

Sustainable Development Initiatives: Making or Marring the Livelihood of the Pygmies of Cameroon

Lum Mafor Shaleen Ambe, Robert Mbe Akoko

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences,
University of Buea, South West Region, Cameroon, Central Africa

ABSTRACT

Pygmies are hunter-gathers who are marginalized from political, economic and social life of Cameroon despite development efforts. This study investigates the implication of poverty reduction strategies initiated by the government of Cameroon and other stakeholders in line with the [Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1&7] on the livelihood of the Pygmies. In order to provide context for this study, empirical literature review took a central stage in elaborating on relevant and related concepts and theories therefore identifying gaps. Conflict theory by Karl Marx was employed to give a deeper understanding and meaning to the study. Findings show that; poor definition of 'Pygmies'; divergence in development expectations and integration methods; difficulty with access to education, forest resources, land ownership and care in modern healthcare institutions explain the social exclusion in the Pygmy communities. Ethnographic approach was used for data collection, data which was classified homogeneously into themes. Content analysis technique was used to analyze the data collected. Findings also show that the association of these factors with poverty and poor health of 'Pygmies': they are more vulnerable to disease (malnutrition, diarrhea, gastritis, malaria, typhoid and intestinal infections). 'Pygmy' people are most often left out of decision making processes that concern them directly.

The failure of these projects is due to the clash between global and local perspectives and interests over the Western definition of develop communities, as well as the non-recognition of the relationships between hunter-gatherers and farmers that is based on cultural, historical and political ecology. Development has thus, become a process which mars the livelihood of the Pygmies rather than making it. This study therefore postulates that effective and adequate integration of 'Pygmies' into society taking into account their cultural peculiarities and identity; reduction of disparities and improvement of their health should be of major concern to the state and policy makers.

KEYWORDS: *Pygmies, Development, Livelihood Sustainable development, Implications, Poverty reduction strategies, coping strategies*

INTRODUCTION

According to Biesbrouck (1999), the Central African rainforest is home to several groups of hunter-gatherers generally called 'Pygmies' who have adopted a nomadic lifestyle. Characterized by their small stature, pygmies are predominantly members of hunter-gatherer communities living in equatorial rainforest across Central Africa. Pygmies are forest dwellers who depend on an intimate symbiosis with their environment. They traditionally live deep in the woods, often in remote camps located several days' walk from any road or village. Many of them have historically had little interaction with wider society

with self-sufficient and subsistence livelihoods. Their

livelihood, medicinal practices and culture depend entirely on the forest Abega (1998:29). Apart from the fact that these groups all maintain a close relationship with the rainforest environment, persecution and appalling poverty seem to be their biggest challenge. They are facing serious threats from attempts by governments, national and international non-governmental organizations and missionary groups to 'modernize' them. Although these diverse networks of development actors often have conflicting aims and interests, they converge on

How to cite this paper: Lum Mafor Shaleen Ambe | Robert Mbe Akoko "Sustainable Development Initiatives: Making or Marring the Livelihood of the Pygmies of Cameroon" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-6 | Issue-7, December 2022, pp.72-91, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd52274.pdf



IJTSRD52274

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the modernist development paradigm that they use. This paternalistic approach is guided by claims to have a better knowledge of the development problems of indigenous groups like the Pygmies and more suitable solutions than those of these indigenous peoples themselves. Wesner (1988:51), opines that development in this context can be equated to “the sublimation of traditional culture into a global way of thinking”. The result has instead been the exclusion, disarticulation and impoverishment of these indigenous Pygmies. They are suffering from the consequences of national policies and land tenure laws that do not take their cultural specificities into account. Hitchcock and Holm (1993) notes that “external domination of hunter-gatherer groups is increasingly structured by the bureaucratic state rather than the market”. The state establishes settlement schemes, social services, land tenure laws, and political representation policies all of which influences the lives of hunter-gatherers. Hewlett (2000:380), affirms that while the market continues to dramatically influence the lives of hunter-gatherers, “Pygmies”, especially international logging interests, (petroleum exploitation) and local demands for bush meat, the role of the bureaucratic state is rapidly increasing.

According to Downing (1999:1), forty-three Bakola Pygmy settlements are located within 2 kilometres of the proposed pipeline easement and on/near its access road Pemunta (2013:4), affirms that the area occupied by the Pygmies in Cameroon is the site of biodiversity projects such as the Dja Biodiversity Reserve, Lake Lobéké National Park, Boumba Beck National Park, Dzanga-Ndoki National Park and the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project passes through their territory. These development projects alongside sedentarisation, have negatively affected the Pygmies in various ways, leading to the erasure of their socio-economic and political livelihoods. This study will enable us to understand whether initiatives undertaken by the Government and its Partners to improve on the Pygmies ties with their aspiration and really impact on their livelihood and environmental sustainability such that more adequate and adapted strategies can be put in place to help this communities. As we reach the completion point of the MDG by the end of 2015 what lessons and conclusions can be drawn from such development projects that will enable a proper planning to avoid the pitfalls as we usher in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

PROBLEMS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite efforts made both by the government, international and national organizations to help the Pygmies in improving on their socio-political-economic life and towards attaining sustainable development, no matter these initiatives, Pygmies are still facing difficulties in meeting livelihood and their persistence in keeping their cultural values. This study will fill the gap in information and set out to answer the following questions. This study therefore seeks to appraise the livelihood of Pygmies and describe mechanisms traditionally used by Pygmies to meet livelihoods, evaluate initiatives undertaken to improve their livelihoods and environmental sustainability, also to analyze the perceptions and indicators of poverty from the indigenous people own perspectives and identify Pygmies preference of development. This study therefore seeks to provide answers to the following research questions: To what extent do Pygmies meet livelihood in imposed developmental projects? Are some of these projects streamlined to fight poverty among the Baka and Bagyeli Pygmies? What are the implications of these development initiatives on the livelihood of the people? Have some of these projects transformed their lives culturally, socio-economically and What are the measures put in place to maintain their natural ecosystem and biodiversity?

The Study Area

The Ocean Division is amongst the four Divisions of the South Region of Cameroon. This division covers an area of 11,280km² with its head quarter being Kribi. Campo is one of the nine subdivisions of this area which lies between Longitude 2022’N 9049’E and Latitude 2.3670N 9.8170E. This coastal plain is undulating with altitudes ranging between 0 to 600m above sea level. Further away from the coast, the hinterland is made up of a low plateau. The mean annual rainfall is about 3000mm, and the mean annual temperature is about 27°C. It has equatorial climate with alternating wet and dry seasons and a vegetation of the equatorial forest. (Cameroon National Statistics Institute (CNSI): 2006). This coastal climate is influenced by the meteorological equator, which is the meeting point between the anticyclones of Azores (north Atlantic) and that of Saint Helen (south Atlantic). The combine effects of the convergence of the tropical oceanic low pressure zone and the inter tropical front within result in the type of climate found in this area, where rainfall along the coast increases from the south to the north, with rainfall of about 3000mm in Kribi, 4000mm in Douala, and about 11000mm in Debundscha, long rainy seasons of 8months and a dry season from November to February (IRAD:2001). The forest in this area is wet, green Atlantic forests which have

different stages made up of trees, shrubs and grass. The Ocean Division has a surface area of about 11,280km² and a population of about 133,062 inhabitants, with a population density of 8 persons per km², less than the national average of 32 persons per km² (CNSI: 2006). The Ocean Division is further divided into 9 subdivisions; Akom II, Bipindi, Campo, Kribi Urban, Kribi Rural, Lokondje, Lolodorf, Mvengue and Niete. And these subdivisions are further divided into villages. The study area was focused around Campo precisely in the Bagyeli Pygmy communities of Akak and Nkoleon. These communities are about 40km from Campo town. Campo is about 70km from the town of Kribi. Campo has a population of about 60,000 inhabitants (CNSI: 2006). It is a beach resort and sea port in Cameroon, lying on the Gulf of Guinea coast, at the mouth of the Kienke River. It services sea traffic in the Gulf of Guinea and also lies near the terminus of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline. Many ethnic groups live in the Ocean Division but they are mostly categorized under the leading traditional lifestyle of the Pygmies and the Bantus. These groups are culturally distinctive and have their own communities.

On the other hand Upper Nyong is amongst the four Divisions of the East Region of Cameroon. It covers an area of about 36,384km² with its capital in Abong-Mbang. The Upper Nyong Division is further divided into 14 subdivisions; Abong-Mbang, Angossas, Atok, Dimako, Doumaintng, Doumé, Lomié, Mboma, Messmena, Messok, Mindourou, Ngoyla, Nguemendouka, and Somalomo. And these subdivisions are further divided into villages. Lomié was the study area which lies between Latitudes 3010'N13037'E and Longitudes 3.1670 N 13.6170E. Lomié is situated in the immediate periphery of the Dja Faunal Reserve. It is about 125km from Abong-Mbang. It is one of Cameroons UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It is home to several Baka Pygmy settlements. But for the purpose of this study the Pygmy communities of Bosquet and Nomedjoh were selected. These communities are about 30km from the town of Lomié. These areas are inaccessible due to the poor infrastructure, muddy roads and heavy frequent rains. It's a two day drive from the capital Yaounde. A good four-wheel drive vehicle is an absolute necessity here. Unbelievably, and despite the incredibly urgent need for help, not a single humanitarian organization is present in this region, to support the Baka. We did find a single a Catholic mission – two aging nuns who were doing everything they could with the little they had.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative field research approach, applying an ethnographic design. Qualitative interviews were considered because most appropriate because of the exploratory nature of the issues under discussion. The research agenda therefore calls for descriptive analytical discussion. The qualitative research method was deemed important because it gave the opportunity for the informants to emphasis their personal experiences and viewpoints without necessarily being limited through structured questions. As an empowering methodology it allowed the Pygmies to speak for themselves and their perspectives took central stage. This method also made it possible for this researcher to make interpretations of quantified data and also focus on links among a large number of attributes across relatively few cases. Both primary and secondary sources of data provided a valid and reliable data base to measure, analyze and comprehend the different ways by which developmental initiatives and interventions have impacted on the Baka and Bagyeli Pygmies.

CONFLICT THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

This work has partly developed theoretical insights from Karl Marx's conflict theory of social change as cited by Saran (1963). Marx views society as always being in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Relating this theory to this study, development projects initiated by the government of Cameroon sometimes results to conflict between the development stakeholders and the local people whose socio-economic livelihood is always distorted in the course of such investments. Such conflicts range from; conflicts over land use, compensations, distribution of benefits generated by the project (roads, schools, health centers), challenges over the investors right to be on the land. For example conflict in Cameroon between the Pygmies and development stakeholders over the construction of the Chad Cameroon pipeline project, conflicts between loggers and Pygmies deforestation and conflicts between the state and Pygmies over protected areas.

POPULATION SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The target population under study comprised of resident community members of selected Pygmy villages specifically heads of households, development stake holders such as representatives of NGO's and Government officials working with Pygmies (Forest Conservators, Divisional Officers, Commissioner of Police and Chief of Social Affairs). A total of six communities constituted the research matrix in the Baka community (Bosquet, and Nomedjoh) of the East Region of Cameroon and the

Bagyeli community (Akak, and Nkoleon). These four communities under study were selected using a purposive sampling method. Proximity and accessibility to affected sites were cardinal criteria for selected study sites. Geographical sampling was purposive because the study targets essentially Pygmies Communities exclusively in the East and South Regions of Cameroon. Purposive snow-ball random sampling was used to select community members participated in the study targeting household heads with no gender bias. However key informants comprised government administrators of the study area and officials of NGOs involved in development projects. At community level, key informants essentially involved community heads/local leaders and others deemed necessary for the study. Researcher moved from community to community and from household to household. Snowball technique was used to select informants.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Key-informant-In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, group discussions, participant observation, observation and life stories were adopted for this study. Questions were designed in English language and translated in to French language. At field, a local translator was employed who was bilingual (French and English), and also who could speak and understand the local languages of the people (Baka language). All interviews were digitally recorded with permission from the participants. This was to ensure that all information was adequately represented. Rubin and Rubin (1995:26) explain that recording interviews on audiotape helps get the material down in an accurate and retrievable form. Some interviewees also appreciate being recorded because they see the tape as a symbol of ability to get their message out accurately. Recorded interviews were transcribed and typed for proper analysis. Data was analyzed using basic qualitative tools like percentages and tabulations to analyze, interpret and describe data.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Instruments used included interview guides, observation check list, pens, pencils, note (log) books, digital cameras and tape recorders with smart phones, flash disc, laptops, and diaries for noting down daily activities and a power bank.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. To facilitate the collection of primary data and gather detailed information the instruments were designed to generate data on the following sub-themes (livelihood sources/patterns, implication of developmental projects on livelihood, community

participation in projects and behavior, demography of respondents among others). The research techniques implemented in this study were; Resource persons included indigenous and non-indigenous, conducted on the basis of a guide that was prepared in advance although relevant questions were ask during probing. Key informants comprised government administrators of the study area and officials of NGOs (representatives of NGOs working with the indigenous populations and organizations that are representative of indigenous peoples). At community level, key informants essentially involved, chiefs and heads of households (in this regard, particular attention was paid to indigenous adult men, adult women and the young). A Bantu native was hired to do interpretations and to ease the work of the researcher. It was very necessary using a Bantu because Pygmies are do shy away from non-community members and persons they do not identify with. The presence of the Bantu enhanced the meeting of the researcher and the Pygmies and there by paving and facilitating the way forward for data collection. Community consultations were undertaken to the extent possible in indigenous languages. In cases where the resource person couldn't speak the indigenous language in question, a translator was employed for the working sessions. The objectives and importance of the study was explained to the targeted respondents (groups). The consent of the respondent was secured by the researcher. The letter of authorization was presented at each meeting and a copy handed to the group head. Respondents also allowed for recording which was done with the use of a smart phone and a digital recorder as well as the taking of photos which made them very happy. Interviews were conducted in English, French, Baka languages depending on the wish of the respondents. Each interview estimated took about at least 15 to 40minutes. Where the respondents expressed some doubts on the intention of the research, the researcher presented the letter of authorization and explained the objectives of the research. Approximately 5 interviews were carried out per day with at least 2 key informants and group interviews per community. Interviews were simultaneously translated, recorded and subsequently transcribed to facilitate data entry and analysis.

Field notes on discussions were also taken to facilitate data transcription. This measure was to guard against an impromptu failure by the data recording device used. Data transcription was effected by the end of the day's work, which comprised of successfully holding the three group discussions with the different categories of respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS

After data collection, the next major challenge according to Patton (2002:432) of qualitative analysis is to make sense of the massive amounts of data collected. Being an exploratory study, the bulk of data collected on selected themes is qualitative. This researcher transcribed the data brought from the field. Transcription was done word for word exactly so as to get the actual views and perceptions of the

respondents. Data was classified into themes, analyzed and put into tables. To analyze the data therefore, entails relating the “context” of the study to the “texts” which helped to answer the research questions and give meaning to the study. This justifies the use of basic qualitative tools like percentages and tabulations to analyze, interpret and describe the data.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings and discussions are according to the specific objectives, the socio-demographic characteristics and distribution of informants by locality. It goes on to present the distribution of informants by themes such as expressed needs, positive and negative economic impacts, positive and negative environmental impacts, positive and negative health impacts as well as the coping strategies and challenges faced by Pygmies.

Table 1 shows distribution of respondents by gender, age and level of education

Gender	Freq N=11	%	Age	Freq N=7	%	Level of Education	Freq N=9	%
Female	5	45.00%	25 – 35	3	42.6%	Not attended school	1	11.1%
Male	6	55.00%	36 – 45	2	28.6%	Primary	2	22.2%
			46 – 55	2	28.6%	Secondary	1	11.1%
						High school	1	11.1%
						University	4	44.4%
	11	100		7	100		9	100

From the table above it is observed that gender was respected because there is no great gender disparity between the men and the women as the researcher purposely chose the respondents for convenience to suit this work. Which now indicates that development does not respect gender, the needs of the female and those of male are not different. What is affecting the woman is also affecting the man. Respondents comprised men, women and youths in the selected Pygmy settlements surrounded by developmental projects. Table 1 reveals that 55% of the respondents were male opposed to 45% of female.

More than half of the respondents had not had any formal education especially in the focus group and group interviews. Three (03) out of (04) informants who were interviewed separately had at least been to school. Those who reported to have gone to school did not obtain any end of course certificates because they never completed. For those who were privileged to have a taste of basic primary education most of them had only a few years of schooling and subsequently abandoned school for other activities that constituted their traditional routine life of hunting and gathering for survival. This probably accounts for the very low literacy rates among indigenous Pygmy people of Cameroon.

In addition to that, the government owned educational establishments are usually located outside Pygmy settlements. The lone school situated within the Pygmy community of Lomie is the St. Kizito Primary School Bosquet is owned by an NGO, yet the Pygmies reluctantly go to school because they are unable to afford the token of which ranges from 4500 to 5000 FCFA they have been asked to pay as compensation the teachers.

Discussions in the focus group revealed that the prevalent problem of discrimination against Pygmy children discourage them from attending primary schools which most of the time are located in Bantu villages. Groups reported recurrent practice such as intimidation against Pygmy. Words such as ‘*school was not meant for you, return to the forest*’ were expressed by the groups to qualify and describe the issues of Pygmy children’s educational situation.

These statements are further justified by a statement made by informant No.03 when he jokingly questioned this researcher during his interview session asking, ‘*why are you interested in studying these animals?*’ Though he referred to the Pygmies as animals, he stated that any case brought by two parties involving a Pygmy, he immediately goes to the scene to investigate the problem. To ensure their security and exploitation by development actors, he goes on regular patrols to the pygmy communities. One of the government officials respondent no. 06 mentioned that;

“...we are operating in this sector in two ways. First through the education and sensitization of parents to register their children in school because that is the problem, firstly, we sensitize the parents because from now to June, they are to go to the forest to gather or collect nut. Because if not, they do not even think of coming back, some even remain there and we have to force them or bring them out by force. That is why we educate them to enter the forest do whatever they are doing and think of coming back to the village especially at the end of August so that their children can be enrolled. Secondly we endeavor to pay the school fees. Thirdly we pay their pocket allowance for their up keep. Honestly for the payment of school fees, this has not yet been done by the government nor the PNDP”



A Baka Pygmy Family at Moange le Bosquet

Source: Fieldwork, 2016.

For all the six communities studied, environmental resources (forest, water and land) were reported as being their most important resources in the studied localities as indicated by all the 11 persons who received in-depth interviews and all the participants in both the focus group discussion and group interviews. In terms of degree of preference, the forest and land was considered the most important and valuable community natural resources. Groups indicated that the forest provided fruits, wildlife, honey, medicine (tree barks and leaves), fuel wood, edible fruits and nuts like ‘mbalaka, njansang, contry onions and kok’, vegetable such as *eru* what they commonly call ‘kok’ which are often bought by Nigerians.

Negative effects of Developmental projects

It is often said that when development comes by, people do change their lifestyle to adapt to the changes that have come to them. Developmental projects always present aspects that might have affected the lifestyle of the Pygmies. Some groups reported that the Forest Reserve in Campo whose main aim is to protect the wildlife has negatively influenced their lives. In the Akak community in Campo, the groups stated that;

“We are not seeing anything good from it. That is a way to keep elephants near us. That is because of the Fauna that we are suffering here. They are not giving us money. That park does not serve us in any way because where we are sitting, elephants leave the Park and come and destroy our crops. We are suffering just because of the park...”

Unfortunately, little has been done in the name of development that can significantly affect their lifestyles. Most of the changes that have taken place on the Pygmies have been through the efforts of international organizations, NGOs such as PLAN Cameroon (which is committed to ensuring a quality primary education for all children and has since 1996 worked extensively in partnership with the marginalized Baka tribe in Eastern Cameroon) and other Missionary Organizations, and their contacts with the Bantu. However, some few Pygmies have been fortunate to receive compensation from development actors especially from loggers but most of them reported

that money is usually not paid to them directly and compensation most of the time is usually in kind. Even with the water project in the Bosquet most of them complained that they were not recruited to work on the water project.

Nonetheless we think that developmental projects aimed at improving Pygmy livelihoods have been able to change the personal identity of some Pygmies. By this we mean that those Pygmies who received compensation have been able to change from a Baka at one point in time; living in a hut constructed with leaves, to the same Baka at another time living in a house with zinc roof. But socially as a group, they are still widely identified as Pygmies because they still maintain their activities and practices. One of them said that though he works in the clinic he still goes to visit his people from time to time in the forest.

‘...before the introduction of loggers (timber exploiter), when you went out to go hunt, you did not make up to kilometers without returning with an animal but today you cover great distances and sometimes return with nothing even a rat mole. As you know the Pygmies live by eating bushmeat, but today we have become like the Bantus eating vegetable. We are now like animals eating grass’

Respondents also indicated that the incurred changes in the availability of wildlife and edible fruits have changed their respective nutritional habits and consumption pattern because they have been given limited forest land to work on.

Most ‘Pygmy’ villages have been destroyed by loggers as there new roads have been constructed to ease the exploitation, extraction and transportation of timber from the forest to ports. The hooting sounds of this heavy duty trucks scares animals away which these local people depend on for their nutritional value. Currently camps are being built to relocate this local people, but this whole idea is not appreciated by the ‘Pygmies’ because they have been sent away from their traditional huts and their natural habitats have been destroyed with most of them not being compensated by logging companies nor by the government.

Negative Health Impacts



Findings also reveal the negative health impact of developmental projects of ‘Pygmy’ people. The deprivation of the local people from their forest life has caused most of them to experience half the life expectancy when compared with other Cameroonians, and that they are at the verge of extinction from preventable diseases. Sexually transmissible diseases including AIDS have not spared the Pygmies. This is justified by the gradual opening of the Pygmies’ habitat to “modernity” and the superstitious believe that having sex with a Pygmy provides therapy against HIV/AIDS. This situation is compounded by lack of concerted measures to provide medical care to diagnosed HIV patients. And the cost of treatment with antiretroviral drugs is certainly not

within the reach of the Pygmies who lack the financial means. They frequently suffer from common treatable health issues such as malaria, diarrhea, worms, cough, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Children, women and young girls are the most vulnerable groups. During discussions with the groups, the participants mentioned that mortality rates of Pygmy children are high. This is confirmed by the statement made by respondent No. 08;

“They have buried so many children here just because they complain that they don’t have money. I think it is their culture, because a child will be sick, they will not make efforts to bring the child to the hospital. I am telling you that medicine is almost free. We give them medicine from 200 to 500frs only just to help them but you will not see them.”

This justifies the fact that development initiatives intended to improve the livelihood of the Pygmies is instead impacting negatively and hence marring on the health of the Pygmy women and children’s and the health of Pygmy communities in general. Death tolls have increased because local people no longer have access to the vast forest they inherited from their ancestors. The modern medicine introduced to them is not their culture, they believe in using backs of trees, leaves and other wild plants. They do not believe in hospitalization and the payment of bills because they are used to getting their stuffs naturally. Pygmy economies are basically trade-by-barter, they have only been introduced into the currency system which doesn’t abide with them.

Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts

A greater majority of the Pygmies expressed that they have problem of land ownership within their communities, they mentioned *‘les baka ont vraiment les difficultes pour s’installés’*. Problem of land ownership among the Pygmies is a call for concern because of their traditional practices. As nomads, they do not have a fixed settlement. They require much land for their hunting and gathering activities. Some respondents mentioned that Baka Pygmies are afraid of death. This statement is confirmed by some groups that *“...if one Baka dies in one locality, all of them decamp, relocate to another place for fear of death...”*

With this tradition it is important that sufficient land be allocated to them so that their cultures and traditions can be practiced. Development actors and stakeholders do not involve Pygmy people when taking decisions that concern them directly. This statement is confirmed by respondent no. 04 who stated that;

“... they should have somebody to lead them (motivate them to mobilize them and attract the others. The real problem is that they are timid, even those who are educated do not influence their brothers and sisters. So there is always misunderstanding and suspicion between the government and this group of people and these takes time or delays project process”

Pygmy on their part mentioned that the council only sends people to come and give them a community hall which never saw the day of light because they had no say in the project and as a result of that the project was never successful. This is supported by the fact that the majority of the respondents mentioned that the contractor put the money in his pocket and disappeared. From observations we noticed that the community hall they talked of was a dilapidated structure which was never completed by its contractor.

This is a clear prove of corruption and embezzlement. Since the Pygmies are never involved in the planning and monitoring of projects, they decided to take off the window and door panels and sold to the Bantus. During group discussions with the Bagyeli Pygmies, some groups mentioned that;

‘We are treated like animals by other people, yet we are restricted from certain places in the forest and we have been given only one hectare of land for our activities, exploiters give only a small token of gifts to exploit, the Bantus exploit us, we live in misery ... More to that influx of projects confuses us and we don’t know what to do because so many different types of developmental projects take place in our communities at the same time which sometimes confuses us...’

We observed one of our host informants in Akak village in Campo returning from hunting dressed in a military uniform carrying a modern gun. This is a sign that the Pygmies have adopted modernity in hunting and are fully socially inserted, some of them no longer depend on traditional hunting tools like spears, bows and arrows and axe. This is also to confirm the fact that the ten pygmies arrested are reported to have been hired and provided with modern guns to kill the Buffalo.

Positive Economic Impacts

majority of the respondents mentioned that they have several economic benefits ranging from the fact that royalties are paid to them, they harvest, collect and non-forest timber products like ‘mbalaka and ‘kokok’, they own a community cocoa farm from the land government has given them, The magnitude and capital

intensiveness of most developmental projects usually indicate that communities affected by such projects are going to derive and enjoy benefits that will contribute to rural poverty alleviation and sustainable development as opined by the development actors. But most of the time it is not usually the case because the negative impacts of such projects most of the time are more than the positive impacts.

Positive Educational Impacts

Majority of the respondents indicated that Pygmy children attend schools and some communities can boast of having graduates from teachers training colleges and forestry schools. Most of them have acquired scholarship in those institutions thanks to NGOs. One of the respondents a government official mentioned that “... *here we see that with the help of missionaries, they have been succeeding...*” This therefore proves that NGOs especially missionaries can better work with the Pygmies than the government. Despite these efforts and achievements most of them still shy away from school. The bulk of the pupils in class are usually in classes one and two. As the classes go higher most of them drop out for no tangible reason.



Pygmy children at school in Bosquet community
Source: Fieldwork 2016.

Positive Environmental Impacts

The government has been able to preserve the park in its original nature because human activity not allowed which has gone a long way to promote tourism in Cameroon. Lands have now been matriculated. No more poaching of animals and the protection of wildlife like for example there is the Gorilla project by the WWF in Campo.

Pygmy Traditional Farming Methods

Majority of the respondents mentioned that they do community farming the use of hoes, cutlass and small axes. Large scale farming is not typically part of the Pygmies. Pygmies are hunter – gathers. The few people who practice farming, do it usually only on subsistence basis. Those that practice subsistence farming do it mainly to feed the family and in some cases excess harvest is given for exchange for other products they cannot afford financially or by cash. In the area of faming the community engine saw is surely used to fell down big trees to clear vast lands for cultivation, they no longer depend on using cutlass and burning of bushes which are traditional methods of farming. Unfortunately, one community reported that their engine saw was damaged by a Bantu man.

Pygmy Traditional Fishing Methods

The varied rivers that intersects the forest landscape provides natural habitat for aquatic life; fish, crocodile, prawns to name a few. This natural resource base assured livelihoods and sustenance of the indigenous Pygmy people. To do fishing, they use poisonous tree barks to kill and catch fish. Others narrated how they block streams to catch fish.

As hunter gathers Pygmies have adopted various coping strategies within their communities one of which is fishing. Fishing is a rare practice of the Bagyeli despite the presence of several water courses and Bantu fisher men in the area. However, due to the increasing scarcity of bush meat, the Bagyeli are becoming more and more involved in fishing. The Bagyeli frequent contacts with the Bantu have helped them to improve their fishing techniques. Most of the women fish in slow moving streams or swampy areas.

Fishing practices helps the Pygmies in sustaining their livelihoods. About 50% of the respondents mentioned this and the local methods they use in catching fish. We observed that they don't use only this method but also they use treated mosquito bed nets given to them by the government as fishing nets. It is carried out mostly by those along the sea shore and along river courses and it is mostly practice by women and children. Their fishing tools include fishing rods, fishing lines, hooks, machetes, baits and nets. This shows that the Pygmies have adopted modernism and no longer rely on traditional methods of fishing. Their livelihood patterns and sources are pegged on dependence on exploiting and using these resources for individual survival.

As hunter gathers to sustain livelihood, a majority of the Pygmies mentioned that they collectively work as a community to gather and collect Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP). Some of them also mentioned that they harvest honey and non-timber products using the axe.

As far as gathering is concern, the women and children do have particular periods for gathering and during this period, they must leave for it. It is during these periods that the Pygmies desert their villages and camp in the forest for days or weeks and only resurface when there are festivities respondent no. 8 confirmed that;

"...as they leave the village they will say they are going to the 'cabane'. Sometimes they will live there for one week. This is because wild fruits and wild food do have particular periods when they are ready and after this period, it will be too late and they might not gather anything. Therefore, they must be in time enough to gather before the fruits and food get decompose in the forest."



Pygmies displaying 'mbalaka nuts' at Nomejoh
Source: Author, May 2016

Pygmies practice hunting and gathering not only because the animal and wild food and fruits are available in the forest but also because they have unstable residence. Those who have a stable residence are seeing the daily practice of hunting and gathering decreasing and they are now turning more to agricultural activities. Though

hunting and gathering is decreasing in importance amongst the Pygmies with stable homes, they still see it as a cultural practice which they have to carry on. The Pygmies believe hunting and gathering is a cultural knowledge which needs to be transferred from the older generation to the younger generation. That is why during their hunting season, the men, women and children have to abandon their homes and activities and go deep into the forest only to be back after weeks or months. When asked why, they said it is to hunt and look for food. But when you look at the quantity of hunt and food brought back, it does not answer the question of their going to the forest for weeks or months. Thus, there is a local myth that the Pygmies have special rituals that they have to carry out in the forest that their purpose is not only to hunt. Informant No. 07 mentioned that “*they hunt while performing their rituals in the forest*”

Positive and Negative Healthcare Practices on Pygmy People

Some NGOS have taken upon themselves to invest in housing and sanitation, which should reduce illness. And others have gone a long way to train some Pygmies so that they can act as intermediaries between the NGOs and the local people, by so doing convince their fellow Pygmy to embrace modern health care facilities.

The government, NGOs, Missionaries and logging companies have made efforts through health programs towards advancing Pygmy People at the same time violating their rights of acquiring traditional methods of healing. Also modern healthcare remains physically and inaccessible to them. The attitude of healthcare staff who considered the Pygmies as "primitive people" is a matter of concern. Negative comments, bullying and insults by their Bantu neighbours has affect mental the health situation of the Pygmies. Majority of the respondents reveal that they still use herbs from the forest for treatment of ailments. Most of them noted that to heal and individual they have to dance during the treatment process. One group emphasized the importance of the forest to the Pygmy in the following words. One of the participants emphasizes the importance of forest to Pygmy people.

‘The forest is our main source of livelihood, since our lives are pegged on it for hunting and harvesting of forest products. Everything we need is from the forest’

Medicinal plants harvested from the forest are of great importance (providing supplementary income to the families of traditional healers) and to the Pygmies as it is used for traditional healing.



Baka Pygmy explaining the medicinal properties of this tree. Source: (Fieldwork, 2016)

Pygmies have a reputation in traditional healing. One of the Pygmy respondents, informant no. 01 stated that “*injecte par l’esprit*” “*if sickness is injected by the evil spirits with this type we treat it*” Patients from neighbouring Bantu communities as well as those from distant communities within the national territory solicit Pygmy medicinal indigenous knowledge and powers in the treatment of certain illnesses such as witchcraft and epilepsy. One of the respondents noted firmly that “*top government officials and prostitutes visit us to get*

charms'. This simply means that Pygmy's livelihood is constructed and sustained by availability and utility of this varied forest resources. Taking them away from these resources by introducing developmental projects such as the creation of road infrastructure and deforestation is marring their livelihoods. Sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) including AIDS have not spared the Pygmies (Pemunta, 2013).

Majority of the Pygmies stated that they still maintain their traditional housing style the huts called 'mongolo' which is spherical in shape made of broad forest leaves and sticks usually with a single outlet.

While the other majority mentioned that they now have modern style of houses and they were proud to say that they live in two room houses like those of the Bantus which are made of sticks and mud roofed with thatch. These houses are usually about 2.80m² to 3m² with a single room partitioned inside at one corner. Most of which are constructed by state and NGOs as compensation. We observed that the Bagyeli Pygmies are more advanced than the Baka Pygmies in the sense that their houses are much more equipped and they bargained and cash was given before they accepted to be interviewed. This is to tell that any man who knows the value of money is a modern man.

Pygmy relation between culture and nature is concerned, a majority of the respondents mentioned that Pygmies are still closely attached to the forest. According to respondent No. 08 a government administrator in Lomie *"...they are fundamentally attached to nature..."*

This statement was confirmed by Informant No. 02 a government official working directly with the Pygmies who mentioned that; *"You cannot talk about the forest without talking about the Pygmies."* Respondent no. 06 also stated that;

"They are attached to the forest. All their activities take place in the forest, they rely on the forest entirely, and this is the reason why they are authorized by the state to kill elephants for certain cultural manifestations. Killing of elephants amongst the Bagyeli is some sort of rite of passage to show that the young Bagyeli has courage. So the state encourages this aspect in their culture..."

This is confirmed by the comment made by an NGO representative also working with the Pygmies who mentioned that *"although they Pygmies have come out, they have not completely abandoned the bush."* Even the Pygmies talked of the fact that they still visit their relatives in the forest even though they all acknowledged that as years goes by there is evolution. From our observations we noticed that they have a strong relation with their culture, and the state authorizes them to kill certain animals and leave others in a bit to promote their culture of killing animals. But this prohibition is hampering on their livelihood and hence marring it. Informant no. 2 a government official stated that;

"...what I have noticed is that though the Pygmies have come out of the forest, they have not completely abandoned the bush. They live in the bush. Pygmies have never forgotten their cultures no matter their level of development, Pygmies rely on forest products ... they are involved in hunting, gathering, that is to say that they are into collection of njangsang, eru, bush mango etc. That is to say that they Pygmy cannot live out of the forest even when we are making efforts not towards bringing them out, but they are also making efforts not to forget their culture. Even though other ethnic groups perform rituals, the Pygmies perform theirs as a health healing therapy. When they are sick, they perform rituals with drums as a means of treating the sick. When they are sick, they perform rituals with drums as a means of treating the sick. And it makes it in such a way that this is their own tradition. With regards to the environment, they cannot live or stay far away from the forest..."

"...They have a strong relation with their culture, the state authorizes them to kill certain animals and protect them from killing other species this is to promote their culture..."

Hence, it is at least for the state of Cameroon to recognize that Pygmies have a certain relationship with their nature, the forest. The Pygmies work to improve the forest environment for their animal neighbors. For example, when Baka harvest wild cassava, they often leave part of the root intact in the soil. This spreads pockets of cassava through the forest, which are a favorite food of elephants and wild boar. They have in-depth knowledge of forest plants they use nearly 500 themselves and recognize many more – and of animal behaviour. For example, Baka have more than a dozen words for the forest elephant, depending on its age, sex and personality. Over generations, the Pygmies have developed their own sophisticated codes of conservation. These prevent over hunting, since Pygmies believe that successful hunting and gathering depends on sharing well, both among themselves and with their environment. They know their lands, and what happens on them, better than anyone

else. Yet they complain that they are unable to pass on these forest skills and values to younger generations, since the violent abuse they face makes them afraid to travel with their families into the forest. This is to say that sustainable development initiatives are marring their livelihood. One of the government officials respondent no. 06 mentioned that; “...the Pygmies are too attached to their forest, their nature. All their activities take place in the forest. They rely entirely on the forest...”

Pygmy Positive Socio-Cultural Impacts

Majority of the respondent mentioned that the state has been giving the free National Identity cards, birth and marriage certificates. Few of the respondents mentioned that they have been given community halls by the government and some NGOs where they can gather as a community to discuss issues concerning themselves. Houses have been constructed for some Pygmies especially those that have been evicted and relocated by loggers. Some Pygmy communities have boreholes and water catchments although most of them went bad immediately after construction and have never been repaired ever since. Some of the Pygmies acknowledged that they have been given generators and solar panels to generate electricity within their communities. But unfortunately most of these sources for electricity are not functional because the Pygmies are unable to maintain them. Their social insertion as many Pygmies now have permanent contacts with those of the outside world and those who are educated are better than those who are not.



An abandoned community hall in Bosquet



Abandoned water tank in Nomejoh

Sources: Author, May 2016

Few of the respondents accepted the fact that development improves their livelihood in terms of the token they are usually given as compensation and the schools intended to educate them. Although on the other hand some mentioned that it doesn't.

Majority of the Baka and Bagyeli Pygmies attribute their poverty to the disturbances caused in the forest by development actors and forest exploiters (hunters and loggers) and conservation organisations and thereby preventing them from gaining access. During one of the focus group discussion in the Akak village in Campo the Pygmies pointed out that;

“There currently exist too many laws which prohibit just anything... the forest no longer has anything and they no longer want to see us there whereas we are not the ones who have destroyed the forest”

This is an indication that development is not improving on their livelihood but instead developmental projects are marring the livelihood of Pygmies. While very few of the respondents indicated that it is difficult to assess the impact of development on their livelihood.

Distribution of Informants by areas of development initiatives

Area of Development Action	Freq N=11	Percent
Agriculture	1	9%
Programme de Développement De Peuple Pygmées (sustainable development)	2	18%

Education and communication	2	18%
(Electrification) solar panels	1	9%
Forest conservation	2	18%
Health outreach for Expanded Program for Immunization (EPI)	3	27%
creation of pygmy camps (housing)	2	18%
law enforcement and social peace	2	18%

Table above indicates that majority of the respondents mentioned the developmental aspects in the health outreach within their communities. The government together with other agencies has established health facilities for 'Pygmies'. A good example of such clinic is that which we visited at Moange le Bosquet founded by the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Ghost in 1973.

Majority of the respondents also mentioned the health outreach project; Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI). EPI is a World Health Organization (WHO) program with the goal to make vaccines available to all children. Several Pygmy communities have benefit from this program.

Majority of the respondents also mentioned that much has been done on education and communication. Few schools have been created around Pygmy communities, most of which are primary schools. Very few secondary schools are often located outside Pygmy communities which make it difficult for them to go to school as they have to cover several kilometers before reaching school. This factor helps in scaring them away from going to school.

Majority of the informants mentioned conservation of the forest in Campo Ma'an and in Lomie. In Campo they spoke of the Campo Ma'an Reserve while in Lomie in the East, the respondents talked of the Dja Reserve which also covers part of the Southern Region. These reserves are all efforts made by the government to protect flora and fauna which consist of recorded plant species and animals. The forest conservator in Campo in his report stated that

"...as far as the park exists here, our being here is to reinforce the gorilla protection project. This is to promote tourism. It is not doing conservation for conservation sake. In this project, the Pygmies are the main actors. It is them who tame the gorilla to be friendly to people..." "... for impacts on them, I can say yes because the Bagyeli in our days can be proud of their National Identity Cards."

But the controversy here is that, the state prohibits the Pygmies from exploiting most parts of the forest even though they claim part of the forest have been given to the Pygmies for their activities. Whereas they authorize and grant permits to logging companies both state owned and private to exploit that same forest.

There are also development projects in Pygmy communities sponsored by the WWF and Forestry Society (SEF) that works with Pygmies and makes it possible for annual royalties are paid to the Pygmies. There are certain trees that are specific to Pygmy cultures. When such trees are felled by loggers a certain amount of money about a million franc is given to the Pygmy community concern. This money is not directly paid to the Pygmies. It is used for the realization of development projects within that said community such as the construction of houses. These sounds like positive aspect of development but the Pygmies are not involved in the decision making panels for them to express their needs as decision are made on their behalf despite the fact that they have local councilors to represent them. This simply explains the reason why the solar lamps installed in their local communities and houses by the council were removed by the Pygmies and sold to the Bantus.

We observed that these identity cards are established without charges in all Pygmy communities with birth certificates inclusive. However, Pygmies show no interest in having these documents. Efforts have also been made in the educational sector as well as in communication, law enforcement, in the creation of Pygmy camps, forest conservation, and electrification. From observation we noticed that electricity is not regular because we noticed almost every community with a generator and due to absence of electricity, informant could not give researcher some information from his laptop. Very little has been done as far as agriculture is concern.

Informants by challenges

Challenges	Freq N=11	%
(Coordination) actors don't consult each other	3	27%
(Bantu Influence) projects earmarked for pygmies are high jacked by Bantus	2	18%
(Mentality) they don't like to work their own farms but work for others to in order to be paid	5	45%

(Embezzlement) contractor put the project money in his pocket and disappeared	3	27%
Enclavement	1	9%
Lack of farm tools and seedlings	2	18%
Lack of knowledge of hygiene and sanitation	2	18%
Lack of money to go to hospital	1	9%
(Illiteracy) education care is a problem	1	9%
Land title	2	18%
(Nomadic) they are afraid of death this makes them to leave their settlements when one of them die	3	27%
(Policies) NGOs hold only meetings no follow up	3	27%
Time and patience is needed to work with the pygmies	1	9%
Lack of water	1	9%

In Pygmy communities, challenges are reflected by other indicators such as the residential pattern, and the problem associated with these transformations including the lack of land due to land conflicts, lack of fishing and agricultural tools, malnutrition, food insufficiency, and lack of financial means and sources of income, among others. This is a system of risks, since the people are affected by direct land access restrictions physically or economically leading to socio-economic challenges.

Observation was predominant in the community of Akak and Nomejoh. Data in the above table suggests that developmental projects contribute very little in solving problem faced by different indigenous Pygmy communities. During one of the group interviews the Pygmies reported that they lack common basic amenities like water, good houses, farm tools, disease prevalence, absence of dependable source of income and lack of educational opportunities.

From table 25 above we notice that discussion with respondents reveal that land problems with the Bantus and mentality i.e. low reasoning faculty of the Pygmies emerged as persistent problems and challenges of Pygmies in Cameroon.

The Bagyeli have a more settled life, they are more sedentary and agriculture is becoming their main economic activity, unfortunately, they are constantly involved in land conflicts with the Bantus who are customarily, the owners of the land located by the roadside. These indicators of poverty resonate with that of the Baka who live along major roads such as in Lomie and Campo.

Other groups identified embezzlement. They mentioned that *'contractors always put the money in the pockets and disappear, we also have problem of land title and farm tools and seedlings and actors don't consult each other, NGO's hold only meetings with no follow up'*. The issue of embezzlement of project funds is supported by this researcher's observation in Pygmy community of Nomejoh where there exist an abandoned uncompleted community hall which was meant to serve the Pygmies during meetings on development projects but it never saw the day of light as it was uncompleted.

Another group of respondents emphasized that *'we don't know why they brought us here to suffer, we lack water and projects earmarked for pygmies are hijacked by Bantus'*. This is a clear indication that the Bantus are exploiting the Pygmies. The Baka use the expression *mandate* to tell the state of their destitution literally meaning that they have nothing: *"no food, no game in the forest, no clothes, no pots, no salt, no money, etc.* The socio-cultural context of poverty among the Pygmies has to do with the nature of local economies, and their way of life in particular.

It is worth mentioning that these problems and challenges are usually common in rural areas in Cameroon, except for the land problem which resulted from the fact that prior to start of every developmental projects in the East and South Regions the government of Cameroon had been engaged in ways of dis-enclaving the Pygmies (displacing them from their original forest lands to cohabit with the Bantus). Parcels of land in Bantu settlements are always allocated to the Pygmies after negotiations which most times the Pygmies are never part of the decisions. Pygmies are certainly always not involved in projects according respondent no. 04 a government official in Lomie because *'Pygmies always slow work, time and patience is needed to work with the pygmies, they lack coordination and leadership.'* This is the possible reason why Pygmies are not consulted or involved in decision making processes. On the allocated land portions the Pygmies are said to have been granted full land rights to execute their activities. Unfortunately, the Bantus are currently threatening to regain the lands given to the Pygmies.

From observation, we noticed that Pygmies have not yet master hygiene and sanitation measures as far as modern health care facilities are concern. They are still in the affairs of herbs.

Challenges Specific to Pygmies

Most of the groups interviewed mentioned that they lack of water, although some Pygmy communities are located by roadsides, they still lack basic social amenities like water. Most of the groups mentioned that their source of water is not good. From observation we noticed that hygiene and sanitation is lacking in all the Pygmy communities we visited. In Nomejoh development agents constructed a water catchment which the Pygmies condemned that the water is standing and greenish in colour whereas in their villages deep in the forest they had running streams and springs in which they could use in drinking, cooking and bathing. Pygmies are disgruntled by the fact that they are not being asked to give opinion concerning development within their communities one of the groups during discussions stated that *“the council only send people to come and give us a community hall”* this is an indication that they did not need a hall but rather something else and since the project was never completed they took away the window and door panels and sold to the Bantus. Pygmies also complained that NGOs hold only meetings and most of the contractors assigned to carry projects within Pygmy communities are dubious contractors. They also complain of lack of farm tools and money to go to hospital. It appears the Pygmies don't request for these projects, they don't express their need, the donor just come after perceiving the needs. After meetings with the Pygmies they implementing immediately begin with implementing the project without further consultations with the Pygmies.

Despite the fact that Pygmies demand for farm tools, agriculture to them is entirely a new innovation which they are not yet used to. All their lives they depend on gathering or hunting from the forest. We observed that Pygmies are not inclined to agriculture. Pushing them out of the forest and initiating them into the aspects of farming is like killing them. This picture above shows a farmland owned by a Pygmy with just nothing on it apart from grass. This observation was affirmed by statements made by respondent no. 04

“...they don't want to work, but if you and me want to open a farm, they will be the ones to come to ask for work to be paid. When they work on your farm, they come back to steal the crops. They don't look at the long term, they focus on the immediate...”

Similar comments were stated by another respondent still at Lomie reported that;

“Pygmies do not adhere to development projects that is to say that they don't think about tomorrow. Even to work on their farms, they don't do that, are not development oriented. They don't adhere to development. Even to work on their farms, they don't do that. They prefer to be hired to work for the population who come from the outside so as to be paid, instead of working on their own farms. When they work even for a day they could be paid 500frs and they get some alcohol and that suffices them. So they are not development oriented. They don't adhere to development initiatives.”



A deserted primary school in Payo Pygmy community with no teacher and no pupil on a school day

From this researcher's observations, discussions took place during school hours but we saw the respondents/informants children of school going ages playing and loitering around their communities. They had not gone to school. After the discussions, we went by to check out at the school, but there was no sign of classes, all we saw were deserted buildings with no single teacher or pupil. In some places, despite the modern structures in place nobody was found. The schools appeared to be abandoned. To confirm this, a government official serving in Lomie reported that *"... so they are not development oriented. They don't adhere to development initiatives... a good example is the 'Education For All'. The government wanted to experiment this project in the Baka language in the primary school. This project could not succeed because the Baka are a bizarre people 'strange people'. When the project started in their communities, after 3 months they abandon the schools. This was the reason why we saw good building constructed for schools in their communities Nomejoh and Akak but there were no pupils there.*

While this researcher was on fieldwork, the following incidences occurred and could be associated with the introduction of developmental projects. These types of occurrences are common among the Pygmies. 10 pygmies were arrested at Nyabeza for killing a buffalo without authorization. A Bantu man spoilt the Baka community chain saw and abandoned it. Pygmies removed solar panels given to them and sold. They perform ritual dances to treat the sick.

Implementation of Development Project

Despite the fact the fact that Pygmies have been displaced or pushed out of their ancestral lands, they have been given a community forest to manage by the government through the help of some NGOs. Majority of the respondents acknowledged that

"the community forest that we have here, it is an NGO that has helped us. ASOBAC gave us groundnut and maize as well as cassava, stems and palm nurseries". These items are given to encourage the Pygmies in agriculture.

At the level of the Baka, some of them are already participating in development activities. There are Baka councilors who represent their communities at the local council. But this happens only when it comes to political matters when the state needs their votes.

It was reported that some Bagyeli Pygmies act as facilitators, trainers, guides and mediators in taming of gorillas. One of the respondents noted that *"... we have some of the Bagyeli working with us. But there is no senior staff in the Campo Ma'an project. They are forest guides. The idea is to arrive at a situation where the population becomes conservators themselves and to develop an alternative vision of tourism of these animals..."*

Pygmy involvement in planning and decision making

It is observed that some of the Pygmies are involved in Planning of their communities. Some groups mentioned that some of them manage their community forest. They also made mention of the fact that they participate in decision making and protection of rare species and also act as facilitators, trainers and guides, mediators. We observed that one

Pygmy does radio animation in their local language the 'Ba'ka dialect in the local FM station in Lomie Town. But this is of no consequence because this radio only airs within 17km from Lomie, meanwhile most Pygmy communities are about 34km away from Lomie. Meaning they don't even get the radio signals. Communities like Bosquet and Nomejoh are 34km away from Lomie town.

At the Campo Ma'an Reserve, we noticed that the conservation service on its part has a Memorandum of Association (MOU) with the Pygmies which was signed in June 2015 between the Pygmies and the National Participatory Development Program (PNDP). Through this union, the Pygmy communities have a responsibility to operate the technical unit as far as exploitation or resources within the Park are concern. Through which they act as facilitators, trainers, guides and mediators. But there is a controversy here because within the Bagyeli Pygmy Community only those of the Akak village have been permitted to live within the Park. And from observation we think this is due to political favouritism.

Pygmies in Cameroon can now boast of National Identity Cards, birth and marriage certificates which are given to them off charge by the government through help of NGOs with the WWF in partnership with *Forêts et Développement Rurale* (FODER).

Nature of Improvement

According to table 26 above, in each of the groups, the respondents mention of the fact that they have been allocated 2000 hectares of land. We observed that houses have been constructed for them by the state and NGOs although very few of them accepted those houses. Still on the national television and radio station the CRTV, during one of its programs the

'Morning Safari' it was that the First Lady of Cameroon (Mrs. Biya) and the government have been doing a lot to improve their way of life in the domain of roads, schools and even social centers have been created closer to the Pygmies but a majority still go further to the thick forest for their livelihood. They are able to rear domestic animal. Some of them especially those who have embrace modernity have different lifestyle from others.

One of the respondents a government official working directly with the Pygmies informant no.06 stated that; *"...we apply the law on the rights of indigenous/autochthones peoples. We remind people that the Pygmies have their own rights just like any other person. We make them know that the Pygmies are not animals. There are some people who think that the Pygmies are animals. We do this by promoting their culture and also valorising their culture..."*

"...For agriculture of recent we distributed hoes, cutlasses and axes to them and other farm tools. I can say that we did not consult them because we have the impression that the Bantus are jealous of the Pygmies because the farm tools. They used to use small axes but the PNDP gave them big good cutlasses and other tools..."

From observation, in a nutshell they prefer the forest live to every other thing given to them. This is to prove that development initiatives introduced by the government and other stakeholder is marring than making their livelihood.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implication of poverty reduction strategies initiated by the government of Cameroon and other stakeholders in line with the [Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1&7] on the livelihood of the Pygmies. It set out to examine the demographic characteristics of Pygmy people in some selected communities in the Lomie and Campo.

To attain the objectives of this research, we made use of interviews and observations to produce data for the study, and we made use of secondary sources to gather necessary information for the present study through which previous works of some authors were reviewed in order to lend weight to the research and explore ideas and experiences concerned with developmental projects and their implications on livelihoods of indigenous people like the Pygmies.

Prospects of the Cameroonian government in meeting up with the Millennium Development Goals-1 poverty eradication and goals-7 ensuring environmental sustainability, and as Cameroon

pushes for its 2035 development vision, mineral extraction and logging are major areas where the Cameroon government hopes to make enough profit to achieve its 2035 development vision. Besides being a lifeline for many rural communities, it is a sector that provides more than one quarter of Cameroon's export earnings.

According to the director of conservation for WWF David Hoyle "The Baka have been living in the forests of Southern Cameroon for thousands, and thousands of years. Their indigenous knowledge is unbelievable, the medicines, the plants, the animals, but of course the world is changing. Cameroon is developing. Cameroon is going down the development rout". This policy has led to the influx of mining and logging companies into the region, which are now creating many problems for the Baka and Bagyeli Pygmies who are traditional hunters.

Baka people do not adhere to modern culture and in their system of values knowing how to read or to talk French is much less valued than knowing the plants of the forest or being a good hunter. Therefore, for them to be able to carry on their way of life and to preserve their values and identities, the state has to respect the set of values, norms and beliefs of the Baka people. They have the right to choose whether they want to learn to read and write or not. This policy has led to the influx of mining and logging companies into the region, which are now creating many problems for the Baka and Bagyeli Pygmies who are traditional hunters.

Baka people do not adhere to our culture and in their system of values knowing how to read or to talk French is much less valued than knowing the plants of the forest or being a good hunter. Therefore, for them to be able to carry on their way of life and to preserve their values and identities, the state has to respect the set of values, norms and beliefs of the Baka people. They have the right to choose whether they want to learn to read or not.

Development initiatives are more often than not aimed at assimilating indigenous and tribal peoples or worse still converting them to the dominant way of life rather than truly integrating them through the respect of their cultural identity. Thus the "developed" or "civilised" Pygmy is the one who has become a farmer, who lives like the others and who no longer, lives on hunting and gathering. Efforts are therefore being made in the areas of agriculture, education and health without taking into account the basic rights of these populations and following culturally unsuitable approaches

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should ensure that particular attention is given to indigenous Pygmy peoples in the land and forest reforms under way, as well as the international initiatives to which it is committed, such as Refusing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Foster Conservation, Sustainable Management of Forest and enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks (REDD+) and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) process. Those reforms and initiatives should guarantee indigenous Pygmy peoples their rights of access and control over their lands and natural resources. Such protection includes recognition of the collective right of indigenous Pygmy peoples to maintain their cultural links with their lands, and to own and control their natural resources.

It is necessary to have disaggregated, up-to-date and reliable data on indigenous and tribal peoples, collected according to indigenous indicators of poverty. Relevant studies should therefore be undertaken to have a better understanding of indigenous peoples and their ever-changing aspirations so that they can be taken into account in national poverty reduction strategies;

Indigenous and tribal peoples should be consulted and should take an active part in the definition, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of their own development priorities; and their traditional skills must be identified and included in poverty alleviation strategies; and their traditional knowledge should be identified and integrated into poverty reduction strategies.

Pygmies with their unique lifestyles, cultures, traditions and languages, constitute a rich and irreplaceable part of the country's national and cultural heritage. Parts of that valuable heritage are however, under clear and immediate threat from development projects and the activities of private companies and other actors. While economic and development goals are legitimate and necessary for the benefit of all, they should not be pursued at the cost of the loss of distinct communities and cultures. In the planning, design and implementation of national projects, due regard must be given to minimizing their impact on vulnerable communities, whose interests must be accorded a high priority.

This researcher urges the Government to take measures to fully record and gather regular social and economic data, including in census surveys that will clearly map the country's diversity and help to reveal the specific challenges facing particular population groups. In addition to gender disaggregation, data should be disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity, religion and language, and individuals should be able

to self-identify as belonging to their chosen ethnic and linguistic group and faith.

This researcher appreciates the efforts made by the Ministry of Arts and Culture to ensure the preservation of the country's diverse cultural heritage. Adequate resources should be provided for the cultural and protection activities of the Ministry, including through the establishment of the new national museum, which will have great potential to play a key role in education, awareness-raising and cultural preservation.

The current legal and administrative regulations governing land use, occupation and ownership do not offer certain minority and indigenous communities adequate protection of their land rights, and should be reviewed and amended to provide stronger legal protection against land grabbing, illegal eviction, forced displacement and ongoing land disputes. Specific legal and policy measures are required to protect the land rights of those who practice nomadic, transhumance and hunter-gatherer lifestyles, including their right to have access to traditional forest habitats and to use land seasonally for grazing.

Local disputes, including over land and inter-community affairs, are commonplace and must be effectively settled and prevented to avoid tensions emerging and growing between communities. It is essential that Government leaders at the local and national levels consult and involve grass-roots community representatives in decision-making processes in order to maintain the peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic and religious groups. National human rights commitments must be better implemented and monitored at the local level.

Mechanisms should be established, in consultation with communities, to ensure that local leadership structures and chiefdoms function in the interests of all communities without discrimination. Effective oversight mechanisms and complaint procedures should be put in place to ensure that paramount chiefs and others with lower-level authority are subject to appropriate review and that community members from all groups have channels through which to challenge decisions or register complaints.

This researcher acknowledges the significant efforts made by the Government to ensure free primary education for all children. However, we urge that the government should intensify specific targeted efforts to improve education access and outcomes for children from minority communities. Education initiatives should be developed in close consultation with minority communities and non-governmental organisations, and should be sensitive to the specific

situations of such groups and their cultures, traditions, lifestyles and languages.

The state should strengthen legislative and policy measures to ensure the political participation of groups that are currently underrepresented in political and decision-making bodies at the local, regional and national levels, including the Pygmy, Mbororo and other communities. Existing measures, including those relating to electoral processes, should be reviewed and where necessary, revised or clarified and their implementation evaluated to ensure that they are fit for their intended purpose.

The customary leadership structures and practices of minority and indigenous communities, including in the appointment of chiefs and the resolution of community-based disputes, should be fully respected and allowed to function according to traditional practices with no undue interference by other communities, individuals or the State. Where a complaint is made that there has been undue interference or disputes exist, an independent review should be conducted with the full participation of the parties and community members concerned, both men and women.

Pygmies are facing pressure to settle as well as loss of access to traditional lands. In addition to measures to protect their rights to land and water and to urgently resolve on-going land disputes, initiatives should be continued and intensified to ensure their access to basic services, education and health care appropriate to their needs, culture and traditions and, where necessary, their nomadic lifestyle. The draft pastoral code provides essential guarantees for pastoralist communities, and should be adopted into law.

The Pygmies are the guardians of the forest, in which they have always lived in harmony. The Government should respect the rights of Pygmy communities to continue to live in their traditional forest habitats and to have full access to the forests and their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyles wherever possible, and find solutions, in consultation with communities, to enable them to do so.

Where displacement of Pygmy communities has taken place or is unavoidable following full review of available options, communities should be consulted fully regarding relocation, with priority given to options allowing them to continue their traditional forest-based lifestyle. Communities should be fully supported in the short, medium and long term to ensure their access to services, food security, their safety and secure, non-exploitative interaction with neighbouring communities, and their access to income-generating activities. Compensation for their

displacement must be appropriate to their situation, culture and traditions.

Pygmies face challenges specific to their lifestyles, livelihoods and relationship to the lands that they own, occupy or historically use. This researcher appreciates the Government's openness to discuss these on-going concerns, and to work with minorities and national and international partners to overcome them. Importantly, adequate financial, human and development resources must be allocated and targeted at protecting and promoting the rights of minorities.

Essential research is required in Pygmy communities and the regions in which they live, to build a comprehensive picture of their numbers, geographical location, socio-economic conditions relative to other communities, the minority and other human rights issues that they face, and their needs as individuals, families and communities. On the basis of such research, targeted interventions should be made, in close consultation with communities, in order to urgently improve their situations and enjoyment of their rights.

Since the Bantus all share the same ecological location (villages) like the Pygmies, it is necessary that a similar study be carried out to study how far the MDGs have been achieved and to get their views and perceptions of developmental projects within their communities while ushering them in the SDGs.

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