



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Land as a Pre-Condition to Access the National
Maize Support Program in Cameroon:
A Study of Exclusion in the North West Region**

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to all African women who have been rendered landless by cultural discrimination.

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Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
List of Acronyms	ix
Abstract	xi
Relevance to Development Studies	xii
Keywords	xiii
Chapter 1 Research Context and Setting	1
1.1 General Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3 Conceptual/Analytical Framework	4
1.3.1 Social Exclusion	4
1.3.2 Land Tenure Institutions, Asset Ownership and Processes of Group Formation	5
1.4 Methodology of the Research	6
1.4.1. Choice and location of the research site	6
1.4.2 Procedure for selecting groups (cases) and informants	8
1.4.3 Techniques of data collection	9
1.4.4 Secondary Sources	10
1.5 Field Difficulties and Limitations of the Study	10
Chapter 2 NSPMS: Rationale, Assumptions and Grant Conditions	12
2.1 Rationale of NSPMS	12
2.2 Conditions for access to maize grants	14
2.2.1 Show proof of land or permanent access to land.	15
2.2.2 Be a Farming Group	16
2.3 Situation of Grants disbursed to farmers in 2008	18
Chapter 3 The African Land Tenure Question and Access to Land in Tubah	20
3.1 A brief review of the land question in Africa	20

3.2	Cameroon as an example: A brief historical overview	21
3.2.1	Genesis of a dual but distinctively blurred land tenure system	22
3.3	The land tenure question and issues of access in Tubah.	24
3.3.1	Three cases of discrimination from access to land in Tubah	25
3.3.2	The land market in Tubah	29
Chapter 4 Confronting NSPMS Assumptions with the Land Question in Tubah		31
4.1	Exclusion involved in NSPMS's assumptions about farmers' access to land	31
4.1.1	Land tenure institutions as a vehicle of social exclusion	31
4.1.2	Processes of group formation as a mechanism of social exclusion	34
4.2	Which groups and categories of farmers showed higher tendencies of being excluded?	36
4.2.1	The disadvantaged and deprived	37
4.2.2	The discriminated	37
Chapter 5 Conclusion and Policy Implications		40
5.1	Conclusion	40
5.2	Policy Implications	42
	References	43
	Appendices	46

List of Tables

Table 1: Population distribution of Tubah according to the 1987 Population Census	8
Table 2: Total number of micro- projects received from FG in Tubah between (2006-2008)	19
Table 3: Forms of land conflicts in Tubah	29
Table 4: Major ways of access to land in Tubah	30

List of Figures

- Figure 1: A Venn diagram illustrating intersection of group membership within groups. 36
- Figure 2: A Venn diagram illustrating access to eligibility for the NSPMS grant scheme 38

List of Acronyms

APIR: Agricultural Professionalization and Institutional Reinforcement

BASSUG: Bambui Union of Self Help Groups

CIG: Common Initiative Group

CIFG: Common Initiative Farming Group

DO: Sub-Divisional Officer

DSDSR: Document de Strategie du Developpement du Secteur Rurale

EU: European Union

FG: Farming Groups

FGD: Focus Group Discussions

GHPC: General Housing and Population Census

GP-DERUDEP: Grassfield Participatory and Decentralised Rural Development Program

HIPC: Heavily Indebted Poor Country

HYV: High Yielding Varieties

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

IRAD: Institut de Recherche Agricole pour le Développement

MINADER: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

NEPAD: New Partnership for African Development

NIS: National Institute of Statistics

NSPMS: National Support Program to the Maize Sub-Sector

PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

SAP: Structural Adjustment Program

SDDARD: Sub-Divisional Delegation of Agriculture and Rural Development

WTO: World Trade Organization

Abstract

This paper explores the question of how the land tenure system in the North West Region of Cameroon affects rural farmers' access to the National Support Program to the Maize Sub-Sector (NSPMS) in Cameroon. It does this by confronting NSPMS's assumptions about farmers' access to land with the land tenure question existing in the Region. The paper uses an analytical framework which links land tenure institutions, processes of group formation and social exclusion to challenge these assumptions. Principally, NSPMS assumes that, access to land is not a problem for all farmers if they organize themselves into Farming Groups (FG). This paper questions this assumption and treats it as being highly problematic and exclusionary for a program which aims at reducing rural poverty.

Rather, this paper argues that, following the nature of the African land question, traditional chiefs do not mainly administer land for the benefit of their subjects in an era of increased land commoditization. Traditional land administration in this era is highly knitted into economic and social relations of power and status which thus suggest high risks of discrimination and exclusion. As such, the paper seeks to add to the knowledge of how mechanisms of social exclusion could be rooted in land tenure institutions but go unnoticed and, continue to further nurture other forms of disadvantage, inequality, exclusion and great vulnerability to acute poverty. This paper locates itself within Shivji's (2008) line of argument which points to the fact that, beyond the agrarian question in Africa is a land question.

The findings of this research suggest disparities between; expectations of NSPMS in their grant making assumptions and, field realities experienced by small scale maize farmers. Instead, there was group polarization. FG's which had land were all made of people of similar social status in terms of their privileged position to access land while, landless groups were mostly made of socio-culturally discriminated categories of farmers. In this regard, there was no mixed group (both landless farmers and landlords) which had received grants. Only the polarized landed groups made of landlords had received grants.

Ensuuing from this divide therefore, this paper concludes by questioning the adoption of FG as a strategy to include majority of landless maize farmers by NSPMS. Rather, this paper is of the stance that, with the current land tenure question and, NSPMS grants conditions, there seem to be the gradual emergence of a classed rural society made up of landlords and the landless. This is because, the blurred mix of customary and statutory tenures provides for lobbying and 'land grabbing' by the elite and, NSPMS through its grant making scheme is rather reinforcing the class situation by adding other forms of capital to the landlords while the landless are progressively being excluded from such capital accumulating programs.

Relevance to Development Studies

Poverty and its eradication is one of the core concerns of development studies and literature on the subject tends to conceptualize rural poverty mainly as a lack of resources. Thus, efforts towards its reduction have often been to give the poor these resources. However, even when these resources are distributed, the poor continue to find it hard to access them. By analyzing how inequalities imbedded in social institutions tend to deprive and exclude the poor from accessing resources distributed by NSPMS, this research seeks to, contribute to the re-conceptualization of rural poverty as a socio-political process imbedded in societal institutions.

Keywords

[Land question, discrimination, access, social exclusion, resources, rural poverty reduction, national food security]

Chapter 1 Research Context and Setting

1.1 General Introduction

In recent years, while the conceptualization of rural poverty is often considered to be a lack of resources by the poor, literature on the African land tenure question has often presented the continent as one with abundant land and not experiencing a land tenure question like other societies in Asia and Latin America. With this conceptualization and, basing on such a projection of the continent, most governments tend to design and implement rural poverty reduction programs on the grounds that, access to land is not a major obstacle for the poor in Africa. This paper seeks to analyze the exclusion involved in such assumptions with a focus on NSPMS, a national rural poverty reduction program in Cameroon which aims at supporting farmers by giving them other productive resources.

Under this support program, it is considered that, access to land is not a major problem for rural farmers. Rather, rural farmers are seen as not organized enough to access land because; a FG can always access land if it wants. Thus, farmers' problem is not lack of access to land but, a lack of organization. From this perspective therefore, NSPMS through their grant conditions emphasize that, all farmers whether landed or landless should form FG because as a FG, access to land is not a problem. In which case, all farmers both landlords and the landless can access these grants to improve their livelihood. However, like Peters (2004) indicates, literature on the land struggle in African countries suggests a land question expressed as a land tenure question which this paper will use to confront and challenge NSPMS's assumptions such as to expose the exclusionary processes involved in these assumptions.

To do this, the paper is structured in five chapters. Chapter one presents the research context, exploring aspects like the research problem, objective and questions, analytical framework, methodology and limitations of the study. Chapter two presents NSPMS, its rationale, grant conditions as well as a critical review of its assumptions about: farmers' access to land and their ability to freely form or join FG. Chapter three reviews the African land question as a land tenure question using Cameroon as an example. This chapter also examines access to land in Tubah by critically discussing its land tenure question. Chapter four confronts NSPMS assumptions with the land question in Tubah such as to analyze exclusion by questioning who has the land, who belongs to farming groups, who gets the grants and who is excluded. This chapter points to exclusionary processes involved between access to land, belonging to farming group, being eligible to apply for the grants and finally, obtaining the grants. It also gives a glance at other exclusionary processes

involved in the process. Finally, Chapter five presents an analytical conclusion with a guess on policy implications.

1.2 Problem Statement

The fight against poverty is an issue of global concern and, poverty reduction strategies range from local community based to, national and international approaches. In Cameroon, a 'sectoral' approach is adopted in strategizing poverty reduction (PRSP, 2003). This approach has been common place since Cameroon's admission as a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) in 2000. In this approach, the agricultural sector is said to be of prime importance to the Cameroonian economy (Fondjong, 2004: 1) since it employs 59% of the active population. However, 85% of the poor in Cameroon live in rural areas and derive their livelihoods from agriculture (DSDSR, 2003:2-3). As such the government identified the rural agricultural sector as a key sector in reducing rural poverty (PRSP, 2003).

In the sector's strategy, it is stipulated that, the government should stay out of all direct production activities while supporting 'private operators to foster production, secure population revenue and food security by modernizing production equipments through medium and long term financing among others' (PRSP,2003:xiii). With this in focus, NSPMS¹ considered to be the priority program for the development of the rural sector was launched in October 2004. NSPMS seeks to develop group production activities by providing financial, technical and material inputs alongside commercialization channels and negotiations such as to increase production and maximize all opportunities in the sector while increasing farmers' revenues (NEPAD, 2004). The development of group production is based on the assumption that, when organized as a group, farmers can mutually reinforce each other and, landless farmers can benefit access to land which otherwise will be impossible (Kengné, 2003). In this way, group production is one of the most effective ways of reaching out to majority if not, all farmers in a community (ibid.)

From this perspective, NSPMS on the one hand supports rural maize farmers on the conditions that, they are legally registered as farming groups, have an account with a Credit Union or a Bank², show proof of land ownership or permanent access and, apply for the grants. These conditions hold whereas, on the other hand, Cameroon as demonstrated by Fisiy (1992) is one of those African countries where the distinction between statutory and customary land tenure is blurred providing formal legal recognition of

¹ Best known by its French acronym (PNAFM) which represents Program Nationale d'appui à la Filière Maize

² Recent measure taken to curb corruption.

customary rights and IFAD (2008:Homepage) further emphasis concerning land tenure that ‘unclear or conflicting systems (e.g. customary versus statutory land rights) often culminate in the loss of land rights for the poorest and most vulnerable’.

Furthermore, while this dual land tenure system remains so far untouched, the countryside has witnessed an increase in the number of national and international organizations³ which assist farmers based on their organization as FG. Yet, as (Mengue, 2004) indicates, poverty in Cameroon continues to be mainly rural and, between 2001 and 2007, rural poverty has even increased from 52.1% to 55.0% with around 60% of peasants and cattle farmers in rural areas being poor (NIS, 2008). Also, further warnings are being made that, ‘if the trend of maize production is not reversed within the shortest time possible, the country will witness a maize deficit of some 330.000 tons by the year 2012’⁴(Afrique Avenir, homepage).

In this respect, the objective of this paper is to analyze how, in an attempt to include majority of maize farmers in its grant scheme, NSPMS has rather made exclusionary assumptions about access to land for these farmers. As such, given that NSPMS emphasizes proof of group land as an indispensable condition for access to grants, this paper focuses on the question: how does the land tenure system existing in the Northwest Region of Cameroon affect access to grants for maize production by rural farmers? In other words, how does the land tenure system affect who gets what and, who is left out? To systematically research this question, the following sub-questions were posed:

1. What modalities does NSPMS assume about access to group land in their grant making scheme and why?
2. Does the land tenure system in the North West Region provide access to land for all groups without discrimination?
3. Do farmers freely form or join farming groups without constraints?
4. Which groups have received grants, which ones are excluded and why?
5. Do all groups which have access to land receive grants? If not why?

Given the objective of this paper and the central question guiding the research, it is important to mention the perspective from which the question

³ HIEFER project international promoting life stock rearing and, IFAD.

⁴ Original French version Si la tendance n’est pas inversée à court terme, le pays devrait connaître quelque 330.000 tonnes de déficit à l’horizon 2012, selon une étude du Comité de compétitivité.

will be explored and analyzed. In this regards, some concepts relating the question have been employed and interlinked to serve in the analysis of field findings. These will be the subject of the next paragraphs.

1.3 Conceptual/Analytical Framework

1.3.1 Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion which evolved from the Western world (Saith, 2001) has gradually gained grounds in present day development literature. It approaches poverty analysis more from a social perspective than an individualistic one (Wuyts, 2004:14). It is defined by the EU to be, ‘the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live’ (Kabeer, 2005:1). However, this definition may not be exactly transferred as an operational definition for analysis (Kabeer, 2000) in a developing country like Cameroon which presents a rather different social and structural situation.

In the context of this paper therefore, social exclusion would be employed as being, the social dynamics of how disadvantage works to exclude the poor from access to resources which might in turn lead to further disadvantages and exclusions (Wuyts, 2004). It would therefore be incomplete to reduce social exclusion to the ‘Idiosyncratic preferences or aberrational behavior on the part of some individuals toward others’ (Kabeer, 2005: 4). Rather, the concept of social exclusion as applied in this paper exceeds the later and includes ‘an institutionalized form of inequality, the failure of a society to extend to all sections of its population the economic resources and social recognition which they need in order to participate fully in the collective life of the community’ (ibid.). Analyzing farmers exclusion from access to NSPMS grants in this paper therefore entails looking at how land tenure institutional rules, processes of resource distribution by NSPMS or traditional chiefs (in the case of land) and, social relationships among: landed and landless farmers, landless farmers and chiefs, tend to determine access to and, recognition within NSPMS grant making scheme.

This concept is chosen for an analytical framework for this study because, ‘it emphasizes multiple and reinforcing aspects of deprivation, process and relational issues, and the role of institutions’ (Conway, 2002:1). Furthermore, it focuses on ‘quite two distinct understandings of disadvantage: one relating to lack of resources “what people have” and, the other identity-based discrimination, “who they are” [in social relations] thereby, offering a perspective which draws attention to the overlap between these different experiences of disadvantage’ (Kabeer, 2005:3). This concept is therefore relevant in analyzing access to NSPMS grants under a land tenure question which presents both institutional and relational dimensions.

From an institutional point of view, land tenure consists of, 'land rights and the institutions that determine, administer, regulate and enforce those rights' (Moyo, 2003: 18). As an institution therefore, land tenure sets rules that regulate issues access, use and control of land. In other words, land tenure systems 'determines who can use what resources for how long and under what conditions' (ibid.). In this respect, since land is an asset upon /or with which a livelihood is constructed, tenure institutions by defining who can use what resources, for how long and, under what conditions, put limitations on the choice scope of livelihood strategies available to individuals in society (North 1990) in (Baye, 2008). These limitations 'wholly or partially exclude groups or individuals from full participation in the society in which they live through the process of social exclusion' (Eufoundation, 1995) in (Laderchi et al., 2003: 258). As such, land tenure which concerns the social relationships in the control and allocation of land can be a tool for discrimination and exclusion since tenure relations are intertwined and related to other institutions and social structures which tend to impose management institutions and rules for access to other resources.

In this regard, employing the concept of social exclusion for analysis in this research further enables us to 'connect notions such as poverty, deprivation, lack of access to assets, goods and services [while allowing for,] a better understanding of poverty as a process that involves multiple agents as well as institutions' (skalli, 2003:75). Thus, 'the analysis of social exclusion lends itself to the study of structural characteristics of a society and the situation of groups that can generate and characterise exclusion' (Laderchi et al., 2003:260).

In my analysis, I consider social exclusion as a socio-dynamic process embedded into societal institutions and structures and, enhanced by the type of social relations which exist between people particularly, relations between different groups and categories. This then enables me to identify the social processes linking lack of access to land, being deprived from access to FG and, being excluded from access to NSPMS which, may further lead to other disadvantages and vulnerability to acute poverty.

1.3.2 Land Tenure Institutions, Asset Ownership and Processes of Group Formation

Generally, access to one resource determines access to the other. Tenure institutions which limit people's access to land tend to precondition their exclusion from livelihood strategies which require land. Social exclusion thus becomes the result of a series of exclusions and, at the same time is 'a dynamic process, best described as descending levels: where some disadvantages lead to some exclusion which in turn leads to more disadvantage and more exclusion and ends up with persistent multiple (deprivation)' (Laderchi et al., 2003:258).

Furthermore, as the literature on group formation suggest, the very process of group formation can be exclusionary (Thorp et al.,2005). Generally, groups are either open or closed. While open groups like political parties and social movements achieve their objectives by expanding their membership and being largely inclusive, closed groups like professional associations (FG) rather achieve their objectives by restricting group membership on the basis of some agreed rules and institutions (Kabeer, 2005). The agencies and actions of some category of people within a given society therefore exclude others and these dynamics tend to impact on the present and future prospects of victims. This approach to social exclusion therefore provides an ‘integrated and dynamic analytical perspective which reveals the processes, agency, and multidimensionality of disadvantage’ (CERED, 1997 in Skalli, 2003:75).

However, although the analysis of social exclusion opens up for exposure of the social processes and dynamics that make certain groups or categories of people disadvantaged and deprived from accessing certain resources to improve their livelihood, the approach presents a few analytical limitations. This approach might not adequately furnish us with tools to exactly measure the number of people excluded from accessing NSPMS grants because, it deals more with social relationships and inequalities between groups than with, individual characteristics of poverty and lack of access to resources (Wuyts, 2004). Nonetheless, this approach seemed most appropriate for this study because the paper sought to understand social processes that prevented some groups or categories of farmers from accessing NSPMS grants. Having said this, it is important to elaborate on the methodology of this research.

1.4 Methodology of the Research

This research collected data from both primary and secondary sources using mostly, qualitative techniques. For primary data collection, the research site was Tubah Sub-Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. In the paragraphs that follow, a brief justification for the choice and, location of the research site, procedures and reasons for selecting cases as well as, the research techniques are elaborated upon.

1.4.1. Choice and location of the research site

The field work of this research took place in the months of July and August 2009 in Tubah Sub-Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Firstly, the North West Region was chosen from among eight maize producing regions in Cameroon because, during the years, (1974-1985) when land

registration and titling was common place ⁵, majority of land certificates in the country were obtained for pieces of land located in this region. A total of 1,502 land certificates were issued by 1985 but of this number, mainly two groups of people (State Elites and Business men who could access the information, importance, and procedures of titling) owned 82.8 % (1244 of 1502) of the titles while, farmers accounted for 4.9 % with a total of 74 titles and, other categories 13.3 % (Fisiy, 1992). Today, 'boundary disputes and land appropriation are among the major kinds of rampant conflicts in the Region' (GP-DERUDEP, 2006:19).

This region is however multi-ethnic. This suggests a broad variation in customary land tenure systems across ethnic groups. To this effect, the research focuses on Tubah Sub-Division which is endowed with a road network, market and agricultural research centers which are assumed to be economic, social and technical motivating factors for farmers.

Tubah is located in Mezam Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. It is situated between several Sub-Divisions; Belo, Bafut, Santa, Bamenda, Balikumbat and Ndop central. 'Hemmed in between so many Sub-Divisions means having so many boundaries, a likely source of conflict' (Monographic Study, 2001:40). It is made up of five villages among which, one's (Finge) appellation as a village is an issue of contention within the Sub-Division due to land disputes. As such, some official sources like (ibid.) record the Sub-Division as having four 'main' villages while others omit the word 'main' and rather prefer to say it has five villages. In this paper, because it seeks to analyze land tenure and exclusion, the later position is taken and these villages include: Bambui, Bambili, Kedjum Keku (Big Babanki), Kedjum Ketinguh (Small Babanki) and, Finge.

Unfortunately, due to the fact that the government of Cameroon has not yet released the results of the third General Housing and Population Census (GHPC) conducted in 2005, it is difficult to say what the present population of Tubah Sub-Division is. This information was vital for a paper like this which deals with the land tenure question and exclusion. It would have been helpful to get the population density of the region such as to better understand issues of land scarcity. Thus, the paper fails to bring out this. However, according to population results of the 1987 GHPC, Tubah Sub-Division as of then was

⁵ common place because, before the introduction of SAPs, the transport, feeding and other expenses of the land and survey team were the responsibility of the Government but, during and after the structural adjustment period, all expenses in the process of land registration became the sole responsibility of land title applicants. This has further demotivated most poor peasants from registering their lands. These unregistered lands by virtue of the 1974 land act are classified as national lands and in the Region, traditional chiefs are the administrators of these lands (GP-DERUDEP,2006)

inhabited by a population of about 68,000 people with 51% females and 49% males distributed as follows:

Table 1: Population distribution of Tubah according to the 1987 Population Census

No.	Village	Population
1	Kedjom ketinguh	19,635
2	Kedjom ketingoh	18,000
3	Bambui	16,000
4	Bambili	15,000

Source: (Tubah Monographic Study, 2001)

Recent population projections for all the villages could not also be found except for Bambui which was projected to a population of 26348 inhabitants by 2004, made of 14348 females and 12000 males. This projection suggested a population density of 354 inhabitants /Squared Kilometres in Bambui (Angong, 2005:14). Also, the population of Finge village as earlier mentioned is absent from the table above and no information was available on whether this population was merged with that of Bambui or explicitly left out.

Similarly, no information on the total surface area of the Sub-Division was obtained. Nonetheless, Angong (2005) reports that the land surface for Kedjom Keku is 108 square Kilometers and that of Bambui is 85 square Kilometers. Finally, both spaced and grouped settlements are observed within the Sub-Division today.

1.4.2 Procedure for selecting groups (cases) and informants

The process was four-fold in descending order according to the agricultural administrative hierarchy of the Region.

Firstly, a list of all groups that have applied for grants whether granted or not was obtained from both the Regional and Divisional offices of NSPMS. After this, four groups from thirty nine were purposefully selected from both group categories (three groups that received grants and, one that did not receive grants). Concerning the strategy to choose the groups, a purposeful selection was done based on: the gender of the group leader and/or his/her social status (either traditional which conveys a relative authority in terms of customary land tenure, or Political/professional which conveyed their capacity to lobby).

Secondly, a list of all maize farming groups whether or not they had applied for grants was obtained from the Sub-Divisional Delegation of Agriculture and Rural Development (SDDARD) Tubah. This was to access even groups that had never applied for grants. At this stage, two groups from a total of ten were selected to find out their reasons for not applying (one landed and the other landless).

Thirdly, visits were made to the village farmers union to find out maize farming groups so as to sort out those groups which did not even feature in any of the two hierarchical levels mentioned above. The objective was also to find out why they have not applied for the grants. Here, one landless group from the six that were not found on the SDDARD list was selected. Thus, at the three different levels, a total of seven FG were selected.

Finally, to get the first individual non grouped maize farmer, the president of the farmers union was asked to indicate an individual maize farmer who is not a member of a group. After the first individual farmer, snow balling was used to select 19 other individual maize farmers. At the end of the process, it was discovered that, among the 20 individual farmers selected, five of them were landlords with plots between (4-8 hectares) who farmed on their own plots, nine owned farm plots ranging between (0.2 and 0.4hectares) and mainly rented land for maize cultivation and, six of them were completely landless and begged or rented land for maize farming.

1.4.3 Techniques of data collection

This research employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection. Qualitative research techniques used included Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and, in-depth interviews. These techniques were chosen because, the major concepts of the research land tenure and exclusion were operationalised in a more qualitative way such that, the use of quantitative techniques like surveys would not have informed us enough. Furthermore, the research sought an in-depth understanding of various aspects of farming groups as well as their experiences. Quantitative data was obtained from secondary sources. Also, some qualitative field findings were quantified and tabulated.

More precisely, FGD were used to collect information from farming groups with, group membership being the identifying criteria. However, conscious of the diversity and, gender sensitivity that does occur during such discussions, different focus groups were done with women, youth and, mixed farming groups. A total of seven FGD each made of a number between 7-10 participants and, lasting 90 minutes were conducted. Of these, three FGD were for participants who have land and had received grants, two for those that do not have land at all, one for those that have land but have not applied for grants and, one with those that have land, have applied but did not receive grants.

Key informants and in-depth interviews were used to get information from traditional chiefs, landlords of farming groups, officials of: NSMSP and MINADER. Two hours long in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 12 people. Three FGD, three extension workers, the delegate of SDDARD, three personnel from NSPMS, two landlords of FG. Also, twenty individual farmers who do not belong to any FG were interviewed each lasting between (60-90 minutes)

Nonetheless, these techniques of primary data collection have their own repercussions and implications on the findings of this research. Since data was collected mainly from a few cases selected purposefully, claims to generalize the findings of this research are limited or, near impossible. It is also important to caution here that the language used in the field for both FGD and in-depth interviews was 'Pidgin-English' not pure English so, there might have been some loss of information in the process of reporting in English.

1.4.4 Secondary Sources

Secondary data was obtained from;

- Working documents of NMSP,
- Documents on the statutory land tenure of Cameroon. In some cases, there was no updated information from these sources to complement primary data.
- Finally, journals articles, academic books, and professional web pages, were consulted.

1.5 Field Difficulties and Limitations of the Study

The process of data collection was not without difficulties. We encountered refusals and silences. Some of these refusals as indicated below were a consequence of previous researches.

Please we are tired of these so called researches. They always come to consult us and, every day we here of new funds and programs to help farmers but, this money never reaches us. The big people take, form their own groups and it ends within them. Now you have come to ask about maize, don't bother, what we say will not change the situation **so, let us talk about something else.** (Refusal by a landless group which, had never applied to NSPMS, during a FGD on the 30th .07.09 in Bambui village)

Also, one of the focus group discussions was aborted and ended up in a one person discussion. This was the case with one of the supported groups in Kedjom Keku which was selected at the Divisional office of NSPMS and upon arrival in the field, group members could not be traced. When the situation was reported to the office, I was called to an office where the concerned said,

Why did you go to the field straight? Interview me, that lady who is indicated as the group president does not have a phone and so cannot be reached. I am the group delegate and own the land which the group uses for maize cultivation. I know all about the group. I can give you all the necessary information (Interview with Group 'delegate' of a maize supported group in Kedjom Keku , external elite and resident in Bamenda town on the 4th.08.09).

In this regard, information obtained about the group from my point of view was not so reliable since, other members experiences were not included in the discussion. Another major difficulty of this research was lack of updated statistics on key aspects like the population of Tubah. This constituted a serious bottle neck in determining the population density of the Sub-Division which is essential to a land tenure related research.

Furthermore, these grants are HIPC resources which demand accountability to international donors and funders. As such, financial and time consuming bureaucratic processes surrounded access to official information from the program. Added to these difficulties are the following limitations.

The paper does not:

- analyze the bureaucratic and structural set ups surrounding the legal registration of FG,
- analyze other selection procedures of beneficiary groups from the pool of eligible applicants,
- analyze how grants have impacted on the livelihood of group members.

Rather, this paper strictly focuses on issues of land tenure and exclusion of maize farmers from participating in, and benefiting from the NSPMS scheme. It examines issues such as: eligibility criteria for belonging to farming groups, how farming groups negotiate for access to group land, the tenure conflict between statutory and customary tenure in the context of access to group land, and finally, which groups are more prone to receiving grants.

It is admitted that, the aforementioned difficulties and limitations have repercussions on the completeness of information found in this paper and that; the quality of information contained herein would have been enriched if these aspects were elaborated. However, due to constraints such as time and paper word limit, nothing more could have been done. The information in this paper can therefore not be considered the ultimate knowledge of all exclusionary mechanisms surrounding farmers' access to grants from NSPMS.

Having said these, the next chapter presents NSPMS with its grants conditions such as to; enable the understanding of what the program is all about, It's assumptions about access to land for rural farmers and, how it seeks to reduce poverty among them.

Chapter 2 NSPMS: Rationale, Assumptions and Grant Conditions

Introduction

This chapter presents NSPMS with a further emphasis on its assumptions about access to land for rural maize farmers and, the eligibility criteria for access to these grants. These assumptions and criteria are further critically questioned given that; NSPMS is considered to be a national priority program for the rural sector in Cameroon.

2.1 Rationale of NSPMS

In the context of the HIPC initiative in Cameroon, a large share of the resources is being disbursed through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) to various farmer support programs. Among these programs is NSPM which is an initiative of MINADER and was approved by the HIPC consultative and follow-up committee on the 6th of October 2004 (NEPAD, 2004). Its activities kicked off in June 2005 and, is said to ‘fall within the millennium Development Goal (MDG) to reduce by half the number of poor people by the year 2015’ (NSPMS, 2006:1). It aims at improving maize food production as well as incomes of maize farmers. As such, the contribution of the sub-sector towards food security and producers income cannot be overemphasized (ibid.1). It is considered to be the priority sub-sector which involves ‘all actors’ meaning that;

At least every rural farmer in the maize producing region of the country cultivates maize. Thus, the maize sub-sector is therefore of prime priority because intervention in the sub-sector will assist majority if not, all maize farmers (Interview with ‘Delegate’ of SDDARD Tubah on the 27th.07.09 in Bambui).

Thus, although there exists many programs⁶ which work with FG to eradicate rural poverty and improve farmers’ livelihoods in Cameroon, NSPMS was identified by rural actors and government as the priority program for the rural sector involving all actors and, capable of boosting farmers’ productivity, ensuring national food security and increasing farmers’ revenues (NEPAD, 2004) . On this hypothesis, NSPMS is said to be a rural poverty reduction program designed for all, even the poorest rural farmer in the region. This also justifies why NSPM was chosen for the present research. However,

⁶ Including the Plantain Project and, the National Program for the Development of Roots and Tubers

the claim ‘involving all actors’ as a rural poverty reduction program is what this paper seeks to analyze.

As a rural poverty reduction program, NSPMS aims at:

- 1) Providing technical and material support to farmers’ organizations in the areas of maize production, conservation and marketing.
- 2.) Providing support in the structuring of farmers organizations and the organization of the subsector. According to (Chai,2008), NSPMS does this by:
 - Facilitating the use of quality seeds
 - Providing support for the acquisition of production tools, marketing equipment and infrastructures.
 - Building capacities of both maize seed producers and food maize producers
 - Strengthening the structuring of the sub-sector and,
 - Facilitating the supply of quality maize seeds to market

NSPMS has two arms, one which works with individual farmers and the other which works with FG known as the poverty eradication arm. The arm which works with individual farmers is mainly to increase maize seed production by training farmers to produce the new High Yielding Varieties (HYV) seeds which they argue it is more nutritious. This training is subsidized and farmers pay the seed multiplication training fee of 10,000FCFA (18€). Farmers who show proof of larger pieces of land might apply for grants to engage in large scale seed production but funding is very limited for this because, the main aim of the program is to increase maize food production. The politics of these HYV, patenting and farmer dependency are quite interesting issues to look at but do not fall within the scope of this paper.

Rather, this paper focuses on the poverty eradication arm which aims at producing food maize through FG such as to ensure large scale production and national food security. In this regard, NSPMS has an underlying assumption about access to land for farmers and, it is on this assumption that they construct their conditions for access to grants. This was pointed out by the Divisional focal point of NSPMS during an interview with her on the 23th.07.09 in Bamenda when she said;

Land is not a problem here in Cameroon. At least here in the North West, every farmer has his/her own small piece of land surrounding their compounds. So a farmer cannot complain about lack of land. In extreme cases, landless⁷ farmers can just organize themselves as a FG and demand land from their traditional chief.

Kegné(2003:4) had earlier mentioned this when he wrote about the potentials of farming groups in the Centre Province saying that, they are given group land by their traditional chiefs. On this note, according to both the program and previous authors, the problem is not about access to land for rural maize farmers. Rather, it is about these farmers lacking access to other productive inputs and commercialization channels. As such,

to reduce rural poverty among maize farmers, the main task is to seek for ways to reach majority of the farmers. This is best by working with them as farming groups. (Interview with, Regional chief of Agricultural Projects and Institutional Reinforcements (APIR)⁸ on 10th .07.09 in Bamenda)

In this light, to access NSPMS grants, farmers have to fulfil some conditions which will be discussed below.

2.2 Conditions for access to maize grants

According to MINADER's document containing the conditions of eligibility to assistance in the Agricultural sector, to be eligible for grants, one must first be a farmer or an agricultural structure (like a FG), show proof of land or permanent access to land⁹, be legally registered as a group, have an account with a bank or Credit Union and, write a feasible Micro- project with an application form obtained from the Ministry (see appendix 4). However, in the context of this paper, only the condition of proof of land and, group formation will be critically analyzed because, it is assumed that, as groups, all farmers can access land if they want.

⁷ The operationalization of the landlessness in NSPMS are those farmers who, by virtue of economic or cultural barriers cannot purchase nor inherit their native lands.

⁸ Commonly known by its French acronym as Projets Agricole et Renforcements Institutionnelles (PARI)

⁹ "La presentation de garanties de propriete foncier(Titre foncier, certificate de donation ou de vente, process verbal de tenue de palabre, attestation de bail ou de l'autorite traditionnelle)"(MINADER, condition of eligibility for assistance number 2 sub 5)

2.2.1 Show proof of land or permanent access to land.

The original condition of the project regarding land stipulates that a FG should have at least three hectares of land on a continuous stretch (NSPMS Regional Focal Point)¹⁰ but, officials of the program in the North West Region where this research took place argued this condition, saying it was very exclusive taking into consideration the land tenure and topography of the region. They rather resorted that farmers could pull their individual pieces of land as a group and apply for grants or, use a member's plot. As such, for the region, the valid proof of land in question is generally a stamped document attesting the ownership or long lease of a piece of land from, either a government official or traditional authority mandated to take care over native lands.

The intriguing issue here is that, although in Cameroon, all land is state property with the exception of lands for which private land titles have been obtained, showing proof of land to be eligible for assistance by the MINADER takes quite a variety of forms ranging from official land titles to traditional justifications by village chiefs and quarter heads whereas, traditional chiefs administer land based on customary laws which in the region are discriminatory and contrary to statutory laws. The acceptance of these varieties of tenures justifies and, reinforces the blurredness in distinction between the customary and statutory tenure systems in Cameroon. (See appendix 5 b). Other forms of access like rents are not accepted as a proof except in cases where land is rented from government institutions like the Institut de Recherche Agricole pour le Developpement (IRAD). This was pointed out during an interview with, the Mezam NSPMS Focal point on 23rd.07.09 in Bamenda when she said:

We do not accept farmers who rent land except, those who rent from IRAD because it is government land. We refuse because, you can rent from a farmer this year and he sees your yield are high and the next year he chases you away from the farm whereas, you have fertilized the soil much enough this year. The farmer is therefore the loser.

Such instances surrounding the rental market and the fact that, renting land from IRAD is expensive for an individual poor farmer tend to further justify why NSPMS emphasizes group farming as a way to ensure that most farmers can access land since, it is assumed that traditional chiefs are 'negotiable' and 'flexible' to give land to all landless groups¹¹. This explains the

¹⁰ Regional Coordinator

¹¹ However, such static assumptions about traditional chiefs in a market dominated economy would be further questioned after the analysis of the land question in chapter three.

second condition for access to grants which is that, farmers should be legally registered as a FG

2.2.2 Be a Farming Group

In the Cameroonian context, a farming group is a group of farmers who come together, organize themselves, and define goals and, work together to achieve them so as to improve their livelihoods. Also, a group could be the initiative of an individual who recruits members of like-minded initiatives. This form of organization existed in Cameroonian peasant societies since the 1950's but, as the economy changed with time, they have witnessed a sudden modernization in processes and have gradually shifted from being a dominantly peasant initiative to a structurally imposed one. (For elaboration, see appendix 3b). Formalizing them by legal registration is recent and date's with the presidential decree signed on the 14th of August 1992 (GP-DERUDEP, 2006). In this light, a group becomes legally recognized when members proceed to their respective regional bureau for Cooperatives and Common Initiative Groups (CIG) and, register as FG in which case they are considered to be Common Initiative Farming Groups (CIFG) commonly known as FG. For formalization, the main condition is that, there must be at least five members and not from the same family.

This measure was taken because, government decided to adapt group farming to curb rural poverty which resulted from both the 1987 economic crises and the repercussions of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP)s which made things harder for small scale farmers who could not get access to production credits, purchase agricultural inputs or receive free technical support due to government's withdrawal of subsidies from direct production processes in the agricultural sector (Fondjong 2004).

However, there is no condition regarding who forms the initiative and how it includes poorer and disadvantaged or discriminated farmers in a customary but market based economy. The assumption of NSPMS remains that, since in the past peasants especially women¹² would form a group and request land from the chief for farming, today, the situation remains the same. In my argument, I dispute and will challenge this because, in the past (50's and 60's) land was a common resource for native well being. As such, native farmers could obtain land from the chief for farming purposes. Now, with the emergence of the market economy and land commoditization, land administration even in traditional settings has changed with traditional chiefs having economic motives as well. The emergence of the market economy I

¹² Because in the past, men used their land for cash crop cultivation and would deny women from farming food crops. So, these women as a group would go to the chief and request land (which had not yet become a commodity) for food crop cultivation to feed the family.

would say, has also introduced different and new forms of land relations. From this perspective and, in the context of NSPMS, I would question how FGs of today are formed (who defines the initiative)? What are the eligibility conditions to group membership for groups that have land and, who defines these conditions? Do landed farmers just freely accommodate landless farmers even with the same initiative into their groups?

As already suggested above, farming groups are first and foremost common initiative groups. This suggests a sort of group closeness since members must have the same initiative. The closeness of these groups like Kabeer (2005) tells, suggests minimum recruitment of new members but rather, maximum exclusion such as to attain group objectives. In the context of NSPMS, the question is to know, what these group initiatives are and who defines them?

Findings from the seven groups interviewed show some common trend concerning the initiatives and who defined them. This trend depended on the socio-economic status of group founders. Groups that were founded by external elite or other working class had their initiatives defined by the founders and generally aimed at grabbing some money from the government. In these cases, group founders determined who could join the group and who could not. This could be read in the lines below:

I only joined this group farming stuff in 2000 when I lost my job, became poor and frustrated. Then, the government had just come up with this HIPC thing and I saw I could grab a little bit of money there and start up life. Since I had the land, I just needed to call some few people, come and let us make a group, get money and help ourselves. (Interview with group founder, University lecturer on the 24th.07.09 in Bambili).

From this, it could be understood that, becoming a member of such a group does not necessarily depend on the farmer's ability to have the same initiative, but on whether or not the farmer was called by the group founder. In general, these groups showed tendencies of extreme exclusion having between five and fifteen members only. Ironically, groups that showed these tendencies all happened to be the same groups that had benefited from NSPMS grants. On the contrary, when group founders were purely small scale farmers like the Bambui Young Farmers integrated FG, the group initiative was clearly defined. Prospective members who fulfilled all the conditions were often admitted as members. The size of this group was '30 active members' (group secretary, during a FGD in the BASSUG building in Bambui on the 5th of August 2009). Landless groups interviewed also showed similar tendencies as the latter group for initiative definition and member recruitment, but members were not enthusiastic about getting support from the NSPMS as they emphasized,

the program does not need us and that is why their conditions to apply for grants does not include us. (FGD with a landless farming group in Finge on the 11th.08.09).

However, to the landless FG, their main initiative was not to get support from NSPMS but to assist each other through pulling their labour for maize cultivation as was done in the 50's since they further noted that, land relations had drastically changed to their disfavour over time.

Also, an exceptional group to which land ownership was not a precondition for farmers to become members further argued as depicted below that, the system has excluded the landless such that, even with the will to include them in a group, they will end up dropping out. This is why some group founders expressly deny landless farmers.

Mboneh Farming Group Bambili: My husband and I are retired civil servants and decided to form this group to help our poor neighbours get funds from the government but, we have come to realize that, the government has really made it in a way that these poor people cannot receive assistance. First of all, this their project writing stuff requires that you have a certain level of education. Mere class seven pass cannot afford, talk less of the illiterate ones. Now, when you ask these poor farmers who cannot even give their monthly contribution of 1000fcfa (1.5€) to contribute for writing these projects, they will complain and complain and, finally drop out from the group. We started up many but now only 15 of us are left.

(Focus Group Discussion, with group members on the 21st .07.09 in Bambili).

In this regards, a previous disadvantage (lack of land, money or education) to contribute in project writing enhances farmers exclusion from group membership which tend to lead to their exclusion from NSPMS grants. As such, the next target of this chapter is to, analyze which groups in Tubah have received grants and which ones have not, and why?

2.3 Situation of Grants disbursed to farmers in 2008

In the North West Region, NSPMS rather kicked off in 2006. In this Region, 'there are about 12,500 registered FG but, only about 450 could be termed active in the actual sense of a FG' (Regional chief of APIR). Of this number, the program for three years (2006-2008) has been able to support 345 farming groups and some seed producers worth 193,000,000 FCFA (averagely, 655FCFA=1€) cash and 110bags of fertilizer, 4.6 tons of maize basic seeds (Chai, 2008). The figures above tend to indicate that quite much sums of money and other assistance are being given to rural farmers in the Region. The issue here is to know what the size of recipient groups are, and if there are no cases of same farmers receiving grants from different groups because they are

members of multiple FG. In Tubah, according to estimations of the ‘Delegate’ of SDDARD, there are about 70 active FG in the maize sub-sector but, of this number, according to statistics from the Divisional office of NSPMS, only 39 groups have so far applied for grants. A total of 12 FG have been awarded and 15 other projects have been accepted pending funding. A summary of the grant situation in Tubah is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Total number of micro- projects received from FG in Tubah between (2006-2008)

Type of Application/ Status	Applied	Accepted	Rejected	Awarded	Total
Group application	39	27	10	12	39

Source: Authors own construction with statistics from the Mezam Divisional Office of NSPMS

As indicated in table 2 above, the total number of applications for grants (39) is relatively very small with respect to what would be expected from 70 active groups. This therefore suggest some serious barriers to ‘access’ before even selection of beneficiary is done.

The Sub-Division has recorded the least number of applications and awards in the whole region. They spend time quarrying over land rather than to, organize themselves to lobby for funds (Interview with Divisional project officer of NSPMS on 06.08.09).

From this, it can further be read that, to NSPMS, farmers’ problem is due to lack of organization into FG and not a problem of access to land. Whereas, the project officer even further emphasized that ‘the people spend time quarrelling over land’. These quarrels indicate an evident land question manifesting in a land tenure question. This will be the subject matter of the next chapter.

Chapter 3 The African Land Tenure Question and Access to Land in Tubah

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, NSPMS has been presented in all its relevant dimensions. However, since one of NSPMS major eligibility criteria for access to grants is proof of land ownership/permanent access, this chapter seeks to examine the land question in Cameroon and Tubah in particular so as to understand mechanisms and institutions surrounding access to land and thus, NSPMS grants. To do this, the chapter reviews some relevant literature on the land question in Africa and, sets a theoretical underpinning for the paper by situating the land question in Africa as a land tenure question with, the case of Cameroon as an example. Finally, the chapter examines how farming groups negotiate for access to group land. This chapter acknowledges that land rights could exist under either: Private, Communal, Open access or, State tenure (FAO, 2002) but, it focuses more on Private, Communal¹³ and State tenures.

3.1 A brief review of the land question in Africa

In recent conceptualizations of rural poverty in Africa, poverty is read as being a lack of productive resources. However, unlike in Asia and Latin America where lack of access to land is routinely included among these resources, very few countries in Africa see lack of access to land as a problem because, land is still considered to be an abundant resource available to all who want (Peters,2004). This is because, some literature on the African land tenure has often presented the continent as one with abundant land with most of its population living and relating socially as though there is no class distinction between; the landless and landed. Nonetheless, constant remarks of land struggles in some critical literature on the African land tenure question pushes one to question the dominant classic assumptions of abundant land for all who want.

Like Peters,(2004:270) indicates, ‘instances of intensifying competition and conflict over land, of deepening rifts between and within kin-based, ethnic and Regional groups, and expropriation of land by local and non-local elites beg for closer attention’. More scholarly tendencies relating to this tenure question in Africa have been towards land tenure security (plateau, 1996, WDR, 2008:159-160). This paper fully agree with this stance but the point is

¹³ Communal here is used only to refer to village lands although in practise, it is the chief's land since he administers and even sells it.

that as argued by Brasselle et al. (2002:373), in Africa, this recommendation that higher tenure security leads to more incentives for investment is being questioned. This is because, in Africa the degree of security in this 'land tenure security' depends on the type of institution granting the latter (formal legal/statutory or, informal/customary).

The African land question has its own specificities defined by constant fights for access to land as well as 'struggles to reclaim alienated rights' (Moyo, 2003:1). Thus, tenure security as a concept is contested because of the blurred nature of tenure distinction existing in most countries in the continent. In this same light, Peters (2004:270) says, the 'pervasive competition and conflict over land call into serious question the image of relatively open, negotiable and adaptive customary systems of landholding and land use. Instead, [it] reveals processes of exclusion, deepening social divisions and class formation'. In this respect, land tenure continues to play a great role in limiting people's livelihood opportunities. A tenure system in which there are high inequalities in terms of access between the poor and the rich often leads to distortions in development programs and, although 'ensuring secure access to land and other natural resources is often central to improving rural livelihoods and reducing poverty, both the rules of land tenure and the system of access rights can be critical' (IFAD, 2008:Homepage).

This is the situation in most African Countries where colonial legacy has played a great role in matters of land administration to the point that, 'traces' of colonial land administration have influenced land tenure arrangements for both, customary and statutory tenures to exist together. This dual existence has initiated power differentials in land administration since, the 'legal pluralism said to typify the mix of legal typologies (statutory, customary, and Islamic) in African countries is not a neat parallel system but often a contradictory blend... [such that], Customary law can result in a form of "decentralized despotism" in which so-called traditional leaders may benefit at the cost of those in their charge' (Peters, 2004:273). This has often been the source of land tenure contention and, as such, 'the land question in sub-Saharan Africa has been most intriguing... The land question expresses itself as land tenure question and land tenure is primarily structured by law and legal rules' (Shivji, 2008:1083) which governs its administration

3.2 Cameroon as an example: A brief historical overview

Cameroon unlike many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa knew a double annexation: First by the Germans in (1884-1916) and later, simultaneously by the British and the French (1914-1961) (Fisiy, 1992). Today, the country portrays land tenure systems which are a cumulative effect of the dual colonial land administration. The progressive transitions of land administration from

the Germans to the British¹⁴ and later to the Post Colonial state has greatly marked the present day land question in Cameroon.

During the German period, a document called the '*Grunbush*'¹⁵ was introduced in which individuals or communities registered all interests on land with specifications of location and dimension (ibid. 29). This conferred a sort of ownership rights over such pieces of land. But then, upon the legal trusteeship of West Cameroon¹⁶ in 1916 to the British, the League of Nations for fear of permanent white settlements made a provision to protect the rights of native settlers on their land. In this provision, it was explicitly stated that:

In framing laws relating to the holding or transfer of land and natural resources, the administering authority shall take into consideration native laws and customs, and shall respect the rights and safeguard the interest of both present and future of the native populations. ... all lands in West Cameroon whether occupied or unoccupied are here by declared to be native lands with the exception of some 84 formally German estates¹⁷.

This ordinance divests indigenous landlords during the German period from their ownership rights to occupiers of land. The rights of first settlement and ownership even corporate like villages were, converted into customary rights of occupancy defined as 'the title of the native community lawfully occupying native lands in accordance with the native laws and customs'(Fisiy,1992: 32)

However, during both periods, only a few rich elites could approach the white land administrators to obtain their private interest in land registered.. Many peasants and villagers therefore remained dwellers on pieces of land where corporate certificate of land occupancy were issued with village chiefs being over seers in the absence of colonial governors.

3.2.1 Genesis of a dual but distinctively blurred land tenure system

At the dawn of decolonization when the British were preparing to leave the country, no further arrangements were made concerning land administration and, peasants who could not register their lands during either periods of colonial reign, remained dwellers on village lands over which Chiefs were

¹⁴ Case of English Cameroon

¹⁵ Word copied from Fisiy 1992

¹⁶ The then West Cameroon comprised the two English speaking provinces of Cameroon where the research area is located.

¹⁷ Article 8 of the Trusteeship agreement as approved on 13 Dec.1947 by the General assembly of UN in Fisiy (1992:31).

overseers. As the country struggled for independence, political elites recognized the issue of land administration as a tool to win the political support of village chiefs. This engineered a new law¹⁸ concerning land administration where customary rights over land tenure became paramount and all land was under customary jurisdiction with management and distribution rights vested on village chiefs or Fons (Fisiy,1992). Certificates of corporate occupancy were then translated into village boundaries.

Immediately after independence in 1961, private/individual land tenure was introduced while redressing the limits of traditional chiefs as land administrators. Rather, the latter were considered as occupiers and care takers of their ancestral lands. The issue of ownership and control of land therefore suddenly became an essential stake containing power deals between traditional leaders and the State.

To normalize the tensions above, a law was enacted in 1966 to recognize lands acquired during colonial land administration. This law provided for a collective registration of customary rights to land 'la constatation des droits fancies sans titre écrits'. This was done provided there was a 'mise en valeur des terres' (Utilisation of the lands)(Fisiy,1992). This transition marked the beginning of a dual statutory and customary tenure system in Cameroon. Today, the distinction between these tenure systems is quite blurred.

This blurredness is reflected among other things in the way land is classified in Cameroon. Land is classified into: private and, national lands. Private lands are all lands for which indefinite¹⁹ land title certificates have been obtained. National land are all unregistered lands including lands which were registered under cooperate occupancy like village lands and is further subdivided into (private and public national lands). However, village chiefs are official caretakers²⁰ of their native lands and administer it based on their native customary laws. In Cameroon,

the law governing the control and use of land in Cameroon is defined formally by an Act of Parliament and promulgated to law by the President of the Republic, but how the rights over the use of land and related assets, as well as over the returns on them are determined and interpreted in practice, depends largely on the socioeconomic and cultural implementation context. In this regard both formal and informal institutions tend to affect and

¹⁸ Law number 59-47 of June 1959 (Fisiy, 1992). All laws mentioned in this text are parliamentary acts, promulgated to law by the President of the Republic.

¹⁹ Although considered indefinite, the state holds the right to exploit the land in case of sub-soil minerals or planned infrastructural development projects. This is done with reimbursement or replacement.

²⁰ Word used by official documents is Custodians.

determine—by interaction—security levels of access to land returns on primary assets (Baye, 2008: 137-138).

3.3 The land tenure question and issues of access in Tubah.

Since land is generally a state property in Cameroon, all land in Tubah is theoretically under the legal jurisdiction of the Sub-Divisional Officer (DO) who in the domain of land administration is called 'Chef Terre'²¹. Village chiefs are legally considered as caretakers of their native lands. However, national land in the North West Region is owned and controlled by traditional authorities through customary tenure (GP-DERUDEP, 2006). Tubah is therefore a typical example of an African society which exhibits a dual land tenure system with a blurred distinction between the statutory and customary tenures. This has raised major obstacles to access land and, like the DO pointed out;

Land is a very difficult thing to acquire. If you do not have money, you cannot acquire land especially in Bambui and Bambili. At the same time, you cannot buy from the state. Here, the D O cannot just spearhead to sell a piece of land or allocate it to a FG. Even us, if we need land here, we must go and buy from the Fon. Land is owned by families and families are under their village authorities. I (the DO) am not competent to tell a person go and start working. If a farmer acquires land from the Fon for example, the state can only assist the farmer to secure the land by registering it (Interview with Assistant DO of Tubah on the 30th.07.09 in Bambui).

Renting, leasing and gifts of land confer user rights but not ownership rights. Ownership rights are obtained when the user obtains a land certificate issued by the state. This process is said to take at least six months with an average expenditure of about 65000FCFA (100€) borne by the applicant (Ibid.). Despite this procedure and fixed amounts written on paper, an informant said:

Since six years today that my husband died, I have been struggling to secure our piece of land but they keep tossing me from one office to the next. The bureaucracy involved in the whole issue is horrible. So far, I have spent 650,000FCFA (1000€) on transport and others. Imagine that I was not a worker; I would have long given up. Yet, if you don't register your land, the chief can resell it to other people especially the big guns (interview with Cecilia, Widow and college teacher on the 3rd.08.2009 in Bambui).

²¹ a French appellation which means chief of the land

Thus, although land titling confers ownership rights to land, only a few small-scale maize farmers can obtain land titles for their land. As further emphasized by the Assistant Sub-Divisional officer (DO) of Tubah when he said;

people now are more conscious of registering their lands, and, about 50% of the population come to register their lands among who Farmers constitute 5%, Civil servant:35%, and Business people:10%. On the whole, about 70% of these are Tubah natives who leave and work out of the Sub-Division and, among which are 20% women(An interview with The Assistant DO on the 30th.07.09 in Bambui).

Nevertheless, farmers cultivating their native lands have customary rights of ownership, transferable by inheritance or selling. In both cases, a land title can be obtained upon request from the state through the DO's office thus converting national lands to private lands. This possibility of obtaining land from the chief and requesting a land title from the state has enhanced a rapid process of 'land grabbing' as a landless woman mentioned:

This is how they steal our land from us, they come with their money and the Chief sells land that he had first sold to us because we gave little money and cannot face them in court. Sometimes even, they will come with big projects that they want to help us or employ our children, the chiefs gives them land and they go and ask for land titles in their names and the land becomes theirs. Even Government too is doing this. Look at that IRAD land that they said they were to use it to teach us how to farm, now, we are renting it from them (Interview on the 21st .07.09 with a landless unmarried woman who begs land from their successor to farm maize in Bambui)

This has been further pointed out by previous researches like the Tubah Monographic Study (2001:34) which noted that, 'despite the evident shortages of farmland, there is still some encroachment from powerful grazers. Alhaji Baba Danpullo, of Ndawara Elba Ranch which has displaced more than 300 farmers by appropriating their land for other uses'. Worthy of note is the fact that, the land question in Tubah is not only characterized by 'land grabbing' as demonstrated above but, by discriminations and conflicts as will be seen below.

3.3.1 Three cases of discrimination from access to land in Tubah

In Sub-Saharan Africa where access to land and other critical resources under customary law depends on membership of groups defined by common descent, common residence or some combination of the two, different categories of members have different-and tiered-sets of claims. Primary claimant's usually married male household heads have direct access while

women and unmarried men gain secondary access through the head... With the emergence of land scarcity in many parts of Africa, a landless population is becoming evident generally made up of secondary claimants within kinship groups, women, young unmarried men and outsiders. These categories tend to be closed off from livelihood options on the land (Kabeer, 2005:9)

From this perspective, Tubah is not an exception. In Tubah, land is owned by members of a group of common descent where married men are the first claimants. This pattern of land administration has led to an increased landless population generally categorized as secondary claimants like women, youths and, 'strangers' as will be explained below. These cases of discrimination from access to land thus, challenges NSPMS assumption about farmers access to land and, brings to question the possibility that, farmers from either of the three cases can organize as FG and, get access to land as NSPMS suggested.

Case 1: The Finge village (considered to be a migrant minority)

Traditional land administration based 'on membership of groups defined by common descent' (Kabeer,2003:9) has resulted in conflicts of co- existence for citizens on territorial land surface. Some citizens by virtue of their membership to a group of different descent are labelled as 'strangers'. This has been a great source of tenure contention, conflict and social discrimination of the said strangers by others who consider themselves as 'natives'. An example of this type of discrimination in Tubah is seen with the Finge people who did not migrate from the same origin as their neighbouring Bambui. The Finge People, 'insist that the land was vacant when they migrated to that spot so, they did not need anybody's permission to settle...[and this,] combined with the insistence by the Bambui people that, the Finge chief is subservient to their Chief has led to violent conflicts' (Monographic Study, 2001:14) which pushed the Finge people up rocky hills which is unfavourable for maize cultivation. Further instances of this repression and discrimination could be read in the lines below.

Does Finge have a palace? They are a sub-chiefdom under Bambui. We have suppressed them enough. If we do not cough, they can't sneeze. We have taught them a lesson and will continue until they Secom to us. They think they can ever be something without us. They cannot avoid us. They must admit that we are the landlords of that land which they are occupying, otherwise, an unceasing hell for them and their generations to come (Conversation with a Bambui youth in Mile 10 Bambui on the 11th.08.09 while trekking from Finge Village to Tubah head Quarters in Bambui)

Land is traditionally considered to be a common heritage in nearly all Cameroonian societies. As such, 'it is seen as a physical, cultural [and] collective space inherited from the ancestors [but], female farming in

Cameroon is[still] quite precarious with the increasing commercialisation of land by men, sometimes without the knowledge of women... What they own is the food crops on the land, not the land itself, which is the property of men' (Goheen1991, 1996 in Awasom, 2006 :41) The chief of Newly appointed Chief of Kedjom-Keku who succeeded his burnt predecessor (See appendix 2) further acknowledged this when he said;

Culturally in kedjum keku, women do not own land. It is believed that all women should get married and farm on their husbands plots. Only men do have the right to own land through inheritance. Today²², when I am giving out the fertile lands up hills to the farmers, I also give it to women because if you block them, you have blocked future generations. What I do not want is taking a piece of land, farming once or twice and selling it latter. You did not buy it so why sell. I now do so because; I do not want their children to be stranded in the future when faced with a situation where they do not have a piece of land to derive their livelihoods. (Interview with the 'Fon' of Kedjom Keku on the 6th .08. 09 in his Palace)

Case 3: Youths access to land

As earlier mentioned, rural youths in Tubah constitute a category of the secondary claimants to land who are discriminated upon in terms of land ownership. Due to the expensive nature of land, unmarried males/youths often have to wait for their father's death to inherit his land. However, this is further complicated when the man has many sons, often, in polygamous settings where they are competing for one or two pieces of land. The result of this is land fragmentation. Furthermore, other social relations contribute to this discrimination such as conjugal relations as is demonstrated below.

I managed to buy the plot on which I have constructed. I rent land to farm while my wife begs from her uncles. I am landless because, my father upon dying had 6 wives but hated my mother most. Since she could not lobby on our behalf, he shared his land and property to other sons. Today we are the losers and sufferers (Interview with, a mid forty maize Farmer in Fonta, Bambui on 20.07.09).

From this terrain of discrimination in traditional land administration in Tubah, I would really question NSPMS assumption that access to land is not a problem for farmers. This categorization and discrimination in terms of access to land in Tubah has resulted in strives and struggles manifested in land

²² Started in 2009 with new chief after the former was burnt

disputes and conflicts. These strife and struggles are not different from what Peters (2004) and Moyo (2003) earlier described above. Land disputes in Tubah could be either over land administration, land use, or land ownership. One of the most recent and outstanding dispute over land administration is that which occurred in Kedjum Keku village in 2006 leading to the harassment, torture and burning²³ of the village traditional leader Fon Vugah II (Awason,2006). This dispute resulted from previous struggles by landless women of the village. The 'Fon went on a rampant sale of village land to rich grazers. Landowners whose land were grabbed and traded off became beggars. As farmlands became scarce, the prices of subsistence crops like Irish potatoes, corn [maize], vegetable, etc soared and a generalized famine resulted' (Chongsi, 2006:1).

Although the overt cause of the conflict was the land question, the Fon was accused of being interested only in 'the politics of the belly', where on the one hand, the Fumbuen women petitioned the administration regarding the sale to a Fulani of extensive farmland in Kedjom-Keku . The land thus alienated was said to be ancestral land. On the other hand, investigation into the matter revealed that the traditional council endowed with the responsibility of giving out pieces of land to needy individuals had actually granted²⁴ grazing land to Alhadji Danpullo as a way of protecting Kedjom-Keku land from encroachment by the neighbouring Bambui chiefdom (Awason 2006:43).

As such, the land question in Tubah is not only land grabbing by the elite but also, encroachment by neighbouring villages. This as illustrated above, causes grabbing from the poor who cannot secure a title to the rich who can secure a title under the pretext of preventing encroachment from neighbouring villages. Also, cooperate occupancy of a particular piece of land by a whole village can result in landlessness. This is the case with the Finge village and like Berry (2002:656) suggests, 'contests over land involves contest over authority as well as resources: they draw on and reshape relations of power as well as property. Where land is subject to multiple claims, based on contested historical precedents, protracted land disputes may serve ongoing debates over the legitimacy of claims to public office'.

The Finge village as a whole is a victim of protracted land disputes. The Bambui people attacked the Finge people in 1955 and burnt down their Palace, farms and houses. In 1978 again, they attacked and were taken to court. Despite this, they attacked again in 1996 when the palace and almost all houses were burnt down, and farms were destroyed. Recently, there were tensions when the Finge people started agitating for full autonomy from Bambui under

²³ See annex for the burnt traditional elite.

²⁴ The word granted used in quote above because, in the past, land was not a commodity, so today, when the Fon sells land, the price is called a token of appreciation to the chief.

the premise that they settled on unoccupied land and have completely different culture and language from the Bambui people (Monographic Study, 2001:34). These and other forms of land conflicts in Tubah are summarized in table 3 below.

Table 3: Forms of land conflicts in Tubah

Forms of complaints received at the D.O	Approximated Percentage (%)
Widows chased out of their husbands land/husband sells family land without the consent of the wife	40
Double and triple sales of same piece of land to different people by Traditional authorities or landlords(double dealing)	30
Disputes over family land(father dies without sharing land, etc)	20
Conflicts of encroachment between farmers/farmer- grazer	5
Fon overselling village lands to foreigners (Strangers) at the expense of the villagers (the case of Kedjom- keku being the bloodiest where the Fon was burnt to death by his subjects).	3
Conflicts over village boundaries (Inter-tribal where the Bambui-Finge was the most bloodiest in the history of the Division)	2

Source: Author's own construction from interview with Assistant D.O.

Approximated percentage were obtained from the DO because, an exact statistic could not be gotten due to non registration of some of the complaints. (See appendix 1 for Reliability). With all these conflicts, how is accessing land through formal market arrangements in Tubah?

3.3.2 The land market in Tubah

In Tubah, land is mostly inherited or rented than, bought or leased. Rental markets present quite a different dynamics because prices of land vary depending on the accessibility of the land to a motorable road/its fertility. A hectare of land situated on IRAD or Fonta (near a motorable road, and very fertile) cost 50,000FCFA (80€) per farming season while the same surface area in an enclave and unfertile region would cost less than half the price of the other. The point is that, since IRAD lands were meant for agricultural research, the most fertile and accessible pieces of village land were allocated for these purposes. However, today, these organizations owing to 'lack of funding' (discussion with, worker at IRAD) no longer utilize the lands. Instead, they rather rent it out to farmers at very expensive rates. Again,

the issue with this situation is not only the price but the fact that there are many applicants such that, if you are not smart to pay your rents in time, some other rich farmer will propose higher amounts and, you will be stopped from cultivating that season. So, although NSPMS accepts land rented on IRAD plots, it takes only the rich and brave to succeed. So far, I have not seen a poor group that succeeded to sail through this bottle neck (president of Bambui Farmers Union (BASSUG) during an interview in his office on the 9th .08. 09).

Furthermore, purchasing land in Tubah can either be directly from another person who owns the land and wishes to sell or through application to the palace addressed to the village chief and traditional council who then, decide the cost and procedures depending on your status in the village. The fact is that, the word ‘purchased’ is replaced with ‘apply’ with misleading connotations of the fact that application has nothing to do with money and purchase. Rather, it’s all about the politics of, the use of words since, application is compatible with the previous traditional perception of land as not being a commodity. Table 4 below presents the statistics of a total of 75 people interviewed during field work their means of access to land for maize cultivation.

Table 4: Major ways of access to land in Tubah

Means of access to land	Male	Female	Total
Own all unoccupied Village Land by virtue of being a Fon	2	0	2
Inherited from Late father(mostly successors)	19	0	19
Bought	11	4	15
Rent	13	15	28
Beg	3	8	11
Total	48	27	75

Source: Author’s own construction from field work 2009.

Again, from table 4 above, sharp gender discrimination in terms of access to land can be read given that more women beg and rent land than men. This may be explained by socio-cultural and economic factors like inheritance rights among others. Among those interviewed, no farmer by profession owned more than one hectare of land on the same piece by purchase. Rather, they were mostly successors, Chiefs and Sub-Chief himself. However, civil servants who had farming as their secondary activity showed proof of more than one hectare of land on the same plot because they could afford to buy from the chiefs at high prices. In this scenario of unequal access, the question then is, how do farming groups negotiate for access to group land.

Unlike NSPMS assumption, access to land as has been demonstrated above is not evident for all farmers even when they are organized as FG. This is because; land in traditional societies has also shifted from being a welfare resource to a commodity. As such, traditional chiefs no longer offer land but sell land. In this regard, landed groups were all made of landlords who had purchased their individual land and pulled it together so as to fulfil the grant conditions. In extreme cases, powerful landlords formed groups in which they included the landless for exploitation as will be seen in the next chapter. Another challenge to NSPM is the socio-cultural and political discrimination from access to land which exists for some categories of farmers within the Sub-Division. This therefore brings to question, the possibility of access to land for farmers from these discriminated groups and categories. Field findings suggested that, majority of the farmers from these discriminated categories were further excluded from accessing the grants since they could hardly form or join landed groups.

Chapter 4 **Confronting NSPMS**

Assumptions with the Land Question in Tubah

Introduction

This chapter seeks to confront NSPMS assumptions and grant making conditions with, the land question in Tubah such as to identify the excluded groups and categories. It does this by critically analyzing who has land, who forms the group, who gets the grant and, who is excluded. Since social identity is often one of the main axis of exclusion, social exclusion tend to be captured in this chapter as a ‘group or collective phenomenon rather than an individual one...it draws attention to the concentration of socially excluded groups among the poorer and most disadvantaged sections of a population’ (Kabeer, 2006:3). This analysis will therefore focus on processes of group/category exclusion.

4.1 Exclusion involved in NSPMS’s assumptions about farmers’ access to land

4.1.1 Land tenure institutions as a vehicle of social exclusion

In its grants conditions, NSPMS as earlier mentioned assumes that, access to land is not a problem to farmers if they organize into FG. NSPMS argues that, when organized as a FG, majority of the maize farmers who are landless or have very small pieces of land can request for land from their traditional leaders or, use a member’s plot to cultivate maize which can benefit all members of the group irrespective of their status in relation to access to land. Hence, to analyze the exclusion imbedded in this assumption, it is important to examine the different ways through [which] disadvantage work to ‘circumscribe the opportunities and life chances of individuals and groups’(Kabeer, 2005:2) in Cameroon. As such, it will be indispensable to revisit the discussion on land tenure institutions as well as, the land tenure question in Tubah.

From an analysis of the land tenure question in Tubah, one would argue that, both assumptions are very problematic and exclusionary. Firstly, the assumption that, traditional chiefs are ‘flexible’ and ‘negotiable’ in matters of land administration to give land to landless FG in an era of increased land commoditization is problematic. This is because, traditional chiefs are not ‘flexibility and negotiability’ of in land administration to benefit their subjects in a neoliberal era with privatization and land commoditization being common place (Peters, 2004). Rather, ‘customary law can result in a form of “decentralized despotism” in which so-called traditional leaders may benefit at

the cost of those in their charge' (ibid:273). This suggestion is not different from the case illustrated in chapter three concerning land disputes (see Kedjom-keku case where chief was even burnt). Such conflicts did arise both because of the sale of native lands by traditional chiefs and cultural discrimination from access imbedded into the village patriarchal social structure leading to the exclusion of discriminated categories and migrant communities like women and the Finge people. As such, the claim that traditional chiefs are 'negotiable and flexible' to give land to landless FG seem to be misleading for NSPMS which aims at including majority of poor maize farmers in its poverty reduction program. Rather, NSPMS assumptions might have fallen prey to what Moore showed when he argued that, 'a perception of official circles that "custom" is static can have certain advantages for groups seeking to keep officials ignorant of what they are doing and changing' (1986:319) in (Peters,2004:273). Such that, while NSPMS in their official circles keep assuming that traditional chiefs are still 'flexible and negotiable' to give land to the landless, these chiefs are actually changing their rules of traditional land administration in an era of increased land commercialization.

Secondly, due to double dealing of traditional chiefs in land sales as also mentioned in chapter three, farmers who leave on native lands and have no money to secure a land title for the pieces of land which they occupy and remain at the mercy of traditional chiefs for acceptable land proofs required by the grant scheme. This dependence has resulted in cases of lobby, corruption and even, auto exclusion by group landlords as pointed out by a landlady, president of a farming group in Bambui, during an in-depth interview with her on the 25th July 2009 when she said:

Remember that, even though we have land, I do not have an official land title so, I have to face the chief to give me a signed document to proof that I have this land for our group to apply for these grants. How do I face the chief to ask him for a written document to testify that, **I as a woman** own such a big plot of land where our group can farm maize? I was alone to my parents, now they are of late so, I manage the plot and, I also share it to other group members who do not have land but, do you think I can be so foolish to make the palace know that I have such a plot? They will just create an occasion to seize and sell the plot. After all, who will speak for me in court? For the buyers, their money will speak.

From the analysis of the land question in Tubah and the 'supremacy' of traditional chiefs in land administration, it could be said that the land question is highly interrelated with social relations of status and class. Therefore, besides discrimination, the issue extends to unequal social power relations such that, while on the one hand, the question is about chiefs' flexibility to offer land to landless groups, on the other hand, the question is about social relations between classes with questions rising like: even with access to land, who is able to show the proof of access? As such, even with access to land, social relations between chiefs and their cultural subject's constrained landed farming groups from obtaining proofs of access to land so as to proceed to apply for the

grants. This further challenges NSPMS assumptions because, even if landless farmers have access to use a members plot for maize cultivation, it is not always evident that they would be able to show a proof of access so as to further apply for grants.

In the same terrain, while officials of NSPMS and landlords failed to see access to land as a problem for poor maize farmers the DO and traditional chiefs who administered land as well as the landless themselves saw social relations and institutions surrounding access to land as a major tool for exclusion as indicated below.

Perception of the land question in Tubah by both the DO and the Fon

Chef Terre (Government Territorial administrative officer for Tubah, DO),

Concerning land and the land question here in Tubah, I have this to say:

Traditional laws should be reviewed because, that alone is an impediment. The traditional authorities instead of selling land can be leasing it out to people since it is so expensive and not everybody can acquire it. They can reduce the price of land and the power given to the palace and the traditional authority. Here in Tubah and Bambui village most particularly, when you sell land, 10% of the sales goes to the palace (Traditional chief). This makes the price of land very expensive such that, the most common person cannot acquire it (In-depth interview with the Assistant D.O of Tubah, in his office on the 30th.07.09)

This was the DO, official land administrator, expressing desperation over traditional land tenure institutions in Tubah. The traditional chief's response to my question further affirms the DO's expression when he said.

Land is the first most important thing a Bambui man holds now. People quarrel, fight and die because of land. It's their main source of livelihood (In-depth interview with Fon in his palace on the 6th.08.09 in Bambui)

A point worth noting here is the fact that, while the DO accused traditional rules and norms of land administration as well as powerful self interest motives as the cause of the plight of the landless, traditional chiefs accused the landless for being uninterested to acquire and secure land, thus giving space for external elite to purchase the land and in turn rent it out to them. The landless on their own part accused the government as the overall land owner for not being mindful about their situation. On this note, I would borrow from Peters (2004:276) to argue that, 'the socio- political relations in

which land is situated: particularly with reference to relations of inequality, of class, ethnicity, gender and age' need to be reviewed when adopting rural poverty reduction programs which seek to 'build on the strength and opportunities open to the poor'(Ibid.275).

To this end, it is also important to analyze how the very process of forming FG which is assumed to facilitate farmers' access to land works in an unequal society like Tubah to exclude the landless.

4.1.2. Processes of group formation as a mechanism of social exclusion

Literature on group formation by the poor illustrates the potentials of groups to improve the livelihoods of their members. However, some critical literature on the subject rather warns that 'the chronically poor are disadvantaged in group formation and this forms a significant part of the vicious cycle and dynamics of chronic poverty' (Thorp et al., 2005:907). This debate has inspired my analysis of; group formation, access to NSPMS grants and exclusion.

Findings from the field suggested that, FGs were all formed on the basis of asset ownership, relations of interest and social status. Unlike NSPMS assumed, active and eligible groups were not formed only on the basis of mutual assistance, exchange of knowledge, purchase of inputs in bulk etc. Rather, the dynamics surrounding group formation revealed that group members were people who owned at least an average minimum of land and finances. They were all people of similar social status in terms of land ownership as was further emphasized during different successive FGD with landed groups when members expressed their views;

First of all, how do you become a member of our farming group when you do not have land? You must first of all have land before we can admit you into our group (FGD with members of Unity is Strength in Bamenda on 23rd.07.2009). We do not admit jokers. You must own your own land first, and then you can rent others to add to it. You must have constructed (a house to show that you are a stable member) or in the process of construction and must pay your registration fee of 10000fcfa (18€) (during a FGD in Bambui on the 3rd .08. 09). Farming actually begins here in Bambui when you have your own land. I say so because, if you rent, you can be chased out (Francis, a member of Bambui integrated FG during a FGD on the 10th .08.09).

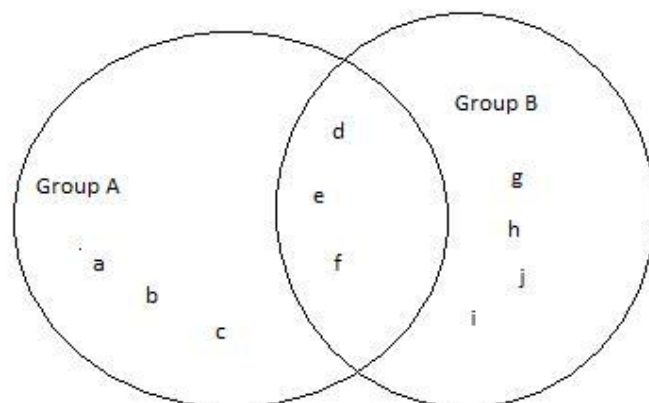
From the quotes above, it can be understood that, FGs also have their closure criteria among which are land ownership. As such, the landless who NSPMS thought, would be protected and given the opportunity to access land and other resources are rather out rightly excluded by conditions of admitting

group members. Also, when the process of group formation was not out totally exclusionary, landlords used landless farmers to obtain grants and latter on chase them out of the group by virtue of their autocratic and dictatorial behaviours as was demonstrated below.

I am a successor and my father upon dying left with me about 50 hectares of land. The group does maize cultivation on my plot because the other members have very small pieces of land. I have offered my land as group land and I write the projects myself. Upon harvesting, I calculate how much I invested into the group, **We** subtract it from the total sales, **I** put 50% into the group account in Bamenda, **I** give **them** 30% to share and help their families, **I** give 20% to the group treasurer to keep such that in case any of them has a problem, s/he can borrow and help the situation(Delegate of a farming Group, during a one person Focus group discussion on the 5th.08.09 in Bamenda).See Appendix 6 for explanation and continuation

From the narration above, it is seen that, mechanisms surrounding group formation deprive some farmers from forming or joining landed groups which in turn has led to their exclusion from accessing the NSPMS grants either explicitly through, group closure criterion as illustrated in the first case or, through group dynamics and leadership. Social relations and ties seem equal among farmers with land such that, landed farmers had the possibility of joining more than one FG. As such, this increased their advantage to access NSPMS grants while the landless were disadvantaged and constantly excluded. As described in chapter three, these landed farmers were mostly civil servants, traditional leaders and people to whom farming was just a secondary employment. Figure 1 below is an illustration of tendencies occurring within landed groups which were either already awarded the grants or accepted but pending award.

Figure 1: A Venn diagram illustrating intersection of group membership within groups.



Source: Author's construction from field findings

The choice of d, e, and f being in the intersection of the diagram is because, among two different groups, the president of group A was the same president for group B, or, in some cases, the secretary for group A was the president of group B and then simple members of the different groups could then differ. Mostly, individuals who were members of more than one FG were either senior officials of the NSPMS program or officials of other sectors who firstly formed their own groups with the message of assisting members to get grants and, later on, they joined other groups which they encouraged their landed friends to start. With such tendencies, I would argue that, giving grants to these landed groups tend to increase capital accumulation for the landed. The landless become disadvantaged and vulnerable to extreme forms of rural poverty or migration given that, rural non farm income diversification options are extremely limited for farmers in this Sub-Division.

4.2 Which groups and categories of farmers showed higher tendencies of being excluded?

Generally speaking, exclusion from access to NSPMS grants occurred due to institutional and relational processes among groups and categories of farmers within a village as well as, from socio-political relationships between villages.

Within a village, internal mechanisms of cultural discrimination and disadvantage among categories of farmers like, landless farmers, illiterates and those who could not meet their group monthly financial contributions worked

to exclude these categories of maize farmers from accessing and benefiting from NSPMS grants. They were therefore excluded because they are deprived from access to other resources. Also, in the category of exclusion from within the village were discriminated categories like women and youths who do not own land because they are socially constructed as secondary claimants to land (Berry, 2002).

Between villages, exclusion resulted from intra village power relations and resource conflicts especially land conflicts. This is the case with the entire Finge village where no group has accessed these grants due to constant land conflicts and the claim by neighbouring Bambui people that, the land is theirs. Due to persistent land disputes, the Finge village has been pushed in and, occupies the hilly portions of land. They now do not have land with which they can apply for these grants as a Finge queen pointed out.

We do not have land on which we can farm maize. We have been pushed up here to the hills by the Bambui people and the government is saying nothing. Even a market we do not have. We cleared the area beside the road to kedjom keku to start our market and, the Bambui people came and chased us away saying that it is their land. All we have are these hills and Bambui own all cultivable lands because they have pushed us in and keep pushing us day by day (In-depth interview with Queen of Finge on the 11th 08.09 in Finge).

Given this discrimination, the village as a whole has so far, not benefited from NSPMS whereas maize is their staple food and NSPMS seeks to ensure national food Security. A detail analysis of the processes of exclusion of these groups and categories is further analyzed below.

4.2. 1 The disadvantaged and deprived

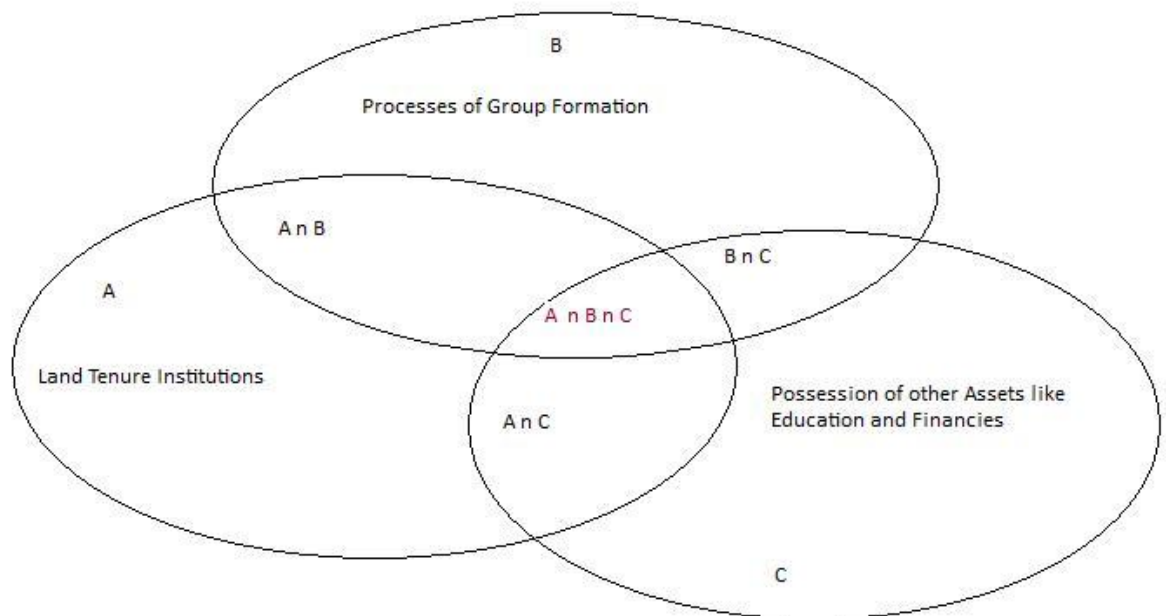
Farmers who do not have land and cannot rent from IRAD are disadvantaged since they cannot join farming groups. Thus, their incapacity to become members of farming groups automatically excludes them from accessing grants. However, even when farming groups sought to be inclusive of landless and uneducated farmers, their lack of these assets still resulted in their exclusion from FG as illustrated in chapter two.

4.2.2. The discriminated

‘Presently, both Cameroon’s land legislation and its customary land practices make women’s access to land, right to property ownership, and control of land difficult’ (Logo et al., 1998:1). The rule of customary traditions in issues of land tenure has tended to result to some forms of discrimination for some groups and categories in the region like women who do not culturally inherit land from their parents and are only considered to be owners of the crops which are on the ground. As a result, they cannot access grants. Such

disadvantages tend to lead to what Stewart in (Kabeer, 2005) calls a “horizontal” model of inequality where inequalities transcend different socio-economic strata, and thus, ‘differentiate the ability of different groups and categories in society to access valued resources and opportunities’(ibid., 2000:3). Among all the 12 groups which had been awarded the grants and the 15 groups pending award, no homogenous women group could be identified. This tendency indicates the extent of the impact of land tenure institutions on rural poverty reduction and women’s welfare. Figure 2 below is an attempted summary to illustrate the exclusionary processes that go on within Tubah for to access NSPMS grants.

Figure 2: A Venn diagram illustrating access to eligibility for the NSPMS grant scheme



Source: Author's construction

In figure 2 above, the set:

A represents all farmers (landlords or landless). Tenure institutions operating in the set determines who has land and who does not have. Thus, some farmers of the set have land while others do not have. Those who do not have are automatically excluded from the program even if they form groups (None landed farmers of A n B) or have other assets (Non landed Farmers of A n C).

Given that these landless members of (A n B) and (A n C) are automatically excluded from access to grants, the rest of the analysis of access/inclusion continue on the premise that, the rest of the farmers in A have land.

B represents all rural farmers in farming groups. Belonging to a FG alone does not fulfil the eligibility criteria for access. Thus, they are excluded.

C represents all farmers having other assets. Having other assets alone does not as well fulfil the eligibility criteria. Thus, they are excluded.

Then,

A n B are those who have land and are in groups but are excluded because they lack other assets like finances to pay for the project writing, creating a bank account or, are even unaware of the program.

A n C are those that have land, have the other assets but are excluded because they are not in groups. The interesting puzzle here is, why a farmer would have land and other asset but refuse to form or join a farming group so as to access these grants. The research findings suggested that, most people who were in this categories were senior elites, employed in other non agricultural sectors with more busy schedules and rather found it more profitable renting out their lands to other farmers than engaging in agriculture themselves.

B n C are those that have other assets and are in groups but are excluded because they do not have land.

***A n B n C** are those who have land, are in groups and have other assets. This was the category of farmers who had 'access' and could successful take the resources given by to farmers by NSPMS.*

From the analysis above, it may be argued that, although governments might have the explicit will to design and implement inclusive rural poverty reduction programs, there is a need to situate their perception of rural social dynamics in contemporary economic situations of their economies such as to escape the trap of perceiving 'culture' as static which Moore earlier suggested in Peters (2004). This is because, NSPMS in its assumptions about access to land for rural farmers, separated the socio-cultural from, the economic in rural areas by, simply assuming that traditional chiefs will offer land to landless groups in an era of land commoditization. This assumption thus altered their understanding of possible exclusionary social relations existing within and between groups which led to, the multi-level chain of disadvantage and exclusion analyzed above.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Policy Implications

5.1 Conclusion

This study, unlike many others in the analysis of social exclusion avoided to accuse government or international organizations for excluding the poor because of some political or socio-economic reasons. On the contrary, it sought to analyze how, even with the ‘intensions’ of including majority of the poor in its grant scheme, NSPMS rather perceived rural social dynamics as being ‘static’ (Moore in Peters, 2004). This ‘static’ perception resulted in NSPMS making highly exclusionary assumptions about access to land for these poor farmers. The main objective of the research was to understand how the land tenure question in the North West Region Cameroon contribute in excluding farmers from participating in and, benefiting from NSPMS grants in Tubah Sub-Division.

From the findings of this study as illustrated in previous chapters, NSPMS sought to support majority of rural maize farmers by giving them material, financial, and technical resources but in the end, only landlords could access and take these resources. Therefore, even though NSPMS assumed that, in a FG, landless farmers can access land and access grants to improve their livelihoods, there are other social mechanisms operating behind the scene which make their assumptions baseless and unrealistic for poor landless farmers. These mechanisms I would argue are the human to human relationships which might have been overlooked when drawing such assumptions. These relationships play a great role in the distribution of land since they determine the forms of land relations existing between the landed and the landless. As such, it is not evident that, landed farmers will easily and willingly accommodate landless farmers in groups such as to improve their livelihoods. This same argument would hold for the assumption that, traditional chiefs freely offer land to landless farming groups for maize cultivation in an era of increased land commoditization.

On this ground, I would further argue that, although promoting agricultural productivity and commercialization through farmer organization as demonstrated by, Kengné (2003) has been hailed for its capacity to increase farmer’s incomes profitably, analyzing this approach by NSPMS in Tubah Sub-Division tend to indicate contradictory tendencies. The very process of forming and sustaining these farmer organizations is highly exclusionary for poor rural farmers which most poverty reduction programs often target. Significant exclusion of farmers occurs at the level of the farmer organizations. Their formation processes were highly exclusionary and like every closed social group, only members with similar social status successfully sailed through to join the groups.

Groups which had land were all made of people of some social status like, civil servants who could purchase land, successors who inherited land or, traditional leaders who had land by virtue of the authority entrusted on them as village land administrators in the blurred nature of tenure distinction. In this regard, no group which had land and, had received grants was made up of a mix of both the landless and the landlords. Ensuing from this divide therefore, with the current land tenure question and NSPMS grants making conditions, there might be the gradual birth of a classed society made up of landlords and the landless where the landless will sell their labour to the landlords. This is because, the land tenure system provides for lobbying and 'land grabbing' by the elite and NSPMS through its grant making scheme is reinforcing the class situation by adding other forms of capital to the landlords while the landless are progressively excluded from capital accumulating programs.

From this, I would argue that, conceptualizing rural poverty as a lack of resources and thus, its reduction as; the giving of these resources to the poor has some repercussions which may end up masking other poverty engendering mechanisms. This conceptualization might be too simplistic because, life in rural areas cannot only be reduced to the relationships of humans with non human resources (Wuyts,2004).

Also, worthy of note from this study is the fact that, the blurred nature of tenure distinction in the region seems to exclude most both; the village which migrated to the region and is considered as a 'stranger' by neighbouring villages as well as, those individuals who were unable to register their lands during colonial administration and whose lands were registered under corporate occupancy which are today known as village lands with customary administration by their chiefs. The blurredness of this distinction leaves no clear prescriptions on how village lands should be administered. Yet, these villagers and their generations constitute the majority of small scale poor rural farmers which NSPMS aims to reach. As such, this paper argues that, unlike NSPMS assumptions regarding their grant conditions, even when farmers are organized as a FG, there is a land question perpetrated by socio-political processes surrounding land administration which ensues from the 'contradictory blend' of customary and statutory tenures. This land question has led to the discrimination of some categories of farmers from access to land which, further leads to their automatic exclusion from access to NSPMS grants. As such, conceptualizing rural poverty as lack of resources only, and its reduction as giving these resources to the poor, may have a few gaps which still make things difficult for them to take these resources. As such, I may argue that, designing a nationally uniform project for all maize farmers in the country without a reconsideration of this land question nurtures imbalances in terms of attempts to improve farmers' livelihoods (Tilly, 2007).

Furthermore, findings from this study suggest that, people who were fully employed in other sectors of the economy and for whom farming was a

secondary employment rather benefited most from NSPMS grants. With all these, I would argue that, as much as achieving individual property rights to land has a role to play in providing access to land and other productive resources to rural farmers for agricultural development, there may be a pressing urgency to revisit who has the right to make claims to land ownership in rural areas and which structures and institutions operate in these societies to perpetuate these claims. In this way, pro-poor policies related to land use might reach the eventual landless. There is thus the need to re-conceptualize rural poverty as unequal socio-political power relations which exist between people in the administration and allocation of these resources. In that light, an understanding of social inequalities in societies may contribute in explaining rural poverty as well as strategies for its reduction

However, a broader view of NSPMS and its criteria of eligibility to grants seem to suggest that, the land question in Tubah is not the only exclusionary factor for farmers. Other exclusionary factors which however were not analyzed in this paper include but not limited to: group ownership of a bank account containing a precise minimal saving, writing of micro projects for grants and, impacts of the grants on the livelihoods of recipients. These therefore open up perspectives for future researches.

5.2 Policy Implications

Basing on the lone case of this research, considering the scope and little time spent researching the topic, looking at the fact that in the literature consulted so far there were no similar cases in other African (similar context) countries, I seem to be uncomfortable with pointing to policy implications immediately. I would rather guess that, the findings of the paper could be an ignition leading to a new scope of research in development studies which seek to analyze assumptions involved in formulation and design of rural poverty reduction programs such as to, confront these assumptions with the social dynamics of the rural world before the implementation of poverty reduction programs. This will help development research to further contribute to policy scrutiny prior to implementation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: A justification for the reliability of data in table 3

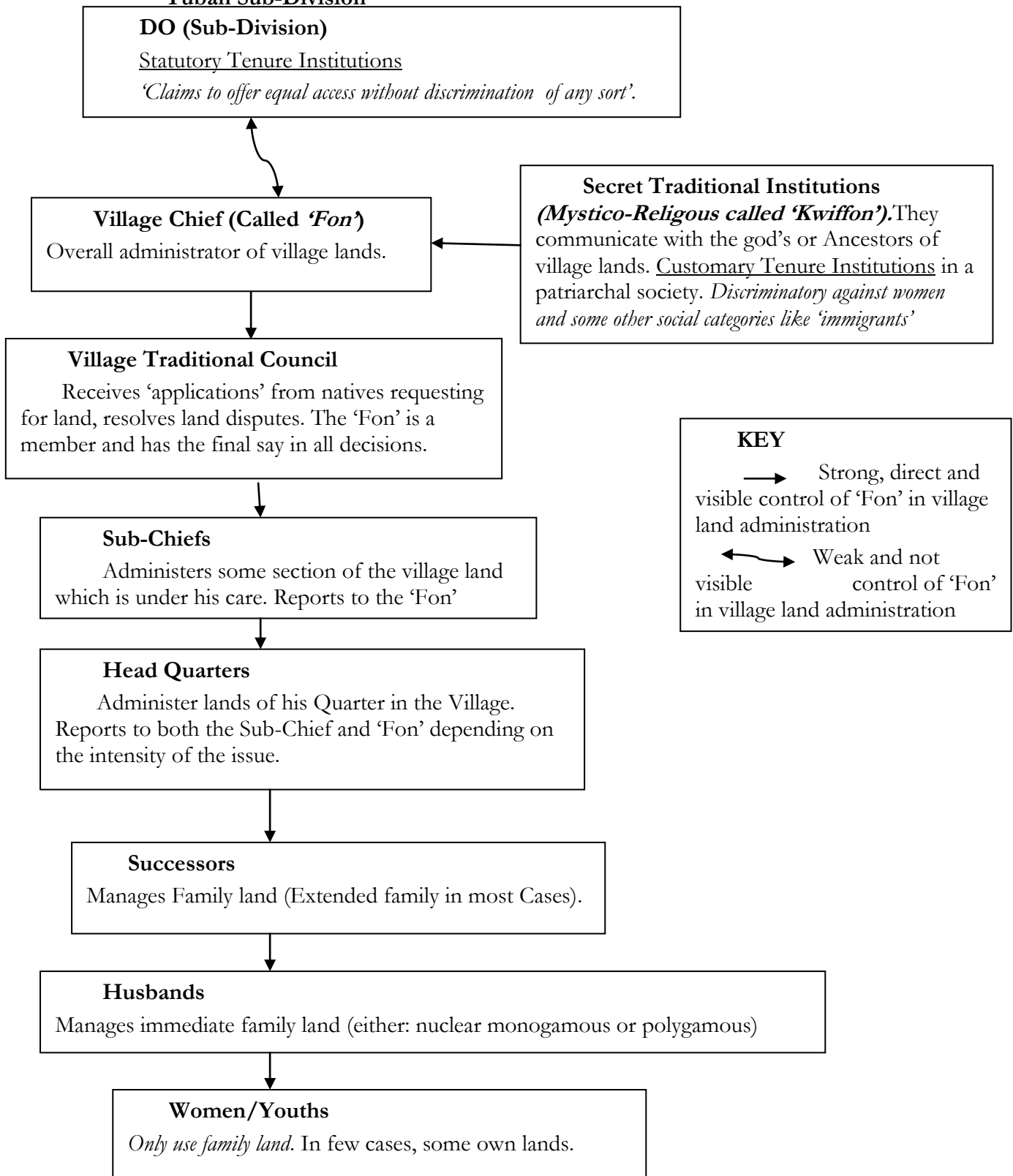
As the data collector, I would rely on this statistics because, during my two successive visits to the DO's office, I respectively met two different groups of people quarrelling on land ownership. The Assistant DO had to suspend one of the groups (widows who had been deprived of their husband's land) to attend to me because of our appointment. After this, he had to go to the field to intervene. *Source: Direct observation by Author during Field Studies 2009.*

Appendix 2: Fon Vugah II burnt by villagers during conflicts over land Administration in Kedjum Keku Village in 2006



Source: The Post watches Magazine online
(http://www.postwatchmagazine.com/2006/04/the_assassinati.html)

Appendix 3a): Village traditional administrative hierarchy in villages in Tubah Sub-Division



Source: Author's construction from field observation 2009.

Appendix 3b): A further explanation of the birth of FG and shifts in traditional land administration in the North West Region of Cameroon

In the days of colonial rule, plantation agriculture was the main source of income for most rural farmers with the cultivation of coffee (in the region). As a cash crop, coffee fetched much more money than food crops. Men who owned the family lands often refused their wives from cultivating food crops especially maize and cocoyam on their plots because the women used traditional techniques of soil burning which did destroy coffee roots or rendered virgin lands bare for coffee cultivation. See picture below (*extracted from authors previous academic research paper in 2007 while at the University of Yaoundé I Cameroon.*)



Picture3: Snapped by NJO-NJO photos at four corners Bambui village in January 20

The picture above was snapped in a peasant farm in Atuonui quarter Bambui peasant setting the fire was one among the few courageous peasants who said: "La

Since women were responsible for household food, they would **form groups(now called FG)** and go up to either their Chief ('Fon'), Sub-Chief or Head Quarter and request for a big piece of land to cultivate food to feed their children (whom they termed 'his people' to mean; the chief's future subject). Since 'land used to be no-one's property but rather a common possession that was treated as shared wealth' (Barrier 1997; LeRoy 1991 in Awasom 2006: 42) and not yet commoditized, also coupled with the fact that the population was lesser, the Chief would give them this land temporarily for as long as they could cultivate it. Then, these women will pull their labour and resources to cultivate, harvest and share the produce. The Practice became common place and was being modernised until it was now adapted by government in 1992 as a

strategy to help farmers overcome the effects of the SAPs. However, this adaptation seems to have omitted the fact that, land had become commodity and so would have some implications on land and social relations among the chiefs and their subjects. *Source: Author's explanation*

Appendix 4: Conditions of Eligibility to Assistance from MINADER
See next page.

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix – Travail – Patrie

MINISTÈRE DE L'AGRICULTURE
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

DIRECTION DES ORGANISATIONS
PROFESSIONNELLES AGRICOLES ET
DE L'APPUI AUX EXPLOITATIONS AGRICOLES

SOUS-DIRECTION DE L'APPUI AUX
MOYENNES ET GRANDES
EXPLOITATIONS AGRICOLES



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace-Work-Fatherland

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL
AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS
AND SUPPORT TO FARM ENTERPRISES

SUB DEPARTMENT OF SUPPORT TO
MEDIUM AND BIG SIZE
AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

CONDITIONS D'ELIGIBILITE AUX APPUIS

Pour être éligible aux appuis du MINADER, il faut remplir les conditions ci-après :

- ❖ Etre exploitant ou structure agricole, homme / femme / GIC / ONG / Coopérative / etc.
- ❖ Adresser au MINADER une demande accompagnée d'un dossier technique comprenant :
 - un document d'étude de faisabilité d'un projet d'intérêt socio économique dans le domaine de l'agriculture, précisant le compte d'exploitation prévisionnel, le plan de mise en œuvre et le plan de localisation du projet ;
 - un rapport de diagnostic de l'exploitation réalisé par le Chef de Poste Agricole ou le Délégué d'Arrondissement;
 - une attestation de compte bancaire ou de micro finance ;
 - une justification d'apport personnel de toute nature (équipements, main d'œuvre, etc.) ;
 - la présentation de garanties de propriété foncière (titre foncier, certificat de donation ou de vente, procès verbal de tenué de palabre, attestation de bail ou de l'autorité traditionnelle) ;
 - le document de légalisation (cas de groupe) ;
- ❖ Avoir démarré la mise en œuvre du projet agricole, objet de l'appui sollicité;
- ❖ Déposer le dossier complet au Poste agricole ou à la Délégation d'Arrondissement de l'Agriculture du lieu d'implantation du projet. Toute demande déposée au niveau des services centraux sera renvoyée au service déconcentré concerné.
 - La possibilité pour un grand exploitant d'encadrer ou d'appuyer les petits planteurs environnants serait un atout.

Source: Regional office of APIR

Appendix 5 a): Extract of proof of land from the project document of an awarded project

LIST OF MEMBERS OF KETIH INTERGRATED COMMOM INITIATIVE GROUP (KICIG) WITH FARM SIZES.

No.	Name	Post Held	Farm Size. in hectares
1.	Vulic Peter Nsofon	Delegate	1.9
2.	Gako Frederick	Secretary	0.6
3.	Mbuame Comfort	Treasurer	1.5
4.	Vukumu Peter Vuvengfe	Financial Secretary	0.7
5.	Mangie Helen	Member	0.4
6.	Abong Constance Mbong	Member	0.7
7.	Tabitha Kenyu	Member	1
8.	Judith Aku	Member	0.6
9.	Benjamin Vukogah	Member	1.05
10.	Paulina Abuh	Member	0.75
11.	Michael Aku	Member	0.5
12.	Wutofu Solomon	Member	1.1
13.	Frida Mokunyu	Member	0.5
14.	Esther Abong	Member	0.75
15.	Guemuh Geoffrey	Member	0.5
16.	Nsofon Catherine	Member	0.7
17.	Kulie Andrew	Member	0.5
18.	Tabitha Ngwe	Member	0.5
19.	Frida Vuvu	Member	1.05
20.	Shien Vera	Member	0.6
	<i>Total</i>		15hectares

Source: Mezam Divisional office in charge of assessing the quality of micro-projects submitted to NSPMS.

Appendix 6: Landlords exploit other landless Farmers

ahhhhhh, that group use to exist and they always have government assistance because the **owner** of the group is a big man but, he is very exploitative and if you do not abide by his rules, he will tell you to leave the group. I even wanted to join the group but he drove my friend who was there so I was discouraged (during a discussion with a woman to help me locate where the said contact person of a FG lived such that, I could make arrangements for a FGD for the next week).

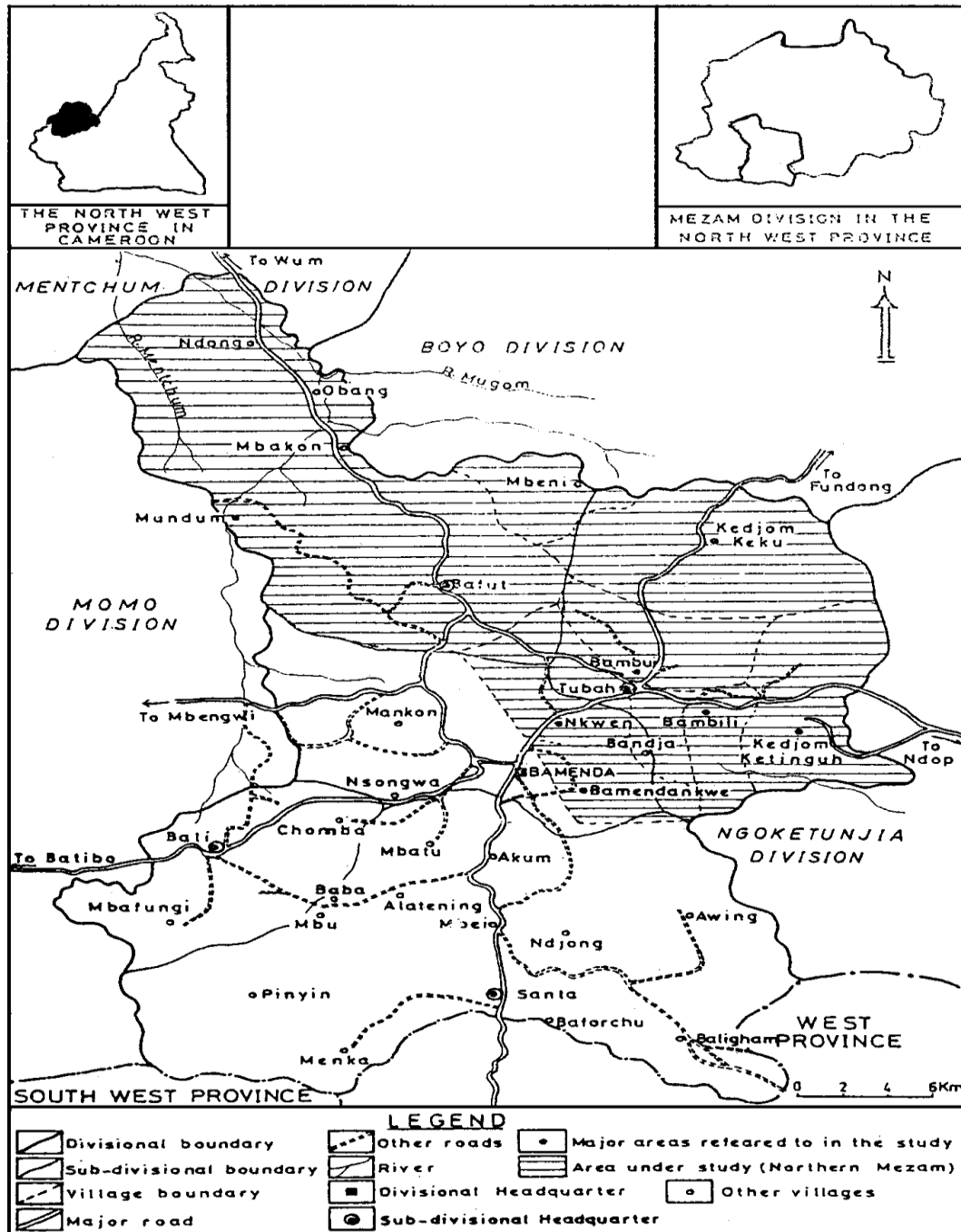
It was observed that, groups that had so far received grants were those groups which had either government officials or village elites as their members. However, an analysis of conditions of becoming a member of such group seemed so rigid that it seemed impossible for poorer landless maize cultivator to be a member. The size of these groups ranged from the required minimum of 5 persons to 15 members only and, 21 in exceptional cases. Furthermore, from an analysis of the groups which had applied for the grants were, groups named as *plantain farming groups* (statistics from NSPMS Divisional office) and, the appellation of groups was a reflection of their activity. Now then, the puzzle is how a plantain farming group suddenly becomes a maize farming group?

In the past, most elite of the region did do small scale farming in one way or another but, were not into group farming until the launch of programs like NSPMS which assist farmers in groups.

Appendix 7: Location of the research area in the map of Mezam Division in the North West Region of Cameroon (cf. shaded portions)

See next page for Map.

Map 1: "A Map of Mezam Division in the North West Region of Cameroon: Indicating the villages of Tubah Sub-Division"



MEZAM DIVISION SHOWING NORTHERN MEZAM.

Source: Vubo et al.(2001)

