



North West Development Authority in the Development of the Northwest Region of Cameroon, 1981-2019

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the contributions of the Northwest Development Authority (NWDA) with its French acronym as MIDENO[1], to the development of the Northwest region of Cameroon through the Grassfields Participatory Decentralized Rural Development Project (GP-DERUDEP) and Livestock and Fisheries Development Project (LIFIDEP). The research was conducted by exploiting primary and secondary sources. Primary sources comprised of oral interviews. Secondary sources constituted published and unpublished books, dissertations and articles in journals. The study argues that MIDENO fell short in an ambitious government developmental agenda in the North West Region but more could be achieved in the near future if government policy in this domain is revisited. In its finding, both GP-DERUDEP and LIFIDEP served as effective avenues of intervention and meeting the objectives of MIDENO in the domain of infrastructure, livestock and fisheries development in the Northwest region but fell short of expectations. In its commitment to meet such ambitious developmental objectives, MIDENO through its different executing agencies faced several challenges. It is therefore necessary for government to revisit its development strategy within MIDENO and other developmental structures in order to achieve meaningful sustainable improvements in the prolonged state of economic quagmire shared by all rural milieus in the country.

Keywords: MIDENO, LIFIDEP, GP-DERUDEP, Development, Northwest Region, Cameroon.

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INTRODUCTION

Persistent economic recession has characterized the process of economic development in Third World Countries in the last five decades or so[2]. The search for best organizational arrangements to promote local economic development has been a significant task for municipal governments and their partners for several decades now. Besides, many local governments and their regional and national governments have innovated organizationally over the past twenty years to create new development tools and development agencies, and other entities that have some specific tasks in pursuing their development agendas. To Mountford, the first of such Development Agencies were established in Europe after the Second World War as a response to place-based crisis caused by war damage, industrial decline and dereliction. In France, Germany and Belgium development agencies were set up with the intention of re-developing damaged and derelict sites and triggering the process of economic re-stimulation. Moreover, there has also been a continued process of re-inventing and updating the role of development agencies in places where they already existed by changing their focus of intervention and altering which tools are applied or by disbanding the old generation of Development Agencies and creating new ones[3]. The premise behind the establishment of Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDAs) according to Khambuli was that they are sub-national institutions that have the necessary capacity to drive the developmental local government agenda[4]. It is from this line of academic debate that this paper delves into the contributions of NWDA/MIDENO to the socio-economic development of the Northwest region of Cameroon.

¹ *Mission Pour Le Development de la Nord Ouest*. It is the French version of the North West Development Authority. Widely, the NWDA is known by its French acronym MIDENO. This study therefore cues with the popularity that this acronym has enjoyed against its English version.

² Aloysius NyuyemkaNgalim and Canute A. Ngwa, "The Heifer Cameroon (HC) as an Agent of Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development: The Case of Bui Division, Cameroon Since 1986", *LAPAI Journal of Humanities*, 128-146.

³ Debra Mountford, "Organizing for Local Development: The Role of Local Development Agencies, *Summary Report*, OECD, (2009), 26-27, www.OECD.org, accessed on 11th January 2021.

⁴ Isaac Khambuli, "The Role of Local Economic Development Agencies in South Africa's Developmental State Ambitions" *Local Economy* Vol.33, No.3 (2018), 287-306, Journal.sagepub.com, Accessed on 11th January 2021.

Contextualizing Mideno

In 1981, the government of Cameroon created MIDENO in the hope of enhancing social and economic development in the North West Region. Located in the Western Highlands of Cameroon, the region lies between latitude 5°40 and 7° to the north of the equator, and between longitude 9°45 and 11°10 to the east of the meridian [5]. It is bordered to the south west by the South West Region, to the east by Adamawa Region and the north by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The study area covers the country's Grassfields Region which according to the Rural Occupancy Plan spans a total area of 17812 km² being the third most populated region in Cameroon, with a population of about 1.985 million inhabitants. It comprises of seven divisions, 32 communes and 560 villages[6]. It enjoys a mild climate with abundant rains averaging 2500ml per year, adequate enough to boost sustainable crop farming and livestock breeding.

The North West Region has the equatorial climate. The region has two distinct seasons; the dry and rainy seasons. The rainy season is the longest and starts from March to November. The dry season is usually described within the context of changing environmental conditions as severe, characterized by drought that affect both crop cultivation and livestock rearing. Such prolonged drought usually necessitates irrigation as alternative means of securing water for both crop cultivation and enclosed livestock breeding. Due to such alternating seasons, crop cultivation in the North West is mostly carried out within the months of the rainy season; such conducive condition are adequate enough to secure bounty harvest of crops and ensures adequate fattening of livestock. The rainy season provides cattle with abundant pasture, accounting for why most calves are born during this time of the year. However, the droughts that characterize the dry season usually necessitate irrigation[7] Generally, high fluctuations in average rainfall and temperatures over the last 12 years particularly in the North West Region of Cameroon which is considered as one of the food baskets of the country has raised concerns from government and individuals[8].

The agricultural practices in the region were heterogeneous with more than six in number. Crop association was estimated to be carried out by almost 90% of farmers in Donga Mantung Division, 95% of farmers in Momo, 91% of such farmers in Mezam. Crop rotation was estimated between 20% and 30% in all the divisions with exception to Donga which was over the threshold of 77%. Irrigation practices were about 5% to 6% in Boyo, Bui, Momo and Mezam while it is 16% in Menchum and 21% in Donga-Mantung. Mechanized farming may not be wide spread in the region but existed in Bui and Mezam at less than 1% in Momo at about 3% and Donga-Mantung at about 7.5%. Mixed farming was practiced by about 95% of farmers in Momo, 85% in Donga-Mantung and 50% to 60% in Menchum and Boyo, and in Bui and Ngokentungia, the threshold was estimated at 40%, 35% and 33% respectively. Shifting cultivation was also approximated at less than 30% of farmers in Bui and 20% in Momo. Slash and burn stood at about 4% amongst farmers in Bui and Momo divisions, 24% to 26% in Boyo and Ngokentungia, 29% in Donga-Mantung, 32% in Menchum and 20% in Mezam[9].

Ngalim argues that cattle in the North West Region had an instructive historical background. It was introduced in 1920 by the Fulani under ArdoSabga who came from East Cameroon with large numbers of the animal. The JafanFulanis, in small parties, did not begin to trickle into the Bamenda Highlands until the last two years of the First World War. In the 1940s, there was some 4000 square miles of cattle ranges in the Bamenda division. Though cattle population figures were incoherent, never the less, they showed a rapid growth until 1948, when there was a decrease. For instance, cattle population in the Bamenda Division rose from 30,000 in 1937 to 144,183 in 1944. In 1946, the population had reached 170,000. By 1948, it had decreased to 149,572 and by 1950, it was 150,000[10]. The decrease was due to the introduction of cattle control rules[11].

Inland fishing was traditionally practiced by occasional fishermen in rivers of Awing, Bui, Donga-Mantung, Mezam and Momo. Regarding the species of fish in the region, Tilapia, Clarias and Cat fish were most predominant. Fish farming was an old activity in the region. It was introduced in the early 1990s by American Peace Corp volunteers with the aim to put into use marginal lands which could not be used for agricultural activities improve the protein intake and provide additional incomes for the rural households. This activity (fish farming) can become a real asset for rural development if sustained with the necessary human and material resources. Since independence, there were several efforts deployed by the government to sustain the agricultural sector which apparently was the life-giving breath of the

⁵GP- DERUDEP- MINEPIA- NWR Delegation; *Annual Report* 2006, NWR Cameroon, 12.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸ Roland AziboBalgah, Jude NdifonKimensi, Mary-Juliette WirbamBime and KusamiaAntoniaForti, "Farmers Knowledge and Perceptions to Climate Variability in North West Cameroon, *World journal of social science Research*, vol. 3, No.3 (2016), 261-273.

⁹FINTECS Consultants, "The Study of Livestock and Fisheries Development Project North West Region" 34.

¹⁰ NAB, Ab 17/5, File No. 23829, Cattle Control- Bamenda Province, 1942,114.

¹¹ Aloysius NyuymengkaNgalim, "The Cattle Industry in the North West Province of Cameroon, 1972-2003," Published PhD Dissertation, University of Nigeria, Nsuka, 2006, 29.

economy as a whole. In this vast arsenal of developmental approaches, the institutionalisation of development-based agencies was a recurring feature. Memfih[12] posits that Cameroon's development efforts were managed since independence through a series of Five Years Development Plans until the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) during the late 1980s. Ngwa[13] holds that by creating the Upper Noun Valley Development Authority, the government of Cameroon was, *ipso facto*, complying with the stipulations of the second five year development plan spanning from 1996-1971. These successive plans incorporated agriculture, especially plantations, in driving the economy forward. Abiaetal[14] argue that the agricultural sector in Cameroon is amongst the main occupations for over 70% of the citizens and contributes enormously to the country's economy. Kimengsi et al[15] argue that plantation agriculture under the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) registers an average annual turnover of over 50 billion FCFA.

It was owing to this geo-historical context and government's desire to promote human welfare that the North West Development Authority (better known by its French acronym MIDENO) was created by Presidential decree No. 81/350 of 13/08/1981. Established within the framework of government goal to accelerate economic development in Cameroon and placed under the tutelage of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), MIDENO's role was to coordinate the implementation of rural development projects in the North West Region. The Authority was created to ensure the prosperity of the agricultural sector (crop and livestock farming) in the region. According to Ngwankfuet al, agricultural extension[16] services in Cameroon can be traced to the MIDENO project which began in the early 1980s[17]. Development may occur due to some deliberate actions carried out by single agents or by some authority pre-ordered to achieve improvements to favorable circumstances in both.

Besides, MIDENO was trusted with the responsibility to improve upon the state of rural roads infrastructure which was generally very poor and inhibited the transportation of agricultural products to urban and semi-urban markets for exchange. In addition, it was within the framework of MIDENO to change the dilapidating state of some apparently abandoned schools and hospital infrastructures in the rural milieu of the region. In its over three decades of existence, MIDENO has apparently satisfied some of its aspirations in the domains of food crop farming, livestock breeding and rural infrastructure. Throughout its existence, MIDENO has prioritized the development of the Northwest region through two colossal projects: Grassfields Participatory Decentralized Rural Development Project (GP-DERUDEP) and Livestock and Fisheries Development Project (LIFIDEP).

Like every corporate organization of this kind, MIDENO was elaborately structured. It comprised of several internal auxiliaries that worked in synergy to ensure the attainment of organizational objectives. The Director General (DG) of MIDENO was appointed by presidential decree and acted as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Authority. The DG was also commissioned to create and manage MIDENO budget, seek more avenues for increasing the Authority's revenue as well as overseeing the acquisition and performance of human resources. The MA functioned as a Technical Adviser to the DG. He/she performed confidential administrative assignments and could be empowered by the DG to control any service, department or operation. The MES was in charge of monitoring and evaluating work done. He does this by putting in place measures to ensure that the approved program of activities for the year is respected. The Communication Unit acted as an intermediary between MIDENO and its beneficiaries[18].

To ensure the credibility of the financial records of MIDENO, there was need for a cashier. The cashier was directly linked to the *Agent Comptable* (AC) who was a representative of the Ministry of Finance in MIDENO. There were also

¹²Ntangsi Max Memfi, A Balance Sheet of Economic Development Experience in Cameroon, NT, NH,(2008), 35-39.

¹³ Canute A. Ngwa, "A Historical Evaluation of the Mixed Fortunes of the Rice Sector in the Economic of the Ndog plain Under the upper Nun Valley Development Authority (UNVDA), 1970-1995," *Journal of Applied Social Sciences* Vol.4, N^o .1 (2004), 107-130.

¹⁴ Wilfred A. Abia, Ntungwe Epole and Richard Fombuh, "Agriculture in Cameroon: Proposed Strategies to Sustain Productivity," *International Journal for Research in Agriculture Research*, Vol 2, Issue No.2, (2016) 1-12.

¹⁵ Jude Ndifon Kimengsi, Julius N. Lambi and Solange A. Gwan, "Reflections on the Role of Plantations in Development: Lessons from the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC)", *Sustainability in Development* Vol. 1, No.1 (2016), 1-11, www.scholink.org, accessed on 23rd March 25, 2021.

¹⁶ Agricultural extension programs have long been seen as key elements for enabling farmers obtain information and technologies that can improve their livelihood and is recognized as an important factor in promoting agricultural development. Hence, from a development policy perspective, investment in extension services are considered as potentially important tool for improving agricultural productivity and increasing farmer's incomes. Consequently, sub-Saharan African countries have been implementing various agricultural extension programs to improve agricultural production and productivity, farm income and rural livelihood. They further argued that the tide has begun to change after decades of under-investment in agriculture and particularly in extension with more funding available for agricultural extension.

¹⁷ Yolar Blandine Ngwankfu, Manu Ibrahim Nformi and Nuipokoh Oscar Mboungho, "ACEFER Participatory Program and its Impact on the Livelihood of Farmers in the Nkambe Municipality, Donga Mantung Division, North West Region of Cameroon" *Agricultural Research and Technology Open Access Journal* Vol. 19, Issue No. 3 (2019), 00131-00145.

¹⁸ Interview with Francis Nfor.

the Divisions of Agricultural Development and Infrastructural Development respectively to shoulder the implementation of MIDENO. Like every other economic venture, the creation of MIDENO necessitated the sourcing of financial resources for the operation of the authority. Such finances were sourced from the government and other external creditors. These external sources of finance were the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the European Development Fund (EDF), African Development Bank/ Fund (ADB/ADF) and the Islamic Development Bank.

Grassfields Participatory Decentralized Rural Development Project (GP-DERUDEP)

One of the nagging problems confronting most developing countries is how to spread to the bulk of the predominantly rural population, the benefits of socio-economic growth, science and technology and development in general which are usually concentrated in the cities[19]. Fonjong argues that in order to discourage rapid urbanization through the exodus of the potential agricultural labor force from the villages to the towns, government created certain agencies all over the country [20]. GP-DERUDEP was born and executed by MIDENO as one of the many avenues through which the socio-economic wellbeing of the Northwest Region could be enhanced. The Grassfields Participatory and Decentralized Rural Development Project (GP-DERUDEP) or Grassfields Project was and still is a poverty alleviation initiative co-funded by the government of the Republic of Cameroon, the ADB and the beneficiary communities. The project was subsequently officially commissioned on 1st October 2004 by the ministry of agriculture. Its main objective was to reduce poverty in the North West. The total project cost was estimated at 15.726 billion FCFA, 84% which was to be contributed by the ADB, 10% by the Cameroon government and 6% by the beneficiary communities[21]. The project intervention area covered the country's Grassfields region which covers a total area of 17,409 km², with a population of about 1.73 million inhabitants, and comprising 7 departments, 32 communes and 560 villages of which 140 villages[22] Besides,

The choice of this area is justified by the high level of poverty of the rural communities which live precariously. According to the rural development strategy paper of February 2002, over 70% of the rural population still lives below the poverty line. A regional socio-economic study conducted in May 1999 indicates that the area is facing a serious deficit of cereals (about 30%), whereas it has enormous potential (near 20% of the useful farming area is actually developed). The project beneficiaries are the rural poor communities, 52% of whom are women. The population concerned is young with 44% of children below fifteen (15) years. The area enjoys fresh climate with abundant rains. It has a long rainy season (mid-March to mid-November) with annual rainfall averaging 2,500 mm/year, making it possible to have two crop cycles for some crops (maize and beans). With the exception of industrial tea plantations, agricultural production is carried out by traditional family holdings. There are four types of farms whose sizes vary from 0.75 to 2.5 ha, distributed over 215,595 farms for an active agricultural population of 1,620,000 persons. Livestock breeding also constitutes one of the agricultural activities of the area. Cattle feed mainly consists of natural grazing. Watering points are insufficient and the resultant transhumance is the source of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. Health coverage is inadequate. The project area also lacks social and community [23].

To achieve its objectives, GP-DERUDEP hinged on the following four components, namely agricultural development, capacity building, support to rural infrastructure and project coordination/management. Through GP-DERUDEP, much was achieved by MIDENO. However, these success stories were fewer than expected. GP-DERUDEP did not meet most of its ambitious plans. The reasons for these many setbacks shall be discussed in chapter five of this study. The construction of 14 small irrigation systems was successfully achieved. By 2019, two lots of 5 irrigation schemes were at 90% completion while the remaining 1 lot of 3 schemes is at 25% completion. Three additional schemes (Leka-Mbu (40ha), Ngong extension (60ha), Chou Baligham (45ha)) were also identified for possible realization. There has been the expansion of 610ha irrigation land currently serving the needs of rural farmers in the Northwest region.

The importance of such irrigation projects can be well understood by looking into the significant climatic changes that have characterized the Northwest region during the last decade. Unlike previously, the dry season has been frequently getting longer and longer. As one inhabitant of the Pangfe community recounted,

The dry season is becoming too long. For some time now, I have not been able to sustain my farm with water. In the distant past, the rain used to come at the end of February. These days, the rain comes in a very irregular manner, sometimes in March and sometimes in April. The rainfall sometimes is very low and inconsistent. My

¹⁹ Canute A. Ngwa and Cornelius M. Lambi, "An Evaluation of the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority's Agricultural Innovation in Ndop Plain (Cameroon) since 1970", *Epsa Moto* Vol.4, No.1 (2009), 50-67.

²⁰ Lotsmart N. Fonjong, "Changing Fortunes of Government Policies and its Implications on the Application of Agricultural Innovations in Cameroon", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol.13, No. 1 (2004), 13-19.

²¹ Nkwenti "MIDENO phase II Reformulated." 15.

²² African Development Fund, "Grassfields Decentralized and Participatory Rural Development Project," Appraisal Reprt, 3.

²³ Ibid.

Irish potatoes and vegetables cannot really do well without adequate water. Installing water pumps that draw water from the nearby stream for my crops has for the past five years been very costly[24].

As such, the need for consistent water supply which is prerequisite for bounty harvests was high amongst farmers like Margaret. The cost of artificial water supplies was too high for such farmers who were gradually abandoning their increasingly dry farms in pursuit of livestock farming. The eventual surface area of irrigated land to be served by the irrigation schemes in Pangfe-Awing was estimated at 640ha, up by 30ha from the earmarked 610ha. Additional 3 irrigation schemes were identified in Santa and Akum, which if realized, shall cover additional 145ha.

By 2018, the realization rate for irrigation schemes was recorded at 65%, the rehabilitation of the Widikum road was at 96%, the maintenance of farm-to-market roads in Santa/Tubah was at 88%, while similar road projects in Mbaw stood at 65% and Gayamawasstill struggling at 59% [25]. Being mainly rural communities, the slow rate of progress made on such projects was partly accounted for by the heightening insecurity that is currently raging on in the Northwest region within the Anglophone crisis. Notwithstanding, the reality painted in these statistics was far from the truth. As seen in the preceding plates in this chapter, it is obvious that there was not even as much as 30 percent of work coverage in those roads projects. If such statistics could present such highly satisfactory results, it is only objective for one to as where the funds that were allocated went to. Apparently, the state of works done was by far short of the expenses recorded.

The need to increase food crop productivity was also indispensable in government priority to ameliorate the micro-economy of the North West Region. At a time when subsistence agriculture dominated the economy of the North West Region as well the rest of the country, the priorities of GP-DERUDEP were many but increasing the amount of crop yields for each farmer was primordial. There had been similar measures by the government to increase the farm produce in the country as a whole. While the Operation Green Revolution targeted the introduction of high yielding crop species most especially, this dream quickly saw its end. With the persistence of low crop yields recorded by the majority subsistent farming communities of the Northwest region and the rest of the country as a whole, there was need for a more regional approach to resolve this problem.

GP-DERUDEP therefore provided technical support to farmers in means as follows: Potato (195 tons of basic seeds planted on 130 ha to produce approximately 1300 tons of commercial seeds; 1300 tons should plant 866 ha from which is expected about 13000 tons of ware potatoes at 15 tons per hectare.); 450,000 cheated nuts planted on 3000 ha: Maize (23 tons planted on 920 ha giving 2760 tons); Rice (80 tons planted on 1600 ha giving 4800 tons) giving a total of 5650 ha on which direct technical support through provision of improved seeds has been provided since 2014 [26]. All these were the measures within the framework of MIDENO to increase crop yields. Such crops were also intended to break the boundaries of time and seasons and be cultivated at least about twice a year. As such, the new potatoes and maize seeds were harnessed to withstand dry conditions that were increasingly characterizing the prolonged dry seasons and inconsistent rainfalls during rainy seasons [27].

In aggregate, the main achievements within this activity was the supply to farmers of 195 tons of potato seeds as against 288 tons envisaged giving a 68% realization; 23 tons of maize seeds as against 36 tons envisaged giving 64% realization; 450,000 oil palm seedlings as against 529,875 seedlings envisaged, giving 85% realization; 80 tons of seed rice supplied as against 120 tons envisaged, giving 66% achievement. There was the realization and distribution of 2,000,000 cassava cuttings as against 2,000,000 giving 100% [28]. As at date, no seeds have been supplied for plantains and beans. This still indicates another setback in the efforts of diversifying seeds amongst farmers in the region. From a situational analysis in 2018, the midterm review of GP-DERUDEP reported an overall state of progress made in the level of the provision of improved seedlings to farmers in the region as illustrated in the figure below.

Provision of Improved Seedlings to Farmers, 2018

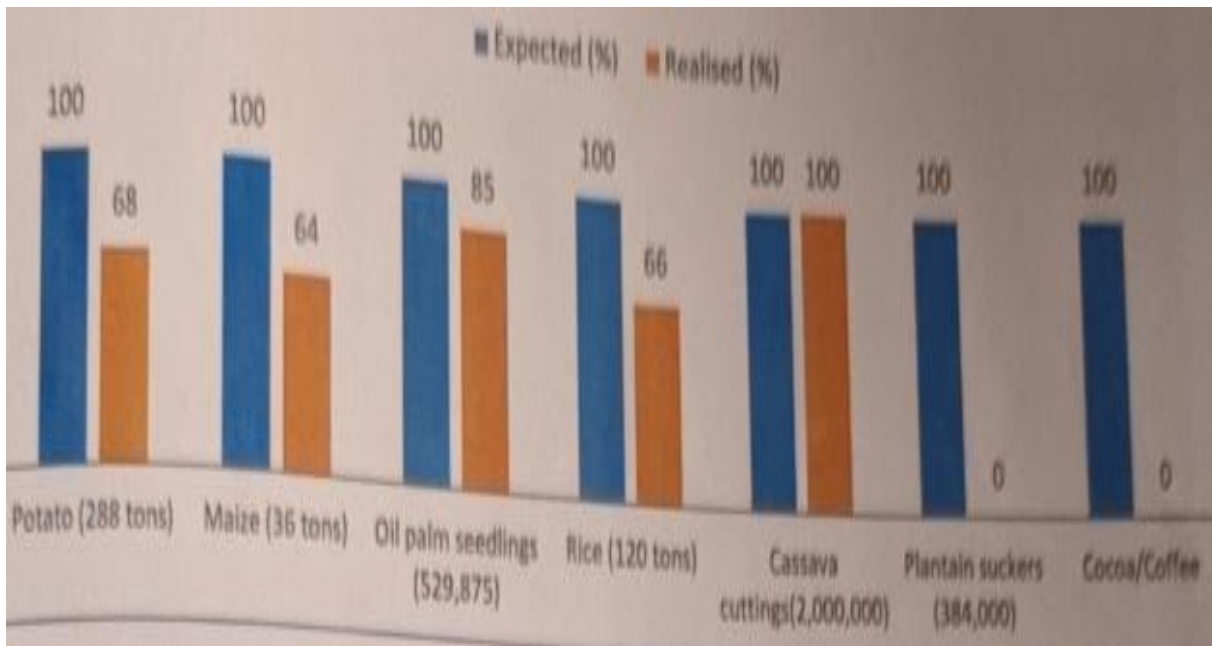
²⁴Margaret Ngongeh, 55 years, Farmer, Awing, 22 November 2021.

²⁵Simon Nkwate, 51 years, GP-DERUDEP Chief of Antenna Gayama, 23 July 2021.

²⁶Ngela Afor Ndi, 31 years, GP-DERUDEP Assistant Procurement Expert, GP-DERUDEP office, 22 August 2021.

²⁷Rhoda She Nfor, 53 years, GP-DERUDEP Assistant Chief of Antenna, GP-DERUDEP office, 21 June 2021.

²⁸Julius N. Wapali, 36 years, GP-DERUDEP Information Technology Officer, GP-DERUDEP office, 23 August 2021.



Source: GP-DERUDEP Midterm Review (2018), 17.

From the figure, the blue bars correspond to the quantity of seeds that was expected to be distributed to farmers. Likewise, the orange coloured bars represent the quantity of such seeds that was actually distributed. As seen in the figure however, only cassava seeds were distributed in full. Oil pal seeds were distributed at 85 percent. Potatoes and maize seeds distribution followed closely at 68percent and 64 percent respectively. Cocoa and coffee seeds saw a zero percent distribution.

The principal training activities for farmers to be able to cultivate these new seeds species were carried out by execution agents with whom GP-DERUDEP signed protocol agreements. The targeted number of trainees was 12000 farmers to be drawn from several communities of the Northwest region. The criterion for such selection was not defined. Protocol Agreements were signed for the training of producers/farmer groups as follows: One with UNVDA for training of rice farmers, one with IRAD for training of maize, potato and beans farmers, one with NWCA for training of Arabica coffee and Cocoa farmers, and one with RDARD for training of farmers and farmer groups[29]. By June 2018, IRAD had trained 6545 farmers, RDARD 1115 farmers, plus 160 extension agents, NWCA 900 cocoa and coffee farmers, UNVDA has trained 476 farmers in rice farming, the Environmentalist has trained 255 beneficiaries on appropriate environmental practices; totaling 9,451 of which 6994(74%) were male and 2457(26%) were female[30].

The choice of oil palm seeds multiplication in Widikum was a wise one. The people of that part of the Northwest were well known for their shared involvement in the growing of palm trees and the transformation of palm fruits into palm oil. Giving them the new species that could produce palm fruits within two years at the latest was such a great transformation that was evidently going to impact the economy of Widikum as a whole[31]. Similarly, the shared culture of maize cultivation in the entire Northwest region necessitated the training of farmers in the multiplication of seeds[32]. The high dependence of these communities on corn for nutrition and for commerce made this training of seeds multiplication to be quite a mile stone from MIDENO.

GP-DERUDEP was very instrumental in ameliorating the social and economic conditions of the North West Region. In a region where the dry season was severe and induced drought conditions, there was the expansion of 610ha irrigation land currently serving the needs of rural farmers. Besides, the rehabilitation of rural roads was significantly advanced, although at a very unsatisfactory level. The road infrastructural projects were aimed to facilitate the access by farmers to markets. Especially, the roads were meant to link the rural communities to towns and cities where the demand for their agricultural produce was constantly high. In addition, there was the provision of seeds of high yielding specie crops which very much increased the food sufficiency of farmers in the North West Region.

²⁹James T. Teyim, 49 years, GP-DERUDEP Administrative Assistant, GP-DERUDEP office, 23 June 2021.

³⁰Felix Ankwangwo, 46 years, GP-DERUDEP Assistant Accountant, GP-DERUDEP office, 23 May 2021.

³¹Interview with Ishmael Cheofor.

³²*Ibid.*

Livestock And Fisheries Development Project (LIFIDEP)

LIFIDEP was a five year project under MIDENO that started in 2014 and lasted until December 2019. Its geographical area of coverage consisted of all 314 communes of the North West Region of Cameroon. The project was conceived in 2010/2011 on the basis of a feasibility study financed by GP-DERUDEP[33]. In May 2012 the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) organized a mission to the Region to conduct a field appraisal of the project. Like every other conclusion, the result of the third general population and housing census indicated that the total population of the North West Region in 2010 stood at 1728953 inhabitants, accounting for about 10% of the population of Cameroon. The same census estimated 2015 population of the region at 1950667 inhabitants. Over 60% of this population lived in the rural milieu and depend mainly on crop and livestock production for their livelihood, as there are few alternative opportunities of employment and income generation in the Region. The third general population and housing census also indicated that in 2010 about 103270 inhabitants of the Region were actively involved in livestock production.

The overall objective of LIFIDEP was to sustainably contribute to poverty reduction in Cameroon[34]. Specifically, the project aimed to facilitate the role of MIDENO to increase household income through increased production and improved marketing of products in the small scale livestock and fisheries sectors. The project also sought to improve on these small scale livestock farmers' access to social infrastructure. The technical component of the project, which were expected to directly lead to the achievement of the above objectives were livestock developments, fisheries development and micro-finance. Two other components, technical assistance and project management unit were also incorporated to provide support to the technical components and ensure the coordination of the technical activities of LIFIDEP.

Generally, the poultry sector in the Northwest region consisted of chickens (63%), ducks (11%), and geese (9%), turkeys (5%), pigeons (3%) and guinea fowl (3%)[35]. Typically, each family kept a few hens, which were mostly looked after by women[36]. Within the framework of genetic improvement of poultry, the objective was to improve productivity of poultry by enhancing farmer's access to good quality day old chicks, quality poultry feed and improved production techniques. To achieve this objective, this sub-component of LIFIDEP planned to acquire and distribute 900.000 Day Old Chicks (DOC) to poultry farmers, train and accompany 3000 farmers on improved production techniques and stimulate their organization into 35 functional farmer networks with a membership of 6247 farmers. As at 31st August 2018 a total 390000 DOC (about 43.3% of the set target of 900.000) had been acquired and distributed to 1168 farmers on a revolving fund basis. Besides, a total of 134,550,000 FCFA had been recovered from the revolving fund with these 1168 farmers.

LIFIDEP also prioritized the acquisition and distribution of small ruminants. Within a well-structured Passing on the Gift (POG) scheme, this component of LIFIDEP seemed quite promising and was greeted by livestock enthusiasts in the rural communities of the Northwest region with euphoria[37]. Comprising mostly of sheep and goats, the small ruminants distribution scheme was not based on paying back in cash but paying back in kind. If one beneficiary received five sheep or goats (compulsorily female) he/she was expected to rear them to delivery, grow the calves and return the same number that was received by LIFIDEP so that new beneficiaries could be listed. Small ruminants only comprised of goats and sheep excluding pigs. The exclusion of pigs was no miscalculation, given the interest of Northwest farmers in pigs, but was necessitated by the non-accommodating attitude of the major financier. The Islamic Development Bank was discriminatory against pigs and pork as conditioned by Islam. Owing to this cultural impediment, pigs were not part of the LIFIDEP small ruminant distribution scheme. The project awarded three contracts for the supply of 7270 young sheep and goats in all the seven divisions of the North West Region. The placement of young sheep and goats within the framework of the Passing on the Gift scheme was carried out in four divisions with the distribution of 2267 sheep and goats with a percentage realization of 30.72%. The reception and placement of small ruminants were organized in ten sub-divisions incorporating 15 cooperatives. A total of 1065 sheep and 1202 goats were handed over to the beneficiary cooperatives.

In 2017, 24 tons of brachiaria seeds, 6.25 tons of stylosanthes were distributed to pastoralists in the Northwest Region through the project[38]. The pastoralists continued with the improvement of pasture farms. A cumulative total of 1614 hectares of pasture seeds farms were developed and 2063 hectares of degraded pasture lands rehabilitated. LIFIDEP also envisaged the construction 25 vaccination crushes within its developmental framework for the North West Region. Despite the heights of insecurity within the region owing to the current socio-political crisis, much of its works have registered significant progress. As of 2019, 23 out of the 25 crushes were completed and 2 were at commencement phase.

³³Martin Awondo, 51 years, LIFIDEP Agronomist, 23 July 2021.

³⁴Pius Mbipeh, 53 year, LIFIDEP Project Coordinator, LIFIDEP office Bamenda, 3 December 2021.

³⁵ Jean Claude Fotso, *Opportunities Of Poultry Breeding Programmes For Family Production In Developing Countries: The Bird Of The Poor* (Cameroon: Bamenda, 2011), 3.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Samuel Nkem, 46 years, LIFIDEP Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, LIFIDEP office Bamenda, 3 December 2021.

³⁸Abety Solomon, 45 years, LIFIDEP Livestock Technician, LIFIDEP office Bamenda, 3 December 2021.

This registered an estimated percentage realization of 98%. Some of the completed crushes were used by the staff of the Regional Delegation of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry[39].

To enhance the health of livestock in the North West Region and reduce the burden of such animal diseases on farmers, LIFIDEP envisaged the construction of 200 technical and veterinary centers[40]. By the end of 2019 the construction of 20 of such centers was in progress although facing some challenges amidst the ongoing socio-political crisis. A total of 13 zoo-technical and veterinary centers were completed while 7 were at various stages of construction owing to security challenges. Alongside with veterinary centers, LIFIDEP also committed its resources for the construction and rehabilitation of Divisional clinics. This component of its developmental agenda envisaged the construction and rehabilitation of seven divisional veterinary clinics. By the end of 2019 works had been completed in five divisions and two were still ongoing.

Being its primary objective, the processing of livestock products necessitated the construction of milk collection points and milk processing plants by LIFIDEP. Besides, the need to provide ready markets for farmers necessitated the construction of goats and sheep markets by LIFIDEP[41]. By 2018, the project envisaged the construction of 14 of such markets. At the end of 2019, a total of seven of such markets had been completed while work was still ongoing at seven sites. This shear progress was rated at 55%. Given the importance and increasing demand for beef, LIFIDEP also was motivated to incorporate the construction of slaughter houses within its chain of projects. This was intended to ensure that beef is produced in the best of hygienic conditions for public consumption. In its commitment, LIFIDEP completed the construction of 10 small slaughter houses, while five were still under construction at various stages realization at the end of 2020. Having projected to complete 15 of such projects, the realization of only 10 at the terminal date was rated at 72.2% success.

Bali Nyonga, Mbengwi and Njikwa registered 0% progress in the execution of projects due to deteriorating security conditions amidst the ongoing socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions. Jakiri also registered 30% realization rate owing to the same challenging security circumstances[42]. Alongside with slaughter houses, for the same sanitary reasons, the construction of meat sales slabs was also pursued by LIFIDEP. Between 2018 and 2020, 40 out of 50 meat sales slabs were constructed, registering a realization rate of 86.43%. By 2018, activities under this outcome area were yet to fully begin, reason being that these activities were linked to the fish-farming center, which had not yet been constructed. As at 31 August 2018, about 60% of envisaged quantity of brood stock (initial brood stock) had been procured and provided to the Bamessing Fish Station in Ngoketunjia Division for fingerling production. The Bamessing Fish Station comes into play as a result of the delay in the procurement of fish-farming center. Project stakeholders decided to effect this slight modification of Bringing the Bamessing Fish Station into the scene in order not to continue waiting for the procurement of fish-farming center which is delaying[43]. The Bamessing Fish Station has been chosen to Kick-start the fingerlings production due to the fact that it has a functional hatchery and other infrastructure.

Aside from livestock and infrastructural development, LIFIDEP also prioritized the development of fish farming. The fisheries component of LIFIDEP envisaged the construction of a fish farming center to contain a hatchery, laboratory, 10 brooding and 15 growing ponds by the end of 2020. The project also envisaged the construction of demonstration concrete tanks. At the end of 2020, only 40% of this sub component was realized. Within the same period 116825 fish brood stock, fingerlings out of 380000 were multiplied and distributed to 60 fish farmers in the Northwest region[44]. The progress of this sub component was rated at a meager 37.7% realization. Besides, 60 cages were constructed and installed in the Bambalang Lake for the local fish farmers to manage[45].

The construction of Bambalang Fish Market was one of the strategies through which MIDENO intended to utilize the specialization of LIFIDEP in enhancing the commercialization of inland fish yields. The project planned to finance the construction of the Bambalang market and provide basic equipment at the said market. Specific items included the construction of a concrete floor with slabs, the acquisition of an ice plant (2 ton capacity), a borehole with overhead tank and a generator. However, owing to dire security conditions in Bambalang and the rest of Ngoketunjia Sub-division in particular amidst the ongoing sociopolitical crisis in the Northwest region, the execution of the fish market project and its associated features was very slow.

³⁹Joseph Teboh, 46 years, LIFIDEP Livestock Expert, LIFIDEP office Bamenda, 3 December 2021.

⁴⁰Interview with Pius Mbipeh.

⁴¹Interview with Martin Awondo.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Interview with Martin Awondo.

⁴⁴Interview with Pius Mbipeh.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of MIDENO in the enhancement of the state of the livestock and fisheries sectors in rural communities of the Northwest region. It delved into the activities of LIFIDEP as a twin integral project of MIDENO. Within this scope, the chapter discussed the role of LIFIDEP in advancing the development of both livestock and fisheries amongst farmers in the seven divisions of the Northwest region. The Grassfields Participatory and Decentralized Rural Development Project was also discussed within the role of MIDENO in enhancing the economy of the Northwest region. In its finding, both GP-DERUDEP and LIFIDEP served as effective avenues of intervention and meeting the objectives of MIDENO in the domain of infrastructure, livestock and fisheries development in the Northwest region but fell short of expectations. In its commitment to meet such ambitious developmental objectives, MIDENO through its different executing agencies faced several challenges.

Therefore, it is a necessity for MIDENO to revisit its project execution plans if past mistakes must be avoided in future. Poor planning was also a major factor in the inability of MIDENO to meet its objectives in time. To live pass these prolonged late appointments in the context of project execution, it is vital for MIDENO to review its project plans and supplement them with some productive reinforcements. It will be necessary for MIDENO to include legal penalties in contracts with executing partners. Such legal penalties would boost the undivided attention of such partners as IRAD and suppliers of animal and crop seeds to meet agreed deadlines. The complacency of MIDENO administrators, especially the Monitoring and Evaluation teams were and still are characteristic of the organizational complexities of the authority. If this is achieved, more progress shall be registered by GP-DERUDEP and LIFIDEP in the commitment of MIDENO to meet the national priority of government to qualify Cameroon as an emergent nation by the year 2035.