

Country Technical Note on  
Indigenous Peoples' Issues

# Republic of Cameroon



Investing in rural people



IWGIA

**Country Technical Notes on Indigenous Peoples' Issues**

**THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**

**Submitted by:**

**IWGIA**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACHPR</b>	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
<b>AFF</b>	Annual Forestry Fee
<b>AIWO</b>	African Indigenous Women Organization
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AWF</b>	African Wildlife Fund
<b>CAS</b>	Country Assistance Strategy (WB)
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CED</b>	Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement
<b>CEEAC</b>	Communauté Economique des Etats d'Afrique Centrale/Economic Community for Central African States
<b>CEMAC</b>	Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale/Central African Economic and Monetary Community
<b>COMIFAC</b>	Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale/Commission of Central African Forests
<b>COVAREF</b>	Comité de Valorisation des Ressources Fauniques (Committee for the Valorisation of Wildlife Resources)
<b>FC</b>	Forêt Communautaire/Community Forest
<b>FCPF</b>	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
<b>FFAC</b>	Forum des Femmes Autochtones du Cameroon
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>FLEGT</b>	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
<b>FPIC</b>	Free, Prior Informed Consent
<b>FSD</b>	Front Social-Démocratique (Social Democratic Front)
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environmental Fund
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>IBRD</b>	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IFC</b>	International Finance Corporation
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IWGIA</b>	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
<b>MBOSCUA</b>	Mbororo Social and Development Association
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NPRSP</b>	National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<b>NTFP</b>	Non-timber Forest Product
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OHCHR</b>	The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OP</b>	Operational Policy
<b>ORA</b>	Observer, Réfléchir et Agir/Observe, Think, Act
<b>RAPAC</b>	Réseau des Aires Protégées d'Afrique Centrale/Protected Areas Network in Central Africa
<b>REDD</b>	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
<b>UNDAP</b>	UN Development Assistance Programme
<b>UNDP</b>	UN Development Program
<b>UNDRIP</b>	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
<b>UNESCO</b>	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization

<b>UNFCCC</b>	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>VPA</b>	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WRI</b>	World Resources Institute
<b>WWF</b>	World Wildlife Fund
<b>ZICGC</b>	Zone d'intérêt cynégétique à gestion communautaire (Hunting zone under community-based management)

## Summary

The Republic of Cameroon has a multi-ethnic population, among which the Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola, Bedzang (also known as “Pygmies”), the Montagnards (Kirdis) and the Mbororo identify themselves as indigenous peoples. The Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola, and Bedzang are traditionally forest-dwellers and hunters-gatherers. They live in the tropical forests and savannas of the East (Baka), the South (Bagyéli/Bakola) and Centre (Bedzang) regions of Cameroon. The Montagnards<sup>1</sup> include more than 30 distinct ethnic and socio-political groups that live in the Mandara Mountains in the Far North and North Regions. The Mbororo are traditionally nomadic and semi-nomadic cattle and goat Fulbe herders, living in the savannas and plateaus of the Far North, North and Adamaoua Regions as well as in the North West Region. Although there are no official census as public administrations do not publish disaggregated data by ethnic group, estimates indicate that hunter-gatherer numbers between 50 and 100,000 (about 0.4% of the total population), while the pastoral population is estimated at around 1 million (representing 12% of the total population).

In general, indigenous peoples have suffered from historical forms of discriminations, forced evictions from their ancestral territories, and the creation of protected areas, the construction of modern infrastructure and land grabbing have dispossessed most of them of their forests and grazing lands. This has disrupted their traditional economies and forced many of them to become sedentary, give up their traditional livelihoods, and adapt to new ways of life. Their growing sedentarization has multiple effects: their traditional skills are no longer relevant; they are compelled to take up unfamiliar tasks; and they have to adapt to new cultural norms.

When it comes to health and education, the lack of disaggregated data makes it difficult to assess their situation. However, statistics show that the regions with the worst records are those with the largest indigenous populations (the three northern regions, the East region and the North West region). Compared with the population in general, indigenous peoples are further disadvantaged in their access to public services due to their geographical remoteness, their semi-nomadic lifestyles, the substantial costs involved, their low levels of literacy, and the lack of ID cards. Indigenous women are a particularly vulnerable group facing the triple discrimination of being women, indigenous and poor. Indigenous children are another vulnerable group with large numbers being exposed to child labor and child trafficking. Culturally, the indigenous peoples of Cameroon have seen their traditional knowledge and skills being devalued and their cultural values being replaced by new ones, often under the influence of religious norms.

When it comes to future opportunities and challenges, much will depend on whether the revised Land and Forest laws take the rights of indigenous peoples into consideration by ensuring their access to land, forest and natural resources. If not, this will become the major challenge indigenous peoples will have to face besides the discrimination and the lack of basic rights they experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Montagnard is a generic term for the various groups, which each have their own ethnonyms, and has replaced the term “Kirdi”, which means Pagan and is estimated to be derogatory.



# 1. The indigenous peoples of the Republic of Cameroon

## 1.1 The national context

The Republic of Cameroon is located in Central Africa and covers 466,050 sq. km, extending from the Gulf of Guinea and some 1,000 km inland, up to Lake Chad, in the north. It borders with the Republics of Chad, Central Africa, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. Cameroon has contrasting and bio-diverse landscapes. These include a narrow coastal plain, a volcanic mountain range and grasslands in the south west, forested plateaus in southern, eastern and central Cameroon bounded by the Adamaoua Mountains that mark the border to the northern part of the country—a zone of low mountains (the Mandara), savannas and flood lands. Major rivers are the Sanaga and Nyong that flow into the Gulf of Guinea, the Bénoué—the main tributary to the Niger River—and the Logone that runs into Lake Chad. The country has two seasons, dry and wet. Its tropical climate varies according to elevation and annual rainfall that range from 2,000 mm along the coast to 500 mm or less in the north. Cameroon is home to some of the most diverse biodiversity of the continent, it ranks fourth in floral richness and fifth in faunal diversity and represents 92% of Africa's ecosystems.<sup>2</sup>

According to recent projections, Cameroon's population was estimated at 27,630,981 in 2022.<sup>3</sup> Cameroon is very diverse country with more than 250 different ethnic groups and subgroups with as many different languages spoken.<sup>4</sup> Most groups south of the Adamaoua Mountains are Bantu-speaking Christians or Animists, while the Muslim Fulbe predominate in the northern part of the country. An estimated 13 percent of the population self-identifies as indigenous and includes the Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola and Bedzang "Pygmies", the Mandara Montagnards (Kirdi) and the Mbororo-Fulbe pastoralists.

A German protectorate (Kamerun) from 1884-1916, Cameroon was divided after World War I between France and Britain in two separate League of Nations mandates—later UN Trust Territories. The French Trust Territory gained independence in 1960 under the name République du Cameroun. The British Trust Territory which had been administered in two parts (Northern and Southern Cameroons) became independent in 1961. While Northern Cameroons opted to become part of Nigeria, Southern Cameroons joined what then became the Federal Republic of Cameroon. In 1972, the federation was dissolved and Cameroon changed its name to United Republic of Cameroon before taking in 1984 its current name of Republic of Cameroon. The country has retained a certain dualism by keeping French and English as official languages and two of its 10 semi-autonomous regions<sup>5</sup> are Anglophone, largely Protestant and base their educational and legal systems

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<sup>2</sup> Republic of Cameroon, 2012. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan – Version II – MINEPDED. [www.minep.gov.cm](http://www.minep.gov.cm).

<sup>3</sup> The last official census dates from 2005, most recent estimates are based on the World Population prospects –United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

<sup>4</sup> Experts suggest that more than 275 indigenous African languages are spoken in the country, making Cameroon one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. 36 of these languages are endangered.

<sup>5</sup> These are the South-West and North-West Regions, near the border to Nigeria.

on British traditions. However, the francophone regions are dominant on all accounts<sup>6</sup> and although most people speak their own vernacular, French is widely spoken and prevails as the language of government and administration.<sup>7</sup> Another divide is politico-religious between the economically and politically strong Christian South and the less developed Islamic North. Having enjoyed several decades of stability, Cameroon has in recent years been grappling with attacks by Boko Haram in the Far North and a secessionist insurgency in the Anglophone regions.

Politically, the country is ruled by a presidential system, but in 2020 marked an important step towards a decentralized system of governance with the first regional elections. These elections mark the start of the decentralization process provided for in the 1996 Constitution. The new regional councilors will work with the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development to pave the way for the gradual transfer of power and the necessary funds to the regions. Cameroon's 10 semi-autonomous regions are administratively divided into 58 departments and 360 arrondissements headed by presidentially appointed governors, prefects and sub-prefects, respectively.

Although Cameroon has a large urban population, in Yaoundé (the capital) and Douala, the majority of the population lives in rural areas as subsistence and cash crop farmers and pastoralists. Agriculture is vital to the economy, employing half the workforce. Alongside agro-industrial plantations and some large private farms Cameroon has about two million small family farms. Tropical forests cover almost half of the national territory. Most of this forest area has been permanently allocated to long-term forest production or conservation.<sup>8</sup> In 2020, Cameroon lost more than 100,000 hectares of primary rainforest to intensive agro-industry. Cameroon is rich in mineral resources and a series of big mining projects are being initiated in East and South Regions.<sup>9</sup> Oil and gas have been extracted since the 1970s, mainly off-shore. Although oil and gas do generate significant revenue, economic growth achievement remains disappointing with the extreme poverty estimated at 25.3% in 2021. Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country.<sup>10</sup> Economic growth rose

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<sup>6</sup> The francophone regions include Far North, North, Adamaoua, West, Centre, Littoral, South and East; they cover almost 90% of the national territory and include over 80 percent of the population.

<sup>7</sup> The Francophones' dominance within the executive legislature and the judiciary, the increased monopolization of key positions and a general feeling of being culturally discriminated has generated a great deal of frustration among the Anglophones. See, e.g., UN HRC, Report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Rita Izsák—Mission to Cameroon (2 – 11 September 2013), UN Doc. A/HRC/25/56/Add.1 (2014), paras. 72-74.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the better known protected areas in Cameroon are Campo Maïan National Park, Dja Reserve, Lobeké National Park, Waza National Park, and Korup National Park. Many of the protected areas overlap with indigenous forest peoples' ancestral lands.

<sup>9</sup> The development of the mining sector is one of the priorities of the government for 2035. Many resources are located under the Congo Basin forest, which makes their extraction environmentally challenging.

<sup>10</sup> Cameroon's HDI value for 2019 is 0.563— which put the country in the medium human development category— positioning it at 153 out of 189 countries and territories. See: Human Development Report 2020 - The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report – Cameroon

from 2.2 per cent in 2009 to 4.02 in 2019 according to the World Bank. Since the late 1980s, Cameroon has been following programmes advocated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reduce poverty, privatise industries, and increase economic growth. The government has taken measures to encourage tourism in the country. Ranked 149 out of 180 countries in the 2020 Transparency International corruption perceptions index, Cameroon suffers from weak governance, hindering its development and ability to attract investors.

## 1.2 Terminology

The Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola and Bedzang peoples, the Montagnards and the Mbororo self-identify as indigenous peoples. On this basis, and because “they have been left on the margins of development, are perceived negatively by dominant mainstream development paradigms and their cultures and lives are subject to discrimination and contempt”,<sup>11</sup> the ACHPR as well as UN mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights also consider them as indigenous in the internationally accepted understanding of the term. Despite this recognition at the international level, the official position of the authorities is that there are no indigenous peoples in Cameroon (or that all the inhabitants of the territory are natives). Nonetheless, the government has voted in favor of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 and officially celebrates the annual International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples since 2008. Hence, although there is no formal legal recognition of indigenous peoples, the government, through many social programs for development, unofficially recognize and refer to indigenous peoples as vulnerable populations. Significantly, the government has established the ‘*Comité Intersectoriel de Suivi des Programmes et Projets Impliquant les Populations Autochtones Vulnérables* (CISPAV).<sup>12</sup>

## 1.3 Demography, location and traditional livelihoods

The last official census was carried out in 2005, but the data are not ethnically disaggregated.<sup>13</sup> The size of Cameroon’s indigenous population therefore rests on estimates.

### 1.3.1 The Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola, and Bedzang

The Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola and Bedzang<sup>14</sup> are traditionally forest-dwellers and hunters-gatherers. They belong to the twenty ethno-linguistic groups formerly known under the generic term “Pygmies” who inhabit the

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<sup>11</sup> ACHPR, *Indigenous Peoples in Africa: the Forgotten Peoples?* (Banjul/& Copenhagen: ACHPR & IWGIA, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Translation: *Intersectoral Committee for Monitoring Programs and Projects Involving Vulnerable Indigenous Populations*. This committee was created by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and its objectives are the identification and centralization of needs for the socioeconomic inclusion of indigenous peoples, the evaluation of human, technical and financial resources available and necessary to implement the main development activities in favour of indigenous peoples.

<sup>13</sup> There is a general lack of statistical clarity even with regard to the actual number of ethnic groups and the number and status of national languages. See UN HRC, Report on Minority Issues, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> The nomenclature and orthography of these ethnolinguistic groups is complex. Baka, for instance is a true ethnonym. Bagyéli and Bakola are the Bantu plural form of Gyeli and Kola, two very similar forest peoples living in the same area in South Region but within two distinct zones—the Kribi zone and the Lolondorf zone, respectively—and therefore often referred to as Bagyéli/Bakola. Bedzang (or Bedzang) is the plural form of Medzan.

tropical rain forests and savannas of Central Africa.<sup>15</sup> They represent about 0.4% of the total population, with an estimated population of 4,000 Bagyéli or Bakola, the Baka, estimated at around 40,000, and the Bedzang, estimated at around 300 people. The Baka live above all in the eastern and southern regions. The Bakola and Bagyéli live in an area of around 12,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the south of Cameroon, particularly in the districts of Akom II, Bipindi, Kribi and Lolodorf. Finally, the Bedzang live in the central region, to the north-west of Mbam in the Ngambè Tikar region.

These groups do not constitute a homogenous group although they acknowledge a certain affinity based on the similarity of their traditional ways of life and their strong spiritual attachment to the forest. They do not, for instance, speak the same language but different dialects related to the Bantu languages spoken by their neighbors.<sup>16</sup>

Today, their ways of life also differ. Already in the early 1990s, it was estimated that those living entirely by hunting and gathering were a tiny minority (possibly around 6 percent), while 38 percent supplemented hunting-gathering with some farming, 35 percent combined farming with some hunting-gathering and 21 percent were farmers-hunters.<sup>17</sup> This was largely the result of efforts made since independence to sedentarize the nomadic forest-dwellers and turn them into “true Cameroonians” so they could take part in Cameroon’s nation building.<sup>18</sup> The **Baka** are probably those who have retained most of their nomadic way of life, even if they are increasingly settling in (or being resettled to) semi-permanent camps near Bantu villages. It has been estimated that they spend up to 1/3 of their time in the forests, where they live, a few families together, in small mobile camps with round huts (*mongoulou*) made of branches, bark and leaves, moving regularly over extensive areas in order to hunt, fish and gather roots and wild fruits. These products are for own consumption, are bartered or are sold to their Bantu neighbors. According to a 2021 report by the Food

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<sup>15</sup> A few hundred Aka are also believed to live in East Region, near the border to the Central African Republic.

<sup>16</sup> The Baka thus speak a dialect related to Ngabaka (Ubangian language group), the Bagyele/Bakola speak Gyele related to Ngumba (Bantu language) and the Bedzang speak Tikar as their neighbors. Yet, despite this linguistic relatedness between them and the farmers, and despite the fact that their economy has been intimately connected with that of other peoples, they have not “merged into farmers’ societies, but have maintained their own identities. Thus, cultural identity without linguistic autonomy is the main characteristics of the Pygmy populations”. Serge Bahuchet, “Languages of African Rainforest ‘Pygmy’ Hunters-gatherers: Language Shifts without Cultural Admixture”. Leipzig 10-12 August 2006.

<sup>17</sup> See CED & Forest Peoples Programme, “The Indigenous Forest Peoples and Protected Areas in Cameroon: A review of Cameroon’s implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas” (2008), p. 1. <http://www.forestpeoples.org>.

<sup>18</sup> Sedentarization started in the eastern part of the country among the Baka and subsequently among the Bagyéli/Bakola during the second five years national development plan (1965-1970), when the “operation thousand feet” (*opération mille pieds*) was launched with the aim of developing agriculture among the Baka and thereby motivating them to become settled.

and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 81% of their food comes from hunting, gathering and fishing.<sup>19</sup> The **Bagyéli/Bakola**, on the other hand, have tended to settle in hamlets<sup>20</sup> where they live in square wood-and-mud houses. While some of them still live almost exclusively from hunting and gathering, most combine subsistence farming with short hunting missions.<sup>21</sup> As for the **Bedzang** of the Tikar Plain, they seem to have become sedentarized in the early 20th century. They live as subsistence farmers in hamlets (or camps) within forest clearings and only occasionally go out hunting.

### 1.3.2 The Mandara Montagnards

The people living in the Mandara Mountains in the Far North and North Regions, near the border to Nigeria, belong to more than 30 distinct ethnic groups such as the Mafa, the Mofou, the Hide, the Tourou, etc. They are often known collectively as “Kirdi” but prefer to be called by their own names or generically as *Montagnard* (highlander) since “Kirdi” means “pagan” and is found derogatory. The Mandara Mountains have a long history of human settlement and have served as a refuge for people living in the lowlands where powerful invaders in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and onwards introduced Islam and slavery to the region.

The Montagnard groups are socio-politically distinct and vary greatly in terms of population, ranging from 500 to almost 130.000 people, but are estimated to total around 400,000.<sup>22</sup> They are originally Animists, speak several distinct languages, have distinct customs, but mainly practice subsistence farming. The mountains receive more rain than the lowlands and this has allowed them to develop a labor intensive system of terraced fields based on sophisticated soil and water conservation techniques. Their few animals are stall-fed and mainly held for religious purposes and for their manure. The Montagnards are known for their ironwork, pottery, and weaving. Millet beer is a central part of their religious and social life.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Montagnards suffered many slave raids by the Fulbe Muslims living in the lowlands.<sup>23</sup> Later, both the colonial and the national administrations have tried to get them to submit to the Fulbe *lamibé*

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<sup>19</sup> FAO and Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. 2021. Indigenous Peoples’ food systems: Insights on sustainability and resilience in the front line of climate change. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5131en> (see chapter 1: The forest-based food system of the Baka indigenous people in South-eastern Cameroon)

<sup>20</sup> Some of the Bagyéli villages near the Chad oil line have existed for more than 50 years. See Joseph Claude Owono, “Cameroon – Campo Ma’an: The extent of Bagyeli Pygmy involvement in the development and Management Plan of the Campo Ma’an UTO”. Case study 8 in *Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas in Africa: From Principles to Practice*, edited John Nelson and Lindsay Hossack (UK: Forest Peoples Programme, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, IPP52, Programme de Développement Participatif (2003).

<sup>22</sup> Population estimates vary greatly. The figure 400,000 is based on the 1976 census. See Antoinette Hallaire, *Paysans Montagnards du Nord Cameroun. Les Monts Mandara*, (Paris: Editions de l’Orstom, 1991) p. 24. [http://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins\\_textes/divers11-10/34319.pdf](http://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/divers11-10/34319.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> According to old Fulbe moral, Muslims did not work the land and farming was considered slave work.

and come down from the mountains.<sup>24</sup> In 1963, it was even made compulsory (at least in theory). In the 1970s and 80s, Montagnard men were recruited by the government to “colonize” the lowlands and become cotton growers.<sup>25</sup> Yet, despite this population drain, the Montagnards have been able to maintain their cultural identity to this day and many of them still practice different forms of Animism and ancestor worship.

### 1.3.3 The Mbororo pastoralists

The Mbororo people living in Cameroon are estimated to number over one million and they make up approx. 12% of the population. The Mbororo belong to the Fulbe people,<sup>26</sup> an ethnic group whose members are represented in at least 15 countries across the Sahel and savanna belt of West and Central Africa.

The first Mbororo migrated into Cameroon in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and their migration continued until the 1970s, the Mbororo either fleeing from political unrest, persecutions and drought in neighboring countries, or looking for better grazing grounds. These successive migration waves followed different routes, and the Mbororo are now found in many parts of the country but particularly in the three northern regions and in the North-West. The Mbororo are cattle Fulbe,<sup>27</sup> i.e., traditionally nomadic and semi-nomadic cattle and goat herders whose lives revolve around cattle rearing from which they derive most of their income: most of the cow milk in Cameroon comes from their herds.

The Mbororo are comprised by three distinct groups—the Wodaabe, the Jahun (or Jaafun) and the Aku (or Galegi). These three groups speak the same Fulfulde language, albeit with dialect variations; they practice Islam but maintain at the same time the Fulbe’s own specific moral code of behavior (*Pulaaku*) based on self-control, patience and wisdom; and they all have a strong spiritual attachment to their zebu cattle. However, the three groups differ when it comes to how they practice pastoralism, ranging from traditional nomadism to varying degrees of sedentarization.

The **Wodaabe** are true nomads and mainly frequent the North and East regions. Although one of the first African tribes to convert to Islam, they preserve many of their ancient Mbororo customs, wear fetishes and charms, and practice rituals for protection. They move in small kin groups of 10 to 20 families and camp in small open enclosures “under the stars of Allah”. They have maintained many traditions and taboos concerning their special breed of cattle—the long-horned red zebu—and they are considered the pioneers in the conquest of new pastures in the humid savannas of Central Africa. This has meant, however, that they can no longer herd goats and have become more dependent on the sale of cow milk products. Another consequence of using the humid savanna pastures has been that Wodaabe cattle are often infected by tse-

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<sup>24</sup> Jacques Champaud, « Montagnards du Cameroun : "Kirdi" et Bamiléké », *Ecologie Humaine* IX (2) Juin 1993, p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> The name Fulbe (Fula, Fulani) is commonly used in anglophone African countries while the francophone countries use the term Peul (Peulh, Peuhl).

<sup>27</sup> As opposed to town Fulbe. These gave up at an earlier phase in Fulbe history the pastoral way of life and shifted to various urban activities, settling in towns and villages (*Fulbe Sirre*) while the others remained pastoralists (cattle Fulbe).

tse transmitted trypanosomiasis.<sup>28</sup> The Wodaabe therefore tend to be shunned and isolated both geographically and socially by other Mbororo.<sup>29</sup>

The **Jahun** and the **Aku** are found predominantly in the North-West (also called the Western Grassfields area), West, Adamaoua and East Regions. Both originate from northern Nigeria, but while the Jahun migrated to the Adamaoua Plateau and from there into the highlands of the North-West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Aku entered directly into the highlands from Nigeria in the 1950s and 1970s, eventually establishing themselves in the lowlands from where some of them migrated to other parts of the country. Besides having distinct migration histories, the Jahun and the Aku speak different Fulfulbe dialects; have different cultural traditions and cattle breed preferences.<sup>30</sup> Their attitude to farming also differs, the Aku being more familiar with agriculture than the Jahun.<sup>31</sup>

Both the Jahun and the Aku are traditionally transhumant pastoralists, moving with their herds over large distances between wet-season and dry-season camps, using special livestock corridors (*pistes à bétail*). However, this traditional lifestyle has increasingly been replaced with a more sedentary, agro-pastoral way of life, turning the wet-season camp—their “attachment territory” (*territoire d’attache*)—into their main residence and combining pastoralism with subsistence farming. Several causal factors are behind this choice: government policies,<sup>32</sup> climatic conditions,<sup>33</sup> loss of traditional dry-season pastures,<sup>34</sup> easier access to basic services, conflicts with farmers during migration, etc. Mobility remains nevertheless a defining feature, and settled livestock breeders try hard to keep a partly transhumant way of life. This is done using several

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<sup>28</sup> Since independence, the Mbororo have been allowed, albeit at their own risk, to cross the southern borders of the Adamaoua Region and enter for instance into the humid valleys of Mbam and Lom in East Region. Jean Boutrais, « L’expansion des éleveurs peul dans les savanes humides du Cameroun ». In *Pastoralists of the West African Savanna*, edited by Mahdi Adamu and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 146-148.

<sup>29</sup> Boutrais, op. cit. (1986).

<sup>30</sup> The Jahun herd the red zebu while the Aku prefer white zebu. The red zebu (boDeeji) is considered to be the finer of the two but the white zebu (daneji) is better adapted to the harsh conditions of the lowlands.

<sup>31</sup> Michaela Pelican, “Friendship Among Pastoral Fulbe in North-West Cameroon”. *African Study Monographs*, 33 (3) (September 2012), pp. 165-188.

<sup>32</sup> Several state projects have encouraged the settlement of Mbororo. See Boniface Ganota et al, « Législation des migrations humaines et animales en Afrique centrale : cas du Cameroun, de la République centrafricaine et du Tchad » in *Savanes africaines en développement : innover pour durer*, édité par L. Seiny-Boukar et P. Boumard (Garoua, Cameroon: Cirad, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> In regions with a more humid climate, as for instance in the Western Grassfields and certain parts of Adamaoua, the access to grazing areas within a short distance from the attachment territory is easier.

<sup>34</sup> Natali Kossoumna Liba’a, « De la mobilité à la sédentarisation: gestion des ressources naturelles et des territoires par les éleveurs Mbororo au nord du Cameroun ». (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier III, 2008).

strategies depending on the existing constraints<sup>35</sup> and ranging between short-distance/long-distance transhumance, the employment of salaried herders and the use of “relocation territories” where part of the herd resides permanently without returning to the attachment territory.<sup>36</sup>

Over the last few years, the Mbororo pastoralists have been victims of the violence that reigns in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, with many suffering from assassinations, confiscation of livestock, kidnapping for ransom, forced displacements, torture and inhumane and degrading treatment from the secessionist armed groups.<sup>37</sup>

## 2. Socio-economic profile

Indigenous peoples usually and dominantly live under a visible and remarkable poverty line. Although there is no of published figures, it is generally recognized that indigenous peoples are among the poorest strata in the country, which has led the Ministry for Social Affairs to label them as “vulnerable populations” deserving special attention in social programs. The high poverty levels of indigenous communities are further exacerbated due to the structural discrimination they suffer from. A major issue in this connection is the lack of accurate information on their numbers and socio-economic situation which makes it difficult to identify the problems they are facing, ensure an adequate response to alleviate the lack of essential services and come up with relevant and sustainable solutions.

### 2.1 Human Rights issues

#### 2.1.1 Discrimination & Marginalization

Indigenous peoples suffer various forms of discrimination in their interactions with their non-indigenous neighbors. This is particularly the case for Indigenous forest hunter-gatherer peoples who are often referred to as “underdeveloped”, “backward”, “primitive”, or worse. Some Bantu communities reportedly treat them as their property and use them as slaves.<sup>38</sup> **Baka and Bagyéli/Bakola** communities often suffer from abusive labor relations and sexual exploitation and in general from the discriminatory attitude of the society at

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<sup>35</sup> These constraints may be due to degraded pastures, conflicts with farmers, insecurity due to the proliferation of criminal gangs known as “coupeurs de routes” that operate in remote areas and besides cattle rustling also take Mbororo women and children as hostages. Kossouma Liba’a, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> See Dongmo et al., “Herding territories in Northern Cameroon and Western Burkina Faso: spatial arrangements and herd management.” *Pastoralism: Research, Policy and Practice* (2012), p. 5.

<http://www.pastoralismjournal.com/content/2/1/26>

<sup>37</sup> For details, see IWGIA, *The Indigenous World 2021*, Cameroon.

<sup>38</sup> See Alawadi Zelao, 2018, « Pratiques esclavagistes, relations interethniques asymétriques et réinvention identitaire en territoire montagnard au Nord-Cameroun ». *Nka’Lumière. Revue interdisciplinaire de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Dschang* 19 : 61-84.



large.<sup>39</sup> They also suffer from abuse and assaults at the hands of civil servants and employees of the national parks and protected areas.<sup>40</sup>

The **Montagnards** have historically had a lower economic and social status than neighboring Fulbe communities, who considered them as “pagans” and used them as slaves. After independence, authoritarian measures were taken by the government to get them to leave their mountains and their “primitive” way of life which Cameroon leaders resented. The tendency to view the illiterate and pagan Montagnards as cultural subordinates, often to the point of treating them with ill-concealed contempt, persists and there still exist exploitative relations between the two communities.<sup>41</sup>

The **Mbororo** in the North-West Region are increasingly experiencing violent forms of xenophobia, including burning of houses, killing of cattle, etc. Although their coexistence with the local farming communities has been relatively peaceful for many decades, there exists a tradition going back to the British colonial administration for considering the Jahun and Aku as “strangers” and for treating them as second-class citizens.<sup>42</sup> It was only after Cameroon’s political liberalization in the 1990s that the Mbororo eventually were registered as being born in the North-West and became qualified as regional citizens with claims and rights to natural resources and political representation in their home area.<sup>43</sup> This, however, does not seem to have stopped the discrimination against them. The Mbororo also feel economically discriminated because they continue to be subjected to long-standing taxes on their livestock—the “*jangali*” in the North-West and the

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<sup>39</sup> Aili Pyhälä, “Cameroon: What Future for the Baka? Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Livelihood Opportunities in South-East Cameroon”. IWGIA report 13 (IWGIA and Plan, 2012), p. 20; see also Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, UN Doc. E/C.12/CMR/CO/4 (2019): noting that the substandard working conditions to which members of indigenous peoples are subjected are tantamount to forced labour.

<sup>40</sup> CERD, Concluding Observations, Cameroon, UN Doc. CERD/C/CMR/CO/15-18 (2010), para. 18; and see Simon Hoyte & Catherine Clarke, Violence, corruption, and false promises: Conservation and the Baka in Cameroon (IWGIA, June 2020), available at: <https://www.iwgia.org/en/cameroon/3791-violence,-corruption,-and-false-promises-conservation-and-the-baka-in-cameroon.htm>

<sup>41</sup> UN HRC, Report on Minority Issues, op. cit. para. 25.

<sup>42</sup> After independence, under Ahidjo’s regime, they qualified as Cameroonian citizens, but were subsumed under the category of “northerners” on account of their Muslim identity and Fulbe ethnicity, with limited rights to the region’s natural resources and political life. See Michaela Pelican, “Mbororo claims to regional citizenship and minority status

(North-West Cameroon)” *Africa*, Vol. 78 (4). 2008; Samuel Hickey, “Caught at the crossroads: citizenship, marginality and the Mbororo Fulani in Northwest Cameroon”. In *Citizenship in Africa*, edited by D. Hammet, P. Nugent and S. Rich-Dorman (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. See also UPR, Joint NGO Report Submitted to the U.N. Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review of Cameroon 16th Session May/June 2013 by MBOSCUDA, Laimaru Network and CAEPA (2013d).

“*zakat*” in the northern regions—which they feel is used to sustain the local administration rather than being invested in pastoral infrastructure.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.1.2 Civil status

In Cameroon, the birth certificate is the first civil document of any individual, which establishes the legal existence of a person. It is a necessary document for the establishment of all other citizenship documents, such as the national identity card or the electoral card, and a key element of the human right to a nationality. Many indigenous peoples (like many other people in Cameroon) do not have birth certificates and as a consequence no national identity cards. The situation is most acute in remote rural areas, where women give birth at home and do not subsequently register the new-born with the nearest authorities. Among several reasons (lack of information, the distance of the registry office, the discrimination they are met with, etc.), it is especially the costs involved that make it difficult or even impossible for indigenous peoples to get registered.<sup>45</sup> The lack of I'D cards has a major impact on the enjoyment of a wide range of rights, services and social benefits. It renders people effectively stateless; they cannot vote in national elections, they cannot access health care services; their children cannot access school education, etc.

Another issue of civic rights has to do with the recognition of the administrative rights of indigenous communities. The Baka and Bagyéli/Bakola settlements are not legally recognized as “villages” and cannot therefore interact directly with government services but depend on the good-will of the Bantu village to which they administratively belong. The non-recognition of their separate villages administratively leads to systemic discrimination and marginalization. It was therefore a breakthrough when some 20 sedentarized Bagyéli communities from Bipindi Arrondissement in the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Zone, with the help of local and international NGOs,<sup>46</sup> were recognized in 2007 as “chefferies de communauté” of 3<sup>o</sup> degree. Since Cameroonian public law stipulates that any creation of chieftdom at village level includes delimitating the land on which the chief will exercise his power, the land on which these Bagyéli communities live, was also legally recognized.<sup>47</sup> And in 2021, for the first time, an indigenous Baka village has been officially recognized and its chief officially installed by the Cameroonian state.<sup>48</sup> This is an important step in a country where indigenous peoples face extreme social, political and economic marginalization.

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<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Kossouma Liba’a et al. “L’élevage mbororo sédentarisé au nord du Cameroon: Entre adaptation et impuissance face aux insécurités » (CIRAD, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> See World Bank, IPP 52 op. cit., (2003), p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> The project was coordinated by the UK-based Forest Peoples Project (FPP), and working with the Cameroon NGOs the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), and Planet Survey Sustainable Environment and Development (PSEDD). See John Nelson, “Securing indigenous land rights in the Cameroon oil pipeline zone” (FPP 2007).

<sup>47</sup> This was achieved through negotiations with Bantu villages. See Patrice Bigombe Logo, « Etude sur le cadre juridique de protection des droits des peuples autochtones au Cameroun » (2008), p. 16-18, at <http://www1.chr.up.ac.za>

<sup>48</sup> The recognition of a Baka leader as the official head of the village of Assok (Southern Cameroon) is the result of several years of work and advocacy by members of the community and Cameroonian civil society, in particular by the organization Appui à l'autopromotion and the integration of women, young people and the unemployed (APIFED). See: Le tout premier chef baka officiellement reconnu dans le sud du cameroun - sa majesté martin abila du village assok,

In the North-West and West, the Mbororo lamibés' status has been challenged by local fons (chiefs) that have argued that their villages were not independent villages but part of their chiefdom's capitals.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.2 The lack of rights to land/forest and natural resources

Access to land is a core concern of indigenous peoples and centers around several related issues: the lack of tenure security; dispossession; sedentarisation; and land conflicts.

### 2.2.1 Lack of tenure security: the legal framework

Although since 2011, the government has been engaged in a vast reform of the main legislation governing land tenure, the legal framework is still governed by two outdated laws: the Land Law of 1974 and the Forestry Law of 1994.<sup>50</sup> According to the 1974 Land Law, all land that has not been registered is considered to be national property. Even if the law has put in place a process for land rights registration, only a small percentage of the national territory has been registered. Most rural land is therefore categorized as national land even if it remains under customary law. But customary tenure rights are fragile in Cameroon. If the forests, savannas and rangelands indigenous peoples use—and in some cases have used since time immemorial—are required by the government for other purposes, the government may dispose of them and grant absolute title, lease or exclusive occupancy licenses to loggers, miners, ranchers, biofuel or food entrepreneurs, or to itself (in the form of State Forests).<sup>51</sup> Indigenous communities are furthermore disadvantaged when it comes to compensations since the law distinguishes between those who *use* the land for hunting-gathering and grazing and those who *develop* it and ensure its "*mise en valeur*", i.e., its economic profitability through cultivated fields or constructions. Only the latter are considered to be eligible for land concessions or compensations if required to be relocated for development projects, while indigenous peoples, who have been evicted or forced to resettle, have no such rights.

The 1974 Law has in particular had direct consequences for the customary land tenure systems of the Montagnards and the Mbororo. The **Montagnards** are known for having a traditional tenure system which is quite unusual in an African context since it allows a head of household to dispose freely of his land plot. He may thus cultivate it, leave it fallow for long periods, lease it out (for money) as he wishes. He may even sell it, as long as he sells it to a member of his community. Such transactions are done according to customs and

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lundi 19 avril 2021- available at: <https://fr.rainforestfoundationuk.org/le-tout-premier-chef-baka-officiellement-reconnu-dans-le-sud-du-cameroun-sa-majeste-martin-abila-du-village-assok>

<sup>49</sup>This has, e.g., happened in Sabga, considered to be the oldest Mbororo settlement in North-West and headquarters of the Mbororo community in the Western Grassfields. Pelican, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>50</sup> For analysis, see Samuel Nguiffo, Victor Amougou Amougou, Brendan Schwartz et Lorenzo Cotula, *Droits fonciers des peuples autochtones au Cameroun : progrès accomplis et perspectives d'avenir* (IIED, Briefing, 2017)

<sup>51</sup> Liz Alden Wily, "Whose Land is it? The Status of Customary Land Tenure in Cameroon" (CED, FERN, RFUK, 2010), p. 11.

in the presence only of witnesses since the community does not have a “land chief”.<sup>52</sup> This tenure system has been at odds with the Fulbe’s customary collective land rights system but the 1974 law directly impacted the Montagnards in at least two ways: on the one hand they could not afford the costs of getting their ownership rights registered;<sup>53</sup> on the other, they were risking that land having laid idle for four years automatically would become national land and be confiscated.

The **Mbororo’s** customary rights to rangelands and other types of collectively held grazing areas have been affected too. In the northern part of the country, transhumant pastoralists have historically benefitted from the support of the traditional Fulbe chiefs (lamibé). In exchange for tributes and taxes, the lamibé protected the Mbororo’s access to rangelands, allowing them to choose and demarcate a territory, within which they could settle, clear some fields and graze their cattle.<sup>54</sup> The 1974 Land Law put this “nomadic contract”<sup>55</sup> under pressure by defining rangelands as “*terres vacantes et sans maître*”<sup>56</sup> and making it possible for the state to confiscate traditional rangelands and promote the settlement of peasants (often Montagnards).<sup>57</sup> At the same time, the authority of the lamibé slowly became eroded by political processes<sup>58</sup> and for the past 20 years, migrant farmers have increasingly settled in the region, making transhumance difficult by encroaching on the “*pistes à bétail*” as well as on pastoral lands without referring to the traditional leaders and in impunity. This land tenure insecurity has discouraged the pastoralists from developing and improving the cattle corridors, rehabilitate grazing areas, etc.<sup>59</sup> The result has been that they are increasingly faced with a shortage of pasture, an absence of fodder crops and problems of crop damage by cattle inside or near to their home territory, forcing some of these settled pastoralists to increase the mobility of some of their animals.<sup>60</sup>

In the North-West Region, the Mbororo were encouraged to settle already during British colonial administration, when grazing rules were introduced to restrict and control their activities. Yet legal

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<sup>52</sup> Hallaire, op. cit., pp. 35-45.

<sup>53</sup> These procedures include buying and setting up boundary markers with the hired help of a land surveyor. See Hallaire, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

<sup>54</sup> See Kossoumna Liba’a, op. cit. (2008), p. 58.

<sup>55</sup> Expression coined by Mark Moritz et al. in “The Demise of the Nomadic Contract: Arrangements and Rangelands under Pressure in the Far North of Cameroon” (1). *Nomadic Peoples*, Vol. 6, No. 1, June 2002.

<sup>56</sup> I.e., unoccupied and without owners.

<sup>57</sup> Boniface Ganota et al., op. cit. (2009), p.5.

<sup>58</sup> This loss of power started during colonial times but was accentuated as the result of the 1974 Land Law which limited the lamibé’s power over land; the shift from a northern, Muslim president to a southern, Christian president in 1982; and the democratization process, including the introduction of political parties. Moritz et al., op. cit.

<sup>59</sup> See Kossoumna Liba’a et al., op. cit. (2009), p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Dongmo et al., op. cit. (2012), p. 2.

entitlement to cultivate within the grazing area (1962) restricted the size of farming plots to 0.4 ha (1,619 m<sup>2</sup>) per family.<sup>61</sup> Over the years, the competition for land between farmers and herders has increased but a major threat today is the option provided by the 1974 Land Law of converting parts of national lands into private property if deemed to be “unoccupied and ownerless”. This has allowed well-to-do people involved in profitable agricultural and pastoral business ventures to increasingly grab grazing areas.<sup>62</sup>

**The Law on Forest, Fauna and Fishery**,<sup>63</sup> which particularly affects the Baka and the Bagyéle/Bakola, was adopted in 1994. This law has been commended for recognizing indigenous peoples’ usufruct or customary rights to forest, wildlife and fishery products when for personal use and with the exception of protected species.<sup>64</sup> It also stipulates that “Indigenous peoples should receive a compensation” if these rights were to be restricted in state forests for being in contradiction with the objectives of these forests.<sup>65</sup> As one of its landmark innovations, the law also provided for community forests (FC)<sup>66</sup> and community hunting zones (ZICGC),<sup>67</sup> including regulatory frameworks.<sup>68</sup>

It was expected that the Baka and the Bagyéle/Bakola would benefit from these provisions but this has not been the case. Obtaining a community forest has proven difficult due to two prerequisites. One is to create a legal entity that represents the community, defines the objectives and area of the community forest and

<sup>61</sup> Jean Boutrais, *Hautes terres d'élevage au Cameroun*. (Paris: Editions de l'Orstom, 1995/96), p. 797-798.

<sup>62</sup> This is also one of the arguments used in the government’s reply to the UN Special Rapporteur’s urgent appeal in the Danpullo case. See [https://www.spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/24th/Cameroon\\_19.11.13\\_\(4.2012\).pdf](https://www.spdb.ohchr.org/hrdb/24th/Cameroon_19.11.13_(4.2012).pdf)

<sup>63</sup> *Loi portant régime des forêts, de la faune et de la pêche* (1994). The law was subsequently completed by several legal decrees, by-laws, etc., and was the first in Central Africa to promote community forest management as a strategy for sustainable forest management.

<sup>64</sup> Art. 8(1). The law which did not allow the sale of these forest products was amended in 2011 and some sale is now allowed. See IWGIA, *The Indigenous World 2012* (2012), p. 476.

<sup>65</sup> Art. 26.

<sup>66</sup> A FC (Forêt Communautaire) is a portion of the state owned national forests; it is free from all types of exploitation; and covers a maximum area of 5000 hectares. The state retains ownership of the forest but grants its management to the village community for a period of 25 years (renewable). The benefits from the exploitation of forest products belong to the communities. The communities are to receive furthermore 10 percent of the annual forestry fees (AFF) to be levied as a requirement for exploiting state-owned forest concessions. See Wily, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>67</sup> ZICGCs (Zone d'intérêt cynégétique à gestion communautaire) are hunting zones under community-based management. They are generally located on the edge of protected areas and juxtaposed to production forests. Their sizes vary between 40,000 and 140,000 ha, and they are considered to be something of a safety belt for the wildlife in these areas. The beneficiary populations are communities living on the periphery of one or more ZICGCs in which they carry out agroforestry-pastoral or hunting activities. The ZICGCs are subject to a management agreement between the local community and the Administration in charge of wildlife.

<sup>68</sup> The demanding and costly procedures related to the attribution of FC have been revised several times, latest in 2001 in a Manual of Procedures. Wily, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

consults with surrounding communities. However, few indigenous communities have the level of formal education or social organization needed to enable them to fulfil this requirement. The other prerequisite is that a community forest may be designated only in areas where the community enjoys customary land rights. But indigenous hunters-gatherers who have settled along forest roads do not enjoy any customary land rights, as such rights are reserved to the Bantus who "host" them; and the law does not provide for the designation of community forests in the "Permanent Forest",<sup>69</sup> where the Baka, and the Bagyéli/Bakola mostly enjoy "customary rights".<sup>70</sup> The maximum size of a community forest (5000 ha) is also inadequate as these communities often use much larger areas for their nomadic subsistence activities.<sup>71</sup> A final constraint has been the high costs involved in establishing a Community Forest (CF).<sup>72</sup> Few indigenous communities have therefore applied and obtained a FC.<sup>73</sup> In the case of mixed Bantu-indigenous communities with a FC, experience shows that the Baka and the Bagyéli/Bakola are being marginalized and not included in consultations or decision-making. As for the 10 percent of the annual forestry fees (AFF) to be levied from state forest concessionaires, the money rarely finds its way to the communities, let alone to their indigenous members. Similarly in the case of the ZICGC, where women and indigenous people have little or no representation within the COVAREF, i.e., the organization to be established by the village to manage the zone and the income received from commercial game hunting.<sup>74</sup>

### 2.2.2 Dispossession

The Baka and the Bagyéli/Bakola have been dispossessed of their forests through the creation of protected areas like the Nki, Boumba-Bek, Dja and Campo Ma'an National Parks in the southern part of the country.

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<sup>69</sup> The 1994 law divides the National Forest Estate into the Permanent Forest Estate (PFE)—where 55% of land is allocated to production forests and 45% to protected areas—and Non-Permanent Forest Estate (NPFE)—where 90% of the land area is allocated to community forests.

<sup>70</sup> WRM's bulletin N° 77, December 2003. <http://wrm.org.uy/oldsite/bulletin/77/Cameroon.html>

<sup>71</sup> ILO & ACHPR, Overview Report on the constitutional and legislative protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in 24 African countries (Banjul & Geneva, 2009), p. 112.

<sup>72</sup> These costs have been estimated to be between US\$12,000 and US\$24,000. While many of the initial CFs were supported by NGOs with foreign aid funds, today, more CFs are financially and technically supported in exchange for logging rights. See Pascal Cuny, *Etat des lieux de la foresterie communautaire et communale au Cameroun* (Tropenbos International. Programme du Bassin du Congo. Wageningen, Netherlands, 2011). Viewed 25.01.2015 at [www.tropenbos.org/file.../etatsdeslieux-28-12-2011](http://www.tropenbos.org/file.../etatsdeslieux-28-12-2011)

<sup>73</sup> The first Baka community forest to be recognized was the Moangua Le Bosquet, (in 2000). For analysis, see Luc Moutoni, *La foresterie communautaire au Cameroun – un aperçu de la perspective communautaire* (OKANI, Forest Peoples Programme, 2019)

<sup>74</sup> Certain provisions regarding the need for approaches taking into consideration the Baka people and gender are mentioned in the "Guide Méthodologique pour l'Élaboration des Plans de Développement Locaux" (République du Cameroun, 2006), p. 17. <http://www.foretcommunale-cameroun.org/>

They have only seldom been involved in discussing the management plans for these protected areas.<sup>75</sup> Other territories they have used traditionally are now part of logging concessions or mining projects such as the Cam-Iron in the Dja area.<sup>76</sup> The Bagyéli/Bakola have also been dispossessed by the construction of the southern portion of the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline<sup>77</sup> that traverses more than 100 kilometers of their lands and they are currently affected by the construction of a deep seaport at Kribi and a 500 km long railway line to link it with the Mbalem iron mine, as well as by the establishment of palm and rubber plantations.<sup>78</sup>

The Mbororo in the Far North, North and East Regions have seen their access to grazing areas being restricted or denied as a consequence of the monopolization of land by cash crops like cotton, rice, sugar,<sup>79</sup> etc.; agro-pastoral projects;<sup>80</sup> or by leases given to foreign companies as hunting zones. The creation of national parks such as Waza Logone in Far North and Takamanda-Mone in South-West have affected important migration routes and cut off floodplains and grazing areas. In the Takamanda-Mone area, Mbororo have even been threatened with expulsion. Crop farming and cattle ranching in the North-West Region are encroaching on traditional Mbororo grazing areas.

### 2.2.3 Sedentarization and land conflicts

Indigenous hunters-gatherers have traditionally had a symbiotic relationship with neighboring farmers, based on mutually beneficial exchanges of goods and services. Hunters-gatherers would barter game, ivory, and forest products for the metal tools, grains, clothes, etc., of their Bantu neighbors. Seen as gifted with special powers, the Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola and Bedzang also held a high status because of their knowledge of the forest, their skills as dancers, singers, and musicians, their healing and diviner practices, etc. As a consequence of land dispossession and sedentarization, the nature of these relations has changed. Lacking farming skills and tools, many of these indigenous communities find themselves highly dependent on neighboring Bantu to meet even basic needs. Without customary ownership rights in the Bantu villages, they depend on their neighbors to get land (as well as tools) to cultivate. This dependency has often degenerated

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<sup>75</sup> John Nelson and Messe Venant, "Indigenous peoples' participation in mapping of traditional forest resources" (Forest Peoples Programme 2008), p. 1. at <http://www.forestpeoples.org>

<sup>76</sup> See WWF, *op. cit.* (2012), p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> This 1,070 kilometer-long oil pipeline was constructed as part of the Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project and goes from the Doba oil fields in southern Chad to Kribi in southern Cameroon.

<sup>78</sup> IWGIA, *The Indigenous World* (2014), p. 456.

<sup>79</sup> Cotton is the major cash crop in the North and Far North Regions where it was introduced in the 1950s; rice is also important in the two regions while new sugar plantations are planned in Kadey and Lom and Djerem Divisions in East Region.

<sup>80</sup> In 1979-1985, 25,000 hectares of rangeland were given by the state to a large agro-pastoral development project in the area of Mindif-Moulvoudaye in the Far North, reducing the possibility of seasonal migrations and leading to the departure of several pastoral groups from the area. See Mélanie Requier-Desjardins, « L'Accès aux pâturages. Une approche économique de la mobilité in L'homme et l'animal dans le bassin du lac Tchad », Actes du colloque du Réseau Méga-Tchad, Orléans, 15-17 octobre 1997, edited by Catherine Baroin and Jean Boutrais (Éditions IRD, 1999).

into a repressive master-slave relationship. It has also been noted that the 1994 Forestry Law does not take into consideration that communities are not necessarily homogeneous entities and an unintended consequence of establishing FCs and ZICGCs has been conflicts between Bantus and Pygmies.<sup>81</sup>

Relations between pastoralists and farmers, too, have often been complementary, both parties mutually benefitting from each other's activities. In North-West Region, for instance, Mbororo herders were dependent on farmers for food supply and access to grazing land. Farmers, on the other hand, relied on the Mbororo for providing manure to their fields and meat which, before their arrival, was available only through hunting and rearing small livestock. While this type of economic complementarity still can be found, new farming practices, such as intercropping, the cultivation of perennial crops and livestock production, and the Mbororo's increased agricultural production, have reduced the need for mutual interaction. A growing competition over land and natural resources has further deteriorated their mutual relationship to the point of becoming conflictive.

### 2.3 Economic poverty

The economies of indigenous peoples have traditionally been based on the resources at hand—hunters-gatherers depended on game and other wild products from the forest, the Montagnards on farm products and the Mbororo on milk and meat from their animals. They could either keep these resources for their own sustenance or exchange/sell them to their non-indigenous neighbors. Today, these economies have undergone fundamental changes all the while indigenous peoples are facing a growing need for cash to pay for social services (health, school), modern amenities (water, electricity) or new technology (mobile phones, scooters in the case of the Mbororo). But discrimination and the lack of basic skills make it difficult for them to find employment. This has left indigenous peoples economically deprived.

For indigenous hunters and gatherers, their traditional ways of life and their local economies have been disrupted by the degradation of their forests brought about by logging and mining, and by the establishment of protected areas that have restricted their mobility. This eventually forced them to leave the forests and end up as landless and abused squatters on the edge of Bantu villages. Here, they have become highly dependent on their Bantu neighbors and often end up working for them on their plantations or forest exploitation sites, under precarious and exploitative labor conditions. In rare cases, some of them are recruited by logging companies working in the region who make use of their knowledge of the forest to locate specific tree species; safari companies may recruit them to accompany sport hunters. But in order to survive, they still to a large extent rely on forest products —such as fish, bush meat and other NTFP. They may also sell whatever surplus they have from their small-scale agricultural activities. The sale of handicrafts (baskets, sculptures, drums, ironworks, etc.) is also a source of revenues.

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<sup>81</sup> Mbile, P., et al., "Alternate Tenure and Enterprise Models in Cameroon: Community Forests in the Context of Community Rights and Forest Landscapes" (Washington: World Agroforestry Centre and Rights and Resources Initiative, 2009), p. 5. [http://www.rightsandresources.org/documents/files/doc\\_1195.pdf](http://www.rightsandresources.org/documents/files/doc_1195.pdf)



The Montagnards have traditionally been able to survive as subsistence farmers, based on their sophisticated indigenous knowledge as well as high and intensive labor requirements.<sup>82</sup> But in the 1960s, they experienced plagues and a series of severe drought periods while their craftworks (iron hoes and pottery) were being outcompeted by industrial products.<sup>83</sup> This difficult situation was used by the government to get thousands of Montagnards to migrate down to the lowlands and become cotton growers. Those who remained were encouraged to grow cash crops (groundnuts, cotton) and raise pigs. In the past years, the need for cash and services has resulted in a pattern of seasonal and more recently permanent outmigration from the area in search of employment and income.<sup>84</sup> This has put their traditional labor intensive agricultural system at risk, and the expansion of commercial cotton may in the long run lead to (fertilizer-based) soil destruction.

The Mbororo have had to adapt their traditional economies to their new migration patterns. When the Wodaabe started migrating to the humid savanna areas, they had to give up breeding goats. At the same time, they experienced that there was little demand for milk products south of the North region. Selling off their cattle therefore soon became their main source of income until it began to undermine their herds. In desperation, the Wodaabe, who despise anything that has to do with farming, started cultivating maize on plots where cattle had been kept. This usually is enough to feed a family for two to four months.<sup>85</sup> In the North-West and Adamaoua, the Jahun and the Aku pastoralists have had similar experiences. But here conditions are more propitious and they have been able to engage in livestock production and more substantial farming in order to compensate for the lost income from milk sales. However, in many other places, cattle epidemics, fatal thunderstorms or a worsened economic situation have left many without cattle. For them, there are two choices: to stay in the bush and try to cope by farming, or to search for other means of livelihood in villages and towns.<sup>86</sup>

#### 2.4. Health and education

Ethnically disaggregated health and education statistics are not available but statistics for the regions in which indigenous peoples are concentrated show great disparities with the rest of the country.

Access to **health services** remains a major concern for many indigenous communities. Inaccessibility to care of health is accentuated by the discrimination observed in health centres, and the high cost of drugs. Public resources are very limited and in regions such as Far North, North and East health infrastructure is insufficient and degraded; there is an acute lack of qualified staff and ratios Doctor/population and Health

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<sup>82</sup> Wouter T. de Groot et al., "A future for the Mandara Mountains, North Cameroon". NIRP Research for Policy Series 14 (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2002), p. 23.; A. H. Barclay Jr. and Gary Eilerts, "Institutional Options for the Mandara Area Development Project October" (1980).

<sup>83</sup> Hallaire, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Barclay Jr. and Eilerts, op. cit.

<sup>85</sup> Jean Boutrais, « Les Savanes Humides », op. cit. (1990).

<sup>86</sup> Tea Virtanen, "The one who has not eaten cannot pray" (n.d.)

Center/population are far below national average level.<sup>87</sup> Most indigenous people are furthermore unable to access health care services because of their remote settlements,<sup>88</sup> their semi-nomadic lifestyles, the substantial costs involved, poor health-care information, low levels of education, fear of discriminatory treatment and lack of ID cards. Many indigenous peoples—like many other Cameroonians—rely on self-medication and traditional medicine.<sup>89</sup> In addition, health centers are far from indigenous communities but even more, national health programs are often not in adequacy with their seasonal way of life. The increasing constraints of access to land, the deterioration of forests as a result of industrial expansion affecting their access to the traditional pharmacopoeia also had negative consequences for their health.

In all the regions inhabited by indigenous peoples, health indicators such as low weight at birth, infant and adolescent mortality, severe chronic malnutrition among children, and the percentage of attended births show considerable disparities with the rest of the country.<sup>90</sup> Indigenous communities also complain of food insecurity and their poor access to safe potable water, sanitation and decent housing conditions, which make the lack of hygiene a part of their health problems. Considering the strong correlation between child mortality and the level of poverty and education of the mother,<sup>91</sup> it can be assumed that infant and adolescent mortality is in general very high among indigenous peoples.

Changes of lifestyle have also affected indigenous peoples' physical and mental health. The Baka and Bagyéli/Bakola who work in plantations, where mosquitoes proliferate, are more exposed to malaria than before. Deprived of bush meat and other forest-based food sources and lacking sustainable income-generating activities, many displaced Baka and Bagyéli/Bakola communities also suffer from hunger,<sup>92</sup> malnutrition and alcoholism which directly impact on their health, child development and life expectancy. The degradation of their forests have also deprived them of their renowned traditional herbal pharmacopoeia, which the Baka, for instance, claim they use to cure many diseases including guinea worm, jaundice, malaria, and diarrhea. Indigenous forest-dwellers also suffer psychologically because of the loss of their forests, which are a vital component of their sense of wellbeing, and mental and spiritual health.<sup>93</sup> For the Wodaabe and the Jahun, who hold agricultural work in contempt, becoming agro-pastoralists and having to do farm work themselves has been a major change in their lives, both physically and mentally.

**In terms of education**, the schooling rate of the indigenous population stands at 9.2% for children aged 3 to 5 years. Despite some progress at the national level, regions like Far North, North and East show much higher

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<sup>87</sup> République du Cameroun, *Annuaire Statistique du Cameroun 2013* (2014), p. 156.

<sup>88</sup> Several international NGOs, like, e.g., Plan Cameroon, provide mobile clinics in some regions.

<sup>89</sup> See République du Cameroun, « EDS-MICS : Enquête Démographique et de Santé à Indicateurs Multiples 2011 » (2012), p. 297.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163 and 126.

<sup>91</sup> République du Cameroun, EDS-MICS 2011, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>92</sup> ILO/ILO PRO, "Indigenous Peoples and the Millennium Development", *op. cit.* (2006), p. 10.

<sup>93</sup> Ohenjo et al., 2006, quoted by Aili Pyhälä, *op. cit.* (2012), p. 26.

ratios for pupils/teachers and pupils/school rooms than the national ratio. Enrolments rates are generally lower for girls and only a small percentage of all school children finish grade six. Indigenous pupils also face multiple challenges such as being regularly teased and marginalized by fellow Bantu students, having to deal with French or English as language of instruction<sup>94</sup> and covering out-of-pocket expenditures. Indigenous peoples living in remote areas or practicing a semi-nomadic way of life are particularly disadvantaged in their access to formal education as no mobile schools or other similar arrangements are available. An additional problem is that many indigenous families depend on their children's work and income and often have a negative perception of the value of education.

### 2.5. The situation of indigenous women and children

Indigenous communities in Cameroon are often patriarchal and traditional, and although women's status and role may vary within the different communities and according to age, most indigenous women are primarily appreciated for the important complementary role they traditionally play within their households and families, whose well-being largely hinges on them. Depending on their ethnic background and ways of life, young girls and married women gather wild plants and berries in the forest, cultivate and harvest the household's fields, tend livestock, milk the cows, process and sell milk products; they are "home builders", erecting the huts and tents their families use; they collect water, fuel wood, prepare food and take care of the children. They make crafts to be used in everyday life and in rituals or to be sold.

Yet, at the same time, most of them suffer multiple discriminations—by their own society for being women, by the society at large for being indigenous, women and poor. Within their own society, they enjoy few rights<sup>95</sup> and some traditional customs, like FGM, discriminate directly against the girl child and women in general. Most have little access to health care and their mortality and morbidity rates are estimated to be higher than the national average. They also have limited access to school education. Among the Baka, most women are illiterate and few girl children attend school. The same applies to Montagnard women and the rate of illiteracy among Mbororo women has been estimated to be 98 per cent or three times higher than the national average.<sup>96</sup> The perception held is often that the girl child should help her mother in her daily chores, or that she will leave the household upon marriage; security reasons may also be evoked if the school

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<sup>94</sup> Several NGO and FBO projects have established Basic Education Centers (CEB) based on the ORA (Observer, Réfléchir et Agir) method that is culturally adapted and uses the children's mother tongue. See ILO/ILO PRO, op. cit., p. 15. Plan Cameroon is working with the Ministry of Basic Education to pilot the use of the Baka language in some primary schools, and hopes to demonstrate an improvement in education outcomes for the Baka who undertake the programme compared to those who attend schools using only the official languages. See Pyhälä, op. cit. (2012) p. 31. Among the Mbororo, many advocate for the use of Fulfulde as the first language of instruction. See Kemdjei Petronilla Kingah "Literacy Development and Impact: The Case of the Mbororo Women in Cameroon" (2014), at [http://www.eadi.org/fileadmin/Documents/Events/General\\_Conference/2014/gc2014-kingah-61.pdf](http://www.eadi.org/fileadmin/Documents/Events/General_Conference/2014/gc2014-kingah-61.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> The right to inheritance, for instance: indigenous women usually have few or no inheritance rights.

<sup>96</sup> According to data collected in 2011 by the Cameroon Indigenous Women Forum (Forum des Femmes Autochtones du Cameroun FFAC) only 50 percent of the girls attend primary school and, over the period 2008-2012, 80 percent were taken out of school by their parents for early and forced marriages. At [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/IFP/Aeisatu\\_Bouba\\_December\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/IFP/Aeisatu_Bouba_December_2012.pdf)

is far away. Another common trait is that they are usually married off at a young age with early and multiple pregnancies as a consequence. This is also the reason why many girl children drop out of school.<sup>97</sup>

The changes experienced by indigenous communities in their livelihoods and general situation have affected the women differently. As members of a society characterized as essentially egalitarian and monogamous, the Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola and Bedzang women have traditionally enjoyed a great deal of gender equality and participated in important family decisions. Baka women have also been highly respected for their ritual role.<sup>98</sup> Sedentarization has reduced the relevance of their traditional skills and knowledge while compelling them to take on other tasks (e.g., farm labour, small scale income generating activities) to which they were not accustomed. It has also exposed them to new forms of discrimination and violent abuses by their non-indigenous neighbors, including rape. They also experience that their men are emulating Bantu men by practicing polygamy and leaving it to their women to work in the fields.

The Montagnard society is patriarchal and polygamous. Traditionally, women participated in the household's subsistence farming according to a male/female dichotomy that assigned them specific tasks.<sup>99</sup> Some of these were very arduous (repairing the terrace walls, carrying water for plants and animals, weeding, etc.); others more satisfying since they had their own fields where they grew specific "female" crops, and had their own separate granaries.<sup>100</sup> Poultry farming and husbandry was their responsibility too. They also participated in the market economy as buyers and sellers, concentrating in the food trade (eggs, vegetables, millet beer). Some women were highly specialized and worked as potters, midwives, ritual experts and curers. A woman could easily divorce and move on to her next husband. The changes experienced by Montagnard women have been threefold: cash products (cotton, pigs and groundnuts) have superseded traditional crops and are the responsibility of the men;<sup>101</sup> outmigration has meant that many women have moved to the plains where they no longer play the same complementary role in the household production; and finally the increased influence of Islam.<sup>102</sup> Today more women than men become Muslims even if their parents may strongly disapprove to the point of repudiating them. Their conversion has many consequences (change of name,

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<sup>97</sup> See Kingah, op. cit. (2014).

<sup>98</sup> ILO/ILO PRO, "Indigenous Peoples and the Millennium Development", op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>99</sup> Scott Maceachern, *Du Kunde: Processes of Montagnard Ethnogenesis in the Northern Mandara Mountains of Cameroon*. Mandaras Publishing (2003), p. 63.

<sup>100</sup> Men too have their "male" crops. In several Montagnard groups, the field rotation system alternate between "women years" when more "female" crops" are grown, and "men years" with more "male crops". Hallaire, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>101</sup> Groundnuts used to be a "female crop", but once a cash crop they became a "male crop". Hallaire, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>102</sup> The influence of Islam among the Montagnards grew after independence, when Cameroon had a Muslim president and job discrimination became an important reason to adopt Islam. After 1984, when Cameroon got a new—and Christian—President, the influence of the Islamic community decreased. See J.C.M. van Santen, "The Spread of Islam in West Africa and Women: Their Changing Position in a North Cameroon Town". In K.v.Dijk and A.M.de Groot (eds.), *Islam and State*. (Leiden: CNWS publications, 1995), p.185ff.

language, praying and sanitary habits, etc.), even if Islam in the mountains seems to have somewhat adjusted to Montagnard customs. The converted women also perceive certain advantages: Muslim women seldom work in the fields, but if they do they are able to sell their products and keep the profits for their own needs;<sup>103</sup> they can inherit and may also divorce even if it is only the man that has the right to repudiate; all girl children receive religious education but also go to secular schools. Finally, being part of the Islamic community is also seen as an advantage since people take better care of their “old and lonely neighbours” than the individualistic Montagnard communities whose compounds are built far apart.<sup>104</sup>

Among the Mbororo, women have traditionally had a subordinate position and everyday relationships between men and women are characterized by reserve and avoidance following the social moral code that demands a lifelong attitude of restraint between wife and husband. Women may have their own cattle,<sup>105</sup> but their herds are never large and women do not participate in major decision making processes within the family (such as sale of cattle, family expenditures and child education) or in the decision making organs within the clan and the community. Their sphere of activities is the home, the “*suudu*”, and the processing and selling of milk products. The latter implies a certain mobility and autonomy since these products are sold on local but also distant markets; the proceedings belong to her.

The change from a nomadic to a more settled agro-pastoralist livelihood has in several ways diminished women’s role and autonomy: women are no longer in charge of building shelters for their families since their semi-sedentarization allows more permanent structures which are built by men (often hired local farmers). Their milking tasks have also been taken over by men.<sup>106</sup> Sedentarization has also been followed by a stronger influence and adherence to Muslim norms. Polygamy has increased both as a practice and in the number of wives. Some women now live in seclusion<sup>107</sup> and many Mbororo women have had to give up selling milk products publicly and travel since it contravenes Islamic gender ideals. As a consequence, the household economy has shifted from the sale of milk to the sale of animals, thus placing economic responsibility on the men, while women have lost their former autonomy and mobility, concentrating instead on household chores.<sup>108</sup> In general, it can be said that the transition from a pastoral subsistence economy to an economy based on market exchange and commercialized production has in many ways left the women disempowered.

When it comes to participating in community meetings or other public events, indigenous women have usually kept in the back without participating actively or have not attended at all. However, over the past

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<sup>103</sup> This does not imply that the women go and sell in the public space: selling is done from their house or by a boy of the household. See J.C.M. van Santen, op. cit., p. 190ff.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>105</sup> Tea Virtanen, “Performance and Performativity in Pastoral Fulbe Culture”. Research Series in Anthropology (University of Helsinki 2003), p. 211.

<sup>106</sup> Tea Virtanem, Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

decade more women have become educated and have settled. This has resulted in indigenous women getting organized, and forming small NGOs; getting elected to municipal councils, etc. Most salient has been the case of the Mbororo women and Mboscuda in particular has not only been able to mobilize Mbororo women, it has also had several prominent women leaders.

Indigenous children are also a vulnerable group. Few children attend pre-school programs and child labor is common throughout the country: according to UNICEF, it concerns 42 percent of children in the age of 5 to 14 years old. In the Far North, this percentage reaches 54 percent<sup>109</sup> and many street children in large cities are reported to come from the north of the country. Among the Baka, children are often taken away by Bantu planters to work for them for very little money and small girls become housemaids in nearby towns.

## 2.6. Cultural changes

The sedentarization process has meant that the Baka, the Bagyéli/Bakola and the Bedzang are under strong pressure from mainstream society to renounce their cultural characteristics and assimilate. Their knowledge and practices are not valued and they are constantly being told that their culture is poorer and “less developed” than other national cultures. This has led to an erosion of their forest-related knowledge and know-how, their hunting skills as well as their cultural values. In the settled indigenous communities, many declare themselves to be Christians and no longer practice traditional rituals. The oral transmission of rites as well as of traditional knowledge no longer takes place systematically and valuable information about, for instance, medicinal plants is going lost. Most resilient to changes seems to be their polyphonic music, which is increasingly gaining international notoriety.<sup>110</sup>

Among the Montagnards, the major cultural changes are due to the increased influence of Islam,<sup>111</sup> based on the perception that Muslims represent progress and innovation.<sup>112</sup> This means that many traditional rituals, celebrations, have disappeared although some old religious practices seem to be followed privately.

The Mbororo pastoralists’ changed ways of life has affected their habitation, marriage procedures,<sup>113</sup> work tasks, the type of cattle they raise, but also the way they coordinate their seasonal movements. This used to be done in co-operation with other camps and lineages; now it is decided within individual three-generation camps, each camp pursuing its own economic interests and the decision-making is now in the hands of the household head, i.e., the father, whose authority has increased.<sup>114</sup> In step with their greater integration into

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<sup>109</sup> République du Cameroun, EDS-MICS 2011, op. cit. (2012), pp. 357ff.

<sup>110</sup> This music is often vocal and composed of four-part polyphonic songs accompanied by one or several drums, wicker rattles, and sometimes hand clapping. See INÉDIT, op. cit. (2000).

<sup>111</sup> Christianity has had much less impact even if Adventist missionaries came as early as in 1928 and Catholic and Protestant missions were established in 1946 in the northern part of the Mandara Mountains.

<sup>112</sup> See Hallaire, op. cit., p. 183; and Maceachern, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>113</sup> See Virtanen, “Performance and Performativity”, op. cit., pp. 123-125; 159-160.

<sup>114</sup> Kossoumna Liba’a, « De la mobilité », op. cit. (2008), p. 112.

sedentary society, the Mbororo pastoralists have also adopted Fulbe villagers' stricter Islamic values and strengthened their practice of Islamic rituals such as the daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan and the seclusion of women. There has also recently been an intra-religious mass conversion to Tijaniyya, an Islamic Sufi brotherhood order<sup>115</sup> which has gained a major position among the culturally and politically marginalised pastoralists.<sup>116</sup> Concurrent with this new emphasis on Islamic values, several Mbororo old cultural manifestations such as the Wodaabe's *Guerewol* festival, the *Wamarde* dance and the Jaahun's *Soro* performance<sup>117</sup> have been criticized for being non-Islamic and licentious, and have in some cases been forbidden (the *Soro*) or strictly regulated.<sup>118</sup>

## 2.7 Security and access to justice

The human rights situation in Cameroon often gives cause for deep concern. Acts of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments by public and other authorities are regularly being reported,<sup>119</sup> including against the indigenous peoples of Cameroon. Due to their low level of literacy and their geographical remoteness, these usually have little knowledge of their constitutional rights or their rights according to conventions ratified by Cameroon.<sup>120</sup> Pressing charges and taking legal action would also require that they understood the language spoken in courts, had significant financial means and socio-political leverage<sup>121</sup> which most indigenous peoples do not have. Their only legal remedy is therefore to refer to the customary law in force

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<sup>115</sup> The Tijaniyya Sufi order was founded in Algeria in 1784; centrally organized and consciously missionary in spirit, it has spread to most of West Africa. Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960-1982), who was a Muslim, officially banned brotherhoods. Today, they have regained a more prominent and open presence. José C.M. Santen "The Tasbirwol (Prayer Beads) under Attack" in *Things: Religion and the Question of Materiality*, edited by Dick Houtman and Birgit Meyer (Fordham University Press: 2012).

<sup>116</sup> This has been explained as the Mbororo's reaction to the severe socio-economic crisis they experience and the political hegemony of the Christian South, which is perceived as ignoring Islamic values and the Islamic lifestyle. Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> The *guerewol* festival includes a kind of beauty contest where young adorned Wodaabe men dance in front of young women; the Mbororo *wamarde* dance involves both men and women. Both of these traditions have much to do with mating, dating, and getting to know possible marriage partners; the *Soro* was originally a beating performance by young Jaahun herders based on their practical skills with the herding staff but had developed into a violent test of manhood.

<sup>118</sup> Tea Virtanen, "Tackling Traditions - Recontextualisation of an Indigenous Youth Dance in Cameroon". Helsinki: Anthropology Department Seminar, University of Helsinki, 16th October 2013.

<sup>119</sup> See CAT, Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture. UN DOC. CAT/C/CMR/CO/4 (2010). At <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/CMIndex.aspx>

<sup>120</sup> See, UPR, Summary of Stakeholders' Submissions prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Cameroon, UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/16/CMR/3 (2013c), para. 102.

<sup>121</sup> Michaela Pelican, "Getting along in the Grassfields: interethnic relations and identity politics in northwest Cameroon". PhD Thesis (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2006), p. 196.

in the region in which they live.<sup>122</sup> This law is based on the customary law of the dominant ethnic group in the region and administered by its leadership structure (e.g., the chiefs). This means that abuses committed against indigenous peoples often remain without remedies or redress.

The Baka, the Bagyéli/Bakola and the Bedzang are particularly vulnerable and recent reports have denounced actions such as arrest, extort, harass and even torture committed by wildlife guards and the soldiers that accompany them on patrols.<sup>123</sup> Attacks, violent evictions and general violence are often done by acts of international INGOs and international agencies acting to preserve the wildlife, whose actions often remain unpunished.

The Mbororo pastoralists have been victims of the violence that reigns in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, and they have suffered assassinations, maiming and confiscation of livestock, kidnapping for ransom, forced displacements, torture and inhumane and degrading treatment from the secessionist armed groups. The security situation is challenged by the frequent incursions and violent attacks by Nigerian Boko Haram soldiers. According to the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association's (MBOSCUDA) regional office, over the 2014 to 2020 period, 2,437 Mbororo were taken hostage in the East Region, 69 were killed and 288 were released after a ransom was paid.

## 2.8. Public participation

All three indigenous peoples of Cameroon are grossly underrepresented in political, administrative and decision-making structures. At the local level, they are often subjugated to the authority of different cultures and religions. Contributing causal factors include lack of education, language issues, remoteness, nomadism, poverty, and unfamiliarity with the concept of voting. But discrimination and exclusion by political and ethnic elites at all levels of political life and decision-making structures too are prominent factors, even if the situation has improved thanks to the Electoral Code that requires electoral lists to take into account the "sociological components of the constituency concerned".<sup>124</sup>

As largely egalitarian societies, the Baka, Bakyeli/Bakola and Bedzang have no tradition for chiefs or chiefdoms and their traditional authorities—the council of elders<sup>125</sup> and a "chief", usually chosen for his wisdom and advanced age—are not recognized by mainstream society. The fact that their villages are not officially recognized also means that they have no councils and that they are administratively and politically represented by the Bantu villages to which they are associated. However, as noted above in Section 2.2.3, some 20 Bagyéli "*chefferies de communauté*" have been established and in the 2007 elections, Baka and

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<sup>122</sup> Customary law—when not "repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience"—is legally recognized and enforceable, and remains in force in rural areas. See UN HRC Report on Minority Issues, op. cit., paras. 32-34.

<sup>123</sup> Survival International, "A history of land theft". <http://www.survivalinternational.org/about/southeast-cameroon>

<sup>124</sup> UN HRC, Report on Minority Issues, op. cit., (2013), paras. 29-31.

<sup>125</sup> This council only convenes on specific issues, mainly related to marriage, initiation rites, etc. See World Bank, IPP641, *Projet Filets Sociaux au Cameroun* (2012b), p. 35.



Bagyelli/Bakola succeeded getting elected to municipal councils in East and South regions, and first official recognition took place in 2021.

Montagnard communities have no paramount chiefs; indeed, their chiefs are commonly considered third-class chiefdoms and under the authority of the Fulbe chiefs (*lamibé* – plural form of *lamido*) from the lowlands; most local officials are Muslims, many municipalities are headed by Muslims. This leaves the Christian and Animist Montagnards with little decision-making power or authority over community affairs that affect them and their lands.<sup>126</sup>

The Mbororo in the three northern regions of the country are—like the rest of the population—under the jurisdiction of a Muslim chiefdom system, the *lamidat*, that dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The lamidats are headed by a *lamido*—a spiritual and traditional ruler appointed by the central government from “an aristocratic family”—and a council of ministers. Most lamibé (often called “kings” or sultans) have traditionally been powerful feudal lords; today their power has to some extent been curtailed by party politics<sup>127</sup> but at the local municipality level, they remain important decision makers together with farmers, who also represent an important number of votes.<sup>128</sup> The representation of the Mbororo at that level and within political parties, on the other hand, remains either inexistent or marginal,<sup>129</sup> due to their lack of literacy that limits their understanding of official texts (in French and English), their way of life, etc. They also often have a conflictive relationship with the lamibé because of the cattle related taxes being imposed on them. Issues concerning the Mbororo are therefore not adequately treated by these municipal instances.

The situation of the Mbororo of the North-West and West regions has developed somewhat differently. Due to their relatively recent immigration, they have for many years been considered to be “strangers” without any political rights; at the same time, their moral code, *Pulaaku*, gave them a sense of otherness and superiority which further kept them isolated. Organized in small clan units under the leadership of an ardo'en, they were difficult to mobilize as a group. The creation in 1995 of the Didango Lamidat in West on the model of the northern Fulbe lamidats was the first tentative of a political unification, soon followed by the creation in 2001 of the Sabga Lamidat in North-West.<sup>130</sup> Concurrently, the democratization process of the late 1990s led to a political wake-up call and today the Mbororo of the North-West and West are increasingly involved in politics. Besides a more favorable legal-institutional environment, two other factors have been decisive for this political surge: the Mbororo's structural assimilation by all competing political parties in the

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<sup>126</sup> UN HRC, Report on Minority Issues, op. cit., (2013), para. 29; Alawadi Zelao, « La situation des minorités Montagnardes au Cameroun » (n.d.) [http://www.minorityvoices.org/force\\_download.php?file](http://www.minorityvoices.org/force_download.php?file). (accessed 25.01.2015).

<sup>127</sup> Kossoumna Liba'a et al., op. cit. (2009), p. 195.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. Out of 360 mayors, there is one Mbororo mayor in the Adamaoua Region. See “Cameroon: Mbororo minority make a surge into councils in the North-West Region”, 15 Oct. 2013 at <http://www.cameroon-info.net/>

<sup>130</sup> Samuel Hickey, “Caught at the Crossroads”, op. cit. (2007), p. 98. These lamidats are constantly challenged by neighboring chiefs and influential politicians. In 2007, the government imposed its own candidate who allegedly was backed by the powerful billionaire politician, Danpillo. See UPR, Joint NGO Report (2013d), p. 6.

North-West Region; and the activities of their social movement, MBOSCUDA, that has played a major role in making the Mbororo aware of their civic and political rights.<sup>131</sup>

### 3. Laws of the Republic of Cameroon and indigenous peoples

#### 3.1 The Constitution and indigenous peoples

The current Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon is based on Law No. 96-06 of 18 January 1996. The Preamble further declares “that the human person, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief, possesses inalienable and sacred rights”; and that “the State shall ensure the protection of minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with the law. As noted previously, it is not clear to whom the term “indigenous” refers to. In its Preamble it refers to international human rights instruments as sources of standards and in Article 45, it is stated that “Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement”.

#### 3.2. Other relevant legislation and policies

Despite numerous recommendations by international human rights institutions, Cameroon has not yet drafted a bill on Indigenous Peoples. The main laws that have an impact on indigenous peoples concerns access to land and natural resources. The 1974 Land Law and the 1994 Forest Law therefore remain the two laws that are most relevant for indigenous peoples. Both are currently under revision, a lengthy process that has been closely monitored by international human rights institutions and Cameroonian civil society, who have consistently criticized the two laws for their negative impact on indigenous peoples.

The **Land Law** has been criticized, inter alia, for (1) not taking into account the traditions, customs and land tenure systems of indigenous peoples, or their way of life since it makes the recognition of land ownership and compensation conditional on land development; (2) for not fully applying the right to consultation and the right to prior, free and informed consent in projects and initiatives concerning indigenous peoples or affecting their rights.<sup>132</sup> The land policy reform process started in 2012 and is being led by the Ministry of State Property and Land Tenure. A wide range of land actors, including the traditional rulers, NGOs such as MBOSCUDA and CED, and CSOs have been actively participating in formulating position papers and strategies. A growing demand by international and large-scale local investors for productive land has further increased the vulnerability of indigenous and other poor communities, making a review of the land governance framework urgently needed.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibrahim Mouiche, « Démocratisation et intégration sociopolitique des minorités ethniques au Cameroun : Entre dogmatisme du principe majoritaire et centralité des partis politiques » (Dakar : CODESRIA 2012), p. 198. MBOSCUDA’s national president, El Hadj Jaji Manu Gidado, is from the North-West. He was in 2013 appointed Senator (Alternate) by the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

<sup>132</sup> CERD, Concluding Observations Cameroon, op. cit. (2010), para. 16; CESCR, Concluding Observations: Cameroon, op. cit. (2019), para. 12-13; ACHPR, Concluding Observations: Cameroon (2014), paras. 72-75.

**The Forest Law** has been criticized for giving the Minister of Forests, Wildlife and Fisheries the possibility to suspend—in the name of public interest and without consulting the affected populations—the exercise of rights of usage for a limited or fixed period (Art 8(2)). This is often in violation of indigenous peoples’ rights to free, prior and informed consent.<sup>133</sup> The law has been under revision since 2010, however, the revision process has been seriously criticized for failing to guarantee the participation and consultation of indigenous and forest peoples.

Law 85-09 of 1985 concerning compulsory acquisitions of land in the public interest is another piece of legislation which has a serious impact on indigenous peoples. Under Decree 87/1872 of 1987 implementing the law of 1985, the government may allocate rights of use under concessions or converting national land into private ownership, for example. Compensation may be in cash or in kind but is limited to direct and verifiable damage caused by the expropriation. On many occasions, are been forcibly expelled from their ancestral territories, with no compensation.<sup>134</sup>

The Ministry of Social Affairs has produced a draft document entitled the “National Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples” (PNDPA), which aim is to fight poverty and social inequalities among Indigenous Peoples.<sup>135</sup> The main objective of the Development Plan is to guide, supervise and coordinate the different initiatives of public administrations, civil society organizations, and the technical and financial partners for effective and efficient actions in favour of the socio-economic development and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples.

#### 4. Climate Change Policies

The earliest signs of climate change in Cameroon can be traced back to the period before 1990, and in 2005, health, agriculture (specifically in the Sudano-Sahelian zone) and the country’s coastal zone were identified as key vulnerabilities.<sup>136</sup> For the Baka and Bagyéli/Bakola communities, climate change such as prolonged dry seasons, less rainfall, and dried-up water sources have resulted in, inter alia, scarcity of game, emergence of new insect pests, failed crop harvest and the disruption of wild fruit tree production. This undermines their health, their food self-sufficiency and their socio-economic situation in general.

The Montagnards and the Mbororo in the north of the country have likewise been affected by extreme weather hazards such as longer drought spells, intense flush floods and more severe desertification and biodiversity loss. Agriculture and livestock production are the most affected by temperature changes, and

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<sup>133</sup> CESCR, Concluding Observations: Cameroon, *op. cit.* (2019), para. 12-13.

<sup>134</sup> See more information: IIED. 2018. Towards fair and effective legislation on compulsory land acquisition in Cameroon. Briefing IIED, CED. URL: <https://landportal.org/library/resources/towards-fair-and-effective-legislation-compulsory-land-acquisition-cameroon>

<sup>135</sup> The draft document was presented during the 4th National Solidarity and Entrepreneurship Week, which took place in December 2020.

<sup>136</sup> See Republic of Cameroon, Cameroon’s First National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (CMEF, 2005a), p. 42ff.

agriculture production is projected to decrease by between 10 and 25 per cent depending on the warming scenario.<sup>137</sup> Mbororo have traditionally relied on the knowledge of their elders and traditional predictive systems when planning seasonal migrations.<sup>138</sup> Climate change is undermining these systems. The late or early arrival of the rainy season, for instance, has made it difficult to plan and adds one more facet to the insecurity the Mbororo are facing in general. Climate change risks have been predicted to differ between the country's diverse ecosystems and people in the north are already increasingly coping with severe dry spells and periodic flooding.<sup>139</sup>

As part of its the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) prescribed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) within the framework of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the government is committed to reduce emissions by 32% by 2035 from its projected baseline of 2010 emissions. Due to the very significant area of the country covered by rainforest, the forest sector is expected to contribute significantly to the realisation of this objective.<sup>140</sup> The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Participants Committee approved Cameroon's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) in 2013, Cameroon finalised its REDD+ National Strategy in 2018.<sup>141</sup> The REDD+ process in Cameroon is aiming at being inclusive, with Indigenous Peoples, civil society organisations, government, research institutions, private sector and local communities listed as major stakeholders. It has a pilot committee, which is the highest body of the REDD+ process. This pilot committee includes an Indigenous representative. The platform "*REDD+ et les Peuples Autochtones du Cameroun*" (PREPAC) was created to enable Indigenous Peoples to participate effectively and efficiently in the REDD+ process. Under this platform, Indigenous Peoples are entitled to be a part of the funding to finalise capacity building initiatives and develop tools for monitoring ongoing REDD+ pilot projects in or around their communities. Other relevant policies include the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT VPA).<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Republic of Cameroon, Cameroon's First National Communication, op. cit. (2005a), p. 59.

<sup>138</sup> See Ibrahim Hindou Oumarou et al. "Knowledge Systems and Climate Change Adaptation Where the Mbororo Peoples and Official Science meet". Paper presented at the ARDD, CoP17, Durban, South Africa, 3 December 2011. Viewed 20.12.2014 at <http://www.iapad.org/publications/ppgis/mbororo-case-study.pdf>

<sup>139</sup> The earliest signs of climate change in Cameroon can be traced back to the period before 1990 when sharp variations in climatic conditions started affecting activities directly and indirectly in almost every sector of the economy, including agriculture. See NPCA (NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency), Cameroon Consultation Report (2012).

<sup>140</sup> The rainforests cover approximately 46.3 % of the national territory and account for 11 % of Congo Basin forests, with Cameroon having the third largest forest range in the Congo Basin, after DRC and Gabon.

<sup>141</sup> The evaluation of the Readiness package was satisfactory, making Cameroon eligible for an additional grant from the World Bank through the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

<sup>142</sup> The FLEGT VPA is a legally binding trade agreement between the European Union (EU) and a timber-exporting country outside the EU. A VPA aims to ensure that all timber and timber products destined for the EU market from a partner country comply with the laws of that country. It can also be noted that in addition to promoting trade in legal timber, VPAs address the causes of illegality there by improving forest governance and law enforcement.

## 5. International and regional human rights treaties and instruments

The Republic of Cameroon has signed and ratified a wide range of international and regional human rights instruments including a number of international environmental conventions. In 2007, Cameroon was one of the more than 30 African countries that voted for the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Cameroon has however not ratified ILO Convention No.169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

### 5.1. International human rights treaties

Cameroon is party to six of the nine core international human rights treaties<sup>143</sup>

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)<sup>144</sup>
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and its Optional Protocol CCPR-OP-1<sup>145</sup>
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol<sup>146</sup>
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)<sup>147</sup>
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its optional protocol CRC-OP-AC.<sup>148</sup>

Cameroon has ratified several universal human rights instruments related to armed conflicts, a number of UN conventions and several UNESCO conventions of importance to indigenous peoples.

Cameroon is a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and has ratified 49 of its conventions, including C29 and C105 (on forced labor), C100 and C111 (on discrimination within employment and occupation), and C138 and C182 (on child labor), which are specifically relevant for indigenous peoples.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Cameroon has only signed the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED); the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol CRPD-OP.

<sup>144</sup> Cameroon has not accepted Art. 14 on individual complaint procedure.

<sup>145</sup> Cameroon has not signed CCPR-OP2-DP on death penalty

<sup>146</sup> Cameroon has accepted CEDAW-OP, Arts. 8-9 on inquiry procedure.

<sup>147</sup> Cameroon has accepted the Convention's Art. 22 on individual complaint procedure and its Art. 20 on inquiry procedure. It has only signed CAT's optional protocol.

<sup>148</sup> Cameroon has only signed optional protocol CRC-OP-SC.

<sup>149</sup> For analysis, see: "Les peuples autochtones au Cameroun : guide à l'intention des professionnels des medias", Bureau international du Travail, 2015.

Cameroon is also Party to the main international conventions and agreements related to environment, biodiversity and climate change as well as intellectual property rights. These include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the United Nations collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD). The country has voluntarily joined the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) and a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) was ratified in 2011.

## 5.2 Regional human rights instruments

Cameroon is member of the African Union and has ratified or signed the following African human rights instruments:

- The Constitutive Act of the African Union
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)
- The African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child
- The Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
- The African Union Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa
- The African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption

Cameroon has only signed the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

## 5.3 Other relevant regional instruments

Cameroon has ratified several other African conventions and is member of a number of regional institutions, including the Economic Community for Central African States (CEEAC/ECCAS), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC/EMCAS), the Economic and Statistic Observatory for sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) and the Bank of Central African States (BEAC/BCAS). Cameroon is member of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and a signatory of the Convergence Plan for improved management and conservation of forests in Central Africa as well as to a number of forest-related and environmental institutions.

# 6. National and grass-roots organizations

## 6.1. Governmental Human Rights Institutions

**The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF)** was established in 1990. Recent legislation has improved its compliance with the Paris Principles, but it has been pointed out that the Commission has little focus on the issue of indigenous peoples.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> UN HRC, Report on Minority Issues (2014), p. 6.

## 6.2. National and local non-governmental organizations

There are a number of small and medium sized indigenous associations/CBOs representing the Baka, the Bagyéli/Bakola and the Bedzang. One of the oldest is **CODEBABIK (Comité de développement des Bagyéli des arrondissements de Bipindi et Kribi)** (1995) and has been coordinated for many years by Jacques Ngoun. It is based in Yaoundé, with branches in Lolodorf and Bertoua, and has for many years collaborated with **Planet Survey Environnement et Développement Durable**, an environmental organization. Many of the other "Pygmy" organizations are members of the national network of "Pygmy", **RACOPY** created in 1996.

**RACOPY (Réseau Recherche Actions Concertées Pygmées)** is based in Yaoundé and assists the indigenous Baka, Bagyéli/Bakola and Bedzang with their self-development and their voluntary inclusion into political, economic, social and cultural life as citizens of the country. Its members hold general meetings three times a year and work together in "geographical hubs". They are located in the East, Central and South Regions of Cameroon. Its members include, among others: **ASBAK** (Lomié); **CADDAP** (Abong-Mbang); and **ADEBAKA** and **ABAGUENI** (Djourn), **ABAWONI** (Mintom), **ADEBAGO of AKOM II** and **BACUDA** (Kribi).

**OKANI** is a community-based indigenous NGO located in the East Region of Cameroon. OKANI works to secure the rights and promote sustainable livelihoods of indigenous communities in Cameroon's forests and works in support of their collective bodies known as the Council of Elders: <https://www.okani-cm.org/>

The Mbororo, in particular those from the North West and West regions, are represented by

**MBOSCUDA (Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association)**, which has been working since 1987 (officially recognized in 1992) to empower the Mbororo people to achieve sustainable and equitable development on their own terms and to secure their human, social and economic rights as valued active citizens of the Republic of Cameroon. MBOSCUDA is a National Organisation for the Mbororo peoples of Cameroon with Regionals offices in 7 of the 10 Regions of Cameroon. The head office is in Yaounde.

There are a number of Mbororo associations in Cameroon including: Lelewal Foundation, SAMUSA, MBOYASCAM, ASSEMCAM, AJEMBO and Sura Mama.

**FFAC (Forum des Femmes Autochtones du Cameroun)** works to mobilise indigenous women to take part in decision making organs that can have impact on their rights.

Several committed Cameroonian NGOs are also member of RACOPY:

**CED (Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement)** created in 1995, works on issues related to forestry and environment, promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in Cameroon and Central Africa. Contact: Samuel NGUIFFO. <http://www.cedcameroun.org>

**FODER (Forêts et développement rural)** has since 2002 worked to contribute to environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources; and to fight against all forms of marginalisation and discrimination.

**INADES FORMATION** is part of the pan African Institute for Economic and Social Development and has been working in Cameroon since 1970 for the economic and social advancement of rural populations. The office

in Bamenda covers activities in the West, South West, North West Regions and part of Littoral Region. <http://cameroun.inadesfo.net/-Inades-Formation-Cameroun-.html?lang=en>

**Plan Cameroun** (Bertoua) is part of Plan International and has been working in Cameroon since 1996, helping poor children (including Baka children) to access their rights to health, education, livelihoods and protection. One of their projects is called "Baka rights and dignity". <https://plan-international.org/where-we-work/africa/cameroon/>

**CERAD (Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour le Développement Durable en Afrique centrale)**, is a research center focusing on environmental issues and the situation of indigenous forest peoples. Director: Patrice Bigombe Logo. Contact: [ftpp.cameroun@camnet.cm](mailto:ftpp.cameroun@camnet.cm)

**Laimaru Network:** Laimaru is an umbrella Network that brings together 20 indigenous organisations including MBOSCUDA providing information, networking, capacity building and representation. [www.laimaru.org](http://www.laimaru.org)

The indigenous organizations of Cameroon are also member of regional networks such as **REPALEAC** (Réseau des populations autochtones et locales pour la gestion durable des écosystèmes forestiers d'Afrique Centrale), **REJEFAC** (Réseau des Jeunes pour les Forêts d'Afrique Centrale), **AIWO** (African Indigenous Women Organization) and **REPAR** (Réseau des Parlementaires pour la Gestion Durable des Ecosystèmes Forestiers d'Afrique Centrale).

There are a number of Montagnards organisations including: **Committee for the Development of Kirdi Montagnards** (CDM) and **TAKOMA**.

## 7. International organizations

External financial support to Cameroon has sharply declined since 2007 when net ODA received amounted to almost 10% of GNI, with net ODA received reported at 3.4388 % in 2019, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources.

### 7.1 UN agencies

The United Nations system in Cameroon is led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the designated representative of the Secretary-General for development operations. The country team works together, based on a "Delivering as One" approach, customized to respond more effectively to Cameroon's development priorities and humanitarian needs, as mandated by the United Nations. Currently, the United Nations system in Cameroon is made up of 22 agencies, funds, and resident and non-resident programs.

The UN System in the Republic of Cameroon is represented by the following agencies and offices: FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), ILO (International Labor Organization), IMF (International Monetary Fund) UNAIDS (Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS), UN OHCHR (UN Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa) UNDP (UN Development Programme), UNESCO, UNFPA (UN Population Fund), UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees), UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), UNIDO (UN Industrial Development Organization) UNODC (UN Organisation on Drugs and Crimes), UN Women, World Bank, WFP (World Food Programme), and WHO (World Health Organization).



## 7.2 International financial institutions

### 7.2.1. The World Bank

The World Bank Group's portfolio in Cameroon comprises 21 national operations financed by IDA, the Global Environment Facility, and trust funds, with a net commitment of roughly \$2.9 billion. The World Bank has developed a Country Partnership Framework with Cameroon for the 2017-2021 period. This Partnership Framework is aligned with the objectives of the government's national development strategy for 2020-2030, and has 12 objectives grouped into three action areas: (1) Eliminate poverty in rural areas, in particular in the northern regions; (2) Strengthen infrastructure and develop the private sector; (3) Improve governance.

### 7.2.2 - Other international and regional development banks and funds

The African Development Fund (AfDF), the Central African States Development Bank (BDEAC), Cameroon is one of the least aid-dependent countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. International partners such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Union (EU), the Agence française de développement (AFD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the Banque de Développement des États de l'Afrique Centrale (BDEAC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations, and Germany have strengthened their coordination mechanisms in order to further the Paris Declaration and Busan agendas for Cameroon.

## 7.3. International NGOs

Several INGOs work in Cameroon, some in collaboration with UN or bilateral agencies, others with their own development programs. They include, among others ACTED (Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement, France), IECD (Institut Européen de Coopération et Développement) Action Aid, Cordaid (Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid), CARE International, Plan International, Médecins d'Afrique, Médecins Sans Frontières, SNV (Netherlands Development Organization). Environmental organizations include IUCN (The World Conservation Union), Rainforest Foundation UK, US AID/CARPE (The Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment), Forests Monitor (UK) that monitors the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society), WRI (the World Resources Institute), and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)

## 8. IFAD/IPAF projects and operations in the Republic of Cameroon

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[https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/w/country/cameroon#anchor-projects\\_and\\_programmes](https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/w/country/cameroon#anchor-projects_and_programmes)

IPAF projects:

[https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/41839851/ipaf\\_africa\\_e.pdf/73fe84da-7916-b06b-6f38-01484a056426](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/41839851/ipaf_africa_e.pdf/73fe84da-7916-b06b-6f38-01484a056426)

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