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History and Dynamics of Herders-Farmers Conflict in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon

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History and Dynamics of Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon



Menchum, Northwest Region of Cameroon

Source: bdodane, Flickr



Donga Mantung Division, Northwest Region of Cameroon

Source: WikiMedia Commons

Abstract

The study investigates farmers-herders' conflicts in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions of the Northwest Region of Cameroon. It argues that the causes, manifestations, management, and consequences of herder-farmer conflicts have transformed over time and space. The study also contends that partial references have been made to the historical dynamics and transformation of these constitutive variables. It adopted quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Also, secondary sources were exploited. The findings reveal that the farmer-herder conflict's dynamics are basically underpinned by a cycle of tension, latent conflict, escalation, de-escalation, and the settlement phase. Also, the results reveal that grievances associated with unforgiven hostilities are passed down by the generations, feeding a broadening gap of fear and detestation, which increases the possibility of additional violent conflict. Also, the Anglophone crisis has inflamed the pre-existing tensions between the Fulani herders and farming communities by sparking more violence and deadly conflicts. Thus, understanding the factors that shape the trajectory of conflict can help reduce its frequency and intensity.

Introduction

One of the main problems confronting global peace and cohesion in recent times is the manifestation of conflicts in diverse magnitudes across the globe. Conflicts between farmers and herders are widespread and persistent in Central and West Africa. Such conflicts are prevalent in Cameroon, Nigeria, central Mali, and northern Burkina Faso.¹ They are surging and exist on a large scale, in Nigeria, the greater Lake Chad Basin, the Sudano-Sahel region, and in Cameroon. From Mali to South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, through Cameroon to Nigeria, the capriciousness of climate change, environmental degradation, bad governance, and socio-political crises have triggered tensions between farmers and herders, resulting in violent conflict, deaths, forced displacement and migration, erosion of inter-communal relationships, as well as the devastation of plant and livestock products. The soaring competition for land and water resources further exacerbates the existing conflicts.² In Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Tanzania, Kenya, Chad, and Cameroon, herder-farmer conflict over grazing land has been both chronic and endemic. The immediate trigger of the clashes is associated with contestations over grazing and farming lands, whereas in some cases, like the Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, chartered Fulani herders are normally accused of theft of cattle under their custody.³ In Kenya, Nigeria, and Cameroon, farmer-herder conflicts are frequently manifested in incidents such as crop destruction by cattle, cattle rustling, and the encroachment of farmlands into grazing areas. These conflicts are driven by a complex interplay of factors, ranging from geometric population increase and pressure, climate change, declining trust between communities, growing social inequalities and social manipulation of ethno-religious biases, changes in

land use and resource access, unclear land-use rights due to the coexistence of customary land systems and complex modern regulations to arms trafficking across the porous borders are cited as factors driving farmer-herder conflicts.⁴

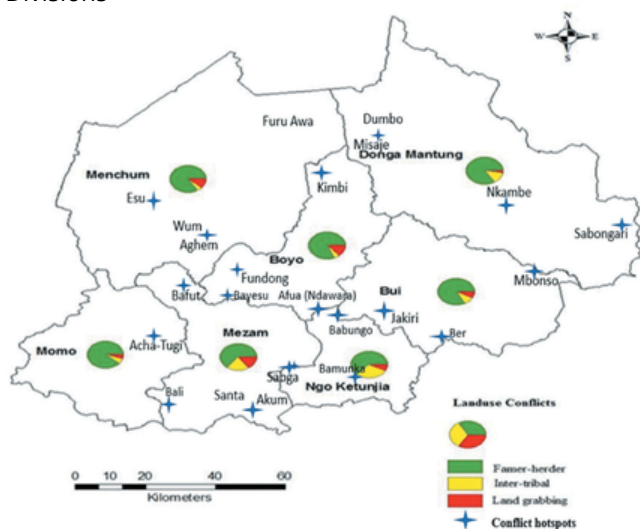
Across Africa, farmers and pastoralists have historically competed over the use of natural resources and, in some cases, engaged in violent conflicts. Given the rising frequency, magnitude, intensity, and severity, as well as the associated consequences, governments have put considerable effort into addressing the problem. Nevertheless, the conflicts persist, and, in some cases, they have escalated as well as mutated. Though numerous scholarly studies already exist on the subject, there are perceptible gaps, as most of them have largely focused on the causes, manifestations, management, and consequences of the problem. No doubt, these elements constitute the fulcrum of the problem; partial references have been made to the historical dynamics and transformation of these constitutive variables of farmer-herder conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon. This study focuses on the historical trajectory and the dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts. It explores the dynamics of farmer-herder relations by explaining the underlying causes responsible for the persistence and escalation of conflicts. In the case of Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions in the North West Region of Cameroon, farmers make up most of the indigenous population, while most cattle herders are the Mbororo Fulani nomadic and semi-sedentary pastoralists.

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DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The area of study, the North West Region of Cameroon, lies between latitudes 5° 45' and 9° 9' N, longitudes 9° 13' and 11° 13'E. It covers an area of about 17400 km², and it is bordered in the North and West by the Republic of Nigeria, in the South by the West and South West Regions, and in the East by the Adamawa Region.⁵ The Region has seven Administrative Divisions. Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions were purposively chosen for this study because of the frequent farmer-herder conflicts (see figures 1 and 2). Also, the Donga-Mantung Division has the highest number of cattle in the North West Region, followed by Menchum Division.⁶ According to Holtzman, Staatz, and Weber,⁷ Menchum, as far back as 1975/76, had 39 percent of all grazing area in the Region, followed by Donga Mantung with 29 percent.⁸ A total of 28 villages were selected for this survey, and the distribution of questionnaires followed the size of the village and the severity of the herder-farmer conflicts (see Appendix 1).

Figure 1: Major Agro-pastoral Production Zones and Farmer-Herder Conflict Hotspots in Northwest Cameroon, Displaying Donga Mantung and Menchum Divisions



Source: Richard Achia Mbih (2020): The politics of farmer-herder conflicts and alternative conflict management in Northwest Cameroon, *African Geographical Review*, DOI: 10.1080/19376812.2020.172075.

The sampling method adopted for this survey was random sampling, stratified into two groups: farmers and grazers. The choice of this method was principally motivated by the fact that these two separate segments of the population were of importance to us in the study. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 200 cattle herders and subsistence farmers in two administrative divisions covering two conflict hot spots in the North West Region of Cameroon. This is an average of 100 questionnaires per community, corresponding to 200 in total. The proportions of respondents interviewed across the divisions depend on the number of communities where questionnaires were administered. Also, archival collections were used to source information. Zald opines that archival work provides a basis for defining key questions, establishes a base of evidence, and supports debate about familiar forms and mechanisms.⁹ Practices, ideologies, or social arrangements can be better understood by exploring their origins, as Piore and Sabel¹⁰ note, the key historical “branching points” or path dependencies.

The fieldwork was conducted in two phases: the first in the Donga Mantung Division in September 2018. The second phase was conducted in Menchum Division in October of the same year. The study adopted purposive and snowball sampling methods. The purposive sampling method was used in selecting key informants such as local farmers, sedentary pastoralists, community residents, chiefs, community/opinion leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), government officials, and security agencies. This technique enabled the selection of respondents who were relevant to the study and contributed to the quality of the discussions.

The snowball sampling technique was used for selecting individuals (farmers and herders) involved in specific cases of conflicts and for selecting seasonal migrant Fulani pastoralists because of the difficulty in contacting them for interviews due to their nomadic nature. In this method, we purposively interviewed one herder or individual who has been engaged in conflict, and they, in turn, led us to others.

Data was collected with the assistance of trained enumerators using structured questionnaires developed with preliminary information gathered from secondary sources and expert interviews conducted in the region of study. An overwhelming majority of the respondents interviewed were men, with women and youth respondents representing 20% of the total sample. Most of the respondents interviewed were married. Also, the respondents on the questionnaires were people who had spent some time in the area. A high proportion of them (186) have spent over 5 years in the areas, 10 have spent 3 to 4 years, while just 4 have spent less than 3 years. This substantiates the authenticity of respondents' responses, especially as many have spent a long time in the area.

The analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the relationships between the different variables and to present the results. The FGD and KII interviews were transcribed from audio. Qualitative information on key variables, issues, and perspectives was derived from the interviews.

The major conflicting groups are pastoralists, predominantly the Mbororo Fulani, who constitute about 90 percent of cattle herders, and crop farmers from specific indigenous Grassfields communities. These groups are socio-culturally and historically distinct, with long-standing and dynamic relations. The nomadic Mbororo Fulani, who dominate the pastoral sector, migrated from the Adamawa region of Nigeria and began settling in the North West Region in the late 1910s.

III. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Historical Dynamics, Manifestations, and Consequences

Resource conflict between farmers and herders is neither a recent phenomenon nor peculiar to any country of the Central and West African sub-regions. Cameroon, in the Central African sub-region, has been a theatre of resource conflict involving sedentary crop farmers and mobile cattle herders. The appropriate context for understanding conflicts between them in the North West Region of Cameroon over land and related resources is to trace their historical interactions and experiences. This is because they have competing needs for resources and are historically prone to enter conflicts with each other about the allocation of these resources, which are directly affected by climate change. The major conflicting groups are pastoralists, predominantly the Mbororo Fulani, who constitute about 90 percent of cattle herders, and crop farmers from specific indigenous Grassfields communities. These groups are socio-culturally and historically distinct, with long-standing and dynamic relations. The nomadic Mbororo Fulani, who dominate the pastoral sector, migrated from the Adamawa region of Nigeria and began settling in the North West Region in the late 1910s.¹¹

In the ensuing decades, additional Mbororo families were drawn to the region by its favourable ecological conditions, notably its rich pastures and abundant salt springs.¹²

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The relative receptiveness of local communities, compared to the more restrictive environment they had experienced in Adamawa, further encouraged this movement. Migration typically occurred along family or lineage lines, under the leadership of family heads (Ardos), who acted as intermediaries between pastoralist groups, host communities, and the colonial administration.¹³ Within this historical context, patterns of interaction gradually evolved into sites of tension and contestation. In Donga Mantung Division, conflicts occur mainly between the Wimbun and the Mbororo in areas such as Nkambe Central and Nwa (Mbaw Plain), driven by competition over land, water, and crop damage. In Menchum Division, the conflict involves groups such as the Aghem, Bum, Fungom, Beba-Befang, and Essimbi, with the Aghem of Wum frequently at the center of disputes with Mbororo herders. The distribution of these communities is reflected in Appendix 1.

The British colonial administration of Southern Cameroons viewed pastoralists as strangers.¹⁴ This stranger discernment of pastoralists by the natives, colonial administration, and successive state regimes in Cameroon explains the extent of marginalization and discrimination against the Mbororo Fulani.¹⁵ However, the British colonial administration supported the inflow of more Mbororo Fulani pastoralists. They used this strategy to expand and diversify the regional economy as well as supplement their tax income. Concomitantly, the village traditional authorities encouraged the pastoralists' settlement in their villages if they paid tribute and acknowledged their hosts' territorial and political hegemony.

The crop farmlands and pasturelands, too, were plentiful because the population densities were relatively low. This implied that tenderfoots could access land without opposition, and crop growers who wanted to enlarge their farms or practice shifting cultivation had minimal or no complications in locating land. As the cattle herding population increased, conflicts started arising, not really because of the struggle over land, but due to recurrent crop damage, favored by the cattle herders' practice of extensive grazing, seasonal vertical transhumance, and crop farmers' practice of shifting cultivation.¹⁶ The crop farmers occasionally responded with public protests and violence.¹⁷ In response to the growing conflicts between farmers and herders/grazers, the colonial administration and later the State of Cameroon started imposing grazing rules.¹⁸

As far back as 1919, Colonial Native Authorities initiated an understanding between farmers and grazers that encouraged the alternating use of farming and grazing lands. Grazing land was delineated from crop farming land, and particular areas were designated as mixed farming zones where crop farmers and grazers are expected to access resources in turns.¹⁹ During the dry season, agreements were also reached with local authorities, and grazers were given access to the lowlands, and in the rainy season, they returned to the highlands. Farmers constructed fences around their farms, and the Fulani did the same for their cattle to avoid crop damage. Traditional rulers, assisted by their Native Authorities, acted as mediators. If crops were damaged, they levied charges or penalties on the cattle owner to compensate farmers for the damaged crops. Through these mechanisms, peace was maintained between farmers and grazers.²⁰

Notwithstanding the complications experienced with the crop farming population, several Mbororo-Fulani cattle herders benefited from the favorable and eco-friendly conditions of the region and thrived over time. The grazing/cattle population, as well as the farming population, increased enormously, and access to land progressively became much more limited. This situation forced the cattle herders to adopt a more sedentary lifestyle and led to changes in the way both cattle herders and crop farmers perceived land. Both groups became more conscious of the economic value and scarce nature of the land. This new perception of the land seriously influenced the conflicts between the two land user categories. From simple conflicts resulting from cattle encroachment into crop farms, issues of identity and land access/ownership rights started setting in, thereby complicating the conflicts.²¹ In addition to individual conflicts resulting from crop damage and trespass, more group-level conflicts were witnessed. Some of these conflicts escalated and degenerated into severe societal crises, triggering huge losses of property and even human lives.²²

In the recent history of farmer-grazer conflicts, the most renowned cases have been recorded in the North West Region. There were about 304 officially registered conflicts in Donga Mantung Division between 2000 and 2017.²³ The historical case of Aghem remains the most popular in the history of farmer-grazer conflicts with a serious uprising in 1972 (when women marched naked in Wum), 1973 (when women marched from Wum to Bamenda to protest to the Governor), and 1981 (when protests were violent leading to the intervention of forces of law and order) and 2003 (when women organized a lengthy sit-in strike action).

The uprising of 1981 led to shocking consequences as many died, many others were injured, and the property was destroyed. The case of Kedjom-Keku was characterized by protests in the 1980s and 1990s and a more serious uprising in 2003-2004. The most recent case, which is gaining in popularity and severity, is the case between the Elba Ranch promoted by Alhadji Baba Amadu Danpulo and the farming population of Esu village in the Menchum Division. Following the conversion of the initial site of the Elba Ranch at Ndawara in Boyo/Ngoketunjia Divisions into a Tea Plantation, the promoter decided to transfer most of the cattle to the ranch at Esu. The co-existence of the farmers of this village and the cattle of the Elba Ranch has since been characterized by tensions.

In recent years, this case has been the source of social tension. As of now, the local and regional administrative authorities are still seeking a lasting solution to the stalemate. Presently, farmer-grazer conflicts occur in all seven Divisions of the North West Region, but they are more serious in some parts of the Region. Though clear statistics are not available, Menchum and Donga Muntung Divisions have been identified as prevalent farmer-grazer conflict hotspots in the region, with huge consequences as indicated in Table 1. A Likert-type scale is used here and elsewhere in the article to evaluate the strength and intensity of responses on a linear continuum as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Decided (D), and Strongly Decided (SD).

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Table 1: Manifestations and Consequences of Conflicts

Variables	Frequency (Percentage)					Total %
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	
Consequences						100
1 Loss of lives and properties	123	47	5	18	7	
	61.5%	23.5%	2.5%	9%	3.5%	
2 Internal displacements/refugees	42	74	51	28	5	100
	21%	37%	25.5 %	14%	2.5%	
3 Destruction of farm lands	112	85	1	2	0	100
	56%	43%	0.5%	1%	0%	
4 Food Security/Insecurity	87	110	2	1	0	100
	43.5%	55%	1%	0.5%	0%	
5 Loss of means of livelihood	70	126	2	1	1	100
	35%	63%	1%	0.5%	0.5%	
6 Loss of cows because of retaliatory attacks and/or cattle rustling	57	119	18	6	0	100
	28.5%	60%	9%	3%	0%	
7 Loss of revenues: individuals, families, and communities	57	139	2	2	0	100
	28.5%	70%	1%	1%	0%	
8 Negative impact on children and women	39	158	2	0	1	100
	19.5%	79%	1%	0%	0.5%	
9 Psychological / Traumatic effects, including a low sense of safety among members of the public	39	148	9	4	0	100
	19.5%	74%	4.5%	2%	0%	
10 Huge cost of post-conflict peacebuilding	20	147	25	7	1	100
	10%	73.5%	12.5 %	3.5%	0.5%	
11 Challenges of return and reintegration	10	139	36	11	4	100
	5%	70%	18%	5.5%	2%	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1 reveals that in Menchum and Donga Mantung, the manifestations of herder-farmer conflicts were viewed differently. Many people 61.5% strongly agreed that there has been a loss of lives and property. This was followed by 23.5% of those who supported the idea. The rest, 2.5%, 9%, and 3.5% were undecided, disagreed, and strongly disagreed, respectively. It was also agreed by 37% of people that herder-farmer conflicts bring about internal displacement. This was followed by those who strongly agreed with this idea by 21%, while 25.5% were undecided. Also, 14% disagreed, and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Generally, there was an agreement that there was food insecurity by 55%, loss of means of livelihood by 63%, loss due to retaliatory attacks by 59.5%, loss of revenue by 70%, negative impacts on children and women by 79%, psychological effect 74%, huge cost in post-conflict peacebuilding 73.5% and challenges of return and reintegration 70%. Some people strongly agreed with this, some were undecided, some disagreed, and some strongly disagreed.

Beyond the survey above, secondary sources and interviews revealed that the conflict between Mbororo Fulani pastoralists/grazers and farmers has been in existence since the beginning of the practice of agriculture. Regardless of the disagreement between the herders and farmers over the scarce resources of land, the incidents of conflict that led to fatalities between the two groups in the early twentieth century were not as alarming as they have been in recent times. In the mid-twentieth century, conflicts escalated into violence and assumed different forms of insecurity with an increase in large numbers of casualties and displaced people.

If the conflicts are allowed to escalate further, the impacts will be on food and animal products because of the grave loss of animals, crops, and valuable properties. The main effect of the conflicts reported by all the respondents interviewed was and is insecurity in terms of human lives and livelihoods. The human security component deals with both farmers and herdsman, who carried out their daily socio-economic activities with fear and terror of being harmed. A synthesis of fieldwork views from farmers and Divisional Officials reported cases of shoot-outs and deaths caused by herdsman. The herdsman and cattle owners, on the other hand, claimed to have lost some of their animals through physical attacks and poisoning using agrochemicals by the farmers. On both sides, water points and catchments were blocked, and some were destroyed.

In Nkambe Central Sub-division, cattle herders were required to pay substantial allegiance fees to the village heads of Bih and Binshua.

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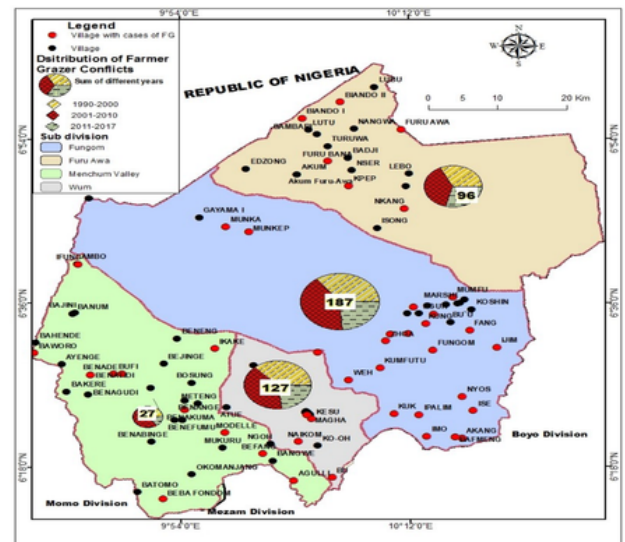
In Mamba Kungi, the Mbororo Fulani were forcibly displaced from their community, leaving grazing rights exclusively in the hands of non-Mbororo Fulani herders. On 19 July 2001, the corpse of a man from Bessa was discovered on the banks of the River Kinken, which forms the boundary between Misaje and Ako Sub-divisions. Available statistics show that the livestock department of Donga Mantung registered only 500 conflicts between herdsman and farmers between 2011 and 2014.²⁴ Due to the dearth of official statistics on incidences of violent conflicts, much of the discourse on increased violence between farmers and herders is reported by local farmers and herders themselves. Between 1997 and 1999, in Menchum Division, 45 houses were destroyed in Esu village by herders during the establishment of the Elba ranch. In December 1980, public protests by Aghem women in Wum, Mechum Division, escalated into widespread violence against the Aku population (sub-ethnic Fulani group) and resulted in the death of eight Aghem men. The Aku-Aghem conflict was preceded by a long history of conflicts between Aghem women farmers and Aku herders.²⁵ These conflicts led to the internal displacement of both herders and farmers. Between 1996 and 1999, in Esu village, over 325 farmers were displaced. In 2012, armed herdsman from Nigeria attacked Baoro village in Menchum. In 2014, hundreds of heavily armed herdsman fleeing conflicts in Nigeria's Taraba and Benue states burnt down schools, houses, and destroyed crops in the villages of Efung, Afu, Gayama, and Mayi.²⁶ The farmers-herders conflict has increased over the years, and the killings and destruction of properties continue without any sign of slowing down. The magnitude of farmer-herder conflict in the Menchum Division has claimed lives and properties, as summarized in Table 2. Also see Figure 2.

Table 2: Summary of Herder-Farmer Conflicts and Estimated Damages in the Menchum Division

Year	Farmer-grazer conflicts and Consequences	
	No of Conflicts Cases	Damages
1982-1984	680	About 320 farms were destroyed, 240 farmers displaced, and about 78 cows killed.
1985-1987	840	Destruction of 450 Bambara groundnut farms in Esu. 120 farmers were displaced in Esu, 101 in Weh, 320 in Mmen, and 156 in Wum. 250 cows were mutilated, and about 230 goats and 200 pigs were killed
1988-1990	1051	Forceful displacement of 300 farmers in Esu, destruction of 890 maize farms in Fungom, and 240 in Wum. About 254 cows were killed.
1991-1993	1395	Countless maize, ground nuts, cassava, potato, and bean farms were destroyed. About 58 cows were also killed.
1994-1996	1397	Over 670 farms were damaged, worth over 5 million Francs
1997-1999	1660	Destruction of 45 houses at the Elba Ranch area, hosting about 125 farmers, displacement of 200 farmers at Sangwa, and 121 at Kedzong. Damages were worth over 9 million FCFA
2000-2002	2010	Displacement of about 35 farmers in Turkisong. Over 540 maize farms, 870 ground nuts, beans, and Bambara groundnut farms in Fungom, 640 in Wum, and 43 in Menchum Valley were destroyed.
2003-2005	2104	The destruction of about 500 maize farms in Fungom forced 75 farmers to abandon their farmsteads in Esu. Invasion of about 100 farms in Wum, leading to a sit-down strike. Displacement of 8 grazers in Wum. Damages are estimated at 13 million Francs.
2006-2008	1999	Invasion of 345 vegetable farms, 230 groundnut farms, and 132 Bambara groundnut farms
2009-2012	2521	Destruction of 689 maize farms in Fungom, invasion and displacement of 540 farmers in Wumand, and the killing of about 750 cows

Source: Adapted from Ngwoh, V. K. (2006). Cameroon: Endemic Agro-pastoral Conflicts in Menchum, *Conflict Studies Quarterly* (19); Fieldwork (2018).

Figure 2: Some Farmer Herder Conflicts in Menchum from 1990-2017



Source: Ntangti F. C., Angwafo E. T., Gam A. T., Fokeng R. M. Spatial. 2019. "Typology and Cause-effect Analysis of Recurrent Agro-pastoral Conflicts in Menchum, North West Cameroon." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*. 220.

Summarily, the main consequences of the incessant farmer-grazer conflicts in Donga Mantung and Menchum are loss of human and animal lives, crop damage, food insecurity, arrested economic growth, loss of mutual understanding between various land users, intimidation, and mistrust. The poser is: why the surging occurrence of farmer-grazer conflicts despite the devastating consequences? These conflicts were attributed to numerous factors to be examined in the following section.

Causes of Conflicts

Over time, many farming and herding communities in Menchum and Donga Mantung have developed interdependent relationships through reciprocity, exchange, and support, as elsewhere in Africa. In the case of Northern and Southern Ghana, Bukari, Sow, & Scheffran²⁸ portray the way farmers and herders epitomized peaceful co-existence and co-dependence based on mutually beneficial and symbiotic relations. These relations involved cross-cutting ties and “routinized processes of social interactions that were regularly repeated.” In several scenarios in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions, farmers and herders could be seen as cultural neighbors. Though ethnically, socially, and culturally distinct, they co-existed side by side in the same communities and engaged in many forms of economic and social interaction. Despite co-existence and cooperation, conflicts between them have arisen for over decades. We need to know why conflicts begin. Many explanations, as illustrated in Table 3, have been offered for herders-farmers conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon. The once symbiotic relationship between them became characterized by frequent conflicts over land contestations, depletion of natural resources, population growth, climate change, farm trespass/crop damage, desecration of water sources, cattle rustling, compensation irregularities, poor institutions, and bad governance of people and resources.

Table 3 presents the survey opinions of the respondents about the causes of farmer-herder conflicts in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions.

Table 3: Causes of the Conflicts

S/N	Variables	Frequency (Percentage)					Total %
		SA	A	UD	D	SD	
1	Poor regulatory frameworks for herding	117	82	0	1	0	100
		58.5%	41%	0%	0.5%	0%	
2	Environmental scarcity, including a shortage of grass and water	154	44	2	0	0	100
		77%	22%	1%	0%	0%	
3	Competition for resources such as land and water	162	38	0	0	0	100
		81%	19%	0%	0%	0%	
4	Poor management of resources	124	60	8	7	1	100
		62%	30%	4%	3.5%	0.5%	
5	Poor relations between herders and farmers' associations	152	47	0	1	0	100
		76%	23.5%	0%	0.5%	0%	
6	Ethnicisation and politicization of tensions between farmers and herders	152	47	0	1	0	100
		76%	23.5%	0%	0.5%	0%	
7	Lack of professionalism on the part of security agencies in handling the herders-farmers conflicts	37	159	2	2	0	100
		19%	79.5%	1%	1%	0%	
8	Poor management of herder-farmer conflicts, including failure to arrest and prosecute offenders	47	137	11	4	1	100
		24%	68.5%	5.5%	2%	0.5%	
9	Abuse of social media	9	33	142	14	2	100
		4.5%	16.5%	71%	7%	1%	
10	The rise and use of fake news	5	32	143	18	2	100
		2.5%	16%	71.5%	9%	1%	
11	Reporting and/or publication of hate speeches	10	57	114	18	1	100
		5%	28.5%	57%	9%	0.5%	
12	Encroachment on grazing routes by farmers	122	42	18	13	5	100
		61%	21%	9%	6.5%	2.5%	
13	The use of small arms and light weapons, such as the AK-47, by herders	93	21	56	21	9	100
		47%	10.5%	28%	10.5%	4.5%	

Source: Author’s Fieldwork, 2018.

Over time, many farming and herding communities in Menchum and Donga Mantung have developed interdependent relationships through reciprocity, exchange, and support, as elsewhere in Africa. In the case of Northern and Southern Ghana, Bukari, Sow, & Scheffran portray the way farmers and herders epitomized peaceful co-existence and co-dependence based on mutually beneficial and symbiotic relations.

Table 3 presents the different observations of respondents on the causes of farmer-herder conflicts. Taking poor regulatory frameworks for herding as a cause of herder-farmers conflicts, 58.5% strongly agreed, 41% agreed, and just 1 (0.5%) disagreed with this claim. Considering environmental scarcity, including the shortage of grass and water as a cause of these conflicts, most respondents, 77% strongly agreed, while 22% agreed, and 1% disagreed, that environmental degradation is the cause of farmer-herder conflicts in the study area. Competition for resources such as land and water was also recognized as a cause of the conflicts, with 81% of respondents strongly agreeing and 19% agreeing. In connection with poor management of resources, 62% of respondents strongly agreed, 30% agreed, 4% were undecided, 3.5% disagreed, and 0.5% strongly disagreed with this. Poor relations between herders' and farmers' associations, ethnicization, and politicization of tensions between farmers and herders had the same observations. That is, 76% strongly agreed, 23.5% agreed, and 0.5% disagreed. There were some cases where respondents were more undecided: abuse of social media, 71% reporting and/or publication of hate speeches 57% and the rise and use of fake news, 71.5% to 46% of the population strongly agrees that politicians, insurgents, Pan Ethnic Association, and Social Civil Organization's involvement in farmers-herders conflicts is of great importance.

Apart from the causal survey illustrated in Table 3, many studies have argued that environmental and climate change play a significant role in the escalation of conflicts between Fulani herdsman and the farming communities, not only in Cameroon but across many countries in Africa.²⁹

The argument is that environmental and climatic hazards have exacerbated conflicts between farmers and herders.³⁰ Discussing the farmer-herder crisis and food security in Nigeria, Adoji (2013) and Ofuoku and Isife (2009) corroboratively state that the major trigger of the farmers-herders crisis has been climate change induced by the deficiency of rainfall, impoverished pastures for their animals, and a lack of alternative strategies by the herdsman.³¹ Dosu also makes similar arguments about Ghana, claiming that unpredictable and unsustainable practices have intensified conflicts between farmers and migrant Fulani herders. However, other causes and triggers of herder-farmer conflicts in the study area are multidimensional and enduring. Respondents and Divisional Officials in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions of the North Region of Cameroon claim that unpredictable climate patterns and unsustainable practices have intensified conflicts between farmers and migrant Fulani herders. They identify climate change, the growth of agro-pastoralism, extensive sedentarization, the expansion of farming on pastures, the invasion of farmlands by cattle, blockage of stock routes and water points, freshwater scarcity, defecation streams and on roads by cattle, cattle theft, inadequate animal healthcare, and disease control, burning of rangelands, soil exhaustion, overgrazing on fallow lands and soil erosion, failure to construct cattle-proof fences, ineffective coping strategies, ethnic stereotyping, and the breakdown of conflict intervention mechanisms as some causes.³² Blench,³³ ascribed these conflicts to the increasing decimation of pastures by farmers and farmlands by the herders, occasioned by seasonal weather conditions that force pastoralists to move from the semi-arid areas in search of pastures down the plains and valleys, which results in competition over access to available land for crop cultivation and grazing pastures for cattle. Blench³⁴ attributes farmer-herder conflict to competition over natural resources and access to grazing and water resources and suggests that, because herders now own farms and farmers have herds, competition for the same natural resources has increased.

Other than attributing conflicts only to resource scarcity and encroachment, continual crop destruction has largely remained one of the main causes of conflicts and confrontations between herders and farmers. Unsupervised (uncontrolled) cattle move into farms and destroy crops, which farmers consider intentional acts. Cattle are usually handled by young, negligent Fulani “herd boys” who lack the physical strength to control the herds from encroaching into farmland. This affects farming, which is their main source of livelihood. Farmers claim that herders intentionally drive their cattle onto farmlands to graze food crops (especially maize, yams, and plantain farms). Herders, on the other hand, argued that spatial access to pasturelands and sources of water (rivers, streams, etc) is restricted. According to the herders, farmers grow crops along the pathways that lead to pastureland and next to water sources. This blocks access to water sources and cattle corridors and may cause the cattle to damage crops. Herders and cattle owners equally argued that they have always paid compensation for crop damage, yet farmers still attack them.

Other than attributing conflicts only to resource scarcity and encroachment, continual crop destruction has largely remained one of the main causes of conflicts and confrontations between herders and farmers.

Another factor responsible for farmer-herder conflict is the scarcity of farmland because of the ever-growing farming population, among other reasons. This has led to more conflicts due to encroachment on grazing land by farmers. The perceptions and discourses of farmers and herders are that resource scarcity, competition over the use of natural resources, especially

Arable land and water, environmental change, and increased transhumance of herders from the hills to the plains, especially during the dry season, are major drivers of severe manifestations of hostilities, social friction, and violent conflicts between farmers and herders.³⁵ Though resource and farmland scarcity provoked the escalation of farmer-herder conflicts, land was another crucial factor that aggravated the situation.

In Cameroon, unlike Burkina Faso, land is state property. The Mbororo Fulani, as well as the farmers, have no right over community land unless they are issued land certificates. Only 3% of rural land is registered. Unless one acquires a titled deed for it, a permit, or a concession, it cannot be claimed. Land tenure insecurity for Mbororo Fulani pastoralists is very high in the North West Region of Cameroon. This corroborates Brottem’s study in the Sudano-Sahelian zone of West and Central Africa,³⁶ where he observes that pastoralists, who often require only seasonal access to resources, are frequently accorded subordinate land rights compared to crop farmers. Consequently, land-use decisions are commonly made without their meaningful participation, effectively excluding them from the decision-making process. In Menchum and Donga Mantung divisions, a few pastoralists who have been able to acquire land for cattle rearing claim that the tenure was and continues to be insecure. The land acquired by them is continuously confiscated by local farmers who claim ownership rights to the lands, and in some communities, they are perceived as outsiders.

Though resource and farmland scarcity provoked the escalation of farmer-herder conflicts, land was another crucial factor that aggravated the situation.

Also, the killing of cattle either with guns or by spraying grass near grazing pastures with agrochemicals escalates conflicts between farmers and herders. Furthermore, the failure of the state to help tackle the conflict has led to the failure of communal peacebuilding mechanisms in the two Divisions. The herdsmen added that armed cattle rustlers attack them and, therefore, they need to protect themselves with sophisticated weapons. The use of small arms, light weapons, and AK-47s by herders triggered more conflicts in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions. On February 3, 2017, an enraged armed group of farmers in Truwa, Fru-Awa Sub-Division of Menchum Division, using rifles, killed 180 cattle and burnt the house of a grazer for masterminding the murder of a cocoa farmer. In February 2019, a group of men armed with AK-47s from Nigeria raided cattle in Esu.³⁷

In recent times, the Anglophone crisis, also known as the Ambazonian war of independence, has led to an upsurge in the animosities between the Fulani herders and local farmers in the North West Region of Cameroon. Like in central Mali and northern Burkina Faso where militant Islamist groups have instrumentalized divisions and inflamed grievances between herders and farmers and in Central African Republic (CAR) where rebel groups have placed themselves as defenders of pastoralist interests,³⁸ the rigidities and tensions between the farmers and herders in the North West Region of Cameroon have been aggravated by the Anglophone crisis that started as a low-scale insurgency in 2016. By 2017, the harmonious cohabitation and coexistence between the communities was reconfigured into violent hostilities that exacerbated conflict and heightened longstanding historic fissures between Fulani.

herders and farming communities. The Separatist groups attacked ethnic Fulani, accusing them of cooperating with the government by providing them with knowledge of their hideouts, as well as occasionally serving as their auxiliaries. The Separatists also accused the government of arming the Mbororo to sow discord between Anglophone communities. In response, the Mbororo quickly aligned themselves through formal and informal arrangements with the Cameroon government and formed their own paramilitary forces. Ethnic Fulani vigilantes assisted state security forces in attacks on civilians.³⁹

Thus, pastoralists and smallholder farmers in the North West Region of Cameroon, especially in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions, pay a high price for the political unrest, civil war, and the collapse of public order, similar to what has been reported from other African countries such as Chad, the Central African Republic,⁴⁰ and Nigeria.⁴¹ Having examined some of the underlying key factors embedded in the farmer-herder conflicts, the section below examines the official and unofficial responses to their management.

Management of Herders-Farmers Conflicts

The prolonged conflicts between cultivators and pastoralists, exacerbated by the Anglophone crisis, created hostile relationships with huge economic, social, and political consequences. Thus, numerous attempts were made to manage the crisis by state and non-state stakeholders. They made enormous efforts to eradicate the conflicts that arrested the momentum of development and added to the security crisis. In the North West Region of Cameroon, official (local and central government) and unofficial (non-governmental) strategies and responses were adopted to manage and curb herders-farmers conflicts as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Causes of the Conflicts

S/N	Variables <u>Responses</u>	Frequency (Percentage)					Total %
		SA	A	UD	D	SD	
1	Governments have not lived up to expectations	113	71	3	12	1	100
		56.5%	35.5%	1.5%	6%	0.5%	
2	Problems associated with a regulatory framework	65	134	0	1	0	100
		32.5%	67%	0%	0.5%	0%	
3	Problems associated with ethnicization and politicization	38	155	6	1	0	100
		19%	77.5%	3%	0.5%	0%	
4	Poor responses to early warning signals	61	138	1	0	0	100
		30.5%	69%	0.5%	0%	0%	
5	Failure to arrest and prosecute offenders	38	152	5	5	0	100
		19%	76%	2.5%	2.5%	0%	
6	Poor post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives	28	142	28	1	1	100
		14%	71%	14%	0.5%	0.5%	
7	Generally, poor responses by the government	105	87	2	6	0	100
		52.5%	43.5%	1%	3%	0%	
8	CSOs/NGOs have not lived up to expectations	49	130	5	13	3	100
		24.5%	65%	2.5%	6.5%	1.5%	

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2018.

Table 4 reveals the responses to conflict management. 56.5% (n=113) strongly agreed that the government at all levels has not lived up to expectations in handling the herder-farmer conflicts. This was followed by 35.5% (n=71) of those who supported (agreed) with the same observation. Some respondents, 6% (n=12) disagreed, 1.5% (n=3) were undecided, and 0.5% (n=1) strongly disagreed with this observation.

Some respondents, 6% (n=12) disagreed, 1.5% (n=3) were undecided, and 0.5% (n=1) strongly disagreed with this observation. Concerning problems associated with the regulatory framework, 67% (n=134) agreed, 32.5% (n=65) strongly agreed, while 0.5% (n=1) disagreed that management has been inadequate. A high proportion of the respondents, 77.5% (n=155), believed the problem of handling conflicts has been associated with ethnicization and politicization. This was followed by 19% (n=38) of those who strongly agreed, 3% (n=6) undecided, and 0.5% (n=1) for those who disagreed with this opinion. Moreover, poor responses to early warning signals have been observed as inadequate. This was confirmed by 69% (n=138), 30.5% (n=61) strongly agreed with this fact, and just 1 respondent was undecided. Failure to arrest and prosecute offenders was noted by 76% (n=152). This was followed by 19% (n=38) of those who supported the idea. At least 2.5% (n=5) each were for those who were undecided and disagreed with the assertion. Poor post-conflict peacebuilding has also been inadequate. A majority, 71% (n=142) of the respondents agreed with this option, while 14% (n=28) strongly agreed. Few of them, 14% (n=28), were undecided, and 0.5% (n=1) strongly disagreed and disagreed. Poor responses by the government to conflicts also led to poor management of conflicts in the study area. A high proportion of the respondents, 52.5% (n=105), strongly agreed with this, while 43.5% (n=87) confirmed (agreed). 3% (n=6) of respondents disagreed, and 1% (n=2) were undecided.

As to whether NGOs and CSOs lived up to expectations in conflict management, many of the respondents 65% (130) agreed that NGOs have remained weak in this process. This was followed by 24.5% (n=49) of those who strongly agreed, 6.5% (n=13) for those who disagreed, 2.5% (n=5) of undecided, and 1.5% (n=3) who strongly disagreed.

Apart from the findings from the survey, as revealed in Table 4, a review of sources reveals that the official regulatory framework to mitigate and resolve farmer-grazer conflicts in Cameroon is the Agro-Pastoral Commission. The prescribed administrative procedure of the Agro-Pastoral Commission is relatively complicated, and individuals frequently explore alternative legal avenues. Therefore, cases occasionally remain pending and unresolved, with the consequence that conflicts are perpetuated and reinforced. Going by the accounts of most respondents that participated in the interviews and focus group discussions in Menchum and Donga Mantung, the farmers have always fruitlessly reported to the police and Gendarmes about recalcitrant Fulani herdsman who refused to pay compensation for farms destroyed. The lack of faith and trust in the police and Gendarmerie forces due to high-level corruption was and is a major factor that encourages the Fulani herdsman to believe that they can go scot-free for any offense and transgression, thus generating room for opportunistic behavior that could lead to conflict.⁴² This is because farmers-herders state conflict mediators obstruct channels for farmers' legal redress by accepting payments from herders for decisions favoring the latter.⁴³ This worked against farmers' participation in the state court for conflict adjudication.

Local agricultural populations feel victimized by insurmountably corrupt adjudicative institutions that operate for the profit of civil servants and elite grazers.⁴⁴ The use of the courts was and is among the least preferred modes of conflict resolution, as the outcome is often lengthy and financially costly.

Available evidence from the field also suggests that the state actors have failed because they are not neutral conciliators. The local people, especially the farmers, have in mind that the state, in most situations, favors the Mbororo Fulani grazers and herders. And even if the state must intervene, they do so often after the conflict has happened and not beforehand. Thus, farmers and herders see state failure in terms of the lack of comprehensive laws on cattle rearing and adequate measures for preventing and resolving violent farmer-herder conflicts. Concerning the traditional institutions and rulers, we observed that they used to play a significant role in resolving some of the conflicts because they had power and influence in their chiefdoms as managers of common property (land and resources). In recent times, the powers have diminished, especially concerning issues about the Mbororo Fulani. They hardly comply with the orders and decisions of the traditional rulers. Gaye⁴⁵ observed this in Mali and Burkina Faso, where he pointed out that traditional and modern regulatory systems were increasingly inoperative, and the State could no longer ensure security. Community members and farmers see the corruption and connivance of local rulers to give out lands to the Pastoral Fulani to settle, and the refusal to act when herders commit crimes as the reason for the weakening power. Thus, Brockhaus concludes that there is much evidence of an institutional failure of traditional authorities across West Africa as far as herder-farmer conflict is concerned.

In the Sahel, Gaye points out that such a security vacuum led to the emergence of new actors, such as using CBOs, CSOs, and NGOs, and a new way of resolving conflicts. This is because they can provide epistemic, technical, and financial assistance to traditional and community leaders to strengthen mediation and non-violent conflict management skills. Despite the failure of traditional authorities, as in the case of Cameroon, Gaye⁴⁶ feels that since traditional and community leaders are often the first line of support called upon in times of violence, enabling them with conflict management skills can help de-escalate conflicts when they emerge. This conforms to the findings of Adebayo and Olaniyi⁴⁷, and Nyong and Fiki,⁴⁸ that informal institutions and authorities were vital in the mediation of conflict and were veritable tools in conflict resolution and management in the Savanna areas of Oyo State and Northern Nigeria. These institutions, to them, are responsible, more committed, and most appropriate for local options and broad-based, effective conflict management initiatives.

Dimelu, Salifu & Igbokwe,⁴⁹ in the same vein, identified community development committees and payment of compensation as key conflict management mechanisms in farmer-herder conflicts in the Central Agricultural Zone of Delta State.

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However, they cautioned that poor financial assistance from the communities, the state, as well as a lack of constitutional power, hinders the effectiveness and sustainability of their efforts. Optimistically, they recommend motivations and constitutional support to rural institutions engaged in the governance of conflict to foster dedication and liability. Cabot ⁵⁰ adds the political factors, and after forty years of research on three West African countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana, she believes that they can reduce agro-pastoral conflicts if a participative process is implemented in a truly inclusive manner by putting in place an appropriate political and institutional framework.

In recent decades, both farmers and grazers/herders interviewed in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions identified the role of non-state actors, especially the NGOs (both national and international), as the main agents that could facilitate a reduction of conflicts between them and ameliorate their relationships. They believe that NGOs are better at protecting their interests, though most of them are still embryonic and weak. The main preoccupation of the NGOs, as observed in the field, is to support and empower farmers and herders/grazers to see the need for dialogue to discuss their grievances and propose solutions.

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For instance, the Mbororo Cultural and Development Organisation (MBOSCUDA), Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Heifer International (HPI), NOWEFOR (The North West Farmers Organisation), Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD), Forest and Agroforestry Promoters (FAP), Ozone Friendly People (OFP), the Grassroots Local Capacity Builder (G-LCB), Community Human Rights and Advocacy Centre (CHRAC) and Rural Development Consultants (RDC) use bottom-up peace approach/hybrid peace/human rights-based approach with community volunteers including the youth to produce fusion peace by enhancing collaborative sustainable management of natural resources for the benefit of those living in and around protected areas, pastoralist communities and transhumance areas. They also improve stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of the laws and regulations governing the use and management of natural resources in Cameroon, as well as improve stakeholders' capacities to manage natural resources more harmoniously and beneficially.

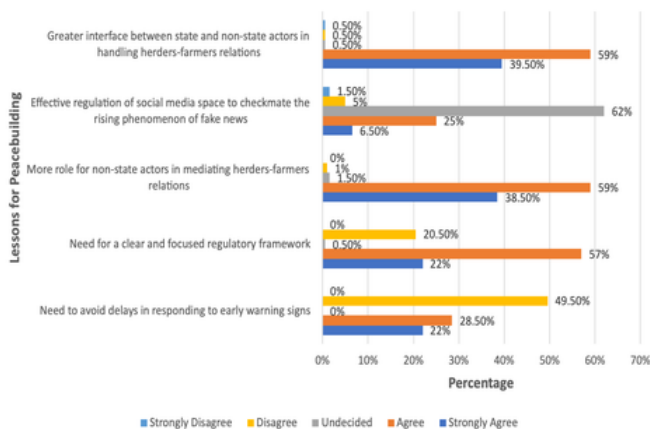
Fundamentally, NGOs promote dialogue between the stakeholders of pastoral resources by setting up Dialogue Platforms (DPs) for amicable solutions to the conflict. For instance, reparations, alliance farming, improved pasture, and improved water management implemented by these NGOs have effectively led to negotiated and shared use of agro-pastoral resources and more peaceful cohabitation between farmers and herders. The focus group discussions and interviews revealed that the mutually beneficial alliances and amicable settlement of disputes by non-state actors have been embraced by herders and grazers. People were also asked about their preferred modes of conflict resolution.

Whilst amicable settlement is still a preferred course of action, the Agro-pastoral Commission was preferred by only very few respondents, while the Dialogue Platforms were preferred by more respondents. This suggests that there is considerable scope for setting up more Dialogue Platforms and that if they were set up, they would be used by large numbers of people. These were practical experiences that could be of interest to public policies and could provide useful information for peacebuilding, as well as serve as actionable recommendations for resolving farmer-herder conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon.

Lessons for Peacebuilding

Multiple constructive conflict initiatives and short-term or long-term peacebuilding lessons for addressing the farmer-herder conflicts in Menchum and Donga Mantung Divisions emerged from the findings of the study. These lessons are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Management of Herder Farmer Conflicts and Responses



Source: Author’s Fieldwork, 2018.

Figure 3 presents the varied lessons learned for peacebuilding from previous conflict resolution efforts. Firstly, stakeholders have realized that there is a need to avoid delays in responding to early warning signs. Based on this, 49.5% (n= 99) of respondents disagreed with this as a factor for peacebuilding. This was followed by those who agreed 28.5% (n=57) and strongly agreed by 22% (n=44) that this may help prevent conflicts. Concerning the need for clear and focused regulatory frameworks, 57% (n=114) agreed, 22% (n=44) strongly agreed, 20.5% (n=41) disagreed, and 0.5% (n=1) undecided. In the aspect of a more role for non-state actors in mediating herders-farmers relations, a high proportion 59% (n=118), agreed, 38.5% (n=77) strongly agreed, 1.5% (n=3) undecided, and 1% (n=2) disagreed. With regards to the effective regulation of social media space to checkmate the rising phenomenon of fake news, a high proportion 62% (n=124) were undecided, 25% (n=50) agreed, 6.5% (n=13) strongly agreed, 5% (n=10) disagreed, and 1.5% (n=3) strongly disagreed. Furthermore, many respondents, 59% (n=118), agreed that there should be a greater interface between state and non-state actors in handling herder-farmer relations. This was followed by those who strongly agreed 39.5% (n=79). At least 0.5% (n=1) each for undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree.

From surveys to field observation and interviews, it is indicative that the Agro-pastoral Commission and the judiciary are the legal entities mandated to resolve herder-farmers conflicts and examine the criminal acts resulting from such conflicts. This process is often costly to the disputing parties and can be ineffective. The farmers, herders, and other stakeholders advocate quick and effective intervention from state authorities in responding to early warning signs of the herder-farmer problem since the consequences are always very grievous.

For this to happen, there is, therefore, the need for the Agro-pastoral Commission to have a clear and focused bottom-up regulatory framework peace approach to resolve conflicts. Most often, non-state actors are not included in conflict mediation at the initial stage. An overwhelming majority of respondents interviewed testified that non-state actors helped them participate in conflict resolution. There is a dire need for more roles for non-state actors in mediating herder-farmer relations. This is because the non-state actors are more responsive and apply peace fusion and inclusive strategies intended to embolden peace from within, as well as avert frustration and aggression to generate sustainable peace. They are closer to conflict victims (farmers/herders) and know the root causes in many instances. Thus, there is a need for a greater interface between state and non-state actors to coalesce and aggregate efforts in handling herder-farmer relations in the conflict zones. The interviews and focus group discussions also revealed that many more grazers have been trained in improved pasture management techniques. The training was offered by the Ministry of Livestock and NGOs. Two carbohydrate-rich grass varieties mostly grown include Bracharia and Guatemala. There are also Stylosanthes (legume) that grow together with Bracharia in some areas of the Divisions. An increasing proportion of grazers adopt the use of improved pasture as an alternative to providing cattle feed. They suggest that good governance of rangeland to reduce rangeland scarcity and the encouragement of zero grazing rather than extensive grazing will solve the problem of trespass and encroachment into grazing and farmlands.

There is a dire need for more roles for non-state actors in mediating herder-farmer relations.

Another recommendation was a synthesis of views from focus group discussions. A good number of respondents observed and suggested the need for economic diversification across ethnic-occupational groups to improve farmer-herder relations. As the Divisional Officers explained, herders who are accustomed to cultivating farms are sensitized to crop damage. Concurrently, farmers who rear cattle are aware of the practical difficulties entailed in cattle herding.

Comprehensive knowledge of both economic systems and a better understanding of each other's predicaments are thus thought to enhance mutual sympathy, empathy, and cooperation.

Further analysis on sustainable peacebuilding shows that an increasing proportion of parties in conflict opted for and preferred an amicable settlement. Of those who had used the Dialogue Platforms in conflict resolution, a high proportion believe it is a more effective mediation method than the farmer-grazer commission. The number that used the Dialogue Platforms as their first source of help was on the increase. This suggests that there is a considerable need for setting up more Dialogue Platforms and that if they were set up, they would be used by large numbers of people. Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin reveal that such platforms were already functioning in Adamawa, Borno, Nasarawa, Kaduna, and Plateau states and served as interactive and solutions-oriented platforms for early warning and early response. Haruna Umaru, a MBOSCUDA trained paralegal extension officer for Wum, stated, "I feel happy because the Dialogue Platform is improving relations, there is peace, and it is known all over Wum. "Now when I sleep, I sleep well" (Interview with Umaru Haruna, September 2018).

Another interviewee, Anthony Ndi, a farmer in Nkambe aged 80, noted:

"I know that the administration has appointed a commission to investigate farmer-herder problems, but to me, it seems they are not handling the problem very well. Non-governmental Organizations are trying their best. I know of MBOSCUA Dialogue Platforms. They are made up of farmers and herders, and they seem to be solving conflicts. This is because, since its creation, we have had a reasonable level of understanding between the farmers and the herders."

Also, the introduction of alliance farming promotes the shared and sustainable use of natural resources like land, water, pasture, and cattle manure by pastoralists and subsistent crop farmers. This system has improved the production and productivity of both cattle and crops, thereby reducing poverty. Also, alliance farming increases soil fertility using organic manure. As early as the late 1990s, Hussein, Sumberg & Seddon,⁵¹ writing on arid Africa pointed out that non-violent outcomes in the management of farmer herder conflict resulted from the avoidance strategies whereby herder groups migrated or retreated from areas of high competition with farmers; diversified livelihoods to cope with increasing pressure, adapted customary institutions to manage local natural resource use; or alliances between local herders and farmers to counter resource use and extraction by actors external to the local area. Such practices enhanced agro-biodiversity management.

Another coping mechanism involves the clear distinction between grazing and farmland. The reduction of herd size and fencing by herdsman are some of the mitigation practices. For instance, the building of fences and instituting controlled rotational grazing in the Tugi community in the NW region of Cameroon.⁵²

Furthermore, the integration of animals, crops, and trees (agro-silvopastoral system) is a sustainable way for land use and diversification of farm produce, hence improvement in food security and alleviating poverty.⁵³

Conclusion

Natural resource conflict, particularly between farmers and pastoralists, is widespread in the North West Region of Cameroon. While it is difficult to establish a single explanatory variable responsible for farmer-herder conflicts, it is apparent that political, social, and environmental factors act in tandem to perpetuate them. The study also discussed the mechanisms used by the various actors and institutions to resolve and manage conflict. Conflict has the potential to affect the livelihoods of both the herders and the farmers. The result is death, displacement, and the destruction of properties. The reasons that might account for the failure to resolve farmer-herder conflicts include the history, nature, and causes of the conflict; the goals and conduct of the disputants; and the mechanisms, style, and methods used to resolve and manage them. Those interviewed on hostilities and management of conflicts agree that, of all the efforts put in place, healing and reconciliation were the least often met. In these situations, violence, either latent or manifest, has become the status quo, and any lasting improvement can only come through changing the dynamics underlying this status quo. The inability of state/official actors to amicably resolve conflicts led to the adoption of alternative conflict resolution strategies by non-state actors. Through local-level mechanisms, mutually beneficial alliances are gradually being embraced by farmers and herders/grazers. This has reduced, though infinitesimally, the incidence and severity of conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders through dialogue and collaboration. This corroborates the view of some respondents that the number and severity of conflicts have reduced.

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