



## LAND CASE STUDY

# In Search of Common Ground

## Summary

Mbororo Social & Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) is the largest membership-based association of the ethnic Mbororo pastoralists of Cameroon. Its mission is to contribute to the human, economic, social and cultural empowerment of the ethnic Mbororo pastoralists of Cameroon. In 2006 MBOSCUDA organized a series of consultation meetings with a range of stakeholders to explore more lasting solutions to the endemic farmer-grazer conflicts in the region. The lessons from a pilot project undertaken in 2007 for a few conflict hot spots were used to upscale and extend the initiative to 14 other conflict hot spots within the framework of our 'In Search of Common Ground' (ISCG) Project, which is being implemented since 2013 in collaboration with Village Aid UK, and United Purpose UK (formerly

Concern Universal). The ISCG project seeks to address the farmers-grazers conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon by promoting dialogue and negotiation as well as the collaborative management of the natural resources, including land and water, that are at the centre of conflicts between the two communities. While the project will end in June 2018, a midterm evaluation carried out in 2016 indicates that the approach has effectively reduced the incidence as well as the severity of farmer-grazer conflicts in the target communities. The most important finding is that people say that conflict has reduced (73% compared with 32% at baseline) and that conflict is less severe than it was before (79% compared with 37% at baseline).

## Context and problem

The initiative is located in 23 communities cutting across all the 7 districts of the North West Region of Cameroon. It is a five year project that started in July 2013.



In Cameroon 82% of the rural population depend on agriculture and 57% of these people live below the poverty line. Extreme poverty is largely a rural phenomenon. Productive land and clean water are essential to the lives and livelihoods of both cattle herders and smallholder farmers but persistent conflict over access to these increasingly scarce resources is an enormous challenge. Violent disputes over access to land and water has resulted in the destruction of property, land eviction and murder. The intensification of unsustainable (slash and burn) farming practices has resulted in environmental damage (soil erosion, pasture degradation, silting of water sources, deforestation and loss of biodiversity). The conflict is intensified by various factors:

1) A colonial legacy of separating grazing and farming land and a legal system that

encourages litigious dispute resolution and payment of compensation where property has been destroyed.

2) Climate change (prolonged dry seasons and flash flooding) exacerbating pressure on land and water. Poor soil quality produces poor crops with limited nutritional value; poor pasture results in unhealthy cattle and low milk yield. Both have a negative impact on household income and family health.

3) Water quality is as critical an issue as water access. Only 44% of the population have access to safe drinking water and over 13,000 cases of cholera were reported in Cameroon in 2011.



4) The marginalisation of Mbororo cattle herders, and the widespread perception that they are outsiders who do not have the same entitlement to land and basic rights as the settled population, adds an ethnic dimension to the conflict.

5) Growing food insecurity in the region linked to rising commodity prices and water shortage led to riots in 2008. This means that access to land and water are critical issues in regional stability.

## Response

### Objectives

MBOSCUDA, its allies and communities agree that conflicts are the result of increasing competition over access to natural resources (land and water) that are central to the lives and livelihoods of both groups. Based on a multi-stakeholder conflict management

mechanism aimed at promoting dialogue and collaboration between the crop farming and cattle herding communities in nine conflict hotspots in 2009, a 5-year project that seeks to alleviate poverty in North West Cameroon by reducing conflict between indigenous crop farmers and semi-nomadic Mbororo cattle herders is implemented. The project will achieve this by making a range of interventions in 23 conflict affected areas under three outcomes.

### Strategy/activities and stakeholders

MBOSCUDA has employed a team of expert staff who are managing the project activities. Fifteen staff were recruited (The Program Director, M&E Officer, Livelihood Officer, Agro-Pastoral Project Officer, Human Rights Officer, Communication Officer, Admin Secretary and an Accountant). Others include seven Paralegal Extension Officers stationed at district offices. There are also ten community resource volunteers who facilitate work in the project sites.

### Outcome 1: Conflict Resolution

**1.1 Dialogue Platforms:** These are forums for resolving farmer/grazer disputes before cases are taken through the farmer/grazer commission. They are neutral spaces, open to multiple stakeholders (crop farmers, cattle herders, traditional authorities and local government officials). Members of the Dialogue Platform are elected by the communities in each of the project sites and are trained on conflict management and mediation. They hold quarterly meetings and annual exchange visits to share best practices, challenges and perspectives.



### Outcome 2: Sustainable Natural Resources

There are three main activities: to promote sustainable farming (crop growing and grazing) and the shared use of natural resources in each of the project sites to meet this outcome (Alliance farming, Bio-gas and Improved pasture). These activities facilitate closer collaboration between crop farmers and cattle herders. They respond to some of the main causes of farmer/grazer conflict (limited access to productive land) and encourage sustainable natural resource usage by introducing farming practices that mitigate the impact of environmental damage. They also lead to increased crop and livestock yields thereby improving household income and contributing to poverty reduction.



**2.2 Alliance Farming:** This involves farmers and herders sharing land which is alternately used to grow crops and to graze cattle outside the crop growing season. When the land is used to paddock cattle, their manure and urine fertilize the soil making it more productive. Crops are planted once the cattle are taken off the land and trials have demonstrated that crop yield is higher proportionate to the amount of time cattle spend on the land. Cattle that graze on

the land used to grow crops are healthier and more productive. Farmers and herders were paired together making a total of 462 persons involved.

**2.3 Improved Pasture:** This involved techniques for improving pasture so that it is more fertile and less prone to invasive species that degrade pasture resources. Fourteen improved pasture demonstration sites were developed. Foliage (Brachiaria, Guatemala grass and browse trees) was planted. These not only help to prevent soil erosion and conserve water but also provide more nutritious pastures for cattle. Today, over 200 cattle herders have taken up the initiative and about 125 hectares of land has been improved by planting Brachiaria or Guatemala grass.

**2.4 Bio-gas:** Bio-gas is a renewable energy that uses cow manure to produce gas and electricity. Fourteen demonstration sites were set up in the project areas. Bio-gas can benefit communities that are in competition over natural resources in a number of ways. Firstly, the cow manure necessary for the digestion process that produces the gas is a resource that cattle herding communities have in abundance and can share with their crop farming neighbours. Sharing cow manure for crop fertilization with farming neighbours was the origin of Alliance Farming and bio-gas promotes sharing this vital resource to help meet domestic energy needs. The bio-gas process produces slurry that can be used as a fertilizer helping to increase household crop yield.

It also reduces dependency on expensive solid fuels (which are contributing to deforestation in the second most important rain forest region in the world) that can be used as an and girls do most of the cooking and fetching of firewood. Bio-gas is a clean and smokeless alternative to wood which means that women are less likely to suffer health problems related to exposure to wood fire smoke, and girls who frequently have to fetch wood before school are released from this chore.

### Outcome 3: Clean and Safe Water

This project promoted equitable access to clean and safe water in conflict hot spots. Increasing awareness in communities about the causes and consequences of water-related conflicts and ensuring a sustainable approach to water management and usage is vital. This project established/ developed 16 water schemes for 14 communities. Specific actions include developing water sources, piping water to storage tanks, and building stand taps in the communities. Other actions include the protection of the water catchment areas by fencing, installation of beehives in the catchments, planting of water and bee friendly trees in the catchment areas and training of the water management committees on how to manage the water infrastructure in a sustainable manner.



Beekeeping was introduced to secure the catchments and provide income for the management committees through the harvesting of honey.

Capacity building trainings were conducted on managing the environment and denouncing environmental malpractices.

## Results

### Increasing food production

Alliance farming pairs especially women crop farmers testified to increased incomes in Achain community as a result of good harvest through alliance farming practices. Hitherto, the community members depended on buying

food from vendors who came from far off towns (about 60 km) in the past 3 years, but now the Achain community is the reference for food selling in all the neighbouring villages.

### Increased income

The water management committees harvested about 260 litres of honey from seven apiaries established in the water catchment areas within seven months. One litre of honey cost 2000frs CFA, which adds up to a total of 793 EURO.



### Drop in the incidence of water borne diseases in Achain Community

Statistics made known by the Head of the Health Centre in Achain indicated that from August 2015 to August 2016 the centre recorded 47 cases of patients suffering from waterborne diseases (typhoid, diarrhoea and cholera). This was before the realization of the water project. After the community members started consuming the water provided by the project, 15 cases have been recorded from July 2016 to August 2017 showing a 68% drop in the prevalence of these waterborne diseases in the community.

### Increased adoption of environmentally friendly practices

The adoption of pasture improvement initiatives by the communities is realized within the lifespan of the project. About 125 hectares of land were developed for improved pasture by herders. This has reduced cost for transhumance, and reduced cattle mortality rate for the past two years.

The provision of potable water to communities has enabled women to engage in more productive work and children to go to school promptly. One woman said, "Our children especially girls are going to school on time and we have seen their academic report cards scoring higher marks unlike before when they used to help us fetching water from far off streams and go late to schools. We were reluctant to send our children to school because our daily work load was heavy on us."

## Lessons learnt

**"Local solutions for local challenges promote mutual understanding and benefits."**

There have been several reports of bloody conflicts between smallholder crop farmers and pastoralist cattle herders over land and access to resources such as water and pastures. These conflicts sometimes result in human and material loss as a result of corrupt practices and poor management of the situation. Many Mbororo cattle herders suffered at the hands of the administration who exploited them through many court cases. Huge sums of money that could be used for better family welfare was most often used to resolve conflicts. The project focuses on the use of the alternative conflict management (ACM) approach to deal with the persistent farmer/grazer conflicts in the target communities whereby many conflicts are solved amicably. This win-win approach focuses on using positive dialogue between the conflicting parties, with dialogue platforms as mediating structures. This subsequently fosters social cohesion and peace building between the farmers and grazers in conflict situations. To further encourage peace in these communities, alliance farming is practiced to foster a positive relationship between the conflicting parties. This has drastically reduced many farmer grazer conflicts, now occupying the same land in harmony.

## Conclusion

Within the framework of the project currently being implemented by MBOSCUDA in collaboration with United Purpose UK two regional conferences were organized. The conferences were chaired by the Governor of the North West Region His Excellency Adolf Lele Lafrique. One of the objectives was: To share project

learning with a range of regional level stakeholders and engage decision makers of the region through debates on policy issues.

The project has impacted on the lives of the resource users by enhancing their relationships, mutual understanding, sustainable management of the natural resources, and improved livelihoods in their communities.



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## **Who is AFSA?**

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa is a broad alliance of civil society actors who are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. It is a network of networks, currently with 34 members active in 50 countries. Its members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous peoples, faith-based institutions, women's and youth groups and environmentalists from across Africa. The core purpose of AFSA is to influence policies and promote African solutions for food sovereignty.

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