

## Analog forestry: pathway for biodiversity conservation and agro-enterprise development

### Strategies To Promote Good Working Relationships Between Farmers And Grazers In Bafut, North West Region Cameroon

I am very happy to receive all of you here in my home for this important meeting at Ntaya. I am particularly happy to see farmers and cattle owners coming together to seek solutions to problems that affect them. We have taken the right step of beginning to seek solutions to our problems rather than waiting for, or calling outsiders to come and bring us more problems. I believe that together we can address the issues of theft of cattle, crop damages and unnecessary friction at community level before seeking outside intervention for issues we cannot manage. Nothing stops us, farmers and cattle owners, from living and working together like brothers and sisters.

**Aladji Daoh:** Chairperson of the Njimuya Water Management Dialogue Committee

**You can also partner with CENDEP**

#### **Our Contact:**

[cendep2001@yahoo.com](mailto:cendep2001@yahoo.com) .

Website: [www.cendep.org](http://www.cendep.org)



Dear Readers,

In the course of implementing phase I of our project to restore degraded watersheds in Bafut in the North West Region of Cameroon we noticed that conflicts over the use of communal resources were a major setback to our efforts. One of the major activities during the second phase of the project was therefore conflict resolution. In February 2012 the Akofungubah Water Management Dialogue Committee, now the Njimuya Water Management Dialogue Committee was created during a workshop on conflict resolution. This committee is responsible for the execution of the action points that were decided during the workshop. Though not regularly, this committee has been meeting on their own to identify and address farmer grazier problems. In September and October 2012, some progress was made. We witnessed the organization of a heavily attended community meeting comprising 45 participants, representing various stakeholder groups. The aim of the meeting was to look into ways to promote good working relationship between farmers and graziers in their communities. A neighbouring village, Mulueh, that is not part of project, was invited for the meeting because cattle from this community contribute in the problems encountered in the project villages. All the speakers at the meeting emphasized the need for farmers and graziers to live like one.

During this meeting participants identified and discussed issues that did not come up during the conflict resolution workshop such as:

- Damages resulting from the negligence of lazy herdsmen who allow cattle to destroy crops and trees
- Need to obtain permission from land owners before using their land for grazing, farming and other purposes
- Need to immediately report damages to government officials such as the Divisional Officer or his representative, traditional rulers, Ardo (Muslim leader), Agriculture-extension workers and
- Need to control the entry and exit of cattle into the community in an effort to reduce theft

It was agreed that if all these is done combined with the knowledge obtained at the workshop, the number of conflicts, time and the cost of resolving these conflicts will be greatly reduced.

An in-depth analysis was done of the causes of crop damages in the community. These causes were categorized into four groups namely damages resulting from negligence of herdsmen, damages due to cattle owners, damages resulting from animals from other communities, damages due to farming in grazing areas and no land use plan for the community.

**Negligence of herdsmen:** The herdsmen it was remarked do not report damages to animal owners. These damages result from the negligence of the herdsmen but the blame always goes to the animal owners who are ignorant of the situation. These herdsmen do not accept to compensate crop owners because they think that it is the duty of their employers.

**Damages due to cattle owners:** Most cattle owners have not constructed night paddocks for animals to prevent cattle from straying at night. Some, just simply intimidate poor crop farmers saying they can buy their way with if they sell one or more of their animals. Some cows actually have problems i.e. are very obstinate and always break fences to look for food. Some cattle owners employ people of dubious characters, some of whom are actually accused of theft in the communities.

**Damages resulting from animals from other communities:** Sometimes it is very difficult to know when the damages took place and by which herd of cattle especially for damages that occur at night. Grazers from neighbouring areas like Sabga graze their animals in the communities and do not contribute to the development of the area. When damages are caused, it is difficult to meet the owners of these animals to inform him of the damages and to obtain compensation.

One of the participants, Malam Agen, reported that a strange cattle herd was feeding on his grazing land without his knowledge and the number was more than the carrying capacity of that land. It was agreed and resolved that the cattle owner be identified and the number of cattle on the land reduced to avoid degradation.

**Damages due to farming in grazing areas:** Some farms are in the grazing areas and some animals are in the farming areas. There have been no formal agreement amongst farmers and grazers and the community have not been organized to give room for all farmers, grazers, etc. the crops and animals are ours, so we are to care for all of them. Rain causes some of these animals to stray out of their paddocks and the solution to this problem is to construct large and strong paddocks.

It was observed that some of the farmers who cultivate near water sources do not respect regulations and as such cause destruction to the planted trees through the fires they set. It was agreed that further sensitization be done through announcements in public places like markets, churches etc. If changes are not observed these farmers would be banned from farming in the area. They would only be allowed to farm if they agree to stop the use of fire, and protect planted trees.

The participants also examined the ways they have been coping with these problems as well as proposed solutions

✓ **Controlling theft in the community;**

It was agreed that all cattle owners verify the identity of their herdsmen and notify the quarter heads and Aldos (leaders of Fulani cattle owners). Since people will be afraid to commit crimes once they know they will be identified. The source of meat and food sold in the community should be verified to reduce theft of cattle and food crops. Henceforth all cases of theft should be reported to the community leaders.

✓ **Security of crops from animal destruction**

- Farmers and grazers that are working close to each other should jointly construct fences to stop the destruction of crops by cattle.

- All the herdsmen should respect and lock all control gates after passing in and out of restricted areas
- Fixed boundaries should be made for cattle and farms
- Grazing should be done by community members' in order to prevent and monitor strangers like those from Sabga from grazing in the community lands.
- Control of animal entry and exit into the community. Local herdsmen should monitor and report presence of foreign animals in the community

In addition it was proposed that a census of all cattle owners should be made. This will help in identifying newcomers or grazers from neighbouring villages. The list of grazers will be given to the Aldos, chiefs and quarter heads and the Chairperson of the Dialogue committee.

The committee will use all legal means to cause cattle owners to compensate for damages caused by their cattle.

Concerning problems caused by pigs, fowls and goats, it was agreed that all pigs be confined in their styles or pens while fowls, goats and dogs should be left to stray.

✓ ***Other matters & Closing remarks***

Protection of the water catchment remained the responsibility of the community. It was agreed that the water management committee should continue to oversee the protection of the catchment by planting more trees. Unidentified cattle should be impounded by the community. Damages that were already evaluated should still be compensated as agreed

News compiled by **Youndjie Koleoko Gabriel** (Project leader)

Contributors: Limshu Augustine & Wirsiy Eric F.