

# Fulani Sedentarisation in Santa Subdivision of the Northwest Region of Cameroon: A Conflictual Situation with the Native Population

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**Abstract**— This study was set up to assess the possibilities of co-habitation between the Fulani pastoralists and the native crop farmers in Santa North West Region of Cameroon. This was linked to the Fulani sedentarisation in the area. The main objective of this study was to provide a fairly comprehensive analysis that would improve our understanding on a better co-habitation between the Fulani grazers and crop farmers in Santa Sub division. Particular emphasis was placed on the socio-ecological relationships that have developed between the Fulani pastoralists and the cultivating communities. The specific objectives were: to investigate the reasons for Fulani sedentarisation in Santa sub division of the North West Region of Cameroon; to examine the impact of Fulani sedentarisation on environmental resources of Santa subdivision; to investigate the reasons for the emergence of conflicts and to assess the possibilities of co- habitation. Our data were collected using questionnaires and interviews, from a sample size of 100 people out of which 50 grazers and 50 crop farmers using the simple random sampling technique. The data were equally analysed through the aid of Microsoft excel 2010 and SPSS. Also, the Department for International development (DFID) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) was used to analyse our data. The study had three hypotheses to test and two were fully confirmed while one was not affirmed by the results of our findings. Further results showed that the sedentarisation of the pastoral Fulani and the change in their livelihood strategies has led to their impoverishment. Sedentarisation of the Fulani has contributed to the growing pressure on agricultural lands, thereby threatening the integrity of the environment in the expansion areas of Santa subdivision. The tendency for persistent conflict is due to population growth and expansion. Results show that major causes of farmer-grazer conflicts identified in the study were competition over land, cattle tress passes, encroachment and struggle for leadership. A number of conflict resolution methods were also identified such as dialogue platforms. Traditional councils, farmer-grazer committees, agro-pastoral commissions. Some recommendations were made to the government, local authorities and the concerned parties. Some of these are “intensification of agricultural activities alongside appropriate inputs such as improved seeds, alliance farming among others should be practiced to reduce the pressure on land for a gro-pastoral activities.

**Keywords**— Native Population, Fulani pastoralists, DFID.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Grass field of Cameroon is one of the major Regions in the country with high concentration of livestock grazers and crop farmers living together and sharing the land for grazing and cropping. The cropping pattern in the Grass fields is hundred percent under peasant control with a variety of crops grown such as maize (*Zeamays*), beans (*Phaselus vulgaris*) yams (*Dioscorea*), cocoyam (*Colocasia esculenta*), cassava (*Manihot esculenta*), Guinea corn (*Sorghum bicolor*), groundnut (*Arachishypogaea*), potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) vegetables and coffee. The major growing season is from March to September and dry season cropping is restricted to the lowlands, forests and along rivers sometimes blocking the cattle tracks leading

to the drinking points. These usually cause the cattle to trespass and destroy the crops leading to conflicts among the farmers and the Fulani cattle grazers.

The rapid population growth and the expansion of the agricultural surfaces largely increase marginal lands decreases pastoral lands. Pastoral lands are diminishing at the expense of an ever increasing and land consuming crop farming. The reducing number of herds and the growing human population has a direct consequence on the Fulani Sedentarisation in Santa. Again, the encroachment of crop farmers into grazing lands has limited grazing areas resulting to over stocking of animals on a small piece of land. This also affects the environment by making the soil to become compacted and unfertile. The escalation of

Sedentarisation related conflicts in the agro pastoral zone of Santa is probably due to the current high population pressure on land. This has however, brought about an increasing alienation of the Fulani who are a minority community.

The Fulani pastoralists of Santa subdivision are considered as the most vulnerable because the source of their livelihood is under threat. This is because the livelihood security encompasses not only access to food and resources required to produce it in the present, but also those required to maintain production in the future and the social networks which are necessary for survival in the long term. Researchers face a particular challenge of understanding the varying roles which livestock play within the community especially in relation to other factors that make up the livelihood security of the livestock owners.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Santa subdivision in the North West Region of Cameroon. Santa subdivision is one of the most populated and exploited in terms of agriculture and animal husbandry in the Region. Information used in this study was obtained from primary and secondary sources (library of the University of Dschang, scientific journals, newspapers and the internet). The data were obtained on the field by direct observations, discussions and interviews with relevant respondents. Structured questionnaires administered to the farmers and grazers as well as the Staff of the Mbororo Social and Cultural Association (MBOSCUDA) An interview guide was also used in finding out more information about the Fulani settlement and the longevity of their sedentarisation in the area which is today one of the hottest conflict hotspot in the Region.

With the help of the administrators and the staff of MBOSCUDA, 200 questionnaires were administered and 180 were fully answered and used for analyses. Field observations and surveys, alongside interactions and discussions helped to meet up the objectives of the study. The data collected were analysed using several statistical tools like the descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as relative frequencies, arithmetic means and percentages were used to realize objectives of the work especially objectives 1,2,3 and 4. Inferential statistics was used to test the hypothesis. Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 20.0 and other computer software spread sheet programs were used too

## III. RESULTS

The distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics from the data obtained from the survey for crop farmers and grazers showed that out of the 100 respondents, 50% were livestock grazers. The information also showed that 48% of crop farmers were males and 52% were females. This shows that women are the main producers of crops while men own the land and therefore take decisions. Since this study concerns conflicts, it was the men who were more involved both in physical fights as well as in the courts. The results of this study were in line with those of Goheen (1994) and Manu (2007) in the Grass field where they discovered that men own the land but the women are the major producers

### Socio-economic characteristics of the Fulani grazers in the study area

However, unlike the crop farmers, the mean age of the Fulani grazers is 51 years which signifies that most of the people in the livestock sector must at least be within this age limit. 60% of the Fulani grazers actively involved in the activity are between 30-50 years. These results show that the elderly persons are those that possess the animals and the various financial assets while the youths are the ones to execute the desired labour on the terrain. It should be noted that very few young people of below 30 years are concerned with this activity.

As compared to the data obtained from the crop farmers, 92.5% of the Fulani grazers were males. This was because the research study targeted the household heads majority of whom were found out to be males who managed the herds and took decisions in the family. The role of the women is mostly insignificant in the case of cattle rearing because they are supposed to take care of the home and milk the cows each morning rather than going after them on the field. This result similar to the crop farmers, gives the impression that marriage is an important institution.

It also reveals the type of marriages practiced by the grazers. In the sample of 50 grazers, only 37.5% practiced monogamy. This was more common among the grazers than crop farmers. The reason for this practice is linked to the Islamic tradition (sunna) as anyone who has the means to support a large family with absolute justice in the treatment of his wives were allowed to get married to a maximum of four wives. Unlike with the crop farmers where cases of co-habitation were found, none existed among the grazers as this relationship was not allowed by Islamic religion. Majority of them practice Islam and therefore children resulting from such relationship were considered illegitimate by the society.

However, the Fulani socio-demographic characteristics differ from that of the crop farmers in the sense that

household sizes are large due to the polygamous nature of the grazers which determined their family sizes. For instance, a home of 6-10 persons which is considered as being large among the crop farmers is taken to be a moderate household size in the Fulani community. The range of household sizes varied from 2-5 persons as a small home to a number of above 17 persons which is taken to be a large household size.

### **Sedentarisation and Social Differentiation**

In the research area, the majority of Fulani grazers said they had no formal education. Nevertheless, most respondents reckoned that they have had more opportunities to attend schools in their new areas. In Baba II for example, most of the respondents had testified to us that they have had at least the opportunity to go to school and have a standard education that has changed their ways of thinking and acting. Such achievements have been possible due to their sedentary life.

Human capital in terms of labour has undergone major changes. Most heads of *households* in the area complained of shortage of labour, particularly for herding. This is due to the fact that most of the youths are now in school and some have gone to the large towns to seek for jobs. This led women and young girls to shoulder the herding task. The result has increased workload for the women. It should be noted that in a critical point of view, this is going to cause a problem for the girls as they delay in going to school and as such some are forced into early marriages. Traditionally, the relationship between generations was hierarchical and one of mutual dependence. The youth depended on the elders for economic sustenance, information and knowledge needed in their daily activities and relations. As the youth aged the roles changed. Social roles and positioning of children in the family were ascribed according to birth rank and position of the mother in case of a polygamous marriage

### **Assessing possible co-habitation between farmers and grazers**

However, in an attempt to assess a peaceful co-habitation between the Fulani and the crop farmers, the results of the field survey revealed that 76% of the crop farmers stated four (4) main points that they judged necessary to respect for this to be achieved. These points are:

- ❖ The respect of one another's religion.
- ❖ There should be the existence of an effective farmer-grazer commission in the area.
- ❖ Construction of fences for both the farms and the cattle for conflict prevention.
- ❖ Distinguish farm lands from grazing lands.

However, on the side of the grazers, 60% of them stipulated that for a situation of peaceful co-habitation to reign between the two parties, three (3) important things must be taken into consideration:

- There must be the existence of dialogue and understanding between the Fulani and the crop farmers.
- Active government intervention in livestock and crop farming policies in Santa sub division. That is, the government must always look into the problems of these groups and provide them with required materials as well as land use management policies
- The two groups have to cooperate or collaborate to improve on their livelihood conditions.

It should be noted that the two communities already share so much together for the few years they have been living together in the study area and the advantages they benefit from one another are numerous.

### **Proposed methods of conflict resolution**

A number of mitigation measures have been identified in this research study to remedy farmer-grazer conflicts in Santa sub division of the North West Region of Cameroon.

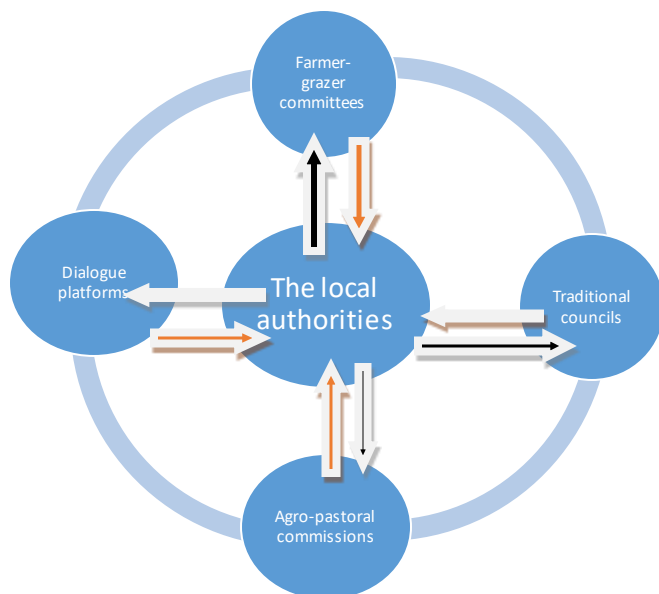


Fig.1: Avenues of conflicts resolution

As seen from the above figure, we have to ensure a kind of bottom-top information flow since the local authorities are the main actors and key players on the field. This kind of link will help disseminate viable information that will contribute to rural development. The local population and all the other parties should promote:

- Dialogue
- Trust between one another,
- Sense of consideration amongst the people,
- Sense of participation in rural projects as well as fostering communication amongst them.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study was aimed to provide a fairly comprehensive analysis that would improve our understanding of the processes of a better co-habitation between the Fulani grazers and crop farmers in Santa Subdivision.

However, the main causes of conflicts in the study were competition over land, land encroachment, cattle trespasses. After having explored several reasons for Fulani Sedentarisation, we found out that both parties were ready for a peaceful co-habitation. As the findings of this research work have revealed, the causes of farmer – grazer conflicts are centered on the Fulani cattle owners and the native crop farmers. These causes are seen in terms of competition on land, cattle trespass, and struggle for leadership, conflicts related to encroachment of grazing lands population growth or expansion and corruption by some officials. This is because the population of both groups is growing very rapidly and the land factor remains unchanged. The grazers equally need more land to practice agriculture as their neighbouring crop farmers thus

resulting to conflicts because the pressure and competition on the relatively small available land is almost going out of control.

The struggle for leadership in the rural areas was found to be a major factor causing conflicts especially among the crop farmers. This often led to inter village conflicts and more importantly intra village conflicts as was the case in Baba II where the villagers decided to imprison their chief in his palace because they suspected him as being corrupt and that he did not solve their problems especially on issues regarding farmer-grazer conflicts.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations were made in this section to reflect the research work carried out in Santa subdivision and its environs. These recommendations were addressed to the various stake holders involved in farmer – grazer conflict resolution to enable a sustainable co-habitation between the Fulani grazers and the crop farmers. The interested parties needed to capitalize on the existing efforts geared at mitigating conflicts and particularly the root causes of conflict for livelihood improvement. These recommendations were addressed to the following stake holders:

##### 1- To the crop farmers

- Intensification of agricultural activities alongside appropriate inputs such as improved seeds, alliance farming among others should be practiced to reduce the pressure on land for agro-pastoral activities.

##### 2- To the Fulani grazers

- Alliance farming and use of improved pasture should be encouraged in the locality so as to iron

out social differences between both parties (that is they should come into CIGs and work for a common goal).

- The Fulani also need to be sensitized on the use of land and preservation of biodiversity especially in transhumance areas.

### 3- To Non-Governmental Organisations

- The role played by non-governmental organization (N.G.O'S) to enhance the socio-economic integration of the Fulani should be strengthened by providing them with logistics and adequately trained personnel.
- MBOSCUDA and other farmer associations should foster their sensitization and education programmes to make possible the realization of good and durable projects in conflict hotspots.

### 4- To the local authorities or traditional councils

- The traditional rulers such as the Fons and Ardos and other civil authorities should discourage farmer-grazer disputes as much as possible.
- They should set up a kind of sanction or disciplinary committee in charge of the amicable settlement of such conflicts and as such sanctions should be levied on those recalcitrant farmers or grazers who may violet the rule of the committee. This may go a long way to reduce tension and promote peaceful co-habitation of both parties.

### 5- To the Government

- The state should intervene through competent agro-pastoral commissions to legally redefine and practically demarcate the boundaries between grazing and farmlands. This could be achieved by issuing land titles to both parties in a way to reduce the overlapping and conflicting tendencies of both Fulani grazers and crop famers.
- The state should also improve the human capital in the rural areas so as to enable excess labour in rural communities to access other profitable economic sectors in the region as well as in the country. This entails that the state takes positive policy actions in several related areas.

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