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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LAND RESOURCE CONFLICT MITIGATION DIPLOMACY FOR HARMONIOUS INTER COMMUNITIES COEXISTENCE: THE OKU-MBESSA LEGACY IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

Land resources in montane highlands often represent common property prerequisites for the survival and sustenance of the human in communities that are dependent thereof. The Oku and Mbessa communities on the northern fringe of the Ijim-Kilum citadel have in the course of manning their respective base resources sowed a spectre of edgy perceptions and practices of ownership entitlements that have hatched land resource conflicts. Their recurrence and abatement attempts within the past three decades has rather enshrined ugly hallmarks of shady peace deals between communities to an extent that planners of contemporary community resources find it hard to stay aloof. This study posits that if the conflicts are not holistically resolved, such issuant and commonplace signatures would continue to exacerbate the current tragedy of the commons to profit advantaged communities in this increasingly global economy where general welfare of all and sundry ought to be valued and preserved.

INTRODUCTION

Land resources constitute one of the fundamental bases for human existence and survival and prosperity of mankind in ecumenes of difficult ecological traits. Montane lands are symptomatic living spaces that throughout history have offered rare satisfaction to rural livelihoods based on agriculture as the main perception of their wealth and power (Hetepo *et al.*, 2010). Such human perceptions anchored on societal civilisations and technologies is hardly unidirectional and so in many cases breeds squabbles and conflicts between communities in varied parts of the world. This is in defiance of Ancient Greek myths that alleged that in the beginning people used resources and lived happily together in modest harmony. Peaceful coexistence could last for just as long as people cease to be envious of borders resources (Wardak, 2010). Resentfulness has often befallen between individuals, social groups and societies wrangling and contending over scarce land resources at the internal and international scales. Mutual and bilateral interaction in modern times has increasingly seen the need for containing and reversing the escalating trends of conflicts issuant of land resources (PSCR, 2014). This is even most needed in montane areas where soil fertility and topography cause major space determinants of human occupancy. Land resource conflict management options are rooted in clear spectrums of decision making and taking actions while considering multiple stakeholder roles of how

such land resources could be harnessed (Anghileri and Burlando, 2017). In the developing world it is to legitimise the resource frontiers and borders between the two conflicting communities with the policy of boundary status quo or in a revised form (Nguendi, 2012). There is certainly an urgent need to determine and demarcate these borders effectively so they can stand as distinct villages, tribes, countries or states which is a valuable platform for successful cooperation and integration (Barbette, 2008). The very pattern and ramifications of inter and intra-ethnic conflicts over resources in the North West Region replicates severally over common property resources as observed in this study between montane communities of Oku and Mbessa. It is same observable scenarios between, Balikumbat and Bambalang, Balikumbat and Bafanji, Bambui and Kedjom Keku, Bambui and Finge, Bali and Bawock, Bali and Ngyen-Mbo as well as Bambili and KedjomKetingo just to cite a few major cases that are experiencing conflicts either in the form of land or ethnic community border disputes (Fogwe and Sikod, 2014); (Bolak, 2015) and (Balgah and Maluh, 2017). The recurrence of these palavers that seem to spare just no single Division in the North West Region can only be a clarion call for a model that encompasses general and specific intricacies of land resource conflict resolution. Such a model should be a robust blend of multi-stakeholder, multi-sectorial, institutional and legal frameworks (Kimengsi, 2015) and (Shwei, 2016) especially for the Oku-Mbessa Highlands that trails a legacy of land resource conflict management paradigms anchored on the 1974 Land

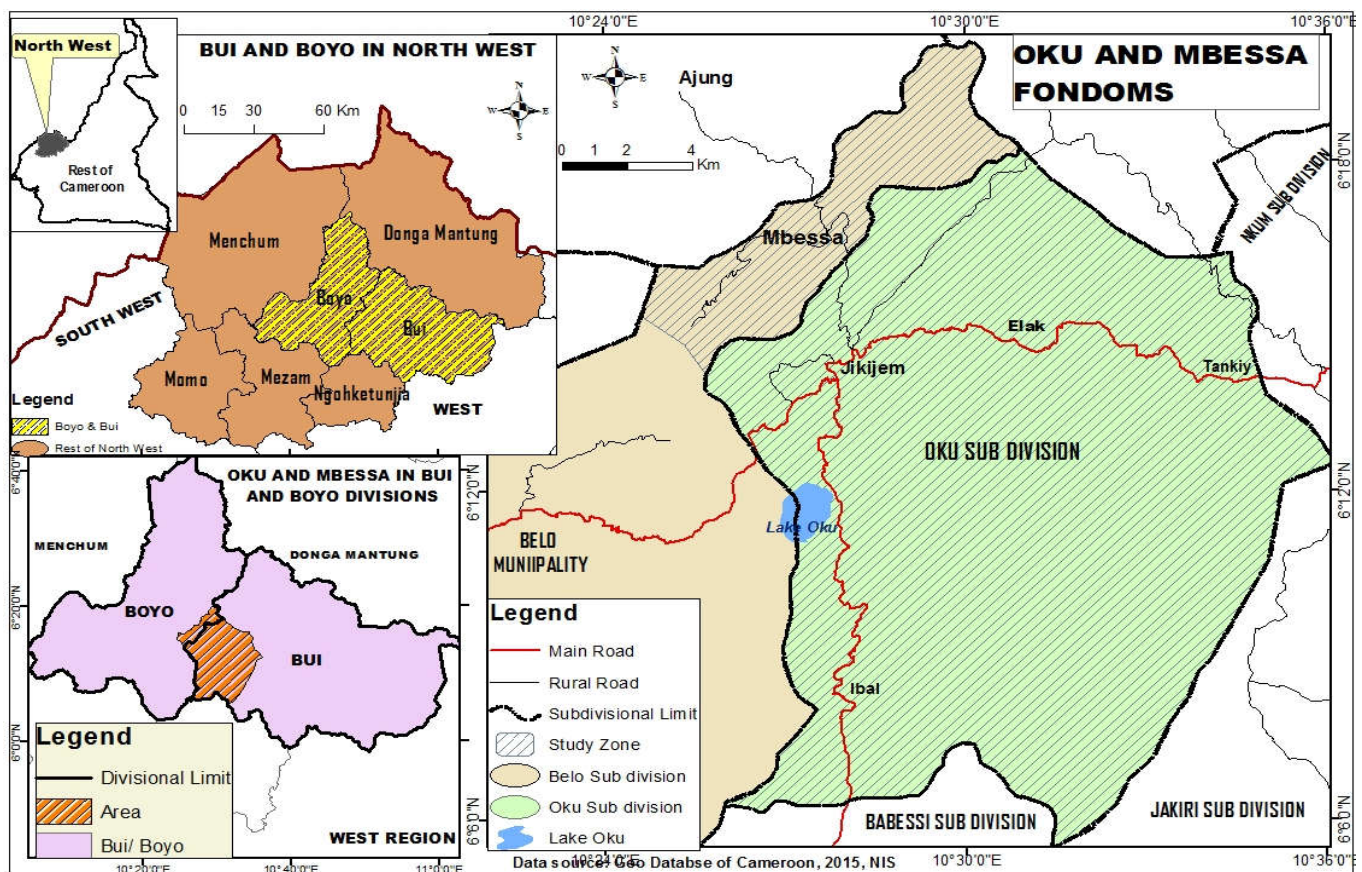


Figure 1.

Reform Law on the management of village and community lands. Oku-Mbessa land resources management has evolved in the past decades involving multiple stakeholders, approaches, institutions, laws, interests and outcomes. Notwithstanding, increasing attention of interest in the land resources between the two communities is increasingly now tilted towards border areas being endemic hollow frontiers like Koh Embel, Bahluh, Buukuh and Ibal where disputes often escalating into violent and lethal conflicts of significant magnitude (Bailack, 2018). This study aims to identify the land resource conflicts and plausible stakeholder management options for sustainable inter-tribal peaceful living togetherness between Oku and Mbessa tribes based on the premise that multi-stakeholder and multi-sectorial participation is a direct panacea to such land resource conflict resolution in the Oku-Mbessa highlands.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Amid the multiple cases of land resources conflicts, the particular one chosen for this study falls between latitude $6^{\circ}6'0''$ and $6^{\circ}16'0''$ North and longitude $10^{\circ}24'0''$ to $10^{\circ}36'0''$ East (Fig. 1). It is a double community area of 314.17km^2 being 276.87km^2 for Oku and 37.29km^2 for Mbessa according to the digital treatment of the satellite image of the study area (Landsat, March 2018). The population of the two communities were 182,879 inhabitants for Oku carved out into 36 villages of the Bui Division while Mbessa had 19,948 inhabitants spread in 12 quarters of Boyo Division according to the 2017 population projections (CDP 2017, BUCREP 2005). The research design used was that of a historical survey stretching over a period of 36 years (1982 to 2018) considered to be most indicative of how myriads of stakeholders and cross sectorial involvement sturdily illustrates a double contrast of the dynamics of land resources conflict mitigation on this

hyper coveted highlands in the North West Region bordering the Boyo and Bui Divisions. The period between 1982 and 2008 coincides with rapid population growth and the upsurge of inter-tribal conflicts over land resources, which is the aeon of conflict generation and causality. The era from 2009-2018 is rather the period of manifest efforts for a conflict pushdown towards peaceful living between the two tribes. The study chose a purposive sampling technique applied in six representative land resource zones (Mbai, Emfveh-Miih, Nchiiy, Mbam, Shinga and Mbessa) and four hollow frontiers (Koh Embel, Bahluh, Buukuh' and Ibal) in the villages and quarters of the Oku Mbessa Highlands. Primary data was collected from the field through three complementary techniques involving questionnaires, formal and informal interviews and direct observation of resource and conflict sites. A total of 300 questionnaires were administered in the six zones with a 10% sample size the of stakeholder involvement in conflict management. The target population were the natives and administrators directly affected and involved as well as traditional rulers and village elders who were interviewed for their experiences in dynamics and impact of the evolution of land resources conflicts. This was complemented by secondary data from published and unpublished sources available in the Oku Council Library, Divisional Delegation of Land and Survey in Kumbo and Sub-Divisional Office in Oku. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to relate stakeholder and sectorial participation in conflict resolution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spatial distribution of land resource conflict typology in the Oku-Mbessa highlands: The patterns of the spatial distribution of land resources in these highlands exhibits a

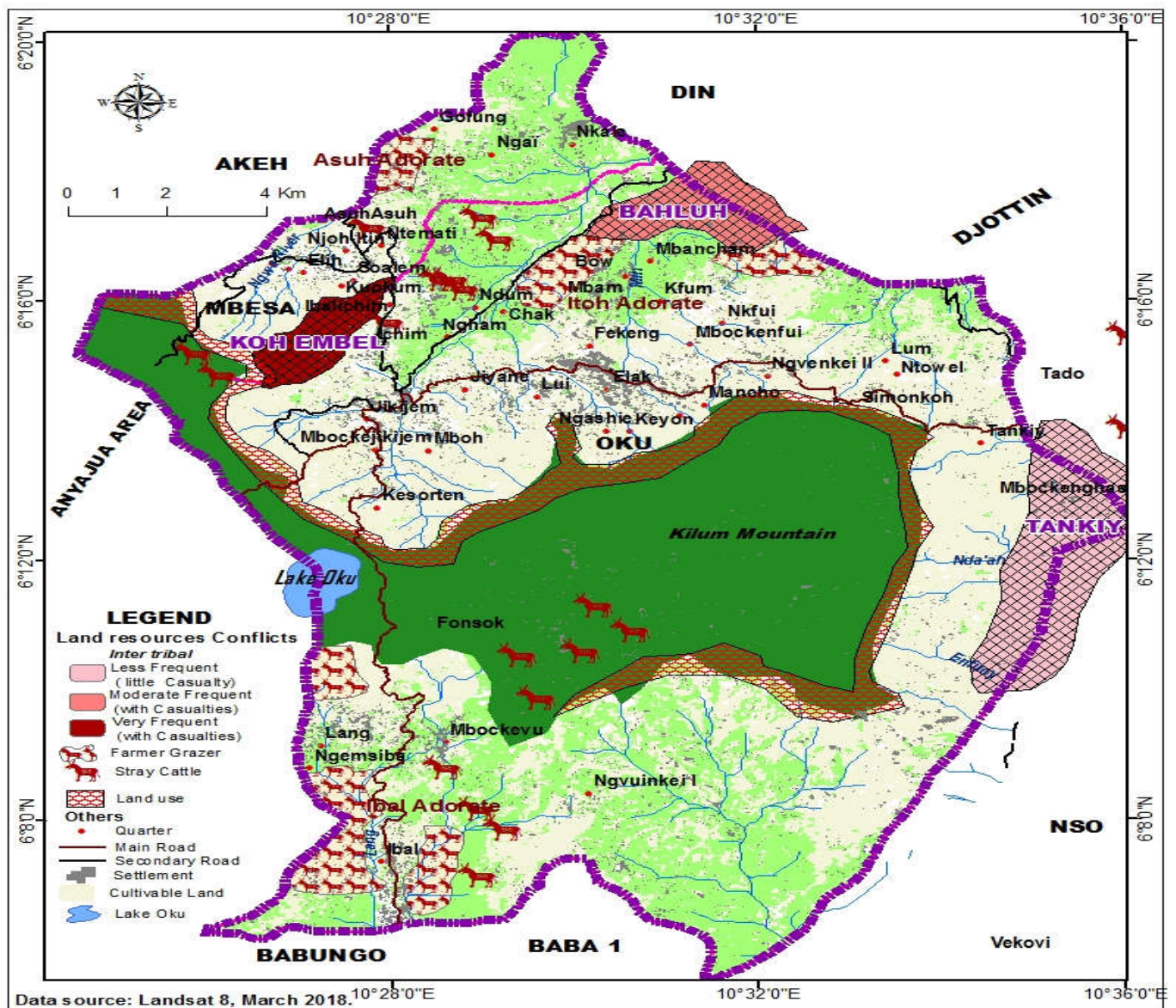


Figure 2. Patterns of land resource conflicts in the Oku/Mbessa highlands

gross inequality between Oku and Mbessa sited on the Bui plateau and Kom highlands which constitutes the mountainous slopes of the Kilum-Ijim mountain of the Western Highlands of Cameroon. The hills of Mount Oku slope down to the lowlands of Ndop to the south, the valleys of Din to the north and to the west by the highlands of Kom. This area with topographic and resource disparities has mainly land and inter-tribal conflicts, land use conflicts and farmer-grazer conflicts (Fig. 2). Figure 2, depicts how most of the land conflicts are concentrated at hollow frontiers with remarkably high proportions at Koh Embel whose conflicts record high human and property casualties. Then is Bahluh zone with moderately frequent conflicts with casualties, while Tankiy and Ibal records the least conflicts and little casualties. Sandwiched between these highland hills and slopes are streams with broad valleys and lowlands. This topographic configuration stretches from Itoh to the Mbacham lowlands and then extends to the foothills of Ndum, Ketongwang and Fekeng as well as to the fertile farmland valleys of Bahluh towards the Mbam zone. Such land values are understandably pregnant with land conflict reoccurrence of unparalleled proportions. The mainly rural and sustainable agrarian montane communities of Oku and Mbessa that find livelihood and survival on such rare-to-find concentration of fertile soils, montane forest and other

trans-boundary land resources of traditional significance at Koh Embel would only rival for the conquest and seek to gain dominance on such community common property land resource. Rather than the resources suffer from a Tragedy of Commons (Hardins, 1968) it is the quick transference of arm-twisting into inter community standoffs of show of strength where mutual understanding fails in the wake of claims of ancestral historicity logics, legality of zone stay duration and sometimes the erroneous pose for superiority complex.

Findings also revealed a farmer-grazer conflicts trend common in other zones as in the:

- Mbai zone where they cut across the steep slopes of Lum to the hills of Mbai in Simonkoh and to the lowlands of Tankiy.
- Emfvemiih zone where the landscape is a rugged landscape and such conflicts stretching from the hills of Kong and Ngveme to the Kfwi slopes, then the Manchok hills extending as far as the Ngashire highlands.
- Nchiiy and Mbessa zones where the topographies make up of a stretch of highland the conflicts are mainly concentrated around Asuh, Timati, Fetonle, Ibalichim through Jikejem to Kesotin.

- Shinga zone, it is the rocky outcrop scenery that characterises the Shinga hills with very steep slopes from Ibal to the flanks of Kilum forest and so it is rather the montane forest zone that severely suffers from such land use conflicts.

It is overly remarked that that it is in areas in which the landscapes are most blessed with diverse land resources, manned by multiple stakeholders that land resource conflicts are the rifest. Such resources in this study are crop lands carpeted by savannah pastures that offer excellent grazing parklands for livestock which often strays into adjacent farmland. The conflicts therefore are directly related to the type of land resources.

Land resource conflicts management dynamics in the Oku/Mbessa highlands: The land resource conflicts recorded in the Oku-Mbessa Highlands have been variedly reflected in consequences within the communities (Table 1). Table 1 shows that the conflicts end in fighting (96%) not in the form of child's play full blown inter-tribal wars between Oku and surrounding tribes like Mbessa and Din in which each party exercises even the most unconventional swift methods of exercising whatever it can take to show dominance using a combination of native weaponry and mystic strategies. From these uncoordinated and uncontrolled indigenous skirmishes is the unleashed secondary casualty in the form of kidnappings for either ransom or enslavement where such kidnapped persons toil in hard labour before their release in case the pleas and negotiations in their favour are fruitful. Such secondary outcomes are most recorded around hollow frontiers (Table 2).

According Table 2, Oku has been in the ugly business of fighting inter-tribal wars with the neighbouring tribes for over three decades with records dating back to 1982. Majority of these wars have been fought between Oku and Mbessa over the hollow frontier of Koh Embel. The open wars of 1982, 1988, 2007 and 2008 were triggered by the mounting claims over this frontier. Cameroon Tribune Newspaper of 7 May 2008 reported that at least some 1,000 Mbessa people were rendered homeless and about 210 houses burnt down, many people wounded in both tribes and dozens killed in an open clash between Oku and Mbessa. Oku and Din have also been fighting as in 1992 due to the struggle over a hollow frontier called Bahluh. The case of Oku and Nso as seen in 2011 was a palaver of ownership of Tankiy. Communities thus exercise the type of Organic Theory as postulated in 1897 by Friedrich Ratzel which is the natural tendency to further their control over spatial confines or *lebensraum*. Hollow frontiers between communities soon become the object of intercommunity aggression because of the sudden awareness of the land resources values of such territories that local political geography gives them neither distinct physical nor cultural boundaries which are seen as nothing but the rim land to be conquered and dominated from the heartland of their communities.

Geopolitical considerations of land resource conflicts management in Oku-Mbessa: Land and resource issues in the Oku-Mbessa highlands portray not only conflicts, their management but salient geopolitical considerations. These considerations of the early architects of political geography like Ratzel, Halford Mackinder and John Buchannan continued

Table 11. Community conflict manifestations in the Oku/ Mbessa highlands

Conflict out come	Frequency	Relative percentage	Degree of Anomaly
Fighting and physical human assault	210	96	15.15714
Destruction and burning of property	194	90.2	9.357143
Killings of human beings	208	95.9	15.05714
Inter-tribal tensions	206	94.9	14.05714
Verbal assault and quarrels	206	94.9	14.05714
Suspicion of mystical practices	144	66.4	-14.4429
Kidnap of natives	60	27.6	-53.2429

Source: Field survey (2018)

Table 2. Evolution of land inter-tribal wars between Oku-Mbessa highlands since 1982

Period	Belligerents	Hollow frontier	Villages involved in the confrontation
1982-1994	Oku and Mbessa Oku and Din	Koh Embel and Bahluh	Ichim, Ibalichem, Ndum, Ngham, Soalam, Koukum, Fetonle, Asuh, Ntoh
1995-2006	Oku and Din Oku and Mbessa	Koh Embel and Bahluh	Mbam, Fekeng And Nkwi, Chak And Manchok, Soalam, Koukum, Fetonle, Asuh, Ntoh
2007-2008	Oku and Mbessa, Oku and Nso	Koh Embel, Tankiy and Buukuh.	Ichim, Ibalichem, Ndum, Ngham; Tankiy, Mbockenghas, Elak, Keyon, Soalam, Koukum, Fetonle, Asuh, Ntoh

Source: Elak Parish archives (2009); Oku Fon's Palace (2017); Bailack (2018)

Table 3. Land use characteristics in the Oku/Mbessa highlands from 1982-2018

Zone	Land resources	Land use practices
Mbai	Fertile soils, rivers, grazing land, building land	Farming (H), building or residential (H), grazing (M), extraction of stones (L)
Emfvemi	Waterfalls, caves, laterite, stones rivers, grazing land, building land	Farming (H), grazing (H), residential (H), tourism (M), irrigation (L), extraction of laterite (M)
Nchiiy	Waterfalls, caves, stones rivers, grazing land, building land, fertile soils	Farming (H), tourism (M), residential (H), extraction of stones (M), grazing (M), irrigation (L)
Mbam	Waterfalls, caves, laterite, stones rivers, grazing land, building land, fertile soils, sand	Farming (H), extraction of stones (M) and sand, grazing (H),
Mbessa	Waterfalls, caves, stones rivers, grazing land, building land, fertile soils	Farming (H), tourism (L), residential (H), water extraction (M), grazing (M),
Shinga	Waterfalls, caves, laterite, stones rivers, grazing land, building land	Farming (H), residential (H), extraction of stones and laterite (M), grazing (H), irrigation (M)
Montane forest	Waterfalls, caves, stones, rivers, grazing land, fertile soils, abundant biodiversity, touristic, mountain climate	Farming (M), tourism (H), extraction of stones (L), grazing (H), water extraction (H), apiculture (H), fuel wood collection (H), collection of manure (M), collection of forest products (H)

Source: CDP (2011, 2012 2017); Field survey (2016 and 2017)

H = Highly practiced, L = Lowly practiced, M = Moderately practiced

to be considered in recent times (Orounye, 2012) that for montane communities based on natural ecology, land is a capital economic asset and source of livelihoods that is intricately attached to community identity, history and culture. It this constitutes a veritable geopolitical platform on which conflicts arise and are erased. The population interactions of these communities portray that land resource conflicts emanate from clear causality factors that are anchored on the Homer-Dixon's Theory of Environmental Scarcity and Conflicts (Fig. 3). Figure 3 portrays how the community expansionist philosophy of the non-respect of resource and land use boundaries dominates amongst the causative factors. The fluid nature of boundaries that exist among Oku and other tribes is a major threat since each would want to gain space. Natural boundaries are marked permanent geographical features like rivers, streams, valleys or hills. These are lacking between Oku and Mbessa as the only such natural boundary separates Oku and Babungo by the Lang stream. Other such other boundaries are absent yet with an abundance of varied land resource abundance which is an exciting invitation to any rationale capitalist thinking and land-hungry tribes to obviously expand into those frontiers and grab land. As a consequence, dynamic community boundaries are made and remade at the end of every conflict episode pushing more in favour of the stronger in battle and less to the vanquished. These are typical see-saw like boundaries that Nkwi (2007) cited in Ndenecho and Balgah (2007) observed in the Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh conflict in 1995 being just archetypical of what obtains elsewhere in the Region. Closely related to this is the lack of official rural land governance land use plan which exist only for few urban areas. The "no matter what, no matter where" approach thus applied by the first arrived on the land certainly leads to conflicting land uses as observed in the seven zones (Table 3). Table 3 indicates that farming which is more dominant in the different zones with the exception of the montane forest zone conflicts with grazing activities while forest manage activities conflicts with grazing and other activities carried out inside the forest. These are land pressures triggered by rapid population growth. The growth rate of the populations of the two ethnic communities is 2.5% annually. According to the CDPs (2011, 2012 and 2017), the population of Oku increased from 87,720 in 2005 to 182,879 in 2017 and from 14,659 in 2005 to 19,948 in 2017 for Mbessa (Fig. 4).

Table 24. The evolution of population density in the Oku

Year	Population	Surface Area (km ²)	Density (inhabitants/km ²)
2005	87,720	37,6.87	232.8
2012	144,800	37,6.87	384.2
2017	182,879	37,6.87	485.3

Source: Population figures from CDP (2012 and 2017); BUCERUP (2005)

Table 5. Main hollow frontiers in the Oku-Mbessa highlands

Zone	Frontier and rangeland village spaces
Mbai	TankiyBuukuh, , Baseh, Mngwaroong
Emfvemiih	Mgisih
Mbam	Bahluh, Nduh, Iley, Fechak
Nchiiy-Mbessa	Koh Embel, Akeh
Shinga	Ndawara, Southern parts of Ibal, vekovi zone

Source: Field survey (2018)

Figure 4 shows a steady rise in the population growth trend for Oku and Mbessa with a growth rate of 2.5%. The increasing human numbers exert pressure on resources reflected through degradation in the Nchiiy and Shinga zones and ushers further conflict (Fig.5). According to Figure 5, population increase

highly triggers the overexploitation of resource with pressure which heightens the number of stressors as exemplified by the increasing cultivation of marginal lands in the Mbai zone and a reduction in rangelands resulting in further soil fertility decline; over cultivation, deforestation and soil exposure; the reduction of fallow periods; and bush burning. This is the case in the villages of Ibal, Ngemsiba, Fetonle and Mbam. This leads to land scarcity and land degradation with the ultimate effect being persistent clashes between and within ethnic groups in the highland area. The logarithmic regression line shows a dominance of scarcity of resources and conflicts in its various forms within the catalogue of environmental pitfalls as population densities are increasing (Table 4). Table 4 shows that the population density for Oku in particular moved from 232.8 in 2005 to 485.3 persons/square kilometer as of 2017. The high densities have been blamed on the rapid population. These densities also vary by zone. Generally, these high-densities have registered a handful of land-related conflicts. This is because the stocks of the resources remain under severe pressure, triggering migrations to hollow frontiers (Table 5) and consequently conflicts in the main hollow frontiers. These rampant uncoordinated movements of farmers and grazers into the frontiers often results in inter-tribal, farmer/grazer, farmer/farmer and grazer/farmer conflicts because the general demand for the land usage is insufficient. Female farmers in the Mbai zone indicate that food security in zone for the past years have been stabilized thanks to the movement to these frontiers for farming.

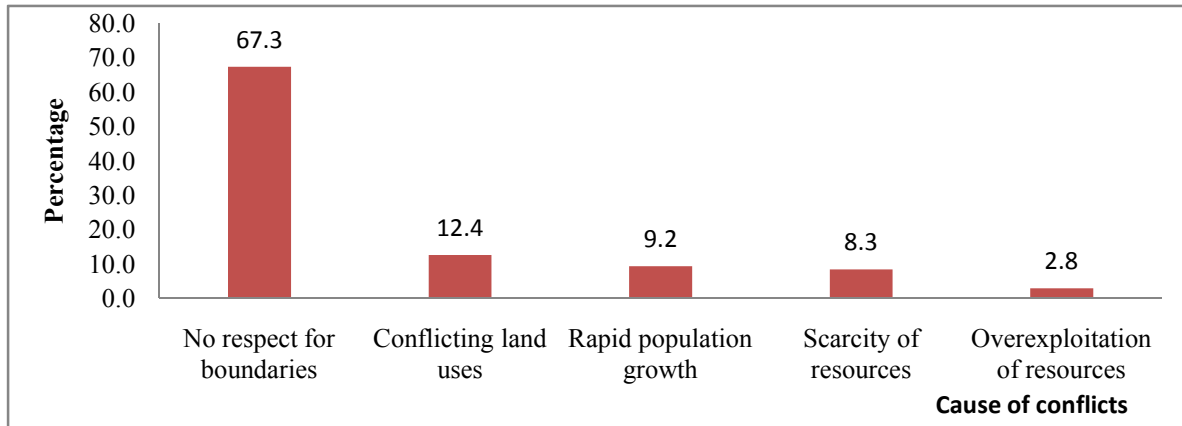
Conflicting stakeholder and sector roles in land related conflicts mitigation: Resolving the land resource conflicts in this study analysed stake holder implications and roles played. These appear to be complex and needs a cross sectorial approach to succeed (Table 6). With these varied roles it can be seen that frantic efforts have been invested since 1982 stop the tribal wars by the various stakeholders yet often with some challenges. It is increasingly evident that such inter-tribal conflicts only need to be resolved through a participatory approach in order that inter-tribal peaceful coexistence be restored through a clear re-demarcation of tribal boundaries, respect of present boundaries and limit illegal exploitation of land resources in hollow frontiers. This would come to buttress the cross sectorial efforts in which:

- The state administration has been taking relentless efforts to maintain peace between these two tribes through the various Governors of the North West Region (Abouem a Choi, Kumpa Issa, Abakat Ahamat, and others) who have paid several visits to the fondoms to sue for peace and despite commissions led by the Senior Divisional Officers for Bui and Boyo yet there is renewed violence always resurfacing (Chung, 2012). The Governor Aldolf Lele Lafrique with a commission planted pillars along the boundary and even the presence of the gendarmerie post in Mbessa to maintain law and order and frustrate any attempt for fighting did not deter the community war mongers even though since 2009, no full blown war has been recorded. Commendable has been the pacification anthem of the Mayor of Elak Council such that prior to the year 2012, nobody could openly enter Mbessa from Oku and vice versa. The municipal diplomacy seems to be paying off since 2010 through negotiations and mediation supported by Member of Parliament for Oku and Noni constituency and the Fon of Oku.

Table 6. Stakeholders and key roles inland resource conflict resolution

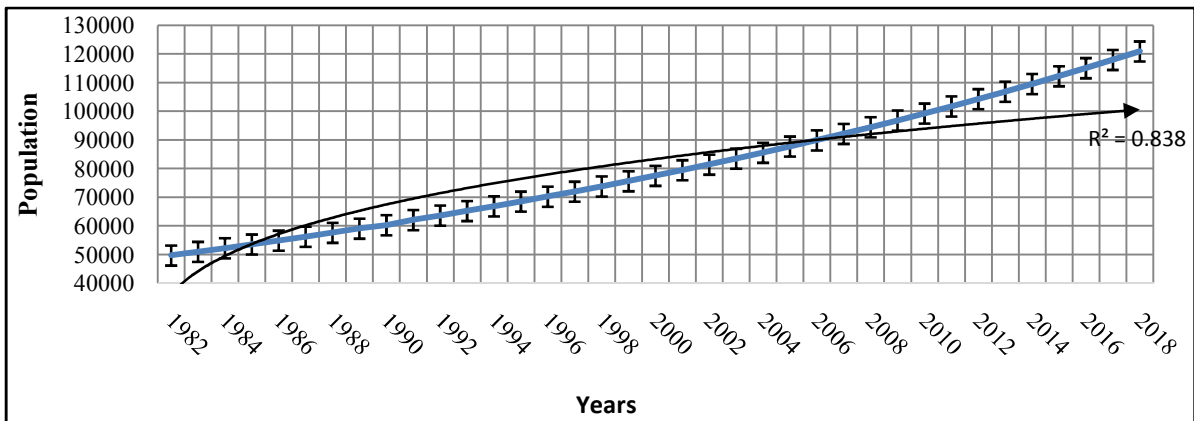
Stakeholder player	Major roles played
Males	Attend resolution meetings, hand weapons to the kwifon.
Females	Sensitisation
Traditional authorities	Demarcate and protect boundaries, initiate and conduct for inter and intra community exchange visits and dialogue.
Traditional societies	Cleanse the land, punish defaulters and call for a cease fire.
Municipal councils	Mediate, negotiate and sponsor the resolution sessions.
Government institutions	Ensure cease fire, demarcate boundaries, punish defaulters and compensate victims.
Community Based Organisations	Negotiate and offer humanitarian aid.
Non-Governmental Organisations	Sensitise and offer humanitarian aid.
Religious institutions	Sensitise and preach peaceful coexistence.

Source: Field survey (2018)



Source: Field work (2018)

Figure 3. Land resource conflict triggers in the Oku/Mbessa highlands



Source: Data calculated from the 2005 BUCEREP census.

Figure 14. Trends of population growth for Oku and Mbessa from 1982-2018

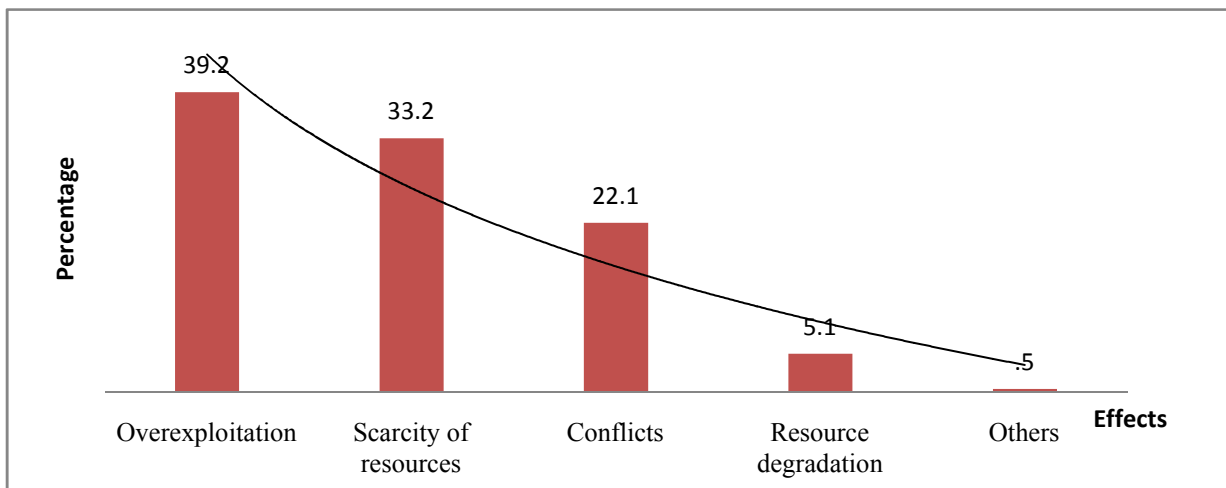


Figure 5. Environmental side effects of rapid population growth-conflict relationship

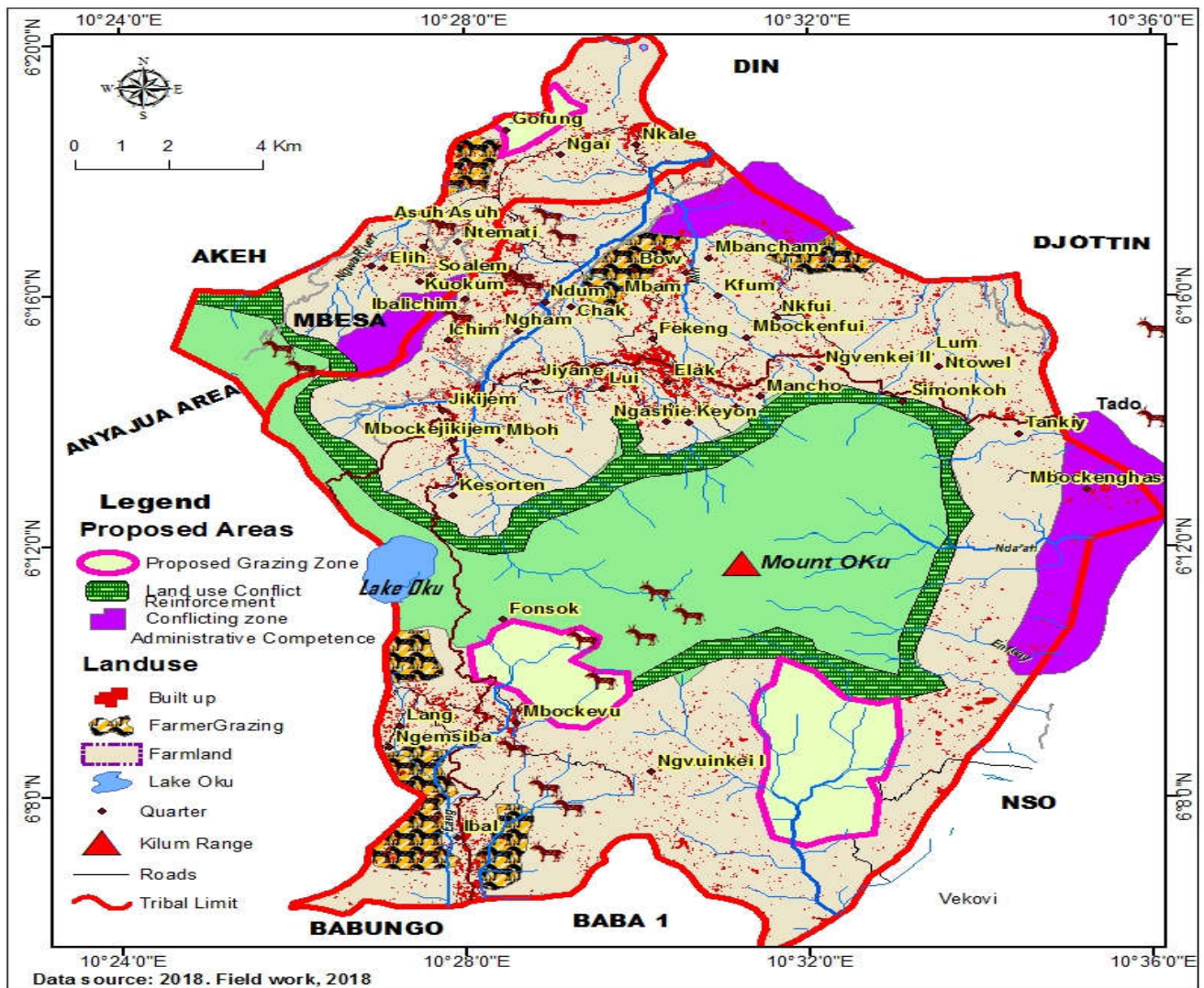


Figure 7. Proposed Land use Plan for conflict resolution for the Oku/Mbessa highlands

The trophy of these efforts is that the *kwifon* of Okupeacefully visited the palace of Mbessa in February 2017 with a return Mbessa *kwifon* visit to Oku palace the following year in March 2018

- The local development and community based cultural and development organisations have been trying to resolve the conflicts through consultation meetings. The Ichim Development Association went to Mbessa to negotiate a peace process in 2008 with the Mbessa Area Development Association. In April 2012, peace talks were renewed with a first meeting was in March 2013 to stop the economic, social, psychological and cultural losses on both sides.
- The role of the females was remarkable as women of Mbessa organised a call for peace march from Mbessa through Belo to Bamenda to meet the Governor in February 2016 received midway at Big Babanki, Women have therefore made significant pushes towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict and reformulation of the inter-tribal ties since 2017.
- Role of traditional authorities have engaged in sincere inter-tribal celebrations and cleansing of the landas well as exchange visits in 2017 in the royal slogans of '*from conflict and confrontation to collaboration*' The tribal leaders with their people are setting a peaceful pace on the same platform since 2017 are rewriting a positive new history of the Oku and Mbessa communities.

Backing off conflicts and the way forward a sustainable inter community peace: Though we have noted that conflicts over resources are bound to occur especially in the context multiple-stakeholders especially where land pressure is generated by population increases, scarcity, degradation and fuzzy resource, land use and tribal borders, it is still possible to completely turn our backs to these conflicts. This study considers that a way forward could be a land use plan for this area as a panacea not just a palliative. Land use plan would stand out as a systematic assessment of land and resource potentials for alternatives for land use and economic and social conditions in order to select and adopt the best land use options while safeguarding resources for the future. The driving force in the plan would be the need for change, diversify and user changing circumstances to improve conflict resolution options (FAO, 1996). This considers protecting well-defined areas from development due to environmental, cultural, historical and establishing provisions that control the nature of development activities so as to avoid conflicts (World Bank, 2003). The land use plan for the Oku-Mbessa highlands is in consonance with the 1976 FAO Land Suitability Assessment, the physical environment; resource potentials and land use characteristics of each zone, the current Land use Plan by the Elak Council in collaboration with PNDP and SIRDEP in 2012 and 2017 (Fig.7). Figure 7 shows a proposed plan as a strategy to manage, minimise and resolve conflicts in this area. Mindful that land and inter-tribal conflicts are commonplace at hollow

frontiers (Koh embel, Bahluh, and Tankiy and Buukuh this study suggests a government take-over of the management and ownership of such frontiers from conflicting indigenous people for any purpose of state concern so that it serves as buffer zone in the logic of the ecosystemic approach of UNESCO Man and the Biosphere. Population expansion and food security can thus be solved by the government modernisation of the agrarian base which would progressively eliminate bush fallowing and shifting cultivation as slope stabilisation practices are embraced by a majority farmers on steep slopes. In this like, grazing zones at Gufung in Mbessa and forest fringes of Mbockevu and Ngenkei I would be sufficiently far off from build-up areas and farm lands as to minimise farmer-grazer confrontations on agrarian resources and wetlands for transhumance. The expanding animal population could be sent into the forest to feed on the forest under growth rather than let them wander about wrecking crop havoc on the crops which instantly triggers germ of farmer-grazer conflicts. The Plan also considers that fences should be made and maintained with seasonal fire tracing by the indigenous actors with pillars planted to permit forest guards supported by vigilante groups patrol the forest fringes ensuring the respect of montane forest boundary at 5m from farmlands.

Conclusion

Land resource conflicts in the Oku-Mbessa highlands connote with the UNEP Report (2007) highlighting that natural resources have played a role in at least 40% of all global conflicts. The populations here solely depends on land resources for its survival yet these land resources are subjected to intense pressure from population increase and poor stakeholder participation in management. This has spawned land resource related conflicts like inter-tribal and intra-ethnic conflicts that have stunned the area for a very long time into hollow frontiers with fluid boundaries. These conflicts have caused unwanted fighting, killing, destructions and inter-tribal tensions raising the need for a peaceful inter-tribal coexistence implored by varied stakeholders between since 2009 and 2018 with emerging possibilities of cooperation between Oku and neighbouring tribes. It can therefore be established that multi-stakeholder and multi-sectorial participatory collaboration efforts are commendable for peaceful inter-tribal coexistence in highland areas of the world where land resources are common property. In such scenarios land use plans could cushion varied stakeholder policies dealing with land resources between conflicting uses.

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