Social Sciences and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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The Cameroon Trend

Edited by

Constantine Kouankem,
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Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-0364-5162-2
ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-5163-9

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

CONSTANTINE KOUANKEM,
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& LOVELINE KONGLA NSAHLAI

According to Gro Harlem Brundtlant, Norwegian Prime Minister (1987), sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (INSEE, 2016, p.1). In 1992, more than 178 countries met at the Earth Summit in Rio for the United Nations (UN) decennial conference on environment and development. Significant progress has been made, such as the signing of the Rio de Janeiro Declaration, which formalizes the theoretical content of sustainable development and its three pillars: economically efficient growth, socially equitable, and ecologically sustainable development. Sustainable development addresses economic, social, and ecological issues (INSEE, 2016).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also called Global Goals, cover all development issues in the world. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2015, with a time horizon set in 2030. These goals include health, climate, biodiversity, agriculture, food, nutrition, energy, water, eradication of poverty, gender equality, economic prosperity, peace, education, urbanization, and sustainable development (United Nations, 2015; Hege et al., 2016; Brimont et al., 2017). This 2030 Agenda is supported by seventeen (17) SDGs, one hundred and sixty-nine (169) targets or sub-goals, and approximately two hundred and forty-four (244) indicators to monitor progress made in its various areas (United Nations, 2015; Hege et al., 2016; Brimont et al., 2017).

The seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations (2015) for 2030 comprise: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1); Zero Hunger (SDG 2); Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3); Quality Education (SDG 4); Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG 5); Ensure access to water and sanitation for all (SDG 6); Ensure access to

affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy (SDG 7); Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all (SDG 8); Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (SDG 9); Reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG 10); Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11); Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12); Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13); Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources (SDG 14); Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reserve land degradation, halt biodiversity loss (SDG 15); Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16); and Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG17).

In many countries worldwide, "the SDGs enjoy high-level political support" (Brimont et al., 2017; p. 397). Cameroon has also subscribed to these SDGs, which fit well with its Development Vision for 2035 (Vision 2035). In fact, under the coordination of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Territorial Development (MINEPAT), the Government has undertaken work since 2015 to appropriate and contextualize these global objectives. This work culminated in 2017 with the publication of the "National Document for Contextualization and Prioritization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Cameroon" in June 2019, and the reports of the voluntary national review on the implementation of the SDGs in Cameroon carried out in 2019 and 2022 respectively (MINEPAT, 2022). Similarly, the National Institute of Statistics (INS) led the work in developing the reference situation (Baseline 2016) of the SDG indicators in Cameroon. From these various works, contextualized targets and indicators necessary for monitoring progress toward achieving these objectives in Cameroon emerged (INS, 2021; Pueugue Simo, 2023).

While the commitment and political endorsement of the SDGs are evident in all strategy documents produced by the Cameroonian State, the role of scientific research in achieving these objectives remains somehow unclear. This edited volume initiated by the College of Social Sciences of the Cameroon Academy of Young Scientists (CAYS) intends to highlight certain scientific works that have appropriated the SDGs in Cameroon. This work of popularizing and promoting research results is directly in line with the missions of CAYS. This book offers scholars, stakeholders, and decision-makers the results of Humanities and Social Sciences researchers. The book has eight (08) chapters constituting constructive and contributory exchanges on current trends and challenges of sustainable development in Cameroon.

With the achievement of the SDGs as an underlying theme, the first chapter assesses the contribution of the Cameroonian government in reducing poverty in an ecologically fragile region of Cameroon (Far North), in a context marked by economic and security crises, disruptions in climate, and natural disasters, the main consequence of which is the decline in agricultural production. The second chapter explores the opportunities and obstacles related to aligning NDCs with local development plans in Cameroon, as recommended by the Paris Agreement on Climate Action (SDG 13) through the mitigation of carbon emissions, greenhouse gases (GHG) and the development of local adaptation measures to address vulnerability to climate risks. The third chapter assesses the level of access to drinking water in Ndé Division (West Region) based on documents relating to the management of water services, field observations, a survey from households in four (04) communities, and bacteriological analysis of 23 water samples taken in September 2016 and February 2017. The study reveals that rainwater harvesting, an ancient technique used in some countries, is a promising way to achieve SDG 6.1 in this part of the country. The fourth chapter assesses the impact of the increase in the number of school-age children in relation to the human and infrastructural resources offered by government nursery and primary education, in the city of Bertoua (East Cameroon), in light of national and international requirements related to SDG 4.

The fifth chapter explains how a revitalized and resilient multilateral trading system will enable trade to play its catalytic role in achieving SDGs 1 and 2 in CEMAC countries. The sixth chapter examines the policy of economic liberalization, its effects, its contradictions, and its devastating consequences on the Cameroonian economy, in particular on the strategy of industrialization by substitution of imports, and argues for the abandonment of some of the liberalization policies for economic growth pursued by the IMF and the World Bank. The seventh chapter examines how diversification of rural economic activities (DREAs) strengthens the autonomy of rural women and ultimately leads to sustainable development in Bui Division (North-West, Cameroon). The last chapter focuses on the performance and challenges of urban road transport in the city of Douala IV in Cameroon. It posits that the inadequacy of road infrastructure, haphazard use of roads, and socio-economic disadvantages triggered the poor performance of road transport in Douala IV.

Through a collection of research findings, the chapters jointly highlight the complex interaction between social dynamics, sustainable development

initiatives, and policy frameworks. The contributions herein not only illuminate the challenges faced by Cameroon in achieving the SDGs; but also offer innovative solutions rooted in indigenous knowledge. Policymakers, researchers, and practitioners must continue to collaborate, leveraging Social Sciences and Humanities insights to foster inclusive and sustainable development pathways that resonate with the unique cultural and socio-economic landscape of Cameroon. Eventually, this volume serves as a call for the amalgamation of Social Sciences / Humanities methodologies with other methodologies in the quest for a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

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CHAPTER ONE

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRAGILE REGION IN CAMEROON: POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE FAR NORTH REGION

SYLVESTRE FIDESSOU

Abstract

Like many of their peers in Sub-Saharan Africa, peasants in the Far North region of Cameroon are faced with multiple crises of several types, placing them in a situation of permanent food insecurity. Thus, they have been confronted with the effects of ecological crises, famine, and poverty for decades. The exercise of their main activities, agriculture, livestock breeding, and fishing, was confronted with this ecological insecurity and recurring poverty. This socio-economic fragility is caused by several factors, namely: the unstable macroeconomic situation with economic and financial crises as well as the devaluation of the CFA franc on the one hand, and natural factors such as drought, floods, seasonal irregularities, and rainfall disturbances. All of these caused a decline in agricultural production leading to food shortage. Throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, this part of the country faced this panoply of socio-economic and environmental crises. This study aims to evaluate the contribution of the Cameroon government in achieving sustainable development goals through poverty alleviation in the Far North region. It is mainly based on empirical, archival, and documentary data. It deduces that recent studies on poverty in Cameroon indicated that its incidence fell by 2.4 points between 2007 and 2014 thanks to the implementation since January 1, 2016, of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by the Cameroon Government and its other development partners.

Keywords: Environmental crises, Far North Region, Lake Chad Basin, Socio-Economic Crises, Survival Strategies.

1. Introduction

Throughout history, the world has experienced various problems in its evolution that have marred the history of humanity. As a result, several challenges have emerged on a global scale calling for international solidarity. This pushed the 193 member countries of the United Nations (UN) to adopt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets as the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs at the historic UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals include: no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships for the goals (FAO and the SDGs). The SDGs are a bold, universal agreement to end poverty and all its dimensions and craft an equal, just, and secure world for people, planet, and prosperity. Particularly, SDG 1, the focus of the current study, whose objective is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030.

For centuries, peasants have demonstrated mastery of their physical environment (Jean-Marc Ela, 1990; René Dumont, 1962; Georges Dupré, 1991). Despite such mastery of the natural environment, they have always been confronted with several hurdles. In Sub-Saharan Africa, farmers have had to face several challenges. Their daily lives had been extroverted by a certain number of obstacles, related to socio-economic difficulties on one hand and ecological crises on the other.

Furthermore, in 2010, more than ten million people, mostly children and women, were victims of food shortages in the Sahel. Nearly 500,000 severely malnourished children had to be cared for between January and November 2010 in Niger, Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso, the reason being that Sahelian herds had been largely decimated. The images and dramas of hunger had awakened the specters of the 2005 food crisis and the famines of 1973-4 and 1984-5 (Oxfam, 2010, p. 2). In West Africa and the Sahel, there was unanimous agreement on the increase in the severity and amplitude of food and nutrition crises, particularly in Sahel and Lake Chad regions (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and

Nigeria), according to participants at the latest meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network, held from 6 to 8 April 2022 in Paris.

Between 2018 and 2022, the number of people needing nutritional assistance and emergency food security in ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, and Cameroon increased from about eleven to nearly forty-one million.[1] To this end, on April 6, 2022, a meeting of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was held in Paris. In addition, the FAO added that if nothing was done, thirty to forty million people could be victims of an acute food crisis. Eighty per cent of these victims were not only in Chad and Cameroon but also in Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Apart from drought and insecurity, the war in Ukraine was cited among the causes of the exacerbation of famine (poverty) affecting these countries.

In Cameroon and the Far North region, in particular, multidimensional poverty is widespread.[2] Conscious of this reality, the United Nations agencies had frequently intervened in the region. The Far North region of Cameroon has been qualified as having the highest rates of food insecurity in Cameroon. Social indicators remained worrying despite efforts noted in recent years (NIS, 2017, p. 63). This vulnerable situation was due to the reduction of cultivable land and grazing areas, exacerbated by the multiple environmental crises resulting in poverty.

Poverty is a natural phenomenon that is as old as human history. It is the result of several factors like natural and anthropogenic. It affects the four corners of the world without any exception. The socio-economic fragility of the Far North region of Cameroon was caused by multiple and diverse factors. Amongst the said factors instigating poverty in this part of the country were first the unstable macro-economic situation with economic and financial crises as well as the devaluation of the CFA Francs and second natural factors such as desertification, drought, floods, seasonal irregularities and rainfall disturbances. All of the above-mentioned environmental crises were therefore responsible for or caused a decline in agricultural production, which in turn led to a shortage of foodstuff. Throughout the 20th century and the start of the 21st century, this part of

[1] FAO, https://www.fao.org/africa/news-stories/news-detail/FAO-warns-of-famine-in-West-Africa-and-Sahel/en, 20/05/2024.

[2] The Far North is one of those places in Cameroon with the most affected famine rate. This can be explained by such issues as excess droughts and in the recent past, the Boko Hara insurgences that had from time to time perturbed daily activities in the area.

the country faced this panoply of socio-economic and environmental crises.

Cameroon hosts more than 25 million inhabitants; poverty affects sixty-four per cent of the rural population, with significant regional disparities. Per capita income is low (US$ 650) and food security remains precarious because it does not keep pace with population growth. Cameroon, a low-income country with a food deficit, has 14.1 million inhabitants and its annual population growth rate is 2.8 per cent. The annual population growth rate is 2.8 per cent. The United Nations Development Program's 2002 Human Development Report (UNDP) ranks Cameroon 135th out of 173 countries, with an indicator of human development of 0.512. Its gross national product per capita amounts to approximately US$ 668 per year (Rapport ECAM, Enquête camerounaise auprès des ménages 1999/2000). Coverage of its food needs fell from 96 per cent to 80 per cent in 1980 according to the latest available estimates (Ministère de l'économie et des finances, 1999), and poverty affects 64 per cent of the rural population (World Food Programme, 2002, 3). Thus, according to the FAO cited by Wambo-Yamdjeu et *al*., (2007, p. 3), the coverage of food needs like cereals, tubers and legumes, increased from an index of ninety-nine in 1982 to eighty in 1998. In Northern Cameroon (North and Far North regions), cereals constituted the basis of the diet: rainfed sorghum (millet), off-season yellow sorghum *muskuwaari* and corn. *Muskuwaari* cultivation represented from twenty to thirty per cent of cereal production in the Far North region between 1994 and 1998 (*Ibid.)*.

All things considered, it appears that poverty is an ancient phenomenon that spares no region of the world and which has always had harmful effects on the social, economic, political and cultural stability of populations. In the Far North region of Cameroon, poverty rate (or incidence of poverty) in 2014 was 74.3%, nearly double of the national level (INS, 2019). Poverty has been reported as the principal cause of hunger, and the vast majority of hungry people live in developing regions of the World (Adeyeye, Omowonuola and Tiamiyu, 2017).

This study aims to demonstrate that poverty was one of the main causes of socio-economic insecurity in the Far North region of Cameroon during the 20th and early 21st centuries. To this end, the analysis will be structured first around the methodology used and the geo-historical background of the Far North region. Further, it will tackle the Far North as a socio-economic and environmental fragile region; thereafter, it will present an analysis of poverty in that region, and will portray the efforts towards the

achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1) in the Far North region of Cameroon.

2. Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this study combines both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The study is mainly based on empirical, archival, and documentary analysis of the content. Data was collected, analyzed, and discussed from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are supported by raw statistics and archives obtained from the National Statistical Institute and the decentralized regional and divisional services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the Far North region. Secondary data was gathered from related literature including textbooks, scientific articles, newspapers, dissertations, and reports. Data was treated using content analysis and through narratives at the same time. The thematic *cum* chronological approach was the back born of the narrative and the analytical framework of the study. This approach informed the organization of the narrative into themes/topics, with occasional attention accorded to the chronological flow of events/elements where necessary. This permitted us to understand the factors of poverty, its effects on the lifestyle of the population and the efforts made by stakeholders towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 in the Far North region of Cameroon.

3. Geo-historical Background of the Far North Region

The area under study is the Far North Region of Cameroon. It is one of the ten regions of Cameroon, and equally amongst the most populated, (see table 1 below). It is located in the Northern part of the country and shares borders with Chad and Nigeria. Its headquarters is in the town of Maroua. It is located in the Sudano-Sahelian zone. The climate is characterised by a long dry season (October-May) and a short rainy season (June-September). Agriculture based on millet and sorghum as well as cattle, sheep, and goat breeding and fishing constituted the majority of the populations' food resources. The history of this region is punctuated by ecological disasters such as drought, floods, famine, epidemics, epizootics, etc. The Sahel is known to world opinion because of the drought, which has always caused poverty. However, the event and its social consequences remain to be analysed (Roch et *al.*, 1975, p. 102).

Table 1: Distribution of the Population per Region in Cameroon

	1976		1987		2001		2015		2019	
REGIONS	**Population**	**%**	**Population**	**%**	**Population**	**%**	**Population**	**%**	**Population**	**%**
Adamawa	359 334	4.7	495 185	4.7	723 626	4.6	1 200 970	5.4	1 344 414	5.5
Centre	1 176 743	15.3	1 651 600	15.7	2 501 229	15.9	4 159 492	18.7	4 670 310	19.2
East	366 235	4.8	517 198	4.9	755 088	4.8	835 642	3.8	855 745	3.5
Far-North	**1 394 765**	**18.2**	**1 855 695**	**17.7**	**2 721 463**	**17.3**	**3 993 007**	**18.0**	**4 384 648**	**18.0**
Littoral	935 166	12.2	1 352 833	12.9	2 202 340	14.0	3 354 978	15.1	3 725 173	15.3
North	479 158	6.3	832 165	7.9	1 227 018	7.8	2 442 578	11.0	2 666 718	11.0
North-West	980 531	12.8	1 237 348	11.8	1 840 527	11.7	1 968 578	8.9	2 133 565	8.8
West	1 035 597	13.5	1 339 791	12.8	1 982 106	12.6	1 921 590	8.7	2 056 714	8.4
South	315 202	4.1	373 798	3.6	534 854	3.4	749 552	3.4	778 145	3.2
South-west	620 515	8.1	838 042	8.0	1 242 749	7.9	1 553 320	7.0	1 732 819	7.1
TOTAL	**7 663 246**	**100**	**10 93 655**	**100**	**15 731 000**	**100**	**22 179 707**	**100**	**24 348 251**	**100**

Source: Author's Compilation from: Cameroon Statistical Yearbook, 2004 and BUCREP

According to projections made for 2010, the Far North region is the second most populated region of Cameroon after the Centre region. Its population is around 3.480.414 inhabitants; with a male population of 1.722.189 inhabitants and a female population of 1.758.225; i.e. a sex ratio of 97.95 per cent. This region is the second most populated in Cameroon, with almost 17.93% of the national population.[1]

Historically, several social changes, socio-cultural and political as well as religious upheavals took place, which reconfigured the entire region of Northern Cameroon since the 18th century. However, this meeting between civilisations was based on the Muslim invasion, which dates back to the 18th century, and the penetration of Westerners in the Northern Cameroon from the beginning of the 20th century. On this matter, Greing Pascal (2006, p. 2) points out that:

> The major fact recorded in Northern Cameroon between the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century is the emergence of a set of small states, of varying size, but whose leaders have real control over their subjects. Indeed, from the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, small Fulani groups had already been strongly established in Fombina, a region that the Nigerian historian Sa'ad Aboubakar defines as a geographical entity corresponding to the Emirate of Adamawa.

Located between North-Eastern Nigeria and South-Western Chad, the Far North has historically acted as a channel for trade and transit between the three countries. With four million inhabitants spread across its 34,263 square kilometres, this Sahelian region was the most densely populated in Cameroon. In the 1990s, climate change and deep poverty in rural areas (home to 85 per cent of the population) exacerbated the competition for access to natural resources in a region already suffering intercommunal tensions and recurrent episodes of violence. It should be recalled that *Boko Haram* highlighted and accentuated the structural problems the area was undergoing.[2]

The major movements to establish the settlement happened between the 15th and 17th centuries. Thus, the overall movements which governed the establishment of the population (except the Fulbe), from the plains of Logone to the Mandara mountains and between the great *Yayres* and Mayo

[1] Republic of Cameroon, 3rd General Population and Housing Census, The population of Cameroon in 2010, p. 7.
[2] International Crisis Group, 2016, Far North: History of a Vulnerable Region, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep31743.6, p. 2.

Kebbi, followed two components. The oldest and the one that operated the longest was of North-Eastern origin. Over time, it underwent a regular shift in latitude towards the south. It was intersected by clearly South-North population flows. It is from these migratory trends that most of the groups present in the region today settled (Seignobos, 2000, p. 44). Further, Christian Seignobos adds that these crossed movements composed between the 17th and 18th centuries a framework of population such that the ethnic groups of the plains shared a certain number of affinities both in the religious domain, that of social organisation and, of course, material culture.[1]

4. Far North: A Socio-Economic and Environmental Fragile Region

It should be noted that food production security in Northern Cameroon depended mainly on rainfall conditions given that the agro-pastoral production system depended on climatic and/or rainfall hazards. The following extracts underline the rainfall situation in North Cameroon, particularly in the Far North.

Wambo-Yamdjeu et *al.* (2007, p. 4) find that because of climatic infidelity, it is not humanly possible to envisage anything (WHAT DO YOU MEAN. BE SPECIFIC). Unfavourable natural, agroecological, and climatic factors can explain all these misfortunes. Climatic hazards made it difficult, both for farmers and decision-makers to develop reliable forecasts. The sharp drop in production in 1998 was due to the drought that affected the entire region. In September 2000, with the sudden cessation of rains, a cereal deficit of 160,000 tons was recorded for the Far North region, because the areas sown with muskuwaari (dry season transplanted sorghum) were reduced by fifty per cent and yields fell significantly; on the lands monitored by Regional Pole for Applied Research in the Development of Agricultural Systems in Central Africa (PRASAC) in the Far North where muskuwaari was cultivated, we noted that the yield of this crop fell from 650 kg/ha in 1999 to 450 kg/ha in 2000. In addition, we noted frequent invasions of predators (grain-eating birds, defoliating caterpillars, locusts, pachyderm, etc.). Finally, land saturation promoted soil degradation, which resulted in difficulties in maintaining yields.

[1] *Ibid.*

Climatic hazards also affected neighbouring regions and countries, and in turn, affected the supply and demand of food products in Northern Cameroon, and therefore had a strong impact on prices (*Ibid.*, 2007, p. 4). The socio-economic context of the Far North made it an environment too vulnerable to natural risks in general and drought in particular. Indeed, food insecurity affected eighteen per cent of the population. It was also the poorest region in Cameroon with 74.3 per cent of the population living below the poverty line (Saha et *al.*, 2021, p. 243).

Just as much, Jean Cabot (1965, p. 138) agrees and examines the situation among the Massa of the Far North region of Cameroon. According to him, it is therefore a harvest of 200 to 250 kg per consumer, which constitutes the main basis of the food of Massa farmers, i.e. a daily ration of 600 to 700 g of unhulled millet. These figures show the extremely fragile nature of the standard of living: if a poor harvest due to poor distribution of rain or the depredations of birds or locusts occurred, there was to be famine. The family harvest rarely allows, about one year out of three, to put aside part of the harvest to make a few exchanges. In a true subsistence economy, the agricultural system of the Massa peasants ensures in a very fragile way the renewal of the workforce of the family group.

The main environmental crises identified in the societies of the Lake Chad Basin constituted the cause of poverty in this part of the country. Their impacts were very significant and characterised by a degradation of natural resources and agro-pastoral production, which unavoidably influenced the economic and social costs affecting the lifestyle of the populations. Thus, the food insecurity situation, derived from ambient poverty, inevitably affected the national economy given that agro-pastoral production which should contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was put to the test.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the main factor determining this worrying food and nutrition insecurity was the exacerbation of security tension in the Lake Chad Basin, in the Northern Mali, in the Liptako Gourma region and in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. This led to massive population displacements, the destabilisation of markets and cross-border transhumance flow, and the disfunctioning of social infrastructures. Besides, the intensification of attacks by armed groups in North-Central and North-Western Nigeria, where the phenomenon of kidnapping created a climate of terror and fear in the affected states, had

a serious negative impact on the food and nutritional security of the population.[1]

Considering the analysis presented above, it appears that the Far North has always been a fragile socio-economic area. It therefore became patent to impute the high level of poverty in this region on the socio-economic and environmental fragility of the Sahel in general and that of the Lake Chad Basin in particular.

5. An Analysis of Poverty in the Far North Region

Most African countries are considered among the poor countries in the World; mostly, those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty is a phenomenon that exists in all parts of the World. It is based on some indices that are determined by the United Nations Organisations bodies. At the regional and national levels, there exist institutions in charge of the production of statistics and the classification of regions according to the living standards of the population. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), SDG 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) measures acute multidimensional poverty across more than 100 Developing Countries. It does so by measuring each person's overlapping deprivations across ten indicators in three equally weighted dimensions: health, education and standard of living. The health and education dimensions are based on two indicators each, while the standard of living is based on six indicators (UNDP, 2023, p. 1).

It is therefore in this light that the following analyses have been produced in Cameroon as a whole and in the Far North region in particular. In 2022, approximately four in ten persons were poor (37.7 per cent). Thus, out of a population estimated at nearly 26.7 million inhabitants in 2022, 10.1 million people lived on less than 813 CFA francs per day, i.e. 24,724 CFA francs per month. This means that in 2022, a worker with a monthly minimum wage of 36,270 CFA francs, who lived alone, and who had no additional income in kind (self-consumption of produce from the farm, dwelling as an owner, etc.) would fall into poverty as soon as another person without income would be added to the household.[2] The highest

[1] FAO, https://www.fao.org/africa/news-stories/news-detail/FAO-warns-of-famine-in-West-Africa-and-Sahel/en, 20/05/2024.
[2] National Institute of Statistics, ECAM 5: Fifth Cameroon Household Survey, January 2024.

rates were recorded in the Far North and North survey regions. In contrast, Yaounde, Douala, the South, Centre, and Littoral had the lowest poverty levels and were below the target of 30.8 per cent set by the National Development Strategy Vision 2030 (NDS30).[1]

Poverty is a real fact that has existed in the history of humanity since time immemorial. On Tuesday, December 26, 2017, the tri-weekly newspaper ''*L'œil du Sahel*'' had the headline: "The risk of famine looms over the Far North region of Cameroon." In this analysis, Brice R. Mbodiam reported that at the origins of the increase in cereals' prices, staple foods of the populations of the three Northern regions of Cameroon, farmers, and experts in agricultural issues mainly blamed on the low amount of rainfall. Indeed, according to official data, the Far North region recorded 516 mm of precipitation in 2017, compared to 606 mm in 2016. Due to such climatic reality, various experts argue that the region could not achieve the cereal production of approximately 1.210 million tons projected during the 2016-2017 campaign (compared to 700,000 tons in 2015-2016), by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (*L'Oeil du Sahel,* 2017, p. 16).

Brice R. Mbodiam continues by indicating that the drop in agricultural production in the Far North was not only the consequence of unpredictable weather, but insecurity played a great role as well. Since 2013, this part of Cameroon has faced attacks from the Nigerian Islamist sect Boko Haram. This phenomenon had two main impacts on agro-pastoral activities. First, fleeing insecurity, several farmers deserted their villages, abandoning the fields. Then, the abuses of Boko Haram in Nigeria caused massive arrivals of refugees to the Northern part of Cameroon. These hundreds of thousands of refugees were fed by the World Food Program (WFP), which acquired cereals locally, putting pressure on already insufficient production (*Ibid.)*.

Furthermore, according to the FAO, the coverage of food needs in cereals was on a steady decline in Cameroon for several decades: ninety-seven per cent in 1961-1963, eighty-eight per cent in 1971-1973, eighty-four per cent in 1981-1983 and fifty-nine per cent in 1988-1990. She estimates the population of undernourished people at thirty per cent. North Cameroon, whose basic diet is essentially cereals, was the most affected by this decline. In the Far North region, food insecurity affected almost all family's farms (Wambo-Yamdjeu et *al*., 2007, p. 3). Table 2 below gives an idea of cereal needs in the Far North region.

[1] *Ibid*.

Table 2: Estimates of Cereal Needs and Production in the Far North Region

Years	Population	Needs (t) (200 Kg/inha)	Production (t)	Balance Sheet (s)	% Muskuwaari	% Irrigated Rice
1994-1995	2 420 000	484 000	578 400	94 400	29 %	8 %
1995-1996	2 451 000	490 200	490 200	0	25 %	9 %
1996-1997	2 498 000	499 700	289 800	-109 900	17 %	11 %
1997-1998	2 572 000	514 500	373 000	-141 500	29 %	13 %
1998-1999	2 633 000	526 600	373 900	-152 700	21 %	15 %

Source: Augustin Herman Wambo-Yamdjeu et *al.*, 2007, p. 4.

The table above shows that from 1996 to 1999, the need for cereals (Muskuwaari and rice) grew as the years passed.

An observation of Table 3 below reveals that throughout 1999-2009, between the three main cereals cultivated and consumed in the Far North region, rainy season sorghum remains the first, followed by dry season sorghum. Maize comes as the third most cultivated and consumed cereal. An overall assessment gives an average production ratio of 1.03 tons of cereal crop production per hectare. For a region of more than 4 million inhabitants having as basic food the consumption of cereals, the yearly production remains insufficient. This state of affairs justifies the increase in cereals' prices three months after each year's harvest. Therefore, poverty and famine become inevitable in the Far North region, and this calls for more intervention mechanisms by the stakeholders (the peasants themselves, the government and Non-Governmental Organisations).

Overall, analyses converge towards the conclusion that poverty is almost endemic in the Far North region due to the harshness of the natural environment and the fragility of the socio-economic situation.

Table 3: Yearly Principal Cereals Production Between 1999 to 2009 in the Far North Region

Years	Types of crops	Space cultivated (Ha)	Production (T)	Production ratio (T/Ha)
1999/2000	Rainy season sorghum	276 100	254 490	0.92
	Dry season sorghum	148 890	141 720	0.95
	Maize	70 400	105 900	1.50
2000/2001	Rainy season sorghum	198 950	145 550	0.73
	Dry season sorghum	108 500	62 100	0.57
	Maize	46 530	38 125	0.82
2001/2002	Rainy season sorghum	221 274	246 665	1.11
	Dry season sorghum	159 287	179 020	1.12
	Maize	57 108	82 661	1.45
2002/2003	Rainy season sorghum	210 603	186 120	0.88
	Dry season sorghum	107 065	61 287	0.57
	Maize	59 439	58 048	0.98
2003/2004	Rainy season sorghum	268 147	308 703	1.15
	Dry season sorghum	156 545	182 075	1.16
	Maize	79 562	122 520	1.54
2004/2005	Rainy season sorghum	242 987	253 110	1.04
	Dry season sorghum	128 962	80 432	0.62
	Maize	78 631	89 816	1.14
2005/2006	Rainy season sorghum	292 700	254 483	0.87
	Dry season sorghum	114 470	97 298	0.85
	Maize	96 340	141 176	1.47
2006/2007	Rainy season sorghum	321 542	386 970	1.20
	Dry season sorghum	177 005	127 983	0.72
	Maize	102 339	112 219	1.10
2007/2008	Rainy season sorghum	291 226	313 463	1.08
	Dry season sorghum	204.000	181 630	0.89
	Maize	62 412	56 924	0.91
2008/2009	Rainy season sorghum	334 163	372 893	1.12
	Dry season sorghum	207.000	184 796	0.89
	Maize	97 354	150 951	1.55

Source: Author's Compilation from: Data collected at the regional delegation of MINADER, Far North

6. Efforts Towards the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 1 in the Far North Region of Cameroon

Overcoming poverty and inequality is still one of the biggest development challenges facing economists and politicians in emerging and Developed Countries. It is universally acknowledged that success can only be guaranteed by a mix of national and multinational contributions. This explains that at the Millennium Summit held in September 2000 in New

York, USA, 191 countries with Cameroon present adopted the Millennium Declaration. The declaration which focused on issues of peace, security, and development and covered areas including environment, human rights, and the sound management of public affairs was worked out into eight major goals and eighteen quantitative targets to be achieved before 2015 and thus became popularly known as the Millennium Development Goals (Wokia-azi Ndangle Kumase, 2010, p. 1).

Faced with all situations, it is natural for people to start thinking and developing ideas to find solutions, regardless of whether they are temporary, short-term or long-term. Therefore, faced with the effects of poverty, recurrent in North Cameroon, especially in the Far North, the populations are fighting the best they can to be resilient. Along the same line, the development agencies as well as the government gave a push to those communities to bring in their assistance to alleviate poverty.

6.1 Peasants' Resilience

In the economic domain, the diversification of agricultural, pastoral and fish farming activities was a survival strategy chosen by peasants during periods of famine. In the Far North region, looking at the consistent recurrence of famine and other food shortages, peasants not only cultivate cash crops like cotton and rice but also produce subsistence agricultural crops, most notably cereals (millet, sorghum, maize), groundnuts, onion, vegetable, tomatoes, etc. They also breed birds, cheeps, goats and cows. They use diverse fishing methods in various water sources (rivers, springs, drainages, etc.). Over the years and looking at the recurrence of climatic hazards, which most often orchestrated famine and poverty, populations had increasingly embraced trade in both foodstuffs, manufactured products and long-distance trade to diversify their sources of income to attempt to raise their living standard.

From the cultural dimension, the presence of the granary aimed at conserving and controlling the use of foodstuffs, especially cereals, which constituted the basic food in the region. The conservation of harvest products in the granary was usually done in anticipation of lean periods and famine depending on the case and the realities of the season.

However, most of the population could not practice the strategies developed above given that they required financial capital. Thus, these substitution activities, including trade and the diversification of economic activities, were elitist. Due to that, the resilience of the majority rested

more on adaptation to the living conditions of the Sahelian zone. Such resilience was also based on the support of Civil Society Organisations as well as Public Authorities. This assistance was done through the implementation of ‘‘a good number of proven techniques and adapted agricultural production systems to Sahelian conditions which have already been validated, both through research and experiments in a real Sahelian farming environment’’.[1]

6.2 Civil Society Organisations' Contributions

Looking at the socio-economic situation in the Far North region, one may be tempted to question whether environmental crises could be used to explain the entire problem of poverty in that region. However, if environmental crises could explain the food crisis, many Sub-Saharan African countries with rather "favourable" agroecological conditions would not be registered with the World Food Program (WFP). From the above, it should be understood that environmental crises constituted one of the main causes and not the only cause of poverty as noted throughout this analysis.

On this note, we must remember that environmental crises are dreadful because their effects on people's lives are devastating. However, thanks to ingenuity, commitment and solidarity, it is possible to fight them. Support from specialised structures can encourage the adoption of sustainable practices in land and water management, which will allow us not only to survive but also to prosper (United Nations, 2022, p. 5).

That said, the actions of several Civil Society Organisations had been so glaring in this region. It aims to help people find solutions to the phenomenon of poverty. In this regard, we must recognise the contribution of United Nations organisations' agencies such as UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UN-AIDS and other structures such as *CODAS-Caritas*, *ACEEN*, *ACORD*, INADES- Formation which intervenes in fields such as education, health, agriculture, breeding, fishing, environment, etc. to foster development and work towards poverty alleviation in the Far North region as well as other regions of the country.

[1] https://mooriben-niger.org/IMG/pdf/Crise_Alimentaire_au_Sahel.pdf, Se nourrir ou périr : invalider le binôme sécheresse/famine au Niger, 20 avril 2022, p. 6.

6.3. Cameroon Government' Effort

The technical structures of both civil society and the state never hesitated to support these farmers in finding alternative solutions to the consequences of poverty. Therefore, farmers were supported in their drive for resilience through the provision of early seed varieties to counteract seasonal irregularities by state institutions such as *IRAD*. Furthermore, water points were installed both for human consumption and for animals in the Mandara Mountains. It is in this line that the Mandara Mountains Region Development Project (*PDRM*), the Poverty Reduction and Action Program for Women in the Far North (*PREPAFEN*), the National Popularisation of Agricultural Research (*PNVRA*), the Social Safety Nets Project, etc. were able to meet up with their objectives in either the construction of school or water points (drillings). Those public structures more or less supported the establishment of a basic regional safety net system, including piloting targeted cash transfers and Labor Intensive Public Works programs for the poorest and most vulnerable people. Financial support and agricultural technics had been given to farmers in the Far North region. All the above contributed to consolidating the resilience of farmers against poverty in this part of the country. Bring and Moussa illustrate this state support in this assertion:

> "The regular droughts of the 1970s and 1980s led the authorities to put in place responses by creating structures oriented towards the prevention and management of droughts: SOCOOPED, CEREAL OFFICE, PROVINCIAL DROUGHT COMMITTEE" (Bring & Moussa, 2016, p. 3).

- *SOCOOPED*: The Cooperative Society for Savings and Development. The main objective was to provide communities with monetary resources to enable them to meet their needs and access to basic resources.
- CEREAL OFFICE: This acted as the Cereal Bank. The structure builds up cereal stocks to counter any inflation in periods of drought and facilitate the reaction of populations.
- PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE TO FIGHT AGAINST DROUGHT: This was the structure set up to create permanent conditions and habits to fight against drought by acting on ecosystems in the domain of plant nurseries, reforestation, and support in basic materials for forestry (*Ibid*., pp. 4-5).

Ultimately, the public authorities and their bilateral and multilateral partners spared no effort to support the populations of the Far North in the