	<i>Ndanaguyen</i>	Ardo Osmanu
Ndu	<i>Tukanko'en</i>	Ardo Sunde
Ndu	<i>Rahaji</i>	Ardo Yaji
Ndu	<i>Rahaji</i>	Ardo Kori
Ndu	<i>Huranko'en</i>	Ardo Adu
Ndu	<i>Sariganko'en</i>	Ardo Gawlo
Nsob	<i>Gamanko'en</i>	Ardo Adama
Ndu	<i>Autanko'en</i>	Ardo Bante
Lassin	<i>Huranko'en</i>	Ardo Gaja

²¹⁷*Ibid*, p.74.

²¹⁸ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65, Traditional Authority/Farmer, Nso, 03/08/2020.

²¹⁹ The salt spring at Sabga and Bamessing are the largest and most important. The Fulani have a lot of faith in these salt spring and they believe the salt waters are a panacea to all cattle diseases.

Ntumbaw	<i>Jaranko 'en</i>	Ardo Jaji
Kishong	<i>Gosi</i>	Ardo Juli
Kishong	<i>Rujumanko 'en</i>	Ardo Jagendi
Kumbo	<i>Majanko 'en</i>	Ardo Mohammedu
Kumbo and Njotonso	<i>Dabanko 'en</i>	Ardo Kara
Binka	<i>Babanko 'en</i>	ArdoJinjo
Binka	<i>Ringimaji</i>	Ardo Gori
Binka	<i>Ndanaguyen</i>	Ardo Manju
Binka	<i>Bawdi</i>	ArdoKafoi
Binka	<i>Jalanko 'en</i>	Ardo Ade
Memfu (Nsaw)	<i>Dabanko 'en</i>	Ardo Hodi
Djotonso	<i>Rujumanko 'en</i>	ArdoBidiwa
Djotonso	<i>Rujumanko 'en</i>	Ardo Abdudawa
Djotonso	<i>Rujumanko 'en</i>	Ardo Bante
Djotonso	<i>Inajanko 'en</i>	Ardo Hasan
Tabessoh	<i>Jaramako 'en</i>	Ardo Sarjo
Tabessoh	<i>Bawanko 'en</i>	Ardo Buba
Mbiame	<i>Sariganko 'en</i>	Ardo Juli
Bali	<i>Sariganko 'en</i>	Ardo Juli
BabankiTungo	<i>Gosi</i>	Ardo sabga
Kom	<i>Sariganko 'en</i>	Ardo Sabga
Ngemba	<i>Jaramako 'en</i>	Ardo Sabga
Bafut	<i>Gosi</i>	Ardo Sabga
Bali	<i>Jaramako 'en</i>	Ardo Sabga

Source: NAB, Ab 17(7) File No.3062, "Fulani intelligence Report", 1973.

Note: The Fulani generally settled on the highlands of the villages indicated on the table above according to their clans of origin. From the table, it can be noticed that, one clan in the village, settled under different leaders. This is explained by the fact that they arrived in Bamenda Grassfields from Adamawa at different periods, and each group settled under its own herdsmen or Ardo. Water was also a factor, determining the site of settlement, thus the numerous conflicts in the region.

The Fulani settlement in the Bamenda Grassfields thus began in 1916 with the arrival of Ardo Sabga. News of the generosity of the Jafun people to the chief of Babanki, their large sized beasts and their strange species of houses spread like wild fire to many parts of the Bamenda Grassfields.²²⁰ This indeed provoked the curiosity of the natives in neighbouring fondoms. The Babanki-Tungoh highlands located between Bamenda town and Bamessing village, enroute to the Ndop plain became a permanent settlement for Ardo Sabga and his followers. The highland after some time came to be known as Sabga Hill²²¹, and today it appears as such on maps and administrative documents. According to Amadou, "... The Sabga community has retained its initial prestige as the earliest arrivers and has become the headquarters of the Fulani in the Grassfields".²²²

Fulani migration into the Bamenda Grassfields forever changed the lives of both the migrants and indigenous communities. These migrations were provoked by rising incidence of cattle disease as well as precipitous change in the sociopolitical conditions that accompanied the arrival of the British authorities in Northern Nigeria. Above all, "the cool, well-watered highlands of... Bamenda were indeed the promised land to these nomad cattle-keepers," who throughout the years from before the time of Mohammed's birth "had to contend with the hot dry plains of the interior."²²³ With the passage of time, entire Fulani families and in some cases clans, moved to the region because the respective divisional and provincial boundaries traversed were not geographical barriers and could not have curtailed the wave. These migrations reached a peak in the early 1940s.²²⁴ By that time, conflict over land and water sources between the Fulani and indigenous communities had reached fever pitch. British authorities were unable to reverse the wave of migration; they were interested in the amount of taxes on cattle paid by the Fulani.²²⁵

²²⁰ Interview with Blasius Nformi Mbinkar, 67 years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

²²¹ Interview with Helen Lawong B., 75 years, Former Deputy, Squares, 14/08/2020.

²²² Abdou Ramani, "The political and socio-economic History of the Fulbe (Mbororo) in Mezam Division in the 20th century", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2004, pp.23-45.

²²³ North West Provincial Archives Bamenda, B.3125, vol.3, NW/Qg/a.1949, A.A.2000/498, pp.3-6.

²²⁴ *Ibid.* pp.3-4.

²²⁵ Revenues derived from cattle taxes could only go up with an increase in the cattle population because the tax was levied on every head, including calves. Compared to other revenue collected in the region, cattle taxes was the most important source of revenue both for native authorities (NAs) and for the colonial administration.

This chapter revealed that, the geographical setting of the Bamenda Grassfields, its history and socio-political organization has a role to play in the conflicts over water in the region. Moreso, the arrival of the Fulani in 1916 at the invitation of the British contributed to the conflicts over water. They occupied the well water valleys of the Grassfields and their cattles contaminated water making it unfit for drinking. This made the inhabitants of the region to rise against them. It is just worthy to note that the arrival of the Fulanis marked a turnig point in the lives of the inhabitants of the Grassfields region. Other factors later contributed to the numerous water conflicts in the region. To better understand this phenomenon, it is important we examine the history of water governance in Cameroon. This shall be seen in the next chapter of our work.

CHAPTER TWO:

HISTORY OF WATER GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON FROM 1902 TO 1985

Water has a multifaceted resource in pre-colonial Cameroon, and its relationship with the society has had many dimensions, such as cultural, spiritual and symbolic meanings of local communities, apart from economic significance. Historical evidence supports both the notion that, there was a wide range of different types of colonization, and that the presence or absence of European settlers, was a key determinant of the form development took.³⁶⁹

Therefore, simply viewing water through an economic lens can undermine its embeddedness, in the everyday cultural and social contexts, within which communities live their lives. Through social institutions, water was controlled and regulated in pre-colonial Cameroon.³⁷⁰ In the 1960s, there was need to review the approaches of the two development strategies applied by the French and the British. New stakeholders entered the arena around water policy making, which politicized water engineering. Since then, other dimensions of water control became more apparent. The entry of new actors with different interests of water has led to numerous conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon.³⁷¹

It is worthy to note that, there were already primitive forms of water governance in the pre-colonial era. These were community initiatives which still exist till date. Water governance in a more centralized form appeared with the colonial era, with the introduction of water laws and the gradual change of water status. It was the start of the development of public domain, which mostly dealt with the engineering of large water works.³⁷²

Water management today in Cameroon, cannot be successfully analyzed, based on contemporary issues, as many important aspects could render coherency quite difficult to

³⁶⁹ M. Basung Gwanfogbe, *The History of Cameroon*, Bamenda, Victory Press, 1981, pp.56-57.

³⁷⁰ B. Page, *Naked Power: Women and social production of water in Anglophone Cameroon. Chapter 3* in Coles A., Wallace T. ed., *Gender, water and Development*, OXFORD, Berg, 2005, pp.58-65.

³⁷¹ Interview with Tata John Nsame, 62years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

³⁷² P. Gleick, "Water and conflict", *A Journal of Internatiol Security*, Vol.18, No.1, 1993,pp.79-112.

readers. Since we assume that past actors and institutions have had much influence on management ideologies, there is need for a flash back. Even though the present actors in Cameroon are almost the same since the 70s, there exist nevertheless differences in evolution of community development or community water supply in the two regions. For this reason, the evolution of water schemes will be treated separately from community development.

A. Footprints of Colonialists

When studying the History of water in Cameroon, it is important to start from the colonial period, in order to better understand the notion of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields region. These shall be examined in the subsequent sub parts.

1. German Development Period: The first Piped Water Scheme in Cameroon

For the purpose of this study, history of water is assumed to have begun in 1902 when the German colonial administration built the first piped water supplies.³⁷³ The German colony of Kamerun, occupied an area larger than the current country of Cameroon. However, the most intensely colonized area was on the coast between “Victoria” (Present day Limbe), Buea and Douala.³⁷⁴ The coastal strip above the mangroves was transformed into a sequence of plantations, initially developed, largely through private capital.

“Victoria” was the administrative and commercial centre of colonial state and a major port. There were schools in the town and a Botanic garden on the banks of the River Limbe, where the Germans experimented with the introduction of new crops from their other Tropical colonies. The water supply was fed from a spring source and gravity was used to distribute water around the town.³⁷⁵ The water system supplied German colonial officers, Christian missions and some businesses.³⁷⁶ However, there was only one tap for Africans. Buea which is inland and at a much higher altitude was the official capital of the German protectorate from 1898 to 1909 and it had about 1500 inhabitants in 1900.³⁷⁷ The cool climate in Buea was preferred by officials to the temperatures a thousand metres lower in Victoria or Douala. However, despite being the capital,

³⁷³*Ibid*, pp.57-59.

³⁷⁴ J. Nfi Lon, *Essentials of Cameroon History 1800-2000*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 2000, pp.43-48.

³⁷⁵ Page, *Naked Power: Women and social production of water*, pp.58-65.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45years, Teacher, 03/08/2020.

³⁷⁷ Gwanfogbe, *The History of Cameroon*, pp.56-57.

it was a smaller town than Victoria, because it served a purely administrative function. It was the focus for government investment in infrastructure with the construction of offices and homes for colonial staff.

The piped water supply system which supplied German Colonial Buea was constructed between 1900 and 1903, for German official's domestic needs, with most of the construction material paid for by the German colonial state.³⁷⁸ But the systems were constructed using forced labour of Cameroonians. For example, the sand, cement and cast-iron pipes were head loaded up from the port of Victoria to the building site in Buea, 1100m above sea level. The system used the Musole stream and a sand filter, to supply the German settlements. In Limbe, there was a single tap for the local population, as well as ornamental fountains and a ceremonial public drinking fountain, decorated with a medallion, showing Bismarck, which continued to work till the 1980s.³⁷⁹ Both Limbe and Buea designated an earlier date for the construction of any piped water supply in Douala, which began in 1911. This was because, they were the most cities, and the mountains which made it easy to use gravity to supply water.³⁸⁰

Apart from the colonial government's engagement in the construction of water supplies, the Missions and plantations also participated in water development. Any development that occurred was a bi-product of profit.³⁸¹ Nonetheless, at very local levels, the family, interfamily and village settings, the pre-colonial trappings of mutual assistance through self-help, persisted for the construction of some water points, and for providing other socially felt needs.³⁸² Church organizations also participated with community members, for the building of portable water supplies such as the Bojongo and Nyassoso water supplies in 1916.³⁸³ This was followed by other small potable water construction works in Buea.

³⁷⁸ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.55-60.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.61-63.

³⁸⁰ B. Page," A priceless commodity. The production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999", PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.101-102.

³⁸¹ Interview with Samson Tafu Shei, 60years, Teacher, Ndu, 09/08/2020.

³⁸² Interview with Charles Ngo, 53years, Teacher, Bajing, 14/07/2020.

³⁸³ Page, "A priceless commodity", pp.102-104.

Following a short military campaign in 1915, the French became the colonial administration in Cameroon, East of the River Mungo, while the British controlled the area to the West.³⁸⁴ The territory, which now forms Anglophone Cameroon, was known by the British as the Southern Cameroons, and though officially a League of Nations Mandate, was in effect governed as an extension of the Eastern Provinces of the British colony of Nigeria. The principal official in Cameroon was answerable to the lieutenant-Governors in Enugu and the Governor-General in Lagos.³⁸⁵

However, after the First World War ended in Cameroon in 1916 and in Europe in 1918, the trend changed. The first government engineers arrived in the early 1920s, and the Public Works Department (PWD), took over the operation of the water systems in Buea and Victoria in 1921.³⁸⁶ But it was not until ten years after assuming control that any technical staff from the Public Works department visited the Bamenda Division.

The German water supplies were largely used and unaltered by the British colonial staff for many years to come. As a British newspaper put it in 1915, “Luckily, the Cameroons itself is thoroughly up to date in this respect, the Germans have spent more on their public works than we should ever dream of doing”.³⁸⁷ It is of interest to us that the British gave the impression of admiration for German development and its implication for Cameroon’s development. However, it is hard to define the German development policy in Cameroon and their prints were wiped off during the French and British period which according to us had a greater impact in infrastructural development.³⁸⁸

We shall look at the role the British Colonial government played in the Bamenda Grassfields as far as water is concerned in the next part of our work.

2. British role in water development in the Bamenda Grassfields

The history of community development in British Cameroon was distinctly different from what was in Francophone Cameroon, where there was no tradition of community development and

³⁸⁴ Nfi, *Essentials of Cameroon History*, pp.83-85.

³⁸⁵ Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60years, Teacher, Ndop, 06/08/2020.

³⁸⁶ Page, “A priceless commodity”, pp.109-112.

³⁸⁷ Sanguv, “Institutional changes”, pp.56-57.

³⁸⁸ Interview with Immaculate Wirba, 47years, Teacher/Trader, Tobin, 22/08/2020.

where it was expected that the government will provide the rural water infrastructure. In the past, self-help efforts in Anglophone Cameroon, particularly in the North West Region were mainly related to the construction of foot paths or roads, dredging of rivers or streams, clearing of public land and market places. Projects such as pipe borne water were not usually attempted.³⁸⁹ The construction of wells did not follow any standard measurement, as the people used their imagination to plan and realise such projects. At this stage, there was little or no government involvement as the planning and execution of these self-help projects was the sole responsibility of the people.³⁹⁰ Where the Government was involved at all, was for the purpose of taking over completed projects for operation or maintenance.

Cameroonian communities always had to make financial contributions to British colonial projects. The British colonial officials expressed a vague desire to extend water supplies in Cameroon, but were only prepared to support schemes if Cameroonians were willing to generate both capital cost of construction, usually by the Native Authority and also agreed to pay ongoing water rates.³⁹¹ More so, Native Authorities acting like local councils were expected to pay an annual charge to the Public Works Department (PWD), for the maintenance of water supplies. Taps never existed in areas that were not able or willing to pay water charges. In Buea town for example, there were no taps in Stranger Quarter before 1938.³⁹²

In Victoria, progress appeared slightly faster. By 1930, the Cameroonian community of Victoria was supplied three stand pipes in New Town, which had been constructed using funds provided by the Native Authority, in addition to the original German tap.³⁹³ However, by 1933, none of these new stand taps were functioning because of poor management, and a vast majority of the inhabitants were using unprotected springs to the East of the town as their supply of water. Occasionally, boreholes were drilled by the PWD and hand pumps installed for Cameroonians

³⁸⁹ C. Che Fonchingong and L. Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance in community development initiatives in Cameroon Grassfields", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol.2, No.12, 2003, pp.56-58.

³⁹⁰ Interview with Ernest Ndishey, 50years, Teacher, Ntudip-Ndu, 03/08/2020.

³⁹¹ The British colonial policy of Indirect Rule worked with local authorities like chiefs in regions where they existed like the North West region of Cameroon. In the South West region, which is relatively less hierarchical, they put in place intermediaries. These middlemen had to collect taxes and manage local development.

³⁹² Page, "A priceless commodity", pp.113-120

³⁹³ Interview with Fames Ndzi Wibab, 72years, Coaching (Now retired), Ndu, 31/07/2020.

use in settlements where the water resources were particularly bad, for example, at Tiko in 1934. Staff shortages and lack of equipment meant that such initiative was very frequent.³⁹⁴

Furthermore, the Second World War was a key turning point for water in Anglophone Cameroon. Before the War, the main constraints on developing water supplies were a lack of skilled engineers and capital. Plans to build water supplies in Bamenda, Tombel and Kumba in the 20s and 30s were never realized.³⁹⁵ In 1944, a survey revealed that there were still no pipes in Bamenda, Kumba, Mamfe, Muyuka, Tiko and Tombel.³⁹⁶ This notwithstanding, after 1945, things began to change. Firstly, there was at least one engineer dedicated to water supplies in the PWD. Secondly, new construction work began in Bamenda in 1947. In the early 50s a series of towns and villages had government-built supplies, as can be seen on table 4.

4. Construction work on water supplies 1950-1952

Place	Work carried out
Tiko	4 new deep wells
Bamenda	New reservoir tank and extension of the pipeline
Bambui	Survey, design and construction of pipe network
Mamfe	Construction of spring catchments
Kembong	Construction of two deep wells
Lisoka	Construction of rain water catchment tank
Mpundu/Moli/Missellele	Construction of spring catchment
Bali	Survey and design of pipe network

Source: Page, “A priceless commodity”, 2000, p.129

Note: It is evident in the above table that no major piped water supplies were put in place before 1955. Small water sources were constructed to serve the entire population. With this in mind, it is worthy to note that these sources were largely insufficient.

In the second half of the 1950s, more money began to be made available as independence was approaching, but community contributions to capital costs were still expected. In 1954, Southern

³⁹⁴ Sanguv, “Institutional changes”, pp.58-60.

³⁹⁵ Interview with Killian Nsaikimo Fai, 56 years, Teacher, Nso, 29/07/2020.

³⁹⁶ Interview with Samson Tafu Shei, 60 years, Teacher, Ndu, 09/08/2020.

Cameroon became a semi-autonomous federal territory within Nigeria, and the first Development Plan was spent on roads, but £50,000 was earmarked for water supplies, £29,000 for Kumba, Tombel and Wum and £21,000 for other supplies.³⁹⁷The development plan ran from 1955 to 1960, and was partly funded by grants and loans from Britain and partly from SATA/HELVETAS.³⁹⁸ This can be seen on table 5.

5. Total Public Works Department (PWD) expenditure divided by source of Capital (1958-1960)

Year	Southern Cameroons Administration (CDC profits)	Federal Republic of Nigeria (Grants and Loans)	Colonial Development and Welfare Fund (Grants from British parliament)	Native Authorities and other Non-Governmental bodies (Taxes)
1958	£174,745 21%	£379,975 45%	£273,038 32%	£14,252 2%
1959	£304,363 30%	£309,651 31%	£392,544 39%	£2,105 0%
1960	£401,479 44%	£123,098 14%	£288,376 32%	£91,508 10%
Total	£880,587 32%	£812,724 29%	£953, 958 35%	£107,865 4%

Source: Page, “A priceless commodity”, 2000, p.169.

Note: This table shows us the financial contribution of the different groups, in the construction of water sources. An interesting remark is the participation of the community through the Native Authorities, even though at times, their income was reducing and they were incurring debts, and therefore, making women eligible for tax. Generally, although the percentage was small, it is evident that they took part in local development and between 1958 and 1960, their contribution moved from 2% to 10%. One can conclude that the communities were increasingly included in development as seen on table 6.

³⁹⁷ Sanguv, “Institutional changes”, pp.59-60.

³⁹⁸ Helvetas is an independent organization for development, based in Switzerland with affiliated organizations in Germany and United States. Helvetas is active in five working areas, water and infrastructure, sustainable and inclusive economies, governance and peace, environment and climate change. This organization also engages in emergency relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation. It takes care of village water schemes, especially the Bamenda Grassfields.

6. Construction and capital costs of water supplies during the British colonial period (1945 to 1961)

Area	Date of construction	Initial capital (£)	Target annual renewal contribution
Bamenda (Hospital)	1945-1947	3000	
Bambui	1954-55	9,050	402
Bamenda (extension)	1955-56	11,700	384
Nkambe	1956-58	4,200	273
Buea (extension)	1956-58	24,000	461
Kumba Town	1956-58	23,000	766
Bali	1957-58	23,000	288
Jakiri	1957-58	8,000	766
Wum	1957-58	24,000	
Kumba Station	1958-59	3,500	
Bamenda extension	1958-59	10,000	
Mamfe	1959-61	63,500	
Victoria	1960-61	60,750	

Source: Page, “A priceless commodity”, 2000, p.170.

Note: In the end, the British government did drive through the construction of a number of urban water systems in the late 1950s, though they depended much on money raised locally. Construction works started after the Second World War in 1945, and progressed as time went on. By 1960, major constructions of water sources were at its peak. Even though with these projects, water was still insufficient to supply all.

It is worthy to note that, much of the money was found locally, either from the taxes raised by Native Authorities or from revenue of the nationalized plantation (Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC)).³⁹⁹ Any funds from the British government were only added after the community had done their best to raise local funds for development. In total, 36% of funds were raised locally at the end of the 50s. This was a real British development policy, which aimed at developing a sense of ownership to community members.

³⁹⁹Interview with Jackson B. Mbinkar, 40 years, Teaching, Mbam Nkum, 30/07/2020.

During the colonial period, self-help community development efforts took a coercive turn. Communities received technical assistance and imported materials such as galvanized pipes, valves and zincs in exchange for donating their labour and local materials, such as timber, sand, stones, and contributing money. Apparently, this development option was most beneficial to the British since it cost less.⁴⁰⁰ However, looking forward to independence, the priority given to urban areas was problematic. Firstly, the proportion of the national population resident in the rural areas of Cameroon was higher than that in urban areas. Nevertheless, this proportion went down in the 1980s, and by 1990, it further dropped. It is therefore clear that despite the high level of urbanization, Cameroon remained largely rural. For this reason, development destined to the majority had to take into consideration rural areas.⁴⁰¹

Secondly, it was realized by the British Administration that a dangerous gap existed in the development levels of both the urban and rural areas, which threatened the political and social stability of the territory. Hence, its development could not be completed with the singular act of developing the urban areas at the detriment of the rural areas, which supplies the urban areas with food and labour.⁴⁰² Disheartening as it may sound, the rural areas are characterized by pervasive and endemic poverty, made manifest by wide spread hunger, malnutrition, poor health, general lack of access to formal education, as compared to their urban counterparts.⁴⁰³

Thirdly, it is being recognized that, the problems of urban centres cannot be solved unless those of the rural areas are solved, or at least contained. Despite the efforts made in the past to effect development at the rural areas, the conditions of the rural areas did not really improve rather, they deteriorated as a result of the absence of suitable social amenities such as water sources.⁴⁰⁴

From the explanations above, it is worthy to note that the British colonial government was only willing to support community water schemes, only if the citizens were going to generate the capital as compared to the Germans. The British understood better the meaning of trusteeship

⁴⁰⁰Fonchingong and Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance", 2002, pp.83-86.

⁴⁰¹Interview with Joseph Fai chila, 55 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 01/08/2020.

⁴⁰² E.R Chadwick, *Community development, West African Affairs series*, London, Bureau of Current Affairs, 1951, pp.15-16.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 17-19.

⁴⁰⁴ C. Acho-Chi, "Human interference and environmental instability: addressing the environmental consequences of rapid urban growth in Bamenda, Cameroon", *Journal of Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.10, No.2, pp.165-179.

over Cameroon as they were aware that, their reign in Cameroon was temporary and that communities will probably need to invest in further development of their nation.⁴⁰⁵ Hence, participative development initiative should be imparted on the individual, the community, socio-cultural organization, institutions and governments.⁴⁰⁶ Colonial policy was geared towards producing autonomy. Also, self-help should have its roots within the economic and social-cultural milieu, within which it was to be practiced. It is the internal dynamics of this socio-cultural and political praxis that motivated the achievement of development goals, “If the people are given too much assistance, their morale will be killed. It has been proved over and over again... that too much financial assistance demoralizes and pauperizes people. Giving villagers money kills the spirit of self-help”⁴⁰⁷. “It is not the model village, but the model villager who is our aim... we do not accept that better conditions create better citizens, working for better conditions”⁴⁰⁸.

What we should retain from the above quotations is that, we were still in the 1950s, and these campaigns were basically in the British part of Cameroon. It is worthy to note that, the scheme was not initially very successful in Cameroon because, lots of people thought that voluntary labour was another sort of forced labour.⁴⁰⁹ Even so, the first community water project undertaken was near Tiko in 1950. It succeeded even without the support of the local council. The success of the project convinced the administrators of this part of Cameroon on the importance of community development. Consequently, this method was adopted as the rural development strategy of the West Cameroon government after independence.

After examining the role played by the British in the development of water in the Bamenda Grassfields, we shall now look at community development under the West Cameroon Government.

⁴⁰⁵ Sanguv, “Institutional changes”, pp.67-73.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Findo Alphones, 52 years, Teacher, Nkambe, 31/08/2020.

⁴⁰⁷ G. Sanguv Ngefor, “Institutional changes” pp.66-100.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.* pp.67-69.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Sabastine Kiyung, 56 years, Businessman/Hotel Manager, Tourist, 22/08/2020.

3. Community Development under the West Cameroon Government 1960-1972

After 1961, the people of Cameroon expected their new African government to give them something. One of the things the people requested for was potable water.

The government is the father of all, and as a father, she can never get fed up with the continual appeals of her children. We hope therefore that, our present appeal will in no way incur your wrath, as it happens to have been made on the constraint of certain unbearable circumstances, which humanly speaking, are beyond our control. To mention a few, there has been continuous exodus of school children from our dear NA School Bova, which had been set up here by your government, for the benefit of the community. Apart from that, most marriages have boiled down to abrupt divorces, thus bringing to a definite halt the procreation of the human race in this sector of our territory. The only reason for these divorces and school leaving stems from this water problem, as both the women and the school children have to travel long distances to fetch water in order to live⁴¹⁰

In response to these demands and in order to protect their limited financial resources, whilst improving the lives of their citizens, the government decided to use the community development approach, as initiated by President Ahidjo.

My dear countrymen, now that we are independent and self-governing, we have to work harder than before if we are to prosper. This means that, we have to use God-given hands to the full, for as the book of God says, Heaven helps those who help themselves. In the discussions that follow shortly, I will like this idea of self-help to come foremost in our minds.⁴¹¹

Initially, they were helped by SATA/HELVETAS (a Swiss NGO). After few years, the West Cameroon government received financial support from Yaounde for community development, through a scheme called Minor Rural Equipment grants. as President Ahidjo said;

The government wishes in this way to break with the passive attitude that is due to the alluring concept of a providential state... the Minor equipment Formula is capable of initiating that permanent exchange of views between the base and the summit, which the formulation and execution of the Development Plan demands.⁴¹²

The East Cameroon government showed its love for the community development strategy applied in West Cameroon. Many contracts were signed with SATA/ HELVETAS and its office was moved from Buea to Yaounde, but it didn't work.⁴¹³ However, some officials disagreed

⁴¹⁰Page, "A priceless commodity", pp.175-176.

⁴¹¹*Ibid*, pp.178-180

⁴¹²Page, "A priceless commodity"191-194.

⁴¹³ HELVETAS Cameroon, *Water Management committee training manual*, Bamenda, 2003, pp.20-24.

about whether communities had the technical capacities to run their water supplies.⁴¹⁴ While some Swiss and Cameroonian government officials were convinced that projects identified, planned, executed and managed by the community, outlive those imposed by a benefactor with little or no community participation, the engineers in the Public Works Department were skeptical for example O.B. Sendze, the senior Cameroonian engineer in the PWD, disagreed with a Swiss engineer from SATA/HELVETAS who was convinced that;

The community can undertake their own maintenance effectively, we do not share this flattering view... it does not seem feasible to us that this community, that found it so difficult to use wells properly will suddenly be able to maintain such a complicated water system on their own.⁴¹⁵

However, despite this disagreement, the government of West Cameroon aimed to develop every community by encouraging definite self-help activities of communities, to see the impact of these dynamic local community resources in the attainment of project goals.⁴¹⁶ As in colonial days, capital expenditure by the West Cameroon administration was conditional, on the provision of labour and materials by the community. If communities didn't supply labour and materials, the West Cameroon government withdrew its grants. In addition, communities were expected to contribute 30% of the finances.⁴¹⁷

Officials and CD/SATA argued that, "It is not advisable for the government to sponsor a water project from start to finish. This will induce the people to relax and they might not think it is in their place to care for it".⁴¹⁸ It is one of the most fundamental principles of this approach that, "A community which knows it will be solely responsible for its water supply, will be much more careful with its drinking water than if this were being managed by the government".⁴¹⁹ Most of the new projects were operated through gravity using spring sources. The first system built this way after independence was at Ekona, and many other systems were inaugurated within the next six years.⁴²⁰ This can be seen on table

⁴¹⁴Interview with Aloysius Chin, 102 years, Farmer/Tapper, Kumbo, 23/08/2020.

⁴¹⁵O. Shey Sendze, *History of the Kumbo water supply*, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., 2002, pp.33-35.

⁴¹⁶Interview with Balten Fai Nyuyfoni, 25 years, Medical Doctor, Hospital Roundabout/Bamenda, 03/08/2020.

⁴¹⁷Interview with Eugene Suilareng Kibu, 41 years, Teacher, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

⁴¹⁸ HELVETAS Cameroon, *Village water supply caretaker's manual*, Bamenda, 2004, pp.34-40.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.43-56.

⁴²⁰ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.63-68.

7. CD/SATA Helvetas water supplies 1964-1970

Divisions	Water points (springs) built	Water schemes built	Water systems under construction	Water systems planned
Momo	9	2	0	0
Mezam	17	0	1	1
Menchum	11	0	0	0
Bui	7	1	2	2
Donga and Mantung	17	1	1	1
Totals	70	16	7	6

Source: CD/SATA Helvetas water supplies 1964-1970

Note: what this table shows is that projects were equally divided between the North West Province, regardless of the big difference in social organization, between hierarchical societies with chiefs and less stratified societies without chiefs. Officially, communities had to pay for the maintenance of the constructions, but they hardly did.

After the construction of the unitary state in 1972, the CD model, working with SATA/Helvetas continued but slowed down as the Yaounde government funded SCAN WATER⁴²¹ (A private company), to build rural water supplies. Helvetas also became a bit frustrated with their projects in South West Cameroon because less was done in community projects, and she thus decided to focus only on the North West because those communities participated more. The economic crisis of the 80s reduced the purchasing power of citizens and greatly affected their contributions to maintenance work.⁴²²

The colonial legacy was adapted to new circumstances and the precise words that made up the community development discords were appropriated to suit new context. Nevertheless, it is the

⁴²¹The Cameroon Water Utilities Corporation (CAMWATER), created in 2005, is a company with public capital, endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy. Placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Water and Energy, and the financial supervision of the Ministry in charge of Finance, CAMWATER manages on behalf of the state of Cameroon the goods and rights assigned to the public service of the drinking water in urban and peri-urban areas.

⁴²²J.M Tifuh, "Human activities and its impact on water resources in Batibo Sub Division", Masters Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2002, pp.113-115.

difference between British and French colonial ideas and not ethnicity, which explains why community development was well carried out in some parts of Cameroon and not others.⁴²³

From 1961-1972, Cameroon had a Federal Constitution and water supply came under the control of the state of West Cameroon.⁴²⁴ The investments of the late 1950s had generally established an adequate urban water infrastructure in terms of coverage. The systems in Tombel and Mamfe were completed using funds from the colonial period. However, within a decade, the infrastructure was considered inadequate. By 1971, Federal government accepted the fact that, the only lasting solution to this vexing problem of shortage of water laid in the complete reconstruction of most of this water supply schemes on modern lines with provisions to accommodate future demands.⁴²⁵

On the one hand, this was because of the rapid urbanization and changing water consumption patterns, which increase demand.⁴²⁶ In Buea for example, increasing domestic demand was growing so fast that restrictions had been placed on water used by 1963. The Victoria supply, which had been constructed in 1961, was designed for 9000 people. By 1972, the population was around 17000 and the system was highly inadequate.⁴²⁷ On the other hand, it was because the government of West Cameroon had limited funds for the Federal Government in Yaounde, so that there was a shortage of investments to meet the new demands. The failure of the government in Buea to substantially increase the revenue from water risk, reduce their chances of raising private capital or qualifying for aid,⁴²⁸ as seen on table 8.

⁴²³ Nfi, *Essentials of Cameroon History*, pp.97-100.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.* pp.153-157.

⁴²⁵ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.55-57.

⁴²⁶ Interview with Peter Yaah, 50 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 05/08/2020.

⁴²⁷ M. Leach, R. Mearns and L. Scoones, "Challenges to community based sustainable development: Dynamics, Entitlements, Institutions", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No.4, 1997, pp.14-18.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.67-69.

8. Construction of piped urban water supplies in west Cameroon completed between 1961-1972

Urban water supplies	Years
Mamfe (extension)	1962-63
Tombel	1963-64
Buea (extension)	1968-69
Bamenda (extension)	1969
Banso (kumbo)	1969-72
Kumba (extension)	1972

Source : Sanguv, “Institutional Changes”, p.71.

Note: From the table above, it can be seen that, 6 urban water supply schemes were constructed in West Cameroon after independence. These sources served the population, in addition to those constructed during the colonial period.

In 1972, the Federal Constitution was abandoned and Cameroon became a unitary state.⁴²⁹

Though this was a decade of rapid national economic growth and personal prosperity for many urban households, there was little investment in water supply. In 1968, with the creation of the National Water Company of Cameroon (*SNEC*), the government handed over to this monopoly the distribution of drinking water in urban areas.⁴³⁰ Nevertheless, the population continued to be responsible for their management. The contract between *SNEC* and the Cameroon government formally seemed to be a conception.

This notwithstanding, the rights and obligation of each party let an affermage.⁴³¹ It embarked on some small projects in the urban water infrastructure in Anglophone Cameroon including the new intake and treatment works at Limbe formally known as Victoria, opened in the 1990s and minor extensions in Kumba.⁴³² That is why *SNEC* was eventually limited to financial equipment necessary for the operation of the system meanwhile, it was the state which was responsible for

⁴²⁹ Lon, *Essentials of Cameroon History*, pp.173-176.

⁴³⁰ C. Missem Fai, “The impact of a water supply project on the society: The case of Kumbo, 1965-2013”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, pp.31-33.

⁴³¹ An affermage is a contract granting use or occupation of property during a specified time for a specified payment. It is binding agreement between two or more persons that is enforced by law.

⁴³² Interview with Susan Fanfon Yah, 58 years, Book-Keeper, Mbiim, 29/07/2020.

financing new infrastructure, which was sold directly to SNEC.⁴³³ Although at the beginning SNEC obtained several loans for construction, the financial problems of the company increased constantly.

From the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, the water infrastructure was transformed across the whole of Cameroon. The target was to supply every town in Cameroon with treated water that met World Health Organization (WHO) standards in terms of quality, coverage, quantity, continuity and cost. There were 19 individual projects in the North West and South West Regions and 7000 million FCFA was spent in the North West Region as a whole. No existing urban system was left completely untouched, though in some cases (such as Kumbo and Buea) the changes were limited.⁴³⁴

The next part of our work shall dwell on the customary laws guiding water during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

B. Customary Laws Guiding Water in the Past till 1998

This section will bring out norms that guided water resources from pre-colonial times till date. It shall also show the divergence between customary laws (water considered as a social good, mediating spot with ancestors, source of life) and statutory laws (Water given economic status), has hindered water governance in Cameroon, leading to consistent conflicts. The traditional African societies were strongly animist before the spread of Islam and Christianity. The animist religion was based on natural an element among which was water.⁴³⁵ These traditional societies had their own vision of water, which differs from the state vision of water. Water is used with a religious sense by the customers to evoke the spirits of the dead, so that they watch over the community. As an element in the democratization process that occurred during the 1990s and even before, most African countries have established a legislative system, governing various branches of industry, including water. Cameroon elaborated and implemented a law concerning

⁴³³ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo water supply*, pp.29-30.

⁴³⁴ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.72-86.

⁴³⁵ M.L. Bouguerra, *L'eau et sa gouvernance. Pour un bien commun de l'humanité*, Paris, les Editions de l'Atelier, 2009, pp.67-70.

the Land and Property Reform (state law), clearly defining the water rights and the role of the state as the owner of some water resources⁴³⁶.

1. Customary laws relevant to water management during the Colonial period

The general perception about traditional structures is an image of institutions whose norms, values and internal organization, date hundred years back. While this may be true in some cases, traditional societies like all societies, inevitably change over time. In Cameroon, the enforcement of customary laws lies in the hands of customary institutions.⁴³⁷ The most powerful customary institution that regulates access and control to natural resources is the Village head (The *Fon*). This is a very important and respected village network, in charge of legislation and adjudication.⁴³⁸

One of the main reasons to incorporate traditional structures is to improve local governance, particularly in countries like Cameroon, where decentralization attempts to establish strong structures at the local level have failed. Another reason is that, many policies have not been included and because they have resisted some of these policies.⁴³⁹ The source of the legitimacy of traditional leaders in historical times goes back to the colonial period. They were usually considered not only as political authorities, but also religious authorities, or as Fathers and Mothers of a company.⁴⁴⁰ Traditional leaders claimed legitimacy in the eyes of their people because, they are regarded as incarnations of history, culture, laws and values, religion and even the remains of the pre-colonial sovereignty of their people.⁴⁴¹

In many traditional communities, there was little or no individual water or land ownership. The allocation of land to individuals and the rights and duties related to the allocation of resources, was part of the functions of traditional authorities.⁴⁴² Quarter heads presented problems and gave

⁴³⁶ O. Saidou Baba and D. Datt Tewari, "The development of water management institutions and the provision for water delivery in Cameroon: History and Futures", *GJDS*, Vol.9, No.2, 2012, pp.80-88.

⁴³⁷*Ibid*, pp.90-94.

⁴³⁸ P.N. Mzeka, *The core culture of Nso*, Agawam, MA. Paul Radin, 1980, pp.78-98.

⁴³⁹ C. Che Fonchingong and L. Fonjong, "The concept of sel-reliance in community development initiatives in Cameroon Grassfields", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol.12, No.2, 2003, pp.55-60.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65 years, Traditional Authority/Farmer, Nso, 03/08/2020.

⁴⁴¹ J. Ambe Njoh, "The impact of colonization on access to improved water and sanitation facilities in African cities", *ELSEVIER*, 2011, pp.208-209.

⁴⁴² Interview with Esau Akoko, 44 years, Teacher, Njikwa, 07/08/2020.

their views and finally, the chiefs gave a final decision based on the views of the majority. During the time of water scarcity, communities reinforced rules that regulated the amount of water drawn in public and private water sources. For example, in the dry seasons, water was scarce and the little water available was shared to everyone. At this time, communities practiced rationing for each household.⁴⁴³ The village elders made the decisions regarding water management rules, and then the villagers were in charge of monitoring the water sources and making sure that the rules were followed.⁴⁴⁴

More so, most people cooperated with their quarter heads to monitor those who broke the rules. Defaulters could face serious public humiliation, sanctions or fines for minor offences. For serious or repeated offences, ostracism was used or the individual sent on exile.⁴⁴⁵ Quarter and village meetings were held to organize communal work for water development and management, and those who did not take part were fined. Rules for managing water sources were made by the chief and his counselors, and made public through town criers. Customary laws related to equitable water access were mainly natural and undeveloped water sources.⁴⁴⁶

Also, religious and cultural practices such as initiation ceremonies and baptism were practiced and still go on till date. We learnt from respondents that, some water sources are still considered as sacred and set aside for the ancestors on particular days, which they believe their ancestors came out to collect food and water.⁴⁴⁷ Consequently, the sites are protected and access to the community restricted. Respondents also revealed that, water plays a crucial part in curing illnesses, the expulsion of evil spirits and the removing of bad luck. Hence, water was and is vital in the belief of certain individuals in the community as it nourishes both the body and the spirit.⁴⁴⁸ Even though the policy did not intend to disrupt religious and cultural practices, it was crucial that these practices were acknowledged by local management structures, so as to avoid disturbance of the socio-cultural fabric of these communities. The communities still perform traditional rituals especially before the planting season, and at the end of the year, (especially in

⁴⁴³ V.F. Nzole, "Problems of Rural water supply, case study: Muea water scheme", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2005, pp.60-65.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp.65-67.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with Samson Tafu Shey, 60 years, Teacher, Ndu, 09/08/2020.

⁴⁴⁶ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.73-77.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Peter Tidze Fokum, 67 years, Retired Civil Servant, Kumbo, 31/07/2020.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Ignatius Tadzenyuy, 52 years, Businessman, Bamenda, 22/08/2020.

preparation of the annual dance which takes place in Bali), and before the celebration of the funeral of *Fons* after every seven years in Kumbo.⁴⁴⁹

Furthermore, traditional communities believed that, water was owned by god, therefore, everyone has the right to access it.⁴⁵⁰ The practice of rituals was cited as a sign of obedience and respect to their ancestors. However, it is important to understand that, cultural practices and values were gradually eroding in some ethnic groups. Respect of the spirits has greatly reduced, with the invasion of more Western styles.⁴⁵¹ The proximity of these areas to the large urban areas and their rapid urbanization are resulting in modern practices and behaviours, infiltrating traditional ways of life.

We also realized that, some streams, rivers and other water sources as well as their surrounding areas, were considered dangerous, if the traditional rules were neglected, especially if the river gods were angered.⁴⁵² Community also said that, people did not mourn when such incidence happen, because the ancestors had been angered. All they did was to perform certain rituals to appease the ancestors, so as to be able to at least retrieve the drowned body.⁴⁵³ State intervention in such places met with violent revolts, as the communities were convinced that their ancestors were being disturbed and could be rendered homeless, which will result in misfortunes in the village like bad harvest, incurable diseases and the absence of rain. They feared also that the state intrusion could eventually suppress their culture.⁴⁵⁴

From our study, we discovered that, traditional healers continue to play a significant and influential role in the community. For example, the traditional healers conduct ceremonies at certain sites along rivers, where they believe that the water spirits are present.⁴⁵⁵ There are occasions when secret societies, traditional healers and their followers spend days at these sites,

⁴⁴⁹ E. Tangie Ngenong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflicts against the Tikars of Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C.1950-1998", Masters of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, 2007, pp.43-47.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp.48-50.

⁴⁵¹ Interview with Eugene Suilareng Kibu, 41 years, Teacher, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

⁴⁵² A. Fonteh Amungwa, "The evolution of conflicts related to natural resource management in Cameroon", *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol.35, No.1, 2011, pp.56-61.

⁴⁵³ Interview with Kinkoh Anthony Bah, 56 years, Civil Servant, Nkor-Noni, 29/07/2020.

⁴⁵⁴ Fonchingong and Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance", p.56.

⁴⁵⁵ Page, "A priceless commodity", pp.175-189.

communicating with the water spirits. If anyone disappears at certain sites where the water spirits are believed to exist, the villages and family members were not allowed to mourn. Sometimes the disappearance of some community members was attributed to the fact that, water spirits were imparting knowledge and skills to them, which they will use in healing.⁴⁵⁶ We shall now look at the customary laws in relation to the post-colonial period

2. Customary laws of the Post-Colonial Period

After independence in 1961, we realized that, customary laws in relation to water are adjusting even though with much difficulty. Many traditional communities are losing their cultural and traditional practices and many, especially as the youths have repudiated them in favour of modern ways of living. However, there were cultural and religious practices identified during the fieldwork, which are still relevant to water management.

Development laws guiding schemes were reported to be enacted only by the local communities.⁴⁵⁷ Firstly, communities form groups that organize themselves to plant live or dead fences around water sources. The fences protect the water source from strong winds and animals that may destroy the pumps, sedimentation tanks, create a boundary and a land tenure mark for the area under protection.⁴⁵⁸ Secondly, each community had specific rules guiding its water sources, depending on the type (river, spring or wells), and called meetings to determine water prices, which differ in each community.⁴⁵⁹

On the other hand, communities were hesitant to let go of their norms and practices, and seem not to realize that water schemes today demanded modern skills.⁴⁶⁰ Up to 1998, customary laws existed and predominated in most communities. Hence, realizing and formalizing customary laws can help address the problem of lack of human resources. We realize that customary laws and institutions are most influential in water access, allocation and settling water use disputes.

⁴⁵⁶*Ibid*, pp.190-193.

⁴⁵⁷ G. Njoka, "Kumbo water supply systems 1968-1992: A Historical Perspective, Kumbo Central", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1993, pp.46-50.

⁴⁵⁸Interview with Immaculate Wirba, 47, Teacher/Trader, Kumbo, 22/08/2020.

⁴⁵⁹Interview with Yefon Ntani, 50 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 05/08/2020.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Peter Mbu Lawong, 37years, Teacher, Kumbo, 18/08/2020.

For example, most laws enacted by communities, are consistent with the customary laws, and are focused on prevention of water pollution and abuse, and equitable water access.⁴⁶¹

There is a mastery of customary laws by communities perhaps due to the participatory nature of the population, meanwhile, people were unaware of statutory laws.⁴⁶² Most conflicts were and are still settled at quarter levels and customary institutions. Thus, local institutions for water management may be empowered and motivated to increase their participation and cooperation in achieving equity for access to water and prevention of water of water pollution, as a way to reduce the cost of water management, using statutory institutions.⁴⁶³

Thus, it is important to consider these indigenous beliefs and practices, and representations to water should be incorporated in management decisions, relevant to the conversation and protection of water resources, as they contribute to community's spiritual life. Some of the violent reactions of these communities can find their explanations in their attachments to these areas and the disruption that can be caused by state interference.⁴⁶⁴

Effectively, what characterizes Cameroonian water law is the existence, parallel to written laws, a set of customary norms. Worst still, as a result of its colonial heritage, Cameroon has a plural legal system, the Common Law and the Penal Law in addition to customary laws.⁴⁶⁵ In a country where the majority of the population is ignorant of statutory laws, this norms turn to supplant the official written legislation in relation to the exploitation of the water resources by the local inhabitants. During our interviews, the traditional leaders affirmed that the state is powerless without those who know the true identity of the people.⁴⁶⁶ They therefore act as intermediaries between the population and the administration. Accounts from various leaders go that, no ambition of creating acceptable judicial norms can bypass the customary law.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶¹ B. Page, "A priceless commodity: The production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999", PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.176-178.

⁴⁶² Interview with Jeanette Wirtsen, 45, Nurse, Kumbo, 14/08/2020.

⁴⁶³ Page, "A Priceless commodity", pp.177-180.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Gariba Mohammed Nyaso, 44years, Teacher, Nkambe, 06/08/2020.

⁴⁶⁵ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands: The case of Bali, Kumbo, Bafou small cities", PhD Thesis, University of Toulouse, 2014, pp.77-100.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 101-110.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65 years, Traditional Authority/Farmer, Nso, 03/08/2020.

Within rural communities, chiefs and their headmen were the main contact persons for the colonial government as well as any other outsiders, intervening in issues concerning water supply facilities. Specific tasks, such as operations and maintenance of water supply systems, were usually delegated to members of the Native Authority (NA), who then formed relevant committees in the village.⁴⁶⁸ However, during the colonial era, many of the traditional leaders were co-opted by the state or corrupted into furthering the aims of the colonial government. The ongoing dislocation of people disrupted traditional forms of governance and customary laws. In many instances, the traditional authorities were viewed as agents of the state, facilitating the execution of policies and laws.⁴⁶⁹ Despite the erosion and corruptive nature of the heads of these traditional institutions, customary values and practices have persisted and in areas like Kumbo, Bali and Bafou, traditional institutions and management systems are still functional and respected.⁴⁷⁰

Looking at the new legal framework governing water management in Cameroon since independence, the role of traditional leaders in Cameroon is unclear. The *Fon* is the senior traditional leader and his position can only be occupied through inheritance.⁴⁷¹ Quarter heads are elected and are mainly responsible for monitoring activities in the community and giving feedback to the *Fon*. The national water act does not explicitly recognize customary water management structures, practices and laws in the present governance system. Although recognized by the Cameroonian Constitution, chief's authority and power in terms of water management are not augmented by legislation.⁴⁷² Furthermore, in cases of conflicts, the legislature suppresses existing customary laws, used by traditional leadership and amends it or replaces it by statutory laws. This establishes the superiority of statutory laws.

Colonial and post-colonial periods, have influenced these traditional forms of legitimacy in different ways. During the colonial period, the legitimacy of traditional leaders was strengthened. Although they had control over their own rites, culture, use of constitutional and legal based on the imperial power order, they sometimes used the traditional chiefs as their local

⁴⁶⁸O. Shey Sendze, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., 2002, pp.41-43.

⁴⁶⁹*Ibid*, pp.46-48.

⁴⁷⁰Interview with Fames Ndzi Wibah, 72 years, Coaching (Now retired), Ndu, 31/06/2020.

⁴⁷¹ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.78-98.

⁴⁷²Interview with Augustine Wara, 56 years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

representatives.⁴⁷³ In these cases, traditional leaders were equipped with the recognition and legitimacy of the colonizers, and at the same time they enjoy those of their own people. Traditional leaders were responsible for managing natural resources such as water, and administering other functions such as mediating conflicts and allocating land.⁴⁷⁴ The next part of our work shall look at the water management frameworks in Cameroon.

C. Water Management Frameworks in Cameroon between Tradition and Modernity

Several groups participated in the management of water resources in Cameroon. Among them were the government, traditional authority, community, water users associations and independent organizers. Other candidates include the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors of the economy and another set consist of the environment, animals and plants. However, these groups can be tied to two broad appellations, such as water administrator and water user. The way in which the water administrator relates with the water user, has necessitated a framework with an articulated set of laws and reliable machinery. This forms the basis of the discussion on water management legal and administrative framework.

1. Legal Framework

In Cameroon, all-natural resources belong to the state.⁴⁷⁵ The government administers these resources through laws and deliberations of the National Assembly (NA). Water is no exception to the rule. Considered as a common good to which people in the country are entitled, in order to live decent lives, parliamentarians who represent the people debate issues of water resource management at the plenary session of the NA, approve deliberations and pass laws for the country.⁴⁷⁶ The different laws and deliberations put in place by the Parliament to address issues of water resources and sanitation management in the country over time are explored below.

⁴⁷³ I.C Browne, *The economies of community water supply in Freachman R.M, GarveyM.C eds., Water and health in hot climate*, London, Wiley and Sons, 1997, pp.123-125.

⁴⁷⁴ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.31-36.

⁴⁷⁵ S. Baba Oumar and D. Datt Tewari, "The Development of water management institutions and the provision for water delivery in Cameroon: History and Futures", *GDJS*, Vol.9, No.2, 2012, pp.82-90.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with Asah Spilan Fai, 50 years, Police officer, Kikaikelaki, 29/07/2020.

Deliberation No.18/50⁴⁷⁷ as adopted in the plenary session of the Cameroon Representative Assembly (CRA) approved the convention project regarding the exploitation of water distribution service for the city of Douala by *la Société Eaux et Assainissement* and the guidelines applicable to subscribers as of 1st January 1950. Within this framework, Deliberation No.428/51 of 29th October 1951 of the CRA, adjusted water rates for ships in Cameroons ports sand wharfs to between 80 and 320 FCFA per ton, depending on delivery station with effect from 01/01/1952. Also, Deliberation No.335/51/B of the plenary session of 29 October 1951 of the CRA, fixed water rates in Cameroon on the average to 22 FCFA for households, 20 FCFA for industries, 14 FCFA for public services and 60 FCFA for ports.⁴⁷⁸

Furthermore, Deliberation No.193/53 as approved in the plenary session of 13th May 1953 of the Cameroon Territorial Assembly (CTA), supported Agreement No.5 to the convention of 9th December 1947, signed between Territory and the Colonial Electric Power Company (CEPC), to grant the city of Nkongsamba a public potable water supply system.⁴⁷⁹ Equally, Deliberation No.195/53 as adopted in the plenary session of 13th May 1953 of the CTA approved Agreement No.5 to the convention of 9th December 1947, signed between the Territory and the CEPC, to avail a public potable water supply system to the city of Yaounde. In addition, Deliberation No.282/55 as accepted in the plenary session of 22nd November 1955 of the CTA endorsed Accord No.6 to the convention of 9th December 1947 for the management of the electric power and water supply network in the towns of Cameroon. Also, Deliberation No.281/55 of the plenary session of 22nd November 1955 of the CTA backed up Accord No.6 to the convention of 9th December 1947, for the management of the network for a supply of electric power and water in Yaounde.⁴⁸⁰

Beyond the colonial era, law No.64/LF/3 of 6th April 1964, outlined the relation between the owner and exploiter of mineral substances and conditions for the acquisition and occupation of

⁴⁷⁷Baba, "The development of water management", pp.82-89.

⁴⁷⁸*Ibid*, pp.90-98.

⁴⁷⁹A.J. Njoh, "Colonial spatial development policies, economic instability and urban public administration in Cameroon cities", www.sciencedirect.com/science, 21st August 2020, 1:45pm, pp.5-15.

⁴⁸⁰A.J. Njoh, "Colonial spatial development policies", pp.16-17.

land applicable to the exploitation of springs and mineral waters in Cameroon.⁴⁸¹ In pursuance of the cause for adequate water delivery in the country, the West Cameroon Urban Water Authority Law of 15th March 1971 established the Urban Water Authority in West Cameroon province, to provide water for domestic and industrial uses along the development and planning of water services to communities.⁴⁸² The law conferred onto the water Authority the responsibility to fix water rates and charges for misuse of the resource and water systems in the province. Two years later, bold steps as epitomized by law No.73/16 of 7th December 1973 were taken to improve the living standard of people across the country.⁴⁸³ Therefore, Law No.73/16 of 7th December 1973 laid down rules and regulations governing spring and spa waters considered them as government property, and subjected the exploration and bolting of such waters by industries to authorization duly obtained from the Ministry of Mines.⁴⁸⁴ The same law prosecutes contraventions for 3years jail, 1000000 FCFA or both. These were some of the laws enacted during the first decade of independence period of the country to manage water resource.

In the second decade of independence, more matured ideas were conceived and implemented. For instance, law No. 84/13 of 5th December 1984 laying down regulations governing water resources entrusted the management and protection of natural resources to the state.⁴⁸⁵ Dispositions of the Law categorized water into state waters including groundwater, rivers, lakes and sea, and non-state waters consisting of water from wells, springs and boreholes harnessed in favour of the public and rain water falling on private land.⁴⁸⁶ However, non-state waters may be declared public and incorporated into state waters, after due compensation of the owner by the state if the need arises. More so, the law gave every citizen the right to public water use provided by the latter would not prevent other users the access to water and also would not cause any harm to the fauna and flora.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸¹ A.J Njoh, “Determinants of success in community self-help projects: The case of the Kumbo Water Supply Scheme in Cameroon”, *Journal of International Development Planning Review*, Vol.28, No.3, pp.381-390.

⁴⁸²Oumar and Tewari, “The development of water management”, pp.82-83.

⁴⁸³ A. Agrawal, “Common property institutions and sustainable governance of resources”, *Journal of world development*, Vol.29, 2001, pp.1649-1657.

⁴⁸⁴*Ibid*, pp.1658-1660.

⁴⁸⁵Interview with Motika Felix, 34 years, Court Registrar, P.C.H.S Junction, 27/07/2020.

⁴⁸⁶ B. Page, “A priceless commodity, the production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999”, PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.75-87.

⁴⁸⁷*Ibid*, pp.88-90.

In addition to this, the law subjected the use of water for non-domestic activities to declaration, authorization or grant of concession from the state and charges users, based on the intensity of pressure of their economic activities on water resources. Also, the Law provided penalties ranging from 5 days to 6 months imprisonment, fines ranging from 10 thousand to 100 thousand FCFA or both on contraveners.⁴⁸⁸ In the same vein, Law No. 88/17 of 15th December 1988 defined the rights and royalties relating to the exploration and exploitation of springs, spa and thermal waters and subjected parties interested in the exploration and exploitation of such waters to payment of rights and royalties to the state.⁴⁸⁹ The law held the Ministry of Water and Energy responsible for its execution and assigned penalties worth 10 thousand FCFA fine, for delay in payment of royalties and payment of 50 percent of total Value of royalties for false declaration to the state.⁴⁹⁰

The third decade of sovereignty presents unusual tendencies that warranted prompt attention, openness and collaboration between water resource stakeholders. Owing to stiff competition for water use among users, degradation of the environment quality around the globe and high degree of water courses sharing between neighboring countries as exemplified between Cameroon, Chad on the Benue River, Cameroon and Chad on the Logone River, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger Republic on Lake Chad, the risk for water wars across the world has tremendously amplified.⁴⁹¹ The situation is worrying today and everyone tries to look for solutions through accredited institutions.

The following laws are attempts towards moderating the anticipated danger of water confrontation. Within this perspective, Law No. 90/016 of 16th August 1990 on mineral waters and sources modifying Law No. 88/018 of 16th December 1988 describes the rights and claims relating to the exploration and exploitation of mineral waters and spring waters.⁴⁹² Besides this, Law No. 95/06 of 30th January 1995 authorized the President of the Republic of Cameroon, to ratify the minutes on international boundaries demarcation in the Lake Chad. This law sought to

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp.90-91.

⁴⁸⁹ B. Page, *Naked Power*”, pp.57-59.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.60-63.

⁴⁹¹ Oumar and Tewari, “The development of water”, pp.84-88.

⁴⁹² Republic of Cameroon (RC), Law No.88/17 of 15/12/1988, legislative year 1988/1989, Yaounde, Cameroon National Assembly (CAN), date accessed 25/05/2021

foster cooperation and sympathy in the use of Lake Chad waters by populations of Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad, living in the vicinity of the Lake, to minimize the risk of conflicts in the region.⁴⁹³

More interestingly, Law No. 98/005 of 14th April 1998 embraces a broader view of water management scenario to lay down regulations governing water resources within the principles of environmental management. The law proclaims water as a common national resource to be directly managed and protected by the state or indirectly administered by regions and councils, on behalf of the state.⁴⁹⁴ Also the Law compelled the use of underground or surface water for commercial and industrial purposes to authorization and payment of royalties based on evaluation and conditions of withdrawals, expecting companies that have obtained approval from the state to exploit and dispense potable water to the public.⁴⁹⁵

Furthermore, the Law prohibits the pollution of water in any form that is prone to modify its quality, the quality of the environment and affect the life of plants and animals. Thus, the Law enjoined any party with services that may pollute water to take measures to control the side effects of such services in the society. Any moral or physical entity that causes damage in the society, owing to poor quality of water dispensed for consumption, is liable for repairs in compensation of the affected party.⁴⁹⁶

After the endorsement of the laws by the representatives of the people at the National Assembly, the executive arm of the government uses administrative procedures to enforce these laws and deliberations across the country. This arouses the discussion on water management administrative framework.

2. Administrative Framework

Various administrative acts were taken at different levels of the government to respond to water resource and sanitation management concerns in Cameroon. These acts were signed in the form of decrees and ordinances by the president and prime minister of the republic, and decisions or

⁴⁹³ RC, Law No.95/06 of 30/01/1995, Yaounde, Cameroon National Assembly (CAN), Date accessed 25/05/2021.

⁴⁹⁴ RC, Law No. 98/005 of 14/04/1998, legislative year 1997/1998, Yaounde, Cameroon National Assembly (CAN), Date accessed, 25/05/2021.

⁴⁹⁵Page, "A priceless commodity", pp.103-106.

⁴⁹⁶RC, Law No.98/005 of 14/04/1998.

service notes by the Governor General, Minister, Governor, Senior Divisional Officer and Divisional Officer. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Order No. 04 of 11th February 1950 to implement Deliberation No. 18/50 of 24 January 1950 of the Cameroon Representative Assembly (CRA) approved the convention signed between the Territory and *La Societédes Eaux et Assainissement*, relating to the exploitation of water distribution service for the city of Douala as of 1st January 1950.⁴⁹⁷ Besides, Order No. 65 of 4th January 1952 enforced Deliberation No. 335/51 of 29th October 1951 of the Permanent Commission of the CRA to fix water rates in Cameroon as of 1st January 1952.⁴⁹⁸

The independence era was characterized by the move towards the creation of a National Water Cooperation (SNEC) company for the country. In line with this philosophy, the Federal Decree No. 64/DF/326 of 14th August 1964 of the Federal Republic of Cameroon extended the convention between the country and the company *Electricité du Cameroun* to the *Société Nationale des Eaux du Cameroon*.⁴⁹⁹ Also, the Provincial Order No. 003/PO/GWS.16/S.2/SG/CAE of 30th March 1992 of South West Provincial Office, set up a local project committee for the follow up of the execution of the Bwassa, Likomba, Mapanja water supply project in the province. Likewise, Sub-divisional Order No. 97/93 of 16th July 1993 Of Akwaya sub-division specify decisions for taping water from the main pipelines of Akwaya water supply systems.

In line with government's pledge to protect water resources, Order No. 315/PO/G.42/114/PS of 15th November 2000 of Kupe Muanenguba prohibited farming and felling of trees around water catchment areas in the division.⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, Decree No. 2001/161/PM of 8th May 2001 of the Prime Ministry, defined the roles, organization and operation of the National Water Committee under the tutelage of the Ministry of Water Resources, thus revoking earlier dispositions of Decree No. 85/758 of 30th May 1985 on the creation of National Water Committee.⁵⁰¹ Also, the

⁴⁹⁷ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.30-40.

⁴⁹⁸ Oumar and Tewari, "The development of water", pp.86-90.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.92-94.

⁵⁰⁰ HELVETAS Cameroon, *Water protection: Project proposal for 14 water catchments protection in 7 communities in Bui Division*, Bamenda, 2002, pp.14-16.

⁵⁰¹ O.C Ruppel and E.D Kam Yogo, *Environmental law and policy in Cameroon- Towards making Africa the tree of life*, Vol.37, Germany, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, pp.49-111.

Service Note No. 198/MINEE/DEAU of 4th January 1999, of the Ministry of Water Resources, instituted an ad hoc committee to study and match text proposals for the execution of Law No. 98/005 of 14th April 1998, to lay down regulations governing water resources in Cameroon.⁵⁰²

Accordingly, Decree No.2001/164/PM of 8th May 2001 of the Prime Ministry set up the withdrawal conditions of surface and underground waters for commercial and industrial uses, while Decree No.2001/165/PM of 8th May 2001 of the Prime Ministry, outlined guidelines for protection of surface and underground waters against pollution. Also, Decree No.2001/216/PM of 2nd August 2001 of the Prime Ministry, set up a special trust fund for financing sustainable water and sanitation development projects while Decree No.2005/494 of 31st December 2005 of the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon created a patrimony company, the Cameroon Water Utilities Cooperation to plan, maintain infrastructures and ensure good delivery of portable water and sanitation services in urban and semi urban centers in Cameroon.

The legal and administrative frameworks could only yield satisfactory results when they are supported by administrative structures. The following section concentrates on structures put in place to administer water and sanitation matters over time in Cameroon.

D. Water Management Structures

Different types of structures were fashioned by different types of administrators to organize and manage the production and distribution of drinking water service across time in Cameroon. A review of these structures is as follows

1. Foundation Phase: Before 1959

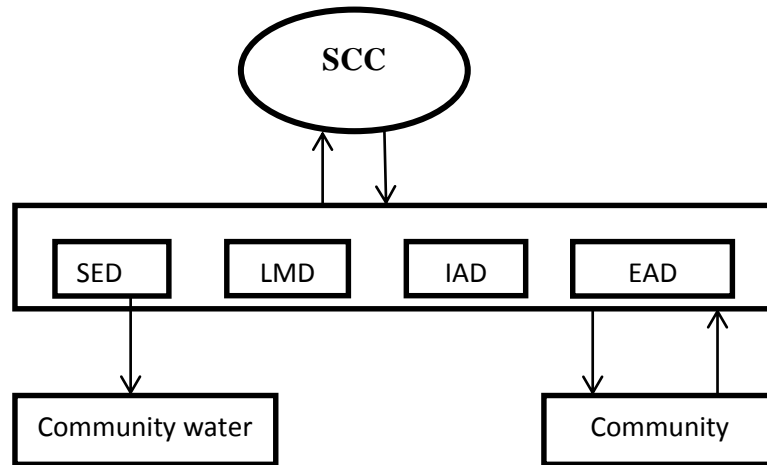
Prior to the arrival of the colonial administrators in Cameroon in the 1880s, all national resources, including water, were managed by local communities or villages. Each community had a Supreme Chief of Community (SCC), who was assisted by the Village Council (VC) to administer the resources in the community.⁵⁰³ The members of the VC were appointed to efficiently run the legal, social and economic matters of the community. The water management task was grouped under the portfolio of social and economic matters. The SCC was finally

⁵⁰²Oumar and Tewari, "The development of water", pp.87-100.

⁵⁰³Oumar and Tewari, "The development of water management", pp.87-89.

responsible for running the activities and resources of the village.⁵⁰⁴ The general tendency in the communities during the Pre-colonial times was for the village to participate in the provision of the communal water supply.⁵⁰⁵ The members of the community developed physical, material and financial means to dig and maintain wells in the villages, following a calendar of events designed by the VC.⁵⁰⁶ This institutional process is shown diagrammatically below in figure 1

1. The Institutional Process of Water, 1900-1959



SCC: Supreme Chief of Community
Legal Matters Delegate

SED: Social and Economic Matters Delegate
LMD: Legal Matters Delegate
IAD: Internal Affairs Delegate

EAD: External Affairs Delegate

Source: Oumar and Tewari, “The Development of Water Management Institutions”, p.87.

Note: The figure above shows how water was managed by local communities and villages. This was done by the SCC, LMD, EAD, SED and IAD. The members of the community also played their own part in the management and construction of water schemes.

The arrival of the colonial masters in Cameroon, weakened the power of the Supreme Chief of Community (SCC), and subjected the indigenous people to the colonial rule that was chiefly designed to explore, exploit and export local resources of the colonies.⁵⁰⁷ Then the colonial administration gradually took control of all natural resources in the country and managed water

⁵⁰⁴*Ibid*, pp.89-92.

⁵⁰⁵Interview with Jaff Tata Usheni, 58 years, Baker, Mbve, 14/08/2020.

⁵⁰⁶Interview with Serophine Wirba, 57 years, Farmer, P.C.H.S Junction, 21/07/2020.

⁵⁰⁷Njoh, “Barriers to community participation in development planning: Lessons from the Mutengene (Cameroon) self-help project”, *Community Development Journal*, Vol.37, No.3, pp.234-236.

resources to fulfill minimum quality and quantity requirements for a decent life, in order to accelerate the exploitation of natural economic resources. The colonial administration thus put in place a network of water resources development and management, to create more water supply points across the country.⁵⁰⁸

The colonial government developed a three-tier model to organize and manage the delivery of drinking water in the country. At the top tier, the Secretary General of the Colony (SGC), had the oversight of the entire scheme in the country, and controlled the budget.⁵⁰⁹ The operationalization of the scheme was devolved to the High Commissioner (HC) at the provincial level. The HC was made responsible for overall management of drinking water in the province.⁵¹⁰ This constituted the second tier. The third tier was at the district level, where activities were supervised and monitored by the District Officers (DOs) in both rural and urban areas.⁵¹¹

Furthermore, to facilitate the development of water structures for drinking water delivery, the colonial administration created the Public Works Department (PWD) to provide engineering and other technical support to the community.⁵¹² For this purpose, the groundwater was considered as a major source for drinking water supply, and emphasis was heavily placed on digging boreholes and supplying necessary technology to the community.⁵¹³

An examination of the process of water provisioning and delivery in the foundation phase portrays a top-bottom approach, where communities are usually confronted with decisions from their administration in which they have little or no inputs as epitomized in the three-tier model in figure 2.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp.237-240.

⁵⁰⁹ S.N Kulshreshtha, "World Water resources and regional vulnerability: Impact of future changes", www.iiasa.ac.at/publications/documents/rr-93-010.pdf, 24/09/2020, 11:30am, pp.18-29.

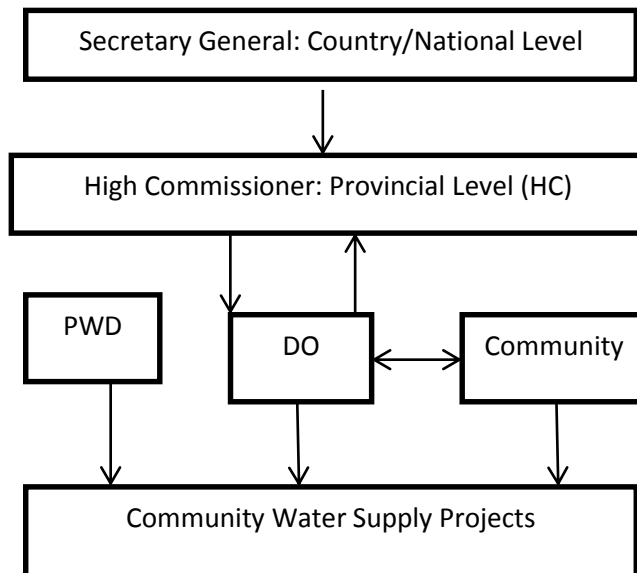
⁵¹⁰ Njoh, "Determinants of success in community self-help projects", pp.381-389.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid*.

⁵¹² O. Sendze Shey, *History of the Kumbo water supply*, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., 2002, p.35.

⁵¹³ Interview with Wirnkar Polycarp, 66 years, Mechanic, P.C.H.S Junction, 22/08/2020.

2. The Three-tier Model of Administration



DO: District Officer

PWD: Public Works Department

Source: Oumar and Tewari, “The Development of Water Management Institutions”, p.88.

Note: The three Tier Model as seen above was created to organize and manage the delivery of drinking water. At the top was the secretary General of the Colony, followed by the High Commissioner, the next level was supervised by the district Officers in both the Rural and Urban areas, and later by the Public Works Department.\

2. The Period Between 1960 to 1998

French Cameroon got its independence in 1960 and a new era in water management began. To better understand the struggle of water management institutions towards the provision and delivery of drinking water in Cameroon during the intermediate phase, two real cases that displayed the shortcomings and strengths of such institutions are discussed. These cases are the Mutengene and the Kumbo Water Schemes/projects.

Until the mid-1970s, the residents of Mutengene town in the South West Region of Cameroon lived on distant, poor, unhygienic and erratic sources of water. Due to acute shortage of drinking water in the area, the community contributed 2,733,353 FCFA or 12.60% of the total cost of the project and 100% labour input on government directives to build a water supply point on a spring

close to Ekanda village.⁵¹⁴ The Mutengene water project witnessed several hurdles, among which two were significant in delaying its completion. At the beginning of the total cost of the project and 100% labour input on government directives to build a water supply point on a spring close to Ekanda village.⁵¹⁵

The Divisional Officer (DO) of the town of Tiko, encouraged minority native population action plans to exclude the non-natives population from the project decision-making processes. As a result of this, the non-natives withdrew their financial contribution and physical participation towards the realization of the project.⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, the personal conflicts among the executive members of the 1967 ad hoc committee, led to organizational decline, as personal issues dominated over social needs. This finally marred the development of water structures.

The Kumbo community water supply scheme in the North West Region of Cameroon is an example of community's efforts on developing water structures in the village. From 1900 to 1974, the people of Kumbo relied on local rivers, as sources of water supply for their survival needs.⁵¹⁷ From 1974 to 1983, the project was entirely managed by the Public Works Department (PWD). During the 1990s, the government handed over control of the scheme management to the National Water Corporation (*SNEC*), so as to harmonise the water provision, delivery and billing system across the country.⁵¹⁸ This did not last long due to community's resistance, which in 1991 opposed the government's decision to hand-over the management of the Kumbo Water Scheme to *SNEC*. The resistance resulted into violence and the community burned to ashes the *SNEC* office, expelled workers of the corporation out of the town and took over the control of the scheme.⁵¹⁹ The Kumbo community was claiming ownership of the scheme, as it was able to generate the additional 372million FCFA, required for the completion of the project which assisted in mitigating the problem of unpredictable and poor quality of drinking water of the community.⁵²⁰ The realization of the community water project, suggested a sense of awareness

⁵¹⁴Njoh, "Barriers to community participation", pp.235-237.

⁵¹⁵*ibid*, pp.238-240.

⁵¹⁶Interview with suilareng Eugene Kibu, 41 years, Teaching, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

⁵¹⁷ C. Missem Fai, "Impact of a water supply project on the society: The case of Kumbo, 1965-2013", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, pp.22-28.

⁵¹⁸ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.19-32.

⁵¹⁹ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65 years, Traditional Authority/Farmer, Nso, 03/08/2020.

⁵²⁰Interview with Susan Fanfon Yah, 58 years, Book-Keeper, Mbiim, 29/07/2020.

and share of a common feeling about the negligence of Cameroon Government, towards the residents of Kumbo who despite all odds, exhibited a high sense of unity to achieve a collective goal.⁵²¹

The Kumbo community capitalized on two political events to channel her grievances. In the 1961 plebiscite, the residents of Kumbo voted for the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) on the reunification with French Cameroon, anticipating improvement in the welfare from the then government of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, but received no positive response, until they decided to start the water project in 1965.⁵²² The community also took advantage of Bernard Fonlon who was then deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, to push forward her case beside the government and request international assistance from the then Canadian Prime Minister.⁵²³

From 1960 to 1980s, the post-colonial government continued water management policy, but also engendered gradual changes to reflect its vision on the future of Cameroon. The government took the task of planning for water provisioning and delivery for the country. Some important landmarks of these changes include the following.

Three Ministries were entrusted with the management of Water Resources. These included the Ministry of Water Resources and Energy (MINEE), the Ministry of Health (MINSANTE) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI).⁵²⁴ The MINEE was responsible for the provision and delivery of drinking water and better sanitation services, where and when necessary, while the MINAGRI, was involved in providing drinking water to rural areas through the Department of Rural Engineering and Improvement of Living Environment in Rural Areas (DEIE).⁵²⁵

Figure 3 below shows how water was provisioned and managed in Cameroon from 1960- 1998.

⁵²¹ A.J Njoh, "Determinants of success in community self-help projects: The case of the Kumbo Water Supply scheme in Cameroon", *International Development Planning Review*, Vol.28, No.3, pp.381-406.

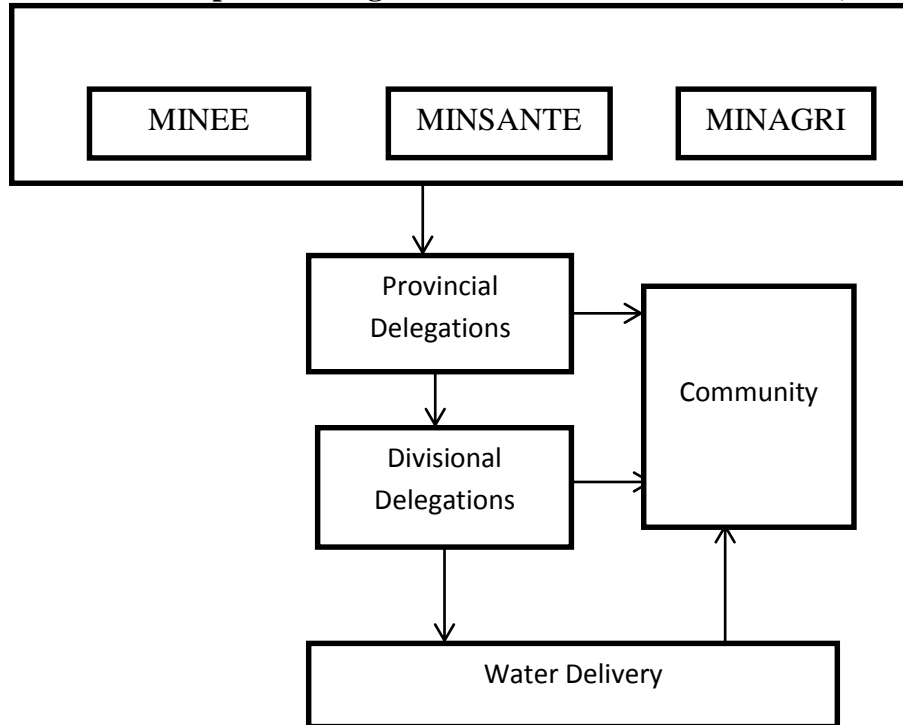
⁵²² Njoh, "Determinants of success", pp.407-409.

⁵²³ Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water*, pp.47-49.

⁵²⁴ Sanguv, "Institutional Changes", pp.93-97.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Anthony Kinkoh Bah, 56, Civil Servant, Nkor-Noni, 29/07/2020.

3. The process of water provisioning and administration in Cameroon, 1960-1998



Source: Oumar and Tewari, “The development of water management”, p.92.

MINEE: Ministry of Water Resources and Energy

MINAGRI: *Ministère de l’agriculture*

MINSANTE: Ministry of Health
Corporation

SNEC: Cameroon National Water

DEIE: Department of Rural Engineering and Improvement of Rural Living Environment in Rural Areas

Source: Oumar and Tewari, “The development of water management”, p.92.

Note: It can be seen that, the period between 1960-1998, ushered in a new era in water management and this was followed by the start of water conflicts. From the figure above, many ministries were given the right to manage water resources as well as Provincial and Divisional delegations. They ensured that water good for drinking was supplied to the entire population.

A four-tier administration was used to manage and operationalize the water management goals in the country. At the country level, the government enforced the water management plan through three ministries as mentioned above. At the provincial level, the national water and sanitation strategy was executed through provincial delegations from respective ministries, whereas at the divisional level, the task of carrying out the national water and sanitation program was assigned

to divisional delegations from corresponding provincial headquarters. The community and other institutions such as the Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs), religious bodies and village associations were at the bottom of the structural arrangement to generate or accelerate the process of water provisioning and delivery in the country.⁵²⁶ At a point in time, NGOs and religious bodies constructed boreholes and wells to serve the need for drinking water of urban and rural populations.⁵²⁷ In extreme cases of drinking water shortages, village associations mobilized resources to avail communities with drinking water.

A careful observation of the process of water provisioning and delivery in the intermediate phase, describes a top-bottom approach, where decisions from administration were implemented with limited inputs from the masses who, however may be allowed to initiate water development projects, subject to government's approval and supervision.⁵²⁸

3. Integration Phase

The effects of the 1980s economic slump, continued to torment the Cameroonian economy even in the 1990s. The depreciation of the US Dollar, fall by 45 percent in the price of primary export products in the world market, and the diminution in oil reserves in the mid-1980s, led to a 50 percent decrease in the country's export earnings between 1985 and 1987.⁵²⁹ In 1988, the government of Cameroon embarked on a Structural Adjustment Programme, to revamp the economy of the country, by slashing public sector spending, cutting public sector employment and banning recruitment into public service.⁵³⁰ Nevertheless, these austerity measures ended up worsening the condition of the country, as external debts swelled up from 35 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country in 1985 to 91 percent of its value in 1994. Furthermore, the salaries of civil servants were revised downward by 65 percent in 1993 and the FCFA was devalued by 50 percent in 1994.⁵³¹

⁵²⁶ B. Page, "A priceless commodity. The production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999", PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.78-83.

⁵²⁷ Interview with Augustine Wara, 56 years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

⁵²⁸ Interview with Peter Tiydze Fokum, 75 years, Retired Civil Servant, Bali Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

⁵²⁹ A.J Njoh, "Colonial spatial development policies, economic instability and urban public administration in Cameroon cities", www.sciencedirect.com/science, 23/08/2020, 11:30am, pp.12-27.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid*, pp.28-30.

⁵³¹ A.J Njoh, "Barriers to community participation in development planning: Lessons from the Mutengene (Cameroon) self-help water project", *Community Development Journal*, Vol.37, No.3, pp.233-248.

The aforesaid economic details affected all state-owned enterprises and significantly, decreased the revenue collection base of *SNEC* due to massive failure of consumers to settle their water bills.⁵³² In an attempt to redress the situation, *SNEC* had sometimes reminded customers to pay their water bills and no extreme cases interrupted water delivery to users. However, both approaches failed to improve the financial position of the corporation, which ultimately affected its performance on the field.⁵³³ The magnitude of the bad debts registered by *SNEC* in a year indicated that, the option of free access to potable water was impracticable, notwithstanding complaints from the general public about the intention of the government to privatize water supply and delivery in the country. Despite the private-public mixed strategy of provisioning and delivery of drinking water, the government continued to hold the responsibility of defining the overall water planning activities of the country.⁵³⁴ This can be seen in figure 4.

Since *SNEC* was unable to satisfy the entire market demand for drinking water, another group of drinking water suppliers, consisting of water traders and vendors, NGOs, religious bodies and other private companies, provide potable water to households that have no access to water supplies.⁵³⁵ The water traders are subscribers from CDE, intending to trade water, while the vendors are people who buy water from traders or fetch it free of charge from other private companies' supply points to sell to people in the cities.

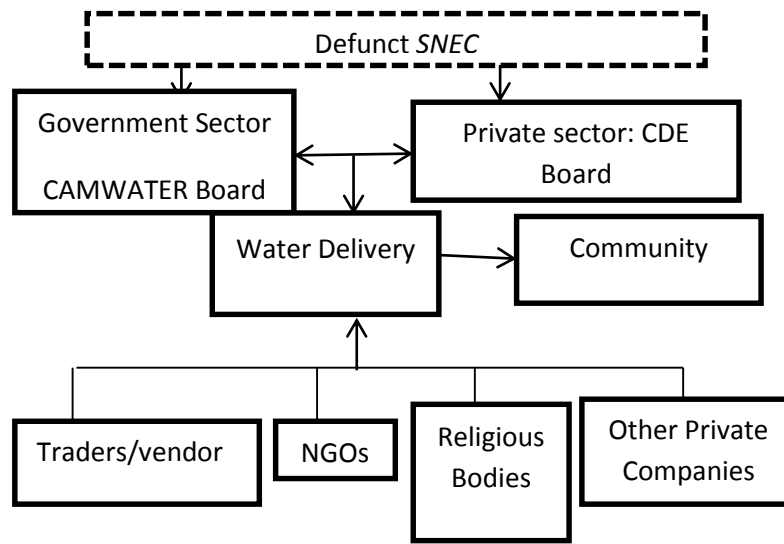
⁵³²Interview with Aloysius Chin, 102years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/08/2020.

⁵³³ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.82-83.

⁵³⁴*Ibid.*pp.93-96.

⁵³⁵ Njoh, "Barriers to community participation", pp.233-248.

4. The new Setup for Water Supply and Distribution in Cameroon



SNEC: Cameroon National Water Corporation **CAMWATER:** Cameroon Water Utilities

CDE: *Camerounaise des Eaux*

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

Source: Oumar and Tewari, “The development of water”, p.94.

Note: From the figure above, we can see that two major sectors are involved in the supply of water in Cameroon which is CAMWATER and CDE. Under them are other minor sectors such as Traders/vendors, NGOs, Religious bodies and other private companies. They supply water to the community.

Finally, from pre-colonial times to present, three approaches with different institutional involvement have been applied in addressing the problems of water development, provision and delivery in Cameroon. The top-bottom approach with three and four levels of participation, characterized the foundation phase and the intermediate phase. The mixed strategy, drawing from the public and private sectors’ efforts, was prominent in the integration phase. Furthermore, it is observed that despite the globalization agenda, the supporting water regulation and water strategy are missing in Cameroon. The lack of these sustaining pillars coupled with overreliance on decrees and orders for the management of water resources, elevates the vulnerability of water management structures to the whims and caprices of the authority, which enacts such declarations in the country.

During the colonial period, there was great effort to keep the European population in the colonies healthy. The Germans during their rule in Cameroon constructed water schemes by tapping water from springs which served the population. The British on their part established the fact that the survival instinct and the societal felt needs induced most self-help activities. This community dictated approach was designed by the British in West Cameroon to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community concerned. It also makes mention of the fact that, customary laws used in the past still remain paramount in our society today. Thus in line with the conclusion reached, self-help was a relevant approach implored by the British for development in Cameroon. Hence, community development is a process that does not only lead to the creation of jobs, income and infrastructure, but also communities that are better able to manage change. After having examined the history of water in Cameroon, we shall now look at the various reasons that account for the numerous water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

CHAPTER THREE:
REASONS FOR WATER CONFLICTS

One resource that has a direct bearing on human community sustenance is water, for its multifunctional role it plays in human metabolism and ecological dynamic equilibrium. Water is one of the most integral and important aspect of daily life for every human being, for example food, clothing and everything else humans interact with involves water. Exploring and using water resources provided by nature for alternative purposes, has been an age-old human enterprise. Though it's renewable and widespread, the utilization of water is a sustainable challenge for quality and quantity. Water may seem abundant, but less than 1% of the World's water can be used for human needs.⁵³⁶

The availability of potable water supply in many rural and urban areas of Cameroon especially the Bamenda Grassfields, has significantly lagged from the colonial period till 1998, while demand has increased tremendously.⁵³⁷ Public grievances relating to water shortages have long been present and continue to this day. Global fresh water supplies are coming under increasing pressure, making it difficult for water-stressed nations to manage its resources. Stress on water resources due to rising demand is already leading to scarcity in many places. Tension among competing parties over access to water, its uses and allocation has led to outright conflict that has become violent because it was not adequately addressed. While water is very rarely the single and seldom the major cause of conflicts between or within nations, it does have a potential to aggravate existing tensions as well as to impede progress towards resolving already existing broader conflicts.⁵³⁸ The Bamenda Grassfields which is our area of study is not an exception to these conflicts over water and many reasons account for this, which shall be examined below.

⁵³⁶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Human development Report: Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global water crisis", New York, 2006, pp.2-10.

⁵³⁷ Njoh, "Barriers to community participation in development planning: Lessons from the Mutengene (Cameroon) self-help project", *Community Development Journal*, Vol.37, No.3, pp.234-236.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid*, pp.237-240.

A. Economic Factors

Many economic factors have caused some of the water conflicts we experienced and are still experiencing today. These factors shall be examined below.

1. Rapid Population Growth

Population growth is simply an increase in the number of humans present within a geographical region. It exerts pressure on water resources and it is a major contributor to water scarcity. Growth in populations means mounting demand and competition for water for domestic, industrial and municipal uses.⁵³⁹ The most water scarce or stressed areas are typically those with few water resources, high population densities and high population growth rates.⁵⁴⁰ Population growth limits the amount of water available per person, drives people into marginal regions which are already water stressed and also into cities.⁵⁴¹ This is the case of the Bamenda Grassfields Region whereby the scarcity of water has continuously made the Fulani to move from one area to another in search of water for their cattle. This has subsequently led to conflicts with the indigenes as a result of pollution of water sources by cattle, making them unfit for consumption.

People use water for drinking, bathing, cooking, washing clothes, maintaining lawns and gardens. Water also is used by the manufacturing sector to make products, by the agricultural industry to provide food and by the energy industry to provide illumination, heat and air conditioning. The amount of water used directly by individuals, is related to various attributes such as age, education, cultural background, religious beliefs and financial status. In general, more people use more water.⁵⁴²

Water is important for sustaining the life of each person, health, socio-economic wellbeing and making possible the very existence of life on our planet. As the world's population grows, the demand for water mounts and pressure on finite water resources intensify.⁵⁴³ Population growth particularly will limit the amount of water available per person, because an increase in per capita

⁵³⁹M. Falkenmark and C Widstrand, "Population and water resources a delicate balance", *Population Bulletin*, Vol.47, No.3, 1992, pp.6-34.

⁵⁴⁰*Ibid*, pp.34-37.

⁵⁴¹ Interview with Tata John Nsame, 62 years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh-Nkum, 15/07/2020.

⁵⁴²J.M. Tifuh, "Human activities and its impact on water resources in Batibo Sub Division", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2002, pp.56-58.

⁵⁴³*Ibid*, pp.60-64.

water consumption, driven by development, will intensify water demand, straining the local water supply. The total amount of water on planet Earth is fixed. Only 2.5% is fresh water⁵⁴⁴ that is not salty, most of which is locked up in glaciers or deep underground. The entire body of fresh water found in lakes and rivers makes up only 0.01% of the planet's total 1.4billion cubic km of water.⁵⁴⁵ The Bamenda Grassfields with a population of about two million (2.000000)⁵⁴⁶ inhabitants continue to experience a decline in the quantity of fresh water as seen on table 9.

9. The evolution of population in the Bamenda Grassfields (1953-1995)

Years	Total Population
1953	429,038
1976	980,581
1987	1,237,348
1995	1,573,910

Source: J.P Warnier, "Pre-colonial Mankon", p.65.

Note: From the above table, we can notice that the population of the Bamenda Grassfields has progressively increased from the colonial period right down to the post-colonial period. The growth in population without a corresponding growth in water sources in the region has been a source for constant conflicts.

The principal problem continues to be man-made. The inhabitants of this region lack access to improved water, no adequate access to improved sanitation facilities such as piped sewers, septic tanks and latrines and those that live in the rural areas have poor access to water and sanitation. Every year, people mainly children die due to illnesses related to dirty water, poor sanitation and poor hygiene.⁵⁴⁷

At the household level, demand for water in the Bamenda Grassfields is determined by demographic factors including household size, composition and age structure. Population growth leads directly to increase in overall water demand, while demographic factors such as population distribution and age structure modify the pattern in demand and determines increase in

⁵⁴⁴ P.H Gleick, *Water Resources in S.H Schneider Ed. Encyclopedia of climate and weather*, Vol.2, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp.817-818.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp.818-820.

⁵⁴⁶ J.P Warnier, "Pre-colonial Mankon. The development of Cameroon Chiefdom in Regional settings", PhD Thesis in History, University of Pennsylvania, 1975, pp.65-70.

⁵⁴⁷ N. Fulai Chiaga, J. Ndzifon Kimengsi, S. Balgah Nguh, "Catchment management ang sustainability of urban water supply: Evidence from Bamenda Cameroon", *Canadian Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol.6, No.2, 2019, pp. 3-9.

household water demand.⁵⁴⁸ Overall, the amount of water each person uses is expected to increase as income grows and consumption increases. Population growth could expose more people to water shortages, with negative implications for livelihoods, health and security.⁵⁴⁹

Water shortage has a serious effect on domestic consumption in Bamenda. Most of the inhabitants do not have enough water to carry out their activities. As a result, communities have resulted to accessing polluted water sources for domestic consumption, the possible medium for the transmission of water borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery.⁵⁵⁰ In the 1980s, water consumption increased to 300 liters per day.⁵⁵¹ Recent study indicates that the average water consumption per household in urban centers is about 500 liters per day.⁵⁵²

The impact of population on the ability of water resources to meet the demands placed on them by the society is parallel by the effects of population on the quality of water resources. People alter the properties of water as they use it, often degrading the quality of water with each successive use.⁵⁵³ Water used in households for drinking, bathing and cooking, become contaminated by various chemicals and other constituents introduced during its use, resulting in frequent conflicts in the region.

Over population of the Bamenda Grassfields has strained current water resources to their limits, caused an increase in water pollution and led to conflicts between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh over existing water supplies.⁵⁵⁴ The path of future growth in population will impact water stress and scarcity. This path will largely depend on the choices that men and women make today about the size of their families, and the family planning services that are available to them as they make their choices.

⁵⁴⁸ Z.N Fogwe and G. Mumah Njong, "Water development shortages in urbanizing communities of the Western Highlands in Cameroon", *International Journal of Geography and Regional Planning Research*, Vol.3, No.1, UK, Published by European centre for research training and development, 2018, pp.98-112.

⁵⁴⁹*Ibid*, pp113-115.

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with Ngala martin Ndi, 56 years, Retired State Agent, Binshua, 03/08/2020.

⁵⁵¹ S.N. Balgah and J.N. Kimengsi, "Land use dynamics and wetland management in Bamenda: Urban Development Policy Implications", *Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol.9, No5, 2016, pp.9-20.

⁵⁵²*Ibid*, pp.23-25.

⁵⁵³ Interview with Augustine Wara, 56 years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

⁵⁵⁴ A. Momah, "Conserving land and water", Paper presented on the occasion of the restitution workshop on dialogue process between pastoral resources users in Menchum, 2010, pp.5-16.

After looking at overpopulation as a reason for water conflicts, we shall now look at population movement

2. Population Movement

Migration, displacement and resentment are sometimes driven by resource competition and often result in resource-based conflicts. Historically, migration and water in the Bamenda Grassfields, were related broadly, to nomads and pastoralists looking for water and food for their animals.⁵⁵⁵ The Fulani pastoralists practiced a purely nomadic lifestyle, which involved permanent seasonal migration with their herds and family. Their constant movement in search of water and food for their cattle has resulted in several conflicts, especially farmer-grazier conflicts in the Grassfields region.⁵⁵⁶ For example, this is the case in Kumbo in 1962 whereby, the Fulani cattle destroyed crops and dirtied water sources.⁵⁵⁷ Today, population movement has become a common phenomenon. The loss of livelihood due to increasing water scarcity and variability, has forced those affected to migrate. Furthermore, water scarcity is becoming much more problematic due to global climate, which potentially alter rainfall patterns, leading to increased flooding, drought and soil erosion.⁵⁵⁸

When people's livelihoods are dependent on water, especially those practicing agriculture, livestock farming and certain industries, they temporarily, cyclically or permanently migrate to areas with better economic activities.⁵⁵⁹ Increasing water scarcity in such cases has a major impact on migration. More so, long term and/or recurrent drought affects livelihoods, in areas where people have few resources or lack the capacity for dealing with water stress, cause people to move. Where resources, institutions and infrastructure do not adequately satisfy increase demand, competition between old and new arrivals can result in conflicts.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁵Interview with Ndzi Fames Wibah, 72 years, Coaching (Now Retired), Ndu, 31/07/2020.

⁵⁵⁶ G. Bamboye, "Population change, agriculture diversification and environmental dynamics in the North West Region of Cameroon", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2010, pp.35-37.

⁵⁵⁷Interview with Ngah Julius Shafee, 47 years, Teacher, Nso, 08/08/2020.

⁵⁵⁸ C. Lambi and E. Ndenecho, *Ecology and natural resource development in the Western Highlands of Cameroon: Issues in natural resource management*, Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing common initiative group, pp.55-60.

⁵⁵⁹Interview with Ndishey Ernest, 50 years, Teacher, Ntudip, 03/08/2020.

⁵⁶⁰ K. Coca, "The new face of water conflict navigating peace", Washington DC Woodrow Wilson Center, Environmental change and security program, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NavigatingPeaceIssues3.pdf>, 18/06/2020, 10:01 am, pp-13-15.

Also, when displaced persons return to their original homes, they sometime come into conflict with populations who did not move, or who settled while the original inhabitants were away.⁵⁶¹ Conflicts also occur when returning individuals change their standards and practices, while in their temporary location. Population movement, irrespective of the cause, increases the demand for water, in the location where groups settle. It has several dimensions that tend to cause tension between recipient and sender states, regardless of the underlying causes.⁵⁶² Pastoralist migration, rural to urban migration and refugee or internally displaced person movements in the Bamenda Grassfields region, are as a result of water management and supply, because of associated shifts in demand. This is the case with the farmer-grazer conflict in Wum, which many dead.

The next reason for water conflict we shall examine is deforestation and eucalyptus farming.

3. Deforestation and Eucalyptus Farming

Deforestation is the clearing, destroying, or otherwise removal of trees through deliberate, natural or accidental means.⁵⁶³ Deforestation occurs for a number of reasons which include farming, cattle rearing, materials for construction and development. It has been happening for thousands of years, arguably since man began converting from hunter/gatherer to agricultural based societies, and the need for large unobstructed tracks of land to accommodate cattle, crops and housing.⁵⁶⁴ Deforestation is thus one of the factors of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon. Today, what is left of the forest around the water sources in Bamenda, are pockets of indigenous trees, which are scattered or dotted around.⁵⁶⁵

Forest and water are highly important resources, which provide many socioeconomic functions and services to human societies and the environment. It has a great role to play in enhancing water quality. Every tree in the forest is a fountain, sucking water out of the ground through its

⁵⁶¹Interview with Rev. Anjoambum George, 51 years, Clergy, Momo, 07/08/2020.

⁵⁶² G. White, *Climate change and migration: Security and borders in a warming world*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.77-79.

⁵⁶³ S. Nchangvi Kangang, *21st century applied physical Geography and Mapwork for forms 3, 4 and 5*, Yaounde, Grassroots Publishers, 2018, pp.148-149.

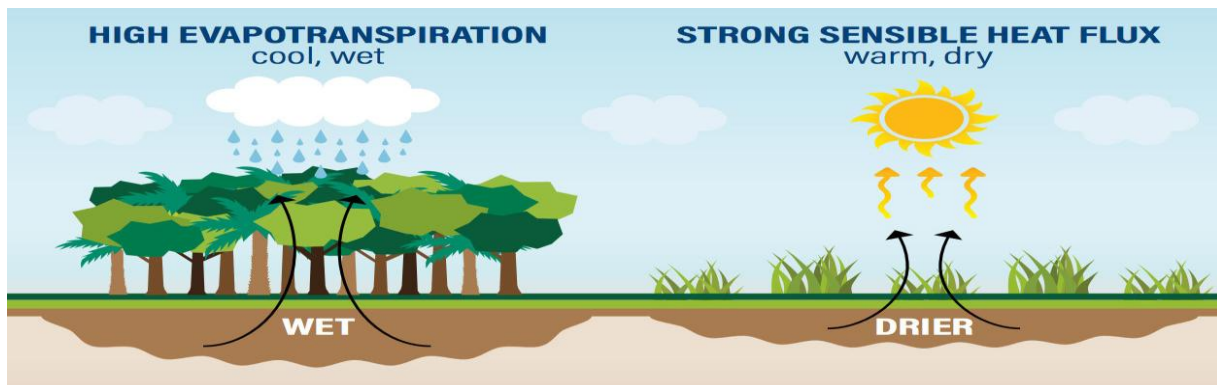
⁵⁶⁴F.O. Masese, P.O. Raburu, B.N. Mwasi and L. Etiégni, "Effects of deforestation on water resources: Integrating science and community perspectives in the Soudu-Miriu River Basin, Kenya", 2012, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268301320>, 01/08/2020, 12:40pm, pp.4-6.

⁵⁶⁵Interview with Che Denis Nebah, 51 years, Teaching, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

roots, and releasing water vapor into the atmosphere through its pores in its foliage.⁵⁶⁶ In their billions, they create giant rivers of water in the air - rivers that form clouds and create rainfall, hundreds or even thousands of miles away. But as we deprive the planet of trees, we risk drying up these aerial rivers, and the lands, that depend on them for rain.⁵⁶⁷

A growing body of evidence indicates that, the continuous destruction of tropical forests is disrupting the movement of water in the atmosphere, causing major shifts in precipitation that could lead to drought in key agricultural areas of the Bamenda Grassfields.⁵⁶⁸ The population has cut down almost all the protective trees around water sources. The forest has been pruned to irrational exploitation and burning, as a result of the search for fuel wood, scares farmland and timber, to meet the rapid population growth, which is estimated at 3% annually.⁵⁶⁹ This has been demonstrated in figure 5.

5. Effects of Deforestation on the Water Cycle of the Bamenda Grassfields



Source: F. Pearce, *Rivers in the sky: How Deforestation is affecting global water cycles*, USA, Beacon Publisher, 2018.

Note: From the diagram to the left, it can be seen that trees pull water from the ground, and releases water vapor through their leaves, generating atmospheric rivers of moisture through evapotranspiration. This replenishes the clouds and instigates rain that maintains the forest, increasing ground water. When deforestation occurs as seen on

⁵⁶⁶ R.J. Reimold, *Watershed management: Practice, policies and coordination*, New York, McGraw-Hill Company, 1998, pp.391-340.

⁵⁶⁷ A. Rahim Nik, "Water yield changes after forest conservation to agricultural land uses in Penensular Malaysia", *Journal of Tropical Forest Science*, 1988, pp.18-22.

⁵⁶⁸ M. Moritz, "The politics of permanent conflicts: Farmer-herder conflicts in Northern Cameroon", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol.40, No.1, pp.101-126.

⁵⁶⁹ V.F. Nzolle, "Problems of Rural supply, case study: Muea water schemes", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde 1, 2005, pp.57-60.

the right of the picture, the sun directly heats the bare surface, rain is lost from the area, flowing away as river water, and causing permanent drying, as well as a reduction in ground water.

Deforestation has reduced communities' access to clean drinking water. It has led to surges in water runoff, increasing what scientists call water yield.⁵⁷⁰ Without the forest floor to sponge up water, runoff picks up sediments, which foul up treatment systems in the Bamenda Grassfields. Also, there is less water in the air to be returned to the soil, which causes dryer soil and the inability to grow crops.⁵⁷¹ Further effects of deforestation include soil erosion and coastal flooding.⁵⁷² Trees help the land to retain water and topsoil, which provides the rich nutrients to sustain additional forest life. Without forests, the soil erodes and washes away, causing farmers to move on and perpetuate the cycle. The barren land, which is left behind in the wake of these unsustainable agricultural practices, is then more susceptible to flooding in the Bamenda Grassfields region. This has resulted in water shortage and thus, constant conflicts over water in the Region.

More so, Eucalyptus farming is a common practice in the Bamenda Grassfields, which has an adverse effect on water sources. The inhabitants of the Grassfields region, found some hope in the planting of cypress and particularly Eucalyptus, imported from Australia, because of its economic importance.⁵⁷³ More than 80% of the region is covered by Eucalyptus forest, especially around water sources. It is estimated that, an average Eucalyptus tree, consumes as much as twenty five (25) liters of water within Twenty four (24) hours.⁵⁷⁴ The tree is also known to transpire about ten (10) liters of soil water per day, and Eucalyptus farming in the dry areas, have been alternating local hydrological systems.⁵⁷⁵

The planting of Eucalyptus is practiced very close to water sources of the Bamenda Grassfields, so much so that, they are fast drying off and water quantity is reducing continuously. Its deep and thirsty root system, prevent the recharge of ground water, and that's why the authorities of

⁵⁷⁰ Water yield is defined as the average amount of fresh water that runs off in an unregulated watershed. It is a measure of the volume of runoff, the quantity of water available for utilization and development.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Visi Edwin, 55 years, Engineer, Kumbo, 30/07/2020.

⁵⁷² T.F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and violence*, Princetown, Princetown University Press, 1999, pp.78-80.

⁵⁷³ Z.N. Fogwe, J.P. Suiven Tume, M. Fouda, "Eucalyptus tree colonization of the Bafut-Ngamba forest reserve, North West Region, Cameroon", *Journal of Environment and Ecosystem Science*, Vol.3, No.2,2019, pp.2-9.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid*.pp.9-10.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp.11-14.

Cameroon denounce the planting of Eucalyptus in and around water sources.⁵⁷⁶ The grazers of the region who are mostly the Fulani, claim that water shortages are as a result of deforestation by farmers, and the effect of planting Eucalyptus trees, which use a great deal of ground water, around water sources. This has led to constant conflicts over water, especially between farmers and herders.⁵⁷⁷ An example of a conflict caused by deforestation and eucalyptus farming is the Yeh crisis of 1975. The people in this area cut down almost all the protective trees in the Yeh catchment area as a result of population increase and the search for farmlands. More so, the inhabitants of Yeh instead planted eucalyptus trees around the water catchment which dried up the water source. They planted these trees because of their economic importance. The end result was the forceful eviction of the Yeh inhabitants in order to ensure the better functioning of the scheme.

The next part of our work shall look at the agricultural practices of the inhabitants of the Bamenda Grassfields and its contribution to water conflicts.

4. Agricultural Practices

Agriculture is the science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool and other products. Agriculture is the largest source of water consumption in the world. The competition arising from this intense agricultural demand for water at various scales is a primary aspect of water conflict around the world.⁵⁷⁸ Demand for increased agricultural output to meet the food security needs of growing populations also adversely affect water quality as runoff from Crop-growth aids such as fertilizers and pesticides, contaminate ground water supplies and adjacent bodies of surface water.⁵⁷⁹ At the same time, inadequate water access among small scale farmers can hamper local food security and also cause those parties to turn against one another or against industrial scale agricultural interests or state water management in competition for what little water is

⁵⁷⁶ C. Missem Fai, "The impact of a water supply project in the society: the case of Kumbo, 1965-2013", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, pp.56-58.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with Mohammadou Sani, 49, Businessman, Mbve, 03/08/2020.

⁵⁷⁸ G.A. Asongwe, "The effect of physiochemical properties of soils and some water bodies on the Douala Edea Mangrove Ecosystem", MSc Thesis in Geography, University of Buea, 2010, pp.90-93.

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with chin Aloysius, 102 years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/08/2020.

available.⁵⁸⁰ In summary, agriculture is characterized by multiple party interests, associated with broad health, economic and social benefits. This drives intense resource use, heighten concerns about insecurity and consequently contribute to competition and conflict.

Furthermore, more than 80% of the Bamenda Grassfields inhabitants are agricultural. The principal crops cultivated are maize, beans and millet; tubers such as yams, cocoyam, sweet potatoes, groundnuts and native carrots; vegetables such as cow pee, huckle berry and bitter herbs as well as plantains, bananas, sugar cane, coffee and kola nuts.⁵⁸¹ These crops are farmed right into spring heads of water sources as a result of limited agricultural resources to meet the increasing needs of the ever growing population, who are in search of food. This has led to competition for water between plants and man.⁵⁸²

Ploughing opens the soil and leaves it bare exclusively during the dry season, which results in rapid evaporation, leading to a reduction in the volume of ground water. Furthermore, during the rainy season, rain water washes the top soil of farms into water sources such as catchments, streams and rivers. The process is repeated constantly, leading to contamination of sources of water, and all attempts to displace the farmers often lead to conflicts. This was the case of the Yeh conflict in 1974. The farmers of the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon still practice the primitive system of agriculture known as the *Ankara*.⁵⁸³ This kills the vegetation cover of the area, leading to a reduction in underground water through evaporation.

Moreso, farmers use fire to clear their farms, commonly known as bush fire. It is an annual activity by farmers and grazers to renew vegetation.⁵⁸⁴ The North West Region like the rest of the Western Highlands of Cameroon lies within the Sudan Savanna, characterized by tree growth and full of tall grasses, ranging from 4 to 6meter high. During the rainy season, the grass vegetation grows to considerable height (4-6m) and during the rainy season, it dries, turns brown

⁵⁸⁰C.C. Fonchingong and N. Lortsmart Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance in community development initiatives in the Cameroon Grassfields", *Nordiac Journal of African Studies*, Vol.12, No.2, 2014, pp.202-206.

⁵⁸¹Missem, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.51-55.

⁵⁸² Interview with Njodzeven Julius, 61 years, Farmer, P.C.H.S Junction, 20/ 07/2020

⁵⁸³ The Ankara system of farming consist of gathering and burring organic matter in ridges, followed by burning which increases the potash and Phosphorous content in the soil. Applying organic matter is paramount in enhancing bacterial activity, which ensures high soil fertility.

⁵⁸⁴ V.F Nzole, "Problems of Rural Supply, case study: Muea Water Scheme", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2005, pp.24-26.

and it is subjected to bush burning.⁵⁸⁵ The burning of bushes has reduced ground water reserve as a result of rapid evaporation. It has as well destroyed protective barriers of catchments, enabling animals and humans to have easy access into them, posing a threat to water purity.⁵⁸⁶ This can be seen on plate 1 below.

1. Cultivation of Farmlands near water sources in the town of Bamenda



Source: Photo by Author

Note: From the picture above, it can be seen that, some inhabitants of the Bamenda Grassfields cultivate their farms near water sources. This leads to pollution of water, thus making it unfit for drinking and subsequently decreases in good drinking sources, resulting in frequent water conflicts.

Also, heavy metal input to arable soils through fertilizers use, is of increasing concern due to their potential risk to environmental health. Mostly all the farmers in the Bamenda Grassfields, use a variety of these fertilizers such as urea and Nitrogen in the ratio 20, Phosphorus in the ratio 10 and Potassium in the ratio 10. Moreso, pesticides such as Lidane, Endosulfan, Karate, Chlorpyrifos and Cypercot are also used.⁵⁸⁷ Even though plants absorb some of the chemicals, part infiltrates into the underlying ground water polluting it. Moreso during rainfall, most of the

⁵⁸⁵NAB, file Ab17(10), P.M. Kaberry, "Report on Farmer-Grazier Relations and the changing patterns of agriculture in Nsaw (South Eastern Federation, Bamenda, Southern Cameroon)", 1959, pp.20-28.

⁵⁸⁶Interview with Tidze Agnes, 67 years, Farmer, P.C.H.S Kumbo, 31/08/2020.

⁵⁸⁷A.W Ntutin, "Economic History of Nso", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Annex Bambili, 1986, pp.35-40.

fertilizers are carried into water catchments and streams through runoff.. Studies have shown that, the potatoes plant lives a lot of nitrates after harvesting, which leach into the underground water, contaminating it.⁵⁸⁸ Runoff of chemicals during heavy rainfall impairs quality of streams, lakes and Rivers. Though the use of these chemicals' benefits consumers through lower prices and increased output, agricultural practices has greatly contributed to water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Furthermore, the rearing of animals in the Bamenda Grassfields is an economic activity done throughout the year, for sale and for consumption, which has contributed to water conflicts in the region. The vegetation of the area is the Guinea Savannah type characterized by, dispersed woodlands, stunted shrubs and low grass. See plate 2.

2. A pig fence constructed besides a flowing stream in the Bamenda town.



Source: Photo by Author

Note: The picture above shows a pig fence near a flowing stream. Inhabitants of the Bamenda Grassfields keep animals and fences containing these animals are constructed near water sources. This pollutes the water, making it unfit for consumption.

⁵⁸⁸ F. Douay, H. Roussel, H. Fourrier, C. Heyman and G. Chateau, "Investigation of heavy metal concentration on urban soils, dust and vegetables nearby a former smelter site in Mortagne du Nord", *Journal of soils and sediments*, Vol.7, No.3 , 2007, pp.143-148.

This explains why the indigenes of the Bamenda Grassfields are involved in animal rearing which was an important commodity in trade from the pre-colonial period till date.⁵⁸⁹ These animals are being reared on small sales by the indigenous population who keep goats, pigs and by the Fulani who own large herds of cattle.⁵⁹⁰ The animals eat the grass living the surfaces bare, and when rain falls, erosion becomes a common phenomenon dirtying water sources.⁵⁹¹ The bare surfaces have also facilitated the process of evaporation, leading to a reduction in the quantity of water.

More so, cattle with their hoof trample on the soil, making it hard, reducing infiltration rate, leading to overland flow whereby, ground water reserve is reduced.⁵⁹² Grazers especially the Fulani bring their animals right into water source and consequently, cow dung and urine contaminate water. Cow dung contains microorganisms called *Cryptosporidium*, which are highly resistant to chlorine and causes gastroenteritis if indigested.⁵⁹³ For instance, one of our informants stated that, the people of Binshua finally settled at Baraki because, the Fulani cattle always contaminated their lone stream.⁵⁹⁴ Hence the constant conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields between the Fulani cattle rearers and the indigenes. Poor Agricultural practices thus plays a major role in aggravating conflicts related to water in the Grassfields region of Cameroon.

The issue of the farmers and graziers using the same water points has contaminated water sources, making them unfit for consumption. This had led to conflicts between the farmers, grazers as well as the indigenes. An example of such a conflict is the case in the Kupe – Muanenguba Division in the 1920s. Here, the Fulani entered into the Division which resulted in water conflicts. After haven treated the economic factors, we shall now examine a case study under this part of our work.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview with Nyuyki Michael Nkuph, 69 years, Retired, Bui, 06/08/2020.

⁵⁹⁰ E. Koizah Karh, “Cattle economy in Wum area 1940-2010: A Historical Analysis”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.40-42.

⁵⁹¹ J.M. Tifuh, “Human activities and its impact on water resources in Batibo Sub Division”, DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2002, pp.43-47.

⁵⁹² Interview with Kindzeka Silas, 54 years, Applicant, Bui, 11/08/2020.

⁵⁹³ I. Khalid, “Bangladesh water concern”, *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, University of Puyab, 2010, pp.73-76.

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with Ngala Martin Ndi, 56years, Retired State Agent, Nkambe, 03/08/2020.

The Yeh Crisis of 1975

Yeh is a small village, situated 10km from Kumbo town and located in the North East of Kumbo Central Sub Division, and constitutes the headsprings, from where water is tapped.⁵⁹⁵ The Yeh village was chosen as an intake area with the initiation of the Kumbo Water Project in 1965. As the project for the construction of the Kumbo water Scheme came to an end, one problem remained to be resolved, which was that of the evacuation and settlement of the inhabitants of Yeh valley in the catchment basin of the head springs that were tapped for the water supply.⁵⁹⁶ When the survey of the project was being carried out, the people of the valley were sensitized about the necessity of moving them to ensure the purity of the source.⁵⁹⁷ Apart from the fact that some few people were recalcitrant, the rest were ready to conform when Fon Mbinglo summoned them.⁵⁹⁸

Before the stream was selected, the valley was heavily forested and spring clean. As soon as the construction of the intake area started, a lot of people started cutting down the forest, opening up farms and building houses near the course of the stream.⁵⁹⁹ It was alleged that, many of the new settlers theorized that they would earn a lot of money from compensation when they were to be moved out.⁶⁰⁰ The mistake made was that, in a hurry to realize the project, this problem was minimized. As time passed and farming activities increased, it became obvious that something should be done.⁶⁰¹ Since the whole conception was based on the necessary evacuation of the valley, the project could not be said to have been completed until the inhabitants of Yeh valley had been moved.

In 1972, the water scheme was completed but not actually delivering water to the community. Minutes from the supply meeting in 1974 explained that, a critical project requirement had not been fulfilled and prevented the distribution of water to the entire population of kumbo⁶⁰². The

⁵⁹⁵ C. Jumbam Tardzenyuy, "The Yeh crisis of 1975", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2002, pp.34-36.

⁵⁹⁶ Interview with Jonas Kikishiy, 49 years, Teacher, Mbiame, 06/08/2020.

⁵⁹⁷ Interview with Joseph Fai Chila, 55 years, Teacher, Misaje, 01/08/2020.

⁵⁹⁸ Missem, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.45-50.

⁵⁹⁹ O. Sendze Shey, History of the Kumbo Water Supply, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., 2002, pp.23-38.

⁶⁰⁰ Interview with Relindis Mbiyzenyuy, 60 years, Farmer, Kumbo, 13/08/2020.

⁶⁰¹ Interview with Lawson Wirba, 54 years, Farmer, Kumbo, 03/08/2020.

⁶⁰² P. Ambe Lum, "Exploring the influence of a community-based project on rural livelihood in Cameroon: The case of the Kumbo Water Authority project", PhD Thesis in Population Health, University of Ottawa, 2018, pp. 65-70.

people living in the catchment area of River Kisani had to evacuate the area for water to be distributed to the population⁶⁰³. The government at the time reiterated the importance of the water scheme and appealed for people in the area to live, so that the water scheme could be enjoyed by the population⁶⁰⁴. The population defied the appeal and continued constructing houses and contaminating the water.

The opposition was quite firm because, instead of packing their properties and leaving the area, they continued to erect new houses and undertook new projects⁶⁰⁵. Added to this, they had been cultivating new farms, not only near the rivers, but also where the water was tapped. Worst of all, the government noticed that, many people in the area suffered from water-borne diseases such as dysentery, whereas many of these diseases would have been avoided if the new water supply system was functioning⁶⁰⁶. The Yeh population resisted the relocation request because the people had a deep attachment to the area. It was where they were born and raised, where their forefathers were buried and where they had most of their properties and assets⁶⁰⁷. Despite the fact that the government fully understood their situation, she ordered the Yeh people to evacuate the area because, there were 40,000 people waiting to benefit from the project as opposed to 2000 people living in Yeh village⁶⁰⁸.

The Newspaper national Bishops' Conference of Cameroon of November 4, 2011 revealed that, although the Yeh community was located at the source of the Kumbo water supply, villagers had no access to potable water for more than four decades and observed that "providing treated water to the Yeh community will ensure better health to the locals"⁶⁰⁹

A special meeting was held in Buea in 1972 to see into the problem of resettlement of the Yeh inhabitants. At this meeting, there were representatives of the various Ministries of Finance,

⁶⁰³ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62 years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

⁶⁰⁴ Ambe Lum, "Exploring the influence of a community-based project", pp.65-67.

⁶⁰⁵ A. Tadesse, T. Bosana, G. Gabresenbet, "Rural water supply management and sustainability: the case of Adama Area, Ethiopia", *Journal of water Resource and Protection*, Vol.5, No.2, pp.208-221.

⁶⁰⁶ Jumbam, "The Yeh crisis of 1975", pp.66-67.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with Agnes Tidze, 67 years, Farmer, Kumbo, 31/12/2020.

⁶⁰⁸ Ambe Lum, "Exploring the influence of a community-based project on rural livelihood", pp. 65-70.

⁶⁰⁹ E. Tangie Ngengong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the bamenda grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998", Masters Dissertation in Peace and Conflict transformation, University of Tromso, 2007, pp.1-96.

Mines and Energy, Agriculture, Plan and Public Works.⁶¹⁰ It was tentatively agreed that a resettlement site be chosen for the population of Yeh as the first step. Survey and planning of the site was to be made to provide the new community with their own water supply and health facilities, which will be better than what they were enjoying at their former settlement⁶¹¹. The plots were to be big enough to allow farming, seeds were to be provided to every family and the local population was to help each family erect a mud brick house, while the state was to subsidize with roofing materials.⁶¹²

The Inhabitants of Yeh were to evacuate the valley and settle in the new area with the authorization to continue exploiting their farms for another year. At the end of one year when the new crops would have been harvested, all access into the Valley was to be banned and afforestation of the valley was to be done with special water shed trees that were to be gotten from east Africa by the Department of Forestry.⁶¹³ However, the Government of Cameroon also promised the Yeh people some financial compensation after they settled in the new area. This was the first stage of conflict within the water scheme since its initiation.

All the attempts made to resettle the people failed, as the youths of the valley formed a resistance committee which chased out a team sent to survey the valley, evaluate its size and the problem.⁶¹⁴ The inhabitants of the Yeh valley did not want to evacuate their settlements which they had inhabited for long, acquired land, built houses, opened farms and reared animals for themselves. Also, the area was very fertile and good for agriculture, and the Yeh inhabitants considered the valley as theirs and did not want the water to be taken from their land.⁶¹⁵

Political intoxication undertaken by politicians came into play to mislead the population, since some of them ill-educated the inhabitants that they were being unnecessarily victimized because their presence could not affect the water to be tapped for the town. An expatriate superintendent of Public Works Department, who had been posted to supervise the work, entered the controversy by saying that he had put water in Wum and Bali and there had been no need to

⁶¹⁰ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo Water supply*, pp.24-31.

⁶¹¹ Interview with John Same Tata, 61 years, Farmer, Bajing, 28/12/2020.

⁶¹² Missem, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.26-29.

⁶¹³ Jumbam, "The Yeh Crisis of 1975", pp.67-69.

⁶¹⁴ Sendze, *History of the Kumbo Water*, pp.25-26.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp.26-29.

move people.⁶¹⁶ Hearing this, the local population really believed that this was persecution, especially as they had evidence from a white man. Unfortunately, this hard working officer who had put in so many years in Cameroon had his services terminated and was sent back home.⁶¹⁷

As the problem was going on, the Canadian Government sent to the Government of Cameroon a message in which they indicated that, the scheme could not be inaugurated until the problem was resolved.⁶¹⁸ On the Fifth (5th) of February 1973, the Minister of Mines, Water and Energy addressed a letter to the Minister of Territorial Administration asking for intervention to move the population out of the valley.⁶¹⁹ The front and back view have been shown on Plate 3 and 4 below.

3. The front view of the Yeh catchement



Source: Photo by Author

⁶¹⁶*Ibid*, pp.30-32.

⁶¹⁷Interview with Rabia Biy, 76, Farmer, Kumbo, 29/08/2020.

⁶¹⁸ Canadian Embassy, letter to the Cameroon Government, 1973.

⁶¹⁹ NSO'DA, *Ngonnso special issue dedicated to the Nso' woman*, Canada, Bond-Free Publishing, 2012, pp.35-37.

4. Back view of the Yeh Catchment



Source: Photo by Author

Note: The pictures above show the front and the back views of the Yeh Catchment. Before this catchment came into existence, it was not an easy task as conflict arose between the Yeh inhabitants and the Kumbo water Authority. Today, the catchment has been completed and continues to supply water to the entire population of Kumbo town.

On the 1st of February, Dr. Fonlon addressed a letter to the *Fon* of Nso asking for steps to remove the people from the Valley and on the 14th of February, he wrote to the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of Kumbo, to take action before the government intervened.⁶²⁰ The *Fon* of Nso on the 28th of February 1973 summoned a meeting of all traditional rulers and parties, to find solutions to the problem. Although resolutions were made and committees set up, there was not much progress. A detailed letter was sent to his Royal Highness the *Fon* in April 1974, detailing a programme of action, following what was agreed upon at the meeting in Buea.

Owing to the intransigence of the population of the valley, the Senior Divisional Officer and the *Fon* of Nso in an organized joint invasion made up of forces of Law and Order and the *Nwerong*,

⁶²⁰ B. Nsokika Fonlon, letter addressed to his Royal Highness, the *Fon* of Nso, 1st February 1973.

a traditional society in the lead, forcefully evacuated the population of the valley in 1974.⁶²¹ Many of the inhabitants of Yeh left Nso for Nigeria, some moved to the area that was designated for them and others moved to the area above Kitiwum. They left in bitterness which has lasted till date.⁶²² With the forceful removal of the inhabitants of Yeh valley towards the end of 1974, the project was now ready to be inaugurated. Many court cases were tabled by the Yeh population, which have not been solved till date.

B. Social Factors

Some of the water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields have been also as a result of social factors. These factors are examined below.

1. Unplanned Rapid Urbanization

Urbanization, defined as the increasing share of a nation's population living urban areas, is one of the most extreme forms of human-induced land use change, resulting from the intricate actions of various physical and socio-economic factors.⁶²³ Urbanization leads to increased pressure on fresh water resources, as people become more concentrated in one area through the transformation of once natural landscapes to urban water-impervious lands, which limits available fresh water resources.⁶²⁴ Urban uses currently account for an average of 10%-20% of the total water withdrawals, with demand increasing rapidly as a direct result of population growth in urban areas.⁶²⁵ This can be attributed to the fact that, most of the growth in the world's population is taking place in urban areas in low and middle-income nations, and this is likely to continue.

As communities grow, we notice many visible changes including, housing development, road network, expansion of services and these changes impact our precious water resources.⁶²⁶ Global water consumption rate doubles as the rate of population increases. Urban areas are continually

⁶²¹Interview with Eugene Suilareng Kibu, 41, Teacher, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

⁶²²Interview with Jonas Kikishiy, 49, Teacher, Mbiame, 06/08/2020.

⁶²³ S. Nchangvi Kangang, *21st century applied physical Geography and mapwork for forms 3, 4 and 5*, Yaounde, GRASSROOTS PUBLISHERS, 2018, pp.71-78.

⁶²⁴ C. Okello, B. Tomasello, N. Greggio, N. Wambyi and M. Antonellini, *Impact of population growth and climate change on the freshwater resources of Lamu Island, Kenya*, Switzerland, Published by MDPI Basel, 2015, pp.1265-1270.

⁶²⁵*Ibid.*

⁶²⁶Interview with Kpunjo Anthony Shohfola, 51 years, Manager of MUFU BBH, Nso, 01/08/2020.

facing problems of water and urban flash floods, which is affecting the hydrological cycle.⁶²⁷ The components affected are infiltration, runoff and evaporation. Thus, rapid urbanization has been a cause of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Around 1998, Bamenda suddenly emerged as the largest urban area in the western highlands of Cameroon.⁶²⁸ It has a surface area of 3.125 hectares, and an estimated current population of over 533,000 inhabitants.⁶²⁹ This emergence and the sustained population growth owe much to its location in the heart of the Grassfields. The factors which contribute to the growth of Bamenda are, its location and site, history and political influences, the changing administrative, agricultural and trade hinterland and educational and research services.⁶³⁰ Because of its Geographical location (at a junction point), it is inevitably the centre of political power, government, higher level education, research and cultural facilities.⁶³¹ For these reasons, many people are moving to Bamenda and its environs. Consequently, there has been continuous increase in the urban population and the development of settlements.

Most of the residents of the region live in informal settlements characterized by middle income residents as well as poor migrants from rural areas.⁶³² Later extensions of piped water supplies have rendered the distribution system completely incapable of servicing the growing population.⁶³³ The city of Bamenda is endowed with litany of catchments, rivers and streams which are scattered all over the surface area in the different municipalities.⁶³⁴ While these sources serve as common pool resources, they are usually open to contamination caused by urbanization.⁶³⁵ Urbanization creates its own forms of water stress through increasing per capita water consumption and rising incomes, as wealthier people use more water, energy and water

⁶²⁷ S. Sharma, "Effects of Urbanization on Water Resources-Facts and Figures", *Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, Vol.8, 2017, pp.433-435.

⁶²⁸ A. Chi, "Human interference and environmental instability: addressing the environmental consequences of rapid urban growth in Bamenda Cameroon", *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.10, No.2, 1998, pp.1-2.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid*, pp.2-6.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid*, pp.7-10.

⁶³¹ P. N. Chia, N. Chinyere Ugaka, K. A. Yongabi, B. Nwoke and P.M. Tih, *Baseline study on the occurrences of Cryptosporidium Spp from streams water, after torrential rains in Bamenda, Cameroon*, Bamenda, Published by Global Institute for Research and Education, 2015, pp.63-68.

⁶³² Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45, Teacher, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

⁶³³ *Idem*.

⁶³⁴ H.T Mbiydznyuy, *Schematic guideline on water hygiene and sanitation for rural people*, Bamenda, Gospel Press, 2006, pp.30-32.

⁶³⁵ Interview with Killian Fai Nsaikimo, 56, Teacher, Nso, 29/07/2020.

intensive goods. Simultaneously, the urban poor inhabitants face inadequate access to drinking water and basic sanitation.⁶³⁶ The uncontrolled utilization of natural resources to supply to the water demands of the ever-growing population of the Bamenda Grassfields region has brought about scarcity.⁶³⁷ The supply shortage has resulted in conflicts among the indigenes of the region, prolonged drought and shifting of local inhabitants. The high growth rate has led to increase demand in water, especially for domestic purposes as seen in table 10.

10. The growth in the Population of Bamenda city from 1964 to 1993

Year	Total population	General increase	Percentage increase
1964	18,489	8,724	47.18
1965	19,000	1,489	7.83
1968	25,900	6,900	26.64
1970	33,376	7,476	22.39
1976	44,764	11,388	25.44
1979	52,537	7,773	14.79
1987	203,480	150,943	74.18
1992	257,200	53,720	20.88
1993	270,400	13,200	4.88

Source: A. Chi, Human interference and environmental instability, p.162.

Note: From the table above, we can see that there has been rapid in migration to Bamenda town and this helps explains the town's very rapid population growth. The town's population increased more than four folds between the years 1976 and 1987 censuses.

More so, the landscape of the hill slopes system of the Bamenda Grassfields, is being changed by human activities. Poorly planned development activities result in land instability, which activates the degradation processes and heavy silt transportation by runoff.⁶³⁸ The result has been the silting of streambeds, giving rise to flood hazards on the lower slopes. The most significant

⁶³⁶ M. Foucault, *The subject and power*, Vol.III, New York, New Press, 2000, pp.327-340.

⁶³⁷ Interview with Wirngo Ernest Shiytum, 49, Business Manager at CAMPOST, Meluf, 06/08/2020.

⁶³⁸ A. Chi, "Human interference and environmental instability: Addressing the environmental consequences of rapid urban growth in Bamenda Cameroon", *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol.10, No.2, University of Buea, 1996, pp.170-176.

responses have been soil erosion, disturbance of sub-surface water flow, contamination of surface water sources, rapid loss of primary agro-forest lands, destruction of watersheds and increase runoff denudation almost everywhere.⁶³⁹

Before urbanization, there is increase in ground water as a result of constant infiltration, decrease in runoff and little or no pollution. After urbanization, increase in impervious or hard surfaces, decreases the amount of water that soaks into the ground or infiltrates, and thus increases the amount of surface runoff. The impervious surfaces collect and accumulate pollutants, such as those from homes, leaked from vehicles or deposited from the atmosphere, through rain or snow melt. The runoff water carries pollutants directly into water bodies, making them unfit for human consumption. Because there is less infiltration, peak flows of storm water runoff are larger and arrive earlier, increasing the magnitude of urban floods. Also, if when infiltration is decreased sufficiently, ground water levels decline affecting stream flows during the dry season.

Furthermore, floods in the Bamenda Grassfields, has been a common phenominon. River and street flooding became a problem in the urban area during the 1980s. Floods occur here in the months of July and August, the wettest months of the rainy season. According to Shaake,⁶⁴⁰ The causes of increased flooding in an urbanized watershed are, increase in the percentage of impervious surfaces, paving, straightening or other ways of improving stream channels, landscaping (decrease in the inundation area and surface removal of vegetation) and fragmentation of land into building sites and filling in and human occupation of flood plains. Two outputs of the drainage basin, river flow and water quality, are sensitive to the effects of urbanization.⁶⁴¹ Four causes of flooding are significant in the case of the Bamenda urban area namely, characteristics of rainfall storms, heavily used open surfaces resulting in low infiltration rate and the blocking of the river channels by solid waste.⁶⁴² Bamenda's rapid urban growth has placed enormous stress on water, forest and land ecosystems, which has resulted in constant conflicts. While the effects of urbanization on the water cycle can be major, if wise choices are

⁶³⁹*Ibid*, p.178-180.

⁶⁴⁰ J.C. Shaake, *Water and city in A.V. Detwyterand D. Marcus eds., Urbanization Environment*, Lagos, Federal Printing Press, 1970, pp.103-104.

⁶⁴¹ F.O Akintola, "Flooding phenomenon in Ibadan", in M.O Filani eds, university of Ibadan, 1982, pp.89-90.

⁶⁴²Interview with Jonas Kikishiy, 49years, Teacher, Mbiame, 06/08/2020.

made during the development process, the impacts can be minimized, and our future water supply protected.

The next social factor that has brought about water conflicts is climate change. This shall be seen below.

2. Climate Change

Climate change is a complex phenomenon. It is sometimes referred to as global warming, which is the increase in the average temperature of oceans and the atmosphere at the planetary level. It entails a short and long term alteration of the statistical properties of climatic system.⁶⁴³ The United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), defines climate change as a change in temperature, which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.⁶⁴⁴

Climate change has and will continue to have far-reaching consequences on the timing, flows and quality of water resources around the globe. It is altering weather patterns, endangering the supply of over half of humanity.⁶⁴⁵ Increasingly, climate change and the associated increase in frequency of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and rising sea level is recognized as not only having humanitarian impacts, but also creating political and security risk that can affect national/regional stability and the welfare of people.⁶⁴⁶ Climate change plays a secondary role in the origin or aggravation of social conflicts linked to water in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon.⁶⁴⁷

The Bamenda Grassfields Region has two seasons, from December to February is the dry season, March to May there are light rains, June to August there is heavy rainfall and September to November there are moderate rains.⁶⁴⁸ During the dry season, there is problem of water shortage

⁶⁴³ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62 years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh-Nkum, 15/07/2020.

⁶⁴⁴ Canada's National Reports to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, <https://www.canada.ca>> climate change, 16th July 2020, 11:54am, pp.56-60.

⁶⁴⁵ D. Weaver, "Can sustainable tourism survive climate change", *Journal of sustainable Tourism*, Vol.9, No.1, pp.10-20.

⁶⁴⁶ A. Wolf, A.G Meredith, "International resource conflict and mitigation", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.42, No.1, 2000, pp.48-50.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with Caleb Kingha Njeba, 37 years, Veterinarian, Ndu, 06/08/2020.

⁶⁴⁸ Misse, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.9-13.

due to harsh weather conditions, which heat up water sources causing rapid evaporation and thus leading to shortage of the precious liquid. Climate change in the Grassfields region has dried up water sources completely, reducing the quantity and volume and rate of water flow.⁶⁴⁹ As a result of this, there is not enough good water to satisfy the ever-growing population of the region. Heavy rainfall has as well affected catchments and other sources such as streams and rivers. When rain falls heavily, it reaches the earth as runoff, and carries all sorts of refuse it finds on the way into water sources. The end result of this is the pollution, making the availability of quality water impossible.⁶⁵⁰

The shortage and poor quality of water as a result of climate change, has triggered the movement of the indigenes of the Bamenda Grassfields to move from one area to another, over long distances in search of water good for consumption. This has led to subsequent conflicts as they often meet with protest in the areas they go to because the water resources are not enough to satisfy everyone.⁶⁵¹ For instance, the Fulani of the Grassfields Region of Cameroon continue to be in conflicts with the inhabitants of the region in search of water sources and pasture for their cattle. Climate change has dried up many water sources and left many surfaces bare.

Water is the primary medium through which we will feel the effects of climate change. Water availability is becoming less predictable in many places and increased incidences of flooding threaten to destroy water points and sanitation facilities and contaminate water sources. Pollution will be the next social factor to be examined.

3. Pollution of Water Bodies

It is generally known that water is life, in effect, water makes up more than 60% of the human body and water also occupies more than 70% of the Earth's surface⁶⁵². It was the absence of water that caused uphill plants to dry off during the dry season, thereby forcing most of the herdsmen to take their cattles into the wetlands or on transhumance. Wum area had a well-

⁶⁴⁹*Ibid.*p.57-60.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview with Vuwe Richard, 62 years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

⁶⁵¹J.V.D. Warde, H.T. Musa, M. Ischer, *Catchment Protection Handbook*, Bamenda Gospel Press, 2000, pp.10-14.

⁶⁵² E. Koizah Karh, "Cattle economy in Wum Area 1940-2010: A Historical Analysis" Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.30-100.

furnished hydrological network; rivers, streams and lakes⁶⁵³. Whenever water bodies became a great polluting factor for humans, animals and ecosystems, measures had to be taken to prevent and avoid the destruction of lives⁶⁵⁴. Cattles poisoned or polluted water bodies in different ways. This was through their faeces, urine and Dung. Urinating in water was one of the most known pollution⁶⁵⁵.

Once water is contaminated, it is difficult, costly, and often impossible to remove the pollutants. Today, 80% of global wastewater goes untreated⁶⁵⁶, containing everything from human waste to highly toxic industrial discharges, which is the case of the Bamenda Grassfields Region. The nature and amount of pollutants in freshwater, determines the suitability of water for many human uses such as drinking, bathing, and agriculture.⁶⁵⁷ In addition, pollution of freshwater ecosystems impacts the habitat and quality of life of fish and other wildlife.⁶⁵⁸ Pollution in freshwater ecosystems includes pathogens (largely from human and animal waste), organic matter (including plant nutrients from agricultural run-off, such as nitrogen or phosphorus), chemical pollution and salinity (from irrigation, domestic wastewater and runoff of mines into rivers).⁶⁵⁹ Plastic pollution and pharmaceuticals, also increasingly put our world's waterways at risk, but the extent and impacts of their presence in our freshwater, is largely unknown.⁶⁶⁰

Pollution and contamination from agricultural runoff, human and animal waste, extractive and manufacturing industries, as well as naturally occurring sources in the Bamenda Grassfields, affects surface and ground water quality, posing significant health risks and degrading livelihoods.⁶⁶¹ While flooding may often be responsible for temporary discharges of untreated

⁶⁵³ A. Momah, "Conserving land and water", Paper presented on the occasion of the restitution workshop on dialogue processes between pastoral resources users in Menchum, November 2010, pp.1-5.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.6-10.

⁶⁵⁵ Interview with W. Asah Mbenkum, 63 years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 18/08/2020.

⁶⁵⁶ Gleick, *The world's water 2000-2001: The Biennial report on freshwater resources*, Washington, Island Press, 2000, pp.37-38.

⁶⁵⁷ Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60 years, Teacher, Bamunka Ndop, 06/08/2020.

⁶⁵⁸ H.T. Mbiydenyuy, *Effective water catchment protection in the Cameroon Western Highlands. Water shed kivenk Development*, Bamenda, Gospel Press, 2006, pp.46-50.

⁶⁵⁹ Interview with Esau Akoko, Teacher, Njikwa, 44 years, 07/08/2020.

⁶⁶⁰ W. Nformi, *Kumbo water crisis: An imminent environmental hazard*, Kumbo, Publication of the Kumbo Urban Council, No.5, 2006, pp.30-31.

⁶⁶¹ Interview with Blasius Nformi Mbinkar, 67 years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

waste into public water supplies, the problem transcends temporary water waste treatment issues spurred by disasters.⁶⁶²

Waste management in the Bamenda municipality has serious drawbacks, despite the activities of the waste management department of the city Council, which collects and disposes waste to improve on the hygiene conditions of the town. In addition to the fact that many localities within the municipality are not included in the collection schedule, collection intervals are not communicated to the residents, which give room to the locals to resort to inappropriate methods of disposal.⁶⁶³ From this study, only 30% of the respondents find it easier to deposit their wastes in the Bamenda City Council waste collection vans, while 70% of the locals resort to disposing their untreated wastes into waterways, bushes and roadsides.⁶⁶⁴ The waterways are thus clogged by wastes and in the event of heavy rainfall, floods occur. Furthermore, wastes around garages and gas filling stations, are usually left to be swept off by runoff into water channels, ending up in the wetlands of the municipality.⁶⁶⁵

In the Bamenda Grassfields, about 90% of waste water is released into the natural environment, without treatment. This causes significant damage of ecosystems and watersheds, placing water supplies at risk, endangering food supplies, by threatening the health of crops and fresh water fisheries and also damaging economically lucrative ecotourism industries. Irrigation with waste water is one of the undesirable means by which heavy metals are added to agricultural farms. This is due to the lack or scarcity of fresh water, which has become chronic in Bamenda. Generally, this is a major problem in poor densely populated developing countries, where pressure on irrigation water resources is extremely great.⁶⁶⁶ In Bamenda, streams that feed the wetlands pass through the commercial areas, receiving untreated effluents from markets, garages,

⁶⁶² J. Gehrig, M.M. Rogers, *Water and Conflicts: Incorporating peace building into water development*, Lexington, Catholic Relief Service, 2009, pp.15-20.

⁶⁶³ G. Azinwie Asongwe, B.P.K. Yerima and A. Suh Tening, "Vegetable production and livelihood of farmers in Bamenda Municipality, Cameroon", *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, Vol.3, No.12, 2014, pp.691-700.

⁶⁶⁴ Interview with Henry Banin Nyuyfoni, 34 years, Loans Officer, 05/09/2020.

⁶⁶⁵ *Idem*.

⁶⁶⁶ O.O. Odukoya, and S.O. Ajayi, "Nutrition problems of irrigated vegetables in Nigeria", *Journal of Nutrition*, Vol.3, 1987, pp.105-106.

households and slaughter houses. They could therefore be charged with significant amounts of contaminants that would be taken up by the irrigated vegetable farms⁶⁶⁷ as seen on plate 6.

5. Polluted water used for the watering of crops in Bamenda



Source: Photo by Author

Note: The picture above is a farmland in the town of Bamenda. Here, we can see a pool of polluted water which is used to water crops. The crops take in some significant amounts of the pollutants, which are detrimental to the health of those who consume it.

Also, some Bamenda Grassfields inhabitants construct pit toilets near water sources.⁶⁶⁸ According to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities 1992 population report, each person generates faecal waste that contains an average of 3.2kg of Nitrogen and 0.6kg of Phosphorus annually through the soil and rocks.⁶⁶⁹ Through sand and fine soil, normal travel of bacteria is up to 30m and several hundred in gravel, thus contaminating ground water.⁶⁷⁰ Less knowledgeable groups living in close proximity to contaminate water are the most vulnerable to its effects, and while knowledge reduces vulnerability, it also fuels grievances towards unaffected water users, polluters and regulatory institutions. This was the case in Yeh and also between Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh over LakeBambili.

⁶⁶⁷ Interview with Samuel Shey Dufe , 59 years, Teacher, Romajay, 04/08/2020.

⁶⁶⁸Interview with Rev. Moses Nchotu Shu, 52 years, Pastor, Bafut, 20/08/2020.

⁶⁶⁹ C. Achu, "Improved water management system in Kano closed settled zones, problems and possibilities", *Journal of Applied Social Science*, Vol.1, University of Buea, 1998, pp.71-90.

⁶⁷⁰Achu, "Improved water management", pp.91-99.

4. Upstream and Downstream Flows

Every water resource in the Bamenda Grassfields region has upstreams and downstream riparian and associated advantages and disadvantages, often accrue, depending on where they are physically located. Upstream users continue to have an effect on downstream water users, thus leading to conflicts.⁶⁷¹ Water is one of the most important natural resources, and is crucial for maintaining socioeconomic and environmental systems. Hence ensuring water security by maintaining the quality and quantity of water required for human consumption and environmental integrity is very important. World Water day in 1999 offered the motto “Everyone lives downstream”, drawing public attention to the conflicts of related interests between upstream and downstream residents.⁶⁷²

Many of the water sources in the Bamenda Grassfields, have suffered serious deterioration in downstream water quality over the years.⁶⁷³ As this research suggests, allocation strategies that disregard water’s unidirectional flow, tend to bring about degradation in downstream quality for two reasons.⁶⁷⁴ First, such water quality depends considerably on pollution discharged from an upstream watershed. The inhabitants living upstream in the Bamenda Grassfields wash their dresses, household utensils and have their bath in these water sources. Some go as far as defecating in these water sources. Excessive nutrient salts from upstream, have caused serious eutrophication problems downstream, making it more difficult for the inhabitants downstream, to secure drinking water.⁶⁷⁵ Secondly, excessive upstream water withdrawals, reduce the dilution capacity of a river, and thereby significantly degrade water quality of downstream river reaches.⁶⁷⁶

More so, the spring flow supplying the downstream community’s water system has diminished dramatically over the years, since the system was originally constructed, due to deforestation and overgrazing in the ground water recharge zone above the spring. Concerns about the quality of

⁶⁷¹ J. Lundqvist and M. Falkenmark, “Focus on the Upstream-Downstream Conflicts of interest”, *Journal of International Water Resources Association*, Vol.25, No.2, 2000, pp.173-177.

⁶⁷² Y. Taeyein, C. Rhodes and A. Farhed Shah, “Upstream water resource management to address downstream pollution concerns”, *Journal of water resource research*, Vol.51, No.2, 2014, pp.2-10.

⁶⁷³ Interview with Roland Tawong Nyamnsai, 38 years, Teacher, Nkambe, 05/08/2020.

⁶⁷⁴ Interview with Mohamadu Nyaso Gariba, 44 years, Teacher, Donga Mantung, 06/08/2020.

⁶⁷⁵ F. Sahar Yousef, “Water scarcity and conflict between upstream and downstream riparian countries”, PhD Thesis in Agriculture and Development Economics, University of Ohio, 2019, pp.8-16.

⁶⁷⁶ E. Ansink and H.P. Weikard, “Contested water rights”, *European Journal of Political Economy*, Vol.25, No.2, pp.246-250.

the water supply are also growing among the community members, as words spread about agrochemical use and livestock grazing just above the spring. This has often resulted in conflicts between the upstream communities and downstream inhabitants. It is worthy to note that, upstream-downstream problems however continue to occur, regardless of political boundaries, as they are dispersed water users in the same watershed. An example of a conflict caused by upstream and downstream flows is that of the Nkanchi Water Supply in 1998.

Upstream water pollution was also very common in Esu, Wanjung, Magha and Chah clans⁶⁷⁷. Herdsmen took their cattle to stream sources in the hills and valleys where there were limited activities to avoid confrontation with farmers and villagers. This was done regardless of the fact that directives had been given to the grazers to build or arrange drinking points for their cattle⁶⁷⁸. But they forgot that streams flowed down hills where they were consumed by villagers. The dung and urine in water made it unfit for humans to use. Thus, this led to water conflicts and still continues to be a problem today.

5. Intrusion of Pastoralists in a Space Strongly Dominated by Agriculture

Agriculture is an economic activity that has been performed and is still being performed, by more than 80% of the Bamenda Grassfields population, from the colonial period till date. During the colonial period, before the arrival of the Fulani cattle rearers in 1916, there was little or no competition over water nor land, since cattle rearing in large herds was not practiced.⁶⁷⁹ Thus conflicts over water were not a common phenomenon. Agriculture was carried out with much ease, as water was always available to carry out this economic activity.⁶⁸⁰ The European powers introduced plantation agriculture and cash crops such as cotton, cocoa, rubber and bananas were also introduced.⁶⁸¹ Irrigation schemes were usually constructed to provide water in areas lacking sufficient natural rainfall or during the dry season, to support crop growth.

The advent of the Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields in the early 20th century, introduced ethnic pluralism and economic divergence in the area. This emanated from the fact that, the Fulani who

⁶⁷⁷ Moma, "Conserving land and water", pp.38-46.

⁶⁷⁸ Sahar Yousef, "Water scarcity and conflict" p.8-20.

⁶⁷⁹ Interview with Ibrahim Amadou Babangida, 31 years, Teacher, Yaounde, 08/08/2020.

⁶⁸⁰ P.M Sone, "Conflict over land ownership: The case of farmers and cattle graziers in the North West Region of Cameroon, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, Vol.12, No.1, 2012, pp.89-90.

⁶⁸¹ J. Lon Nfi, *Cameroon History 1800-2000*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 2000, pp.61-63.

were culturally Muslim dominated and economically pastoralists, met in the Bamenda Grassfields a population composed of the Tikar, Widikum, Chamba, Ngemba, who were predominantly cultivators, practicing shifting cultivation.⁶⁸² The dominant economic activity of the two groups, that is, farming and grazing quickly exposed them to rivalry over parcels of land.⁶⁸³ Considering that both parties depended on traditional methods of their respective activities which required the exploitation of vast lands, the available land now became insufficient to satisfy the desires of the different groups. This basically established the ensuing Agro-pastoral conflicts, which were in the long run exacerbated by physical as well as human and economic factors, peculiar to the area.⁶⁸⁴

The contention between farmers and cattle grazers over control of land has resulted in perennial conflict in the Bamenda Grassfields. These conflicts are traceable from the colonial period, where colonial policies promoted mostly herding practices and cash crop production, which were income generating. When Fulani cattle rearing was introduced in the region in 1916, the local chiefs immediately welcomed the Fulani nomadic grazers.⁶⁸⁵ The conquering of space by Fulani herders, uncoordinated grazing practices and farmers' constant search for but tenuous access to fertile lands, water sources, are increasingly putting both partners at loggerheads.⁶⁸⁶ Hence for over forty (40) years now, farmers' agricultural productivity and livelihoods are threatened, and they have continued to blame the graziers and local authorities who have been dithering over the issue.⁶⁸⁷

The main causes of persistent farmer-herder conflicts include diminished water sources, crop damage by trespassing cattle, encroachment into grazing zones by farmers, blockage of cattle routes by farmers, land grabbing, environmental degradation, climate change, partiality of traditional leaders and state officials in settling such cases, population growth and

⁶⁸² Interview with Asah Mbenkum William, 63 years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 18/08/2020.

⁶⁸³ Interview with Njodzeven Julius, 61 years, Farmer, Kumbo, 20/07/2020.

⁶⁸⁴ H. Ami-Nyoh, "Strategies and pitfalls of Agro-Pastoral conflicts prevention in Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon under British administration", *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.3, No.4A, 2015, pp.825-829.

⁶⁸⁵ M.Z. Njeuma and N. Fru Awasom, "The Fulani and the political economy of Bamenda Grasslands: Opportunity and conflict, 1940-1960", *Paideuma*, Vol.36, 1990, pp.459-460.

⁶⁸⁶ Interview with Mohamadou Nyaso Gariba, 44 years, Teacher, Nkambe, 06/08/2020.

⁶⁸⁷ B. Ufon, "Farmer-grazier conflict and women's agricultural productivity in Cameroon Grasslands: Case of Wum, Menchum Division, North West Region", Postgraduate Diploma Dissertation, University of Buea, Cameroon, 2004, pp.33-36.

urbanization.⁶⁸⁸ Persistent farmer-grazier conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon have disrupted agro-pastoral production, due to dwindling agrarian land, resulting from population growth and environmental degradation. Such land use competition often results in open violence, with loss of properties, human lives and displacement of both farmers and herders.⁶⁸⁹ Unfortunately, this conflict has been largely ignored by stakeholders, despite its widespread occurrence and disastrous implications in the region.

Furthermore, climate variation is another problem posing issue in Agro-pastoral regions. The entire Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon has two main seasons, the dry and rainy seasons. With the practice of transhumance and shifting cultivation, grazers who depended on the rains for pasture regeneration and farmers who depended on the rains for planting their crops, are bound to clash over the small pieces of land in the valleys, which are often punctuated by streams.⁶⁹⁰ This apart, the raffia palms grew around these valleys and with their fibrous roots, they drew up water from the soil which they stored and kept the nearby lands wet throughout the year.⁶⁹¹ It was around these wet areas that women planted their vegetable for dry season consumption. When cattle came from the hill tops for water, they trampled on the crops and destroyed them.⁶⁹² This often resulted to conflicts, after inadequate compensation or none at all.

The intensity of farmer-herder conflicts in the region varies from one community to another, based on the availability of agro-pastoral resources and relief. For example, Wum in Menchum Division is for the most part a low land area characterized by many river valleys, which favour year round agro-pastoral activities for both local farmers and herders.⁶⁹³ This excellent fertile landscape attracted early Fulani pastoralists in the region, but population growth and demands for more farmland, water contrasted with the early mutual interaction between farmers and herders, as Fulani pastoralists would not let their grazing land be converted to settlements and

⁶⁸⁸ M. Moritz, "Commoditization and the pursuit of piety: The transformation of an African pastoral system", Masters Dissertation, University of California, 2003, pp.37-40.

⁶⁸⁹ G. Bamboye, "Population change, agricultural diversification and environmental dynamics in the North West Region of Cameroon", Masters Dissertation, University of Yaounde 1, 2010, pp.45-60.

⁶⁹⁰ M.K. Kebei, "Environmental impact Assessment of the Farmer-Grazer conflict on Aghem culture", Masters Dissertation in Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, pp.42-48.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp.49-54.

⁶⁹² Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60years, Teacher, Ndop, 06/08/2020.

⁶⁹³ Interview with Lawson Wirba, 54years, Farmer, Kumbo, 03/08/2020.

native farms. Today, Wum is well known in Cameroon for its early and recurrent incidents of farmer-herder clashes.⁶⁹⁴

Farmers see land ownership as a major issue and competition over water as a major challenge. They expressed the view that grazers frequently drive their cattle into streams and rivers to drink water, thus polluting water, which is also used for human consumption.⁶⁹⁵ Farmers further explain that, during the dry seasons, they experience unusual 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 in their farms for irrigation purposes, but grazers come and destroy them.⁶⁹⁶ Also, land rights are an issue because, farmers and grazers do not always have land certificates, and the ownership of land then becomes contested. 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 only. The planting of eucalyptus trees has resulted in water shortages,⁶⁹⁷ this was the case in the Dumbo village (Misaje Sub Division) in the early 1990s, when the Fulani cattle rearers invaded the Dumbo catchment with their cattle thereby destroying it. It was unbearable to the Dumbo people because they lacked good water for consumption.

According to our field survey, the majority of local inhabitants in the region believed that, farmer-herder conflicts are often solved with bias, and in most cases in favour of Fulani pastoralists, who have cattle wealth to bribe traditional leaders and state officials, to judge in their favour.⁶⁹⁸ The local perceptions reflect the corrupt practices that are very common in solving Farmer-herder conflicts, due to their often complicated nature. However, some state officials argue that, Fulani pastoralists are a minority group, and because of their nomadic lifestyle and minority status, they often suffer discrimination, making it difficult for them to judge against the Fulani, in cases of farmer-herder conflicts.⁶⁹⁹ This is so because, the

⁶⁹⁴ C. Harshbarger, "Farmer-herder conflict and state legitimacy in Cameroon", Masters Dissertation, University of Florida, 1995, pp.51-53.

⁶⁹⁵ Interview with Elfreda Wirmum, 6 years, Farmer, Bajing, 28/06/2020.

⁶⁹⁶ Harshbarger, "Farmer-herder conflict", pp.52-60.

⁶⁹⁷ Interview with Marceline Shinyuy, 42 years, Bajing, 28/06/2020.

⁶⁹⁸ Interview with Rosaline Baye, 75 years, Farmer, Kumbo, 28/06/2020.

⁶⁹⁹ R.A Mbih, S.L Driever, S.K Ndzeidze, J. Mbongowo Mbuh, C. S. Bongadzem, H.M Wirngo, Fulani pastoralists' transformation process: a sustainable development approach in the Western Highlands of Cameroon, *Article in Journal of Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 2017, pp.15-29.

government is always looking for ways to encourage them to integrate and live a sedentary lifestyle within their host communities. This has resulted in diminishing water sources, crop damage by herders, disrespect of local authorities, more suspicion and hatred between farmers and herders in the region.⁷⁰⁰ After looking at the social factors, we shall now examine the political factors.

C. Political Factor

Political factors have also contributed to the numerous water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. They are as follows

1. Poor Management

One of the most pressing and complicated issues influencing effective and equitable water management in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon is corruption.⁷⁰¹ This issue is intertwined with water information management, as a lack of transparency and public knowledge about water management (for example, allocation of water rights and private sector contracts), can mask inequitable benefits and preferential treatment within weak or corrupt governance system.⁷⁰²

Perceptions of preferential access to limited water resources are often a source of grievance. Preferential treatment, which benefits parties of economic, social or political influence, weakens regulatory regimes and sustainable water management, and contributes to imbalance economic opportunity.⁷⁰³ Corruption increases marginalization and exploitation of disadvantage and vulnerable populations. It generates significant social unrest at the local level, by worsening water related economic and health issues, among already vulnerable groups,⁷⁰⁴ which results in subsequent conflicts, over poor management of water.

⁷⁰⁰*Ibid*, pp.30-33.

⁷⁰¹ M. Barlow, *Blue covenant: The global water crisis and the coming battle for the right to water*, New York, The New Press, 2008, pp.89-90.

⁷⁰²M.G Brown, water and conflict, USA, 2014, pp.8-10.

⁷⁰³*Ibid*, pp.11-17.

⁷⁰⁴ C. Achu, "Improved water management system in Kano closed settled zones, problems and possibilities", *Journal of Applied Social Science*, Vol.1, University of Buea, 1998, pp.35-37.

Low technical competence, lack of political will of government and other water management institutions, has resulted in inequitable or ineffective water management.⁷⁰⁵ This is an indicator or consequence of fragile state-society relations. More so, lack of technical water expertise, insufficient technical training of water managers and engineers, absence of water dispute settlement mechanisms and inadequate funding of water programs and infrastructures in the Bamenda Grassfields, has hindered the capacity to build social and institutional resilience to internal and external water related conflicts.

Furthermore, if the state or local water management body is not delivering on core public services like household provision of potable water or effective management of large infrastructure that failure can quickly be perceived as a sign of government ineffectiveness or illegitimacy, thus resulting in water related conflicts. This has been the case of the National Water Corporation (*SNEC*), created on 28th May 1968, to run water supply schemes all over the country.⁷⁰⁶ This was the case with the National Water Corporation, known by its French acronym as *SNEC*. Until 1968, eight years after independence, the responsibility for the distribution of drinking water in Cameroon became the duty of the municipality.⁷⁰⁷ Each locality collected tax, intended to cover the cost incurred by using water, electricity, garbage collection and operation of the ambulance system. This tax covered among others, the costs of operation and maintenance of free public standpipes.⁷⁰⁸

With the constitutional changes following the referendum of May 20th 1972, the government of Buea was dissolved with its services, and the responsibility of the state government in respect to water, were taken over by the Ministry of Mines, Water and Energy, which immediately took over the administration of the water schemes in West Cameroon.⁷⁰⁹ Since the Ministry did not

⁷⁰⁵ Interview with Kinkoh Anthony Bah, 56years, Civil Servant, Nkor-Noni, 29/07/2020.

⁷⁰⁶ B. Page, "A Priceless commodity, the production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999", PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.78-80.

⁷⁰⁷ Interview with chin Aloysius, 102years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/08/2020.

⁷⁰⁸ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands: The case of Bali, Kumbo and Bafou small cities", PhD Thesis in Rural studies of Geography and the environment, University of Toulouse, 2014, pp.72-78.

⁷⁰⁹ Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, pp.45-46,

have as its responsibility the actual running of water supplies, most of the water schemes in the former West Cameroon, were immediately handed over to *SNEC*,⁷¹⁰ created in 1968.

The transfer of power from the central state to *SNEC*, a parastatal, ushered in a new phase of water politics. The period between 1970-1990, was a stage of maturity and growth of the company, as it spread to many small towns.⁷¹¹ The system that was originally with minor modifications pulled on until 1991, when the deep economic crisis which manifested in 1987, had its first visible effects on the system. Thus in 1991, *SNEC*, whose financial situation had become unbearable, single-handedly decided to close public taps, due to accumulated bills from councils, as a result of high rates.⁷¹² Representative data in 1993 for unpaid bills accumulated by the state, amounted to 30,000million FCFA. In the same year, *SNEC* recorded a turnover of 500million FCFA.⁷¹³ The decision to close the last public tap supplying councils was due. However, the social consequences of this closure were remarkable.

Obviously, the poorest of the population were the most affected, while in reality, it was the state that had to pay the consequences, as the percentage of the population supplied through free public fountains was between 35 and 45% of the urban population, a figure that included many of the layers of the poorest population.⁷¹⁴ The creation and failure of the system of payment of public fountains created tension between some towns and *SNEC*.

Also, *SNEC* abandoned the protection of the intake areas, as activities which were dangerous to the catchment such as farming and installation of fish points, continued to be carried out. This led to massive evaporation and reduction of water volume in the intake area. For example, when the population of the town of Kumbo became restive and organized a clean-up of their catchment area, a dead donkey was seen inside the debris that had blocked the intake basin.⁷¹⁵ The intake was as well choked with plants and expected reafforestation of the catchment area was never

⁷¹⁰ *SNEC* is a government corporation, created in 1968, to run water supply schemes all over the country, and ensure that most of the centers drink portable water. They do not construct water schemes but they manage constructed water schemes by the government and communities. It is not a private company, neither is it set up to make profit.

⁷¹¹ V.F Nzole, "Problems of rural supply, case study: Muea Water Scheme", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2005, pp.56-70.

⁷¹² Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, pp.29-33.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.* pp.33-35.

⁷¹⁴ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.74-76.

⁷¹⁵ Interview with Sebastine Kinyuy, 56years, Business/Hotel Manager, Kumbo, 22/08/2020.

started. This discovery was the last straw that angered the consumers, leading to the revolt that took place in 1991.⁷¹⁶

Furthermore, *SNEC* levied high rates on the population, resulting in high bills of public taps. Pipes were never replaced and the employees of the corporation were rude, some incompetent but were paid high salaries.⁷¹⁷ The various communities thus decided to take over management of their water schemes from *SNEC*, when it became obvious that the water supply was being mismanaged, resulting in dwindling supply, giving rise to water rationing, massive disconnection of public standpipes and deteriorating water quality.⁷¹⁸

The first largest and most violent of these cases was Kumbo.⁷¹⁹ Here, an angry crowd attacked and drove the *SNEC* officials. The protest was only controlled when the military police fired into the crowd, killing six people.⁷²⁰ A troop was later on sent to Kumbo, *SNEC* officials continued to work in Kumbo, but the population refused to pay bills. They side stepped *SNEC*, and called for meetings to plan on the management of their water system. A new institution, Kumbo Water Authority (KWA) was created in 1994 as a result, to take over the infrastructure and who have continued to manage the network ever since.⁷²¹ Thereafter, in Bali, a similar process took place a year later. Practically, the disappearance of public tap stands, which were initially free and paid for, later forced the population to adopt various strategies, such as buying water from individuals, but also the return to wells and natural sources, dangerous alternatives if we consider the consequences in terms of health.⁷²² The situation which had been supported by the Bali people only triggered their anger with the closure of public taps during the *Lela* dance, a key annual cultural event, during which numerous visitors as well as Bali elite return to their

⁷¹⁶Interview with Peter Yaah, 50years, Teacher, Kumbo, 05/08/2020.

⁷¹⁷ C. Missem Fai, "The impact of a water supply project on the society: The case of Kumbo, 1965-2013", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, pp.32-34.

⁷¹⁸*Ibid*, pp35-40.

⁷¹⁹ G. Njoka, "Kumbo water supply systems 1968-1992: A historical perspective", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1993, pp.50-56.

⁷²⁰Sendze, *History of Kumbo Water Supply*, pp.30-38.

⁷²¹Interview with Killian Nsai Kimo, 55years, Teacher, Kumbo, 27/07/2020.

⁷²² R.B. Sikud, "Farmer-Grazer conflict in Bali Sub Division, 1975-2010: A Historical Analysis", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.61-74.

hometown. The protest which began peacefully, ended in violence and the *SNEC* officials were forced to leave the town the same day.⁷²³

This experience had significant differences in relation to the state. As illustrated in the recent ownership claims or change movements, it is perhaps more difficult to sustain change than to initiate a reform. Although there have hardly been any objective analyses of the impact, both sets of experiences, had several common lessons for future development in the sector. The Kumbo and Bali water supplies had a bold break with the past, and deserve attention for the astonishingly great effort they made to reclaim their water supplies and render them more community based, demand responsive and participatory.⁷²⁴ It is therefore unfortunate that the unresolved shortcomings of *SNEC* supposedly hampered its effectiveness and sustainability.

Lastly, we shall look at the cultural factor of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields Region.

D. Cultural Factor

Culture is an important aspect of a people. Water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields have been as a result of some cultural aspects. These have been discussed below.

1. Tradition and Customary Practices

Customs and traditional norms are significant components of water management regimes in the Bamenda Grassfields, which strongly influences user preferences and affect institutional contexts.⁷²⁵ For example, a formal state body may legally hold decision making authority, while users defer to customary authorities regarding secondary and tertiary rights, unrecognized by the law.⁷²⁶ Furthermore, water plays a key role in many religious rituals, making it a focal point of community activities and giving it significant emotional importance. This has been the same in some areas of the Bamenda Grassfields. This has been the case of Bali-Nyonga- Bawock crisis over the *ntsi-su'fu* stream and the Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh over Lake Bambili. Bambili claim the lake is their ancestral home, and that libations are poured into the lake once a year to

⁷²³ B, Nde Fontah Nyamndi, *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon: A political History*, Paris, Editions CAPE, 1988, p.80.

⁷²⁴ Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies", pp.79-80.

⁷²⁵ Interview with Shu-fai Yuwar, 65years, traditional authority/Farmer, Nso, 03/08/2020.

⁷²⁶ M. Leach, R. Mearns and I. Scoones, "Challenges to community based sustainable Development, dynamics, entitlements, institutions, *IDS Bulletin*, Vol.28, No.4, 1997, pp.4-14.

appease the ancestors and to have a good harvest during the farming season,⁷²⁷ while Babanki-Tungoh point to the lake also as theirs and the entire piece of land. This led to conflicts between the two parties, which dragged on from 1950 to 1998.

In some locations, traditional institutions and formal government bodies, compete for authority over water management, and do not collaborate frequently or effectively. This was the case in Kumbo, between the Mayor of the Kumbo Urban Council (KUC), the *fon* of Nso and the Nso Development Association (NSODA), over who should control the Kumbo Water Scheme. This led to conflicts between these bodies, which has lasted till date.⁷²⁸ Traditional mechanisms that fail to consider technical aspects of the hydrologic regime, contributes to unsustainable water use or, as the environmental conditions of technology access change, they may be ill-equipped to adapt and manage associated conflict risk.⁷²⁹

In addition, when formal institutions make water management decisions without sufficient stakeholder's participation, effective or locally valued traditional practices may be overlooked or ignored.⁷³⁰ As a result, controversies will erupt and concerned parties may reject new water policies and infrastructure. Tussle over power by the government and traditional authorities on who should have control over water sources in the region has often led to conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon.

This was the case of the Bali-Nyonga/Bawock Crisis of 2006-2007. In the year 2006, a crisis occurred between Bali-Nyonga and the Bawock over the *Ntsi-Su'fu* stream. It is claimed that, an important Bali-Nyonga shrine is located at the ntsi-Su'fu stream, which runs through the disputed land. The flags used in the annual *Lela* dance, the most important ceremony in the Bali Nyonga calendar, are ritually washed at this shrine.⁷³¹ According to the *Fon* of Bali, access to the site has been an issue for some years:

Every year, we have tension with Bawock over the *Lela* shrine. I am embarrassed that one group who came to settle in Bali, are trying to insulate themselves. The traditional ruler of Bawock pleaded that he be called *fon*. Why do the Bawock people see

⁷²⁷ E. Ngengong Tangie, "From friends to enemies: Inter-ethnic conflicts amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon, 1950-1998)", Masters Dissertation in peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, 2007, pp.36-38.

⁷²⁸ Interview with Ivo Yiyen Shang, 67years, Retired school Teacher, Nso, 06/08/2020.

⁷²⁹ Interview with Joseph Fai Chila, 55years, Teacher, Misaje, 01/08/2020.

⁷³⁰ Brown, *Water and Conflicts*, pp.36-40.

⁷³¹ R. Fardon, *Lela in Bali: History through ceremony in Cameroon*, Berghahn, Oxford, 2006, pp.89-90.

themselves as separate? We don't want them to be Bali. We simply want them to allow us to use our shrine.⁷³²

The *Ntsi-Su'fu*, also known in its lower course as *Ntsi- Matoa*, flows in between Bali-Nyonga and Bawock. From time immemorial, the Bali-Nyonga people performed their annual *Lela* rites at the same stream unperturbed.⁷³³ But when they were stopped from doing so by the Bawock, they wondered why. The Bawock people claimed that, the Bali people put poison in the stream, in the course of performing these rites and that, the poison was intended to kill them.⁷³⁴ The Bali considered such claims as flimsy excuses, forwarded to stop them from practicing their customs and tradition, by people whom they had helped.⁷³⁵

Since they persisted to carry out their traditional rites, the Bawock decided to provoke them to stop.⁷³⁶ They started spreading rumours intended to frighten the Bali-Nyonga. They said they were to plant bombs and explosives, at the spot where the Bali-Nyonga performed the *Lela* rites.⁷³⁷ According to the story, the Bawock had wanted to victimize as many Bali-Nyonga from using the stream. For them, the stream and the land around the stream was owned by them, since their arrival and establishment at their present site, and that they allowed the Bali Nyonga to use the stream because they never needed it much. But now, they wanted to use it more than ever before, and so the Bali should back off it.⁷³⁸

According to the Cameroon Land Law of 1974, "All natural properties including waterways, as well as their banks and estuaries, with a further zone of twenty five (25) meters from tidal mark, belonged to the state".⁷³⁹ Consequently, the question that ran throughout the Bali-Nyonga peoples mind was, how could the Bawock ever think of stopping them from performing their annual rites at the said area, when the land on which the Bawock people are , was given to them

⁷³² B. Page, C. Mercer and M. Evans, *Revising the politics of belonging in Cameroon*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp.351-360.

⁷³³ *Ibid.* p.362-365.

⁷³⁴ Q. Kahkuntan Numbuh Bauket, "The Bali-Nyonga- Bawock relationship: 1906-2007", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2008, pp.65-70.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid*, pp.71-75.

⁷³⁶ Interview with Tiydze Fokum Peter, 75years, Retired C.S, Bali Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

⁷³⁷ Bauket, "The Bali-Nyonga- Bawock relationship", pp.65-68.

⁷³⁸ B. Ndi Fontah, *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon: A political History*, Paris, Editions CAPE, 1988, pp.83-85.

⁷³⁹ C.F. Fisiy, *Power and privilege in the administration of the law: Land law reforms and social differentiation in Cameroon*, Netherlands, African Studies Centre, 1992, pp.132-135.

out of their hospitality? How could they now claim ownership of a stream when all streams, the banks and estuaries, belonged to the state?

The Bali-Nyonga grievously condemned the Bawock action because they violated the terms of the Prefectoral Decision, signed in January 1975 between the then chief of Bali-Nyonga, Galega II and the then chief of Bawock, Nana Ntanke I, to promote peaceful co-existence between them. This was done in the presence of the then Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) for Mezam Division, Alexander Ngomba Motanga.⁷⁴⁰ According to this Prefectoral Decision, the Bali people will continue to carry out their annual *Lela* acts of libation, in the usual place. The persistent Bawock threats were the subject of several decisions and communiques from time to time, brokered by the administration in Bali and Mezam Division. Unfortunately, whenever there was a change in the administration, the Bawock people revisited the problem, a symbol of their determination to discontinue the usage of this stream by Bali-Nyonga.⁷⁴¹

It should as well be noted that, while in Bagangte, the Bawock put up the same attitude. They refused the Bagangte people from performing their annual traditional dance, the *Nkam*. This was one of the reasons for their expulsion from Bagangte.⁷⁴² The repetition of such an act in Bali-Nyonga, another aggressive people who could hardly let go of what they think is theirs, was only to result to conflicts. However, the *Lela* situation was enough to fan up disputes between the Bawock and Bali-Nyonga peoples.

Despite a long time of concerted efforts, a large proportion of the Bamenda Grassfield inhabitants still lack safe drinking water. This lack of progress suggests that there might be some circular reasoning in the approach to solve the named problems pointing to the need to think outside the box. Water availability depends on hydrological factors and can change due to natural conditions over time. While water scarcity can be caused by natural conditions such as drought cycles, it is often created or at least worsened by over abstraction, unsustainable land use, deforestation and pollution. It is worthy to note that public grievances relating to water shortages have long been present and continue to this day. Inadequate access to safe fresh water contributes

⁷⁴⁰ M. Nkematabong, "Bali/Bawock crisis: Medics pre-empt epidemic outbreak", http://www.cameroon-info.net/cmi_show_news.php, 09/08/2020, 12:09 PM, pp.23-25.

⁷⁴¹Kahkuntan, "The Bali-Nyonga-Bawock Relationship", pp.67-68.

⁷⁴² Fontah, *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon*, pp.80-89.

to waterborne diseases, malnutrition, poverty economic and political instability and potentially violent conflicts between people, groups and countries. Changes in water availability particularly water scarcity increases competition between water users, making conflict more likely. Conflicts over water in the Bamenda Grassfields continue to be on the rise as a result of the above-mentioned factors. There is therefore the need to look into this issue.

The next chapter of our work shall examine some case studies of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

CHAPTER FOUR:

**THE BAMBILI/BABANKI-TUNGOH, BALI/SNEC, KUMBO/SNEC WATER
CONFLICTS, 1950-1998**

Central Africa's possession of the second largest global reserve of dense rainforest, attests to the relative abundance of water in the region. Yet inappropriate management of these resources has hampered the ability to respond to the demands of the growing populations of the countries such as Cameroon.¹ This has often been a major source of public grievances. In recent years, the Cameroonian populations have developed a range of grassroots water projects to seek positive change, the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon not being an exception. This notwithstanding, poor management of community water projects by government owned organizations such as *SNEC*, has led to conflicts such as that with Bali and Kumbo.²

More so, ethnic conflicts over water sources cannot be left out. Ethnic diversity is one of the greatest pillars of any society world-wide. The variety and competition that comes with it is good for socio-economic growth. However, ethnic group's interests and competition for scarce resources among them, bring about ethnic polarization. Most countries in Africa such as Nigeria have experienced a form of conflict that has an ethnic relation. The case of Cameroon is not different. These wars take an ethnic perspective even when the real cause could be natural resources, land, politics, religion, discrimination or unequal distribution of resources.³ Interethnic differences have caused a lot of destruction in many great nations. It is worrying to see the trends of this phenomenon in Cameroon and most especially in the Bamenda Grassfields, and it is important to discuss it.

Cameroon has lost a lot of resources because of these ethnic differences in the last 50years, the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive. It is ironical to say that, before the start of colonization, most

¹ S.Baba Oumar and D. Datt Tewari, "The Development of water management institutions and the provision for water delivery in Cameroon: history and Futures", *GDJS*, Vol.9, No.2, 2012, pp.82-90.

² T.E Ngengong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998", *Masters of Philosophy and Conflict Transformation*, University of Tromso, November 2007, pp.30-34.

³ *Ibid*, pp.30-32.

countries in the continent were so united. Different communities that comprised of people of different cultures lived closed to each other and in different types of relationships. They intermarried, did business with each other, learnt from each other and respected each other way of life. In the 20th century, ethnic hatred started creeping in and sparks of violence started showing up. Some communities in the Bamenda Grassfields have remained in conflict for over half a century now, resulting from ethnic differences, one of the reasons being shortage of water. This was the case of the Bambili and the Babanki-tungoh over the lake Bambili. We shall start by looking at the geographical location of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh.

A. Bambili and Babanki-tungoh

The Bambili and Babanki-tungoh people lived together happily. There was peaceful co-existence between them but as time went on, conflict broke out between them over Lake Bambili. To understand better the evolution of the conflict, we shall first of all look at the Geographical location of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh.

1. Origin and Migratory Histories of Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh

Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh belong to the Tikar group and speak one of the Bantu languages. Bambili speaks the Mbili and the Babanki-Tungoh speaks the Kejom (Kidzem) or Babanki.⁴ As already mentioned, the Tikars originated from the Northern part of Cameroon, Ndobu and moved to the Bamenda Grassfields in waves.⁵

According to the account given by the *Fon* of Bambili in 1926, the Bambili people were related to the Bafut at Ndobu, and left with Baba at the same time in the early 18th century.⁶ Instead of following the usual mountain track, the Bambili broke away from the Bafut and went directly to their present site along the Noun plain, passing between Babungo and Bambalang in the Ndop plain.⁷ The Bambili oral traditions maintain that Mbili, people from Bambili never settled in

⁴ The Bantu languages are spoken in Africa, South of a line running from the Bibht of Biafra, to the Indian Ocean near Kenya-Somali borders. The groups include more than four hundred languages, all as closely related to each other as are Germanic languages. The Bantu people occupy a huge area not only in Africa, but in Cameroon. For more on Bantu and Semi-Bantu, see G. Murdock, *Africa: Its peoples and their culture history*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1959.

⁵ Ngengong, "From Friends to enemies", pp.28-30.

⁶ Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60years, teaching, Ndop, 6/08/2020.

⁷ Interview with Aloysius Chin, 102years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Kumbo, 23/08/2020.

Bafut before proceeding to their present site. The Mbili migrated from Ndobobo to the Ndop plain and from there, they moved to their present site.⁸

When they migrated from the Ndop plain, they went to Awing and settled at Mumfieh. Their settlement at Mumfieh was because of the fact that, it was the area around Lake Bambili which did not only have fresh water, but also provided fish and thus contributed to the fertility of the area.⁹ When the first migrants arrived at Mumfieh, they named their community Mbili, meaning to sleep, because it was during their sleep that they discovered that the area had favourable conditions for settlement. It was from this word Mbili that the village later derived its name Bambili.¹⁰ They were led to this area by a man called Ishahten, who became the first ruler or *fon*.

The Mbili were not however the first settlers at Mumfieh. The indigenous people whom they met were a certain clan head called Nchotilem. The origin of Nchotilem has been difficult to trace. However, a conflict soon developed between Nchotilem and his family and the Mbili newcomers. This conflict stemmed from the fact that Nchotilem wanted to control the dynasty, while Mbili wanted to maintain its sovereign authority with Ishahten at the head.¹¹ The conflict was resolved when Nchotilem accepted the supremacy of the Mbili dynasty. A consensus was forged between the two factions with Nchotilem condescending to become part of the Mbili dynasty.¹²

The Mbili further moved and settled at Achi, which had been discovered by hunters to be another fertile area. At the time of the settlement, the only neighbouring village was Bambui, whose inhabitants had arrived in the Bamenda Plateau much earlier. When the Mbili arrived, they quickly spotted the Bambui hamlet, since it was lower down on a plain.¹³ The Mbili attempted to launch sporadic attacks to subjugate the Bambui, but all ended in futility, due to the strength and

⁸NAB, E.G. Hawkesworth, "Assessment report on Bafut tribal area of Bamenda Division", 1926, pp.1-10.

⁹*Ibid*, pp.10-12.

¹⁰ E. Tangie Ngengong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998", Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromsø, 2007, pp.28-31.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp.32-36.

¹² NAB, E.G. Hawkesworth, "Assessment Report on the Bafut and Babanki, Bamenda Division", 1931, pp.3-6.

¹³ Interview with Denis Che Neba, 51, Teaching, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

fighting tactics of the Bambui. When the attempt failed, the Mbili became contented with Mumfieh, because it was fertile.¹⁴

Babanki, also called and spelled differently as Babanki-Tungoh (Tungaw, Tungo or Kidgem-Ketinguh), derived its name from gigantic pillars of rock, some hundreds of feet in height that tower on each side of the village.¹⁵ Their oral tradition maintains that, Babanki-tungoh and Big-Babanki was one village. They broke away from Big-babanki because of problems that arose in the royal family. It should be noted that, the two Babankis left Ndop together and settled in the present site of Big-Babanki. They lived in peace until a disagreement erupted between them on whether to celebrate the annual cultural festival, *Kabenkendong* or not.¹⁶

This cultural festival coincided with the death of a prince, who just died as the festival was about to begin, thus resulting in a split of the people. Wanti, who had succeeded his father Yufani, as chief declared that the funeral rites must be postponed until the end of the cultural festival. His brothers refused and proceeded to carry out the usual ceremonies, but *Kwifon* was sent to stop them, and they migrated to a site near Kuwi and established themselves as an autonomous unit.¹⁷ However, when Babanki-tungoh arrived at this new site, there was peaceful co-existence between them and their neighbours, but later their relations were strained.

Geographically, the villages of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh formed the groups that make up the Bafut Native Authority Area of Bamenda Division of the Cameroon Province in the 1920s.¹⁸ These village-group units lived in the fertile valley basin encompassed on the North by the Nkom Mountains, on the West by the distant Meta, Ngie and Ngonu mountains and hill ranges, on the East by the Tingeh hill range and in the South by the escarpment on which the Bamenda Station is perched.¹⁹

¹⁴ NAB, Hawkesworth, "Assessment Report", 1931, pp.4-10.

¹⁵ NAB, R.J Hook, "An intelligence report on the Associated Village Groups Occupying the Bafut Native Authority Area of Bamenda Division", 1933, pp.15-20.

¹⁶ E. Yenshu Vubo and A. Ngwa, "Changing intercommunity relations and the politics of identity in the Northern Mezam area, Cameroon", URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafricaines/70>, 28/08/2020, 11:04am, pp.5-12.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp.12-13.

¹⁸ T.E Ngengong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998", Masters of Philosophy and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, November 2007, pp.30-34.

¹⁹ NAB, E.G Hawkesworth, "Assessment report on Bafut Tribal area of Bamenda Division", 1926, p.10-15.

Bambili is situated on the lower hill-slope of the area and form a small village about 15 kilometers from Bamenda. It shares boundary with Bambui to the Northwest, Babanki-tungoh to the Southwest and Nkwen to the West.²⁰ It forms part of Tubahsud-Division of Mezam Division. Babanki-tungoh is found in the valleys surrounded by hill ranges on the northern part of the Bambutous Mountains and stretches down to a portion of the Noun plain.²¹ It shares common boundaries with Bambili to the North, Bamessi to the East, Sabga to the North East and Balikumbat to the South.

The combined forces of climate, bedrock, topography, living organisms, amongst others have made the soils fertile. The soils of the region are a mixture of forested Equatorial and Azonal types. A survey carried out in 1953 presented a broad picture of two soil types, reddish friable porous clays and sandy clays, about 1524.3m above sea level. The soils are well drained, strongly leached and of high humus content.²² The sandy soils form is derived from the volcanic rocks. This therefore means the region under study is blessed with fertile soils, but Babanki-tungoh is more fertile because it is situated in a valley, though in terms of coverage, she is not as fertile as Bambili which is found on the slopes.

The arrival of the Germans in this region in the 1890s, led to the introduction of cash crops like Arabia coffee. Babanki-tungoh produces more food, but has limited or small land for cultivation.²³ Besides, the production of crops like vegetables, groundnuts, yams and maize flourish in this region. The coming of the Fulani was accompanied by another type of farming, animal husbandry.²⁴ This was however to become a problem because arable land was used now for cattle rearing, thereby making it scarce. In the late twentieth century, most of the inhabitants diverted their line of occupation to commercial services. Nonetheless, it could be deduced that it was because of the lake and the fertility of the land which is suitable for agriculture all year round, that the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh were having incessant disputes. Before the ethnic conflict erupted in the 1950s, these two neighbouring villages were living in peace.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp.15-20.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp.22-28.

²²D. Zetlyn, and E. Mohammadou, "Tikar origins", *In Journal of the Anthropological society of Oxford*, Vol.XXVI, No.1, 1995, pp.45-47.

²³ J. Lon Nfi, *Essentials of Cameroon History, 1800-2000*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 2000, pp.88-100.

²⁴R.B. Sikud, "Farmer-Grazer conflict in Bali Sub Division, 1975-2010: A historical analysis," Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2011/2012, pp.25-30.

Nonetheless, it could be deduced that it was because of the lake and the fertility of the land which is suitable for agriculture all year round, that the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh were having incessant disputes. Before the ethnic conflict erupted in the 1950s, these two neighbouring villages were living in peace.

2. The Genesis of the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh conflict: From colonial cohabitation to the independence period

The people of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh lived at their present sites for more than a century. From the period when they arrived at their present site to the early 1950s, these two villages which shared a common land lived peacefully.²⁵ The administrations of R.J. Hook, the British in the 1920s as the Assistant Divisional Officer (ADO) for the Bamenda Division, made the villages live in peace by coercing them. This was facilitated by creating the Seven Head Chiefs in Council, which consisted of all the seven chiefs making up the Bafut Native Area.²⁶ The head chiefs declared that they were going to work together. This meant that, none of them was going to make or execute any law without the consent of the other chiefs. There was to be consensus of doing everything in union, and this seemed a good reason to accept the assembled chiefs as individuals, and at the same time as a collective unit of the Native Authority to Bafut area.²⁷ This could be seen as all the villages jointly operated a single court at Bafut, which worked satisfactorily, and was headed by the chiefs of Bafut and Big-Babanki (which later gave birth to Babanki-tungoh).²⁸

In addition, the two neighbours paid taxes into a common treasury at Bafut. Also, they had been freely intermarrying. This therefore meant that they must have experienced social cohesions through market interactions, cultural ceremonies and other festivals. From the foregoing analysis, it is tempting to conclude that, the relationship between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh was very cordial.²⁹ Despite the unanimity with which the chiefs exercised their duties in the Bafut Native Area, they nonetheless frequently displayed envy of each other, as one was either larger than the other in terms of territory, stronger than the other in times of war and weapons, more influential

²⁵ Interview with Richard Vuwe, 62years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

²⁶ Ngengong, "From friends to enemies", pp.33-34.

²⁷ E.V Yenshu and G.A Ngwa, "Changing intercommunity relations and the politics of identity in the Mezam area, Cameroon", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, vol.161, 2001, pp.163-165.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp.166-168.

²⁹ Interview with William Asah Mbenkum, 63, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 18/08/2020.

in administrative matters, as one village hosted most of the institutions in the region for example Bafut. This could be illustrated by the fact that, other chiefs of the Bafut area petitioned the position and influence of the Bafut chief in the area, over administrative and traditional issues. Each chief was determined to resist the exercise of any authority except his own inside his territory. Each chief was also ready to recognize the fact that in term of population, land area, wealth and history, his territory was autonomous. The two chiefs were also suspicious of neighbouring villages, which allegedly nursed aggressive and expansionist tendencies on them.³⁰

The Bambili people did arrive in their present area of residence prior to the Babanki-tungoh people and the area now in dispute was no man's land. Both parties were probably using it for their various activities. Then the Fulani arrived in the 19th century with their cattle and settled on it.³¹ With the introduction of law and order by the British Government, some Babanki-tungoh people left the valley that they had already settled in, because of shortage of water and farming land. They started to farm in the farm land under study.³² From the 20th century, the two villages, Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh made claims and counter claims over this land, especially over the lake Bambili. What was really disturbing was who owned the land, taking into consideration the fact that the Bambili people arrived first.³³ We could as well accept the fact that the disputed land belonged to Bambili.

The Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh claimed the piece of land between them, yet, none could show any document to this claim. The Bambili people said that the lake on the land is their ancestral home. They maintain that libations were poured into the lake once a year to appease the ancestors and have a good harvest during the farming season.³⁴ The Babanki-Tungoh as well points to the lake as theirs and the entire piece of land. What was more surprising was that, none of the villages possessed a land certificate of occupancy.

³⁰Ngengong, "From friends to enemies", pp.35-43.

³¹F.A Nicodemus, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields 1903-1960", Doctorat de 3^e cycle, History, University of Yaounde, November 1984, pp.45-50.

³²*Ibid*, pp.51-60.

³³ BNA, R.J Hook, "An intelligence report on the assorted village groups occupying Bafut Native Authority Area of the Bamenda Division of the Cameroon Province", 1934, pp.40-42.

³⁴ F. Barth, *Introduction in ethnic groups and boundaries: The Social Organization of culture difference*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1998, pp.43-44.

That notwithstanding, by the 1950s, the piece of land containing the lake Bambili, became a bone of contention. The ethnic conflict between these two villages manifested itself in various ways, which shall be examined below. The lake can be seen below in figure 6.

6. The Lake Bambili



Source: E. Tangie Ngengong, “From Friends to Enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998”, Masters Dissertation of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, 2005-2007

3. Manifestation of the Ethnic Conflict (1950-1998)

The conflict between Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh was manifested in three principal ways. From 1950 to 1958, it was characterized by law suits filed by the contestants, from 1958 to 1978, it led to the signing of the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh entente. This second period was called the thaw in the boundary manifestation, and lastly the period from 1978 to 1998, which was characterized by skirmishes, threats, suspicion and outright warfare. It ended in 1998 with another law suit.³⁵

The Bambili people brought a law suit against the Babanki-Tungoh people in Bafut native court in 1953. The court judgment of December 11, 1953 drew a line dividing the piece of land on the

³⁵ E. Yenshu Vubo and G.A Ngwa, “Changing intercommunity relations and the politics of identity in the Northern Mezam area, Cameroon”, *Cahiers d’etudes africaines*, Vol.161, No.1, 2001, pp.163-190.

hills on the West site of the outlet of the lake and valley.³⁶ The court granted Bambili part of the land which Bambili had claimed. The land stretched from the German drawn boundary of Babanki-Tungoh with Mendankwe at “Kukets”, to the hills west of the lake and valley.³⁷

The Bambili people were not however satisfied with the decision of December 11, 1953. As a result of this, they appealed and in the judgement of July 15, 1955, the Appeal Court shifted the line to the high grazing land near the escarpment beyond which is the Bambili village. Yet, they were not still satisfied, and called for the review by the Colonial District Officer.³⁸

On September 8, 1956, the Assistant Divisional Officer, Ward, rendered his review judgment. According to Ward, he came close to giving Bambili most of their claim. Thus, in an attempt to solve the conflict, Ward aroused the disgruntleness of the Babanki-Tungoh people. As a result, the people asked for a review.³⁹ On May 15, 1958, A.B Westmacott, colonial resident in Bamenda gave his judgment. According to him, ward’s decision was one-sided since he maintained that many Babanki-Tungoh people were affected and no Bambili man was even required to make a choice.⁴⁰ Westmacott inspected the land and decided that Babanki-Tungoh should remain in possession of the land which they now occupy, but that all the grazing land on the Bambili side which is (was) then occupied should be confirmed as belonging to Bambili.⁴¹

The manifestation of the Ethnic conflict moved from one court to another. From the Bafut Native Court to the High Court of Appeal, from the Divisional Officer Bamenda through the advisory bodies to the President, Westmacott.⁴² The decision of Westmacott has remained on the map. What was required was that, the decision on the map should be utilize for visible demarcation, that is, there should be a physical marking on the ground, to show the border through the disputed area. However, when this decision was arrived at on May 15, 1958, the two villages reacted differently to it.⁴³

³⁶ Bamenda Divisional Archives, File No. 596, “Handing over notes for Bamenda Division”, 16 April 1946, p.5.

³⁷Ngengong, “From friends to enemies”, pp.37-40.

³⁸ File no. 361 (569), Review No. 84/56 Bafut Native Court Civil Suit No. 23/53, 15th may 1958.

³⁹Yenshu and Ngwa, “Changing intercommunity relations”, pp.163-190.

⁴⁰Ngengong, “From friends to enemies”, pp.36-47.

⁴¹*Ibid*, pp.47-50.

⁴²BDA, File No.361 (569), “Review No. 84/56 Bafut Native Court Civil Suit No. 23/53, 15th May 1958, pp.5-9.

⁴³*Ibid*, pp.10-16.

This notwithstanding, the Bambili people were still not satisfied with the decision. In April 1959, the Fon of Bambili protested against the decision to the Government of Southern Cameroons.⁴⁴ On July 8, 1959, the Deputy Commissioner of Southern Cameroons, J.A.A. Tamkoh, replied that the petition was rejected. The Babanki-tungoh people as well were not satisfied with the Westmacott decision either. As a result, they paid the sum of 138,400 CFA francs in July 1967 as a deposit for an appeal against part of the marked areas by the 1958 decision.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, this appeal was never heard.

On July 25, 1973, both villages signed an agreement acknowledging and accepting the Westmacott decision as the only authentic document.⁴⁶ It was hope that the decision will put an end to the long-standing dispute between the two ethnic groups. The entente was signed by the Fons of Babanki-tungoh and Bambili for their villages. This understanding was witnessed by the Cameroon representatives, Ngonge Sone, B.N. Mukong for Babanki-Tungoh, S.N. Nkindo for Bambili and several land surveys officers.⁴⁷

As a result of the entente, peace reigned between the two ethnic groups. Despite the degree of calmness for more than a decade, after the Westmacott Decision and the 1973 accord, the manifestation of deep-seated conflict took a different dimension and magnitude in the early 1990s.⁴⁸ This witnessed the accumulation of weapons, the rising aspirations of the peoples and their rulers to expand and annex the piece of land under dispute, and also the involvement of politicians and the training of local militia men.⁴⁹ These factors increased the amount of threats, tension and fears amongst the people of both villages, which culminated in open clashes in 1991, 1993 and 1995.

Before the 1991 outbreak of war, the 1973 peace accord had been violated. On August 1, 1981, the Fon of Bambili reported to the Civil Administration that the Babanki-tungoh people were still

⁴⁴Interview with Denis Che Nebah, 51 years, Teacher, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

⁴⁵M.D.W Jeffreys, Bamenda Provincial Registry, "Notes on Babanki (Kijom Kitingo)", 1936-1943, pp.6-12.

⁴⁶E. Yenkong Sobseh, "Land tenure and conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon 1974-2008: A Historical Analysis", PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2011, pp.45-60.

⁴⁷Ngengong, "From friends to enemies", pp.40-78.

⁴⁸Ngwane, *settling disputes in Africa*, pp.50-53.

⁴⁹ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

continuing their activities in the disputed area.⁵⁰ In response to this, on April 17, 1986, the District Officer of Tubah reported to the Divisional Officer (DO) for Mezam, in what he called a “provocative trespass” in to Bambili land by the Babanki-tungoh people. In his reply, the DO for Mezam stated that he had convoked the ring leaders of the aggressive groups to his office for interrogation and cautioning.⁵¹ The provocation nonetheless continued uninterrupted. On May 24, 1991, the Babanki people (men and women), went to the disputed area and started farming.

More so, on May 25, 1991, the Babanki-tungoh community attacked the Bambili community. This led to the outbreak of the first Bambili/Babanki-tungoh war.⁵² On July 27 1991, the Babanki-tungoh reported to the Civil Administration of Tubah that the Bambili people had illegally started activities on the disputed area. From the account, it is obvious that the agreement between the two communities led to the escalation of the armed conflict. The term of the agreement explained that any person encroaching on the disputed area would be penalized by the administration, yet this was not done. The only thing that was done to the trespassers was that, the ringleaders were called and cautioned by the District Officer.

There was confrontation between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh which led to the death of many people and places were destroyed.⁵³ After the confrontation, the administration of Tubah under the District Officer, M. Jum and the Mezam Divisional Administration, under the Senior Divisional Officer, Bell Luc Rene, set up an administrative commission to investigate and resolve the problem. The 1991 commission began by attempting to retrace on the map of the conflict area to satisfy both parties.⁵⁴

In spite of the painstaking efforts to resolve the dispute, the inhabitants of Babanki-tungoh violated one of the agreed terms of the commission, that there was to be no farming around the disputed area by both villages. Babanki-Tungoh people struggle to dry up the Bambili Lake so as to use the water for irrigation on their farms. The Bambili people destroyed crops on the farms

⁵⁰B. Page, Communities as agents of commodification: the Kumbo Water Authority in North West Cameroon”, *Geoforum*, Vol.34, pp.483-489.

⁵¹E. Yenshu Vubo and G.A Ngwa, “Changing intercommunity relations”, pp.163-165.

⁵² Interview with Richard Vuwe, 62years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

⁵³ Interview with Peter Tiydze Fokum, 75years, Retired C.S, Bali-Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

⁵⁴Yenshu and Ngwa, “Changing intercommunity relations”, pp.163-165.

owned by Babanki-tungoh people and blocked the Bamenda road as well as the Bambili-Mbingo highway. All these led to another war.⁵⁵

On January 23, 1993, there were fresh provocations. The Babanki-Tungoh people asserted that people from Bambili came up to their side of the land and embarked on crop destruction, chopped down a young eucalyptus forest and set a Babanki-Tungoh man's compound on fire.⁵⁶ This act was immediately reported to the administration by the Babanki-Tungoh elites. The administration claimed that there was no evidence to show that it was the Bambili people who had caused the destruction. According to the administration, they should have been arrested when they were in the process of causing the destruction.⁵⁷

On January 26th 1993, the Bambili people blocked the road leading from Bamenda to Ndop and from Bamenda through Bandja to Babanki-Tungoh and attacked the Babanki-Tungoh people. This strategy according to them, was because most of them had gone to the Big Babanki for the annual traditional festival, *Kibenkendong*.⁵⁸ The Babanki-Tungoh people rushed back and confronted the Bambili. Before the Bambili people could launch an assault, the Babanki-tungoh people had burnt down some houses and several people were wounded. The S.D.O for Mezam, Samuel Sufo, went to the battle front on January 27th 1993 and attempted to appease the belligerents.⁵⁹ The warring factions retreated but fighting resumed the next day and continued for more than a week before the administration brought in the gendarmes. Six ring leaders were arrested from Babanki-Tungoh and detained in the gendarmerie Brigade for having instigated the fighting.⁶⁰

It is important to note that the war broke out when the 1991 commission set up by the administration was still at work in its attempt to find solutions to the dispute. When the battle was over, the D.O for Tubah inspected the area and found out that both sides violated the laws given to them. He implemented his own decision and ignored the Westmacott Decision and this

⁵⁵Ngengong, "From friends to enemies", pp.50-56.

⁵⁶ Ngwane, "Settling Disputes in Africa", pp.50-72.

⁵⁷Interview with Augustine Wara, 56years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

⁵⁸Hawkesworth, NAB, "Assessment report", pp.5-8

⁵⁹Ngengong, "From friends to enemies", pp.59-60.

⁶⁰*Ibid*, pp.60-63.

move was detested by both parties.⁶¹ A sub technical commission was formed in 1994, charged with special functions for settling the ethnic dispute in a way acceptable to all the factions. The commission as a matter of fact, made futile efforts to settle the conflict, yet activities still went on unabated in the disputed area against the terms of the commission. The end result was war in 1995. The next thing was the exchange of gun firing by two hunters from the rival villages who found themselves around the disputed area while on a hunting expedition. In the process, the Babanki-tungoh hunter was killed.⁶² This led to the immediate declaration of war on the Bambili people by Babanki-tungoh. The war was fought with renewed ferocity by both belligerents for three days, until the forces of law and order intervened and stopped it. The prompt intervention of the forces of law and order, never gave a breathing space for any terms to be deliberated upon. More so, when Samuel Sufo attempted another Decision on the conflict area, the Babanki-tungoh took him to the Bamenda High court on July 3, 1995 and again in 1998. The Babanki-tungoh claimed he attempted to impose a line on them in the conflict area, without making reference to the Westmacott line. 1998 marked the last court hearing from this ethnic conflict. The next part of our work shall look at the second water conflict, between Bali and the National Water Corporation (*SNEC*).

B. Bali Water and the National Water Corporation (*SNEC*)

This conflict occurred as a result of poor control of the Bali Water Scheme by *SNEC*, which resulted in the expulsion of *SNEC* out of Bali. To better understand the reason for the conflict, we shall start by looking at the Historical Evolution of Bali.

1. Creation of *SNEC*

In 1967, Cameroon created the National Water Supply Company of Cameroon (*NMSSC*) to supply water across the country. Until 1968, shortly after independence, the responsibility for the distribution of drinking water in Cameroon became the duty of the municipality, with a management system inherited from the colonial system. Each locality collected tax intended to cover the cost incurred by using water, electricity, garbage collection and operation of the

⁶¹ S.D Oumar and D.D Tewari, “The development of water management institutions and the provision for water delivery in Cameroon: History and Futures”, *GJDS*, Vol.9, No.2, October 2012, pp.81-100.

⁶² V. Agha-Ah Mah, “Sustainability of community-managed projects in the North West Region of Cameroon”, PhD Thesis in Philosophy, Cardiff Metropolitan University, 2016, pp.170-172.

ambulance system. This tax covered among others the costs of operation and maintenance of free public tap stands, which was at times disadvantageous to certain sections of the population.

Later, the control of water schemes in Cameroon was taken over by the Ministry of Mines Water Resources and Energy.⁶³ This Ministry immediately took over the administration of the water schemes in west Cameroon. Since the new Ministry did not have as its responsibility the running of water supplies in the country, most of the water schemes in the former West Cameroon were immediately handed over to *SNEC*.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the population continued to be responsible for their management. This contract between *SNEC* and the Cameroon Government formally seemed to be a concession. In practice, the rights and obligations of each party led to affermage. The next part of our work shall show the conception and evolution of the Bali Water Scheme.

2. History Evolution of Bali

Bali subdivision is situated approximately 16km from Bamenda, the chief town of the North West Region of Cameroon. It is one of the seven sub Divisions that make up the Mezam Division. Bali Nyonga commonly known as Bali belongs to the Chamba Leko group that migrated from the Chamba area of what is today known as Northern Cameroon to the Bamenda Grassfields.⁶⁵ The date of their exodus is not certain but could be estimated to be the beginning of the second quarter of the 19th century. Under the leadership of Gawolbe, the Chamba group arrived Banyo (the Adamawa region) in about 1825, where they incorporated a number of groups.⁶⁶

Furthermore, in the numerous battles aimed at subjugating other groups, Gawolbe was killed and succeeded by Gangsin in about 1836, but his unpopularity and inability to sustain the cohesion of the groups, triggered a struggle for the throne.⁶⁷ As a result of the fact that none of Gawolbe's sons was able to emerge the leader, the group split into seven factions with each faction led by his seven sons and daughter. The seven groups were Bali Kumbat, Bali Gashu, Bali Gham, Bali

⁶³ C.M. Fai, "The impact of a water supply project in the society: The case of Kumbo, 1965-2013", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, p.32-37.

⁶⁴ S.O. Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., June 2002, pp.30-45.

⁶⁵ B. G. Fochang, "An exploration of the conception of go among the Bali Nyonga and its impact upon their contemporary Christian practice with particular reference to Hymnody and prayer", Masters Dissertation in Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu Natal, 2004, pp.15-30.

⁶⁶ Interview with PeterTiydze Fokum, 75, Retired C.S, Bali Nyonga, 02/08/2021.

⁶⁷ J.T.D Fokwang, "Chiefs and democratic transition in Africa: An ethnographic study in the chiefdoms of Tshivhese and Bali", PhD Thesis in History, University of Toronto, 2003, pp.55-56.

Muti, Bali Gangsin, Bali Kontan and Bali Nyonga. Bali Nyonga was led by the only daughter Nanyong, which had the strongest faction and constitutes our main focus in the study.

Unlike most towns in Cameroon, Bali owns a potable drinking water supply system which was constructed by the community in 1957.⁶⁸ The water project has gone through a number of transformations over the years. Before reunification in 1961, it was managed as a nonprofit scheme by the community. Following reunification, the project fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Mines, Water Resources and Power.

In 1984, the Ministry handed the water project to the state-owned parastatal, *Société Nationale des eaux du Cameroun (SNEC)*. According to Page, “with the shift from Mines and Power to *SNEC*, she was undoubtedly was bent on the marketization of water supplies”⁶⁹. The marketization of the community water was very much at odds with its founding principle as a self-help project. Tired of being exploited, the population of Bali violently expelled *SNEC* in January 1994.

3. Conception and Evolution of the Bali Water’S scheme

Community Development was enormously successful in Anglophone Cameroon. In no sector was this true than the water sector. During British rule in the Southern Cameroons, authorities were the main source of local decision making. Britain’s limited moral commitment to radically altering the traditional status-quo of indigenous societies meant colonial policy was tailored to ensure that local needs did not constitute much of a strain on the financial resources of the crown.⁷⁰ As a result, local people funded community development through local taxation and other income-generating schemes

Around 1950, the British authorities began implementing a “New welfare-oriented colonial development policy”. Community development through self-help initiatives was the modus operandi of this policy.⁷¹ The scheme initially focused on mass education and adult literacy, but later evolved to include projects in the domain of water, agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure,

⁶⁸ Gwaibi Numvi, “Revisiting community development in Cameroon: the Bali Community Water Project- A Historical Perspective”, *IOSR Journal of humanities and social science*, volume 26, January 2021, pp.112-117.

⁶⁹Page, “A Priceless Commodity”, pp.101-120.

⁷⁰Interview with Blasius Nformi Mbinkar, 67years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

⁷¹ G. Numvi, “Revisiting community Development in Cameroon: The Bali community water project- A Historical Perspective”, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol.26, No.1, 2021, pp.52-57.

buildings and road construction. Community development was a trade off mechanism whereby local people provided labour and materials and colonial officials sometimes provided cash and technical support.⁷² In view of the colonial officials, community development through self-help was to induce in the people the desire for progress and the will to achieve it by their own efforts and by cultivating a work ethic, which in the process preserved a historical African tradition of co-operation.⁷³

Missionaries also played an active frontline role in developing infrastructural projects in the Southern Cameroons. According to Nkwi,⁷⁴ “they raised funds from their home parishes and with labour supplied by Christians, were able to build these institutions and improve the quality of life of the people”. In Bali, the Bassel mission for example who arrived during the German Colonial Period was well-established. They had excellent working relations with Fon Galega II and were involved in the decision to construct the Bali community water project, using the money gotten for damages during the Bali-Widekum conflict in 1952.⁷⁵

The plan to construct the Bali Water Scheme was a well thought out process reached by the Fon in collaboration with the traditional council and with inputs from some missionaries stationed in Bali. The main sources of water for the Bali population were a number of naturally occurring springs dotted around different areas of Bali, wells, boreholes and a handful of streams.⁷⁶ However, the unreliable nature of these water sources meant people in some places had difficulty accessing water, mostly in the dry season. This notwithstanding, there was one major stream that cut across the entire length of Bali and unlike the others, it flowed all year round.⁷⁷ The stream or *Tsi Mungaka*, was named differently depending on the neighbourhood through which it flowed. At a place called *Mbat Matua*, it was known as *Tsi Matua*, at *Mbatmandet* it was known as *Tsi Munyam* and at the main water pumping station, it was called *Tsi Gola*.⁷⁸ The stream constituted the main water source for many people. It was accessed at many points and used for diverse

⁷²*Ibid*, pp.53-58.

⁷³Interview with Peter Tiydze Fokum, 75years, Retired C.S, Bali-Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

⁷⁴ P.N. Nkwi, “Rethinking the role of elites in rural development: A case study from Cameroon”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol.15, No.1, 1997, pp.67-86.

⁷⁵*Ibid*.

⁷⁶Numvi, “Revisiting community development”, pp.53-61.

⁷⁷ R.B Sikud, “Farmer-Grazer conflict in Bali Sub Division, 1975-2010: A Historical Analysis”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.61-65.

⁷⁸ Sanguv, “Institutional changes”, pp.80-91.

purposes including, drinking water for humans and animals, laundry and bathing. Its multi-purpose uses exposed the population to water borne diseases. Thus, one of the factors that made the traditional authorities to provide pipe-borne water was the potential and actual occurrence of water borne diseases especially cholera.⁷⁹

The Bali water project was built in 1957 during the British Colonial administration and was administered by the Bali Native authority under the leadership of Galega II. Once the decision to use the money for the water project was reached, a German engineer was charged with the actual construction work. The bulk of cash was therefore used to purchase material and some to pay the engineer and his crew.⁸⁰

True to the spirit of self-help, the population of Bali eagerly participated in the construction process. This was done by way of manual labour for constructing materials and digging trenches to lay down asbestos pipes, which transported water from the pumping site to the main storage tank in *Jamjam* neighborhood.⁸¹ The tank was strategically placed on a high plateau and once full, water could easily be resupplied to other areas by gravitational pull. In addition to labour costs, the storage tank and asbestos pipes, among other equipments purchased for construction, there was also the hydraulic ram⁸² purchase from the United Kingdom (UK) and used to pump water. Purchasing the hydraulic ram was appropriate considering that, Bali did not have electrical power.

Construction was completed in 1958 and the project handed over to the Bali Native Authority where it was managed as a not-for-profit scheme. The community constructed a number of standpipes that were dotted around Bali from which people collected water for free.⁸³ Individual connections were possible, but a vast majority of the population use but public standpipes. Many people commended the charitable nature of the project although some argued that it was not

⁷⁹Page, “communities as agents of commodification”, pp.483-486.

⁸⁰ N.B Nyamdi, *The Bali chamba of Cameroon: A political History*, Paris, Editions Cape, pp.145-146.

⁸¹Numvi, “Revisiting community development”, pp.53-58.

⁸² A hydraulic ram or hydram is a cyclic water pump powered by hydropower. The device uses the water hammer effect to develop pressure that allows a portion of the input water that powers the pump to be lifted to a point higher than where the water originally started. The hydraulic ram is sometimes used in remote areas, where there is both a source of low-head hydropower and a need for pumping water to a destination higher in elevation than the source. In this situation, the ram is often useful, since it requires no outside source of power other than the the kinetic energy of flowing water.

⁸³Numvi, “Revisiting community development”, pp.53-59.

entirely free, because, people paid a lot of tax to the Native Authority (NA), which used part of it in running the system.⁸⁴ Other people wondered how feasible it would have been for the NA to treat the water chemicals, maintain the equipments and network of pipes without a regular source of income especially from the much dreaded poll tax. This above discussion pretty much sums up the situation that prevailed in Bali prior to the arrival of *SNEC*. This shall be examined in the next part of this work.

4. Manifestation of the Conflict between Bali and SNEC

Created on 13th May 1967, *SNEC* was a state parastatal with a monopoly to manage water resources in predominantly urban areas. Other organisations such as the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA-HELVETAS), the Cooperation for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), the Cameroon Industrial and Civic Contractors (CIACC) and SCANWATER were active in rural areas.⁸⁵ Following the reunification of Cameroon in 1961, the Federal government sought to supply potable drinking water to urban and rural areas. This involved the creation of the Ministry of Mines, Water resources and Power, the Rural Engineering or Public Works Department and the Community Development Department (CDD).⁸⁶ The CDD mostly operated in the English-speaking part of the country, where most of the successful self-help and community managed projects were located.

The circumstances surrounding *SNEC*'s take-over of the Bali community water project was quite controversial. One issue which arose was if *SNEC* paid compensation to the people of Bali. Some sources say that, *SNEC* actually paid damages prior to the taking over of the water project, but the money was syphoned off by the Divisional Officer and the Municipal Administrator of Bali Rural Council.⁸⁷ This version of events was hotly disputed by others who claimed that, if any negotiation about handing over the water installations was ever contemplated, it had to be with the *Fon* who at the time was Galega II, the reigning monarch and founder of the project. No claims of compensation were raised during talks between Bali, state officials, *SNEC* and

⁸⁴ Interview with Stephen N. Ntokungwia, 60years, Teacher, Bamunka-Ndop, 06/08/2020.

⁸⁵ A. N. Nchari, E.N Ngaba and N. Amouye, "Community water management experience in Cameroon", *IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre*, 1997, pp.10-20.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.21-25.

⁸⁷ N.B Nyamdi, *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon: A political History*, Paris, Editions Cape, 1988, p.67.

representatives of the Ministry of Mines, Water Resources and Power, following the violent takeover of water installations by the community in 1994.⁸⁸

More so, another grievance the people of Bali expressed was that, they had requested the authorities to help them exploit the possibilities of extending the water supply network not to appropriate it. Also, some people were still fuming over the fact that *SNEC* completely changed everything including the canalization system even though it was a good decision because the asbestos pipes that were used in transporting water were found to contain cancerous properties.⁸⁹ *SNEC* replaced the standpipes with metered public taps, moved the pumping station from Mbatmandet to Gola, where she constructed an ultramodern water catchment, treatment and pumping station that is still in use.⁹⁰

Unlike the Hydraulic rams which were mechanical and incurred minimal costs, the use of electricity to power the engines at the water treatment plant could only mean high bills which as expected were passed to the council.⁹¹ The municipal authorities became alarmed at the exorbitant amount they were regularly charged by *SNEC*. It got to the point where the council could no longer afford to pay the water bills. This resulted in *SNEC* shutting down public taps in Bali, leaving many people to fetch water from unreliable sources. This generated great resentment against *SNEC* in Bali.⁹²

Meanwhile, the management style of the local chief of center did not help improve *SNEC*'s image in Bali. The rash and somehow cavalier attitude of Mr. Nguenang precipitated the revolt. The incoming chief of Center like his predecessor was a Bameleke.⁹³ Just like his colleague and fellow Bamileke in Kumbo, where the population rioted against *SNEC* and took over their water in 1991, the chief of Center in Bali also recruited fellow Bamileke's to perform menial jobs such as mending broken pipes, digging trenches and reading water meters. This greatly angered many

⁸⁸ Sanguy, "Institutional changes", pp.81-84.

⁸⁹ Page "A priceless commodity", pp.1-23.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.25-30.

⁹¹ G.C Ngwa, "Inter-chiefdom conflicts in the North West Province of Cameroon", Masters Dissertation in Social sciences, Catholic university of Central Africa, 2003, pp.38-40.

⁹² *Ibid*, pp.41-44.

⁹³ Page, "Communities as the agents of commodification", pp.483-489.

locals who resented the fact that *SNEC* not only usurped their property and was making profit out of it while delivering poor services but also excluded them from any potential spin-offs.⁹⁴

In the 1990s, Bamenda was the centre of opposition against the regime of President Paul Biya. Ni John Fru Ndi, the opposition leader at the time was loved and loathed in equal measures by some Cameroonians because he had defied the Government and launched the SDF party in Bamenda, an action that stunned many and presumably angered the likes of Nguenang. Upon taking charge of the treatment centre in Bali, Nguenang dismissed a key staff member of the Gola treatment site. According to Kongnyuy, the new chief of centre erroneously thought Ni Fogam was a relative of the SDF leader, Ni John Fru Ndi.⁹⁵

The story goes that, Ni Fogam from Batibo was the sole qualified person in charge of water treatment at the Gola station. In disregard to his pivotal function, Ni Fogam was fired on the presumption that the prefix Ni automatically meant he was a relative of the SDF Chairman.⁹⁶ This notwithstanding, it was apparent that there was more to his dismissal than this. Apparently, the chief of centre was in no hurry to find a replacement for Ni Fogam. This created acute water shortages in Bali and water that occasionally flowed through the taps was untreated and dirty.⁹⁷ Thus, the chief of Center who lived on site could have acted promptly to save the situation by standing in temporarily for the dismissed colleague while seeking a replacement, so as to ensure uninterrupted drinkable water supply in Bali. However, he completely abandoned his responsibilities and spent his time drinking beer in Ntangfuang.⁹⁸ To make matters worse, the water crisis occurred in December at the peak of the dry season when alternative water sources were scarce.

Furthermore, the previous chief of center had prior to his departure had issued a “Fantastic Bill” to the fon and also sent a notification threatening to cut off water supply if the fon did not pay the bill. Thus, because traditional rulers in the Grassfields are near deities and containers of ancestral

⁹⁴*Ibid*, pp.490-445.

⁹⁵Numvi, “Revisiting community development”, pp.55-67.

⁹⁶Page, “Accumulation by dispossession”, pp.1-23.

⁹⁷Interview with Peter Tiydze Fokum, 75years, Retired C.S, Bali-Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

⁹⁸Numvi, “Revisiting community development”, pp.68-90.

spirits⁹⁹, this treat to stop supplying water to the palace, the highest institution of the land and incarnated by the fon, was deeply offensive. In fact, many saw it as a slap on the face of the Bali people, something they could not tolerate. For all these reasons, an ultimatum was issued to *SNEC*. This not only threatened to forcefully expel *SNEC* from Bali, but also requested it to pay damages based on the following claims as seen on table 11.

11. An ultimatum issued to *SNEC* by the BCWC

Damages	Amount
Amage to 250 standpipes and concrete protective slabs	170000000 francs
Damage to our network of pipes	50 000 000 francs
Depriving the Bali people of their water supply (a basic necessity of life) an frequent inconveniences for the duration of 10years	20 000 000 francs
Rent for our water tank for 10 years	100 000 000 francs
Exploitation of our quarry at Njenka quarters	50 000 000 francs
Cost of three rams collected by <i>SNEC</i> after taking over	30 000 000 francs
Compensation for damages to property in Bali during the construction of High-Tension line of <i>SNEC</i> system of water pumping	31 000 000 francs
Total Sum Due	748 000 000 (seven hundred and forty-eight million francs)

Source: Ultimatum issued to the local chief of centre of *SNEC* by the Bali Community Water Committee (BCWC) and the Bali Traditional Council on 11 January 1994.

Note: The table above shows the ultimatum issued to the local chief of Center of *SNEC* by the BCWC and the traditional Council on the 11th of January 1994. *SNEC* was asked to pay a total sum of 748000000 Francs before the 15th of January 1994.

⁹⁹ N.F Awasom, *The vicissitude of twentieth-century Mankon Fons in Cameroon's changing social order*. In: *The dynamics of power and the rule of law; Essays on Africa and beyond, in honour of EmilebAdriaan B., Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal*, Leiden, African Studies Centre, 2003, pp.101-104.

The expiration of the deadline on midnight of 15th January 1994 passed without reaction. On Monday 17 January 1994, the population ransacked and burnt *SNEC* branch office in Bali town. It appeared the chief of Centre and staff were tipped off and discretely fled over the weekend, not without breaking doors, and windows, pulling off toilets, wash basins and electrical fittings. The slogan adopted by the movement to oust *SNEC* was dubbed *Global Fight*, and the leaders of this movement issued clear instructions that no staff member of *SNEC* was to be physically harmed.¹⁰⁰ This was so as not to give the government an excuse to intervene forcefully and reverse the people's gains.

The action of the people of Bali came in the wake of the devaluation of the Francs CFA which took place on 12 January 1994. The CFA was devalued by 50% to the French Francs so as to boost Cameroons exports by making them cheaper in the world market. Devaluation of the CFA occurred at the peak of austerity measures that were implemented within the framework of the Structural adjustment Programme. Some of the measures required privatization of state-owned companies including *SNEC*. However, privatization of *SNEC* was quite intractable and only occurred decades after the Structural Adjustments¹⁰¹. This action of the people of Bali therefore occurred at a time when the legitimacy of the government in most parts of Cameroon was at its lowest ebb and quite possibly its moral authority too. This was due to its perceived failure to tackle the economic crisis and its blatant refusal to meet popular demands for a national conference.¹⁰² The government's lack of credibility presumably sapped its will to use force on this occasion unlike what had happened in Kumbo. The next part of our work will look at the aftermath of the water conflict.

5. Triumph over SNEC: The Aftermath

Following the triumph over *SNEC*, the population of Bali did not leave anything to chance. On January 19, 1994 two days after the expulsion of *SNEC*, several meetings were held at different locations in Bali to draw up plans to manage the water project.¹⁰³ The key issues discussed included security of facilities, finances and alternative water sources. Several themes were

¹⁰⁰Interview with Augustine Wara, 56years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

¹⁰¹Page, "Accumulation of dispossessions", pp.1-23.

¹⁰² J. Takougang and M. Krieger, *African state and society in the 1990s; Cameroon Political Crossroads*, Oxford, WestviewPress, 1998, pp.125-127.

¹⁰³ Minutes of the Bali Nyonga Elites meeting held on the 19-01-1994 at the Bali Community Hall.

discussed under the rubric general affairs, work on alternative water sources, and resumption of water distribution by the Bali people and general maintenance of facilities. The following issues were also discussed;

- **Anti-gang/Vigilante**

This plan had two main objectives. Firstly, to station six guards at the Gola site, two during the day and four at night, three guards at the storage tank in Jamjam two at night and one during the daytime. The second was to mobilize vigilante groups in Bali and put them on maximum alert. The neighbourhood watchers and guards at Gola were to be equipped with all necessary equipments, suitable for the execution of their duties.¹⁰⁴ They were to be provided with alarm instruments to alert the villagers in the event of any confrontation. This was probably because at the time, there were rumors that the government was planning to send troops to take the water installation and hand them back to SNEC, as it did when the population of Kumbo made their first attempt in April 1991, only to be thwarted by massive troop deployment from a military base in Koutaba in the West Region. The people of Kumbo nevertheless successfully retook their water in October 1991.¹⁰⁵

- **Strategy for General Mobilisation**

In the 1990s, Bamenda was highly militarized. This was because it was the bastion of the main opposition SDF party and also the epicenter of civil disobedience campaign dubbed *Operation Ghost Towns*, which aimed to force the government to organize a sovereign national conference and carry out electoral reforms. This campaign urged citizens to stop paying utility bills (water, electricity and Telephone), civil servants to desert their offices and markets/businesses to open only on weekends.¹⁰⁶ This campaign was largely effective in Bamenda and other opposition strong holds notably, Bafoussam and Douala. There were also weekly rallies and regular protest marches organized by the SDF party. Thus, Bamenda located some 16km from Bali meant that troops could be deployed to Bali within the twinkle of an eye.¹⁰⁷ Fearing the repeat of the scenario in Kumbo, the people of Bali decided to take preventive measures to alert the

¹⁰⁴Numvi, "Revisiting community development", pp.56-60.

¹⁰⁵Missem, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.37-39.

¹⁰⁶ B. Page, M. Evans and Mercer "Revisiting the politics of belonging to Cameroon", *Africa*, Vol.80, No.3, pp.345-346.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid*, pp.347-349.

population in such an event. The strategy went thus, alarm instruments should be installed in all quarters of the village which has to respond to any distress signal from Gola, Jamjam or the Fon's palace in the event of any confrontation. The population was urged to immediately come out in readiness for any necessary action if the alarm signal went off.

While the General Affairs meeting was taking place, another conclave was brainstorming about the immediate and long-term modalities to raise funds for the smooth functioning of the water project. The members of the finance committee were drawn from people with a wide range of backgrounds including economists, accountants and businessmen. In the short term, they sought voluntary donations from individuals and from all Bali meeting houses throughout the country.¹⁰⁸ The committee also recommended the production and sale of support badges with the slogan *I support the Bali Water Project*. In the long run, they proposed sending out letters appealing for funds to Bali elites of other communities in Bali that is Bawock and Bossa. They also envisaged a scheme whereby individuals and groups will pay annual subscriptions.¹⁰⁹

The price per unit of water was significantly reduce from CFA 286 francs per cubic meter (cm³) as charged by *SNEC* to CFA 100 francs per cm³¹¹⁰. They decided to continue with the metered public taps installed by *SNEC* with the bills to be footed by the council. They also scrapped the CFA 545 francs that was charged monthly by *SNEC* for meter rent to households with private connections and instead recommended a once-off fee for meters, payable during the first installation.¹¹¹ On the issue of the *Fon* paying bills, the "Fantastic Bill" which evoked enormous passion and outrage, it was decided that the paramount Fon of Bali will enjoy 25cm³ free every month.¹¹² Finally the committee recommended opening accounts with banks over which the government had little or no control. This indicated that the faith in the government at this juncture was in very limited supply among the population in Bali.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸Vubo and Ngwa, "Changing intercommunity relations", pp.163-190.

¹⁰⁹ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.82-90.

¹¹⁰ Numvi Gwaibi, "Revisiting community development in Cameroon", pp.1-12.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Finance Committee (Committee No.2) during the Bali Water Supply General Meeting 19th January 1994.

¹¹² G. Mbwemboh, "The implication of population increases on pipe born water supply in Bali Sub Division, Mezam Division (North West Region of Cameroon)", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2009, pp.59-67.

¹¹³*Ibid*, pp.68-70.

It is worthy to note that, after the successful overthrow of *SNEC*, the Bali Community Water Committee (BCWC)¹¹⁴ was established as a management committee to oversee the functioning of the installations. Bills were reduced significantly and the Bali elites in Cameroon and abroad were called upon to make annual contributions to ensure the smooth functioning of the water supply¹¹⁵. In 1996, Bali elites in the United States under the banner of the Bali Cultural Association-USA (BCA-USA) established a Water Committee that devised a plan through which community members (especially those abroad) could make contributions and pay the bills of their families back in Bali.¹¹⁶ Apparently, BCWC functioned without any major crisis from 1994 to 2000.

It is worthy to note that before the water committee was formed, the *Fon* had showed his interest to head the committee. The Bali community had opposed the *Fon's* campaign and advocated that a commoner should head the committee, who could be accountable to the population and the *Fon*. As a result, the *Fon* withdrew his candidature leading to the election of a retired engineer, Mr Dinga, to head the water committee.¹¹⁷ The next part of our work shall look at the third case study of water conflict between Kumbo and *SNEC*.

C. Kumbo and the National Water Corporation (SNEC)

The Kumbo water scheme was a community development project brought about by the son of the soil, Bernard Nsokika Fonlon with the help of the Canadian government. After sometime, the scheme was controlled by *SNEC*, which resulted in a conflict. To better understand the conflict, we shall start by looking at the historical setting of Kumbo.

Kumbo is the headquarters of Bui Division, located some 109 km from Bamenda, the North West Regional headquarters and is about 500 km from Yaounde, the National capital of Cameroon.¹¹⁸ Kumbo town or what is commonly known as Kimbo is the chief town of the Nso *Fondom*. It is the second largest town to Bamenda in the North West Region with a population of

¹¹⁴V.F Nzolle, "Problemsof Rural Water supply, case study: Muea Water Scheme", DIPES II Dissertation in History, E.N.S Yaounde, 2005, pp.79-80.

¹¹⁵Numvi Gwaibi, "Revisiting community development in Cameroon", pp.1-12.

¹¹⁶Page, "Communities as the agents of commodification", pp.483-498.

¹¹⁷*Ibid*, pp.500-512.

¹¹⁸KCA, File No KUC 74, "6th year Development Plan and provincial Draft Committee meetings," 06\05\91, pp.231-234.

over 100,000 inhabitants, 49,217 of them males and 51,700 females, based on the 2018 estimate, distributed over an area of 630km squared.¹¹⁹ The quarters of Kumbo includes Squares which is the traditional and religious centre, Mbve the commercial centre and Tobin the seat of administration where we find the Kumbo Urban Council centre and other administrative buildings are located. Kumbo is a fast-growing town with basic infrastructural and communicational linkages.¹²⁰ Kumbo was founded at the end of the 18th century when the Nso moved from Kov-vifem where they had been for many centuries after their emigration from Rifem under the leadership of Ngonso¹²¹.

Kumbo is very hilly and has a climate which is neither hot nor cold. The climate from December to February is the dry season, March to May there are light rains, June to August there is heavy rainfall and September to November there are moderate rains. Annual temperature varies between 22 degree Celsius and 26 degree Celsius. As concerns hydrology and drainage, the urban area is made up of fast flowing streams.¹²² Topography and drainage are quite simple as all the streams meet in the valleys. The major streams include, Bui, Meluf and Kisaan, and a few more very isolated marshy areas exist within the urban area. During periods of intense rainfall like July and August, run-offs are directed towards the valleys due to the hilly nature of the area. Although the area is characterized by hills, there are some significant low lying areas.¹²³ The plains found in the Nso Fondom include the Mbo-Nso, the Mbo-ber, the Mbo-Nkuv, Wasi and Kwanso¹²⁴ which are fertile areas for agriculture. Food crops and cash crops are grown in substantial quantities in such areas, the abundant food produced help in feeding the population which is ever increasing. The principal crops cultivated are maize, beans and millet, tuber crops include yams, cocoyams, sweet potatoes, groundnut and native carrots, vegetables such as cow pee, hauckle berry, bitter herbs and plantains, bananas, sugar cane, coffee and kola nuts.¹²⁵ Many farmers migrate within the *Fondom* from hilly areas which are leached and characterized by poor infertile soils in search of fertile farming lands.

¹¹⁹*Ibid*, pp.235-236.

¹²⁰Interview with Sule Lukong, 51years, civil servant, Nso, 10/08/2020.

¹²¹ P. Ambe Lum, "Exploring the influence of a community-based project on rural livelihood in Cameroon: The case of the Kumbo Water Authority project", Phd Thesis in Population Health, University of Ottawa, 2018, pp.3-50.

¹²² Interview with Ivo Yiyen Shang, 67years, Retired school Teacher, Nso, 06/08/2020

¹²³ A. Suh Neba, *Modern Geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, Bamenda, Neba Publishers, 1987, pp.165-167.

¹²⁴*Ibid*, pp.168-178.

¹²⁵Interview with Joseph Tabi M., 65years, farmer/Trader, Bajing, 05/08/2020.

The lakes found in the area are lakes Ber, Oku and Mbiame. The vegetation of the Nso area is the Guinea Savannah type characterized by dispersed woodlands, stunted shrubs and low grass. This explains why the Nso people are involved in the keeping of livestock which was an important commodity in trade from the pre-colonial period till date.¹²⁶ The extensive forests that exist in Kov, Ngonmba, Tadu, Bgwarkang and Kovndzen have come under the presence of an exuberant farming population. The short grass vegetation serves as pasture for the animal-grazing population. There are also economic and subsistence trees like the Kolanuts, raffia and the tobacco introduced during the pre-colonial period and pea, orange and coffee introduced during the colonial period.¹²⁷ Other trees of economic importance introduced during the colonial period are the cypress and the eucalyptus which have substituted the olden days bamboos used for the construction of houses and furniture.¹²⁸

1. Events Leading to the Creation of the Water Scheme in Kumbo Town

The course of the events leading to the creation of the water scheme was champion by Dr. Bernard Nsokika Fonlon for which he was publicly honoured by the *Fon* of Nso with the traditional title of *Shuufaay woo Ntoo-dzev* during its inauguration.¹²⁹ When the Nso councillors arrived in Ndop, one of their objectives was the provision of pipe borne water in Kumbo. The public works department estimated the cost of the scheme at £20.000, this was beyond the financial capacity of the council's fund. The amount available, 5000 000fcfa was put in the West Cameroon budget and the project was submitted for financing by the Colonial Welfare Development fund.¹³⁰ With the creation of the Nso Area Council, it continued the fight for the water project but there was no progress. Most parliamentarians in Buea and Yaounde put pressure on the Buea government on the issue of a water scheme for Kumbo, but there were no results.¹³¹

The department of Public Works was in those days equipped to study and construct small water schemes which were financed by the Colonial Welfare development funds, but the funds were

¹²⁶ G. Chilla, "Nso Traditional Political Institutions," Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2001, pp.8-10.

¹²⁷ J.A Ngwa, *A new Geography of Cameroon*, London, Longman, 1978, pp.10-27.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp.28-30.

¹²⁹ S.O. Shey, *History of the Kumbo water supply*, Consling Eng., Bamenda, 2002, pp.35-40.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*.pp.40-46.

¹³¹ Chem-Langhee, *The Shuufaayship of Bernard Nsokika Fonlon*, pp.20-32.

small and could not finance big schemes. The Local Administration or native authority councils participated in these schemes.¹³² In the case of Kumbo, the needs were really enormous as much money was needed for the construction of a water scheme for the town.¹³³

According to Shey Sendze Omar, Dr. Bernard Fonlon who was a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in February 1965 stated in a memorandum his opinion to the Executive Council of the West Cameroon Government.

Years after years, the government has repeated its promise to install pipe borne water in Kumbo. Hardly an address of welcome has been written in Nso without stressing the need For urgently carrying out of this plan...speaking from my heart, I can tell you this, if I were asked to give up my Ministerial post against the firm pledge that this government shall give Kumbo pipe borne ... I wouldn'thesitate one minute.¹³⁴

No prominent member of Government visited Nso without giving the assurance that due attention shall be given to this affair. Water engineers had been sent a number of times to carry out surveys. It was announced that engineers were coming up soon, to carry out a really thorough survey for a water scheme, but none of this ever happened. Having waited long and in vain, the people of Kumbo started making plans to divert an upland stream into the town. They said if the Government could not help them, they will help themselves.¹³⁵

In early November 1965, Dr. Fonlon contacted Shey Sendze who was by that time senior executive engineer for works in the public works department headquarters in Victoria about the situation of the scheme.¹³⁶ He informed him of the five million (5,000,000) francs which had been inscribed for the project in the West Cameroon Government budget, but this money according to him was too small to start any works as the scheme would cost about Two Hundred Million (200,000,000) francs CFA.¹³⁷ This then made Dr. Fonlon see the need to lobby for help from foreign governments, especially his friends the Canadians for assistance. There was need

¹³²N.D Lantum, "Dr. Bernard Nsokika Fonlon 1924-1986 is now a legend", *Nso History Publication*, No 3, 1988, pp.25-38.

¹³³Interview with Eugene suilareng Kibu, 41 year Teacher, Kumba, 04/08/2020.

¹³⁴ Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, pp.8-10

¹³⁵ K.C.A, File No KUC 121, Municipal Council Decisions, 06/05/91, Vol.2, pp.873-876.

¹³⁶Interview with Aloysius Chin, 10 years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/08/2020.

¹³⁷ R. Nga, "Case study of Kumbo Water Authority". In de Jong D. (Ed), Small Towns Water and Sanitation Electronic Conference, 1st January- 10th March 2000, http://www.wsp.org/pdfs/st_studies.pdf, 15th May 2021, 10:35AM.

for the preparation of an outline analysis of the project called in French *Fiche de projet*, which contained the details of the project, its technical complexity and estimated costs.¹³⁸

In December 1965, Priestner a water superintendent in Bamenda carried out a field survey of the streams around Kumbo that could serve as a source for the project. They looked for a clean source that could be exploited with minimum treatment and cost. It was noticed that if the supply for example was based on the Bui and Ro Kimbo Rivers as the source there would be need for the water to be pumped before being treated which would have made the scheme too expensive and the cost would have been high.¹³⁹ It was as a result of this that the Kinsaan stream in the Yeh village was chosen. This stream was very clean at that time since its upper reaches had no farm lands but only forest and there was little or no pollution. As the water source was in the hills above Kumbo, it was thought that water would be piped into town by gravity.¹⁴⁰

After the preliminary studies of the project, the public works department with little allocation in the budget for the project, decided to construct an intake as the first phase of the project. A fresh water intake was therefore constructed on the head waters of the Kinsaan at Yeh by the water superintendent Priestner which later on brought problems. In September 1967, Dr. Bernard Fonlon presented the matter to the Head of States who advised him to meet the Minister of plan, to study the problem before submitting the files to him. In this letter to the Head of states, he explained in detail the problem and asked the Head of states to permit him to make contacts with external aiding agencies especially the Canadians who seemed willing to consider the project.¹⁴¹ Just then, Dr. Fonlon contacted his friend, the Prime Minister of Canada, Dr. Elliot Trudeau on this subject and he indicated his sympathy and the Canadian Ambassador in Yaounde.

On September 29th 1967, Dr. Fonlon was received by the Head of States who told him that the project could not at that time be submitted for Canadian aid and assured him that the project would be considered in the context of other assistance.¹⁴² Dr. Fonlon became disappointed and therefore wrote to the Minister of plan asking him to make every effort to contact other assisting

¹³⁸K.C.A, File No KUC 121, Municipal Council Decisions, 06/05/91, Vol.2, p.877-880.

¹³⁹ B. Page, "A priceless commodity, the production of water in Anglophone Cameroon 1916-1999", PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.112-118.

¹⁴⁰Interview with Killian Nsaikimo, 56years , Teacher, Tobin, 29/07/2020.

¹⁴¹Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, pp.15-27.

¹⁴²*Ibid*, pp.28-30.

agencies who could help. At this stage, the matter came to a standstill.¹⁴³ On landing in Canada, Dr. Fonlon contacted the Canadian Foreign Office, the Prime Minister and the Canadian Agency for foreign assistance for them to help in the construction of the Kumbo Water Scheme. They were all sympathetic and promised to study the project along with others submitted by the Cameroon government. They promised a Canadian mission would be sent to Yaounde in a new year to hold discussions with the Cameroonian Government.¹⁴⁴

The Canadian mission arrived Cameroon at the end of February 1968 from the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This mission was led by the Hon. Lionel Chevrier and under his leadership were Henri Gaudefroy, the Assistant Director General of Cooperation, Jacques Dupuis, the Counsellor of the Ministry of foreign Affairs and the Canadian Ambassador in Yaounde, M. J. E. Thibault.¹⁴⁵ The mission discussed with their Canadian counterparts the various projects submitted by the Cameroon Government. They were five in number among which was the Kumbo Water Project.¹⁴⁶ Out of the five projects, two were accepted for immediate implementation while the others were referred for studies among which was the Kumbo water project. Before signing the accord, the Canadian Mission asked for two more copies of the preliminary study. The Government in Yaounde asked the state government to send other copies of the study the next day to facilitate the signing of the final agreement.¹⁴⁷ The Secretary of state for Public works, Hon. Samuel Tamfu, asked the Director of Public Works to produce immediately, a file for the Kumbo Water Supply since there was no official file. The private secretary of Dr. Bernard Fonlon, Shey Sankie Maimo was dispatched immediately to collect the files.¹⁴⁸

The files were available in Yaounde the next day and the final agreements were signed. A press release was issued on the 7th of March 1968 confirming what had been agreed between the two governments. An agreement was made stipulating that a Canadian consulting group would be

¹⁴³ Interview with Yefon Ntani, 50years, teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020

¹⁴⁴Ngengong, "From friends to enemies" p.68.

¹⁴⁵ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon western Highlands: the case of Bali, Kumbo and Bafou small cities", PhD Thesis in Rural Geography, University of Toulouse, 2014, pp.77-78.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid*, pp.78-80.

¹⁴⁷C.C Fonchingong and L.N Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance in community development initiatives in the Cameroon Grassfields", *Geojournal*, Vol. 57, No.1, 2002, pp.83-94.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid*, pp.95-100.

sent to Yaounde to make the final study and produce execution plans.¹⁴⁹ While waiting on the Canadians to send their team of engineers, Some engineers from the division of the Public Works Department Headquarters in Victoria were organized to start work. The leader of the team of engineers was a competent Ceylonese Engineer by name Samuganathan, and under his supervision were engineers Ndaka Fru, Johnson Agbor Sanganga and later on Thomas Ntoko.¹⁵⁰

They did a good job and when the Canadian government firm of consulting Engineers chosen to carry out studies on the water scheme and execute plans reached Cameroon on the 5th of November 1968, all the design work had been completed. The Canadian engineers were amazed at the quality and amount of work done and therefore decided to redefine their work to consist of reproducing the drawings of Cameroonian engineers to suite Canadian standards.¹⁵¹ This limited their role to quarterly visits during construction, to consult with technicians in Cameroon on the progress of the work being carried out with local labour under the management of Cameroonian Engineers.¹⁵² This reduced the cost of the scheme and also extended the network to Tobin and Mbve.

As earlier stated, the Canadian Engineers reached Cameroon on the 5th of November 1968 and by May 1969, their assessment and final design work was completed and submitted to the Canadian Agency for International cooperation. It was thought that another year would go through before anything could materialized, but the Canadian government sent a note informing the Cameroonian government that sixteen (16) miles of pipes and fittings had been shipped and would arrived Douala on the 24th December 1969.¹⁵³ The joy in the Nso community that this announcement received was hilarious and overwhelming. Dr. Bernard Fonlon could not think of a better Christmas gift for his Nso Brethren.

When the pipes arrived the stocking yard of the Douala port, it was all full, and a flatbed truck was hired to transport the pipes to Tiko, arranged by a transit agent. The pipes were of sizes seen

¹⁴⁹ Lantum, *Dr. Bernard Nsokika Fonlon 1924-1986 is now a legend*, pp.30-40.

¹⁵⁰ Chem-Langhee, *The Shuufaayship of Dr. Bernard Nsokika Fonlon*, Yaoundé, CEPER, 1986, pp.33-37.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp.39-45

¹⁵² Interview with Blasius Nformi Mbinkar, 67years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

¹⁵³ Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water*, pp.35-38.

for the first time in Cameroon and the story of the pipes for Kumbo was on everyone's lips.¹⁵⁴ The expected cost for the transportation of the pipes to Kumbo was about 18 million francs, but there was no money to transport them. As a result of this, Shey Omar contacted S.S Shang, the then Director of Cooperatives and member of the Marketing Board. Shey Omar proposed that all the vehicles conveying coffee from the North West Province to Victoria should return with a load of pipes, that way cost would be reduced.¹⁵⁵ It was also agreed that the money available will be used to meet the bills of private transporters, while the bills of the marketing board will be paid in the next budget when credits would be made available.¹⁵⁶

Shang sent his machineries into action and it was an efficient operation. Within the space of six weeks, all pipes had been moved to Kumbo. The assembling and connection of pipes was done by the state government and the excavation of the trenches by community labour which was divided amongst the various quarters in town and the surrounding villages.¹⁵⁷ Even though finance became a major problem after the pipes had been transported to Kumbo to commence work, this hurdle was finally crossed. Dr Fonlon decided to take up the challenge and presented the matter to the President of the Republic who decided to make a provision in the federal budget.¹⁵⁸ At the end, a meeting was held in the Ministry of Plan and Development on the project and the Department of Urban Development sent the estimated cost of the project to the Minister of Plan. In July 1971, the Minister of Plan sent a letter to Dr. Fonlon forwarding to him a copy of the instructions that had been sent to the minister of finance to make the first thirty (30) millions Francs of the sixty (60) millions estimated cost available to the West Cameroon Secretariat of state for Urban Development to enable the works to start.¹⁵⁹ As soon as the funds were received, works were started immediately in the dry season, as seen on table 12 below.

¹⁵⁴A.K Bamwai, "Influence of community spirit in the process of development of the Nso Fondom: A historical study from 1800-1994", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, pp.90-100.

¹⁵⁵Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.80-86.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid*, pp.88-90.

¹⁵⁷Page, "Communities as agents of commodification", p. 483-498.

¹⁵⁸Interview with James Ndzi Wibah, 72years, Coaching (Now retired), Ndu, 31/07/2020.

¹⁵⁹ Ngefong Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.90-94.

12. Main stakeholders and contributions in the first phase of the Kumbo Water Project

Stakeholder	Material contributed	Financial contribution in francs CFA
Canadian Government	Plumbing materials, piping and fittings, salaries of supervising engineers	420,000,000
The Federal Republic of Cameroon	Custom duty-free materials from Canada, transportation of pipes and other materials	60.000.000
State of West Cameroon Government	Provided the engineers and carried out construction work	12,000,000
The Kumbo Community	Manual labour supply for trench digging, transportation of potable construction equipment and materials	80,000,000

Source: B. Page, “Communities as agents of commodification: The Kumbo Water Authority in Northwest Cameroon”, *Geoforum*, Vol, 34, pp.483-498.

Note: During the construction of the Kumbo Water Scheme, a lot of assistance was received either materially or financially as seen on the table above. Assistance came from the Canadian government, the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the State of West Cameroon Government and the Kumbo Community. They did their best to ensure that the kumbocommunity gets their own pipe borne water.

The constant support of the *Fon* of Nso and the population of Kumbo, made the construction phase to pass off successfully.¹⁶⁰ With the provision of the above necessities, work on the construction of the water network went very fast and by the end of 1972, the installation of pipes was over and what was left was for the network to be tested. It therefore meant that the network would be ready for commissioning early in 1973. This was a record in the History of foreign and financial projects.¹⁶¹ There was a special meeting held in Buea in 1972 to see into the problem of resettlement of the people of Yeh valley, since this area had been chosen as a catchment area for

¹⁶⁰Interview with Joseph Chila Fai, 55years, Teacher, Misaje, 01/08/2020.

¹⁶¹ G. Njoka, “Kumbo water supply systems 1968-1992: A historical perspective, Kumbo central,” Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1993, pp.59-60.

the Kumbo water authority.¹⁶² At this meeting, there were representatives of the various Ministries such as Finance, Mines and Energy, Agriculture, Plan and Public Works. It was tentatively agreed that a resettlement site be chosen for the population of Yeh, as the first step.¹⁶³

Survey and planning of the site was to be made to provide the new community with their own water supply and health facilities which will be better than what they were enjoying at their former settlement.¹⁶⁴ The plots were to be big enough to allow farming, and plans for the erection of houses after allocation of plots were made. The local population was to help each family erect a mud brick house and the state to subsidize with roofing materials. Seeds were to be provided to every family to farm and replace their farms in the Yeh valley.¹⁶⁵ The inhabitants of Yeh were to evacuate the valley and settle in the new area with the authorization to continue exploiting their old farms for another year.¹⁶⁶ All the attempts made to resettle the people failed because the local population was not well informed or educated on this hence, the youths of the valley formed a resistance committee which chased out a team sent to survey the valley, evaluate its size and the problem.¹⁶⁷

The inhabitants of the Yeh valley did not want to evacuate their settlements which they had inhabited for long, acquired land, built houses, opened farms and reared animals for themselves.¹⁶⁸ Political intoxication undertaken by politicians came into play to mislead the population, since some of them ill-educated the inhabitants that they were being unnecessarily victimized because their presence could not affect the water to be tapped for the town.¹⁶⁹ As the problem was going on, the Canadian Government sent to the Cameroon Government a message in which they indicated that, the scheme could not be inaugurated until the problem was resolved.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶²HELVETAS Cameroon, *Water catchment protection: Revise project proposal 2001 for Kumbo Urban Council water catchment protection, North West Province*, November 2000, pp.12-16.

¹⁶³*Ibid*, pp.18-22.

¹⁶⁴Interview with Lawson Wirba, 54years, Farmer, Kumbo, 03/08/2020.

¹⁶⁵Bamwai, "Influence of community spirit in the process of development", pp.115-118.

¹⁶⁶Shey, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.40-45.

¹⁶⁷Interview with Narcasius Ntutin Kudzebam, 55years, Teacher, Kumbo, 15/08/2020.

¹⁶⁸C.Jumbam Tardzenyuy, "The Yeh crisis of 1975," DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaoundé, 2002, pp.35-39.

¹⁶⁹Ngefors Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.111-116.

¹⁷⁰Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62years, Retired Community worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

On the Fifth (5th) of February 1973, the Minister of Mines, Water and Energy addressed a letter to the Minister of Territorial Administration, asking for intervention to move the population out of the valley.¹⁷¹ On the 1st of February, Dr. Fonlon as elite of the town of Kumbo addressed a letter to the *Fon* of Nso asking for steps to remove the people from the Valley and on the 14th of February he wrote to the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of Kumbo, to take action before the government intervened.¹⁷² The *Fon* of Nso on the 28th of February 1973 summoned a meeting of all traditional rulers and parties, to find solutions to the problem. Although resolutions were made and committees set up, there was not much progress.¹⁷³ A detailed letter was sent to his Royal Highness the *Fon* in April 1974 detailing a programme of action following what was agreed upon at the meeting in Buea.

Owing to the intransigence of the population of the valley, the Senior Divisional Officer and the *Fon* of Nso in an organized joint invasion made up of forces of Law and Order and the *Nwerong*, a traditional society in the lead forcefully evacuated the population of the valley.¹⁷⁴ Many of the inhabitants of Yeh left Nso for Nigeria, some moved to the area that was designated for them and others moved to the area above Kitiwum. They left in bitterness which has lasted till date.¹⁷⁵ With the forceful removal of the inhabitants of Yeh valley towards the end of 1974, the project was now ready to be inaugurated.

The water scheme was inaugurated in 1975 by the Ministry of Mines, Water and Energy as designed by the Head of State.¹⁷⁶ He arrived in Kumbo with Canadian Ambassador and all the elites of the town were all present in the palace of the *Fon* of Nso. This was really a great day taking into consideration all the struggles. This was the crowning of a battle that had been won by the Canadian government, some important Nso elites and the local Nso community. It was on this day of the reception in the community hall that the father of all this, Bernard Fonlon, was

¹⁷¹ B. Page, "Communities as agents of commodification: The Kumbo Water Authority in Northwest Cameroon", *Geoforum*, Vol.34, 2003, pp.483-498.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, pp.499-504.

¹⁷³ Jumbam, "The Yeh crisis of 1975", pp.37-39.

¹⁷⁴ KCA, File No KUC 63, Vol.2, Rural Water supplies and resettlement schemes, 06/05/91, pp.449-456.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp.457-459.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Aloysius chin, 102years, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/07/2020.

elevated to the Nso rank of *Shufai Woo NtooNdzev*, meaning the controller of the source of water.¹⁷⁷

2. The Ousting of the National Water Corporation (NWC) from Kumbo

After the inauguration of the Kumbo Water project, the scheme was controlled by the Water Service of the State Department of Public Works in the area. It was not immediately controlled by the National Water Corporation. With the constitutional changes following the referendum of May 20th 1972, the government of Buea was dissolved with its services and the responsibility of the state government in respect of water was taken over by the Ministry of Mines, Water and Energy.¹⁷⁸ This Ministry immediately took over the administration of the water schemes in West Cameroon. Since the new Ministry did not have as sole responsibility the running of water supplies in the country, most of the water schemes in the former West Cameroon were immediately handed over to the National Water Corporation (*SNEC*).¹⁷⁹ Kumbo water was not handed over immediately to the National Water Corporation in view of the special nature of the scheme. When the water scheme was completed it was first managed by the public works Department and during the period, the scheme operated to its desired expectations.¹⁸⁰

When the National Water Corporation took over the water scheme, it led to a crisis in 1991. The local population felt that the National Water Corporation was a private company making profits out of a gift their son brought. This was as a result of the high rates for water consumption levied by the National Water Corporation on the population.¹⁸¹ The population of Kumbo took advantage of the political upheavals in Cameroon and organized a smear campaign against *SNEC*, which resulted in its eviction from Kumbo in October 1991.

The National Water Corporation abandoned the protection of the intake area, as activities dangerous to the catchments continued to be carried out. There was massive farming and installation of fish points at the catchment area, which led to massive evaporation and reduction of water volume at the intake area. When the population became impatient and organized a

¹⁷⁷ Shey, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.45-48.

¹⁷⁸ Page, "Communities as agents of commodification", p. 483-485.

¹⁷⁹ The NWC is a government corporation created to run water supply schemes all over the country and ensures that most of the centres drink potable water. They do not construct water schemes. *SNEC* manages constructed water schemes by the government. It is not a private company neither is it set up to make profit.

¹⁸⁰ Lantum, "Dr Bernard Nsokika Fonlon", pp.45-53.

¹⁸¹ M. Bell, "Restructuring communities as agents of progress", *Antipode*, Vol.23, No.3, pp.336-347.

clean-up of the intake area, a dead donkey was seen inside the debris that had blocked the intake basin.¹⁸² The intake area was as well choked with plants and expected reforestation of the catchment area was never started.

The taking over of the control of the water scheme by the National Water Corporation resulted in high bills of public standpipes consumption and the council found itself unable to settle these bills.¹⁸³ It was purported by the majority of the Kumbo elites that the bills far exceeded the council's budget¹⁸⁴. Public standpipes were put in all the quarters that make up the town of Kumbo, and the bills were to be paid by the Kumbo Urban Council to the National Water Corporation. Eventually, the council was unable to pay the bills and almost all the public taps were disconnected and went out of use. This resulted eventually in the decision to close down over 80 percent of the standpipes to reduce consumption to the level the council could pay for.¹⁸⁵ This coming crisis was evident as twelve (12) standpipes left for the vicinity of Kumbo led to rationing resulting in long lines and fights at stand pipes, which meant returning to the days of old. With the council unable to pay even for the reduced number of standpipes eventually meant that, all were to be shut down.¹⁸⁶

More so, the National Water Corporation concentrated more on the reading of meters than on maintaining and protecting this source of water. The schemes in the country consisted of water networks which were very expensive and brought in little revenue. Schemes which were expensive to run but were profitable because of large populations, but that of Kumbo was ran at a low cost. It was government policy that the amount charged for water should be uniform all over the country and to achieve this policy was evolved the economic balancing of the profitable water schemes to subsidize uneconomic centres. That is why even though the real unit cost of water in Kumbo should had been 100francs, the inhabitants were paying 250francs.¹⁸⁷

Also, most of the water technicians of the Water Authority were employed out of the town of Kumbo, while many Nso youths were unemployed during the period of the Water Corporation.

¹⁸²Shey, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.30-32.

¹⁸³ Interview with Martin Ngala Ndi, 56years, Retired State Agent, Nkambe, 03/08/2020.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with J. Tata Nsame, 62years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

¹⁸⁵ V. Berkpu, "The role of the Kumbo Urban Council in the Socio-cultural and economic development of its area of jurisdiction 1977-2003", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2004, pp.78-90.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid*, pp.92-99.

¹⁸⁷Page, "Communities as agents of commodification", pp.483-498.

They were paid huge sums of money, instead of employing workers from Kumbo who could do the work well with less pay and knew the needs of their people.¹⁸⁸ The workers knew little or nothing about Kumbo and its inhabitants. This was a great mistake made by this corporation. The high cost of the water scheme was also as a result of the high cost of salaries and facilities which added to the unit cost of water and led to poor management of the water scheme.

The National Water Corporation was also over staffed as a small centre like Kumbo had four senior staff.¹⁸⁹ The population of Kumbo had celebrated the great fight of the Canadians and now they had been reduced to return and fetch water from open Rivers which meant one thing, returning to the traditional period. All these problems contributed to the riots of the Nso people against the National Water Corporation and their eventual removal from Kumbo town.

The Kumbo water project was conceived as a low maintenance cost gravity scheme to give water at a cost so low that the population could easily contribute for its maintenance and commensurate with their level of income. The National Water Corporation charged a rate of two hundred and twenty five (225) Francs per m³ which for schemes like Kumbo was highly inflated.¹⁹⁰ The rate of one hundred and fifty (150) Francs per m³ charged was meant to put the burden of paying the cost of maintenance mainly on the shoulders of those who could afford a private supply. The high rate charged on the inhabitants of Kumbo by the Water Corporation made the people very angry and eventually the riots that followed.

This was a major setback to the National Water Corporation considering the sensitive nature of the scheme. A lot had been sacrificed before this water scheme was constructed. As a result of these reasons, the population of Kumbo invaded and took over the National Water Corporation installations and chased its workers out of Kumbo, with vigilante groups in the lead in October 1992. According to a local newspaper (*Blows the Whistle on SWELA of 1992*), the paramount chief of Nso, Fon Ngah Bifon III stated that, “If the government prefers to respond with guns which we do not have, we will prefer to lose this most cherished gift. We rather not have water than have *SNEC*”.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65years, Traditional Authority/Farmer, Nso, 03/08/2020.

¹⁸⁹ G. Njoka, “Kumbo water supply systems 1968-1992: A Historical perspective, Kumbo Central”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1993, pp.87-100.

¹⁹⁰ M. Lang Kpughe, “The role of local communities in self help development: The case of the Weh water supply project in Northwest Cameroon”, *GLOBAL SOUTH SEPHISE Magazine*, Vol.9, No.1, 2013, pp.45-100.

To the population of Kumbo, it looked like a revolution but fortunately for them, there was political crisis in the country in 1992 and the government thus decided not to interfere in the crisis as she understood the feelings and anger of the people. To honourable Bobeh Nkwain who came to handle the crisis in 1992, and being from the same traditional background as the Nso people understood that this was a battle the Government could not win.¹⁹¹ To his greater Credit and that of the Government, they understood the sentiment and anger of the people and decided to hand over the scheme to the *Fon* of Nso in 1992 immediately *SNEC* was chased out of Kumbo.

With the withdrawal of the National Water Corporation from Kumbo finalized by the visit of the Minister of Mines, Water and Energy, the *Fon* of Nso was now left with the problem of running the scheme which though simple, required a well-structured management.¹⁹² This ended the era of the National Water Corporation. With the ousting of the National Water Corporation from Kumbo, the population was organized to clean and open up all the intake basins some of which had been abandoned by the National Water Corporation. They renewed the filter beds which the Water Corporation could not do due to lack of funds and re-establish the public standpipes that had been shut down¹⁹³. All farming in the intake valley was prohibited and effectively stopped. Planting of trees that protected the catchment and increase the flow of water was carried out and all eucalyptus trees destroyed. The settlement tank which the National Water Corporation had not cleaned frequently because they could not obtain the funds to do it by contract was done by the population at no financial loss to the management. The rate of water flow increased dramatically.¹⁹⁴

After the eviction of *SNEC* in 1992, Quarters such as Tourist Home that did not have water connections because of low pressure were now served. All the standpipes closed down by the national Water Corporation were reopened, (62 in number) and eleven of the standpipes were added.¹⁹⁵ The quality of water returned to its original level as it was before the advent of the National Water Corporation. Chemical treatment was carried out regularly and permanently to

¹⁹¹Missem, "impact of a water supply project", pp.45-60.

¹⁹²Interview with Julius Ngah safe, 47years, Teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

¹⁹³Bamwai, "Influence of community spirit in the process of development of the Nso Fondom", pp.90-98.

¹⁹⁴Interview with Joseph chila Fai, 55years Teacher, Misaje, 01/08/2020.

¹⁹⁵Page, "Communities as agents of commodification", pp.483-498.

ensure the portability of the water. Out of a total daily production of one thousand seven hundred and fifty (1750) cubic meters, one thousand four hundred and fifty (1450) cubic meters was consumed through standpipes and the water committee presented monthly revenue of one million five hundred thousand (1500 000) Francs.¹⁹⁶ With the handing over of the water scheme to the Fon of Nso in October 1992, fears were expressed at the level of the Ministry of mines as to the ability of the local community to manage the scheme and ensure potable water is distributed to the population.

In reality, the Nso community succeeded beyond all expectations in producing a better management for the scheme. This was due to the single minded determination of the *Fon* and the community who made sure that the scheme was well managed and overhead cost kept low.¹⁹⁷ To enable the water project function at optimum during a period of nearly ten years, the *Fon* and the quarter heads set up a temporary water committee under a young law graduate to run the scheme. He was Tobias Wringo, the first Manager who was at the forefront of the campaign that chased the National Water Corporation out of Kumbo.¹⁹⁸ The scheme was controlled by a skeleton staff of sixteen (16), including the Manager. This temporary water committee was later on to be replaced by a proper water authority which was to have a legal personality. The water committee did a good job considering the fact that it was made up of people who had no knowledge of water techniques and administration. The proceeds from the water were kept in the Bishop's house with a reverend father as treasurer.

Twenty-two months (from 1992 to 1994) after the incident with the National Water Corporation, the population was fully served.¹⁹⁹ Water now reached quarters such as Tourist home which could not be supplied because of insufficient pressure. Water rationing stopped and the quality of water was restored to what it was when the scheme was inaugurated, and under the control of the Public Works Department. This was as a result of the good management of the *Fon* and the temporal water committee that had been chosen to take care of the water scheme.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Killian Nsaikimo Fai, 56years, teacher, kumbo, 29/07/2020,

¹⁹⁷ Shey, *History of the Kumbo water*, pp.45-60.

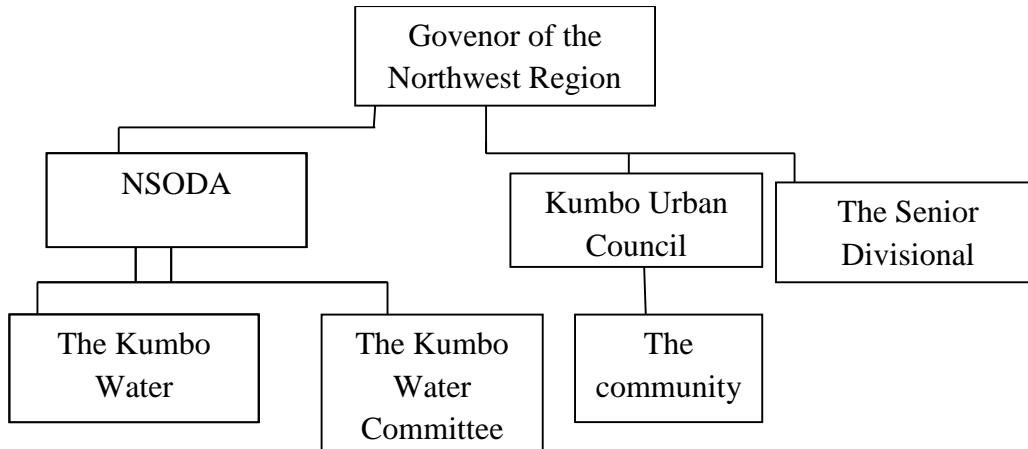
¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.61-70.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with E. Ndi shey, 50years, Teacher, Ntudip-Ndu, 03/08/2020.

²⁰⁰ Fonchingong and Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance", pp.56-59.

The success of the operation of the water project carried out by the *Fon* and his people served as an eye opener to many other communities around the town of Kumbo as many have following closely the initiative of the Nso people. Areas out of the municipality of Kumbo such as Meluf, Njavnyuy, Kai, Melim, Kikaikelaki, Kitiwum, Kikaikom, Nseni, Tadu, Mbah and Mbuluf have their own local water supply schemes, which are controlled by these villages.²⁰¹ These independent water schemes were most often constructed with little help from the government, the Kumbo Urban Council and donor organizations involved in village self help development projects such as HELVETAS.²⁰² The structures of the Kumbo Water can be seen on figure 6 below.

6. Kumbo Water Structure after SNEC



Source: Ambe Lum, “Exploring the influence of a community-based project”, p.71.

Note: when *SNEC* was chased out of Kumbo, the management scheme of the water scheme changed completely. At the head of the region was the governor overseeing all the activities of the region. The Kumbo water scheme was put under the General control of NSODA, the Kumbo Urban Council and the Senior Divisional Officer. The immediate control was put in the hands of the Kumbo Water Authority, the Kumbo Water Committee and the community. This structure did a great job to ensure that water was provided to the inhabitants of Kumbo.

Finally, the next part of this work shall look at the change of name from Kumbo Water Supply to Kumbo Water Authority.

²⁰¹Shey, “History of the Kumbo water”, pp.50-54.

²⁰²*Ibid*, pp.55-60.

3. Change of Name from Kumbo Water Supply to Kumbo Water Authority

After the ousting of the National Water Corporation from Kumbo finalized by the visit of the Minister of Mines, Water and Energy in 1992, the *Fon* of Nso was left with the problem of running the scheme which though simple required a well-structured management²⁰³. The *Fon* of Nso proceeded to set up a water maintenance committee which was given the authority to organize maintenance of the water and collect rates.²⁰⁴ Many problems arose owing to lack of a legal framework for the water project and it was also operating under a shadow, as the management feared that the government felt insulted by the step taken by the population of Nso and wished for the whole experience to fail so that they could move in again. The government on its part was afraid that what happened in Kumbo will repeat itself elsewhere.²⁰⁵ Taking over the scheme from *SNEC*, the temporal water committee did a good job at assuring that water continued to flow. The intake basin was cleared, well maintained, and in less than a year, all stand pipes were reopened.

To solve the problem of structures, a water conference was summoned at the end of 1992²⁰⁶ in which a constitution was adopted for the water committee. A lot of credit was given to the first Manager Tobias Wirngo, one of the activists who were at the forefront of the campaign to chase out the National Water Corporation from Kumbo, as a result of their inefficient management of the water scheme.²⁰⁷ Unfortunately, Wirngo though a law graduate had no technical training on water management and as a result of this, he could not continue to run the water scheme. A new management was thus needed that had training on water techniques with a legal backing. This conference failed to resolve the problem of the legal framework in which the scheme was to continue to operate and by that time, the tax services asked the management to pay taxes as they were considered an income generating company.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ Page, "Communities as agents of commodification", pp.483-498.

²⁰⁴ G. Njoka, "Kumbo Water Supply Systems 1968-1992: A Historical perspective, kumbo Central", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1993, pp.60-63.

²⁰⁵G. Njoka, "Kumbo Water Supply Systems", pp.65-70.

²⁰⁶Shey, "History of the Kumbo water", pp.51-58.

²⁰⁷Page, "Communities as agents of commodification", pp.483-498.

²⁰⁸*Ibid*, pp.500-503.

In finding a solution to these problems, HELVETAS²⁰⁹ a company taking care of village water schemes was consulted to come out with a legal frame work for the structures they were creating for village water schemes. HELVETAS explained the type of law under which village water schemes were operated. According to HELVETAS, each village was encouraged to form a Village Development Association under the law.²¹⁰ They were authorized to form committees for road and water maintenance, which were tax free and recognized by the state. It was therefore advisable to use a similar structure for Kumbo. The unfortunate thing was that by that time, there was no longer a Nso Development Association since the death of the early trials at organizing and running such an association. This was the only way out of the Kumbo Water Supply.²¹¹

A committee of twelve (12) was set up in 1994 to draw a text for the Nso Development Association and that for a Kumbo Water authority, made up of lawyers, Engineers and Community development experts.²¹² They worked hard continuously for six months (March to August 1994) and produced a draft constitution for the Nso development Association and Kumbo Water Authority. With the availability of these documents, a general assembly of all sons and daughters of Nso all over the country was summoned by His Royal Highness the Fon of Nso on the 13th of August 1994.²¹³

At the meeting, a constitution was adopted and the Nso Development and Cultural Association (NSODA) was born. Dr. Anthony Mapi Maimo later on *Fai Bamfem* was elected as the first president general of NSODA.²¹⁴ The General assembly of NSODA proceeded to vote a status for the proposed Kumbo Water Authority, and its board under the chairmanship of Mr. Joseph Wirlem was put in place. At last, the structures of the Kumbo Water Authority (KWA) were born to replace the Kumbo Water Supply.²¹⁵ The change of name from the Kumbo Water Supply to the Kumbo Water Authority in 1994 marked an end to the control of the Kumbo water Scheme

²⁰⁹ HELVETAS is a Swiss International Non-Governmental organization that helps in the construction of community water schemes.

²¹⁰ HELVETAS Cameroon, *Water management committee manual*, Bamenda, 2003, pp.5-8.

²¹¹ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands: the case of Bali, Kumbo and Bafou small cities", PhD Thesis in geography, University of Toulouse, 2014, pp.40-100.

²¹² G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.108-112.

²¹³ Interview with Lawson Wirba, 54years, Farmer, Kumbo, 03/08/2020.

²¹⁴ Missem, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.55-64.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.65-73.

by the National Water Corporation. It marked a new era for the control the Kumbo water by the Nso people themselves under the leadership of the *Fon* of Nso.²¹⁶ See table 11 below.

13. Comparing *SNEC* and *KWA* (Kumbo Water Authority)

Water price	Under <i>SNEC</i>		Under <i>KWA</i>	
Water price	Domestic connection	271FCFA/m ³	Domestic connection	175CFFA/m ³
	Public tap stand	337FCFA/m ³	Public tap stand	100FCFA/m ³
Number of domestic connections	104 (1985)		1920(1998)	
Number of public taps	12(1991)		30+19 planned (1998)	

Source: B. Page, “Communities as agents of commodification: The Kumbo Water Authority in Northwest Cameroon”, *Geoforum*, Vol.34, pp.483-198.

Note: The table above compares the water supply during the period of *SNEC* and *KWA*. Water pricing was high during the period of *SNEC* than during the period of *KWA* as seen in the first row of the table. More so, the number of domestic consumptions was 104 during the period of *SNEC* in 1985 and 1920 during the period of *KWA* in 1998. Lastly number of public taps was 12 under *SNEC* in 1991 and 49 under *KWA* in 1998, this comparism shows that the *KWA* controlled the scheme better.

Judging from the above explanations, a lot of conflicts haD occurred in the Bamenda Grassfields as a result of water from 1916 to 1998. Most of these conflicts as seen were as a result of poor management skills and others as a result of ownership. The case in Kumbo and Bali was overwhelming as the people rose against the state-owned entity *SNEC* as a result of poor management and over billing of consumers and sent them out from their communities.

The expulsure of *SNEC* from Bali and Kumbo led to better management of their schemes by the communities themselves. They did a better job as compared to the corperation itself and their communities were well served. Adapting the prices per unit of water consumed should be treated with utmost caution. Two reasons explained this. Not only was it ensure the sustainability of projects but it could be the cause of serious confrontation if poorly done. In this light, we put forth the hypothesis that, community water projects in Cameroon served as an arena for

²¹⁶ Interview with William Asah Mbenkum, 63years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 18/08/2020.

displaying socio-political and economic grievances and interests between communities and the state. While some regions in Cameroon such as the Bamenda Grassfields tried to solve their water problems through community driven approaches, others adopted quite different modes ranging from boreholes and wells to piped water schemes.

Numerous water conflicts have been recorded in many areas of the Bamenda Grassfields. Looking at the examples of the case studies we have examined above, we can see that these conflicts had been between and within ethnic groups and sometimes between communities and state-owned corporations. History revealed that ethnic conflicts remained a thorny issue since time immemorial. People turned to fight over ownership of water sources. Moreso, conflicts also occur as a result of poor management, over billing of consumers and water shortage. It is thus important that the communities of the Bamenda Grassfields be given the opportunity to control their water schemes to avoid future conflicts and communities should learn to manage their grievances for the good of all. We shall now look at the strategies used by the state, the NGOs, traditional authorities and the church to curb water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon.

CHAPTER FIVE:

**STRATEGIES USED BY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF
WATER CONFLICTS IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS**

Conflict is a fact of life and it comes and goes as life moves on.¹ Conflict is part of a larger process, since it may arise out of an array of objective and subjective conditions that demand resolution on a sustainable basis. Dealing with water related conflicts, requires strong interpersonal skills as well as an understanding of the conflict at hand.² Water-related conflicts are on the rise in the Bamenda Grassfields region³ and the factors that drive such conflict and instability seem to be intensifying, including population growth, climate change, pollution and agricultural practices. While water crisis is rarely the only cause of conflict, water crises greatly contribute to a country's instability.⁴

Conflict management refers to a broad array of tools used to anticipate, prevent and react to conflicts.⁵ A conflict management strategy will involve a combination of these types of tools. These tools are used to encourage the parties to open up, identify the real issues behind the publicity pronounced positions and find win-win solutions that leave both parties better off with the outcome.⁶ However, it is not possible to come up with win-win outcomes all the time but in order to succeed, trade off and compromise could be necessary.

While conflict may be difficult, it is by no means a destructive process.⁷ As has already been pointed out, conflict can be solved if only we have the necessary skills to create the synergy for

¹ N.P Gleditsch, T. Owen, K. Furlong and B. Lacina, "Conflict over shared Rivers: Resources wars of fuzzy boundaries", http://www.pri.no/files/file45233_isa_proceeding_14244, 26/08/2021, 11:14am, pp.32-37.

² P. Gleick, *Environment and security: Water conflict chronology*, Carlifornia, Island Press, 2000, pp.56-60.

³ Interview with Eric Njongal, 51years, Teacher, Tobin, 08/08/2021.

⁴ D.L Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflicts*, London, University of California Press, 1985, pp.10-20.

⁵ A.J Njoh, "Determinants of success in community help projects: The case of the Kumbo water supply scheme in Cameroon", *International Development Planning Review*, Vol.28, No.3, 2006, pp.381-406.

⁶ A.J Njoh, "Determinants of success", pp.407-409.

⁷ Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies", pp.58-71.

the well-being of all the contending parties.⁸ There are no particular tailored techniques, either formal or informal to manage conflicts although the techniques are based on intuition, logic and communication arts. The following are the most commonly known methods of conflict resolution.

Just as no single solution will eliminate water insecurity, fortunately, a wide variety of solutions has been put in place to curb the issue of water conflicts.⁹ Thus, the Government of Cameroon, NGOs and traditional authorities have played significant roles in solving water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

We shall start by examining the strategies put in place by the government of Cameroon to solve water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

A. Role of the state in water conflict management

The Government of Cameroon as an administrative body has put in place a number of strategies to help in the management of conflicts in the country, the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive. These strategies shall be examined below.

1. Creation of SNEC in 1968

The government of Cameroon is doing its best to ensure that water is distributed to the entire population by creating competent organizations to supply and control the distribution of water¹⁰. In 1968, Cameroon created the National Water Supply Company of Cameroon (*SNEC*), to provide water supply across the country¹¹. *SNEC* was a government corporation created to run water supply schemes all over the country and ensure that all the population of the country was provided with potable water¹². *SNEC* did not construct water schemes, but managed constructed water schemes by the government. The corporation was not a private company neither was it out

⁸ Interview with Ivo Yiyen Shang, 67years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 06/08/2020.

⁹ Interview with Julius Ngah Safee, 47years, Teacher, Tobin, 08/08/2020.

¹⁰ Interview with Samuel Shey Dufe, 59, Teacher, Romajay, 04/08/2020.

¹¹ S.O Shey, *History of the Kumbo Water Supply*, Consulting Eng., Bamenda, 2002, pp.45-49.

¹² *Ibid*, pp.50-55

to make profit¹³. *SNEC* has controlled many water schemes in the North West Region of Cameroon such as that in Kumbo and Bali¹⁴. Even though they were driven out in most of these communities, their role cannot be undermined in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon,¹⁵ such as the construction of water schemes, opening of new catchments, organized cleanup campaigns in the catchment areas and carried out renovation works on water networks.

2. The Constitution

The Constitution of Cameroon is the supreme law of the country. The current constitution of Cameroon was adopted in 1996 amending the 1972 constitution.¹⁶ The document consists of preamble and thirteen (13) parts, each divided into articles.¹⁷ The Constitution outlines the rights guaranteed to Cameroonian citizens, the symbols and official institutions of the country, the structure and functions of the government, the procedure by which the constitution may be amended and the process by which the provisions of the constitution are to be implemented.¹⁸

The constitution of the Republic of Cameroon of 1996 does not explicitly provide for the right to water. However, it has a number of preambular provisions relating to economic and social rights.¹⁹ Since it is admitted that the right to water is an integral part of economic and social rights, it could therefore be submitted that the constitution makes implicit reference to the right to water through its provisions for economic and social rights.²⁰ As an integral part of the environmental law, the right to water has a comfortable foundation in the constitutional provisions.²¹ It is provided in the preamble that every person has a right to a healthy environment, that the protection of the environment shall be the duty of every Cameroonian and

¹³Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.45-198.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.100-113.

¹⁵ C. Misem Fai, "The impact of a water supply project on the society: The case of Kumbo, 1965-2013, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, pp.25-50.

¹⁶ Cameroon, Law No.96/06 of 18 January 1996.

¹⁷*Ibid*.

¹⁸ M.W Delancey, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon (3rd Ed.)*, Maryland, Scarecrow Press, 2000, pp.45-115.

¹⁹ L.E Enonchong, *The constitution and governance in Cameroon*, London, Routledge, 2021, pp.8-36.

²⁰*Ibid*, pp.37-42.

²¹ Interview with Spilian Asah Fai, 50years, Police Officer, Kikaikelaki, 29/07/2020.

that the state shall ensure the protection and improvement of the environment.²² Therefore, in this light, there is an implicit commitment to protect and improve on the right to water.

This law has helped to curb water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields Region. With the constitution being the supreme law of the country, its view on water is thus respected in this part of Cameroon. The Government tries to ensure that every member of this region is provided with good drinking water by sponsoring and encouraging community water projects²³. Also, all the inhabitants are called upon to take care of the environment by planting environmentally friendly trees.

3. Cameroon's Adoption of the Dublin Principles concerning integrated water

- Origin of the Dublin Principles

The Dublin Principles on water and sustainable development, also known as the Dublin statement, was a meeting of experts on water related problems that took place at the International Conference on water and the Environment (ICWE), Dublin, Ireland organized from the 26-31 January 1992.²⁴ The Dublin Statement on water and Sustainable Development recognize the increasing scarcity of water as a result of the different conflicting uses and overuses of water²⁵. The International Conference on Water and the Environment, which preceded the Earth Summit in Rio, drew attention to the new challenges facing policy makers in managing and allocating water resources. The international meeting for the first-time defined water as an economic (as well as social) good and its "commoditization" should encourage the establishment of approaches based on expressed demand by communities' consumers. Yet the Statement clarified that within this principle "it is vital to recognize first the basic right of all human beings

²²C. F Tamasong, "The right to water in Cameroon: legal framework for sustainable utilization", paper prepared for the workshop entitled Legal aspects of water sector reforms, Geneva, 20-21 April 2007, pp.1-22.

²³ Interview with Gilbert Sunday Menyong, 36years, Civil Servant, Nkambe, 20/08/2020.

²⁴Ako Ako, Eneke Takem and Elambo, "water resources management", pp.871-888.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp.889-890.

to have access to clean water and sanitation at an affordable price”²⁶. Thus, the right to water does not necessarily mean that water should be provided free of charge.

Five hundred participants including government-designated experts from a hundred countries and representatives of eighty international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations attended the International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE).²⁷ The experts saw the emerging global water resources picture as critical. At its closing session, the conference adopted the Dublin Statement and the Conference report.

In commending this Dublin statement, world leaders assembled at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992²⁸, the conference participants urged all governments to study carefully the specific activities and means of implementation recommended in the conference report, and to translate those recommendations into urgent action programmes for Water and Sustainable Development.²⁹

- **Cameroon’s adoption of the Dublin Principles**

Cameroon adopted the Dublin principles concerning Integrated Water Resource Management in the year 1992.³⁰ It is aimed at promoting coordinated development and management of water, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital eco-systems³¹. In the absence of proper water management, conflicts within countries often arise because of competing water uses and from competing jurisdictional mandates of agencies dealing with water issues.³² Cameroon for instance has many rivers that it shares with other countries. These are the Benue River, Cross River and

²⁶ P.B Moriarty, J.T Visscher, P. Bury and L. Postma, “Water, sanitation and hygiene: Challenges of the millennium”, 26th WEDC Conference, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2000, pp.1-4.

²⁷ Lovell, *Productive water points*, pp.48-50.

²⁸ P.H. Gleick, “Water in crisis: Paths to sustainable water use”, *Ecol Appl*, Vol.8, 1998, pp.571-574.

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp.575-577.

³⁰ Ako Ako, Eneke and Elambo, “water resources management”, pp.876-879.

³¹ infoResources, “Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): a way to sustainability”, *InfoResources Focus*, Vol.3, No.1, 2003, pp.78-90.

³² Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

River Munaya all shared with Nigeria. It is critical therefore that the country has a successful water resource management to avoid conflicts with other countries³³.

In Cameroon, competition over water is already evident where more than 90% of installed electricity generation relies on hydropower. Competition over water use for agriculture and domestic purposes is already evident in the Bamenda Grassfields of the country.³⁴ With an integrated approach to water resource management, there are important institutional dimensions to help avoid such conflicts related to water management.

- **The Four Dublin Principles**

During the Conference at Dublin, four principles were adopted. The Conference Report set out recommendations for action at the local, national and international levels based on the principles.

- **Principle No. 1- Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment**

Since water sustains life, effective management of water resources demands a holistic approach, linking social and economic development with protection of natural ecosystems. Effective management links land and water uses across the whole of a catchment area or groundwater aquifer.³⁵

- **Principle No.2- Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels**

The participatory approach involves raising awareness of the importance of water among policy-makers and the general public. It means that decisions taken at the lowest appropriate level, with

³³ P.H Gleick, "Water in crisis", pp.571-579.

³⁴ Interview with Micheal Nyuyki Nkuph, 69years, Retired, Mbve, 06/08/2020.

³⁵ P.B. Moriarty, J.T. Visscher, P. Bury and L. Postma, "Water, sanitation and hygiene: Challenges of the millennium", the Dublin Principles revisited for WSS, 26th WEDC Conference, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2000, pp.392-340.

full public consultation and involvement of users in the planning and implementation of water projects³⁶.

- **Principle No.3- Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water**

The pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources.³⁷ Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women's specific needs³⁸ and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resource programmes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them³⁹.

- **Principle No.4- water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good**

Within this principle, it is vital to recognize first the basic right of all human beings to have access to clean water and sanitation at an affordable price⁴⁰. Past failure to recognize the economic value of water has led to wasteful and environmentally damaging uses of the resource.⁴¹ Managing water as an economic good is an important way of achieving efficient and equitable use, and of encouraging conservation and protection of water resources.⁴²

³⁶*Ibid*, pp.341-346.

³⁷ Ako Ako, Eneke Takem and Elambo, "water resources management", pp.880-883.

³⁸ B. Page, "Naked Power: Women and the social production of water in Anglophone Cameroon", chapter 3 in C.A. Wallace ed., *Gender, water and Development*, Berg, Oxford, 2005, pp.69-70.

³⁹*Ibid*, pp.72-79.

⁴⁰ Interview with Richard Vuwe, 62years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

⁴¹ P.S. Farolfi and R. Hassan, *Water governance for sustainable development: Approaches and lessons from Developing and Transitional Countries*, London, Earthscan, 2006, pp.167-168.

⁴² J.P. Platteau and A. Abraham, "Participatory development in the process of Endogenous community imperfections", *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol.39, No.2, pp.104-113.

4. Celebration of the International Worlds Water Day (22nd March)

International water day is celebrated world wide in Cameroon every 22nd of March⁴³. This day is celebrated to create awareness on the issues causing water scarcity, thus leading to conflicts and how they can be ameliorated. Through this medium, the government increases its efforts to ensure continuous access to safe water for all, irrespective of gender, age, disability, social status and geographical location.

- Origin of the World Water Day

The International World Water Day was first formally proposed in Agena 21 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro⁴⁴. In December 1992, United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/47/193 by which 22nd March of each year was declared World Day for Water⁴⁵. In 1993, the first water Day was observed on the theme, Water, Sustainable development, sustainability.

World Water Day is an annual UN observance day held on 22 March that highlights the importance of fresh water. The day is used to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. The theme of the day focuses on topics relevant to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), which is in line with the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 6⁴⁶.

Some previous Water Day celebrations and their themes are as follows;

- 1994: Caring for our Water Resources in everybody's business
- 1995: Women and Water.
- 1996: Water for thirsty cities.
- 1997: The World's Water: Is there enough?

⁴³World Water Day, "Coping with water scarcity, challenge of the twenty-first century", www.worldwaterday.org, 19/12/2021, 20:14pm, pp.14-18.

⁴⁴*Ibid*, pp.19-23.

⁴⁵World Water Assessment Programme Report, "Meeting Basic Needs", http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/facts_figures/basic_needs.shtml, 5th March 2020, 3:30pm, pp.24-25.

⁴⁶World Water Council, "Water Crisis", <http://www.worldwatercouncil.org/index.php?id=25>, 21st February 2020, 12:45pm, pp.25-28.

- 1998: Groundwater- The Invisible Resource.

The UN World Water Development Report (WWDR) is released each year around World Water Day. UN-water is the convener of world Water Day and selects the theme for each year in consultation with the UN organizations such as UNICEF, WaterAid and Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), which share an interest in the year's focus⁴⁷.

The Cameroon government has made its mark among countries that are determined to ensure water and sanitation for all by 2030. The Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon has been one of the regions of the country that has benefited a lot from the efforts of the government to ensure that portable water is provided to the entire population⁴⁸. While we laud the steps taken by the government to remake water a public utility, more efforts should be placed on addressing the reasons why continuous access to safe water still seems like a luxury to millions of Cameroonians.

5. The Cameroon Water Code of 1998

The law No. 98/005 of 14 April 1998⁴⁹ lay down regulations governing water resources in Cameroon. Just like the constitution, earlier pieces of legislation on the environment had not made any express provision on the right to water. However, probably inspired by the constitutional provision on the right to a healthy environment and the other bundle of economic and social rights, the Cameroonian legislator passed the Water Code within the respect of the environment at management principles and public health protection⁵⁰. The Water Code expressly provided that, water is a public good or utility which the state ensures its protection, management and facilitates access to all⁵¹.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp.29-33.

⁴⁸ Interview Julius Ngah Safee, 47 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

⁴⁹ Cameroon, Law No. 98/00 of 14 April 1998 to lay down the Water Code and its Enabling Statutes.

⁵⁰ Cameroon, Law No. 98/00 of 14 April 1998.

⁵¹ C.F. Tamasong, "The right to water in Cameroon: Legal framework for sustainable utilization", A paper prepared for a workshop entitled "Legal aspects of water sector reforms to be organized in Geneva from 20 to 21 April 2007 by the international Environmental Law Research Centre", 2007, pp.1-10.

More so, the measures of protection are clearly spelled out in the Code and violators come under heavy criminal sanctions without prejudice to civil claims. To ensure conservation, protection and sustainable utilization, the Code institutes a National Water Committee, an institution placed under the Ministry in charge of water resources⁵². By the wordings of Article 2(1) of the Water Code, “*L’eau est un bien du patrimoine national dont l’état assure la protection et la gestion et en facilite l’accès à tous*”⁵³ From the provisions of the subsection, the state ensures protection and management of water but only facilitates rather than ensures or guarantees access of it to all Cameroonians.

6. Creation of the Ministry of Water Resource and Energy in 1998

The major institution in charge of overseeing the implementation of the right to water in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfields region in particular is the Ministry of Water and Energy, created in 1998.⁵⁴ This is the government’s eye on issues relating to water⁵⁵. Technical expertise on water issues is offered by this ministerial department. In fact, it is this department and decentralized administrative institutions that facilitate the understanding and practical implementation of the right to water to the population⁵⁶.

The institutional framework of Cameroon’s water sector is characterized by the central role played by the Ministry of Water and Energy (MINEF) and due to the transversal nature of water resources, other public institutions do intervene into the water sector. This explains why the Water Code institutes a National Water Committee, bringing together representatives from every ministerial department whose activities directly or indirectly relate to water resources⁵⁷. The competence, organizations and functioning of the National Water Committee is dictated by a

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.12-20.

⁵³ Cameroon, Law No. 98/00 of 14 April 1998 to lay down the Water Code and its Enabling Statutes.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ P.T. Tanga and C.C. Fonchingong, “NGO-state interaction and the politics of development in Cameroon in the context of liberalization”, *International NGO Journal*, Vol.4, No.4, 2009, pp.84-96.

⁵⁵ Interview with Narcasius Ntutin Kudzebam, 55 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 15/08/2020.

⁵⁶ M. Balogun, “The role of Governance and civil society in Africa’s development”, *Regional Development Dialogue*, Vol.19, No.2, pp.32-49.

⁵⁷ Cameroon, Law No. 98/00 of 14 April 1998 to lay down the Water Code and its Enabling Statutes.

Prime Ministerial Decree⁵⁸ and collaborative institutions, which enhance the enjoyment of the right to water, are concessionaries of water supply and treatment. They enter into contracts with the Ministry of Water Resources and Energy⁵⁹. Where they do not meet their concession agreements notably the regularity and quality of water according to WHO Guidelines, the Minister can propose the withdrawal of authorization to operate in the water sector⁶⁰.

MINEF has primary responsibility of the sector in the Bamenda Grassfields and is responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating policies regarding water resources and its exploitation⁶¹. Within MINEF, the Department of Water resources and hydrology (DHH) is responsible for rural drinking water. As rural water supply networks develop, they will be managed by water point management committees or contracted out to private entities as networks grow.

MINEF is responsible for the definition and application of water policies in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon and is the coordinating institution as regards water. It is responsible for the execution of projects on managing pollution, water supply and sanitation in both urban and rural areas of the country, the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive⁶². Furthermore, the ministry is responsible for enforcing pollution control measures, determining the sanction for defaulters and determining consumption of industrial/commercial users to facilitate the calculation of abstraction fees⁶³. MINEF has the mandate to issue abstraction and discharge licences following the text of applications signed in May 200, to enforce the water law of 1998⁶⁴.

The Ministry of Water and Energy, also plays the role of an arbitrator. Out of court arrangements or compoundments can be made by the Minister with the author of an offence relating to the right to water⁶⁵. Therefore, the Ministry is an arbitration centre. This may partly explain why

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Interview with Ezekiel Baijona, 52years, Teacher, Tobin, 08/08/2020.

⁶⁰Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-96.

⁶¹ Tamasong, "The right to water in Cameroon", pp.20-24.

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp.25-30.

⁶³ Ako Ako, Eneke and Elambo, "Water resource Management", pp.871-888

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp.890-894.

⁶⁵ Balogun, "The role of Governance", pp.32-49.

court cases on right to water are difficult to come by⁶⁶. The creation of MINEF has greatly helped as far as water is concerned in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular. This has thus helped to curb water conflicts in the Region.

7. Some other contributions of the Government

The Government of Cameroon is responsible for supplying drinking water to the whole country, the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive, through the ministry of mines and water, the rural engineering department and the Community Development Department (CDD).⁶⁷ The rural communities are being encouraged to develop and manage their systems with the government encouraging foreign organizations to help provide rural communities with potable water⁶⁸. Because of failure and abandonment of rural water supply networks in the Bamenda Grassfields, the government came up with some guidelines to regulate the situation for rehabilitation of these broken systems and for the continued existence of other reliable rural water supply systems⁶⁹. They guidelines include:

- ✓ Any project by international organizations that was initiated by the community will continue to be managed by the community with assistance from these agencies
- ✓ For any project to be carried out in the community, the people in the community shall contribute a sum of about \$300 to make sure maintenance of system is secure
- ✓ The local people shall contribute in the realization of the project through funding, labour and other means appropriate.
- ✓ Systems with big equipments shall see the locals pay for the upkeep of these machines as need be.
- ✓ On completion of the project, community will own the system and not the government.
- ✓ Training of water operators to guarantee functioning of systems.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp.50-57.

⁶⁷ C. Chia Kiteh, "Stakeholders participation: Myth or Reality? A case study of community water supply management in Bambui-Tubah village in Cameroon", Master thesis in Sustainable Development, Uppsala Universitet, 2011, pp.30-31.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp.37-40.

⁶⁹ J. Davis, G. Garvey and M. Wood, "Developing and managing community water supplies", *Oxfam development guide* no. 8, 1993, pp.7-12.

- ✓ Serious breakdown of systems shall be repaired by the regional service and will be paid by the community.
- ✓ The government through the Ministry of mines, water and power shall decide what systems are better for a particular community.
- ✓ Sensitization and education of locals for maintenance of systems.

From the above policies, it is clear that the Government of Cameroon is doing a lot to curb water conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields by ensuring that communities take part in the rural water supplies by involving the people in the management and planning for success of water projects, sustainability and implementing these policies is an indication of its commitment and involvement in the management.

B. Role played by NGOs

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are an aspect of civil society, without Government representation that embarks on conflict reduction, welfare scheme, empowerment and employment⁷⁰. They play an important part in conflict resolution, through their ability to build inter-communal links, facilitate reconciliation and address the root cause of conflicts.⁷¹

In Cameroon, NGOs became popular with the liberalization of association and civil rights organization by the law No. 90/053 of 19th December 1990.⁷² NGOs have played a great role as far as the management of water conflicts is concerned in Cameroon especially the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon. These shall be examined below through the cases of SATA-HELVETAS, SHUMAS, CARE International and MBOSCUDA.

⁷⁰ Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-96.

⁷¹ M. Bolak Funteh, "Non-Governmental Organisations in Conflict Resolution in the North west Province 1990-2004", DEA Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2005, pp.45-60.

⁷² G. Thibault, "On the diversity and role of NGOs", *the Courier, the Magazine of the ACP-EU Development Cooperation* No.152, Brussels, 1995, pp.35-43.

1. Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA-HELVETAS)

HELVETAS, the Swiss Association for International Corporation, (SIAC) which was formerly known as SATA (Swiss Association for Technical Assistance), started its development cooperation in the former West Cameroon Federated States early as 1961.⁷³ HELVETAS during its forty five years of activity in Cameroon was mostly involved in the provision of potable water in the rural communities, rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads, bridges, community centres and other infrastructural buildings in Cameroon.⁷⁴

The first works of SATA HELVETAS could be traced as far back as 1961 in Cameroon and it worked closely with the community Development Department (CDD) of the Ministry of Agriculture.⁷⁵ It first constructed 23 water points in the South West Region of Cameroon by 1963.⁷⁶ Given this encouraging take off and the zeal of community members, an agreement was signed on the 29th of June 1964 between SATA-HELVETAS and the Cameroon government to extend SATA-HELVETAS' assistance to the whole of the country.⁷⁷

The activities of HELVETAS began in former West Cameroon with three SATA water engineers stationed in Bamenda, Kumba and Mamfe. After starting water supply projects in close collaboration with the benefiting villages and the local committee development offices⁷⁸. The lack of qualified Cameroonian technical staff led to the establishment of a training Center in Kumba (BTC), to instruct the required technical artisans like masons, plumbers, carpenters and providing advanced level courses for men, works supervisors, technicians and maintenance

⁷³ R. Ngek Monteh, "Ecumenical Mission for peace and development foundation (Emped-Cameroon) in conflict resolution in the North West Region of Cameroon: Contribution and Challenges 1996-2007", *EAS Journal of humanities and Cultural studies*, Vol.1, No.3, 2019, pp.12-45.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp.46-51.

⁷⁵ G. Ngefor Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and Governance in the Cameroon Western Highlands: The case of Bali, Kumbo and Bafou small cities", PhD in Geography, University of Toulouse, 2014, pp.107-111.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp.112-114.

⁷⁷ J. van der Waarde, "Helvetas Cameroon experiences in catchment protection activities", <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330293254>, 19/07/2021, 15:30pm, pp.5-11.

⁷⁸ Interview with Aloysius Chin, 102, Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/12/2020.

staff.⁷⁹ Due to the high demand for portable water in the villages of the Bamenda Grassfields, the programme was rapidly expanded to areas like Ndu.

By 1994, SATA-HELVETAS constructed 344 water points.⁸⁰ It also had a total of 189 caretakers and 446 water project maintenance committee members.⁸¹ Community development Department (CDD) technicians and staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also benefitted from training programmes on catchment protection and the maintenance of water systems⁸².

After handing over most of the institution's projects and activities to local bodies, HELVETAS concentrated its interventions and assistance, mainly the water sector in the Bamenda Grassfields regions of Cameroon and transferred the programme director's office to Bamenda.⁸³ New partnerships came up with some NGOs and local councils. This led to the new council support programmes which in recent times became very successful and strengthened the ownership of the water project communities.

HELVETAS Cameroon has been active for more than 10 years in water catchment in the Bamenda Grassfields.⁸⁴ More or less standard approach for water catchment protection has been developed. This approach includes sensitization of the population, acquiring of land title of the catchment area, setting up of a water management committee, training of caretakers and implementing protective measures.⁸⁵ These protective measures worked well in most cases and the technical approach followed by Helvetas can be used as a good basis for any water catchment protection project⁸⁶.

⁷⁹Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.107-111.

⁸⁰ T. Zimmerman, "Seminar on water catchment protection" *Helvetas Cameroon*, Vol.14, No.6, 1993, pp.57-60.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, pp.61-67.

⁸² Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

⁸³HELVETAS Cameroon, "Water catchment protection, learning and experiencing sharing series", Bamenda, 2005, pp.2-6.

⁸⁴HELVETAS Cameroon, "Guideline on project planning execution and management of rural infrastructure", Bamenda, 1994, pp.35-38.

⁸⁵*Ibid*, pp.39-43.

⁸⁶ Interview with Samuel Dufe Shey, 59years, Romajay, 04/08/2020.

One of the first written reports of Helvetas Cameroon in the field of catchment protection is a seminar on water catchment protection in 1993 in Bamenda.⁸⁷ The document gives a wealth of the technical/scientific information about the water cycle and introduces measures for catchment protection. It is further mentioned that, water catchment should be the responsibility of the newly formed water management board⁸⁸.

More so, in 1994, a report written by HELVETAS described an assessment of the situation in Bambui watershed.⁸⁹ After an extensive interview program with local farmers, a clear socio-economic analysis of the problem was presented and a strategy proposed. This strategy centred on including different farmer groups, who appear to be endangering the catchment are in the watershed committee, while Helvetas played the role of surveying the improved farming systems⁹⁰. A proposal was made that encompassed many aspects, regulation of land ownership, training of farmers on good farming practices, establishment of tree nurseries, protection zones of water catchment areas, division of land rights among users and planning of land use.⁹¹

The program was implemented at a great pace and four months later, significant progress was reported. Tree nurseries were set up, farmers were trained, collaboration between farmers in the watershed committee was successful and trespassers of the set agreement were prosecuted.⁹² The input from Helvetas Cameroon appears to have been very significant taking into consideration their financial contribution towards materials like raincoats, shovels, new water supply points, project housing, transport, tree nurseries and technical assistance⁹³. Also, in the Guzang watershed, any grazing was forbidden in the area and 14 farmers were forced out of the

⁸⁷ T. Zimmerman, "Report on seminar for water catchment Protection", *Helvetas Cameroon*, Vol.37, No.3, 1993, pp.32-34.

⁸⁸ Zimmerman, "Report on seminar for water catchment", pp.36-39.

⁸⁹ D. Wunderlin, "Bambui watershed, present situation in the watershed and proposal to the Bambui authorities", *HELVETAS Cameroon*, Vol.93, No.7, 1994, pp.40-43.

⁹⁰ Interview with Elfreda Wirmum, 72years, Farmer, 29/12/2020.

⁹¹ D. Wunderlin, "Watershed protection in the NW-Province of Cameroon- a prerequisite for sustainable rural water supplies. The improvement of the Bambui and of the Guzang watershed", *Helvetas Cameroon*, Vol.58, No.7, 1994, pp.50-51.

⁹² *Ibid*, pp.53-56.

⁹³ Interview with Marceline Shinyuy, 49years, Farmer, Bajing, 23/12/2020.

watershed.⁹⁴ The watershed was especially threatened by illegal grazing by local farmers with little knowledge of cattle breeding.

Workshops on sensitization against bush fires were held by Helvetas Cameroon in the 1990s in the Kumbo area⁹⁵. In general, the people appeared to be very aware of the problem of bush fires. Graziers burnt the grass to improve grass growth after the dry season, hunters to get a better chance at hunting animals while to a lesser extent, farmers can cause burning or people set up catchment as a means of revenge. Proposed solutions against bushfires are technical (fire tracing), social (sensitization of farmers Fulani and even the whole community) and organizational (arresting defaulters or performing traditional rites against them).⁹⁶

Since land ownership was a recurring theme in water catchment protection, Helvetas Cameroon supported a project carried out by legal professionals into land tenure systems. Three workshops were held in Wum (Menchum and Boyo divisions), Kumbo (Bui and Donga/Mantung divisions) and Batibo (Ngoketunjia and Momo divisions) respectively.⁹⁷ The workshops were held with involvement of the traditional councils, water management committees, landlords and Fulani adhors, councilors, Mayors and on one occasion the Regional Parliamentarian.⁹⁸ One main conclusion from these workshops was that although there appears to be sufficient legal basis to allow proper protection of water catchment areas, insufficient knowledge of these rules results in improper protection water catchment and conflicts.⁹⁹ Conflict over water is a common phenomenon in the Bamenda Grassfields and water conflicts also incite small conflicts among stakeholders.

Furthermore, training sessions were held by Helvetas to support water catchment protection. Inter village training sessions were held to stimulate knowledge exchange and capacity building of

⁹⁴Wunderlin, "Bambui watershed", pp.47-50.

⁹⁵H.M. Tah, "Participatory Partner Approach on Sensitization against bushfires in water catchment areas of Kumbo Central Sub Division", *Helvetas Cameroon*, Vol.44, No.3, 2001, pp.25-27.

⁹⁶*Ibid*, pp.28-30.

⁹⁷T.P. Che, "Consulting services for water catchment protection in Batibo, Jakiri, Kumbo rural and Kumbo Urban Council areas end of year report", *ECO-consult*, Vol.77, No.6, 2003, pp.89-95.

⁹⁸M. Mbufung and H. Tah, "Land tenure system and conflict resolution in water catchment areas, the North West Province", *Helvetas Cameroon*, Vol.161, No.7, 2002, pp.10-11.

⁹⁹*Ibid*.pp.11-15.

Water Management Committees (WMC)¹⁰⁰ and caretakers. It appeared difficult to measure the results of these workshops. The only measurable effect was the extent of implementation of work plans agreed during the workshops. Roughly 25% of the villages implemented these plans completely, 50% partly and 25% not at all.¹⁰¹ The workshops were too spread out over a large region to allow proper monitoring and the villages liked to be trained by Helvetas Cameroon rather than local NGOs¹⁰².

SATA-HELVETAS sensitized and educated the entire community, provided technical, financial and material support. The participatory approaches adopted by HELVETAS, constructed more sustainable water systems in the Grassfields Region of Cameroon. The Chomba project started in 1998 was successful thanks to the introduction of alternative farming methods such as pig and hen production to farmers involved.¹⁰³ Also, the Akum project started in 1997 was successful with a protected watershed and clean water. Again, the standard of living of the people increased as a result of new farming methods (Beekeeping).¹⁰⁴ In the Kai-Momo project, started in 1998 was successful as farmers were allowed into water catchment areas as long as strict farming methods were applied, thus improving living standards and nutritional values for farmers.¹⁰⁵ There was also constant water supply.

The work sponsored by HELVETAS Cameroon in the Bamenda Grassfields in the last ten years shows a clear shift from very technical hands on assistance in the field to more advisory role towards councils in organizing these activities themselves. This evolution comes as a natural process where the organization learns from results obtained in the field and feedback given by

¹⁰⁰ The WMC has a legal status that allows it to own and dispose of land. There are several laws dealing with land ownership in Cameroon that are relevant to the WMCs. One especially important law (92/12) allows the community to reserve land for the general interest, for example water catchment.

¹⁰¹ Waarde, "Helvetas Cameroon experiences", pp.6-7.

¹⁰² Interview with Relindis Mbiydenyuy, 60 years, Farmer, Bajing, 21/12/2020.

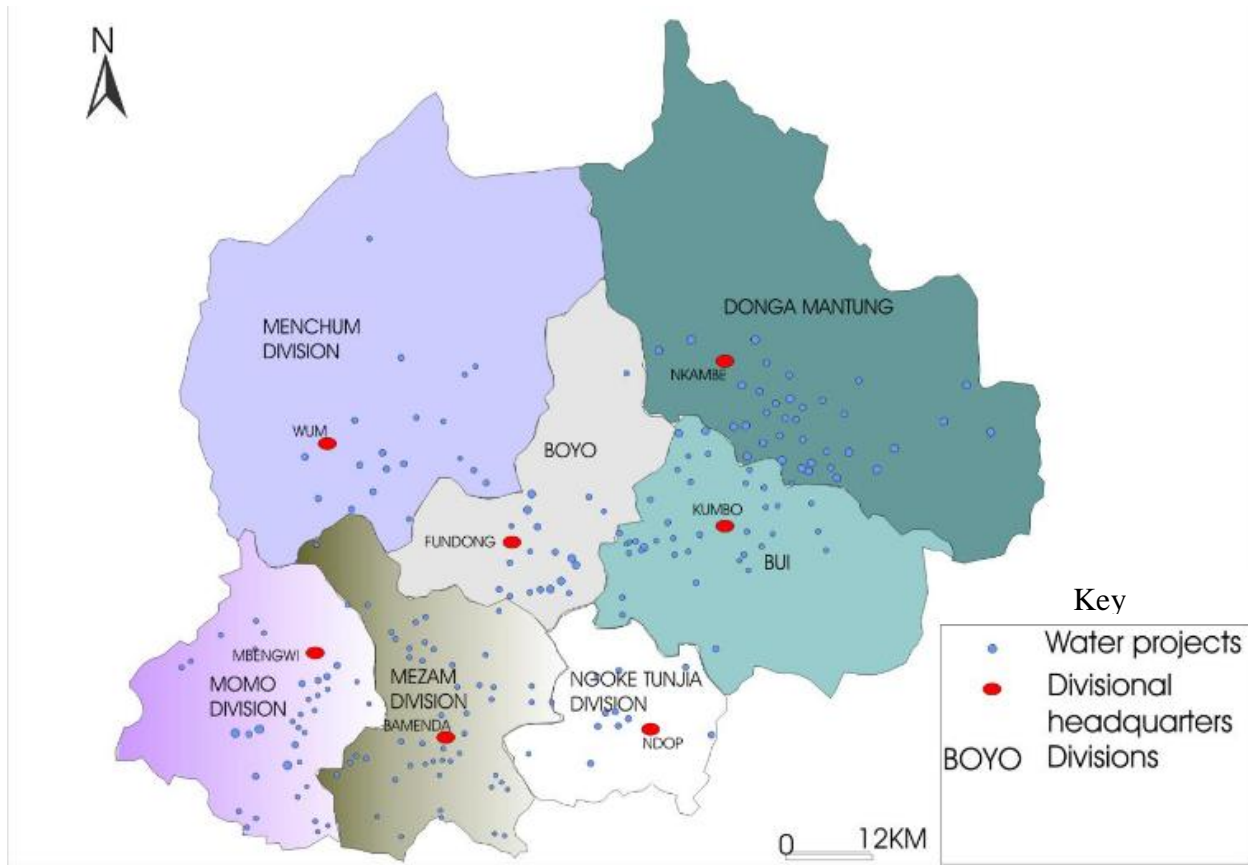
¹⁰³ Kumbo Council Archives (KUC), File No. KUC 63, Vol.2, Rural water supplies an resettlement schemes, 06/05/91, pp.15-17.

¹⁰⁴ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.111-119.

¹⁰⁵ Waarde, "Helvetas Cameroon experiences", pp.6-7.

partners. In general, the approach of water catchment protection conceived by Helvetas Cameroon as a participatory approach.¹⁰⁶

4. Helvetas Water Schemes in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon Before their Departure in 2007



Source: Waarde, “Helvetas Cameroon experiences”, p.7.

The approach used by Helvetas for catchment protection and management has worked well thus curbing water conflicts¹⁰⁷. Not every measure was equally successful in all sites, but they all found their uses in one or more places.

¹⁰⁶ R.E Rhoades, “Participatory watershed research and management: wherethe shadow falls, *International Institute for Environment and Development*, Vol.136, No.9, 1998, pp.100-102.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Yvonne Ndzerem Mendzen, 48years, Teacher, Nso, 08/08/2020.

2. SHUMAS

Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS)-Cameroon is a Developmental and Humanitarian Non-Governmental not for profit Organization. SHUMAS head office is located at Mile Six Nkwen, Bamenda with zonal offices across the country¹⁰⁸. It was recognized as an association in 1997 per the 1990 law of association under authorization number 1082/E.29/III/VI.7/APPB¹⁰⁹. In 2013, SHUMAS was recognized as a full flesh Non-Governmental Organization by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization under Decree number 00000196/A/MINATD/SG/DAP/SDLP/SONG¹¹⁰.

SHUMAS is an organization in special consultation status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2013 and equally a member of the NGO Committee on Social Development with the UN since the 4th of February 2016¹¹¹. Through our vision for a just One World and Sustainable Development, SHUMAS focuses on Integrated Sustainable Development and Humanitarian response with the aim to protect lives, ensure wellbeing, reduce poverty and empower target populations to realize the fullest of their potentials without limiting posterity from meeting theirs¹¹².

To achieve this, SHUMAS has 12 programs that propel her to reach this goal. They include Water Sanitation and Health (WASH), Agriculture, Education, Early Recovery, Environmental Protection and Management, Food Security, Gender Based Violence (GBV), Shelter and Volunteering¹¹³.

Activities of SHUMAS

Water is an important source of livelihood. Man needs water for almost 80% of his activities. Cameroon is blessed with abundant water sources like streams, Rivers, springs, rainfall, Lakes

¹⁰⁸ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.107-111.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp.116-123.

¹¹⁰ Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-96.

¹¹¹ C. Fonchingong and L. Fonjong, "The concept of self reliance in community development initiatives in the Cameroon Grassfields", *Geojournal*, Vol.57, No.1-2, 2002, pp.3-13.

¹¹² Interview with Odilia Wirba, 87years, Farmer, Bajing, 27/12/2020.

¹¹³ L. Fonjong, "Fostering women participation in development through non-governmental efforts in Cameroon", *Geographical J.*, Vol.167, No.3, pp.223-234.

and Oceans¹¹⁴. The government of Cameroon has done much to assure portable water in the country. But unfortunately, the rural population which constitutes over 60% of the total population benefits very little from the effort¹¹⁵. Access to potable water is one of the major targets of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper. It is hoped that the rate of access to potable water should be increased from 50% to 75% by 2035¹¹⁶.

In this domain, SHUMAS has been contributing tremendously towards realizing this vision. Through the water, health and sanitation program, SHUMAS aims at improving rural access to potable water especially in the Bamenda Grassfields¹¹⁷. This specifically entails providing clean potable water in at least 25 rural communities of Cameroon, ensuring good management of the water and building sufficient stand taps as needed by the community¹¹⁸.

Since the creation of SHUMAS in the late 90s, she has realized nine (9) community water projects under the support of 3-H Water Projects of Canadian Rotary Club International¹¹⁹. They are as follows;

- Kongir community water Supply project (Phase one)
- Tonguh community water Supply Project (Phase one)
- Tobin New Lay out community water point
- Sarkong community water project (Phase one)
- Ngulu community water supply project (Phase one)
- Bandzeng (Fulani community/BIOFARM) water supply (Phase one)
- Jem/Veka-akui community water project (Phase one)
- Kourom II community water project phase I
- Baraki community water supply project phase I

¹¹⁴ Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS) Cameroon, Annual Report, North West Region, Bamenda, 2017, pp.70-72.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.73-77.

¹¹⁶ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.107-109.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Peter Fokum Tiydze, 82years, Retired Civil Servant, Bali Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

¹¹⁸ Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-86.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.88-90.

As an addition to the activities of the SHUMAS Educational Programme, SHUMAS supplies water to most of the schools it had constructed and is to construct. More than 15 schools have access to good drinking water. Some of these schools in the Bamenda Grassfields include the following¹²⁰;

- G.S Bamali (school tap) Ngoketunjia Division
- G.S BojuNjap (school tap) Donga Mantung Division
- G.S Achialem (school tap) Boyo Division
- G.S Njinikejem (school tap) Boyo Division
- I.P.S Bamali (school tap) Njoketunjia Division
- G.S Nkanchi (school tap) Donga Mantung Division
- G.S Mbande (school well) Bui Division

SHUMAS also initiated water by gravity project for St. Patrick's Catholic Technical and Comprehensive College BabankiTungoh¹²¹. This involved the construction of two catchments, linking of these catchments to the main supply line and extension of the water supply to the school. The projects included¹²²

- Mobang Community Water Project. The construction of a Catchment, 15m³ of water tank. A pipeline of 1km and 2 stand taps in Bamenda I Sub Division, Mezam Division, and North West Region.
- Bloc Tongnia Water Extension of 800m pipeline and construction of 3 stand taps in BabadjoubSub Division, Bambutous Division, and West Region Cameroon¹²³.

SHUMAS has equally provided water tanks to encourage the washing of hands after using the toilet. With the cholera epidemic outbreak in Cameroon in the 1990s, proper sanitation in our

¹²⁰ Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS) Cameroon, Annual Report, North West Region, Bamenda, 2010, pp.46-50.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, pp.51-53.

¹²² Ako Ako, Eyong and Elambo, "Water resource management", pp.871-874.

¹²³ *Ibid*.pp.875-.879.

schools is very important and obligatory. SHUMAS found it imperative to ensure that all the schools she constructed should not face such health difficulties¹²⁴.

Two health centers benefited from SHUMAS water and sanitation program. Both health centers benefited from the extension of water by gravity and the construction of stand taps in the different centers. The centers are¹²⁵

- a. Dom community Health Center in Nkor, Bui Division, North West Region. Rehabilitation, construction of a catchment and extension of pipeline by 200m.
- b. Bamendankwe Integrated Health Center, Bamenda I, Mezam, North West Region

SHUMAS has thus done a lot as far as the provision of water is concerned in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon. Thanks to its activities, water related conflicts have greatly been curbed in the Region.

3. CARE International

CARE in full means Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, formerly Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe¹²⁶. It is a major international humanitarian agency, delivering emergency relief and long-term international development projects. Founded in 1945, CARE is nonsectarian, impartial and non-governmental¹²⁷. CARE is one of the institutions that have applied the approach in the construction of rural water supply¹²⁸. CARE was originally designated by the United States to respond to the needs of Europeans after the Second World War¹²⁹.

CARE is a Non-Governmental Organization that promotes rural development. It started its activities in Cameroon in 1979 and currently operates in four provinces, namely the south West,

¹²⁴ Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65years, Traditional Authority/Farmer, Squares, 03/08/2020.

¹²⁵ Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies", pp.107-111.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, pp.120-123.

¹²⁷ T. Carroll, *International NGOs: The supporting link in Grassroots Development*, West Harford, CT Kumarian, 1992, pp.20-98.

¹²⁸ Interview with Edwin Visi, 55years, Engineer Construction, Kumbo, 30/07/2020.

¹²⁹ M. Cernea, "Non-Governmental Organisations and local development", World Bank Discussion Paper, No.40, Washington D.C., 1988, pp.1-79.

North West, North and East¹³⁰. Since then, in collaboration with government stakeholders and development actors, they focus on access to water, environmental protection, food security, primary health projects and the fight against AIDS¹³¹.

In the area of water development, CARE has so far constructed watersupply systems in the Bamenda Grassfields, and 141hand pump wells. Its development approaches implore some degree of community participation where each village wishing to benefit from CARE’S assistance has to show its commitment by meeting the following conditions¹³²:

- An application to CARE for assistance.
- A bankor post office account opened with at least 25000FCFA for future maintenance.
- A down-payment of 150,000FCFA after the first field test has been carried out.
- Supply of sandand gravel by the village if available.
- Readiness to dig from the ground level to the water levelif the project is a well.
- Routine testing of water quality.
- Fencing of the well after completion.
- Provision of voluntary labour in the case of a large water supply system.
- The formation of a Water Maintenance Committee.

In return, the village gets the following services from CARE¹³³,

- CARE carries out routine supervision and financial monitoring after handing the project over to the community and evaluates their efforts.
- CARE takes over the construction of the well when the water level is reached and installs the rings and a hand pump imported from Canada.
- CARE trains the water operator or pump mechanic.
- CARE educates the users about water quality issues.
- Lastly, she provides technical advice and support.

¹³⁰Cernea, “Non-Governmental Organisations”, pp.80-82.

¹³¹ Interview with Denis Che Nebah, 51 years, Teacher, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

¹³² Fonchingong, Fonjong, “The concept of Self reliance”, pp.3-13.

¹³³*Ibid*, pp.14-17.

4. SCANWATER

SCANWATER is a technology developed in Scandinavian countries in the 1980s, to provide good and potable drinking water probably in Sweden¹³⁴. For this technology to be able to succeed in other countries, there was the need for the transfer of technology and technological know-how. SCANWATER is a project that is being funded by Scandinavian countries.¹³⁵ she has constructed water schemes in Cameroon, especially in the Bamenda Grassfields Region. This NGO is a high technological project, which is a national project whose purpose is to provide good drinking water to rural areas as a result of scarcity of water¹³⁶. Due to the the cultivation of crops and water unfriendly trees beside the catchment areas, SCANWATER was seen as the only source that could keep water roaming in the rural areas¹³⁷. So, this project is for rural and local areas, where water crisis is the talk of the day.

It was commissioned to build the first water station towards the end of 1980¹³⁸. The building of new schemes continued until 1992, when about 335 schemes had been installed in medium-sized villages and small towns¹³⁹. Water is most often obtained from bore holes. After pumping, it undergoes simple treatment process by aeration, followed by filtration and chlorination.¹⁴⁰ It is later distributed through public standpipes and a few private connections and power is normally supplied by a diesel-powered generator, but sometimes electric pumps are used¹⁴¹.

The SCANWATER approach was to bring potable water into villages using its own engineers and technicians¹⁴². The organization then trained an operator and left for the next village after handing over the project to the government¹⁴³. With the failure of this approach, there has been a

¹³⁴ Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies", pp.107-111.

¹³⁵ Scandinavian countries are those countries that are involved in the development of other countries through SCANWATER projects such as Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

¹³⁶ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62 years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

¹³⁷ Interview with Joseph Tabiy, 65 years, Farmer/Trader, Bajing, 21/12/2020.

¹³⁸ L. Fox, "A study of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Republic of Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire, World Bank Occidental and Central Africa Department", *Population and Human Resources Divisions*, 1993, pp.11-69.

¹³⁹ E. Yenshu, "The Evolution of official attitudes towards Grassroots initiatives in Cameroon", *Community Dev. J.*, Vol.33, No.1, p.41-44.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Jeanette Wirtsen, 45 years, Nurse, Kumbo, 14/08/2020.

¹⁴¹ Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies", pp.107-111.

¹⁴² Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-85.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, pp.86-88.

move now to prepare the villagers themselves to take over the water projects. Thus, for many years, the government has maintained these water systems free of cost to the consumers, entrusting their operation and management to SCANWATER¹⁴⁴. Until August 1988, the local community was never involved at any stage of the project.

From the SCANWATER experience, we can say that community participation is inevitable and highly preferable in local development. With the deteriorating economic situation, the state could no longer maintain the installed water systems. Faced with not only the full range of operating problems, but also the growing number and dispersed nature of SCANWATER installations, it was decided to transfer all running and maintenance expenses to the beneficiaries¹⁴⁵. The new water policy delegated power to the community through a village committee, for the management of the water installations.

More so, considerable effort is currently being made to encourage the villages to take over permanently the responsibility for maintaining the water works¹⁴⁶. Training and sensitization programmes are being undertaken to ensure a smooth transition. Furthermore, awareness-raising usually covers the history of the project and the current water policy, information on water and hygiene, the importance of participation and the responsibility of each individual¹⁴⁷.

SCANWATER was introduced in Bui Division in the 1990s, because of the alarming water crisis in the interior of the villages in the Division.¹⁴⁸ Water crisis occurred when there was an inadequate supply of water to meet the needs of the community villages, such as Kyarn, Giyarn and Lassin had frequent water shortages. This came as a result of mismanagement of water used for irrigation in topography and relief¹⁴⁹. In these areas, survey was carried out and discovered that constructions of SCANWATER systems could be able to supply the whole

¹⁴⁴Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.89-90.

¹⁴⁵Yenshu, The evolution of official attitudes, pp.48-50.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Ibrahim Amadou Babangida, 31 years, Teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Derrick Ayuni, 33 years, Teacher, Tobin, 09/08/2020.

¹⁴⁸ P. Ndonko, "Rehabilitation of Scan Water Stations in the North-West Region of Cameroon the need for communication for development", *Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology*, Vol.3, No.1, 2021, pp.17-20.

¹⁴⁹Ndonko, "Rehabilitation of Scan Water", pp.21-23.

population and even guarantee that there will be water in the long run¹⁵⁰. This project was important because it took into consideration the sustainable impact of development, provided good drinking water to a large community, helped in the prevention of water-borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery, diarrhea, curbed water conflicts and created employment considering the sustainable impact.¹⁵¹

Thus, SCANWATER was perfect as far as it maintained to provide good and potable drinking water. It was a perfect source of drinking water when underground water was well treated and contributed greatly to the eradication of water-borne diseases¹⁵². These diseases affecting water came from bacterial infections and were dangerous to the system, so the presence of a treatment station in the SCANWATER project was of great help, as chlorine was used to treat water, killing the bacteria and leading to a low rate of water-borne diseases¹⁵³.

Furthermore, SCANWATER projects created employment in so many communities due to the high intensity of labour that was needed and also the need of workers after the project has been completed and handed to a few persons that were trained to manage it¹⁵⁴. These persons were payed for their services thus increasing their per capita income¹⁵⁵. SCANWATER has played a great role to fight against water conflicts through its activities as seen above. Activities of some organisations in Cameroon can be seen on table 12 below.

14. Development Organizations promoting local water supply in Cameroon

NGOs	PROJECTS
CARE (International NGO) CDD	143
CDD/SATA HELVETAS (International NGO)143	347

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Yefon Ntani, 50years, Teacher, 05/08/2021.

¹⁵¹ The word sustainable here means handling the present problem, which will be beneficial to the present and future generation. In other words, it means trying to meet the needs of the future.

¹⁵² Interview with Stephen Ntokungwia, 60years, Teacher, Ndop, 06/08/2020.

¹⁵³ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.135-156.

¹⁵⁴E. Yenshu, "The evolution of official attitudes towards Grassroots initiatives in Cameroon", *Community Dev J.*, Vol.33, No.1, pp.42-48.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp.49-54.

Projects Source: IRC (International Water and Sanitation Centre) 2011 online.

OPERATORS	WATER SCHEMES REALIZED
RURAL ENGINEERING (integrated in the Ministry of water and Energy)	3900projects
CIACC (State managed)	30projects
SCANWATER (private Danish company) with a contract with the Cameroon government	335projects

Source: IRC (International Water and Sanitation Centre) 2011 online. Total number of water projects: 4755

Note: When consensus or political support at the national level is weak, there is the greater possibility of project failure. As a sign of commitment to this international declaration, the Cameroon government created the Ministry of Mines and Water, the National Water Corporation SNEC –a para-statal whose activities are concentrated in the urban areas, the Rural Engineering Department (now defunct) and the Community Development Department to carry out its policy and has also participates in local water projects (See table 12) encouraged foreign organizations to provide potable water in the country especially the Bamenda Grassfields as shown on the tables. From the above analyzes we will realize that in a bid to meet the water needs of small towns and rural areas all the possible operators (public, private and NGO's) have existed in the Bamenda Grassfields. In every case it is important to note that some systems are more efficient than others. This relative success can be explained by the methods used by the different operators depending on the level of community's participation.

5. MBOSCUDA

The Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) is a Cameroon based non-profit organization founded in 1992¹⁵⁶. It was conceptualized in 1987 and became a reality in 1992, when the Fulani Social Development (FUSUDA), the Fulani foundation of Cameroon (FUFOUCAM) and the Mbororo Development Association (MDA) met in Bamenda, Kumbo and Yaounde respectively and merged to form the MBOSCUDA¹⁵⁷. It was officially recognized by the government of the Republic of Cameroon in accordance with law No 90/053 of December 19, 1992 and receipt of declaration of association No RDA/06/BAPP of 21st October 1992 as a non-for-profit social-cultural development Association¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁶ M. Moritz, "Understanding Herder/Farmer conflicts in West Africa: Outline of an analytical approach", *Human Organization*, Vol.69, No.2, 2010, pp.138-139.

¹⁵⁷ V.P. Nchinda, M.A Che, P. Ijang, A.A. Shidiki and N. Chi, "Insearch of a common ground for Farmer-grazier conflicts in the North-West Region of Cameroon", Expert Interview Report, MBOSCUDA, 2014, pp.1-10.

¹⁵⁸ Sanguv, "Institutional changes", pp.107-111.

MBOSCUDA's vision is to empower the Mbororo people to achieve sustainable and equitable development on their terms and to secure their human, social and economic rights as valued active citizens of the Republic of Cameroon¹⁵⁹. It also aims at reinforcing unity among members as well as other communities by promoting dialogue, cooperation, integration and tolerance, to promote socio-economic, cultural development of Mbororo¹⁶⁰. It is out to improve agro-pastoral practices in order to protect the environment and to facilitate all forms of cooperation with persons or groups who can help in realizing these objectives. MBOSCUDA collaborates with local civil society organizations, Government Departments and International development agencies. It also has special consultative with the Economic and social council of the United Nations¹⁶¹.

In the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon, MBOSCUDA has facilitated several conflict resolution platforms that identified water scarcity as a key source of between farmers and pastoralists¹⁶². Together with the communities in question, they focused on how to develop water sources and protect catchment areas. A water committee was set up consisting of representatives from both communities, and water measures such as minimizing the felling of trees were agreed upon¹⁶³.

MBOSCUDA has trained water management committees and Dialogue platform members in search for a common ground¹⁶⁴. The aim was to alleviate poverty in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon by reducing conflict between indigenous crop farmers and semi-nomadic Mbororo cattle herders. The conflict is as a result of increasing competition over access to natural resources (water and land) that are central to the lives and livelihood of both groups¹⁶⁵. The project brought about by MBOSCUDA achieved its objectives by making a range of

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Mohammadou Sani, 49years, Trader, Mbve, 22/12/2020.

¹⁶⁰ E.N. Ndenecho, "Appraisal of NGO intervention in Natural resource management: Tubah Upland Watershed", Helvetas sponsored NRM formative evaluation, Bamenda, 2000, pp.10-17.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp.18-26.

¹⁶² M. Bolak Funteh, "Non-Governmental Organisations in conflict resolution in the North West Province of Cameroon 1990-2004, DEA in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2005, pp.35-120.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, pp.122-125.

¹⁶⁴ Moritz, "Understanding Herder/Farmer conflicts in West Africa", pp.138-148.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp.150-160.

interventions in 23 conflict affected areas¹⁶⁶. Its scaled up work has been piloted in some Districts of the Bamenda Grassfields such as Menchum, Donga Mantung, Ngoketunjia, Momo, Mezam, Boyo and Bui¹⁶⁷. This training recorded some outcomes.

It led to equitable access of clean and safe water by farmers and grazers. This has greatly reduced the conflict between them and a more sustainable use of a vital natural and economic resource¹⁶⁸. Also, it led to improved skills in sustainable farming methods leading to better crop and livestock yields, greater cooperation between crop farmers and cattle herders and increased awareness of the need for environmental protection¹⁶⁹.

Direct beneficiaries from the training ranged approximately 20,000 farmers and herders (men, women and children) across the 23 project sites¹⁷⁰. Indirect beneficiaries included people from neighbouring communities who benefitted from the ripple effect. Further more, the training had 27 participants selected from Akum water community held at Nilap quarter¹⁷¹. They were impacted skills on bee keeping by MBOSCUDA through a consultant to protect water catchment areas and to generate income for the committee as well as to sustainably manage the water scheme¹⁷². These inclusive water management committees were created to oversee the entire water scheme given to them by MBOSCUDA, to improve on access to water resource, so as to reduce conflicts between grazers and farmers¹⁷³. The activities of MBOSCUDA in the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon have gone a long way to greatly reduce conflicts between Mbororo cattle herders and grassfielders who are mostly farmers¹⁷⁴.

¹⁶⁶ Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-96.

¹⁶⁷ C.C. Fonchingong and I. Fonjong, "The concept of self reliance in community Development initiatives in Cameroon, In *Journal of Applied Sciences*, Vol.2, No.12, University of Buea, 1998, pp.1-20.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Mohammadou Sani, 49years, Trader, Mbve, 22/12/2020.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Richard Vuwe, 62years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

¹⁷⁰ A.N Canote and V.K. Ngwoh, "Farmer-grazier crisis and conflict resolution in Menchum Division of the North West Province of Cameroon", *Journal of Applied Social Science*, Vol.6, No.1 and 2, 2006, p.228-230.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp.231-233.

¹⁷² S. Nsah Kekeisen, "Challenges of Non-Governmental Organisations in conflict resolution in the North West Region of Cameroon, 1990-2010", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, pp.63-70.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, pp.72-78.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Denis Che Nebah, 51years, Teacher, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

It is worthy to note that MBOSCUDA has provided training and capacity building in conflict mediation, as well as maintaining a conflict data base to assist with evaluation and learning¹⁷⁵. The idea here is to prevent conflict from emerging in the first place. The organizational structures and internal processes of these dialogue platforms were not set up in stone, but subject to constant re-evaluation and were also context dependent¹⁷⁶. Some platforms hold regular meetings whilst others only meet to preside over an emerging conflict. This approach started to achieve success and other communities started to come and request assistance in setting up their own dialogue platforms¹⁷⁷. Representatives from existing platforms were invited to be part of the training process, and their enthusiasm and expertise rooted in lived experiences, were key to the spread of the concept¹⁷⁸.

Rather than deal with this by seeking to define borders which would always be a contentious process, communities were encouraged to look at why this encroachment was happening. Scarcity and degradation of land and resources such as water were found to be central to this, and so water management committees were set up to protect catchment areas and the concept of alliance farming was developed¹⁷⁹. This promoted collaboration for example allowing herders to graze their animals on farmland in certain periods of the year in return for the fertility building service provided by the animals' manure¹⁸⁰. The dialogue platforms also served as the basis for intercultural dialogues that helped to minimise conflict by understanding each others cultural values and the reasons for certain behaviours that might appear offensive¹⁸¹. Thus MBOSCUDA has played a great role in solving water conflicts and continue to do so in the Bameenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon.

¹⁷⁵ E.N. Ndenecho, "Appraisal of NGO intervention", pp.10-17.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp.18-19.

¹⁷⁷ Nsah Kekeisen, "Challenges of Non-Governmental Organisations", pp.45-62.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp.63-67.

¹⁷⁹ Nchinda, Che, Ijang, Shidiki and Chi, "Insearch of a common ground", pp.10-29.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, pp.30-31.

¹⁸¹ Tanga and Fonchingon, "NGO-state interaction", pp.84-90.

C. Role Played by Traditional Rulers

Conflicts existed long before colonisation of Africa and it was the task of traditional leaders to solve these conflicts. Most of the African societies still prefer the use of traditional and informal justice and reconciliation forums to help in resolution¹⁸². This is because, most of the populations still live in rural areas with limited infrastructures in the state justice systems and the unfair justice systems provided at the formal courts, which tend to favour the rich in the society, hence it cannot be trusted¹⁸³. So, it is important to recognize them in conflict management in Cameroon and the Bamenda Grassfields in general.

Traditional rulers play decisive roles in water conflict resolution. This is because of the relevance accorded to them by their subjects coupled with the fact that they believed to communicate with the gods of the land¹⁸⁴. This has been facilitated by a well-structured management system as shown in the figure below. Maintaining peace is among the main roles played by traditional authorities in many African societies. Their influence goes a long way in resolving disputes between family members, within communities and occasionally across state lines.¹⁸⁵ In traditional African societies, conflict may generally exist whenever or wherever incompatible events occur and may result in win-lose character. The resolution and management may however produce a win-win situation too¹⁸⁶. According to Peter, traditional institution is referred to as indigenous political arrangements whereby leaders with proven track records are appointed and installed in line with native laws and customs to act as custodian of the people's norms, culture, and practices.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Interview with Shu-Fai Yuwar, 65years, Traditional authority/Farmer, Squares, 03/08/2020.

¹⁸³ J. Bercovitch, *Structure and diversity of mediation in Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, In mediation in international relations, multiple Sapproaches to conflict management*, Britain, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1992, pp.110-126.

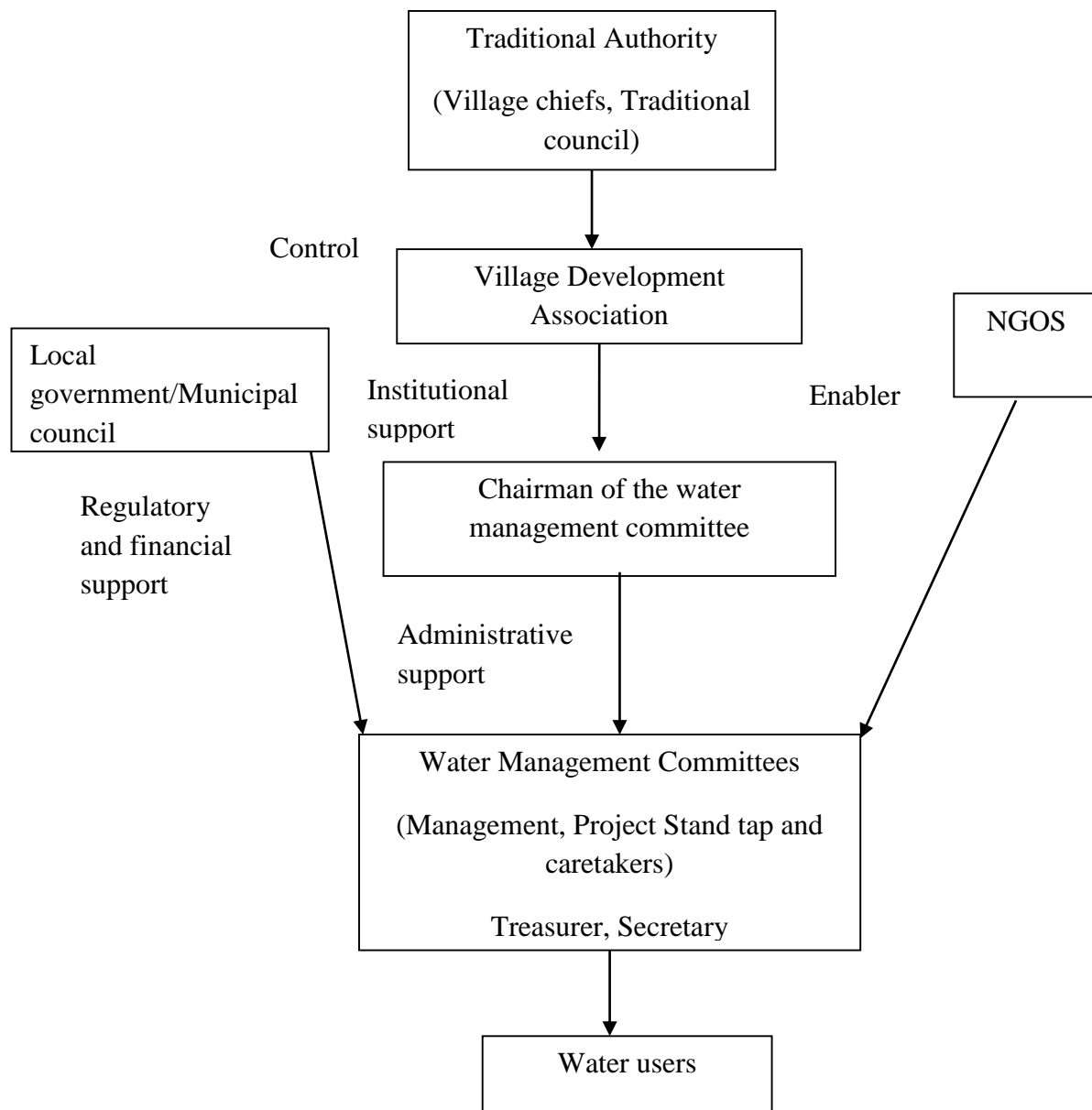
¹⁸⁴ Interview with B. Nformi Mbinkar, 6 years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

¹⁸⁵ M, Owusu, "Tradition and transformation: Democracy and the Politics of popular power in Ghana", *Journal of Modern African studies*, Vol.34, No.2, pp.329-330

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.331-335.

¹⁸⁷ S. Danladi, P. Sivamurugan and R. Ramli, "The role of traditional leaders in mitigating violence an enhancing peace and harmony in Nigeria", *International Journal of Recent Technology an Engineering*, Vol.8, No.2, 2019, pp.222-231.

16. Community Management Model in the Bamenda Grassfields



Source: H. BikwibiliTantoh, E. Ebhuoma and D. MulalaSimatele, “Shifting Paradigm in community-based water resource management in North West Cameroon: A search for an alternative management approach”, *Community Development*, 2019.

Note: The figure above shows that traditional authorities are the highest decision-making body in the village and they work very closely with the Village Development Association (VDA) in solving conflicts and in shaping development projects within the communities. Foreexample, they oversee the Water Management Committees (WMCs). Through community participation and partnerships with local district councils and NGOs, the WMCs receive financial, regulatory and technical support while building the capacities of the water caretakers. The WMCs of the different villages consist of elected and devoted members of the community who are responsible for organizing manual work, carryout necessary repairs within the water network, collect operation and maintenance fees. The members are answerable to the chairs of the WMC, who are subsidiaries to the VDAs. They equally make major decisions concerning water management. The resulting constellation and pattern of the management organization define the power relations and performances of the WMCs, which has an effect on the sustainability of the water system.

This implies that traditional leadership is hereditary in nature and is not subject to the electoral process¹⁸⁸. The essence of the institutions is to preserve the customs and traditions of the people and to manage conflicts existing among or between members of the community by the instrumentality of laws and customs of the people¹⁸⁹.

These institutions of traditional rulers were virtually the only institutions of governance. They played critical roles such as custodians of customary law and communal assets especially water, land and resources guardians, symbols of cultural values and religious practices, dispensing justice, enforcing contracts and also resolving conflicts.¹⁹⁰ The art of resolving conflict is borne out of the belief that conflict which is inevitable could and should not be left alone¹⁹¹. It therefore needs to be put under control by interacting with relevant parties to develop common generalizations or principles and practices that would return cordial relationships against violence.

The role of traditional rulers in peace buiding is as old as the institution itself¹⁹². Peace building is part and parcel of African precolonial social systems geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships.¹⁹³ The methods, processes and regulation seem to restore a balance to settle conflict and eliminate disputes. In this regard, traditional rulers

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Peter Yah, 50years, Teacher, Kumbo, 05/08/2020.

¹⁸⁹ Owuso, "Tradition and transformation", pp.340-360.

¹⁹⁰ V. Boege, *Potential and limits of traditional approaches in peacebuilding*, Berlin, Berghof Foundation, 2006, pp. 187-189.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Eugene Suilareng, 41years, Teacher, Buea, 04/08/2020.

¹⁹² Interview with Ernest Wirngo Shiytum, 49years, Business Manager at CAMPOST, Meluf, 06/08/2020.

¹⁹³ W.I Wartman, *Traditional cures for modern conflicts, African Conflict Medicine*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2000, pp.224-228.

play a vital role in peacebuilding at the grassroots level as part of the cultural heritage of the people¹⁹⁴.

Furthermore, traditional authorities in the Bamenda Grassfields have been mediating in violent conflicts where they give penalties which focus on compensation and restitution in status quo. According to Lederach¹⁹⁵, “Conflict resolution must situate the conflict disputants frame of reference, understanding how the participants interprets the boundaries and context of the conflict, which is seen in African communities who value their traditional cultures hence holding their clan leaders in high esteem so that in case of conflicts, these leaders should be involved for effective conflict resolution¹⁹⁶”.

Choudree also argues that, “traditional conflict resolution possesses strive to restore balance, settle conflicts and eliminate disputes hence the traditional elders not only resolve conflicts by virtue of their position in society. In addition, traditional leaders tend to develop peaceful relations while the political figures make deals to stop the conflict or by resolving the conflict in war meaning that wisdom is often ignored”¹⁹⁷. This has been the case in Bambili whereby the traditional authorities worked hard to bring a peaceful co existence between the Bambili people and Babanki-tungoh over LakeBambili¹⁹⁸. This shows the importance of traditional rulers in conflict resolution over water, because many people still believe in their cultural practices and traditional institutions.¹⁹⁹

Conflicts over water have become a common phenomenon in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. Many community developments projects have suffered stagnation or complete failure due to conflict resulting mostly from internal disputes within the community.²⁰⁰ The cost of inability of these communities to manage disputes contributes to underdevelopment and poverty.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Esua Akoko, 4 years, Teacher Njikwa, 07/08/2020.

¹⁹⁵ J.P Lederach, *Building peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in divided societies*, Washington DC, USIP Press, 1997, pp.93-94.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.95-97.

¹⁹⁷ R.B.G Choudree, “Traditions of conflict resolutions in South Africa”, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 1999, pp.60-61.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Blasius Nformi Mbinkar, 67years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

¹⁹⁹ Choudree, “Traditions of conflict Resolution”, pp.45-60.

²⁰⁰ Sanguv Ngefor, “Institutional changes”, pp.89-90.

One key factor that has been associated with successful project implementation and sustained development is peace. Peace building therefore becomes an integral part of development process in any given society and the need for vibrant traditional leadership in conflict resolution becomes essential.²⁰¹

Traditional rulers play a pivotal role in settling these conflicts and are regarded as custodians of traditional law and receive a bulk of these conflicts over water²⁰². The guiding objective of the traditional justice system presided over by traditional rulers in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular is to restore peace and harmony within the communities²⁰³. This is done by ensuring that disputants and their respective supporters are reconciled. According to Igbokwe²⁰⁴, three key factors help explain why most Africans in general continue to live in rural villages where access to the formal state justice is extremely limited. Also, the type of justice offered by formal courts may be inappropriate for the resolution of disputes between people living in rural communities or even those in urban areas can cause conflict within the community and affect economic co-operation on which the community depends²⁰⁵. Lastly, state justice systems in most African countries operate with an extremely limited infrastructure which does not have the resources to deal with minor disputes in the villages.

These notwithstanding, most water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields are mainly managed by traditional rulers. This is often done by bringing the parties in conflict together to discuss the cause of the conflict, find a solution and reach a settlement.²⁰⁶ This was the case with the Yeh crisis in the North West Region of Cameroon. This process is supported by Pickell in

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, pp.92-100.

²⁰² Interview with William Asah Menkum, 63years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 18/08/2020.

²⁰³ Ogwari, "The role of traditional leaders", pp.36-40.

²⁰⁴ Igbobwe and V. Chitoo, "Socio-cultural dimensions of dispute resolution: Informal justice processes among the Ibo-speaking peoples of Eastern Nigeria and their implications for community/neighbouring justice system in North America", *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, Vol.10, 1998, pp.446-447.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp.448-460.

²⁰⁶ J.T.D Fokwang, *mediating legitimacy: chieftaincy and democratization in two African chiefdoms*, Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing common initiative group, 2009, pp.124-125.

Morgenmen who posit that, reconciliation does not mean getting back together but means helping the parties negotiate a workable way of living together²⁰⁷.

Traditional rulers are impediments to nation building in Cameroon. They are consultants in municipal councils because they help to identify the needs of the citizens in the society. More so, the traditional rulers have employed the issue of compensation in the Bamenda grassfields which is in concurrence with what Merry said. She argued that, the penalties focus on restitution in order to restore the status quo rather than punishment²⁰⁸. It is with this view in mind that the role of traditional leaders in the resolution of conflict was said to be the most uniting factor in the whole community²⁰⁹ and responsible for finding peaceful solutions to various conflicts that arose in the community and various groups they led.

Customary law is still very much alive and reflects cultural values and identities in Cameroon.²¹⁰ Customary laws are unwritten and every new law is announced by the chief in conjunction with traditional councils.²¹¹ Cameroon is one of the few countries that practice legal pluralism with the common law, statutory and customary laws²¹². According to section 27 of the Southern Cameroons High Court Law of 1955, there is the recognition of indigenous customary laws and norms.²¹³ The traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfields are very influential in mediating conflicts using customary laws. In most cases, the main source of conflict relates to water and land. Traditional leaders participate to inform the community about the need to set up a water system with a management committee or board.²¹⁴ All water management boards are based on their various constitutions which distributes responsibilities between traditional leaders

²⁰⁷ T. Rukuni, Z. Machingambi, M. Musingafi and K. Kaseke, "The role of traditional leadership in conflict resolution and peace building in Zimbabwean Rural communities: The case of Bikita District", *Public Policy and Administration Research*, Vol.5, No.3, 2005, pp.79-83.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp.84-89

²⁰⁹ Micheal Nyuyki Nkuph, 69, Retired, Kumbo, 06/86/2020.

²¹⁰ J. Nzalie Ebi, "The structure of succession law in Cameroon: Finding a balance between the needs and interests of different family members", PhD in Law, University of Birmingham, 2008, pp.121-124.

²¹¹ F.B Nyamnjoh, "Our traditions are modern, our modernities traditional: chieftaincy and democracy in contemporary Africa", *Journal of Contemporary African studies*, Vol.21, No.2, pp.233-234.

²¹² *Ibid*, pp.235-238.

²¹³ E.N Ngwafor, "Cameroon, The law across the bridge: twenty years (1972-1992) of confusion", *Revue générale de droit*, Vol.26, No.1, 1995, pp.76-77.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.78-79.

depending on their influence within the local community. The creation of water committee boards has helped curbed conflicts in the different villages of the Bamenda Grassfields. This has been the case in Kumbo and Bali.²¹⁵

Traditional rulers as well play an active part in land distribution. As was raised in Kumbo and Bali, conflicts and tension around catchments related to land ownership and access mainly occur due to lack of clarity regarding the land tenure systems in the communal lands (Catchment).²¹⁶ Till today, traditional institutions are still actively involved in land allocation in all the different villages of the Bamenda Grassfields along side government agencies like Divisional Officers and local municipalities, since land tenure in rural communities is rooted in value systems, social, religious and cultural backgrounds and enforced by traditional leaders, it is worthy to note that there is cohesion between the government structures concerned and traditional governance structures with the issues of land distribution.²¹⁷ We shall now evaluate the role of the church in water conflict resolution.

D. Role of the Church

Religion's role as a promoter of both conflict and peace has been established by scholars. But there is a consensus argument among conflict experts that peace and reconciliation are fundamental Christian core values²¹⁸. Churches have enormous credibility which offers them the potential to be suited for aiding peacemaking. Africa, a continent with a long history of multiple forms of violence and conflict, is in dire need of peace²¹⁹. The continent transitioned from the colonial era against the backdrop of war and violence which manifested as civil wars, ethnic

²¹⁵ B. Page, "A priceless commodity. The production of water in Anglophone Cameroon, 1916-1999", PhD Thesis in Gender, water and development, University of Oxford, 2000, pp.95-112.

²¹⁶ Sanguv Ngefor, "Institutional changes", pp.100-130.

²¹⁷ A. Njoh, "Barriers to community participation in development planning, Lessons from the Mutengene (Cameroon) self-help water project", *Community Development Journal*, Vol.37, No.3, pp.233-259.

²¹⁸ M. Nyongesa Wafula, "The role of the church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post-election violence Kenya", Masters Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 2014, pp.39-46.

²¹⁹ Wafula, "The role of the church, pp.47-49.

conflicts, inter-state wars, religious conflicts of various sorts, exacerbated intolerance, with ensuing violence against innocent, poor, and powerless people²²⁰.

This violence came with challenges and opportunities for the Catholic Church to work for peace²²¹. In countries throughout Africa, the Church has exploited its credibility status in ways that have enabled it to commit to the task of conflict prevention and resolution. This has been the case in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular. Apart from identifying and knocking out the forces that feed conflicts in societies, the Catholic Church has faced conflicts head on in numerous ways: sheltering victims, providing a place for dialogue with perpetrators and serving as intermediaries between conflicting parties²²². The Church operates faith-based organizations whose actors are active in conflict zones as educators, mediators, and intermediaries²²³.

Haynes has pointed out that efforts by religious organizations in conflict resolution are characteristically partially successful. According to Haynes peacebuilding initiatives of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) results in either success or partial success²²⁴. Churches are a major component towards conflict resolution in the Bamenda Grassfields region of Cameroon. The means of conflict resolution lies primarily on the pastors through conversation between the involved parties²²⁵. In this way, the pastors function primarily as intermediaries, counselors and impartial third parties in order to facilitate reconciliation or at the very least tentative cease-fires²²⁶.

The Northwest Region of Cameroon, which corresponds with the area covered by the Archdiocese of Bamenda, has been hit by many conflicts based on water since colonial times,

²²⁰ M. Kpughe Lang, "Inter-ethnic conflict management and prevention in Cameroon's Northwest: Assessing the role of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Bamenda", *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, Vol.7, No.1, 2019, pp.129-130.

²²¹ Interview with Rev. George Anjoambum, 51 years, Clergy, Momo, 07/08/2020.

²²² J. Bercovitch and S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution." *International Negotiation*, Vol.14, 2009, pp.179-180.

²²³ Ibid, pp.181-186.

²²⁴ J. Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 47, Vol.1, 2009, pp.59-60.

²²⁵ Ibid, pp.60-70.

²²⁶ Interview with Emmanueln Fai Kisha, 5 years, Pastor, Ndu, 05/08/2020.

with some traced back to the pre-colonial period²²⁷. The conflicts have caused economic hardship, population displacement, loss of human life, and destruction of property. Some of the injurious conflicts include those between Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh, Bali and *SNEC* and Kumbo and *SNEC*²²⁸. As these conflicts dragged on in a context of failing government initiatives, authorities of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, whose followers also suffered from the violence, saw the need to promote peace through conflict management and peacebuilding. As such, discussions on the creation of a faith based institution to be given such a task began in the Archdiocese²²⁹.

Furthermore, discussions to establish a clerical institution for the promotion of peace equally came at a time when the Vatican had taken steps to enable the Church to act as a global promoter of peace. This was occasioned by the surge in violent conflict and abuse of human rights in the world²³⁰. The Catholic Church was pushed by this dilemma of conflict to build on its social teachings in view of promoting peace and justice. The teachings of the Church are replete with messages relating to social justice, human development, and peace²³¹. Initial teachings issued by popes focused on the plight of workers and general human wellbeing, with no measures taken to ensure their enforcement. In 1961, there was a shift from words to action when Pope John XXIII expanded the Church's social doctrine, with the promotion of peace being emphasized²³². The Pope released a statement in 1963 titled "Peace on Earth" calling on both Catholics and non-Catholics to enhance world peace²³³. To match this with action, the Pope convened the Second Vatican Council in 1963, with its participants advocating concerted effort in dealing with social problems broadly categorized under injustice, abuse of human rights, and conflict. Since the Second Vatican Council, efforts have been made to enable the Catholic Church to engage

²²⁷Lang , "Inter-ethnic conflict management and prevention", pp.130-135.

²²⁸ Sanguv Ngefor, "Institutional changes", pp.90-99.

²²⁹ P. Ilo, "Faith-Based Organizations and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: The Case of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)." *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective*, Vol.9, No.2, 2015, pp.99-120.

²³⁰*Ibid*, pp.121-127.

²³¹E. G. Omaku, *A Prophetic Church*, Ede, Provincial Pastoral Institute, 1996, pp.58-60.

²³² Lang, "Inter-ethnic conflict management and prevention", pp.129-130.

²³³*Ibid*, pp.132-135.

practically with society²³⁴. One of such initiatives was the creation of the Pontifical Commission in 1967 by Pope Paul VI, with the promotion of peace in the world as its blueprint²³⁵.

The African continent with its numerous civil wars, inter-ethnic conflicts, and wanton abuse of human rights caught the attention of the Pontifical Council with the holding of a Pan-African Justice and Peace Conference in Lesotho in 1988. Participants who came from across the continent resolved that steps be taken to create permanent justice and peace institutions at national and regional levels by episcopal conferences. Later in 1995, following delays in the establishment of these justice and peace structures, Pope John Paul II re-echoed the call in his *Ecclesia in Africa*: “Aware that in many African countries, gross violation of human dignity and rights is being perpetuated, I ask the Episcopal Conferences to establish where they do not yet exist, Justice and Peace Commissions at various levels. These will awaken Christian communities to their evangelical responsibilities in the defense of human rights”²³⁶.

With a vision hinged on the expectation of a transformed society in which there is respect for human dignity, equality, and sustainable peace and development, the JPC is commissioned to work for justice, build peace, and promote socially sustainable development in the light of the Gospel and the social teachings of the Church. Clearly, therefore, the JPC was established to promote justice and peace across the Archdiocese, build a peaceful society by managing and preventing conflicts, denounce and combat all that degrades and destroys the human person, carry out studies on justice and peace, and heighten awareness on the need to promote and keep peace.

These objectives matched the local context of the Bamenda Grassfields Region which was/is known for numerous conflicts especially on water and abuse of human rights.

The church’s charisma and likewise her unique nature vis-à-vis reconciliation at what ever level it needs to be achieved lies in the fact that she always goes back to that reconciliation at the

²³⁴Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana, “Religion and Mediation”, pp.182-183.

²³⁵*Ibid*, pp.184-197.

²³⁶Pope John Paul II, “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops Priests and Deacons Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on the Church in Africa and Its Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000”, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html , accessed March 27, 2019, 4:30pm.

source. The next part of our work shall look at the challenges at resolving and prevention of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Stakeholders have done a lot to ensure that water conflicts are resolved in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. This can be seen through the works of the government, NGOs, traditional authorities and the church. These stakeholders are better placed at fostering capacity building needed to guarantee the sustainability of projects and curb water conflicts. The prospects for development cooperation are immense taking into consideration the interest of the poor. Therefore, communities should be considered as stakeholders in the development process and not mere benefactors. This will render the government and others more accountable, open and proactive in service provision, as stakeholders fight against the water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, there is the need for them to work as one in other to arrive at a better solution to the problem.

CHAPTER SIX:

CHALLENGES OF RESOLVING AND PREVENTION OF WATER CONFLICTS IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS OF CAMEROON

Scarcity of fresh water is an increasing critical public health problem in many parts of the world²³⁷. World leaders including the former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon have argued that this issue be given high priority²³⁸. While we can usually identify solutions to water and security challenges, they are often difficult to implement for a number of reasons including political and economic tradeoffs inherent in the proposed solutions²³⁹. Also, problems associated with collective action such as the issue of free riders who use services without paying for them, scarce financial resources and or technical capacity, social or cultural barriers and widespread and entrenched corruption²⁴⁰. If the issue of water conflict is not resolved, we will likely see a rising number of water-related conflicts, water scarcity and flooding induced displacements of populations and failed states²⁴¹.

Water related conflict and political instability are on the rise across the globe. Where conflicts over water begin to dissipate, the restoration of basic water and sanitation services should become a priority²⁴². But while intensifying water challenges and threats, they pose to security, relatively few solutions have been presented. Addressing water and fragility challenges requires combining an immediate response to people's basic needs with a long term approach aimed at

²³⁷ Interview with Denis Che Nebah, 51 years, Teacher, Ntambessi-Nkwen, 30/07/2020.

²³⁸ P. Gleick, C. Iceland, T. Ayushi, "Ending conflicts over water before they boil: Solutions to water and security problems", *World Resource Institute*, 2020, pp.60-63.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, pp-64-75.

²⁴⁰ World Water Day, "Coping with water scarcity, challenge of the twenty-first century", www.worldwaterday07.org, 06/12/2020, 3:07am, pp.1-16.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp.17-21.

²⁴² R.H. Munk, "Water and conflict: Conflict prevention and mitigation in water resources management", Danish Institute for International Studies Report, 2004, pp.34-39.

building resilience to stocks and protracted crisis²⁴³. The latter should rely on sustainable, efficient and equitable water resources management and service delivery.

Solutions exist for even the thorniest water problems²⁴⁴. Once conflict hotspots have been identified, the focus can switch to how they can be addressed. Now we need significant political will, collective action and successful management of trade-offs and vested interest to implement them²⁴⁵. This part of our work therefore fills the gap by exploring several strategies to reduce water related conflicts in key water insecure hotspots such as the Bamenda Grassfields, which is our area of concern. These decisions provide decision makers with options for addressing unique water challenges and can help improve water resource management, drought response, flood prevention and access to safe reliable and affordable water for all. We shall begin by examining the challenges to the resolution of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon.

A. The Challenges of Resolving Water Conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields

Despite all the efforts that have been put in place by the government, NGOs and traditional authorities to ensure the resolution of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, this phenomenon continues to persist. This has been as a result of some challenges and they shall be examined below.

1. Economic Factors

A number of economic factors have hindered the resolution of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. They are as follows

- Poor Agricultural Practices

Much of the population of the Bamenda Grassfields region practice farming and they believe that, one of the most effective ways of reducing hunger and poverty is to raise their productive

²⁴³Munk, "Water and conflict:" pp.40-46.

²⁴⁴ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

²⁴⁵ S.W.H. Al-Muqdadi, "Developing Strategy for Water Conflict Management and Transformation at Euprates-Tigris Basin", *Water*, 2019, pp.21-25

capacity through agricultural development²⁴⁶. Many households in the region rely upon producing and eating their own food. These agricultural practices have negative impacts on water quality²⁴⁷. Improper agricultural methods tend to elevate concentration of nutrients, fecal coliforms and sediment loads. Increased nutrient loading from animal waste leads to eutrophication of water bodies which eventually damages the aquatic ecosystems²⁴⁸.

Moreso, grazing and other agricultural practices intensify erosion processes, raising sediment input to nearby water sources. Increased sediment loads make drinking water treatment more difficult²⁴⁹. This increased the conflicts between water users and agriculturalists due to lack of unclean water for consumption. All efforts put in place to thus solve water conflicts have failed as a result of increased agricultural practices.

- **Inappropriate Water Pricing**

Water pricing and rights go hand in hand, with consumers questioning the benefit of high prices. Most of the village water schemes in the Bamenda Grassfields Region are poorly controlled by those at the helm of power²⁵⁰. They charge high prices on water so much that consumers are unable to pay. Worst of this is that, most of these water schemes are community initiatives and are supposed to be distributed to the community at lower prices²⁵¹. This has led to continues conflicts over water in the Bamenda grassfields.

This was the case in Kumbo, whereby, *SNEC*, charged high prices on water consumption for the inhabitants of Kumbo. *SNEC* was more interested in giving Bills than maintaining the network²⁵². She charged a rate of two hundred and twenty five (225) Francs per m³ which for schemes like Kumbo was highly inflated. The rate of one hundred and fifty (150) Francs per m³

²⁴⁶ J.M Tifuh, "Human activities and its impacts on water resources in Batibo Sub Division", DIPES 11 in History, ENS Yaounde, 2002, pp.30-98.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Seraphine Wirba, 57years, Farmer, P.C.H.S Junction, 21/12/2020.

²⁴⁸ C. Missem Fai, "The impact of a water supply project on the society: The case of Kumbo, 1965-2013", Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, pp.89-90.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Augustine Wara, 56years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

²⁵⁰ Interview with N, Ntutin Kudzebam, 55years, Teacher, Kumbo, 15/08/2020.

²⁵¹ Missem, "The impact of a water supply project", pp.34-40.

²⁵² S.O Shey, *History of the kumbo water supply*, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., pp.40-45.

was meant to put the burden for paying the cost of maintenance mainly on the inhabitants who could afford a private supply²⁵³. The high rate charged on the inhabitants of kumbo by the Natinal Water Corporation, made the people very angry and eventually the riots that followed.

- Institutional Problems

Although there is a structural framework for the various institutions involved in the management of water schemes in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, there is still a problem arising because of overlaps in institutional frameworks. One major issue here is on which institution has power to authorize certain changes or give a final say²⁵⁴. This comes to play when the government through the local council wants to be authoritative by getting involved in village matters and the village council on the other hand tries to make its voice heard as the authority in the village. It is accepted that the council audits the Water Management Committee (WMC) to ensure efficiency and sustainability as the council has the technical know how and can give advice to the WMC²⁵⁵. As such, this gives right to the council to check files of the WMC and question their budget and activities, but on the other hand, the village owns the projects and they take full responsibility of the management²⁵⁶.

For instance, a problem arose whereby the council questioned the chair person of the Atuniba WMC (Bambui) about his administration and how he dictates in the community, and brought the Divisional Officer (DO) to use his powers and bring the chair person to booking²⁵⁷. But the chair person was backed by the village council with the *Fon* as leader telling the DO that it was a community problem and will be solved in the community as the project is owned by the community²⁵⁸. Thus, there is always a clashbetween the administrative authority and the local

²⁵³*Ibid*, pp.46-50.

²⁵⁴C.C Fonchigong and L.N. Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance", pp.13—22.

²⁵⁵ R.C. carter, S.F. Tyrrel, P. Howsam, "The impact and sustainabilityof community water supply and sanitation programmesin developing countries, *Water and Environment Journal*, Vol.13, No.4., 1999, pp.295-300.

²⁵⁶*Ibid*, pp.301-303.

²⁵⁷ N. Nakamura, "What is community's desire? A critical look at participatory research projects with indigenous communities", *Social and Cultural Geography*, Vol.16, 2014, pp.16-17.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp.18-20.

authority when it comes to the water management scheme because of the bottom up approach in the management of the scheme.

- **Education**

Changing the face of conflicts involves education to motivate new behaviours²⁵⁹. Education is critical to solve water crisis. An educated population is better able to recognize abuses, speak up in their best interest and argue for reforms when needed. There are plenty of opportunities out there that can enable people to learn more about the world around them. By educating those who are not dealing with water scarcity, it will go a long way to curb water conflicts while those dealing with it can be educated on how they can prevent the problem from becoming even worse in the future²⁶⁰.

Most or the entire population of the Bamenda Grassfields donot know about the dangers of poor water practices such planting of unfriendly water trees, deforestation, poor agricultural practices and water pollution just to name a few. This is because they are ignorant of the dangers because of lack of education. This has been a major setback to the resolution of water conflicts in the area.²⁶¹

Moreso, giving people the power and the knowledge to improve their own quality of life is an important step towards creating a society committed to water security. By educating populations on how they influence the quality of local water supplies, contamination and abuse of water sources, can be replaced with environmentally friendly practices which allow more people to have access to greater quantities of fresh water²⁶². Communities can also be trained to be self-sufficient and less reliant on outside help. This independence demands that a community is able to work with local and national governments to establish a system of regulated independence.

²⁵⁹ JVD Waarde, H.T Musa, M. Ischer, *Water catchment protection handbook, Bamenda*, Gospel Press, 2000, pp.30-36.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp.37-39.

²⁶¹ Tifuh, "Human activities and its impacts on water resources", pp.30-98.

²⁶² Interview with Joseph Fai chila, 55years, Teacher, Mesaje, 01/08/2020.

Moreso even with the education some of the inhabitants of the Bamenda Grassfields still go ahead to carryout unfriendly water practices thus polluting water and making it unfit for consumption. This was the case of the Yeh Village in Kumbo whereby the people were asked to leave the area as it had been chosen as a catchment area for the Kumbo Water Scheme to avoid pollution. The information felt on deaf ears as they people started cutting trees, opening farms, building houses andthrowing dirts into the catchment. Eventhough they were finally ousted from the area in 1974, it was a major challenge.²⁶³

Again many water conflicts in the Bamenda gGrassfields can be predicted and avoided or at least mitigated if provisions are made against them in time²⁶⁴. It is therefore crucial to be aware of those changes and occurrences that have the potential to trigger water conflicts.²⁶⁵ Once a potential cause of conflict has been identified, the extent of the conflicts and scope of their social, economic and political consequences can be roughly calculated and communicated to decision makers and responsible water management experts at both the central and local levels²⁶⁶. Water conflict experts should preferably discuss with these decision makers what measures should be taken to avoid massive water conflicts.

Water quality is vital for the success of agriculture and in turn, proper agriculture management practices are necessary to meet domestic water quality standards and provide for ecosystem health²⁶⁷. Cooperation between agriculture and domestic water users is necessary to provide adequate water quality for both parties²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Shey, "History of Kumbo Water", pp.46-51.

²⁶⁴ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

²⁶⁵ S.L Carpenter and W. Kennedy, *Managing public disputes*, London, Jossey-Bass Publications, 1988, pp.24-30.

²⁶⁶ D. Michel, "Water conflict pathways and peacebuilding strategies", *United States Institute*, No, 164, 2020, pp.40-44.

²⁶⁷ V.F Nwolle, "Problems of Rural water supply, case study: Muea Water Scheme", DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 1993, pp.106-110.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp.111-116.

- **Effective Water Governance**

Rather than water scarcity in itself, water-related conflicts are caused by the way in which water and its uses are governed²⁶⁹. In its framework for action entitled, Towards Water Security, the Global Water Partnership stated that water crisis are often crisis of governance, and identified making water governance effective as one of the highest priorities for action²⁷⁰. The Global Water Partnership defines water governance as “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services at different levels of the society”²⁷¹.

2. Social Factors

A number of social factors have retarded the possibility of an effective water conflict resolution in the Bamenda Grassfields. They have been discussed below.

- Bribery and Corruption

Bribery and corruption in the water sector continues to be the root cause of water conflicts that threatens the population of the Bamenda Grassfields and exacerbate environmental degradation.²⁷² Water is a resource without substitute. It is paramount to our health, our food security, our energy future and our ecosystem. But corruption continues to plague water management and use in all areas, said Huguette Labelle, Chair of Transparency International²⁷³.

The impact and scope of corruption in different segments of the water sector ranges from petty bribery in water delivery to procurement related looting of irrigation and hydropower funds, from covering up industrial pollution to manipulation of water management and allocation

²⁶⁹ Gleick, “Ending conflicts over water”, pp.10-14

²⁷⁰ S.W.H Al-Muqdadi, “Developing strategy for water conflict management and transformation at Euphrates-Tigris Basin”, *MDPI*, Vol.11, 2019, p.45-50.

²⁷¹ Al-Muqdadi, “Developing strategy for water”, pp.51-60.

²⁷² Transparency International, “Corruption in the water sector is an overlooked threat for Development and Sustainability”, 24th June 2008.

²⁷³ L. Oyebande, “Water problems in Africa-how can the sciences help?”, *Hydrological Science Journal*, Vol.46, No.6, 2001, pp.947.

policies²⁷⁴. More so, it is as well manifested by lack of sustainable delivery, inequitable investment, targeting of resources and limited participation of affected communities in developmental processes²⁷⁵. Corruption's impact on water is a fundamental governance problem, yet it is not sufficiently addressed in the many global policy initiatives for environmental sustainability, development and food and energy security. According to the World Bank, 20 to 40 percent of public finances worldwide meant for the water sector are lost due to corruption and dishonest practices²⁷⁶.

The water crisis in the Bamenda Grassfields is undeniable and the corruption challenge it faces is urgent. Most cases of corruption in the water sector that have been documented are related to the drinking water and sanitation sector. Drinking water is a basic need and has no alternatives, and proper sanitation is of fundamental importance for individual and public health. The lack of adequate services in this sector therefore can be deadly. The water sector has high risk of corruption because of monopoly positions of the providers and the large sums of money involved in investment, rehabilitation and operation and maintenance.²⁷⁷

Furthermore, corruption is occurring higher up the water supply chain, such as embezzlement by water officials, collusion in the bidding process for water infrastructure projects or the exclusion of the community from participatory processes also affects the day-to-day struggle of the poor²⁷⁸. This kind of corruption is likely to reinforce inequitable water policies and divert resources away from projects designed to benefit the poor and as such may have more profound negative impacts on the poor's access to water²⁷⁹.

More specific cases of how corruption denies the rural population access to water include situations where wealthy or politically connected people use their position to unduly influence

²⁷⁴ Interview with S. Shafe Dufe, 59years, Teacher, Romajay, 04/08/2020.

²⁷⁵ A. Fonteh Amungwa, "The evolution of conflicts related to natural resource management in Cameroon", *Journal of Ecology*, Vol.35, No.1, 2011, p.53.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ J. Plummer and P. Cross, "Tackling corruption in the water and sanitation sector in Africa; starting the dialogue", Water and Sanitation Programme (WPS), Working Paper, 2006.

²⁷⁸ Transparency International, "The impact of corruption on access to safe water and sanitation for people living in poverty", *Anti-corruption Resource Centre*, 2017, p.24.

²⁷⁹ Interview with S. Asah Fai, 50years, Police Officer, Kikaikelaki, 29/07/2020.

the location of a water source at the cost of the poor²⁸⁰. According to Jacobson²⁸¹, the poor do not have the resources to participate in corrupt system that relies on bribes and therefore lose out in terms of poor water services. The key drivers of corruption are limitations of participation, transparency and accountability²⁸². There is limited participation of right holders in critical issues of development and the checks and balances to key decision-making roles are weak.

Coping with the coming era of water scarcity will require radical reform of all forms of consumption from individual use to the supply chains of major companies²⁸³. Davis provides a detailed account of the systematic character of corruption in the public water and sanitation sector. Three main forms of corruption noticed were bribery related to reading water meters and illegal connections, collusion in contract bidding and a market for job transfers.²⁸⁴ The construction of water works can yield considerable amounts of illegal revenue to politicians and officials. Thus, water scarcity might be artificially maintained or worsened. Water resources management is a broad subsector with a wide range of activities. Therefore, the types and forms of corruption also differ widely²⁸⁵.

- Unsatisfied parties

Efforts to address water conflicts requires engagement with communities, stakeholders and governments at all levels that are deeply invested in the outcome yet have profoundly different interests and perspectives²⁸⁶. Experience shows that these efforts even when focused on a common goal, can face unexpected challenges, create tensions and leave some parties unsatisfied or some objectives unfulfilled. This was the case in the Babanki-tungoh and Bali conflict over the Lake Bambili²⁸⁷. The parties continued fighting each other because the decisions and

²⁸⁰ Interview with Roland Alonka, 52years, Teacher, Squares, 20/12/2020.

²⁸¹ J.D. Peterson-perima, J.C. Veilleux and A.T. Wolf, "International water conflict and cooperation: Challenges and opportunities", <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2017.1276041>, 05/12/2020.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ Interview with Agnew Tidze, 67years, Farmer, P.C.H.S Junction, 31/12/2020.

²⁸⁴ J. Davis, "Corruption in public service delivery: Experience from South Asia's water and sanitation sector", *World Development*, Vol.32, No.1, 2004, p.71.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ Davis, "Corruption in public service delivery", pp.77-88.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Usheni Tata Jaff, 58years, Baker Mbve 14/01/2020.

solutions put in place did not favour either of the concerned parties. Most at times a solution is found but one party is unsatisfied with it. It thus becomes likely that the issue will arise again²⁸⁸. This has been the case of several conflicts over in the Bamenda Grassfields region. Though they always try to reach a compromise between the conflicting parties, it always yields no fruits but further conflicts²⁸⁹. Thus, conflicts over water still continue to be a recurrent phenomenon in the Bamenda Grassfields region.

Also, the main reasons that water conflicts are so difficult to resolve is that they are predominantly influenced by emotions²⁹⁰. When emotions like anger and resentment are felt, it is often difficult for people to behave rationally. The likelihood of the person understanding the others point of view diminishes, as their own strong emotions take over²⁹¹. Emotions play a role in how people make sense of their relationships, concept of power and social status. People constantly evaluate situations and events to work out if they are personally relevant. These understandings and appraisals are infused with various emotions and feelings. So emotions not only serve as a side effect of conflict, but also frame the way in which parties understand and define their disputes²⁹².

More so, emotions typically express people's agendas, desires and goals. When people perceive that they have incompatible goals, or that others are interfering with their desires and pursuits, this elicits emotions and leads to conflicts²⁹³.

- Sustainable urban development

The sustainability of urban growth is threatened by curtailment of the copious supplies of cheap water as a result of depletion and degradation caused by past profligacy.²⁹⁴ After a generation of more excessive water use and reckless discharge of municipal and industrial waste, the situation

²⁸⁸ Finance Initiative, "Challenge to water scarcity", the United Nations Environmental Programme Finance initiative, 1998, pp.32-42.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Sule Lukong Kidzeje, 57years, civil servant, Kumbo, 10/08/2020.

²⁹⁰ Interview with Anthony Kinkoh Bah, 56years, Nkor-Noni, 29/07/2020.

²⁹¹ C.C. Fonchingong and L. Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance in community development initiatives in the Cameroon Grassfields", *Nordic journal of African Studies*, No.12, 2003, pp.89-93.

²⁹² *Ibid*, pp.95-99.

²⁹³ Interview with Spilian Asah Fai, 50years, Police Officer, Kikaikelaki, 29/07/2020.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.46-49.

in the majority of the world's major cities is appalling and getting worse. This is as a result of the fact that, water scarcity and pollution force development of ever more distant sources, marginal costs of meeting fresh demands are growing rapidly.²⁹⁵ Almost all of the population of the Bamenda Grassfields still throws their dirt inside water because of rapid urban growth. Future guaranteed supplies must be based on appropriate water charges and discharge controls. Residual contamination of land and water can no longer be seen as a reasonable trade-off for the jobs and prosperity brought by industrial growth.

- **Climate Change**

Water resources are important to both society and ecosystems²⁹⁶. We depend on a reliable, clean supply of drinking water to sustain our health. We also need water for agriculture, energy production, navigation, recreation and manufacturing²⁹⁷. Many of these uses put pressure on water resources, stresses that are likely to be exacerbated by climate change²⁹⁸. In many areas with the Bamenda Grassfields inclusive, climate change has continuously increased water demand while shrinking water supplies, thereby leading to constant water conflicts²⁹⁹. This shifting balance has challenged water managers to simultaneously meet the needs of growing communities.

Crises of water quality and quantity are intimately linked with climate change. The impact mostly comes from extreme events of flooding and drought and is compounded by existing inequalities³⁰⁰. Water extremes affected by climate change continue to contribute to the migration and displacement of millions of people and could further global migration crisis. Climate change is already causing extreme events in many watersheds in the Bamenda

²⁹⁵ Interview with Susan Fanfon Yah, 58 years, Book-Keeper, Mbiim, 29/07/2020.

²⁹⁶ P. Gleick, "Water and conflict", *Fresh Water Resources and International Security*, Vol.18, No.1, 1993, pp.115-116.

²⁹⁷ Interview with Ernest Ndishey, 50 years, Teacher, Ntudidip-Ndu, 03/08/2020.

²⁹⁸ Ravnborg, "Water and conflict", pp.100-145.

²⁹⁹ Akoko, Eyong, Nkeng, "Water resource Management". pp.1-18.

³⁰⁰ M. Leach, R. Mearns and I. Scoones, "Challenges to community-based sustainable development: dynamics, entitlements, institutions", *IDS Bulletin*, Vol.28, No.4, 1997, pp.14-35.

grassfields, impacting communities³⁰¹. The United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Climate Action and Support Trends 2019 report pointed to water as one of the most vulnerable sectors, poised to impact the greatest number of countries relative to the other sectors identified³⁰². Changes in extreme precipitation are likely to be stronger than changes in mean precipitation.

Further more, Climate change continues to impact water quality in the Bamenda Grassfields Region. For instance, shifts in Monsoon timings have led to dilution or concentration of Nitrogen, phosphorus and other pollutants in to water³⁰³. Inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene resources have disproportionately affected the Bamenda grassfields, leading to negative health and social outcomes³⁰⁴. This has made the solving of water conflicts difficult and sometimes completely impossible in the region.

- **Accessibility**

A large majority of water users in the Bamenda Grassfields Region still face enormous burden of walking over long distances to collect water from piped networks. Only about 5% of the rural populations have water piped directly to their houses³⁰⁵. However, the actual percentage is lower if unreliability of supply is taken into account. This statistic indicates that many households do not have improved water delivery sources on site and therefore their water delivery needs are met through lower service levels such as public standpipes or alternative sources such as spring³⁰⁶. These streams are located some tens of meters to several kilometers away from the point of use. This often results in conflicts as the water sources become over used consequently leading to shortage for both the inhabitants of the area and those who come to carry water.

³⁰¹ Interview with Peter Tiydze Fokum, 75years, Tetraté CS, Bali Nyonga, 02/08/2020.

³⁰² UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (UNESCO-WWAP): Water for people, water for life (The UN Development Report), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/oo12/001295/129556e.pdf>, 7/12/2020, 4:37, pp.12-14.

³⁰³ V.F Nzolle, "Problems of rural supply, case study: Muea water Scheme", Masters Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde, 2005, pp.45-156.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Jojn Njobam, 70years, Retired Teacher, Ndzenjiy, 16/01/2020.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Jeanette wirtsen, 45years, nurse, Kumbo, 14/08/2020.

³⁰⁶ H.B tantoh and D. Simatele, "Complexity and uncertainty in water resource governance in Northwest Cameroon: Reconnoitring the challenges and potential of community-based water resource management", Land Use Policy, Vol, 75, pp.245-247.

3. Infrastructural Factors

A lot of challenges have been faced in solving water conflicts In the Bamenda Grassfields as a result of lack of or deteriorating infrastructures. A number of points have been discussed below, to support this assertion.

- Insufficient Water Catchments

The problem of insufficient water catchments has been a hindrance to solving water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. Some water sources in the region are very dirty than it was during the traditional period³⁰⁷. There has been a lot of pollution making it difficult to find good water sources. Also, it is always a tough struggle to displace inhabitants of an area when a catchment has been selected. People donot easily give up their land for water construction because they need it for farming. This was the case in the Yeh village in Kumbo³⁰⁸.

As the construction of the Kumbo Water scheme was going on, the yeh valley was choosen as a catchment area of the Kumbo Water Authority. Plans were made to resettle the population in a choosen site but such attempts failed because the local population was not well informed or educated on this³⁰⁹. Hence the youths of the valley formed a resistance committee which chased out a team sent to survey the valley. Owing to the unwillingness of the population to evaquate the site, the Senior Divisional Officer and the Fon of Nso in an organized joint invasion made up of forces of law and Order and the Nwerong, a traditional society in the lead, forcefully evacuated the population from the valley³¹⁰. They left in bitterness which has lasted till date.

- Aging Infrastructures

Aging is a natural process characterized by the decline in the quality of building materials due to corrosion or rust³¹¹. An infrastructure in bad condition, such as when materials have exceeded their life span, is of concern in potable water delivery because of increased losses for utilities and

³⁰⁷ Fonchingong, and Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance", pp.1-100.

³⁰⁸ S.O Shey, *History of the Kumbo water supply*, Bamenda, Consulting Eng., 2002, pp.5-50.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp.51-55.

³¹⁰ Jumbam, "The Yeh Crisis of 1975", pp.157-158.

³¹¹ Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45years, Teacher, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

high rates of leakages³¹². Thus, the problem of aging infrastructures continues to be a cause of conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. This is also a concern because of the high cost of maintenance and the risk of frequent breakdowns which together exacerbates the poor revenue returns for water utilities and thus reduces the quality of their services leading constant conflicts over water³¹³.

B. Prevention of Water Conflicts

Despite the challenges facing the resolution of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields in particular and Cameroon at large, a no of propositions has been put in place to ensure the effective resolution of water conflicts or preventing them before they occur. They are as follows;

Governing water inevitably involves governing conflicting interests. As Postel describes it, “water unlike other scarce consumable resources, is used to fuel all facets of society from biologies to economies to aesthetics and religious practices”³¹⁴. As such there is no such thing as managing water for a single purpose- all water management is multi-objective and is therefore by definition based on conflicting interests.

Fundamentally therefore, conflict prevention and mitigation in water-resource management is a matter of recognizing and understanding conflicting interests relating to water governance at different levels, from local to the international level and of mediating and arbitrating in negotiations between these conflicting interests³¹⁵. Such approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, focusing on the negotiation of conflicting interests, have become known as Alternative Dispute resolution (ADR) or Environmental Dispute Resolution (EDR)³¹⁶. This focus on the the recognition and negotiation of conflicting interests relating to water is not only important in situations of actual conflicts or disputes, but also as an aspect of the formulation of

³¹² A.J. Njoh, “Barriers to community participation in development planning: lessons from the Mutengene (Cameroon) self-help project”, *community Development Journal*, Vol.37, No.3, 2002, pp.235-240.

³¹³ *Ibid*, pp.243-244.

³¹⁴ S. Postel, “Troubled waters”, *New York Academy of Science in association with the Gale Group and Looksmart*, <http://www.qmw.ac.uk/ugtel133/courses/environs/cuttings/water/troubles.pdf>, 31/10/2021, 15:30, pp.14-18.

³¹⁵ Interview with Rev. Moses Nhotu Shu, 52years, Pastor, Bafut, 20/08/2020.

³¹⁶ Muqdad, “Developing strategy for water conflict”, pp.36-40.

policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks which form a core part of water governance. They following are some of the ways corruption can be tackled in the Water sector.

1. Economic Factors

A number of economic factors have been discussed below if which well implemented, will go a long way to ill help in the effective resolution of conflicts related to water.

- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to a wide variety of consensual approaches with which parties in conflict voluntarily seek to reach a mutually acceptable settlement³¹⁷. It generally seeks to move parties away from zero-sum or distributive solutions, towards those in which all parties gain. The term ADR and the methods generally described are not more than twenty years old in Western dispute resolution literature³¹⁸. In defining the methodologies for ADR, indigenous processes are rarely drawn upon. Some of the modern techniques used in ADR are:

1. A clearly defined water authority

ADR distinguishes between unassisted negotiations, where an individual is designated as a facilitator, mediator or adjudicator³¹⁹.

2. ADR process technique

Alternative Dispute Resolution Theory describes a tool box of process techniques- the methods by which a facilitator or mediator helps guide negotiations through to an acceptable agreement³²⁰. One method by which ADR practitioners help shape the direction of a negotiation is to begin by asking the participants to share their individual views of what the future might

³¹⁷ G. Bingham, A. Wolf and T. Wohlgenant, "Resolving Water disputes: Conflict and Cooperation in the US, Asia and the Near East Washington DC", *US Agency for International Development*, 1994, pp.34-35.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.36-40.

³¹⁹ R. Fisher and W. Ury, *Getting to YES: negotiating agreement without giving in*, New York, Penguin, 1981, pp.56-66.

³²⁰ P. Gleick, "Basic water requirements for human activities: meeting basic needs", *Water International*, Vol.21, No.2, pp.83-100.

look like if negotiations were both successful and unsuccessful³²¹. The shared visions can then be referred back in the course of negotiations to remind participants how critical it is for them to reach an agreement³²².

- Traditional Water Supply Expansion

When tensions over water arise, due to scarcity, the historical response has been to expand water supplies through traditional approaches³²³ of building dams, withdrawing water from lakes and rivers, moving water from distant water sheds with aqueducts and pipelines or tapping ground water systems³²⁴. There are regions in the world where carefully designed and built infrastructure can still provide important water-supply benefits, even though such options are increasingly expensive³²⁵.

-Water Treaties and Cooperatives Water Agreements

When engaged with equity and planning, these agreements can serve as the groundwork for lasting political stability. Water laws and accords are not always initially equitable or can become outdated, therefore revision and amendment of agreements is sometimes necessary and can be very successful³²⁶. For example, in the two decades, the republic of South Africa's water and environmental laws have been rewritten with a more inclusive and comprehensive scope, establishing availability of water as a basic human right and including consideration of ecological requirements for water³²⁷. High-quality policies toward water management can also improve societal conditions and reduce stress on communities. Top-down government protocols could include³²⁸:

³²¹ *Ibid*, pp.101-110.

³²² Interview with Richard Vuwe, 62years,, Retired Civil Servant, Ndu, 08/08/2020.

³²³ HELVETAS CAMEROON, *Water management committee training manual, Bamenda*, 2003, pp.15-30.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, pp.33-39.

³²⁵ Munk, "Water and conflict", pp.95-98.

³²⁶ D.K. Kreamer and B. Usher, "Sub Saharan African Ground water protection-Buiding on International experience", *Ground Water*, Vol.48, No.2, 2010, pp.257-268.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, pp.270-280.

³²⁸ United Nations, "International decade for action water for life 2005-2015", <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/scarcity.shtml.google scholar>, 26/12/2021, 19:18pm, pp.12-18.

- a. Clear, quantitative definition of acceptable risk for populations and ecosystems.
- b. Creation of hydrological and water quality data storage systems that are transferrable and compatible.
- c. Initiation of risk-based on improved site characterization and pro-active anticipation of water problems.
- d. Rigorous standards for wells and water conveyances.
- e. Common vision on monitored natural attenuation of pollutants and technical impracticability of remediation.
- f. Strengthening of natural protected areas and upgrading emergency response to potential water crisis.

Bottom-up local policies can include³²⁹:

- a. Water and water quality education (Embracing community, primary school and university levels).
- b. Holistic sanitary community improvement.
- c. Increasing regional analytical and technical capabilities.
- d. Water quality protection at wellheads and distribution points and improvement of water regulation enforcement.

Governments and communities can create enhanced policies and continue to renew their web of resources to prepare for and address water challenges³³⁰.

- **Infrastructure Improvements**

Infrastructure improvements when done correctly in a sustainable manner can dramatically and positively impact the water security of a society³³¹. These improvements can range from small scale community wells or water/sanitation improvements, to major structural water diversions,

³²⁹*Ibid*, pp.19-20.

³³⁰ H. Hatami and P. Gleick, "Chronology of conflict over water in the legends, myths and history of the ancient Middle East. Water and war and peace in the Middle East", *Environment*, 1994, Vol.36, No.3, p.6-10.

³³¹ D.k kreamer, "hydrophilanthrop and education", *Journal of Contemporary Water Research and Education*, Vol.145, pp.1-4.

treatment and large-scale water projects³³². On the smaller scale, hydrophilanthropic efforts to establish or enhance clean water supply can make a significant local contribution that lowers water tensions in the population in the face of personal privation³³³.

Large scale projects can also be effective. Forexample in the September 2012 Annual Report to Congress on the Paul Simon Waterfor the poor Act

- Access to Water Development Financing

Inadequate water structure and management systems in many countries, Cameroon inclusive has contributed to growing tensions over water³³⁴. While the failure to develop such systems has many causes, an important one is the inability to deploy sufficient capital for water development³³⁵. Improving access to financing for such systems, including green bonds, microfinance, and microinsurance approaches, international lending and more, can alleviate this problem but requires more unding for water and mechanisms to allocate this funding to the regions of greatest need must be improved³³⁶.

- Improved Water Policies

Water prices rarely reflect the true cost of providing reliable water³³⁷. Markets that permit more efficient reallocation of water are rare and difficult to implement equitably. Thus, each of these areas offers opporrunities to improve the quality of water services and access. Prices of water can be designed not only to reflect the full cost of service in order to pay for current operation and maintenance costs, but also to provide reliable streams of financing for improving and expanding water infrastructure³³⁸. Pricing structures should also protect access to safe and adequate water and sanitation, a basic human right for poor and disadvantaged communities through carefully

³³² Interview with S.N. Shey Dufe, 59years,, Teacher, Romajay, 04/08/2020.

³³³Kreamer and Usher, "Sub Saharan African Ground water", pp.268-275.

³³⁴ A.N. Angelakis, M. Valipour and T.A Abdelkader, "Water conflicts: From ancient to modern times and in the future", *Sustainability*, Vol.13, 2021, pp.31-45.

³³⁵Angelakis, Valipour and Abdelkader, "Water conflicts", pp.46-50.

³³⁶ Munk, "Water and conflict", pp.98-115.

³³⁷ Interview with Roland Tawong Nyamnsai, 38years,, Teacher, Mbot-Nkambe Central, 05/08/2020.

³³⁸ AL-Muqdadi, "Developing strategy for water conflict", pp.21-34.

designed subsidies and safety-net programs³³⁹. More generally, water pricing should reflect societal values of efficiency (economic values), inclusiveness (social values) and sustainability (environmental values)³⁴⁰.

To adequately enjoy the right to water, government must ensure that water is affordable by all³⁴¹. The right to water therefore does not imply that water is free of charge. The general principle is that everyone is obliged to contribute to the cost of supply and treatment of water although this contribution may vary depending on the capacity of individual uses and may be made directly or indirectly³⁴². But for the right to water not to be an illusory one, the contribution must be made moderate and affordable, not exorbitant³⁴³. Affordable must be taken to include rates payable to access water networks such as connecting water to homes or public taps and the rates payable for consuming the water³⁴⁴.

We also recommend that, to surmount the hurdles to the enforcement of the right to water and guarantee its sustainable utilization, governments should subsidise the sector where the provision of water for domestic and personal uses has been privatized³⁴⁵. This way, the rates will be reduced and the affordability would be guaranteed³⁴⁶. This is a matter of political will if the government is really committed to build a strong and healthy leadership and a just society for the future. Alternatively, it could shy away from privatization and provide water for domestic and personal needs simply by prioritizing the sector for obvious reasons. This way, water is not an economic good but the basic need for human survival³⁴⁷.

³³⁹ C.S Banadzem, “Transhumance and its implication on the wet lands of Ndop Central Sub Division”, Masters Dissertation in Geography, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, pp.110-120.

³⁴⁰ E. Kangha, “Potable water in Fungom Sub Division: case studies of the Weh, Esu and Bafmen water supply projects 1974-2010”, Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2014, pp.124-150.

³⁴¹ Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45years,, Teacher, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

³⁴² HELVETAS Cameroon, *Village water supply caretaker’s manual*, Bamenda, 2004, pp.1-16.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, pp.16-20.

³⁴⁴ Interview with Jovita Kifem La-ashe, 54years, Teacher, Ntudip, 03/08/2020.

³⁴⁵ C.T. Tamasang, “The right to water in Cameroon: Legal Framework for sustainable utilization”, paper prepared for the workshop entitled Legal Aspects of Water Sector Reforms, Geneva, 20-21 April 2007, pp.22-36.

³⁴⁶ Interview with E. Baijona, 52years,, Teacher, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

³⁴⁷ Kangha, “Potable water in Fungom Sub Division”, pp.130-160.

Although it is stated in the principle of law with respect to accessibility that there should be no discrimination, it must be stated here that when it relates to charges, common sense and logic, natural justice supports discrimination³⁴⁸. This implies that the less privilege, marginalized, deprived population and those incapacitated should benefit from preferential rates than other segment of the population without these characteristics³⁴⁹. This would ensure that the right to water is respected, protected and fulfilled. For this to happen, the government generally monitors the water and take appropriate action to ensure that all can access a minimum service through mechanisms such as pricing policy and tariff regulation³⁵⁰

- **Improved Practices Related to Farming**

Farming and irrigation are often a huge culprit when it comes to water scarcity. Because of that, we need to improve practices so that we donot use as much water and those who are using water are doing so to its fullest potential³⁵¹. Technology also needs to be advanced in this manner.

More so, excessive levels of chemical fertilizers and pesticides are used to maximize crop yields. However, it leads to serious soil pollution, which in turn translates in to ground water pollution and contributes to water scarcity issues³⁵². It is crucial that farmers reduce the use of chemicals for farming, to ensure clean water and reduce water shortage³⁵³. Furthermore, Agricultural subsidies that promote inefficient water allocations and demand should be redesigned or eliminated. In areas where ground water is falling, such subsidies should be modified to encourage more sustainable use of water³⁵⁴.

³⁴⁸ H.B Tantoh, M.D. Simatele and E.E Ebhuoma, “Shifting the paradigm in community-based water resource management in North-West Cameroon: Asearch for an alternative management approach”, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2019.1659382>, 30/11/2021, 3:30am, pp.40-44.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp.47-50.

³⁵⁰ G. Sanguv Ngefor, “Institutional changes”, pp.45-198.

³⁵¹ HELVETAS CAMEROON, “Water catchment protection, Learning and Experiencing sharing series”, Bamenda 2005, pp.13-17.

³⁵² Interview with Elfreda Wirmum, 72years., Farmer, Bajing, 29/12/2020.

³⁵³ P. Wallenstein, *Understanding conflict resolution, second Edition*, Great Britain, Cromwell Press Ltd., 2007, pp.115-118.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.119-123.

- Population Policies

Rapidly growing populations in many developing countries are putting significant pressure on fixed or diminishing water resources, raising tensions among user groups and often leading to conflict and violence³⁵⁵. Because of the accelerating growth in global population, parts of the world could see a supply-demand gap of up to 65percent in water resources by 2030³⁵⁶. Socially, responsible policies are therefore needed in many parts of the world to improve access to information and strategies for family planning³⁵⁷. Experience from a wide range of countries shows that fertility rates can drop rapidly when a combination of technical, educational and social interventions is pursued³⁵⁸.

- Monitoring and Early Warnings

In order to avoid or solve water conflicts, global monitoring systems for key indicators associated with water related conflict, migration and other water related crisis (cities running out of water, large scale disease out breaks and famine) should be established³⁵⁹. The Water, Peace, and Security (WPS) partnership for example has developed a machine learning-based Global Early Warning Tool that identifies potential high-risk areas based on indicators such as rainfall, crop health, poverty levels and population growth³⁶⁰.

More so, the US agency for International Development (USAID) and its partners developed a famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET)³⁶¹. It is very important for the international community and affected countries in general and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular, to have

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp.22-31.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp33-35.

³⁵⁷ Oyebande, “Water problems in Africa”, pp.17-27.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp.28-39.

³⁵⁹ J.D.P. Perlman, J.c Veilleux and A.T. Wolf, “ International water conflict and cooperation: challenges and opportunities”, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2017.1276041>, 12/12/2020, 17:08pm, pp.41-50.

³⁶⁰ Perlman, Veilleux and Wolf, ‘International water conflict’, pp. 51-58.

³⁶¹ UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (UNESCO-WEAP): water for people, water for life (the UN Development report), <http://unesdoc.org/images/0012/001295/129556e.pdf>, 12/12/2021, 17:17pm, pp.13-17.

as early a warning as possible to show that water risks are growing and that crisis may be at hand³⁶².

- **Sources of Funding**

Most solutions to water conflicts require significant funding. The rapid response teams should therefore have the backing of development banks, bilateral aid agencies and other sources of funding that can furnish grants or loans³⁶³. Funds should be set aside by these organizations specifically to address emerging water and security crisis. The private sector and public private partnerships may also have a role to play in achieving these solutions³⁶⁴.

2. Social Factors

- **Role of Public Health Workers**

Public health workers can play many roles in ensuring equitable access to freshwater and reducing the likelihood of conflicts over water. These roles include

- Raising awareness about the importance of access to freshwater.
- Documenting conflicts over water and their adverse health effects.
- Promoting efforts to prevent contamination of water, to conserve it and to use it more efficiently.
- Promoting nonviolent approaches to resolving conflicts over water.
- Promoting proactive cooperation among countries or groups within countries.

- **Scaling up the Diagnosis of Corruption in the Water sector**

More systematic research needs to be conducted to better understand the scope and nature of corruption in water, adapting tools such as corruption impact assessments, public expenditure tracking or corruption risk-mapping to the different areas of the water sector³⁶⁵. When designing

³⁶² Interview with Joseph Chila Fai, 55years,, Teacher, Misaje, 01/08/2020.

³⁶³ M. Flemming, "Hydro-crisis in the Middle East: Water schemes for a thirsty region", Master of Arts in National Security affairs, Naval Post Graduate School carlifornia, 2001, pp.67-86.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.89-98.

³⁶⁵ Transparency International, "The impact of corruption", pp.24-30.

specific anti-corruption interventions, it is also important to develop a solid understanding of the local water context, including the conditions of supply, demand, existing infrastructure and governance systems as well as the incentives of the local stakeholders to design targeted and effective reforms that are tailored to the local circumstances³⁶⁶.

A tool that might be able to help achieve this is the Annotated Water Integrity Scan (AWIS), essentially a one-day multi-stakeholder workshop designed to quickly assess the water integrity risks which may facilitate corruption and identify priority areas for action³⁶⁷.

- Strengthening Monitoring and Oversight

Governments are primarily responsible for establishing effective regulatory oversight of the water sector³⁶⁸. Measures aimed at curbing regulatory capture can include capacity building and training of regulatory staff, the provision of adequate resources (human, financial, technical and administrative), the creation of a clear institutional mandate, the implementation of transparent operating principles and the introduction of a public consultation and appeal process³⁶⁹.

Monitoring and oversight mechanisms are key to ensure the enforcement of regulations and as such, they need to be robust, regardless of whether they are conducted by the central audit agency, parliament, anti-corruption agency, ombudsman, Complaint offices and specific sector and local government organizations³⁷⁰. This requires increasing the risk of detection by conducting regular independent audits, providing transparent access to public accounts, as well as establishing effective complaints mechanisms and whistleblower protection that encourages citizens and employees to report illicit behavior without fear of retaliation³⁷¹. It also requires

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp.32-38.

³⁶⁷ S. Tremolet and C. Hunt, "Taking account of the poor in water sector regulation", <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/464491468313735847/taking-account-of-the-poor-in-water-sector-regulation>, 29/12/2021, 21:17pm, pp.21-28.

³⁶⁸ Interview with S. Tafu Shei, 60years., Teacher, Njimkang-Ndu, 09/08/2021.

³⁶⁹ Transparency International, "The impact of corruption", pp.21-31.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pp.32-39.

³⁷¹ Interview with A. Chin, 102years., Farmer/Tapper, P.C.H.S Junction, 23/12/2020.

enforcing adequate and dissuasive sanctions, as deterrence must be supported by effective implementation of regulations³⁷².

Though this may involve investing in equipments and technology, monitoring mechanisms should also be beyond auditing of accounts and agent performance, and include monitoring the quality of water at each stage of the water cycle³⁷³. Moreso, where governments lack capacity to regularly monitor water quality, citizen scientists are in some instances stepping to fill the gap, aided by more affordable technology and support from NGOs³⁷⁴. Indeed , increasing such monitoring systems provide for citizen participation and input with tools such as citizen report cards, hotlines, feedback mechanisms to monitor the quality of water services provided by private and public utilities³⁷⁵.

- **Promoting Participation**

Meaningful participation by community can provide a means for including their concerns at all stages of the process, from water budgeting and policy development to the selection of sites for developing water infrastructure and the management of water to ensure equitable access to water³⁷⁶.

Community involvement in selecting the site of rural wells and managing irrigation schemes can help to ensure that small landholders are not last in line when it comes to getting water for drinking and growing crops³⁷⁷. Civil society participation in auditing, water pollution mapping and performance monitoring of public utilities, creates important checks and balances³⁷⁸.

Transparency International recommends that, “Tender bids should be read aloud in community meetings, planning blueprints publicly posted, documents and water quality indicators uploaded

³⁷² HELVETAS Cameroon, “Guideline on project planning execution and management of rural infrastructures Bamenda”, 1994, pp.20-29.

³⁷³ Interview with J. Tata Nsame, 62years., Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

³⁷⁴ Muqdadi, “Developing strategy for water conflict”, pp.45-50.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp.51-56.

³⁷⁶ P. Gleick, C. Iceland and T. Ayushi, “Ending conflicts over water: Solutions to water and security challenges”, *World Resources Institute*, 2020, pp.128-130.

³⁷⁷ Interview with S. Fanfon Yah, 58years., Book Keeper, Njottin, 29/07/2020.

³⁷⁸ Missem, “Impact of a water supply project”, pp.100-113.

to websites and materials produced in a simple and accessible language-from service contracts to audit reports”.³⁷⁹

Furthermore, project budgets can be opened to scrutiny and water users can participate in decision making through social budgeting and social auditing³⁸⁰. In Peru forexample, the management of large-scale irrigation systems was transferred to water users’ associations, resulting in improved financial and water delivery performance³⁸¹. Moreso, civil society can also play an important role in the process from the design stage of water projectsto the monitoring of contract implementation.

Citizens can as well be involved in decision making processes for the development of new water infrastructure to inform project designs. Reporting mechanisms provide other avenues for citizen participation and citizens can use communications technology to monitor and report problems and issues related to water and sanitation services³⁸². Forexample, crowd-sourcing platforms used in Daraja, Tanzania, provided citizens with digital platforms from which to complain about the lack of access to water or to report problems to engineers responsible or maintenance³⁸³. These platforms contribute to reorient government water policy and increase maintenance and infrastructure budgets constantly.

- **Clear Water Rights**

In the context of increased competition between users and uses over water, clear water rights can contribute to reduce conflicts. This explains the increasing pressure to formalize water rights.³⁸⁴ However as forcefully argued by Meinzen-Dick, security of tenure, in this case to water, does not necessarily come from stage-granted ownership of the resource, no matter whether ownershipis

³⁷⁹ Transparency International, “The impact of corruption on access to safe water and sanitation for people living in poverty”, *Anti-corruption Resource centre*, 2017, pp.24-28.

³⁸⁰*Ibid*, pp.31-33.

³⁸¹ J.A. Allan, “Integrated Water Ressources Management is more a political than a technical challenge”, *Developments in Water Science*, Vol.50, 2003, pp.23-35.

³⁸²Allan, “Integrated Water Ressources Management”, pp.42-49.

³⁸³ Muqdadi, “Developing strategy for water conflict”, pp.45-54.

³⁸⁴ P. Rogers, R. de Silvia, R. Bhatia, “water is an economic good: how to use prices to promote equity, efficiency and sustainability”, *Water Policy*, Vol.4, 2002, pp.17-31.

issued to the state itself, to private companies or individuals or to communities or groups.³⁸⁵ The state is not the only source of water rights in a given setting. Other sources include customary laws, religious laws. International laws, project regulations and local norms within a territory, community or group³⁸⁶.

In an effort to promote clarification of water rights, Meinwen-Dick therefore suggests that, rather than taking a top down view of water right that begins with state law, it is more useful to begin with people's own experiences with access to and control over water, in which individuals and groups, draw upon a range of strategies for claiming and obtaining resources.³⁸⁷ If marginalized groups are not to be further marginalized as an outcome of such efforts, it is essential to pay specific attention to the sources through which marginalized groups obtain their water rights and how they do so³⁸⁸.

- **Climate Change Mitigation**

Climate change and water scarcity go hand in hand to cause some of the biggest contemporary challenges to the human race³⁸⁹. These issues have a reciprocal relationship identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in which, "Water Management Policies and measures can have an influence on Green House Gas (GHG) emissions".³⁹⁰ Healthy aquatic ecosystems and improved water management can lower greenhouse gas emissions and provide protection against climate hazards

As renewable energy options are pursued, the water consumption of these mitigation tactics must be considered in producing alternatives ranging from bio-energy crops to hydropower and solar

³⁸⁵ H.M Ravnborg, *Water and conflict, Conflict prevention and mitigation in water resource management*, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2004, pp.10-20.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.22-29.

³⁸⁷ Rogers, Bhatia, "water is an economic good" pp.19-33.

³⁸⁸ Interview with Rev George Anjoambum, 51years., Clergy, Momo, 07/05/2020.

³⁸⁹ H. BikwibilTanto, D. Mulala Simatele, E. Ebhuoma, D. Kwabena and T.J.M. McKay, "Towards a pro-community-based water resource management system in Northwest Cameroon: practical evidence and lessons of best practices", *GeoJournal*, Vol.78, No.4, pp.22-37.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.38-47.

power plants³⁹¹. Climate smart agriculture using drip irrigation and other means of using water more efficiently can help reduce demand on freshwater supplies. Early warning systems of floods, droughts and other water related hazards provide a more than tenfold return on investment and can significantly reduce disaster risk. A 24-hour warning of a coming storm can cut the ensuing damage by 30%.

- **Sustainable Urban Development**

The sustainability of urban growth is threatened by curtailment of the copious supplies of cheap water as a result of depletion and degradation caused by past profligacy.³⁹² After a generation of more excessive water use and reckless discharge of municipal and industrial waste, the situation in the majority of the world's major cities is appalling and getting worse. This is as a result of the fact that, water scarcity and pollution force development of ever more distant sources, marginal costs of meeting fresh demands are growing rapidly.³⁹³ Future guaranteed supplies must be based on appropriate water charges and discharge controls. Residual contamination of land and water can no longer be seen as a reasonable trade-off for the jobs and prosperity brought by industrial growth.

- **Gender Equality**

When women influence water management, studies show their communities measurable better outcomes, including better functioning water systems, expanded access, economic and environmental benefits and equitable distribution especially in times of scarcity.³⁹⁴ However, women's participation in decision-making roles is often restricted by their lower status in the society and the discrimination they face in their homes and communities. These restrictions are

³⁹¹ S.Z. Gaskin, F. Folifac and S.S. Kometa, "The effect of urbanization on community-managed water supply: Case study of Buea, Cameroon", *Community Development Journal*, Vol.49, No.4, pp.524-544.

³⁹² *Ibid*, pp.46-49.

³⁹³ Interview with Susan Fanfon Yah, 58years, Book-Keeper, Mbiim, 29/07/2020.

³⁹⁴ M. Kholif and A.M. Elfarouk, "Activating the role of women in water projects", *Water Science*, Vol.28, No.1, 2014, pp.75-93.

often compounded by other social characteristics like age, class and religion.³⁹⁵ It is worthy to note that women are the gatherers of water in most developing countries and make most of the decisions about its use for drinking and for personal sanitation. Women are also involved in 70% of food production and although food production is a major use of water, women have little voice in this aspect of water policy.

Breaking such a country's specific structural, social, legal and economic barriers is essential to elevating women's status and enabling them participate actively in water resource decision making.³⁹⁶ Improvements in women's education, economic and political participation and safety are also correlated with reduced inter and intrastate violence and leads to lower levels of conflict and more peaceful and stable outcomes as well as help achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³⁹⁷. Similarly, research shows that gender-inclusive peace processes produce longer lasting, more robust agreements that are less likely to be broken.

- **Water Conservation and Reuse**

This means limiting the use of water, the use of washing machines, taking short showers instead of full baths, even if you are on a vacation in countries where water is scarce, try to save water, You should also try to convince your family and friends to save water whenever and wherever possible³⁹⁸. Also, there are plenty of technologies available that allow you recycle rain water and other water that you may use in your home. Thus, consider learning about how you can recycle water³⁹⁹. This doesnot only revent scarcity, but it can save you money as well. Rain water harvesting and recycled eases pressure on ground water and other natural water bodies.

³⁹⁵ T. O'Neil and P. Domingo, "The power to decide: Women decision-making and Gender Equality", <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9848.pdf>, 2015, 25/11/2021, 4:41am, pp.45-50.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.51-54.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Orpah Beryen, 45years,, Teacher, Mesaje, 03/08/2020.

³⁹⁸ Wallensteen, *Understanding conflict resolution*, pp.117-119.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.120-146.

Groundwater recharge that allows water moving from surface water to ground water is a well-known process to prevent water scarcity⁴⁰⁰.

Current patterns of water use involve excess waste. There is great scope for water savings in agriculture, industry and domestic water supplies.⁴⁰¹ Irrigated agriculture accounts for about 80% of water withdrawals in the world. In many irrigation schemes, up to 60% of this water is lost on its way from the source to the plant. More efficient irrigation practices will lead to substantial freshwater savings.⁴⁰²

Recycling could reduce the consumption of many industrial consumers by 50% or more, with the additional benefit of reduced pollution.⁴⁰³ Application of the “Polluter pays” principle and realistic water pricing will encourage conservation and reuse.⁴⁰⁴ On average, 36% of water produced by urban water utilities in developing countries is unaccounted for.⁴⁰⁵ Better management could reduce these costly losses.

Combined savings in agriculture, industry and domestic water supplies could significantly defer investment in costly new water-resource development and have enormous impact on the sustainability of future supplies.⁴⁰⁶

- **Protection Against Natural Disasters**

Lack of preparedness, often aggravated by lack of data, means that droughts and floods take a huge toll in deaths, misery and economic loss. Economic losses from natural disasters, including floods and droughts, increased three-folds between the 1960s and the 1980s.⁴⁰⁷ Development is

⁴⁰⁰ L. Nyuydine Wirba, “Exploring water management practices and sustainability implications in the Bamenda Metropolis”, *International Journal of Global Sustainability*, Vol.4, No.1, 2020, pp.13-21.

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Ernest Ndishey, 50years, Teacher, Ndu, 03/08/2020.

⁴⁰² R.N. Lekunze, “Assessing Stakeholders participation in integrated water resource management. The role of the youths in the community water management projects in Cameroon, Masters Dissertation in Social Science, Lund University, Sweden, 2011, pp.42-46.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, pp.47-49.

⁴⁰⁴ Ako Ako, Eneke and Elambo, “water resources management”, pp.882-884.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp.885-889.

⁴⁰⁶ Lekunze, “Assessing Stakeholders participation”, pp.44-45.

⁴⁰⁷ S. Shiva, *Water wars, privatization, pollution and profit*, Cambridge, South End Press, 2002, pp.56-58.

being set back for years in some developing countries, because investments have not been made in basic data collection and disaster preparedness.

Projected climate change and rising sea-levels will intensify the risk for some, while also threatening the apparent security for existing water resources.⁴⁰⁸ Damages and loss of life from floods and droughts can be drastically reduced by the disaster preparedness actions recommended in the Dublin Conference Report.

- **Rapid Respond Teams**

Once high-risk areas are identified, the international community should have rapid respond teams in place that can offer assistance to at-risk countries⁴⁰⁹. These teams can catalyze the identification and implementation of solutions by helping regional, national, state and local leaders better understand the nature of problems, the major risk drivers and potential ways to address the problem⁴¹⁰. The WPS Partnership for example, has developed tools to conduct local-level rapid analyses for hotspots, capacity-building and training modules for decision makers and resource managers, guidance for convening relevant stake holders and establishing legitimate decision-making processes and approaches to dispute resolution⁴¹¹.

- **Increase Quality and Quantity of Water Supply**

- a. Find new water sources to augment the supply from current source(s).
- b. Install household rain catchment systems to complement the water system supply.
- c. Improve quantity/quality of existing supply source through watershed protection measures⁴¹². These might include:
 - **Forestry protection**- reforestation, including fruit, coffee, and lumber; tree nurseries; and fuel-efficient cooking stoves/ovens, solar ovens, compressed “paper” fuel logs, etc. Native

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Killian Nsaikimo Fai, 56years., Teacher, Tobin, 29/07/2020.

⁴⁰⁹ Wallenstein, *Understanding conflict resolution*, pp.117-120.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.123-131.

⁴¹¹ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62years., Retired community worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

⁴¹² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Encouraging evaluation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, toward DAC guidance Off-print of OECD”, *Journal on Development*, Vol.8, No.3, 2007, pp.6-11.

species should be prioritized, as some tree species, such as eucalyptus, could actually diminish water flows⁴¹³.

- **Soil conservation measures**- such as horizontal vegetative barriers, stonewalls trenches, and terracing⁴¹⁴.
 - Rehabilitation/replacement of existing source water catchment facilities.
 - Sanitation infrastructure- dry pit and composting latrines, recycling and composting, solid waste disposal facilities, especially near the water source⁴¹⁵.
 - Restriction of livestock grazing in upper reaches of watershed above the water source⁴¹⁶.
 - **Reduced agrochemical use**- such as promotion of organic horticulture, certified shade-grown and organic coffee⁴¹⁷.
 - **Mitigation of other sources of contamination**- for example, in coffee growing areas, install simple treatment facilities to capture and provide primary treatment of wastewater from washing and pulping of the coffee beans⁴¹⁸.
- **Improving Baseline Information and Data Exchange**

To a certain extent, institutional capacity may be only as strong as the basic information available about the watershed in question. Lack of data in some basins on for instance, historical hydrology patterns or water quality can make management decisions much more difficult.⁴¹⁹ There are certain cases where this is due to alack of monitoring capacity, but it can also be due to a lack of information sharing between countries or even between agencies in one country. Reliable basic information about the watershed in question is crucial for parties to buy into cooperative frameworks. It is also crucial in making management plans, the fundamental

⁴¹³*Ibid*, pp.12-15.

⁴¹⁴K. Annan., World Environment Day Address as reported in the article, “UN urges world to get serious about water issues”, Environmental News Service, 2003, Retrieved from www.unep.org/cpi/briefs/Brief06June.doc, 18/12/2021, 13:00pm, pp.3-7.

⁴¹⁵Annan., World Environment Day, pp.8-9.

⁴¹⁶J. Gehrig and M.M. Rogers, “Water and Conflict incorporating peacebuilding into water development”, *Catholic Relief Services*, 2009, pP.79-92.

⁴¹⁷ HELVETAS Cameroon, “Water catchment protection, learning and experiencing sharing series”, Bamenda, 2005, pp.35-49.

⁴¹⁸*Ibid*, pp.50-53.

⁴¹⁹ D. J. Peterson-Perlman, C.V. Jennifer and T.W. Aaron, “International water conflict and cooperation: challenges and opportunities”, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02508060.2017.1276041>, 12/7/2022, 4:15pm.

aspects of a watershed, the hydrology, the people, the uses, the biology and the topography must be accounted for in any effective plan.⁴²⁰

3. Political Factors

- Institutionalize Conflict Solution as Part of Water Governance

In many places, the response to concerns over ensuring stakeholder participation and negotiation has been the creation of water-user boards whose aim is to include representatives of all the relevant stakeholders⁴²¹. The issue of stakeholders has been disappointing in many ways. Firstly, comprehensive stakeholder's participation in water governance as a whole that is including the formulation and renegotiation of the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks as essential elements in water governance has been limited⁴²². Secondly, within their limits and often unclear mandates, water user boards have had a tendency to reproduce existing power balances among stakeholders and thus have come to legitimize rather than challenge and alter these relations.⁴²³

Despite the lack of comprehensive understanding of local and national water-related conflicts, it seems safe to say that water-related conflicts are issue-based (rather than universal) and diverse and they change over time as a function of changing demands and options of water use⁴²⁴. Thus, rather than assuming that a single organizational structure like a water-use board would be capable of identifying, representing and negotiating the interests involved in the multitude of water-related conflicts⁴²⁵, the institutional arrangement for effective water governance, including conflict resolution should aim to create opportunities, an enabling environment for the articulation of water-related conflicts and the negotiation of the associated conflicting interests⁴²⁶. Therefore, four elements seem essential in an enabling environment of this sort:

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ HELVETAS Cameroon, "Water catchment protection", pp.35-49.

⁴²² P. Wester, D.J. Merrey and M.D. Lang, "Boundaries of consent: Stakeholder representation in River Basin Management in Mexico and South Africa", *World Development*, Vol.31, No.5, pp.812-832.

⁴²³ *Ibid*, pp.833-840.

⁴²⁴ D. Michel, "Water conflict pathways and peacebuilding strategies", *United States Institute for Peace*, No.164, 2020, pp.40-47.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Jonas Kikishiy, 49years, Teacher, Mbiame, 06/0/2020.

⁴²⁶ *Idem.*

- a. A water ombudsman⁴²⁷-like institution, with triple function of receiving and registering cases of water-related conflicts, providing third party mediation in situations of water-related conflicts and providing third-party arbitration in cases where conflicts cannot be solved through mediation⁴²⁸.
- b. Improved options and increased space for the involvement of water-users in discussions of and decision-making regarding water policy principles and priorities locally and nationally⁴²⁹. The need for such efforts will differ from setting to setting, but a general thrust towards more inclusive and transparent processes of governance is necessary.
- e. Capacity enhancement among water users within legal aspects of water management. This may include legal literacy campaigns, the discrimination of dissemination of information and two-way communication regarding the establishment of local and where relevant national regulatory frameworks by law⁴³⁰.
- f. Access to water-related knowledge and information, that is to general hydrological assessment of the quality and quantity of water available within specific geographical areas, as well as to a fund to which stakeholders could apply to have assessment made of the potential or actual impacts or projected or actual water use⁴³¹.

- **Effective Water Governance**

Rather than water scarcity in itself, water-related conflicts are caused by the way in which water and its use are governed. In its framework for action entitled “Towards Water Security”, the Global Water Partnership stated that water crises are often crises of governance and identified making water governance effective as one of the highest priorities for action.⁴³² The Global

⁴²⁷ The word ombudsman comes from the Swedish ombudsman meaning “Legal representative”. An ombudsman is a legal representative, often appointed by a government or organization to investigate complaints made by individuals in the interest of the citizens or employees. It can also be defined as an official appointed to investigate individuals’ complaints against a company or organization, especially a public authority.

⁴²⁸ L. Oyebande, “water problems in Africa-how can the sciences help?” *Hydrological Sciences Journal*, Vol.46, No.6, 2001, pp.17-26.

⁴²⁹H.B Tantoh and D. Simatele, “Complexity and uncertainty in water resource governance in Northwest Cameroon: Reconnoitring the challenges and potential of community-based water resource management”, *Land Use Policy*, Vol.75, pp.251-256.

⁴³⁰*Ibid*, pp.257-260.

⁴³¹Michel, “Water conflict pathways and peacebuilding strategies”, pp.40-48.

⁴³² V. Shiva, *Water wars: Privatisation, pollution and profit*, Cambridge, South End Press, 2002, pp.45-50.

Water Partnership defines water governance as “The range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society.”⁴³³ Governing water inevitably involves governing conflicting interests. As Postel describes it, “Water unlike other scarce, consumable resources, is used to fuel all facets of society from biologies to economies to aesthetics and religious practices.

As such, there is no such thing as managing water for a single purpose. All water management is multi-objective and is therefore by definition based on conflicting interests.⁴³⁴ Fundamentally, conflict prevention and mitigation in water-resource management is a matter of recognizing interests relating to water governance at different levels, from local to the international level, and of mediating and arbitrating in negotiations between these conflicting interests.

Institutions of all kinds can be involved in the water governance for large cross-border and international entities to local or regional governments, institutions of much smaller or civil society-based organizations and communities. Nevertheless, they have to be dynamic by reforming institutions for better governance. Management bodies of water today undergo institutional and structural changes that reflect national aspirations for a better efficiency and improved performance. At the same time, however, many organizations whose primary function is not the water management are responsible for areas that can have a huge impact on water resources such as agriculture, industry, trade and energy.

- **Regulation and Control of Privatization Process**

Governments should have the capacity and authority to protect the public interest (social principles of water management) in the bidding process and contract negotiations. The best way to do this is to establish mechanisms for the evaluation and comparison of bids in order to be able to assess differences in a qualified manner, to define clearly pro-poor targets for investment, coverage, service standard and water quality as well as costs and tariffs.⁴³⁵ Moreso, to determine

⁴³³ *Ibid.* pp.50-52.

⁴³⁴ W.T. Aaron, *Conflict prevention and resolution in water systems*, UK, Elgar Publishing Inc., 2002, pp.34-48.

⁴³⁵ A. Hardoy and S. Ricardo, “New Models for the Privatisation and sanitation for the urban poor”, *Environment & Urbanisation*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2000, pp.63-75.

the type, quality and timing of the installation and the location of the connection, it is important to separate initiatives to privatise water as a resource from initiatives to privatise the water supply, otherwise it is not clear what is being privatized and conflict may arise on false grounds.⁴³⁶

Gleick and his colleagues recommend that, the responsibilities of each partner are made clear.⁴³⁷ For example, the government retains public ownership of water sources as well as defining and enforcing laws and regulations about water quality and that clear dispute-resolution procedures are developed prior to privatization. Unfortunately, the greatest need for water services often exist in those countries with the weakest public sector, yet the greatest risk of failed participation also exists where governments are weak.⁴³⁸ This dilemma is often caused by discrepancies in experience, information, human and financial resources between government and private operators. In order to resolve these problems, independent technical assistance and an overview of the contract are essential.

- **Policy and Governance Strategy**

Broad-based engagement of water users, communities and other stakeholders in water resources management is required to make informed and legitimate decisions⁴³⁹. The inhabitants of the Bamenda Grassfields Region need such engagements now more than ever as climate change and growing demands on natural resources make more people compete for limited water supplies⁴⁴⁰.

The tensions between local farmers and animal herders in the Bamenda Grassfields over increasingly scarce water and land reached a high point in the 1990s when many people died in

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ P.H. Gleick, W. Gary, L.C Elizabeth and R. Rachel, "The new economy of water: The risks and benefits of globalization and privatization of fresh water, http://www.pacinst.org/reports/new_economy_of_water.pdf, 28/7/2022, 10:20pm.

⁴³⁸ H.D. Thomas, "Environmental scarcity and violent conflicts: Evidences from cases", *International Scarcity*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1994, pp.5-40.

⁴³⁹ Aaron, *Conflict prevention*, pp.161-165.

⁴⁴⁰ E. Yenkong Sobseh, "The settlement of conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields: Traditional and Colonial methods, 1889-1961", Diplôme D'étude Approfondie (DEA) in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, pp.120-129.

clashes between these communities⁴⁴¹. By bringing communities together, to participate in landuse decisions, will go a long way to help communities to restore and better manage natural resources and reduce local tensions⁴⁴²

- **Decentralisation of Water**

Where water management is heavily centralized as it is in many parts of the world, the reliance on centralized water agencies and large-scale construction can be balanced with decentralized, soft-path approaches of water efficiency, alternative nontraditional supplies, improved economics and regional decentralized water basin approaches⁴⁴³.

Writing about Iran, Kaveh Madani⁴⁴⁴ notes that, “such a management paradigm recognizes the inter-related dynamics of the water sector with other sectors, cures the problem causes rather than its symptoms, manages water rather than controlling it and benefits from effective non-structural (soft) solutions forexample regulations, institutions, taxation, monitoring and population control as much as it benefits from structural solutions (examples dam construction, water diversion, using irrigation sensors)⁴⁴⁵.

- **Stakeholders Dialogues**

The challenge of collective action is significant, but it can be overcome if and when societies recognize the benefits of needed changes and the perils of continuing with business as usual⁴⁴⁶. Consensus on collective action is the product of global, trans-boundary, national, state or local

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Helen B. Lawong, 75years, Former Deputy, Squares, 14/01/2020.

⁴⁴² P. Gleick. “Environmental and security water conflict chronology”, Pacific Institute, updated 2006. <http://www.worldwater.org/chronology.html>, 28/02/2020, 2:00pm, pp.31-33.

⁴⁴³Tantoh and Simatele, “Complexity and uncertainty in water resource governance”, pp.235-240.

⁴⁴⁴ M. Kaveh, “Water management in Iran: What is causing the looming Crises?”, *Journal of Environmental Studies*, Vol.4, No.4, pp.315-327.

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Peter Wirba Fomukong, 45years, Computer Technician, Kumbo, 08/08/2020.

dialogues⁴⁴⁷. Consensus enables the rewarding of compliance with desired actions (such as tax breaks) and the imposition of penalties for noncompliance⁴⁴⁸.

Moreso, there are many ways to conduct dialogues. When dialogues occur amid tensions or conflicts, they can occur through formal or informal diplomatic processes or through discussions organized by the civil society and other third parties such as the United Nations, the World Bank and Bilateral agencies⁴⁴⁹.

- Making Water Scarcity Everybody's Business

World Water Day 2007 is a day for raising the profile of water scarcity⁴⁵⁰. Actions to cope with water scarcity are needed at various levels.

- a. At international level, countries need to seek increased cooperation in dealing with transboundary water management issues, within the IWRM framework, focusing on negotiations and dialogue and on the quest to optimize the overall societal benefits of water⁴⁵¹.
- b. At national level, policies and governance need adapting in order to better account for increased scarcity and address competing uses in a fair and equitable way⁴⁵². The institutional integration of water policies and increased stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes are paramount to this process, and the development of effective conflict-resolution mechanisms will become increasingly important⁴⁵³.

⁴⁴⁷ S. Khepi and T. Nja'a, *Youth peace training manual*, Nairobi, AAC publications, 2007, pp.37-40.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.38-56.

⁴⁴⁹ Sanguv, "Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies", pp.111-136.

⁴⁵⁰ World Water Day, "Coping with water scarcity, challenge of the twenty-first century", www.worldwaterday.org, 19/12/2021, 20:14pm, pp.1-2.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp.3-4.

⁴⁵² Human Development Report, "Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis", United Nation Development Program, New York, 2006, www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr2/, 19/12/2021, 20:21pm, pp.2-4.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*, pp.4-6.

c. At local level, better management practices are needed in all fields, leading to increased productivity and sustainability in water use and to improved sectoral integration in the management of water resources⁴⁵⁴.

- **Implementation of the Water Related Structural Development Goals (SDG)**

The implementation of the water SDGs raises important governance challenges that governments cannot tackle alone. Whether the water-related goals are successfully reached may depend in a large part, on their abilities to engage the wide range of stakeholders concerned with the water related goal⁴⁵⁵. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders provides them with opportunities to be part of the solutions and share the views and priorities, raise awareness on water risks and costs, foster production of services and policy, manage trade-offs related to water allocation and prevent or solve water conflicts over water use⁴⁵⁶. However, there is a high degree of fragmentation of players and decision-makers in the water sector, which roles and responsibilities are not always clear and tend to overlap. Identifying who can do what to support the implementation of the water SDGs is an important step to capture the contribution that each category of actors can make⁴⁵⁷. It also brings attention on how they interact with each other and how they can develop mutually-supportive initiatives to hit the water-related targets in the different themes.

- **Governments** set-up the institutional landscape within which water is managed and can play a critical role to translate the global water SDGs into national policy frameworks and agendas for water, mobilize dedicated funding and set incentives to hit the targets.
- **Business'** contribution in implementing the water goals can take the form of investments in infrastructures and innovative technologies to improve water efficiency and better manage water related risks.

⁴⁵⁴ UN-Water, "coping with water scarcity: a strategic issue and priority for system wide action", www.unwater.org, 19/12/2021, 20:25pm, pp.1-6.

⁴⁵⁵ Khepi and Nja'a, *Youth peace training manual*, pp.37-40.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp.41-45.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with Peter Yaah, 50years, Teacher, Nso, 05/08/2020.

- **Civil society** encompasses a variety of players, from local informal to more formalized community-based organizations and NGOs and includes unheard voices such as women, youths, indigenous communities and the poor. They can contribute to the implementation of the water SDGs through advocacy, information-sharing on local realities and needs, social mobilization and local development through capacity building and raising awareness.
- **Academia** can contribute to produce and share technical and scientific information and evidence to build a sound knowledge-base in support of the formulation of policies, decisions, strategies and tools for the implementation of the water-related goals.

- **Capacity Building**

All actions identified in the Dublin Conference Report require well trained and qualified personnels.⁴⁵⁸ Countries should identify as part of national development plans, training needs for water resources assessment and management and take steps internally and if necessary with technical co-operation agencies to provide the required training and working conditions which help to retain the trained personnels.⁴⁵⁹

Governments must also assess their capacity to equip their water and other specialists to implement the full range of activities for integrated water resources management⁴⁶⁰. This requires provision of an enabling environment in terms of institutional and legal arrangements, including those for effective water-demand management. More so, awareness raising is a vital part of a participatory approach to water resources management. Information, education and communication support programmes must be an integral part of the development process.⁴⁶¹

In the framework of the follow-up procedures, all Governments should initiate periodic assessments of progress⁴⁶². At the international level, United Nations institutions concerned with

⁴⁵⁸ A. Zehnder and Y.H. Schertenleib, "Water issues: the need for action at different levels", *Aquat Sci*, Vol.65, No.1, 2003, pp.1-20.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp.21-23.

⁴⁶⁰ Ako Ako, Eneke and Elambo, "Water resource Management", pp.888-889.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp.900-902.

⁴⁶² P. Gleick, "Water and conflict", *A journal of International Security*, Vol.18, No.1, 1993, pp.79-112.

water should be strengthened to undertake the assessment and follow-up process.⁴⁶³ In addition, to involve private institutions, regional and non-governmental organizations along sidelaws concerning water management and utilization, creating water management structures such as SNEC and CAM Water⁴⁶⁴ and ensuring that the enter population is provided with good and sufficient water in order to avoid and curb conflicts over water⁴⁶⁵. Cameroons with all interested governments in the assessment and follow-up, should create a world water forum or council to which all such groups could adhere.

- **Fair Presentation**

Perceived bias should be identified and addressed in order to help conflicting parties engaged in solution-seeking processes⁴⁶⁶. Working with a diverse network of organizations that are already known and trusted by parties to the conflict can help to overcome this challenge. Identifying social, cultural and gender barriers that may prevent the fair representation of important stakeholders, foreexample women, youth or minorities within a community is an important step to ensuring that all oarties in the conflict are taken into account and that all parties have a say in the resolution process and potential solution⁴⁶⁷. Solutions that ignore the voices of those silenced in the resolution process are unlikely to resolve all aspects of the conflict and may therefore lead to superficial or short-term solutions and future conflicts⁴⁶⁸.

Communities should be involved in decision making and putting more investment into the water sector⁴⁶⁹. These are some of the ways to ensure access for more people. The leaders concerned in water control and distribution must ensure integrity by ensuring more openness in dealing with issues of water and land in the Bamenda Grassfields Region. Remember that in rural

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, pp.113-119.

⁴⁶⁴ G. Sanguv Ngefor, "Institutional changes", pp.45-198.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with Augustine Wara, 56years, Teacher, Batibo, 16/08/2020.

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with Caleb Kigha Njeba, 37years, Veterinarian, Ndu, 06/08/2020.

⁴⁶⁷ J.J Van der Waarde, "Helvetas cameroon experiences in catchment protection activities", www: <http://www.helvetascameroon.org>, 08/03/2022, 8:40pm, pp.11-17.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp.18-20.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Blasius Nformi Mbinkar, 67years, Retired Teacher, Kumbo, 16/09/2020.

communities, access to land is commensurate with access to water. This explains the numerous conflicts between pastoralists and farming communities⁴⁷⁰.

- Available Processes

It is easier to prevent and resolve conflict at an early stage when people are aware of the mediation options available to them and feel empowered and able to access and participate meaningfully in these⁴⁷¹. Providing clear information about the range of choices available and their advantages and disadvantages is essential in helping local communities design a conflict resolution process that responds to their needs and concerns⁴⁷². Stakeholders can play an important role by ensuring that this discussion process is inclusive and that special needs or concerns of different groups or community members are identified and taken into account⁴⁷³.

4. Inter-Cultural Dialogue

Cultural differences are often intertwined with water and resource conflicts and can create invisible barriers to reaching understanding and agreement⁴⁷⁴. Overlooking these is likely to undermine long-term success in conflict prevention or resolution processes. Sensitizing different groups to the reasons behind the perspectives, behaviours or cultural values held by others is therefore a crucial part of trying to understand, resolve or prevent conflicts⁴⁷⁵. This is relevant not only for conflicting parties themselves to understand, but also for any potential mediator be they traditional authorities, government officials, as even mediators can bring a bundle of assumptions, values and experiences that may colour their interpretation of a conflict⁴⁷⁶.

Sensitization can be worked into existing platforms such as community dialogues, local radio and other media and ongoing development or capacity building activities. In its simplest form, it

⁴⁷⁰ Fonchingong, and Fonjong, "The concept of self-reliance", pp.100-129.

⁴⁷¹ M. Mbufung and H. Tah, "Land tenure system and conflict resolution in water catchment areas, the North West Province", *Helvetas Cameroon*, 2002, pp.166-173.

⁴⁷² *Ibid*, pp.174-180.

⁴⁷³ Interview with John Tata Nsame, 62years, Retired Community Worker, Nseh, 15/07/2020.

⁴⁷⁴ A. J. Njoh, "Determinants of success in community self-help projects", *International Development Planning Review*, Vol.28, No.3, pp.396-410.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 411-417.

⁴⁷⁶ B. Page, "Communities as agents of commodification: The Kumbo Water Authority in NorthWest Cameroon", *Geoforum*, Vol.34, No.4, pp.488-501.

is about getting to know the other side, putting yourself in their situation and trying to understand their perspective and how it differs from yours⁴⁷⁷.

Water conflicts continue to be on the rise as a result of several challenges such as climate change, corruption and embezzlement which needs to be addressed immediately. The links between water and conflicts are far more complex, diffuse and dependent on a number of intervening factors. It is this mix that determines whether, how and to what extent water-related risks indeed becomes security issues. In response to the challenges to water conflict resolution, a number of propositions have been made to enable us curb this phenomenon. That means action can be taken to reduce water-related risks. Well- considered and targeted actions can potentially avert conflicts, ensuring that the feared vicious cycle between water-related risk, conflict and insecurity does not emerge. We need to shape water challenges into virtuous cycles of water cooperation and water-based peacebuilding. After detailly treating the issue of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, we shall now give a general conclusion for this work.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Anthony Kinkoh Bah, 56, civil Servant, Nkor-Noni, 29/07/2020.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Potable water supply is a major challenge especially in rural communities in the developing world, the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon inclusive. The human body is largely made up of water, and it is the necessary medium for nutrient transfer and waste removal. Without water, human cells and organs could not adequately perform their life-sustaining functions. Furthermore, portable water has no substitute for most of its basic and non-discretionary uses such as drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. Currently, however, about 884 million people in the world still do not have access to an improved drinking water source.

The threat of water wars was evoked throughout the 1980s and the 1990s by the United Nations, the World Bank and various academics. In recent years, the United Nations has pulled back from this position, but this did not prevent Margaret Beckett, the then United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, spoke in 2007 about the Darfur crisis in Sudan being intimately related to climate change and water scarcity. There is evidence that countries engage in wars over water especially at the rural communities. These conflicts have profoundly frustrating effects on development efforts, further entrenching social problems such as gender discrimination and destabilising local governance. The water riots against the Bechtel Scheme in Bolivia in 1999 and the on going contention between landowners and poorer peasants in the Chittoor District, India, over the lowering of the water table, are typical of an increasing number of local conflicts. The case in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon has not been different as many conflicts over water have been recorded, such as that in Bali and Kumbo.

While incidents of water-related violence are often thought to be related to disputes over access to and control of water, a growing number are direct and indirect attacks on water and sanitation systems in conflicts that may have started for any number of other more traditional reasons, including political, economic and ideological ones. The outcome of local conflicts tends to reflect societal problems. Those who are marginalized in society tend to lose most in water conflicts, for example the rural populations.

Furthermore, contemporary conflict management systems in Cameroon neglect the importance of the indigenous systems of the communities over which the modern state has gained jurisdiction. The challenges involved in the management of natural resources call for response in the form of new conflict management models that take into account the socio-cultural and political frameworks and peculiarities of indigenous communities. Community participation in the decision-making process of state institutions can ensure that the indigenous cultural values of the rural population are taken into consideration in designing strategies for judicious management of water resources. The functionality of existing Land Tenure Commissions on the modalities for resolving natural resource management conflicts needs to be reinforced by including farmers, foresters, pastoralists, community leaders and other resource users at the local level.

More so, Government and its development partners should seek means by which the relevant aspects of conflict management systems of the indigenous communities can be synthesized with those of the modern state in order to harmonise potential benefits of both systems. It is important to investigate and understand the social structures and the various forms of authority and power of indigenous communities, to ensure that their legitimate interests are also taken into consideration in decision making.

A critical observation of some of the resurging inter-ethnic conflicts in Cameroon leads to the conviction that any state intervention for promoting peaceful co-existence which is not firmly rooted in the people's culture will not be sustainable. By assuming that government administrative and technical officers know what is best for the local population, their input into building the critical linkages needed for solving resource management conflicts is undermined. Involving indigenous communities in the process of decision-making offers better prospects for development of sustainable water conflicts management, now and in the future.

Water-related conflicts started from time immemorial and have persistently been a regional and worldwide predicament. These decades have witnessed a proliferation of a number of conflicts as a result of water scarcities. Levy and Sidel observed that water disputes both within and between

nations are greatly increased and have outlined a number of factors that contribute to water conflicts including low rainfall, inadequate water supply, and dependence on one major water source, population explosion and fast urban development. Eventhough the world acknowledges water-related problems stretch out beyond boundaries, little to no efforts have been made to deliberate on global water governance that looks at shared water challenges inclusively.

In the first water development report, the UN affirmed that water conflict is fundamentally a problem of governance and communities are encountering many social, economic and political problems, on how to manage water efficiently. This notwithstanding, water shortage can provoke regional friction and dispute and can be at the center of terrorism, local tribal and ethnic conflict and political conflict in the context of the struggles for economic development.

In order to better understand the issue of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, this thesis is divided in six chapters, intended to back up the topic. Chapter one of the study dwelled on the background to the study. The main objective of this chapter was geared at presenting a background to better understand the origin and evolution of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfield Region of Cameroon.

To better appreciate the issue of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, chapter one was divided into four parts. The first looked at the geographical setting of the Bamenda Grassfields, the second at the historical background and thirdly at the socio-political organisation. This was all examined in relation to water. The fourth part examined the advent and settlement of the Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields. This part gave us an insight of the origin of water conflicts in the Grassfields in relation to the arrival of the Fulanis.

It emerged from this chapter that the geographical, historical and socio-political evolution of the Bamenda Grassfields has a link as far as water conflicts in the region is concerned. More so, the arrival of the Fulanis in the Grassfields in 1916, prior to the invitation of the British, led to the beginning of water conflicts. They settled in the well watered parts of the region with their cattles, contaminating water sources at the detriment of the indigenes.

Chapter two studied the History of water in Cameroon. The objective of this chapter is to expose the importance of water during the colonial and precolonial period and how water frameworks were managed. The chapter surveys the human dimension in the history of water governance in Cameroon, to discover the various institutional aspects of the governance concept. We already find primitive forms of water governance in the precolonial area and these were community initiatives which still exist till date.

It was revealed in this chapter that, water governance in a more centralized form, appeared in the colonial era, with the introduction of water laws and the gradual change of water status. In the 1960s after the independence of French and British Cameroon, there was the need to review the approaches of the two development strategies applied by the French and the British. New stakeholders entered the arena around water policy making, which politicized water engineering. Since then, other dimensions of water governance became more apparent. Eventhough the present actors in Cameroon are almost the same since the 70s, there exist nevertheless, differences in the evolution of community development or community water supply in the two regions.

Chapter three demonstrated the reasons for water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. Because of its fundamental necessity, water scarcity had been both a source of regional dispute and a tool of military conflict throughout history. Moreso, it had been the cause of tribal conflict and border tension and has been used for ethnic warfare, terrorism and political actions. Water was used as an excuse for violence.

It is affirmed in this chapter that a host of factors ranging from economic, social, cultural and political factors were responsible for the numerous water conflicts in the Grassfields Region. These conflicts occurred because fresh water resources were necessary, but yet scarce. They were a center of disputes arising out of the need for potable water, irrigation and energy generation. The lack of cost-effective water supply options in areas like the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, put severe pressures on water users, whether corporate, government or individuals,

leading to tension and possibly aggression. Growing water scarcity, increasing demand and poor management of water resources caused rising competition over water allocation.

Water is a vital element for human life and human activities in the Bamenda Grassfields are closely connected to the availability and quality of water. Unfortunately, water is a limited resource and, in the future, access might get worse with climate change. Water scarcity occurs when the demand for water exceeds the available amount of water. It also occurs when the poor quality of water limits its usability. Therefore, water quantity is not the only benchmark for scarcity, water quality also has a bearing.

Globally, water conflict is a cancer worm that has eaten deeply in the world at large and the Cameroonian society in particular. This has been the case in many African countries such as the Middle East. There is therefore the need to address this issue before it goes out of hand.

Chapter four examined some case studies of water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields, such as the cases of Bambili-Babanki-Tungoh 1950-1998, Bali-SNEC in 1957 and Kumbo-SNEC in 1975. We look at examples of conflicts that have occurred in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, between 1916 and 1998 related to water. A lot of conflicts have occurred in this region and still continue to do so due to lack of potable water.

The water crisis that humankind is facing today is largely of our own making. It has resulted not only from the natural limitations of the water supply or the lack of financing and appropriate technologies, but also from profound failures in water governance especially in Africa. National water policies in Cameroon can be seen to act as a hindrance to community development. The radical social and political transformations that are taking place in the Cameroon water sector (most recent structural adjustment effects, on-going democratization processes), call for a wider and a more effective participation in the process of water management by all groups of stakeholders.

Leadership is an important factor for an effective participation management. The issue of leadership in most local water projects in the Western Highlands of Cameroon is very critical as

it stands as the main factor behind the success/failure of a majority of all the water supplies that have been studied in this research work. If the leadership of a community is committed and receptive to change, the process is likely to proceed smoothly. But based in this present context where most of the leaders are too dominant and want to pull all the benefits to their interest, democratic participation is hardly possible.

Being the backbone in local development, the challenge is to open up charismatic leaders to new functions and attitudes, without destroying the respect they have in the community, or transforming them into bureaucrats. In the Western highlands of Cameroon, sometimes a community has various interest groups struggling over the same water scheme, so that a lot of work has to be devoted to resolving conflicts and starting negotiations.

In this chapter, emphasis was laid on chosen case studies which better suits the study in question. It was discovered that a lot of conflicts have occurred in the Bamenda Grassfields over water between groups in the community and between groups and state owned entities from 1916-1998. The chapter concludes that, most of these conflicts over water were as a result of poor management and even though most of these conflicts escalated to wars, they were later solved.

Chapter five discussed the the role played by the Government, NGOs and Traditional authorities in water conflict resolution in the Bamenda grassfields. These stakeholders have done a lot to solve conflicts over water in the region and still continue to do so till date. Their influence in the Region can not be undermined. Stakeholders have been involved in solving conflicts over water in the Bamenda Grassfields for many decades. Just as no single solution will eliminate water insecurity, fortunately, a wide variety of approaches has been put in place to curb this phenomenon.

Finally, chapter six throws light on the challenges to water conflicts and proposed solutions on what communities can do to eradicate these conflicts. To better examine this chapter, it has been shared into two parts. The first part examined the challenges of resolving water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon while part two looked at prevention of water conflicts.

A lot of approaches have been put in place to solve conflicts over water, but challenges still continue to be faced in this domain. Many factors continued to hinder the resolution of conflicts over water. Water insecurity throughout much of the world and the Bamenda Grassfields in particular is growing as populations grow, economies expand and climate change begins to impact the hydrological cycle. This growing water insecurity is combining with other societal stressors to produce violent conflicts or trigger destabilizing migration.

Global water resources are coming under increasing pressure. Demand is beginning to outpace supply and supply itself is being impacted in terms of both quantity and quality by a range of factors including hydrological variability, climate change and environmental degradation. For poor and marginalized populations, who often live on marginalized lands, reliable access to water is tenuous and ensuring adequate water quality is becoming increasingly difficult. As water resources become scarce and as pressure on these resources increase, tension is likely to grow.

There remains no doubt about the critical importance of water resources to every aspect of life on earth or the enormity of water challenges facing human society and increasing human populations. In spite of notable progress improving water resources management, access to improved water supplies and sanitation, and water productivity remains an immense challenge.

Solutions exist for even thorniest water problems. Now we need significant political will, collective action and successful management of trade-offs and vested interests to implement them. Meeting the growing demands on water resources for people, economies and nature requires bold action by governments, water users, donors and the private sector working in partnership to transform water management in fundamental ways. Despite the apparent complexity of many water and security challenges, potential solutions are not difficult to identify, once the key drivers of risk are correctly understood. By bringing communities together to participate in land-use decisions and better manage natural resources, reducing local tensions. Growing value should be placed on identifying and addressing water-related conflicts as early as possible.

While we can usually identify solutions to water and security challenges, they are often difficult to implement for a number of reasons including political and economic trade-offs inherent in proposed solutions, problems associated with collective action such as the issue of free riders who use services without paying for them, scarce financial resources and/or technical capacity, social or cultural barriers and widespread and entrenched corruption. The barriers can be overcome with sufficient political will.

This notwithstanding, failure to avoid or resolve water conflicts have been traditionally blamed on human factors such as inadequate political will and unsustainable commitment to potable water provisions as well as poor management and governance practices. As a result this and because potable water is fundamental to human survival and development, some civil society and non-governmental organizations have over the past few decades, advocated for the establishment, by the International community, of a human right to water. In July 2011, the United Nations General Assembly, referring to previous resolutions relating to human rights and potable water delivery, passed a resolution stating that the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation is a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights.

Therefore, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously upheld the resolution and affirmed that, “the human right to safe drinking and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health as well as the right to life and human dignity”. Since the Human Rights Council resolution proclaims that the human right to water and sanitation is universal and enforceable, it can be considered a significant step towards the provision of portable water services to all and a way to avoid or curb water conflicts. It means that within the framework of a state’s responsibility for the promotion and protection of all universal human rights, the government can no longer deny their legal responsibility to ensure the provision of water and sanitation services to those currently without such access. Thus, it is clear that adequate access to and affordability of safe potable water of sufficient quantity is intrinsically linked to human welfare, public health, sanitation and hygiene, human productivity, poverty alleviation as well as to the social and economic development of a given society and a reduction in conflicts related to water.

In the Bamenda Grassfields Region of Cameroon, conflicts are often traced back to the use and control of water and other natural resources like land, between different user groups in the community such as farmers, grazers and the community members as a whole. Potable water supply is a major challenge in the rural communities. Although they are supposed to determine the way in which their natural resources are managed, endless top-down control from central governments, passive participation, inadequate technical know-how and financing mechanisms hinder the smooth operation of rural water systems. Thus, in certain contexts, it may not be possible to bring people together for dialogue due to safety or security risks. Where threats, criminalization or violence against indigenous peoples and/or water, environment or human right defenders is a risk or treated with impunity by authorities, ensuring safety for community members should be a priority and constant consideration. Building community resilience is crucial in circumstances of potential safety risks and security threats.

The institutional framework in Cameroon is characterized by the progressive repositioning of the state and the diverse contribution of all the actors of the water sector in the new environment. The institutional framework currently in construction is not backed by a reference document which takes into account the “National Water Policy” in order to orientate all the actors involved in the water sector. It is worth mentioning that, while adopting the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), there is a weak and unstable positioning of the existing institutions involved in the water sector which inhibits their significant manifestation at the national level. This non-integration of these institutions coupled with the co-existence of competence and powers of different water structures of the state could be cited as the main causes of the inefficiency of water.

The difficulty encountered by the water sector can also be attributed to the fact that there exists no clear principle for the management of water resources at the level of the watershed coupled with the non application of the pollute/pay principle as is the case of user/pay principle, a situation which merits clarification within the context of good governance. In view of the present political, technical, socio-economic and judicial environment in water management, the necessary conditions are present for an efficient follow-up of the process of IWRM in Cameroon. In such a

process it is necessary to create and mobilize a “unique centre” to pilot the water sector. In effect, there are many risks in the absence of a unique centre of reflection and strategic orientation of great reference for an IWRM at the national level. In diverse parts of the Cameroonian territory, varied visions and practices develop leading to a generalized confusion on the part of the actors in the water sector).

Even though until date, there exists no national water policy document as a unique orientation, there are instead a good number of reference documents in the water domain as well as strategic sectoral documents in the water sector. Based on the fact that there exist many strategic documents in the water sub-sectors, there is a growing need to assemble these sectoral strategies and also indispensable to have a strategic and policy document within the best time limit which will combine the sub-sectoral policies and constitute a reference guide for all the actors, including the development partners. It is commonly admitted that the institutional framework is at the same time a set of rules established in view of satisfying the collective interest pertaining to water in all its forms, and a set of organizations created to maintain and apply these rules and satisfy this interest.

In view of this we can attest that the current water sector in Cameroon has been built-up over time, based on the different events which generated consciousness of the population and the political decision-makers on the stakes surrounding water. It is worth noting that the institutional framework of the water sector in Cameroon is greatly influenced by the international environment which is today marked by neoliberal capitalism and interconnection of national economies, with competition and profit-making the main objective. The institutional framework of the water sector in Cameroon is characterized by the central role of the Ministry of Water and Energy (MINEE, Ministère de L'Eau et d'Energie).

As a result of the multi-functional character of the water, there is an intervention of a good number of public operators. Many ministerial divisions are concerned in the water sector: Ministry in charge of Energy, Ministry of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Industry, Ministry in charge of Equipments and Transport, Ministry of Territorial Administration, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry in charge of Civil Protection. Other actors (the private sector, NGOs and the community

in general) are not part of the institutional framework in the strict term but play an important role in the mobilization and the management of the water resources in Cameroon. The Global Water Partnership Cameroon, study offices and diverse companies are also involved in the realization of water installations. Multi-lateral and bi-lateral organisations play an essential role in the realization of water infrastructures by giving financial and/or technical support to the water sector as a whole.

A core component of community resilience is internal unity. Helping communities to strengthen and see the value in their shared values, cultural practices and traditional land management systems can help bring them together. The process of conflict resolution can start by identifying conflict hotspots together with diverse stakeholders, including representatives from the government administration. There is a need for better communication and dialogue and so communities experiencing water conflicts are encouraged to put together committees' dialogue platforms. These could take the structure and organizational form deemed appropriate by the community themselves, but with the basic premise that they are formed of volunteer representatives chosen by the community to mediate conflicting parties and help them to reach an agreement.

Moreso, the idea is to prevent conflict from emerging in the first place, but if it does then to have an established and locally-recognised platform already in place to deal with it. These platforms could then be used as the basis for collaboration in building longer-term conflict resolution strategies as well as other development activities. Further more, while men make most of the decisions about water policy, the role of women is often inappropriately neglected. Women are the gatherers of water in most developing countries and make most of the decisions about its use for drinking and for personal sanitation. Women are also involved in 70% of food production and although food production is a major use of water, women have little voice in this aspect of water policy. The targets of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3) - promote gender equality and empower women are far from being achieved.

From this study, we discovered that water conflicts are not a recent phenomenon and could be traced right back to the colonial era. Even though these conflicts existed, they were not as

pronounced as today because the water sources used at the time such as streams and rivers under went little or no pollution. The advent of the Fulani in 1916 upon invitation by the British saw another dimension of water conflicts. The Fulani settled in the well watered areas of the Bamenda Grassfields leading to pollution of water sources. After the independence of British Cameroon in 1961, serious water accessibility problems started being noticed provoked by rapid population increase and urban growth. This double expansion led to increase in the demand for farmlands and lands for construction of houses. Increase in population led to increase in water pollution as houses were gradually being built close to water sources. Thus this led to the persistent occurrence of water diseases such as cholera.

Further more, we examined the background of our study area and realized that, the Geographical location of the Bamenda Grassfields, the migration and settlement of ethnic groups, the sociopolitical organization of the Bamenda Grassfields and the advent of the Fulani into the area under study greatly contributed to the water crisis in the region in one way or the other. Also after looking at the history of water governance in Cameroon, we discovered that both the British and the Germans had different ways through which they governed their respective areas with regards to water. While the constructed water schemes to serve German offices their homes and Cameroonian populations, the British on their part brought in the concept of self help efforts in Anglophone Cameroon. Here, there little or no government involvement as the planning and execution of these projects was the sole responsibility of the people. This was the same case with the West Cameroon Government.

This notwithstanding, we discovered that customary laws were still very much present and used from the colonial period till 1998 to solve issues related to water. Customary laws governing water were put in place and those who violated them were either sanctioned, were asked to pay fines or faced public humiliation for minor offences while for serious offences the individual was ostracized or sent on exile. Traditional communities believed that water was owned by the gods, thus everyone had right to access it. We further discovered that a number of legal and administrative frameworks governed water in Cameroon all backed by the law coupled with a number of water management structures.

Water resource problems are mounting and have the potential to constrain human wellbeing including that related to economic development, food security and healthy ecosystems. In many parts of the world today, current practices in the management or mismanagement of water resources have led to several challenges in meeting future human, economic and environmental water requirements. To achieve water security, individuals and countries must have reliable and sustainable access to an acceptable quantity and quality of water to meet human, livelihoods, ecosystems and production needs while reducing the risks of extreme hydrological events that can be devastating to people, the environment and economies.

Despite the great challenges to peace that are posed by current and imminent conflicts over water, there is reason for hope that these dangers can be transformed into opportunities. As the United Nations have stated, “Despite widespread perceptions that water basins shared by countries tend to engender hostility rather than collaborative solutions, water is an often-untapped resource of fruitful cooperation”.

Finally, the following can be done to ensure equitable access to freshwater and in reducing the likelihood of armed conflicts over water. Those roles include:

- a. Raising awareness about the importance of access to freshwater.
- b. Documenting conflicts over water and their adverse effects.
- c. Promoting efforts to prevent contamination of water, to conserve it and to use it more efficiently.
- d. Promoting non-violent approaches to resolving conflicts over water.
- e. Supporting a key target of the Millennium Development Goal 7 (MDG 7) which is to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

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1. Question Guides

1. What are the ethnic groups that make up the Bamenda Grassfields Region?
2. Availability of water has always been one of the most important factors determining where people settle. Do you think the different ethnic groups of the Bamenda Grassfields took this into consideration? Give reasons.
3. What sources of water were used by the indigeneous population during the colonial period?
4. Where there any advantages or disadvantages of fetching water from this (these) sources? Give reasons.
5. What are some of the water sources that can be found in the different geographical locations of the Bamenda Grassfields today? Are they good for consumption?
6. Of what significance are some of these water sources to the society?
7. Taking into consideration the fact that water conflicts are a common phenomenon in the Bamenda Grassfields today, can we say that it was the same scenario before the arrival of the Fulani? Give reason(s).
8. Where did the Fulani originate from and how did they get to the area under study (Bamenda Grassfields)?
9. Why did the British government decide to encourage the immigration of Fulani cattle rearers into the Bamenda Grassfields in 1916, during the rule of southern Cameroon by the British?
10. What has been the impact of Fulani immigration on water in the area under study?
11. With the construction of community water schemes, after the independence of British Southern Cameroon in 1961, can we say conflicts over water schemes have been minimized or aggravated? Give reason(s).
12. Why did the government decide to intervene in community water schemes after independence?
13. What has been the impact of government interference in community water schemes?
14. What reason(s) can be given for the constant water conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields?
15. Where did the inhabitants of the area get funds to construct these water schemes?

16. What prompted the construction of community water schemes in the Bamenda Grassfields?
17. What are some of the conflicts that have occurred in the Bamenda Grassfields as a result of Fulani immigration into the region, poor management, between ethnic groups and within ethnic groups? State them and If possible, give the date it occurred and what provoked these conflicts?
18. What strategies have been used by the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), traditional Authorities and the Church in the management of water conflicts in the region?
 - a. Government
 - b. NGOs
 - c. Traditional Authorities
 - d. The Church
19. What challenges have been faced in the resolution of conflicts over water in the Bamenda Grassfields?
20. In your opinion, what can be done to resolve and prevent conflicts over water in the Bamenda Grassfields?

2. Native Court Ordinance

THE NATIVE COURTS ORDINANCE CAP. 142, LAWS OF NIGERIA

In the Review Jurisdiction of the Resident, Bamenda holden at Bafut, this 15th May, 1958, before Mr. A. B. Westmacott, Resident, Bamenda.

Review No. 84/56.

File No. 361(569).

Bafut Native Court Civil Suit No. 23/53.

Plaintiff: Awemo V. H. of Bambili / Claim: Ownership of land by

Versus

Defendant: Asik V. H of Babanki-tungoh /defendant some years ago.

1. Native Court Judgement dated the 11th December, 1953.

Judgement for plaintiff with a part of the land according to the demarcation of the land. Cost to be refunded to the Court members who inspected the land.

2. Native Court Appeal Judgement dated the 15th July, 1955.

On appeal, judgement modified according to sketch map attached by appeal.

3. District Officer's review judgement dated the 8th September, 1956.

The marking will begin at the very high peak near Bambulue and will come straight down the watershed into the stream known as tuentueng which will follow streams in the same general direction until it reaches the cattle track near market ruga. There a cairn will be erected and the marking will go in a straight line to the raffia bush on the stream that comes across the main road just beyond mile 13. This portion is as claimed by Bambili.

4. Anybody, from either village who now finds himself on land not owned by his own people will have the choice of moving to his own land or staying where he is and paying tax to the new village. If he chooses to do the later he will be permitted to stay and farm. Persons who choose to move must do so before January 1st 1957. This will give them time to harvest their crops. Cattle owners who Amy is involved will continue to be under the same Ardo as before.

5. Defendant asks for review being dissatisfied with the decision of the Assistant District Officer, Mr. Ward on review. Both parties present on the land in dispute. This is a long outstanding dispute involving a large tract of land on top of Sabga. On the high ground adjacent to Bambili, the land is purely grazing land. It then drops suddenly over a rocky escarpment, over most of the height into a valley. This valley is extensively farmed and built over by Babanki-tungoh people—their village being the ridge on the far side of this valley on the edge of the Ndop Plain. There is a lot of truth in Mr. Ward's remarks. The Bambili people did arrive in this area prior to the Babanki-tungoh people, and there is not the slightest doubt that the high ground now in dispute was —no man's land, both parties probably using it for hunting. Then the Fulanis arrived with their cattle and settled on it. With the introduction of law and order, some Babanki-tungohs left the valley they had originally settled in, being short of farming land, and started to farm in the high valley now in the area of dispute. Today they are well established there, even to the extent of building some pan roofed houses. Both parties agree that they have no further evidence to produce other than that already recorded, though the village Head of Bambili points to a spot in the valley referred to above, where, he states, some of his forefathers are buried and where he now makes sacrifices.

Mr. Ward in his decision, stated, in my opinion correctly, that he did not think that the markings or boundary had ever been defined between the parties. It was his opinion that the decisions of the Court of First Instance and the Appeal Court were no more than attempts to arbitrate. They all failed because they choose an unsuitable and artificial line. It was his intention therefore, to create a more suitable natural boundary.

This he did and make a boundary running roughly down the centre of the valley already referred to and extensively occupied by Babanki—tungoh people. He ordered that anybody from either village, who now found himself on land not owned by his own people would have the choice of moving to his own village land or staying where he was and

paying tax to the new village. If he chooses the later, he could stay and farm. This, however, was very one-sided as although many Babanki-tungoh people would be affected. Obviously in these days you cannot expect a large number of persons, who have occupied land for some years without interference, to suddenly pack up and to move lock stock and lance. I am of the opinion that his decision would cause hardship and be difficult to enforce. I therefore set aside his decision.

On the other hand I am not prepared to reinstate in toto the decision of either the Native Court or of, the Appeal Court. Both decisions run along the high grazing land near to the escarpment beyond which and close to, is Bambili village.

After carefully inspecting the land (3days) I have decided that Babanki-tungoh should remain in possession of the land which they now occupy but that all the grazing land on the Bambili side on which is now unoccupied-with the exception on three Babanki-tungoh houses and several Fulani rugas,-should be confirmed as belonging to Bambili. Starting from Bambili Lake, the boundary will be as decided by the Appeal Court until it approaches the footpath running from Babanki-tungoh to Bamenda. It will then bear almost due north from this point along a grassy spur until it reaches a rocky out crop on the steep escarpment defining the valley. It will run along the edge of this escarpment until the cliff like feature ends and the land becomes rolling down land. The boundary will then follow the line as defined by cairns until it reaches the main Bamenda-Kumbo-Nkambe Road (the ring road) at the sharp corner just beyond mile 13. The village head of Bambili to have the right of carrying out sacrifices at the spot in the valley now on Babanki-tungoh land as heretofore.

Each party to be supplied with a copy of the map showing the boundary.

ABW/Monkam:

Administrative Officer Class I.

Source: T.E Ngengong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-ethnic conflicts amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon, 1950-1998)", Masters Dissertation in peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, 2007, pp.73-74.

3. Decision on land dispute

DECISION ON LAND DISPUTE BETWEEN BABANKI-TUNGOH AND BAMBILI AGREED UPON BY THE BAFUT CHIEFS MEETING ON THEIR COUNCIL ON 13/2/65

- 1) That the area in dispute was allocated to Bambili following the Westmacott decision of 1956.
- 2) That it is desirable for the Babanki-tungoh people to have a market for their potatoes about this area, and so a piece of land should be sliced from the Bambili land on this area and allocated to Babanki-tungoh for this purpose. This piece of land will start from the present V.H.F. beacon to a point somewhat westward to a point 10 meters away from the brick building now being constructed by one Babanki-tungoh man somewhat southwards into Bambili land. Hereafter to join the Westmacott line straight ahead. The rest of the line to follow the Westmacott demarcation towards its terminus.
- 3) All houses built by Babanki-tungoh people on Bambili land should remain in Bambili and be known as Bambili people or to quit to Babanki-tungoh. A statement to this effect was to be got from these men who will enable the administration and the Bambili village council to decide whether they should remain or quit.
- 4) The surveyor should be accompanied by four representatives of the Bafut clan Area, drawn from Bafut West and Bafut East constituencies. Stones were to be collected by both villages to be piled up at various places on the line to be readily visible.
- 5) A copy of the amended Westmacott map with statement as was agreed upon by the Bafut clan chiefs to be given to the chiefs of each of the two villages.

Signed: J.N. Foncha
P.M 15/2/65
S.D.O

The above are my draft minutes. You will produce the full minutes please, and give the necessary instructions to the surveyor etc.

Signed: J.N. Foncha
P.M. 15/2/65.

Source: T.E Ngengong, "From friends to enemies: Inter-ethnic conflicts amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon, 1950-1998)", Masters Dissertation in Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromsø, 2007, p.75.

4. Traditional Council Meeting

TRADITIONAL COUNCIL MEETING WITH HON.MUKONG AND HON. KINDO ON THE 16-1-72 IN THE CHIEF'S PALACE IN BABANKI TUNGOH TO FIND OUT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE BABANKI-TUNGOH/BAMBILI DISPUTE.

At 2:30pm Hon. B.N. Mukong, in the presence of the Chief, Traditional Council members, and a host of other Babanki-tungoh people, introduced the Hon. S.N. Kindo and the topic of his visit. In his brief introduction, Hon. Mukong told the house that on the 13th January, 1972, Hon. Kindo, the District Officer, Mezam, the Surveyor and himself went to the disputed site, and saw things for themselves. He then told the Babanki-tungoh people that as the leaders of the area and also sons of the two villages had deemed it expedient to address the two villages in order to seek ways and means by which they could end the long standing dispute between the two ethnic groups. He then concluded by saying that, that was the reason why they were in the palace that day. He declared the floor opened for Kindo to speak to the people of Babanki-tungoh.

Having addressed the Chief, His Council and the people, Hon. S.N. Kindo told the house that the dispute between the two villages was one of a long standing. He went on to say that, they the parliamentarians of the area had come to seek from the people ways by which the matter could be ended. He pointed out that the Parliamentarians come and go, and that they could leave parliament tomorrow. Continuing, he said that since they were the children of the two villages, they were out to find a suitable solution to the dispute. He added that if they are changed or leave Parliament next day, new persons coming might not know the problems of the people very well, and consequently might not tender the right cure to their problems.

Kindo, said that in the multi-party days there was a lot of enmity, nepotism and tribalism among people but today under the C.N.U. Government peace and security are the only media of solving disputes. We went to site under conflict, Hon. Kindo went on and saw that one village claims land and puts it into effective use, but on the contrary the other village claims land and never puts into use at all. He said that he was not going to call the spade a spade. Kindo pointed out that it is the role of the Government to make the best use of the land they have and not to allow it stand wasted. Hon. Kindo appealed to the house to think constructively and to resolve at a peaceful and lasting solution to the issue. As a witness of the marking from start to the finish, Hon. Kindo observed:-

- a) That one village is claiming land and using it, while the other is not doing so.
- b) That in certain place on the marking as showed by Westmacott, Babanki-tungoh had trespassed into Bambili land and Bambili had done vice versa.
- c) That when he first came into Parliament, he was received first in Buea by Babanki-tungoh elements and that Mukong and himself were not well loved by all in the two villages. He then revealed that the hatred for them cannot make Mukong give part of Babanki-tungoh land to Bambili or claim part of Bambili and give to Babanki-tungoh, likewise himself.
- d) That in certain places on the site, he took to himself the powers of the D.O. to suggest to the surveyor to change the marking so as to avoid problems from either village.
- e) That the deposits giving by the two villages calling on the land Tribunal was not to be returned and that it was small, and should be increased so as to meet up with the cost of stones, sand and labour on the construction of a permanent boundary between Babanki-tungoh and Bambili.
- f) That he Kindo was free of blames in Babanki-tungoh because if he knew of any cause to be blamed he would not have come to address the Babanki-tungoh people without fear. He then opened room for questions from the people.

QUESTIONS

1) The first member of the Council asked:-From the time of the Germans to the time of the British rule we had no disputes between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, why are these disputes coming up this time when the people of Cameroon are ruling themselves?Hon. Kindo gave no answer to this question.

2) The Chairman of the Council asked:-I have always been present at the disputed site from the time of the decisions of the law court to this time. I also travelled with Westmacott for three days along this site, why is the map drawn to show Westmacott's decisions not in accordance with his decision? Hon. Kindo did not answer the question.

3)Westmacott made a boundary between Babanki-tungoh and Bambili in 1958 and gave a decision but he never drew a map of the area he visited. In his decision he gave out 3 Babanki-tungoh compounds to Bambili namely-Toh Meshi, Che Veghwo and JaffMukom. The giving out of the compounds did not satisfy the Babanki-tungoh people, and as such they raised a deposit calling on the Land Tribunal to decide the matter.

a) What has happened that the land Tribunal has not come to the site?

b) What has become of the deposit given?

Hon. Kindo said that the deposit given was small to do the work as such it should be increased to make up the cost of sand, stones and labour force to be given.

4) Another Council member asked: -When one makes a summon, he wants that his case be tried. If he is tried and he loses the case then, the courts forfeit his summons, do the Babanki-tungoh people now presume that they have lost the three compounds to Bambili? If they did not lose the case,

a) What therefore were the decisions of the land Tribunal?

b) Where is the deposit of the Babanki-tungoh people?

Hon. Mukong in respond said that Hon. Kindo in his talk appeal to the Babanki-tungoh people to forget the past and to explore ways and means to end this issue, because they politicians did not come as judges but as peace makers to end the dispute.

5) There were four people who visited the site on the 13-1-72. Why was it not possible that all of them come to address this Council today? There was no answer to this question.

6)Between miles posts 12 and 13, the Babanki-tungoh have a common boundary with Bambui, why do Surveyors and Government Officers who came to make the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh boundary always begin their boundary trace from mile post 13, on the Ring Road to Nso?

In Hon. Kindo's attempts to answer the questions, said that they were not out to receive blames but rather, the people of Babanki-tungoh would have praised him, and made suggestions as to what they as their representatives could do to end the situation.

A member of the Council suggested that a conciliation committee could be formed consisting of members from Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages to sit and study the situation at the disputed area and to suggest ways of ending the matter.

The Chief and people of Babanki-tungoh resolved as follows:

1) That for the purpose of peace, the Westmacott map showing the markings should be corrected to work in accordance with his decisions since it was drawn from the said decision.

2) That the law court marking of 1953 between the two villages be respected to appease both villages.

3) That something be done about the deposit of the land Tribunal will not come to the site.

4)That the council and entire people of Babanki-tungoh are happy and grateful for the giant step taken by Hon. Kindo and Hon. Mukong in their attempts to end this matter. The Council and Chief wished them every success.

5)That after consultation with the Council and entire people of Babanki-tungoh, and after a serious study of the Situation the Council and people will tender a report later on the Hons Kindo/Mukong mission to Babanki-tungoh on the 16thJanuary, 1972.

CONCLUSION: -Hon. Mukong thanked the Hon. S.N. Kindo for his endeavour to end the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh dispute. He called on all Babanki-tungoh people to do same.

Hon. Kindo thanked the entire population of Babanki-tungoh for the time and patience sacrificed to come and listen to what he had said. He told the Babanki-tungoh people to wait on the information of the District Officer on when to come to the site for final arrangements. He prayed for a peaceful solution when time came. In conclusion, he said the Governments decisions were final. The rally ended at 5:30pm.

Signed Peter Vewerro

Signed: Secretary

Chairman –Babanki-tungoh

Babanki-tungoh Council

Traditional Council

Copy: To Hon. D.N. Mukong,
Officer-Mezam

To District
To Hon. S.N. Kindo

Source: T.E Ngengong, “From friends to enemies: Inter-ethnic conflicts amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon, 1950-1998)”, Masters Dissertation in peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromso, 2007, pp.76-78.

5. Customer agreement document during subscription



KUMBO WATER AUTHORITY
 P.O. BOX 51 – NTO' NSO'
 TEL: 33 48 16 00
 BUI DIVISION



KWA – Customer Agreement

By signing this agreement, you are entering into a Water Subscription Contract with the Kumbo Water Authority. The following conditions need to be agreed to prior to new service being started.

KWA will be responsible for:

1. Completing the new connection and commencing service within five (5) working days of the signing of this contract.
2. Reading meters on a regular schedule and providing the customer with a monthly bill. The bill will show the amount of water used, the current bill amount and any outstanding charges owed by the customer.
3. Cleaning and maintaining meters as required.
4. Replacing meters that do not function properly because of age or mechanical breakage.
5. Fixing leaks that occur between the water main on the street and the stop cock.
6. Ensuring that all KWA employees are carrying proper identification that clearly states their name and position within KWA.
7. Responding to customer concerns as quickly as possible.

The customer will be responsible for:

1. Paying the monthly bill on or before the stated due date.
2. Applying to have the meter reconnected and paying a reconnect fee following a disconnection for unpaid bills.
3. Protecting the meter from any form of vandalism, intentional breakage, or other misuse.
4. Paying the cost for repair or replacement of damaged meters and the stop cock due to tampering or misuse.
5. Keeping access to the meters clear and open to KWA employees at all times.
6. Keeping all animals, including dogs, away from meters and KWA installations.
7. Reporting leaks, bad meters, or any other problem with water system to KWA, Customer Service Unit as soon as possible.
8. Not allowing any stealing of water from their connection. Failure to do so will result in legal action being taken by KWA.
9. Paying money to the cashier only. No other KWA employee is authorized to accept any money for any work done or for bribes or to pay bills for the customer.

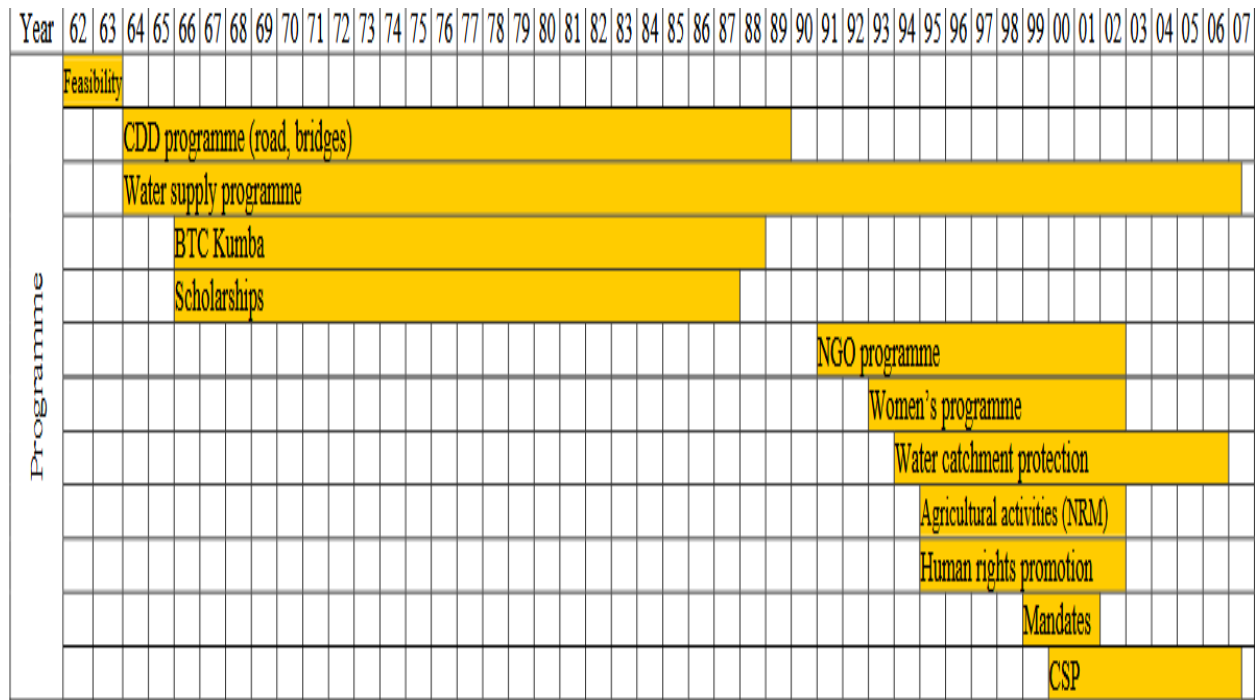
I have read and agree to the conditions of the agreement as stated.

Customer

Chief, Customer Service

Source: G.S Ngefor, “Institutional changes, water accessibility strategies and governance in the Cameroon Western highlands: The case of Bali, kumbo and Bafou small cities”, PhD Thesis in History, University of Toulouse, 2014, p.395.

6. Programmes and events in Helvetas Cameroon (1962 – 1998)



Source: J.V.D Waarde and M. Ischer, “45 years HELVETAS Cameroon, A History of learning and experience sharing series”, 2008, p.29.

7. 45 years Helvetas in Cameroon - facts at a glance

Helvetas has an impressive track record in Cameroon. More than 550 water supply systems have been installed. In the North West Province alone it is estimated that some 80% of all water supply systems that are functioning today have been constructed with support from Helvetas. More than 100 water catchment areas have been protected with a total area of 932 hectares. More than 40 bridges and 120 km roads have been constructed. Several NGOs have been established that are still active. More than 1500 technicians were trained at the BTC in Kumba; many of them are still working in the field in Cameroon today. A total of 24 councils have received capacity building training. A total of 15 monographic studies have been elaborated, steering the priorities of councils and communities for the years to come. And last but not least, there are signs that Government institutions are using approaches and methods that were promoted by Helvetas, thus giving good prospects for the sustainability of this work. The Helvetas strategy from 2003-2006 appears to be successful mirroring the strategy from the 1960s, aimed at participatory development at the grass roots of society. The Cameroon programme has been a very good and important programme for Helvetas. The engagement for water was first established in this country and was translated to many other countries where Helvetas was active. Countless Helvetas water engineers obtained their first practical experience in Cameroon. Many lessons were learned in Cameroon that are still benefiting Helvetas programmes around the world. But there comes a time when it is time to go: 'Wir haben unsere Pflicht getan, wir können bald einmal gehen' (We have fulfilled our duties, we soon can go). OUTLOOK Helvetas Cameroon has documented their experiences of the past 45 years in a series of brochures and tools. The brochures describe the methods and procedures followed in the PWS and CSP programmes and could be used by e.g. councils as guidelines on how to continue working according to these principles even after Helvetas has left Cameroon. The tools are examples of documents used in the Helvetas Cameroon programmes and can again be used by the former development partners in Cameroon in their work. The brochures have been distributed widely in the NWP and SWP.

The tools can be downloaded from the website: www.helvetascameroon.org

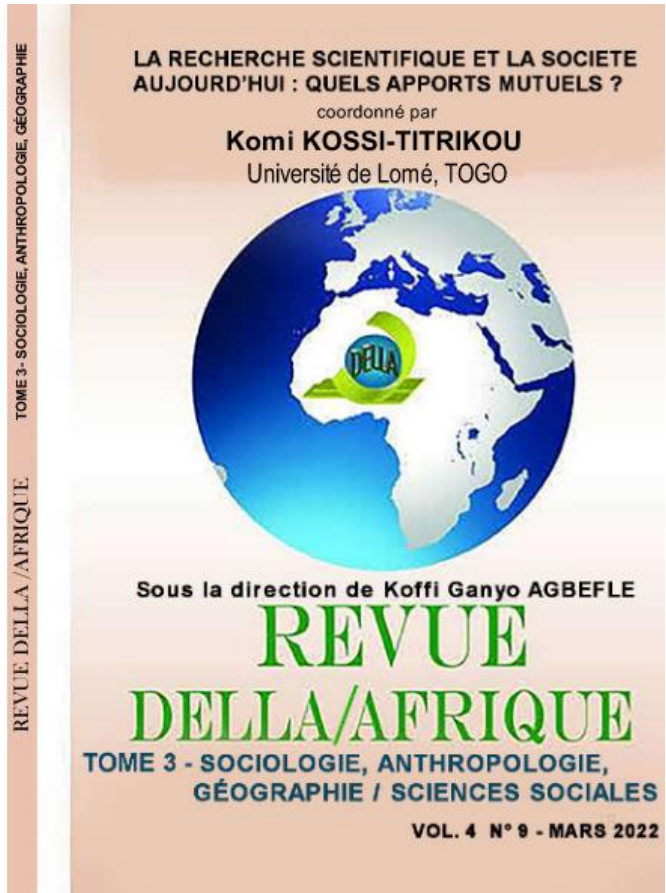
This website will remain available for several years to come. Finally, Helvetas Cameroon has agreed with several councils in the NWP to set up and implement a monitoring system to follow the activities of these councils in the domains where they previously received support from Helvetas Cameroon. For the councils, this allows them to monitor future achievements, which are based on results from the collaboration with Helvetas. For Helvetas, this will allow the organisation to see the longer term impact of the programme and possibly learn more lessons

about the effectiveness of this development programme. For all, this allows people to continue a long and lasting friendship

1'4 mio	People served with drinking water
114	Council training packages facilitated
1500	Craftsmen Trained
24	Billion FCFA spent (60 million CHF)
82	Council projects supported
932	Hectares catchment areas protected
81	Expatriates worked in CA
15	Council MS & SP realized
551	Water Schemes realized
1600	Care takers trained
322	Local staff employed
184	Toolboxes distributed
5200	Members of VWMC trained
45	Technicians trained abroad
122	Water schemes rehabilitated
40	Bridges constructed
120	Kilometres of road constructed
250	Kilometres road maintained
++	Quality infrastructures / motivated mayors / informed - participating communities / trained consultants and service providers / well maintained water schemes / functioning council services

Source: J.V.D Waarde and M. Ischer, "45 years HELVETAS Cameroon, A History of learning and experience sharing series", 2008, pp.31-32.

8. Article



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Coordonné par
Komi KOSSI-TITRIKOU

Equipe de relecture AGBEFLE Koffi G, koffiganyoa@yahoo.fr
TREMBLAY Christian, OEP Paris France, RICHEVAUX Marc, Institut
CEDIMES, France

Tome 3 : Sociologie, Anthropologie,
Géographie/ Sciences sociales.

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Koffi Ganyo AGBEFLE

Mise en forme : KPATI Adzo Dzinedzoni, ACAREF/Bureau Afrique,
Lomé

Maquette de couverture : AMEWOU Koffi, ACAREF/Bureau Afrique,
Lomé

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“STAKEHOLDERS APPROACHES IN WATER CONFLICTS RESOLUTIONS AND PEACE BUILDING IN CAMEROON: A HISTORICAL EXPLORATION”

Fai Charlotte Missem *University of Yaounde 1*
faicharlottemissem@gmail.com

Résumé

Le conflit est une réalité de la vie et faire face à ce phénomène nécessite de solides compétences interpersonnelles. Cette étude examine le rôle joué par le gouvernement, les autorités traditionnelles et les ONG dans la résolution des conflits liés à l'eau et la garantie de la paix au Cameroun. Les conflits liés à l'eau sont en augmentation au Cameroun et les facteurs à l'origine de ces conflits semblent s'intensifier, notamment la croissance démographique, la pollution et pratiques agricoles. L'étude s'est principalement appuyée sur des données secondaires comprenant des articles de revues, des livres, des thèses et des journaux. En cas d'analyse de données, l'analyse de contenu a été employée. Les résultats ont révélé que les différentes parties prenantes sont très respectées car elles jouent un rôle important dans la lutte contre les conflits liés à l'eau et le renforcement de la paix au Cameroun. Tout comme aucune solution unique n'éliminera l'insécurité de l'eau, heureusement, une grande variété d'approches a été mise en place par les parties prenantes pour résoudre les conflits liés à l'eau. Enfin, l'étude conclut que même si beaucoup a été fait par ces acteurs dans la résolution des conflits autour de l'eau, il existe encore des insuffisances.

Mots-clés : Parties prenantes, conflits de Léau, gestion de Léau, société civile

Abstract

Conflict is a fact of life and dealing with this phenomenon requires strong interpersonal skills. This study examines the role played by the Government, Traditional Authorities and NGOs in solving water conflicts and ensuring peace in Cameroon. Water-related conflicts are on the rise in Cameroon and factors that drive such conflicts seem to be intensifying, including population growth, climate change, pollution and agricultural practices. The study predominantly relied on secondary data that include journal articles, books, thesis and newspapers. In case of analysis of data, content analysis was employed. The findings revealed that, the various stakeholders are highly respected as they play an important role in curbing water conflicts and enhancing peace in Cameroon. Just as no single solution will eliminate water insecurity, fortunately, a wide variety of approaches has been put in place by these stakeholders to solve conflicts over water. Finally, the study concludes that even though much has been done by these stakeholders in solving these conflicts over water, there are still some inadequacies.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Water conflicts, water management, civil society

Introduction

During the History of humanity, numerous water conflicts, accidental and/or deliberate, have been reported and in some instances, water has been used as a weapon of war. (Tulloch, 2008: 10) The United Nations recognizes that water disputes result from opposing interests of water users, public or private. (UN Water Development Report, 2020) Since prehistoric times, water conflicts have occurred as a result of a wide range of tensions and/or violence, which have rarely taken the form of traditional warfare waged over water resources alone. (Angelakis et al., 2021) Water has historically been a source of tension and a factor in conflicts that starts for several reasons including territorial disputes, fight for resources and strategic advantage. In some cases, water was used directly as a weapon through its ability to cause damage through deprivation or erosion of water resources of enemy populations. Access to water is a key challenge in Cameroon, both in terms of quality and quantity. A minority of the people manages to secure enough water to meet their needs and a fifth of the communities rely exclusively on unimproved sources.

Central Africa's possession of the second largest global reserve of dense rainforest attests to the relative abundance of water in Cameroon. (Mbiatem, 2017: 67) Yet inappropriate management of these resources as a result of financial constraints associated with the construction and management of systems has hampered the ability to respond to the demands of the growing populations. This has often been a major source of grievances. In recent years, however, rural Cameroonian populations have developed a range of grassroots water projects, to seek positive change, but these water projects still faces some

problems. (Ibid, 2017) The availability of water supply in many rural and urban areas of Cameroon has significantly lagged for the past two decades, while demand has increased tremendously. Many community developments projects have suffered stagnation or complete failure due to conflicts resulting over water. Thus, sustainability can be achieved when equity, accountability and transparency are put in place by using key aspects such as social justice, self-reliance and empowerment of the local people. Water is a state property in Cameroon and the state is responsible for protecting and managing the resource as well as making it accessible to the people.

This notwithstanding, several laudable initiatives have been taken by the Government of Cameroon, NGOs and traditional rulers to raise awareness and foster action on the issue of water conflicts and peace building. In recent decades, the improvement of potable water services has, at least rhetorically, been among the top issues on international and national political development agendas. (Rahaman & Varis, 2005: 15-21) More so, legislated institutional and policy reforms in several developing countries have been motivated by these international efforts. (Saleth & Dinar, 2005: 1-20) Furthermore, developed countries have pledged 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) for overseas development assistance to support infrastructure expansion in developing countries. (Hecht, 2004: 67-85) These efforts date as far back as the 1977 United Nations Mar de Plata Water Conference.

The sheer volume of the above initiatives reveals that, despite their different ideological underpinnings, the call to action by various levels of government and different stakeholders has become increasingly loud and clear. In addition, there has been a shift from sectoral thinking to cross-cutting approaches, with attention to such aspects as user's engagement in management and decision-making, the role of water governance and need for a more local approach to water management in order to promote sustainability of water systems. While all these initiatives can be considered laudable, their relevance can only be measured by the extent to which they translate into concrete, on-the-ground actions to promote access to safe, affordable and an adequate quantity of potable water.

By spotlighting the perspective of stakeholders on conflict prevention, resolution and peace building, Njoh (2006: 381-406) defines conflict management as a broad array of tools used to anticipate, prevent and react to conflicts. Thus a conflict management strategy will involve a combination of these types of tools. These tools are used to encourage the parties to open up, identify the real issues behind the publicity pronounced positions and find win-win solutions that leave both parties better off with the outcome. (Ibid, 2006) However, it is not possible to come up with win-win outcomes all the time but in order to succeed, trade off and compromise could be necessary. Along with its proactive focus, the conflict management approach also uses methods that involve negotiation, mediation, conciliation and consensus building. (Fisher, 1991: 45-100)

Conflicts over water have become a common feature in Cameroon, and as a result there is the need to ascertain the effectiveness of stakeholders in resolving such conflicts. The cost of inability of communities to manage disputes contributes to underdevelopment and poverty. One key factor that has been associated with successful project implementation and sustained development is peace. Peace building therefore becomes an integral part of development process in any given community and the need for vibrant stakeholders in conflict resolution becomes essential. In this paper, we are going to examine the role played by the government, NGOS, Traditional Authorities in water conflict resolution. Lastly, we shall attempt to look at the challenges faced by these stakeholders.

1. Role of the Government in water conflict management and peace building

The government of Cameroon as an administrative body has put in place a number of strategies to help in the management of conflicts over water in the country. These strategies have gone a long way to curb these conflicts and ensure peace in the country. These have been done through a number of ways.

1.1. Water Legislation

A number of legislations have been put in place by the Cameroonian Government, governing water in the Country. The 1996 Law on the environment and the 1998 Law on water are the cornerstones of the current legislation of water. (PAWD, 2020: 1-20) Following the Framework Law on Environmental Management, No. 96/12 of 5th August 1996, Cameroon adopted law No. 98/005 of 14 April 1998 on the Water Sector, in which water is recognized as a national good that the state protects and manages, while facilitating access to all. (Ako Ako et al., 2010: 871-888) The law No. 98/005 of 14 April 1998 lay down regulations governing water resources in Cameroon. However, probably inspired by the constitutional provision on the right to a healthy environment and the other bundle of economic and social rights, the Cameroonian legislator passed the Water Code within the respect of the environment at management principles and public health protection. The Water Code expressly provided that, water is a public good or utility which the state ensures its protection, management and facilitates access to all. (Tamasong, 2007:1-10)

More so, the measures of protection are clearly spelled out in the Code and violators come under heavy criminal sanctions without prejudice to civil claims. To ensure conservation, protection and sustainable utilization, the Code institutes a National Water Committee, an institution placed under the Ministry in charge of water resources. (Ibid, 2007) By the wordings of Article 2(1) of the Water Code, "*L'eau est un bien du patrimoine national don't l'état assure la protection et la gestion et en facilite l'accès à tous.*" From the provisions of the subsection, the state ensures protection and management of water but only facilitates rather than ensures or guarantees access of it to all Cameroonians.

In order to implement these different laws, some instruments have been developed. Firstly there is Decree No. 2001/161/PM of 8 May 2001 to lay down the roles, organization and functioning of the National Water Committee (CNE). In its article 2, this decree stipulates that the committee is responsible for:

- Studying and proposing to the government all measures or actions likely to ensure the protection and sustainable use of water.
- Expressing its opinion on water issues and problems raised by the government.

Secondly, Decree No. 2001/165/PM of 8 May 2001 to lay down conditions for appointing officials to monitor and control water quality. In accordance with this article 1(3), the persons concerned are in charge of controlling water quality, research, signaling and prosecuting offences as stated in the provisions of the law governing water activities and its implementation instruments.

Thirdly, Decree No. 2001/165/PM of 8 May 2001 specify on the modalities for protecting surface and underground water against pollution. In its article 15, this decree stipulates that, "Individual or corporate bodies owning installations hooked up to public or private sewage systems, artificial drainage channels or waste water treatment plants, shall be subject to the payment of a sanitation tax in accordance with the modalities laid down in the financial bill".

Lastly, Decree No. 2001/216 of 2 August 2001 to set up a trust fund for financing development projects in water and sanitation. This is to ensure sustainability of investment in the sector. These legislations put in place by Cameroon have helped in curbing water conflicts as non compliance to the laws will always lead to sanctions.

1.2. Cameroon's Adoption of the Dublin Principles concerning integrated water

The Dublin Principles on water and sustainable development, also known as the Dublin statement, was a meeting of experts on water related problems that took place at the International Conference on water and the Environment (ICWE), Dublin, Ireland organized from the 26-31 January 1992. (Moriarty et al., 2000: 1-4) The Dublin Statement on water and Sustainable Development recognize the increasing scarcity of water as a result of the different conflicting uses and overuses of water. (Ibid, 2000)

Cameroon adopted the Dublin principles concerning Integrated Water Resource Management in the year 1992, (Ako et al., 2010: 871-888) which is aimed at promoting coordinated development and management

of water, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital eco-systems. (Info Resources, 2003: 90) In the absence of proper water management, conflicts within countries often arise because of competing water uses and from competing jurisdictional mandates of agencies dealing with water issues.

In Cameroon, competition over water is already evident where more than 90% of installed electricity generation relies on hydropower. Competition over water use for agriculture and domestic purposes is already evident in the country. With an integrated approach to water resource management, there are important institutional dimensions to help avoid such conflicts related to water management.

During the Conference at Dublin, four principles were adopted. The Conference Report set out recommendations for action at the local, national and international levels based on the principles.

- Principle No. 1- Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.
- Principle No.2- Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.
- Principle No.3- Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.
- Principle No.4- water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.

The government of Cameroon is doing its best to adhere to the Dublin principles through the celebration of the International World's Water Day (22nd March). International water day is celebrated worldwide in Cameroon every 22nd of March. This day is celebrated to create awareness on the issues causing water scarcity, and how they can be ameliorated. Through this medium, the government increases its efforts to ensure continuous access to safe water for all, irrespective of gender, age, disability, social status and geographical location.

2. Role played by NGOs

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are an aspect of civil society, without Government representation that embarks on conflict reduction, welfare scheme, empowerment and employment. (Tanga and Fonchingon, 2009: 84-96) They play an important part in conflict resolution, through their ability to build inter-communal links, facilitate reconciliation and address the root cause of conflicts. (Funteh, 2005: 45) In Cameroon, NGOs became popular with the liberalization of association and civil rights organization by the law No. 90/053 of 19th December 1990. (Thibault, 1995) NGOs have played a great role as far as the management of water conflicts is concerned in Cameroon. Some activities of NGOs in conflict resolution have been examined below.

2.1. Swiss association for Technical Assistance (SATA-HELVETAS)

HELVETAS, the Swiss Association for International Corporation, (SIAC) which was formerly known as SATA (Swiss Association for Technical Assistance), started its development cooperation in the former West Cameroon federated state as early as 1962. (Monteh, 2019: 64-81) HELVETAS during its forty-five years of activity in Cameroon was mostly involved in the provision of potable water in the rural communities, rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads, bridges, community centers and other infrastructural buildings in Cameroon. (Ibid, 2019) Helvetas worked closely with the community Development Department (CDD) of the Ministry of Agriculture. It first constructed 23 water points in the South West Region of Cameroon by 1963. Given

this encouraging take off and the zeal of community members, an agreement was signed on the 29th of June 1964 between SATA- HELVETAS and the Cameroon government to extend SATA- HELVETAS' assistance to the whole of the country. (Waarde, 1990: 6- 7)

By 1994, SATA-HELVETAS constructed 344 water points. It also had a total of 189 caretakers and 446 water project maintenance committee members. (Zimmerman, 1993: 57) Community development Department (CDD) technicians and staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also benefitted from training programmes on catchment protection and the maintenance of water systems. More or less standard approach for water catchment protection has been developed. This approach includes sensitization of the population, acquiring of land titles of the catchment area, setting up of a water management committee, training of caretakers and implementing protective measures. These protective measures worked well in most cases and the technical approach followed by Helvetas can be used as a good basis for any water catchment protection project.

More so, in 1994, a report written by Helvetas described an assessment of the situation in Bambui watershed. After an extensive interview program with local farmers, a clear socio-economic analysis of the problem was presented and a strategy proposed. This strategy centered on including different farmer groups, who appear to be endangering the catchment were included in the watershed committee, while Helvetas played the role of surveying the improved farming systems. (wunderlin

,1994: 40) A proposal was made that encompassed many aspects such as regulation of land ownership, training of farmers on good farming practices, establishment of tree nurseries, protection zones of water catchment areas, division of land rights among users and planning of land use.

The program was implemented at a great pace and four months later, significant progress was reported. Tree nurseries were set up, farmers were trained, collaboration between farmers in the watershed committee was successful and trespassers of the set agreement were prosecuted. The input from Helvetas Cameroon appears to have been very significant taking into consideration their financial contribution towards materials like rain coats, shovels, new water supply points, project housing, transport, tree nurseries and technical assistance. (Ibid, 1994)

Since land ownership was a recurring theme in water catchment protection, Helvetas Cameroon supported a project carried out by legal professionals into land tenure systems. Three workshops were held in Wum (Menchum and Boyo divisions), Kumbo (Bui and Donga/Mantung divisions) and Batibo (Ngoketunjia and Momo divisions) respectively. The workshops were held with involvement of the traditional councils, water management committees, landlords and Fulani adhors, councilors, Mayors and on one occasion the Regional Parliamentarian. One main conclusion from these workshops was that although there appears to be sufficient legal basis to allow proper protection of water catchment areas, insufficient knowledge of these rules results in improper protection water catchment and conflicts. (Mbufung and Tah, 2002: 10)

The work sponsored by Helvetas Cameroon in the Bamenda Grassfields in the last ten years shows a clear shift from very technical hands on assistance in the field to more advisory role towards councils in organizing these activities themselves. This evolution comes as a natural process where the organization learns from results obtained in the field and feedback given by partners. In general the approach of water catchment protection conceived by Helvetas Cameroon as a participatory approach. The approach used by Helvetas for catchment protection and management has worked well thus curbing water conflicts. Not every measure was equally successful in all sites, but they all found their uses in one or more places.

1.1. SCANWATER

SCANWATER is a technology developed in Scandinavian countries in the 1980s, to provide good and potable drinking water probably in Sweden. (Sanguv, 2014: 107-111) For this technology to be able to succeed in other countries there was the need for the transfer of technology and technological know-how. SCANWATER is a project that is being funded by Scandinavian countries. She has constructed water schemes in Cameroon, especially in the Bamenda Grassfields Region. This NGO is a high technological project, which is a national project whose purpose is to provide good drinking water to rural areas as a result of scarcity of water. Due to the cultivation of crops and water unfriendly trees beside

the catchment areas, SCANWATER was seen as the only source that could keep water roaming in the rural areas. So this project is for rural and local areas, where water crisis are the talk of the day.

It was commissioned to build the first water station towards the end of 1980. The building of new schemes continued until 1992, when about 335 schemes had been installed in medium-sized villages and small towns. Water is most often obtained from bore holes. After pumping, it undergoes simple treatment process by aeration, followed by filtration and chlorination. (Yenshu, 1998: 41-48). It is later distributed through public standpipes and a few private connections and power is normally supplied by a diesel-powered generator, but sometimes electric pumps are used.

SCANWATER was introduced in Bui Division of Cameroon in the 1990s, because of the alarming water crisis in the interior of the villages in the Division. (Ndonko, 2021: 17-26) Water crisis occurred when there was an inadequate supply of water to meet the needs of the community villages, such as Kyarn, Giyarni and Lassin had frequent water shortages. This came as a result of mismanagement of water used for irrigation in topography and relief. In these areas, survey was carried out and discovered that constructions of SCANWATER systems could be able to supply the whole population and even guarantee that there will be water in the long run. This project was important because it took into consideration the sustainable impact of development, provided good drinking water to a large community, helped in the prevention of water-borne diseases, curbed water conflicts and created employment considering the sustainable impact.

Furthermore, SCANWATER projects created employment in so many communities due to the high intensity of labour that was needed and also the need of workers after the project has been completed and handed to a few persons that were trained to manage it. These persons were paid for their services thus increasing their per capita income. SCANWATER has played a great role to fight against water conflicts through its activities in Cameroonian communities as seen above.

3. Role played by Traditional Rulers

Conflicts existed long before colonization of Africa and it was the task of traditional leaders to solve these conflicts. Most of the African societies still prefer the use of traditional and informal justice and

reconciliation forums to help in resolution. This is because, most of the populations still live in rural areas with limited infrastructures in the state justice systems and the unfair justice systems provided at the formal courts, which tend to favour the rich in the society, hence it cannot be trusted. (Bercovitch, 1992:110-150) So it is important to recognize them in water conflict management in Cameroon.

Traditional rulers play decisive roles in water conflict resolution. This is because of the relevance accorded to them by their subjects coupled with the fact that they believed to communicate with the gods of the land. The role of traditional rulers in peace building is as old as the institution itself. Peace building is part and parcel of African pre-colonial social systems geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships. (Wartman, 2000: 79) The methods, processes and regulation seem to restore a balance to settle conflict and eliminate disputes. In this regard, traditional rulers play a vital role in peace building at the grassroots level as part of the cultural heritage of the people.

Choudree (1999) also argues that, "traditional conflict resolution possesses strive to restore balance, settle conflicts and eliminate disputes hence the traditional elders not only resolve conflicts by virtue of their position in society. In addition, traditional leaders tend to develop peaceful relations while the political figures make deals to stop the conflict or by resolving the conflict in war meaning that wisdom is often ignored". This has been the case in Bambili whereby the traditional authorities worked hard to bring a peaceful co existence between the Bambili people and Babanki-tungoh over Lake Bambili. This shows the importance of traditional rulers in conflict resolution over water, because many people still believe in their cultural practices and traditional institutions. (Ibid, 2000)

Traditional rulers play a pivotal role in settling water conflicts and are regarded as custodians of traditional law and receive a bulk of these conflicts over water. The guiding objective of the traditional justice system presided over by traditional rulers in Cameroon is to restore peace and harmony within the communities. This is done by ensuring that disputants and their respective supporters are reconciled. More so, the traditional rulers have employed the issue of compensation in Cameroon which is in concurrence with what Merry said. She argued that, the penalties focus on restitution in order to restore the status quo rather than punishment. It is with this view in mind that the role of traditional

leaders in the resolution of conflict was said to be the most uniting factor in the whole community and responsible for finding peaceful solutions to various conflicts that arose in the community and various groups they led.

These institutions of traditional rulers were virtually the only institutions of governance in the past. They played critical roles such as custodians of customary law and communal assets especially water, land and resources guardians, symbols of cultural values and religious practices, dispensing justice, enforcing contracts and also resolving conflicts. (Boege, 2006: 187) The art of resolving conflict is borne out of the belief that conflict which is inevitable could and should not be left alone. It therefore needs to be put under control by interacting with relevant parties to develop common generalizations or principles and practices that would return cordial relationships against violence.

The role of traditional rulers in peace building is as old as the institution itself. Peace building is part and parcel of African pre-colonial social systems geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships. (Wartman, 2000: 224-229) The methods, processes and regulation seem to restore a balance to settle conflict and eliminate disputes. In this regard, traditional rulers play a vital role in peace building especially at the grassroots levels of Cameroon as part of the cultural heritage of the people.

Challenges to Resolving Water Conflicts in Cameroon

There is no doubt that stakeholders in Cameroon have in practical ways play important roles by engaging in conflict management and peace building in Cameroon. Despite all the efforts that have been put in place by the government, NGOs and traditional authorities to ensure the resolution of water conflicts in Cameroon, this phenomenon continues to persist. This has been as a result of some challenges. Bribery and corruption in the water sector continues to be the root cause of water conflicts that threatens the population of Cameroon and exacerbate environmental degradation. (Transparency International, 2008) Water is a resource without substitute. It is paramount to our health, our food security, our energy future and our ecosystem. But corruption continues to plague water management and use in all areas.

The impact and scope of corruption in different segments of the water sector ranges from petty bribery in water delivery to procurement related looting of irrigation and hydropower funds, from covering up industrial pollution to manipulation of water management and allocation policies. More so, it is as well manifested by lack of sustainable delivery, inequitable investment, targeting of resources and limited participation of affected communities in developmental processes. (Fonteh, 2011: 53- 60) Corruption's impact on water is a fundamental governance problem, yet it is not sufficiently addressed in the many global policy initiatives for environmental sustainability, development and food and energy security. More so continues increase in population, poor agricultural practices and climate change are a challenge to solving water conflicts in Cameroon. Crises of water quality and quantity are intimately linked with climate change. Water extremes affected by climate change continue to contribute to the migration and displacement of millions of people. This is already causing extreme events in many watersheds in the Cameroon, impacting communities.

Furthermore, efforts to address water conflicts require engagement with communities, stakeholders and governments at all levels that are deeply interests and perspectives. Experience shows that these efforts even when focused on a common goal, can face unexpected challenges, create tensions and leave some parties unsatisfied or some objectives unfulfilled. The parties continued fighting each other because the

decisions and solutions put in place did not favour either of the concerned parties. Most at times a solution is found but one party is unsatisfied with it. It thus becomes likely that the issue will arise again.

Conclusion

This study compliments the historiography of water conflicts and stakeholders' intervention and prevention of these conflicts in Cameroon. Stakeholders' engagement is an important tool in developing the common understanding of context that is necessary for making decisions that affect sustainable water management. The article has argued that, while stakeholders have successfully resolved and prevented many of such conflicts in the country, it has failed in some instances as a result of some challenges, thus part of the reason why conflicts over water still continue to persist in the area.

New challenges in managing water conflicts in Cameroon will surely emerge, particularly with the advent of increased variability due to

climate change and the growing globalized economy. To be prepared for this, parties should participate in conflict-resolution mechanisms and invest in institutional capacity with their neighbours. Systematic, holistic water management can provide the opportunity for more users to meet their basic needs and become economically resilient with respect to whatever new variables regarding management they face, thereby increasing water security. Concrete measures are therefore required to strengthen these stakeholders as agents of conflict

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I. Interviews

Names of informants	Ages/ Years	Status	Sex	Place of interview	Date of interview
Ali Slyveria	60	Farmer	F	Bajing	27/12/2020
Asah Mbenkum William	63	Retired Treacher	M	Kumbo	18/08/2020
Asah Spilian Fai	50	Police Officer	M	Kikaikelaki	29/07/2020
Bame Nelson	30	Accountant	M	Kumbo	13/08/2020
Banin Henry Nyuyfoni	34	Loans Officer	M	Tobin	05/09/2020
Beri Brigit	58	Farmer	M	Bajing	23/12/2020
Che Denis Nebah	51	Teacher	F	Nkwen	30/07/2020
Chilla Pricilla Tonsle	39	Nurse	M	Kumbo	25/08/2020
Elfreda Wirmum	72	Farmer	F	Bajing	29/12/2020
Esau Akoko	44	Teacher	M	Njikwa	07/08/2020
Fai Emmanuel Kisha	57	Pastor	M	Ndu	05/08/2020
Fai Joseph chila	55	Teacher	M	Misaje	01/08/2020
Fanfon Susan yah	58	Book-keeper	F	Mbiim	29/07/2020
Findo Dorine	45	Business woman	F	Nkambe	07/08/2020
Fonkpu Peter Mayie	47	Teacher	M	Ndu	08/08/2020
Ibrahim Amadou Babangida	31	Teacher	M	Kumbo	08/08/2020
Kifem Jovita La-ashe	54	Teacher	F	Kumbo	07/08/2020
Kigha Caleb Njeba	37	Veternarian	M	Ndu	06/08/2020
Kikishiy Jonas	49	Teacher	M	Mbiame	06/08/2020
Kinkoh Anthony Bah	56	Civil servant	M	Nkor-Noni	29/07/2020

Kpunjo Anthony Shohfofa	51	Manager of Mufi	M	Kumbo	01/08/2020
Lawong B. Helen	75	Former Deputy	F	Kumbo	14/01/2020
Lukung Sule Kidzeje	57	Civil Servant	M	Kumbo	10/08/2020
Marceline Shinyuy	49	Farmer	F	Bajing	28/12/2020
Mbinkar Jackson B.	40	Teacher	M	Mbam	30/07/2020
Mboulav Spellian Nsoyuni	58	Nurse	M	Mbve	13/08/2020
Menyong Gilbert Sunday	36	Civil Servant	M	Nkambe	20/08/2020
Mohamadu Nyaso Gariba	44	Teacher	M	Ndu	06/08/2020
Ndzerem Yvonne	48	Teacher	F	Kumbo	08/08/2020
Mendzen					
Ndishey Ernest	50	Teacher	M	Ntudip	03/08/2020
Ndzi Fames Wibah	72	Retired	M	Ndu	31/07/2020
Nformi Blasius	67	Retired Teacher	M	Nkambe	16/09/2020
Ngah Julius	47	Teacher	M	Ndu	08/08/2020
Ngala Martin Ndi	56	Retired S. A	M	Binshua	03/08/2020
Ngo Eugene Yefenyuy	47	Teacher	M	Kumbo	01/08/2020
Ngoran Genesis Lemnyuy	53	Accountant	M	Njavnyuy	09/08/2020
Njongal Eric	51	Teacher	M	Kumbo	08/08/2020
Nsaikimo killian Fai	56	Teacher	M	Bajing	29/07/2020
Nsoh Joseph Teng	29	Prison Warder	M	Misaje	03/08/2020
Ntutin Nacasius	55	Teacher	M	Squares	15/08/2020
Kudzebam					
Nyuyki Michael Nkuph	69	Retired	M	Tobin	06/08/2020
Nyuylam Theresser	58	Farmer	F	Mbve	23/12/2020
Odilia Wirba	87	Farmer	F	Bajing	06/08/2020
Orpah Beryen	45	Teacher	F	Misaje	03/08/2020
Rabia Biy	76	Farmer	F	Ntudip	03/08/2020
Rev. Anjoambum George	51	Clergy	M	Momo	07/08/2020

Rev. Nchotu Moses Shu	52	Pastor (PCC)	M	Bafut	20/08/2020
Roland Tawong Nyamnsai	38	Teacher	M	Nkambe	05/08/2020
Shey Dufe Samuel	59	Teacher	M	Romajay	04/08/2020
Shey Esther	45	Hostess	F	Mbankar	27/12/2020
Shinyuy Ernest	48	Nurse	M	Shisong	04/08/2020
Shu-Fai Yuwar	65	Traditional Authority	M	Kumbo	03/08/2020
Stephen N. Ntokungwia	60	Teacher	M	Ndop	06/08/2020
Suilareng Eugene Kibu	41	Teacher	M	Kumba	04/08/2020
Tata Syveria	61	Farmer	F	Bajing	03/08/2020
Tafu Samson Shei	60	Teacher	M	Ndu	09/08/2020
Tata John Nsame	62	Retired C. W	M	Nseh	15/07/2020
Tata Usheni Jaff	58	Baker	M	Mbve	14/01/2020
Tchambian Brigit	54	Teacher	F	Nkambe	20/08/2020
Tidze Agnes	67	Farmer	F	Kumbo	31/12/2020
Tiydze Fokum Peter	75	Retired C. S	M	Bali Nyonga	02/08/2020
Tume Amos	38	Student	M	Tobin	08/01/2020
Vernyuy Nicholine	35	Hair Dresser	F	Tobin	22/12/2020
Vuwe Richard	62	Retired C. S	M	Ndu	08/08/2020
Visi Edwin	55	Engineer	M	Kumbo	30/07/2020
Wara Augustine	56	Teacher	M	Batibo	16/08/2020
Wanyu Fidelia	45	Farmer	F	Bajing	06/08/2020
Winifred Fonlaini	44	Business Woman	F	Bagante	23/12/2020
Wirba Eric Binyuy	32	Teacher	M	Mbve	04/08/2020
Wirba Immaculate	47	Teacher/Trader	F	Tobin	22/12/2020
Wirba Lawson Y.	54	Farmer	M	Kumbo	03/08/2020
Wirba Serophine	57	Farmer	F	Kumbo	21/12/2020
Wirngo Ernest Shiytum	49	Business	M	Meluf	06/08/2020

		Manager			
Wirnkar Ivoline	33	Teacher	F	Tobin	05/08/2020
Wirba Peter Fomukong	45	Computer Technician	M	Kumbo	08/08/2020
Wirtsen Jeanette	45	Nurse	F	Kumbo	14/08/2020
Yaah peter	50	Teacher	M	Mbve	05/08/2020
Yefo Ntani	50	Teacher	F	Kumbo	08/08/2020
Yiyen Shang Ivo	67	Retired	F	Kumbo	06/08/2020

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