

Categorisation of Rural Development Stakeholders in Bui Division, North West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract— Rural development is a complex process involving multiple stakeholders with diverse interests and roles. The question of categorising these stakeholders which is missing in current literature is an urgent matter. This study aims to categorise the rural development stakeholders and examine their spatial geographical coverage in Bui Division of Cameroon. To do this, data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through field observations, personal interviews with RD institutions and administration of 360 questionnaire to the rural population of Kumbo, Oku and Noni Sub-Divisions within Bui Division. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and cartographic techniques with the help of figures, percentages, tables and a map. The findings revealed internal and external stakeholders in the rural development process, who are unevenly distributed within the division (40.9% in Kumbo, 30% in Oku and 29.1% in Noni). The study concludes that a critical foundation to formulate strategies for strengthening RD planning and implementation via stakeholder categorization in the area is in dire need. By providing a novel stakeholder categorisation approach, the study recommends that the internal and external stakeholder groups should each delineate their own set of priorities and requirements in streamlining sustainable future RD in the area. Also, the state should ensure balanced distribution of RD stakeholders by increasing their numbers in the less developed sub-divisions such as Noni and Oku in order to ensure that all sub-divisions equitably benefit from RD initiatives.

Keywords— Bui Division, internal, external, rural development, stakeholders

I. INTRODUCTION

In strict economic terms, development has traditionally meant the capacity of a national economy whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time to generate and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Income (GNI) at rates of 5 percent to 7 percent or more (Todaro and Smith, 2009). The world today stands at a critical juncture in its development trajectory. While significant progress has been made in poverty reduction, human health, and education, persistent challenges remain (World Bank, 2023). These challenges, including climate change, inequality, and

conflict, threaten to derail the global community's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Rural areas are home to over half of the world's population, and they play a vital role in food production, environmental protection and economic growth. However, rural areas also face significant challenges, including poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (UNDP, 2023), necessitating RD stakeholders.

Rural Development (RD) is a continuous process facilitated by stakeholders who play complementary

roles. The role of stakeholders in overcoming rural development challenges is a key issue to consider. Stakeholders in RD are those individuals and organizations who are affected by the activities of rural development and who can potentially influence the outcomes (Dorward and Kydd, 2004). They work together in order to create positive change in rural areas. This might include government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other local groups. Stakeholders can play a critical role in addressing the lack of access to resources and services, a lack of investment in infrastructure and the lack of job opportunities that often plague rural communities. For instance, NGOs can help provide educational opportunities, access to healthcare services, and better access to markets for small business owners. Government agencies on their part can provide financial support for infrastructural projects and incentives for investment in rural areas. Through collective action therefore, stakeholders can work together to create more sustainable and equitable development solutions in rural communities (Dorward and Kydd, 2004).

In this 21st century, RD has been the front burner of several developmental attempts aimed at improving the quality of life and living standard of the rural areas and the teeming population in both the developed and developing countries are pushing forth for this process (Brown and Wocha, 2017). The idea has gradually metamorphosed into a new paradigm shift from the old ways of agro-based economy to modernization of lifestyle and activities which are geared towards upgrading the rural areas (Funwi and Wanie, 2022). This could be a step in the process of RD although there is an assertion that there is no clear and comprehensive definition of rural development as the definition is scenario specific.

In advanced countries like the United States, Canada and England, rural areas constitute a complex web of social, political and historical factor/process in which the various groups of actors attempt to achieve outcomes that are commensurate with their aims (Terluin, 2003). In addition, several kinds of uncertainties (technology, market dynamics and economic constraints) are usually present while designing rural development plans (either at regional or Local Action Group level), where a number of different actors, processes and requirements need to be managed and included in the planning. As a consequence, frequent mismatches arise in practice

between measures and rural development goals and priorities.

Africa in general and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in particular faces several RD challenges. Her demographic transition has come late and the sub-continent has the highest fertility rate in the world. The process of structural transformation (including RD) in SSA is also still in the early stages with agriculture being the predominant livelihood activity (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OCED, 2016). In this realm of Africa, some 600 million people had no access to energy services in 2020, most of them living in rural areas (Winklmaier *et al.*, 2020). Nigeria and Ghana for instance are struggling with varying degrees of success to attain RD goals. In achieving these goals, RD is recognized as being of critical importance because the core problems of underdevelopment are related to stagnation of economic life in rural areas (Mbanga, 2015). Rural areas in these countries are not progressing in line with urban areas or metropolitan states in terms of having sustainable development like good road, electricity, good telecommunication, transportation, good water supply, standard market and health centres, improved housing and improved agricultural and storage facilities that would help in sustaining the rural masses (Ray, 2000).

Rural areas in Cameroon covered some 41% of the total surface area in 2022 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022). They are characterized by high level of poverty, illiteracy and insufficient social amenities. These characteristics allows for a more comprehensive view of the RD process, as stakeholders from diverse backgrounds can provide different perspectives. Cameroon considers stakeholders roles as an important strategy for addressing RD challenges. the involving multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders are often in a better position to understand the local context and the specific needs of the rural population, which can help to ensure that development efforts are more targeted and effective (McComb *et al.*, 2017). Stakeholder collaboration can therefore help ensure a sense of ownership and commitment to the development process by involving local communities, which is an important factor for achieving meaningful and lasting development outcomes (*ibid*). Consequently, it is clear that stakeholder involvement is a key strategy for addressing RD challenges, and one that should be actively pursued by development practitioners in Cameroon.

RD in the North West Region of Cameroon is an important issue that needs to be addressed in order to improve the living conditions of the people living there. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2020), investing in infrastructure, health, education and economic growth can help promote RD, together with improving access to basic services such as electricity and water and providing training and support for small and medium size businesses is essential to RD in the region. Additionally, investing in technology that can help keep farmers connected to the global market and improving access to markets for their products, as well as providing support for local agriculture and promoting sustainable use of natural resources. The absence of the above in the region currently implies that RD is challenged.

In Mezam Division for instance, Funwi and Wanie (2022) found that several rural development stakeholders are present. However, these stakeholders face problems of uncoordinated activities, insufficient funding, poor infrastructures such as bad roads and state dominance in decision making in the RD process. The respective areas of intervention of the various stakeholders in rural development are not well carved out leading to conflicts at times between stakeholders. The local population has not also been highly empowered to assist in the RD process. The local population still lacked the knowledge required to make correct decisions concerning the RD of their area such as on which basic needs projects to execute, materials to use, where the project should be sited amongst others, highlighting clearly that RD projects and actions in rural Mezam just like is the case in the entire region are currently unsustainable.

In Bui Division, different stakeholders have implemented a number of strategies to promote RD over the years, such as creating programs to promote agricultural production, providing financial support to farmers and investing in infrastructure and basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity and transportation. The government has also provided support to local businesses and promoted the establishment of micro and small enterprises. These organizations have conducted research, provided training and capacity building and advocated for policies and programs to improve the lives of local people, besides providing support for small businesses and invested in infrastructure (Fonjong *et al.*, 2015).

While previous studies have focused on stakeholders' contributions to RD in Mezam Division of Cameroon (Funwi and Wanie, 2022), assessment of the evolution of land tenure system in Cameroon and its effects on women's land rights and food security (Fonjong *et al.*, 2015), RD trends and their socio-economic implications in Noni-Sub-Division-Bui Division (Bime, 2020) and economic development of rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa through decentralized energy-water-food systems (Winklmaier *et al.*, 2020), there is currently the absence of scientific evidence on RD stakeholders categorisation in Bui Division, despite the large number of RD stakeholders present, different intervention domains as well as influence of the stakeholders present within the Division. Also, the spatial geographical coverage of the different stakeholders has not been clearly demarcated to avoid conflict amongst stakeholders as is oftently the case currently. This study adds to existing knowledge on RD stakeholders by categorising the different stakeholders involved in the RD process and determining their spatial geographic concentration in Bui Division, thereby filling in the existing research gap. Classification of the RD stakeholders could help determine their influence and level of effect in RD projects outcome as not all stakeholders are equal and require the same amount of attention or exert the same amount of influence on RD. It could also help set priorities and requirements for each of the stakeholder groups in the RD process in the future.

II. STUDY AREA AND RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Study Area

Bui Division is one of the seven Divisions in the North West Region of Cameroon. It is located between Latitudes 6°00"-6°20" North of the Equator and Longitudes 10°30"-11°00" East of the Greenwich Meridian (Kumbo Rural Council, 2020). The area covers a surface area of some 2160.88km². It has six sub-divisions; Kumbo Central (630km²), Jakiri (675km²), Nkum (375.3km²), Nkor-Noni (307.7km²), Mbiame (575km²) and Elak-Oku (232km²) sub-divisions (Figure 1). Bui Division is bordered to the north by Donga Mantung Division, north east by Boyo Division, south west by Ngoketunjia Division and to the south and south east by Noun Division in the Western Region of Cameroon.

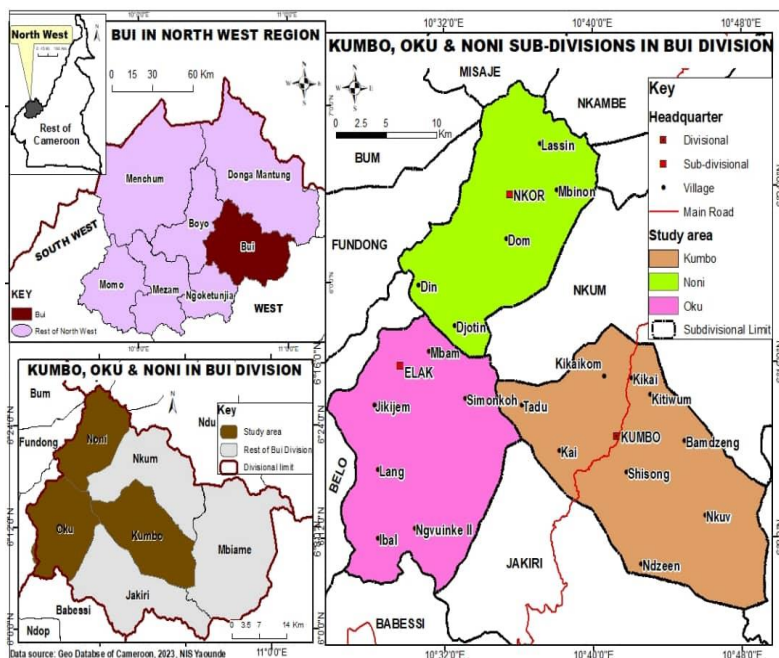


Fig. 1: Location Map of Bui Division outlaying the study areas (Kumbo, Oku and Noni Sub-Divisions)

Source: Aster Landsat image, 2022

As of 2023, the population of the Bui Division, including the three studied areas (Kumbo, Oku and Noni Sub-Divisions) stood at some 659,200 inhabitants (BUCREP, 2010 and Bui Council Development Plan, 2023). Between 1987 and 2023, the population has experienced a fast growth rate as shown in Figure 2. Bui Division has an agrarian economy with over 75% of the inhabitants involved in either crop cultivation or animal rearing which constitutes a veritable potential for rural development stakeholders in the area.

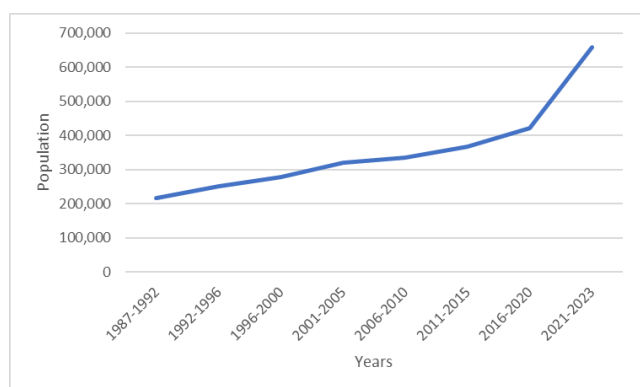


Fig. 2: Population dynamics in Bui Division (1997-2023)

Source: BUCREP (2010) and Bui Council Development Plan (2023)

In the same year, the population of the three sub-divisions which constitute the study area had a

combined population of over 546,000 inhabitants. Of these, Kumbo had the largest population, followed by Oku and Noni sub-division (Table 1).

Table 1: Population of the three sub-divisions that constitute the study (Kumbo, Oku and Noni) in 2023

S/N	Rural Councils	Population
1	Kumbo	283,079
2	Oku	180,000
3	Noni	83,504
	Total	546,583

Source: BUCREP (2010) and Kumbo, Oku and Noni Council Development Plans (2023)

2.2 Data Collection

Data for this study was gotten from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data included field observations, personal interviews and questionnaire administration. These targeted individuals, institutions and groups who were directly involved and contribute to the RD process in Bui Division.

Field observation was done to identify the RD stakeholders present and subsequently categorise them and where they operate spatially within the Division.

This was done repeatedly with the three studied sub-divisions between the months of November 2022 and September 2023.

Personal interviews were equally carried out in order to collect primary data. This was a technique used to target RD institutional stakeholders from schools, churches, health centres, electricity, road maintenance, potable water supply, sub-divisional delegations of government ministries in the three studied areas, local administrative (rural council) authorities or mayors, Village Development Associations (VDA), Common Initiative Groups (CIG) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) involved in RD in one or more sub-divisions. Personal interviews were successfully done with Forty-One (41) institutional RD stakeholders in the three sub-divisions (Table 2), with each interview lasting between 5 to 10 minutes. The aim of the interview was to determine the spatial geographical concentration of the stakeholders.

Table 2: Personal interviews with 41 institutional stakeholders in Bui Division

S/N	Institutional stakeholder	Number of interviews granted
1	Rural Council heads (Mayors)	3
2	Sub-divisional Delegations of government ministries	4
3	Health centres	6
4	School heads	6
5	Church heads	3
6	CIGs	4
7	VDAs	6
8	Others	6

Field work was also accompanied by questionnaire administration to the rural population within Kumbo, Oku and Noni Sub-Divisions in varying numbers following the population size of the rural council area using the purposive sampling method. This sampling technique involved the intentional selection of rural population involved in the RD process in the area. Using this method, some Three Hundred and Sixty (360) copies of questionnaires were administered and Three Hundred and Forty (340) successfully retrieved within the three sub-divisions that make up the study area

(Table 3). The questionnaires were administered to both male and female, youths, adults and the aged within the population, educationist, health workers, teachers, political leaders, farmers, agricultural extension workers, road maintenance, electricity provision and pipe borne water supply workers and livestock breeders. The questionnaire targeted the rural population because they constitute the main RD stakeholders who play a crucial role in their RD process. The response rate of the administered questionnaire stood at 94.4%, which formed the basis of the qualitative data analysis employed in the study.

Table 3: Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved in Kumbo, Oku and Noni Sub-divisions

Sub-division	2023 Population	Number of questionnaires issued	Number of questionnaires retrieved	Response rate (%)
Kumbo	283,079	135	130	96.3
Oku	180,000	117	110	94.0
Noni	83,504	108	100	92.6
Total	546,583	360	340	94.4

The secondary sources of information used for this study emanated from libraries, institutional and internet sources where published and unpublished documents were gotten. The libraries of The University of Bamenda and Buea were consulted where past dissertations and Thesis on RD in Cameroon and the Northwest Region. Text books and journals were also reviewed at the libraries in order to situate the study. Archives of institutions such as the Kumbo, Oku and Noni Rural Councils as well as NGOs, VDAs, UNDP, OECD, The World Bank and CIGs were also consulted from where end of year reports of RD activities were read and analysed. Finally, e-books and journals on RD were accessed online (internet) with the help of Google search engine. Here, sites consulted included pdfdrive.com, academia and ResearchGate all provided relevant secondary information on the introduction of the study.

2.3 Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

The data obtained from the primary and secondary sources were classified, coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. This software was used to generate qualitative

techniques of data analysis, presented using figures, percentages and tables for easy understanding. Cartographic analysis was also ensured in the form of a map showing the spatial geographic concentration of the RD stakeholders in Kumbo, Oku and Noni sub-divisions and the degree of RD in these areas.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study are presented on stakeholders categorisation and their spatial coverage in the RD process in Bui Division.

3.1 Categorisation of RD Stakeholders in Bui Division

Findings revealed that diverse stakeholders are involved in the RD process in Bui Division. This study inductively

categorised the different RD stakeholders in to two groups for simplicity and easy understanding, namely, internal and external stakeholders (Figure 3). The internal stakeholders are those RD stakeholders in Bui Division originating from within the national territory (local, sub-divisional, divisional, regional and country) while the external are the intervening stakeholders originating out of the national territory (international). Generally speaking, these stakeholders play a crucial role in driving RD efforts addressing issues such as poverty reduction, improved agricultural productivity, infrastructural provision, health care accessibility, education and overall improvement of living standards of the rural population.

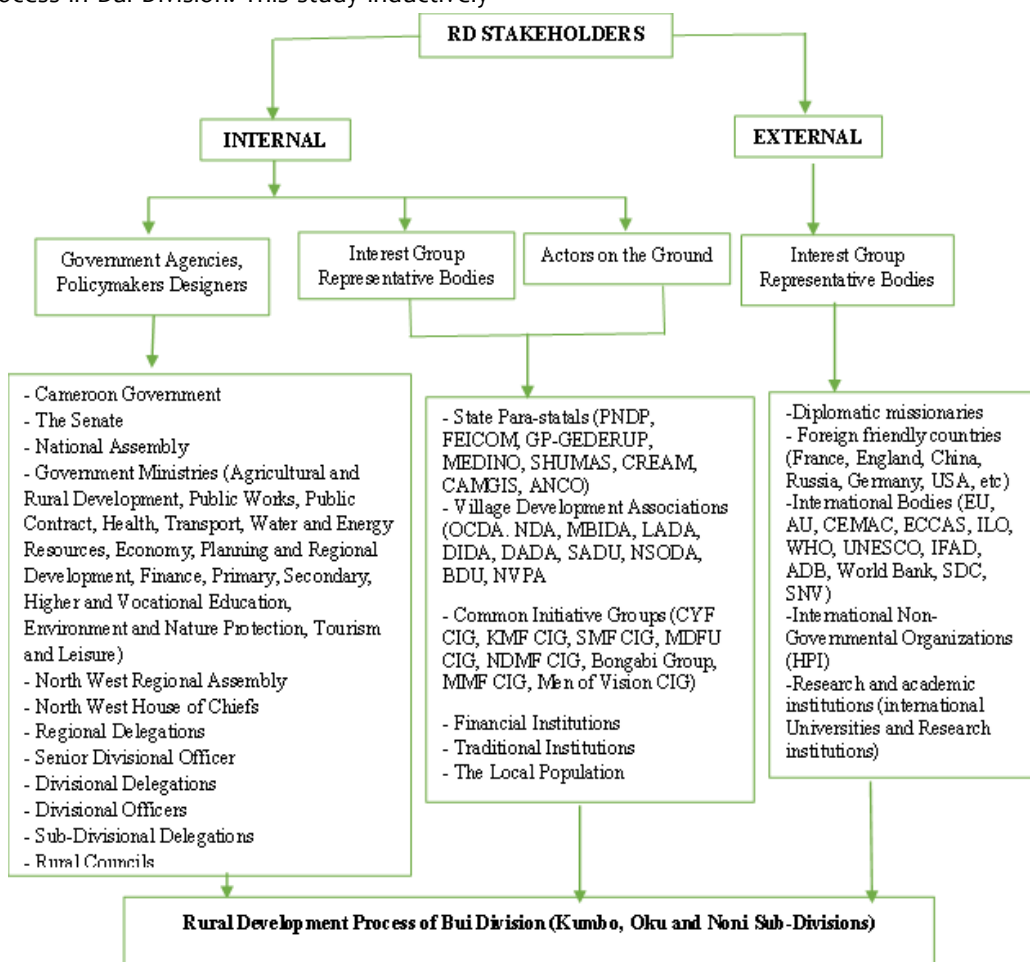


Fig. 3: Categorisation of RD Stakeholders in Bui Division

Source: Conception by Authors, 2023

Figure 3 shows the two broad categories of RD Stakeholders in Bui Division which are classified under internal and external stakeholders as evident in Figure 3.

3.1.1 Internal RD Stakeholders

As seen in Figure 3, the internal RD stakeholders in Bui Division are of three sub-classes. These include government agencies, policymakers designers, interest

group representative bodies and actors on the ‘ground’ (Table 4).

Table 4: Sub-classes of Internal RD Stakeholders in Bui Division

S/N	Internal RD stakeholders sub-class	Internal RD stakeholders
1	Government Agencies, Policymakers and Designers	Cameroon Government and her ministries (Agricultural and Rural Development, Public Works, Public Contract, Health, Transport, Water and Energy Resources, Economy, Planning and Regional Development, Finance, Primary, Secondary, Higher and Vocational Education, Environment and Nature Protection, Tourism and Leisure, Decentralisation and Local Development, Territorial Administration, Post and Tele Communication, etc)
		The Senate
		National Assembly,
		North West Regional Assembly
		North West House of Chiefs
		Regional Delegations of various ministries present in Bui
		the Senior Divisional Officer for Bui
		Divisional Delegations of various ministries present in Bui
		Sub-Divisional Delegations of ministries present in Kumbo, Oku and Noni sub-divisions,
		Divisional Officers of

		Kumbo, Oku and Noni sub-divisions
		Kumbo, Oku and Noni Rural Councils
2	Interest Group Representative Bodies	state parastatals, including, PNDP, FEICOM, GP-GEDERUP, MEDINO, SHUMAS, CREAM, CAMGIS, ANCO
		VDA's
		CIGs
3	Actors on the Ground	Local population (farmers, livestock breeders, small-scale entrepreneurs, cottage industry operators, traditional authorities such as fons, VDA's) and business community

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 4 shows the three sub-classes of internal RD stakeholders in Bui Division, being government agencies, policymakers and designers, interest group representative bodies and actors on the ‘ground’. Government agencies, policymakers and designers are responsible for policymaking, planning, and implementing RD programs. They provide essential infrastructure, support services and financial resources. The interest group representative bodies equally play a vital role in RD by providing expertise, mobilizing resources and implementing projects on the ground. They often work closely with communities and governments to address specific issues, provide financial and technical assistance to support RD programs. They collaborate with governments, NGOs and rural communities to address development challenges and contribute through research, knowledge generation and capacity-building initiatives. Finally, actors on the ‘ground’ are mostly the local population who are the residents of the rural areas who directly benefit from or are affected by development initiatives like farmers, small-scale entrepreneurs, women's groups. They actively participate in decision-making, implementation and monitoring of projects.

3.1.2 External RD Stakeholders

The external RD stakeholders in Bui are interest group representative bodies originating from outside the Cameroon (international). They include diplomatic missionaries, friendly foreign countries (France, England, China, Russia, Germany, USA, etc), international bodies (EU, AU, CEMAC, ECCAS, ILO, WHO, UNESCO, IFAD, ADB, World Bank, SDC, SNV), international Non-Governmental Organizations like HPI and research and academic institutions (Universities and Research institutions). They provide specific needs of interest to the rural population of Bui Division. They also provide valuable insights, innovations and technical expertise to inform evidence-based RD strategies.

Nevertheless, the categorisation of RD stakeholders in Bui Division as internal and external is not mutually exclusive. This is because as it was observed, the stakeholders interact and collaborate with each other to achieve the desired RD outcomes in the study area. The categorisation of RD stakeholders in Bui Division as internal and external differs from earlier categorisation by Funwi and Wanie (2022), who categorised RD stakeholders in Mezam Division of the Northwest Region of Cameroon into four groups including CBOs, NGOs, state institutions and Development Corporation Agencies (DVAs).

3.2 Spatial geographic concentration of RD stakeholders in Bui Division

There is an unequal concentration of the RD stakeholders within Bui Division. Findings reveal that Kumbo sub-division with the largest population and surface area, being the regional headquarters of Bui Division with several divisional delegations of government ministries present and having up to 42 villages, has the highest number of RD stakeholders (40.9%), closely followed by Oku (30%) and Noni (29.1%) due to their comparatively small number of villages and surface area occupied compared to Kumbo. Furthermore, Kumbo sub-division with the highest number of RD stakeholders equally showcases the highest degree of rural development, followed by Oku and Noni (Figure 4). Understanding the spatial geographical concentration of the RD stakeholders in the area is important because it helps identify the concentration or dispersion of stakeholders concerned with resources, expertise and interventions across the different sub-divisions that make up the division which can have significant implications for RD outcomes like the degree of RD.

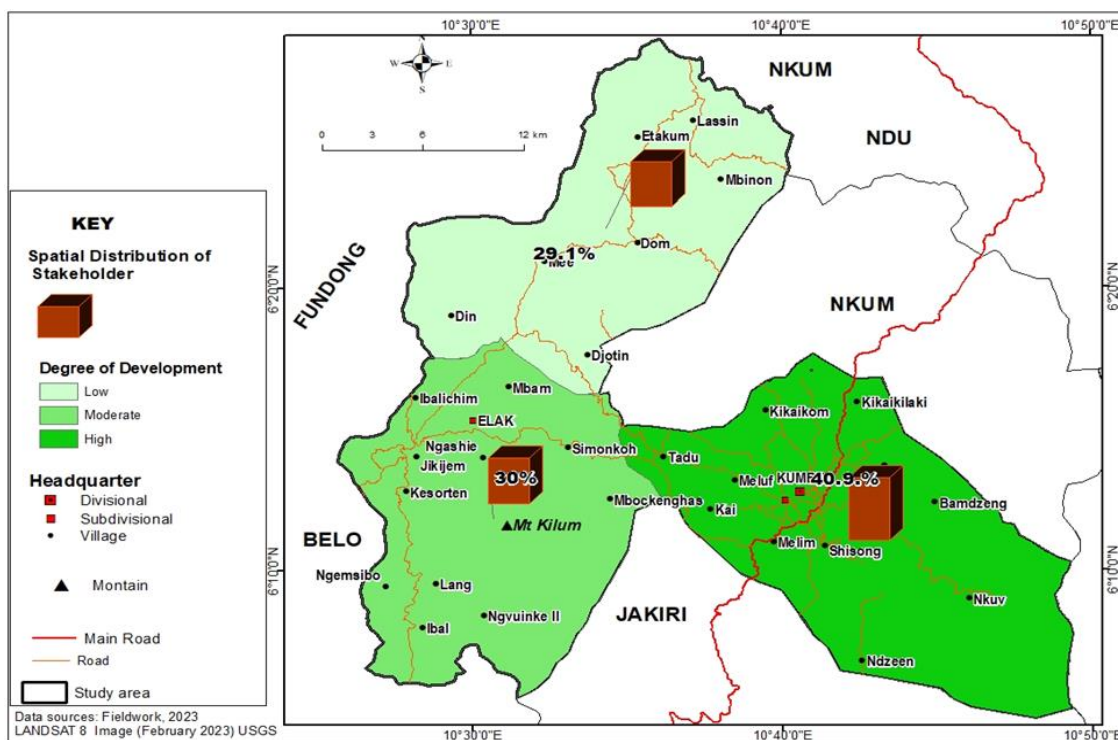


Fig. 4: Spatial geographic concentration of RD stakeholders and degree of RD in Kumbo, Oku and Noni sub-divisions in Bui Division of Cameroon

Source: Aster Landsat image, 2022 and Fieldwork, 2023

From Figure 4, we observe a spatial variation in the concentration of the RD stakeholders in Bui, which strongly influences the degree of overall RD in the area. It follows that the more the RD stakeholders, the more the degree of development as seen with the evidence of Kumb over Oku and Noni sub-divisions. Findings on spatial geographic concentration of RD stakeholders in Bui Division corroborates studies by Funwi and Wanie (2022), who found that Santa with more rural population has more RD stakeholders (33%) than Bafut (28%), Tubah (23%) and Bali (16%) sub-divisions, all in Mezam Division of the Northwest Region of Cameroon.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The realization of RD in Bui Division is the collective effort of several stakeholders who perform different but complementary roles in the agriculture, transport, water, health care, education and energy (electricity) domains. This study inductively categorised the multiple RD stakeholders into two groups, namely, internal and external stakeholders for the sake of clarity and easy understanding, with sub-classes. The internal stakeholders are those originating from within the country, while the external ones are those that intervene externally in the RD process of Bui Division. Despite this categorisation, the stakeholders perform complementary roles and collaborate and cooperate with other in the RD process in the area. The study also sought to determine the spatial geographical concentration of the stakeholders with result that more stakeholders are present in sub-divisions with large population, administrative headquarter and more villages like Kumbo than those that are not like Noni. The results could set the stage for a clearer understanding of the specific contributions and cooperation domains between the different stakeholders. It could also provide a critical foundation to formulate strategies for strengthening RD planning and implementation via stakeholder groups in the area as well as help set priorities and requirements for each of the stakeholder groups in the RD process in the future. The study recommends that the specific domains of RD contributions of the different stakeholders be clearly delimited so as to avoid conflict and over lapping of functions/intervention domains in the RD effort in Bui. This will also hasten the currently slow pace of RD in the area, as several stakeholders invest in the same domain and/or sub-division, while

neglecting others with the end result being abandoned projects and observed regional inequality within sub-divisions. Besides delimiting the respective domains of RD invention by the different stakeholder groups, more stakeholders should be distributed to sub-divisions with currently low degree of RD such as Noni and Oku. This could help attain balanced or equitable RD within the Division. There is therefore the need to increase the concentration of RD stakeholders in the less developed sub-divisions in order to ensure that all sub-divisions benefit from RD initiatives.

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