

Dynamics of Ndu and Tole Agro-Industries and Outcomes on Rural Development in Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Agro-Industries play crucial roles in population empowerment, rural development and the dynamics of communities in developing countries. The Ndu and Tole Tea estates in Cameroon are not exceptions. Created by the Germans, in 1928 the management of the estates was inherited by the British under the Commonwealth Development Cooperation and later transferred to the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in 1947. These agro-industries now under private management since 2002 have been involved in tea production, transformation and commercialization in national and international markets. In the process of achieving these goals, the enterprises have been at conflict with the local populations and workers that carry out activities in the plantations. Even though, the estates have been at the forefront of rural development and livelihood transformation in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon, their activities at different periods of Cameroon history have had several negative outcomes in the uplift of populations and promotion of development in the countryside. This study has as objective to investigate how the activities of these estates have contributed to the improvement of rural livelihoods and development in the study sites and emerging challenges. Data for production of this work is tapped from primary sources (field investigations) and secondary sources (literature on development, agriculture, and industrial geography). The findings of this study show that the estates have created job opportunities for the population, enhanced the incomes of host communities, improved the road infrastructure, health, water and electricity services of the rural population. On the other hand, the working conditions of population that operate in the estates have been precarious and marked by human rights violation through nonpayment of debts owed workers, wanton dismissal of workers without justification, landgrab and conflicts amongst others. This paper investigates into the development history of these enterprises.

Keywords: Agro-Industry, Cameroon Tea Estate, Development Outcomes, Ndu- Tole

Published Online: May 15, 2022

ISSN: 2736-4534

DOI : 10.24018/ejedu.2022.3.3.302

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I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a priority sector of many countries in the world following the important role it plays in job creation and income generation. In developing countries, agro-industries contribute 20 percent of the Gross Domestic product (Dugue, 2007). According to Moloua and Lambi (2005), 35% of Cameroon's GDP comes from agriculture and related activities. About 40% of the rural population hit by abject poverty (UNDP, 2016) depend on this sector for survival. In Cameroon, the Cameroon Development Corporations (CDC) is the second largest employer after the government, with some of its estates located in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. These regions are dynamic with contrasting development potentials. Unlike the Northwest Region is dominated by livestock grazing and subsistence farming and

characterized by high rural poverty, unemployment and rural exodus, the Southwest Region is endowed with natural resources (rich volcanic soils for agriculture, timber exploitation, offshore and inland fishing) that attracts a significant number of migrants into the region (Nformi, 2014, Tanyi, 2017). The Tea estates of Ndu and Tole located in these regions have since creation, established diversified socio-economic opportunities to promote development and environmental dynamics. Populations participate at different levels of tea production processes, transformation and commercialization to generate cash income for poverty alleviation, unemployment combat and development of their communities. These are land preparation, planting, pruning, harvesting, transformation and marketing of tea. The working environment of labourers in these tea plantations in the past has been difficult (Konings, 1993a). Workers have faced

rights violation manifested through poor housing and sanitation, suppression of salaries and dismissal without payment of dues owed. Some work under very difficult conditions marked by long hours of bending on farms, standing in factories and increase working hours without salary increase amongst other. Today, in efforts to improve on the poor working conditions of workers, the corporations have contributed in the enhancement of life in plantation host communities through road improvement, rural electrification and provision of health and educational services.

II. DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study has been tapped from primary and secondary sources. Fieldwork at the Tole and Ndu Tea estates gave the opportunity to conduct interviews on plantation workers and CTE officials. It also enabled the observation of the activities of tea workers and challenges faced during their interaction with the estate. In total 20 persons were interviewed in each plantation comprising tea workers, managers and populations living at the neighbourhoods of these plantations. These interviews were accompanied by participant observation of the activities of tea cultivation, harvesting and transformation in the factories. Secondary data was collected from archived documents of the plantation, Buea National archives, student dissertations and thesis carried out on tea production. Statistics on tea production yields, workers population was furnished by these sources. Mapping of the tea estate was done using remotely sensed data generated using the Global Positioning Systems receiver (GPS) Garmin and high-resolution satellite images (quickbird) exploited in the Google Earth library. DEM image was also exploited to produce the relief map of the tea estates. These remotely sensed data helped in the spatialization of the tea plantations and land use mapping of the estates and neighbourhood villages.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF NDU AND TOLE

Ndu and Tole are located in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Specifically, Ndu is the administrative capital of Ndu Subdivision in Donga Mantung Division-Northwest Region and Tole a village situated East of Buea in Fako Division – Southwest Region (Fig. 1). These localities host the Cameroon Tea estates within which the factories considered for this study are found. The Ndu and Tole tea estates were bought by the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE) in 1992 following the privatization of CDC.

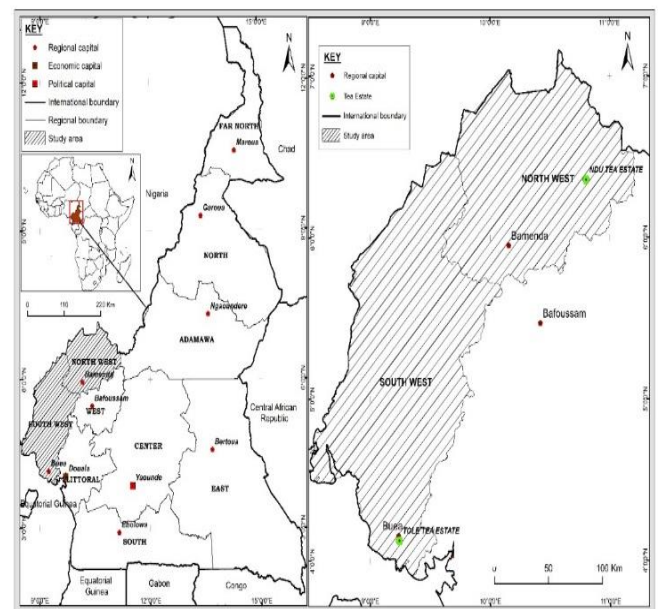


Fig. 1. Location of Ndu and Tole tea estates.

III. RESULTS

A. Dynamics of the Tea Plantations and Estates

1. Genesis and Ecology of Tea

Tea originates from Southwest China. It was first used as a medicinal plant or drink for recreational purposes in China. Portuguese missionaries introduced it in Europe in the 16th century. In Africa tea was introduced during the colonial period through interaction with the colonies for exportation of the final product to Europe. The plantations were established in Cameroon by the Germans and later inherited by the British in 1928 (Konings, 2011). With the defeat of the Germans in the First World War, the British Estate and Agency Company continue to set up tea plantations in Cameroon and other African Countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi to nourish its market and that of other European Countries (Nformi 2014). The tea (*Carnellia Sinensis*) plant thrives under rainfall of 1.140 to 3000 mm and temperature of 16 to 27°C. Ndu receives an average rainfall of 1500mm per year and an average temperature of 17°C (Nformi, 2014). The soils appropriate for its growth are acidic volcanic soils with a PH of 5.4 to 5.8. The soils of Ndu are mostly laterites and those of Tole volcanic drained with a pH varying from 4.5 to 5. Because of vulnerability of insects and fungi, the Tole and Ndu tea are sprayed regularly with pesticides and fungicides. The spraying is done by men as women specialize in plucking or harvesting on a daily schedule from 7 AM to 3:30 PM.

2. Activities of the Tea Factories

The Ndu and Tole agro-industries combined three functions. These are cultivation of tea, transformation into finished products and commercialization through a distribution or supply channel to the consumer. Tea cultivation involves land preparation, planting, tending and harvesting. High technology is employed at the level of soil management and protection. The procurement of machines for pruning and harvesting opens the way for tea transformation in the factory. Transformation takes place

after preservation of harvested tea through drying, weighing, selection, grading and packaging. During this stage tea is processed from raw form into finished products that are marketable. In each of these processes presented labour is deployed and the wages earned contribute to empower the families concerned.

3. History of Ndu and Tole Tea Factories

The Tole and Ndu tea estate have evolved under different administrations, actors and management. The plantations were introduced in Cameroon in 1928 by the Germans (Courade, 1977). Management was transferred to commonwealth Development Corporation in British Southern Cameroons in 1947. Its indigenization after the second world war led to transfer of management to the Cameroon Development Corporation in 1954. The Cameroon government continued the management of these corporations after independence in 1960 till 1992 when they were sold to Brobon Finex South Africa. This firm bought the Ndu, Tole and Djuttitsa tea estates for 1.5 billion FCFA. Under this transfer arrangement, the firm had 55% of the shares, the government and private sector 35 % and technical partners

and workers 5 %. John Neba Ngu, the then manager of CDC is said to have connived with a fake South African company to sell the estate below the market value under support of influential politicians. This sale below the market price led to loss of huge sums of money by the estate and indebtedness. The state accepted to pay the debts of these enterprises before privatization. Tole Tea Estate (Fig. 2) had a cultivated surface area of 439 hectares and labour force of 1639 workers in 1990, the largest in the Southwest Region (CDC Annual Report 1990). Ndu Estate (Fig. 2) on its part had a surface area of 1589 hectares with tea occupying 668.27 hectares, the eucalyptus section 503 hectares and other land uses 418 hectares (Ojuku *et al.*, 2014). The labour force of Ndu stood at 1559 workers (Nformi 2014) prior to the socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Legal instruments were put in place in April 2013 (order No 00000366/MINFI/SIG/DGI/DGD of 19th November 2013 that enabled the CTEs of Ndu and Tole to do business with the CDC and repatriation of their profits abroad without difficulties. This attracted huge capital investment to boost the sectors.

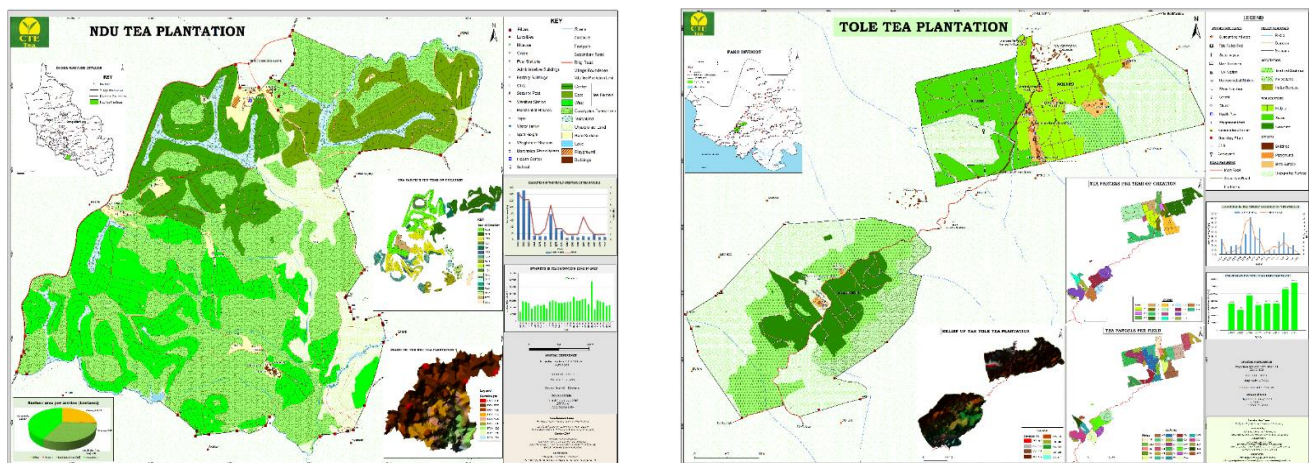


Fig. 2. Layout of the Ndu and Tole tea estates.

4. Ambiance Prior to the Privatization of Ndu and Tole Estate

Prior to the privatization of Ndu and Tole Tea estates, the CDC – a state owned enterprise was the manager of the tea plantations and engine of development in Donga Mantung and Fako Divisions. The CDC played active role in creation of jobs, skills development, and provision of rural infrastructure (electrification, water supply, telecommunication, road construction and maintenance to ease transportation, health service provision and housing of workers). These actions contributed to rural-urban development and poverty eradication. These development packages put in place enhanced the economic growth of the Northwest and Southwest regions and plantation host communities. Unfortunately, these benefits did not last following the withdrawal of the state for many reasons. The CDC was operating at a loss and became a burden to the state. Managerial lapses like corruption, inexperience resulting from recruitment of incompetent personnel base on tribal and social leaning, laxity and laziness of workers due to

perception of the enterprise as a government service led to liquidation and privatization. Also, the inability of the Cameroon government to continue the provision of subsidies to the Ndu and Tole tea estates as was the case with other state-owned enterprises due to the economic crisis led to the demise and closure of these institutions rendering its workers miserable (Ngwa 1978). The privatization was also influenced by mismanagement, indebtedness and pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. By privatization the government thought the tea estates were to be modernized, managed efficiently, help raise revenue for the state, reduce poverty, cut down corruption and embezzlement (Mbunwe, 2008). It was also hoped that this will improve performance, generate wealth which will trickle down the entire society. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Privatization brought untold sufferings to workers and their families that depended on the estate activities for survival. The working hours were increase and wages reduced. For example, in Tole, the daily quota required from tea harvesters was raised from 26kg to 32 kg of green tea leaves harvested

(Konings, 2011). These reforms did not improve the Tea output of tea significantly as production continue to decline after privatization (Fig 3, photo 1).

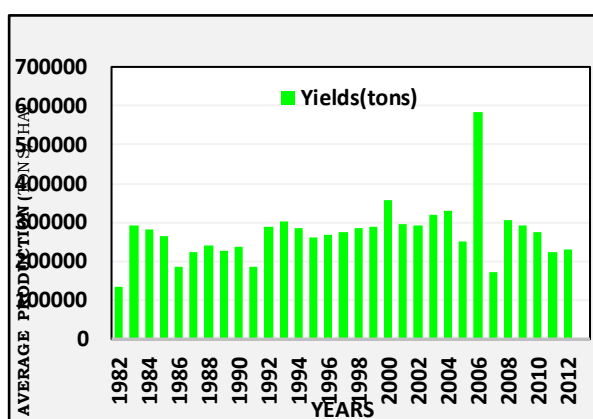


Fig 3. Situation of Tea Production in Ndu, 1982- 2012 (Field data compiled at the factory by author, 2012).



Photo 1. Weighing of tea plucked by workers at Tole (Ojuku, 2012).

As seen on Fig. 3, the output of tea increased from 1982 to 2004 and after this period there was a steady decline up to 2012 with a sporadic increase only in 2006. Recent data on tea production could not be obtained due to insecurity resulting from armed conflicts in the regions that has halted activities in the tea estates.

This at a time wages and fringe benefits of all workers were cut by 30-40% of their previous income. This action was an austerity measure at a period considered as the hell days of workers in CDC. The actions were done with the intension of adjustment. Also, the fringe benefits of workers were reduced, payment of salaries irregular, the free houses, electricity and medical facilities the workers benefitted from in the past were not paid for. The houses were dilapidated, unimproved, poorly equipped and went for long without refurbishment. Workers were also asked to do compulsory savings representing 15 % of their wages and basic salary. Plantation workers who could not cope under this austerity conditions were laid off and trade union activities censored to avoid strikes that will paralyze the corporation.

Intensification of control over workers for discipline and increase in productivity was put in place. Worker lived a period of humiliation. Because of these draconian measures, the labour force of the CDC dropped from 1546 to 974 in Tole, and 1750 to 1333 in Ndu in 1986 and 1991 (Konings 1993a). The most vulnerable of the workers without an alternative source of livelihood as was the case in Ndu accepted the condition for survival and became humble to impress the management.

From this ambience experienced by the CDC, one is tempted to conclude that the CTE was bent on maximization of profit at the detriment of the wellbeing of its workers. Workers were laid off to boost productivity and increase annual turnover. Profit maximization replaced the social welfare of workers. Workers lived in miserable conditions as over 10 people in a family lived in a two-bedroom house. Salaries for hard work were only paid after strike action. This dehumanization in favour of profit maximization in Cameroon tea plantations brought into limelight the debate on the role of capitalism and social welfare models of development in human progress and civilization.

5. Condition of Workers under the CTE and Hidden Penalties

The history of Cameroon Tea Estate shows one of unstable relationship between the enterprise, its workers and host communities. When the CDC privatized these tea estates in 2002, ownership and management of the Djutitsa, Ndu and Tole was transferred to Brobon Finex and later Alhadji Danpullo popularly known as Ndawara. Workers were disgruntled when in November 2002, 23 managerial staff mostly made up of Francophones were transferred from the headquarters of the business enterprise in Douala to CTE. This innovation marked the beginning of new problems in the Ndu and Tole estates. Apart from breeding an Anglophone-Francophone sentiment, many because of their little experience in tea production and management, became involved in the maltreatment of tea workers (pluckers). Plantation conflicts erupted and aggravated between the workers and incoming managers leading to tension. These clashes with Anglophone managers increased and adversely affected the tea enterprise following the fall in production and profits (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). Ever since these changes were made, the new management have failed to leave up to expectation as workers go for months without salary at a time their working hours have increased. The bonuses of workers and allowances continue to be annulled. Even the fringe benefits accorded them formerly by the CDC have been taken out of their payroll. The Cameroon Tea Estate laid off women and men that were above 50 years of age. They were evicted from camp houses owned by multinational companies and obliged to wait for over five years before payment of their dues.

Apart from rights violation, the infrastructure and living environment of the workers has not improved leading to further discontent. The factory unit has not been equipped with new machines as those inherited from the CDC continue to be used. Most of these machines are obsolete dating up to sixty-five years. At times the machines break down and halt operations in the factory, leading to huge revenue losses and unemployment of workers in the Ndu and Tole tea plantations and factories. Camp life have remained precarious as was the

situation under the CDC management. The situation of health and sanitation is bad characterized by overcrowdings in toilets and rooms. This is visible with about 100 persons per toilet and over 5 persons per room in some camps. The refurbishment of buildings has been neglected making life uncomfortable. The buildings constructed with plank material (carabot), are very dilapidated and marked by nasty surroundings with poor ventilation. The living conditions of workers in these camps are poor. This explains why the estates have had a history of strike actions to retaliate and request for reforms.

The ill practices and unstable relation led to discontent on 17 April 2003 when a strike was staged leading to dismissal of John Niba Ngu as general manager of CDC and replaced by Mahamat Alamine Mey. Protracted strikes continued in 2004 leading to the dismissal of 268 workers without payment of their dues. New recruitments of non-Anglophones were done as a therapy and their workload augmented from 32 kg to 45kg of tea in the peak season. This did not solve the problem as in 2006 another strike action grounded the estates for a year. This time at CDC head office at Bota Limbe. Again 736 workers were dismissed without payment of their termination dues. This action increased tension.

B. Developmental Outcomes and Imprints

1. Farm Labour and Income

Farm labour plays a vital role in rural livelihood enhancement. According to Moloua and Lambi (2005), there are 1.1 billion workers in the world with agriculture workers representing 450 million (40%). In this total, 20 to 30 percent are women agricultural wage workers. The Ndu and Tole tea estates have since creation created many job opportunities for the population Plate 1. These populations have different responsibilities in the plantations from administration to field work, with the later dominating. Prior to 2002 when the Ndu Tea Estate became operational under its new management, Ndu Tea was the largest employer in the Northwest Region with about 1559 workers registered in the enterprise.

Plate 1: Workers transported back home from Ndu Tea Estate



Photo 2. Transportation activities in the estates in (Ojuku, 2012).



Photo 3. Bags of tea harvested and transported to Tole Factory (Ojuku, 2012).

It has remained the largest employer in the region when compared to other enterprises like WADA (now defunct), and Upper Noun valley Development Authority (UNVDA) in Ndog involved in rice production and transformation. If seasonal workers that operate on temporal basis are added, the average number of workers employed by Ndu Tea Estate will stand at 1500-2000. This total is significant when compared to the employment force in other national enterprises in Cameroon. In 2013, the CDC employed 22000 workers out of 40 000 collectively employed by other state-owned enterprises like SODECOTON, CAMTEL, CAMPOST, PAMOL amongst others (IMF, 2015).

2. Local and National Income Production

In Cameroon agro-industries play a vital role in the empowerment of local population, council and the nation in income generation. This has been the case of the Ndu and Tole Tea Estates. Monthly salaries are paid to the local populations carrying out activities at different stages of tea production (Plate 2). These salaries are used for meeting up with the daily needs of its beneficiaries such as running of their households, reinvestment in other income generating activities such as article stores, drinking parlors, farming etc. The salary of these workers shows a significant budget of the enterprise ranging from 27.142.998 to 35,759.759 FCFA per month. It is estimated that in 2002, the tea estate paid out 2000 000 to 4000 000 FCFA into the treasury of Ndu as taxes (Nformi 2014). These royalties were used for the provision of potable water and road maintenance works for the rural communities. Today the taxes are no longer paid to the councils but to the state by the Cameroon Tea Estate headquarters in Douala. These financial contributions show the key role the CTE through Ndu and Tole plantations play as development actors in Cameroon.

Plate 2: Preparation of tea processed for commercialization

Photo 4. Second Grade Tea packaged at Ndu for shipment (Ojuku, 2012).



Photo 5. High Grade Tea packaged at Tole (Ojuku, 2012).

3. Feminisation of Labour

Tea production activities are gender indiscriminatory in both the Tole and Ndu tea estates. The female gender is represented by a significant proportion of women and girls that operate in different activities in these tea estates. Today, the Tole agro-industry has a labour force of 1200 workers. Out of the 1200 manpower, females constitute 60 percent of the labour force. Some of the activities they do are tea planting, plucking, weighing, tasting, sorting and packaging in plantations and factories. Field interviews revealed that some of these women have been operating in these estates for a period of over 53 years. These women are given preference for work than men because they are readily available, timid and docile and do not complain a lot as compared to the men. Also, they do not question management decisions and are easy to manipulate than men. Several of them are illiterates and in most situations not aware of their rights. They work for long hours and are involved in backbreaking and hazardous farm operations for little pay. The wages of women are lower than that of men. In general labour supply, the women are paid 118 per hour as compared to 135 per hour for men. An assistant receives 171 per hour against 198 per hour for men and for headmen services a woman is paid 130 per hour against 156 per hour for men. This discrimination is unfair.

4. Community Development

The Ndu and Tole tea estates have been real engines of growth and rural development. Even though, these enterprises have many managerial lapses, they have been of great importance to the development of Donga Mantung and Fako Divisions where there are located. Because of their employment of non-indigenes and financial contributions through tax payments to the state, these estates have promoted development in the North West and South West Regions and Cameroon in general. They have created many job opportunities (about 1559 workers in Ndu and 1200 in Tole), improved on the rural road network, electrification and water supply to host communities. In Tole and Ndu the estate has established schools for the education of children, created health services for its workers and the population living in the surrounding area.

Plate 3: Some infrastructure and job opportunities created by the Cameroon Tea Estates of Ndu and Tole



Photo 6. Population employed for tea cultivation in Tole (Ojuku, 2012).



Photo 7. A health facility created to improve on population health in Ndu (Ojuku, 2012).

In Tole the Cameroon Tea Estate play a key role in the empowerment of peasant farmers through the consumption of food crops (tomatoes, plantains, maize) produced by small farmers. Indigenes of Ndu have also opened small holder tea plantations and regularly supply their harvest to the estate for commercialization. Some of the workers rendering services to the estate are lodged for free. In an interview granted to the

manager of the Cameroon Tea Estate Tole (May 2012, Tole factory), it was revealed that the plantation has employed 1200 workers and if one considers that these people have five dependents, then one will see the large number of people the estate supports in Cameroon in addition to social corporate responsibilities to communities hosting the plantations such as free potable water. He further notes that a pay package of over 30 million Francs CFA is paid out to workers with its multiplying effect on community development, low-cost medical services provided to its workers and surrounding villages, workers social club operated for plantation workers and the public for relaxation, nursery schools established for the children of its workers and neighbouring communities. In Ndu the picture has been the same. In an interview granted to Nelson Nfor a worker of the Ndu tea estate, the Ndu community has been empowered with incomes earned from participation in Ndu Tea plantation activities. According to him when salaries are paid, money circulates in the community and promotes the creation of income generating ventures such as purchase of motor bikes and taxis for transport after work in the plantations, establishment of small shops, restaurants and drinking bars for income generation. He further notes that the school, health centre, sports playgrounds established by the Ndu Tea Estate have increased social cohesion in Ndu. Structures such as the Ndu Tea Health Centre, Ndu Tea Estate Credit Union and its many branches, Ndu Tea Challenger Football Club, the Ndu Athletic Club headed by Kongnyu Joseph Shey that has won the Mount Cameroon International Race for the male category (1999 and 2000) and for the female category won by Ngwang Catherine Giwe in 2000 are examples of contributions the Ndu Tea agro-industry has done to promote development in the Northwest Region. These pro-poor services have enforced the relations between the tea plantation owners and the local population. The dynamics of private sector interactions with host communities even after state withdrawal from management is eloquent proof of how poor people have gained returns from private sector initiatives without losing control over their land resources leased out for establishment of the plantations.

C. Challenges

1. Anglophone Crisis; an Appalling Situation

The insecurity from the Anglophone crises remains a challenge. The current Socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions has been an additional hurdle many of the rural poor have to grapple with faced with a dwindling living condition and daunting context of poverty experience for three decades. Stakeholders of the Public sector, NGOs and civil Society organizations responsible for providing solutions to some of these problems with the goal of uplifting the plight of these vulnerable population have been compelled to ground their development packages. This is due to the daunting challenge of resolving the socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions since 2016. The Ndu Tea Estate that until 2016 was a panacea in the fight against rural poverty in the Northwest Region through job creation was grounded due to these crises. The closure of the enterprise has aggravated livelihood problems and paralysed the socio-economic and cultural life of the people. The installations of the tea factories and plantations have been

attacked by separatist rebels and workers tortured and killed in some circumstances. Several workers have been abducted for ransom, maimed, injured and killed for not cooperating in secessionist activities. Houses, vehicles and processing units belonging to CDC plantation have been burnt down. These attacks have adversely affected the output and profit margin of the enterprises. Prior to the Anglophone crisis, in 2014 the CDC registered 5.4 billion FCFA net loss. By 2015 net loss went up to 10.53 billion FCFA (Cameroon Intelligence Report 2018).

2. Praedial Larceny

Crime and insecurity manifested in the form of theft of tea has been a predicament to handle by the estate. This is the outcome of poor working conditions in the Ndu and Tole Tea estates. Many tea workers laid off and not compensated by CTE as was the situation under CDC opened smaller holder schemes to become independent producers. These small holder schemes have created opportunities for tea theft and resale in the estate. Theft of tea (Praedial larceny) leads to heavy losses and reluctance to invest. Poverty in local communities hosting the plantations resulting from high youth unemployment and school dropouts is the root cause of praedial larceny. The practice is not limited to tea agroindustry. Similar ills are encountered in all CDC plantations in Cameroon with the worst cases in Mondoni palm plantations due to high demand for oil in local markets (Tanyi, 2017). According to Obale (2021), 98% of farmers in Cameroon are victims of agricultural produce theft. Theft of agricultural produce especially palm oil represents 36 to 45 percent of losses (FAO, 2013) face by farmers. Security has become a priority in Cameroon Tea Estates. Farm gate security recruited guards are present to check incoming and outgoing guests and trucks. Mobile teams are also recruited in Ndu and Tole estates for security of the plantations, factories and other services. The private security agents work in collaboration with the Cameroon military to secure the estates and combat secessionist fighters hiding in the neighbourhoods and bushes.

3. Climate Variability

Climate variability has been another challenge to the Ndu and Tole plantations. Excessive and erratic rainfall marked by high inter and intra monthly, seasonal, annual and periodic rainfall and fluctuating temperatures have been a problem to tea production. The volume of water received during rainfall, rainfall intensity, and frequency has been a problem to tea growth. Traditionally, rainfall in Ndu and Tole occurs in mid-March and ends in mid-November. This calendar is no longer respected as from the month of January rains start leaving the months of March with little rainfall. Sometimes the rains begin in April referred to as late rains. Irregularity in rainfall as was the case in 1999 adversely affected tea production. During this year an average of 86658.417 tons of tea was produced. In 2005 when rainfall was regular, 267641.42 tons of tea was produced in Ndu. At times when rainfall is excessive, the soils are leached leading to dwarfness of the tea plants and difficulties of bearing. Also, heavy rains favours the rapid growth of weeds and when the rains are violent accompanied by hailstones that also damages tea leaves. In tea plantations located in flat or lowlands, floods after heavy rainfall are a problem as tea requires well drained

soils to thrive. Extreme weather events marked by poor distribution of rains have led to droughts that affect the tea plants. In 1988, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2005 and 2008 long dry seasons were witnessed with less than 15mm of rainfall recorded. Because of these variations, pest and diseases have developed that have been destructive to the plants necessitating more drought and disease resistant species. Some of these diseases are pink mite, purple mite, pale mite, scarlet mite, yellow mite and red spider mite. The reductions in tea yields resulting from climate variability has wider implications on the Ndu and Tole agro-industries as workers' wages are cut down when this occurs to minimize losses.

VI. DISCUSSION

The central tenet for creation of the Ndu and Tole tea plantations was to inject growth in the economy of Cameroon. At first, the state involvement in management of tea production was to give a human face to the enterprises by empowering the local population and communities hosting the plantations in development. Faced with the economic crisis, managerial crises and poor perception of these agro-industries by its workers as a social scheme the plantations declined. The government was compelled to privatize them. Market-oriented strategies and privatization became the basis of future economic growth prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. This structural adjustment or new orientation was wrongly perceived by the estate workers and local populations. Field evidence shows that transfer to private ownership and direct investment as a motor for growth led to new problems for the plantations. Evidence from this study shows that this change of strategy has not paid off. Growth rates have been at a decline and disappointing. Also, employment of local populations in the enterprise has fallen drastically. Structural adjustment and market liberalization have clearly not delivered the development benefits claimed by it and people's livelihoods opportunities and vulnerability has declined and increased over the years aggravated by the recent socio-political crisis in the anglophone region. Withdrawal of the state support to tea producers and the reliance on the private sector as the principal agent of development as prescribed by WB and IMF did more harm than good to the Cameroonian population working in these estates. For those that were thrown out of work for demonstrating for the payment of arrears owed or people whose lands were expropriated for establishment of the tea plantations (Nguiffo *et al.*, 2015), that have never benefited to work in the tea enterprise their living conditions were precarious. Mass impoverishment and precarity in rural livelihoods was the outcome on the host communities as they experienced high unemployment levels, poor returns to small scale agriculture practiced in the neighborhoods for survival, lacked good access to basic social services such as health and education as was the situation in the heir days of management under the Cameroon Development Cooperation.

From field evidence, the transfer of management of Ndu and Tole tea estates like other tea estates in Cameroon, has not fundamentally changed the livelihoods of the local population and communities hosting the enterprises. This is because, significant material benefits to the rural populations

in the plantations area has not been noticed. The privatization of these former state enterprises and granting of concession to commercial operators, placed much of the arable lands and natural resources of the areas in the hands of a powerful economic elite within a framework of market capitalism.

The enterprises have contributed to empower the populations that interact with them in production activities even though with many challenges. The female gender has been the backbone in labour supply contributing over 60 percent of the labour force. This labour force even though dominated by indigenes of the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon where the estates are located, has been dynamic and a veritable factor of national integration as populations from the different regions of the country and beyond work in the two estates. Most of these workers are the second and third generation of populations that came here for work from when the estates were established in the colonial period. In other CDC plantations in Cameroon, agro-industries have since the colonial period been a veritable factor of national integration as migrants from different areas irrespective of their ethnic, social, economic background, are recruited to work in plantations as is the situation in Ndu and Tole (Barbier *et al.*, 1983).

VII. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that while workers at different levels in the tea plantations are following the necessary procedures in terms of labour supply required and loyalty to the employers, this is not translating into significant financial and material benefits for them. In most of the cases reported, the estate management undertook to provide employment for local populations hosting the enterprise, but in only one out of 60 cases in Ndu and one out of 40 in Tole was any firm agreement reached on the number of jobs and levels of financial remuneration to provide. One notes that the Tea estates of Ndu and Tole have contributed to uplift the population, development of the countryside and support for the government. These benefits have contributed in livelihood transformation, but the problems encountered faced with privatization have equally been enormous. Accrued unpaid areas, laying off of workers, land grab and neglect of basic services for profit gains has also inflicting suffering on the population leading to reduction in tea output and crisis in the enterprise. This negative outcome brings into question the role of agro-industries in rural development and population empowerment and the need for state intervention for social development. This will help to reduce the mal practices carried out such as tea theft, crime and other forms of insecurity perpetrated by dropouts from the estates and their progenies that are implicated in retaliatory armed conflicts in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon.

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