

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban and Rural Development

Rural Development and Natural Resource Management



Land, Property Rights, Women and Food Security

A case from Cameroon

KEWONG ISAAC NTANI

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

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Supervisor: Linley Chiwona Karlton Department of Urban and Rural development, SLU, Sweden

Examiner: Alex Ronald Arevalo Vasquez, Department of Urban and Rural development, SLU, Sweden

Keis0001@stud.slu.se

<http://epsilon.slu>.

ABSTRACT

The 2008 world food crisis brought a lot of anguish to many people in the world. The poor in Cameroon weren't spared the hit. Reactions from various communities to this crisis varied from one community to another. In the main cities of the country, there were riots and demonstrations. The riots and the demonstrations were fueled by the rise in food prices. Many lost their lives and many lost property also and the security they have built for sundry years. Governments also reacted differently to the food crisis in an effort to satisfy the longings of their people. Some countries considered the buying of land and the cultivation of food needed to feed their countries as the best alternative solution.

While rich countries could afford to buy or lease land, poor countries were not in the position to do so. Ultimately, poor countries were seen selling or leasing their available land to the rich countries. Little is known about the conditions or terms under which the so called "free land" was sold or leased. Another point at stake would be the rights of ownership of land, who owned the title to sell or lease the "free land"? This thesis analyses the land and property rights status in Cameroon and the impact it bears on women's ability to have food security.

Key word: Women, Land and property rights, land grabbing, food security, statutory laws, customary laws, patriarchy, tenure.

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“Nothing would be done at all if one waited until one could do it so well that no one could find fault with it.” *John Henry Cardinal Newman*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ECA- Economic commission for Africa

IPRI- International food policy research Institute

FAO – Food and Agricultural organization

FIDA- International Federation of women’s lawyers

SSA – Sub-Saharan Africa

WFP – World Food Program

WHO – World Health Organization

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

From a global perspective, women should have the same rights to access, ownership and control of land as men. They should equally have the right to adequate housing and ownership of property as men. This point is stated in the international law (UN-HABITAT, 2002). Yet there is still a need to examine how the law regarding the equality of women is being applied in different countries. The existence of *gender biased* customary laws that see women as property and the weak application of statutory laws have led to lots of gender disparity in land ownership in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This gender disparity in land ownership has opened the doors to land tenure issues which result from poverty and weak laws giving the notion of the availability of land in SSA. This encourages land grabbing especially in situations where ownership is attributed to the female gender. The question that remains to be answered is whether there are Sovereign measures being taken to ensure food security in this region given that land is being sold at the expense of its inhabitants.

In rural Sub-Saharan Africa the woman is predominantly responsible for the well-being of the family (Yarissa, 1999). She depends primarily and mostly on land where she wields the plough to provide for the household. It is therefore lamentable that despite the existence of national and international legislation that fosters gender equality - in most developing countries like in Africa and South Asia- women are still denied their rights to access, own, and control or inherit land and property due to existing customary practices (Yarissa, 1999). Furthermore the women are relegated to the background because most of them live in poverty and cannot afford to buy land (Benschop, 2004). Consequently they can only access land and housing through male relatives making their security of tenure dependent on good marital and family relations (Yarissa, 1999). This is a cause for concern because many women in Africa, Asia and Latin America depend critically on land for their livelihood (Yarissa, 1999).

According to Ellis (2000), land is a fundamental asset in a rural and Agricultural context. However, women seem to be neglected and their rights in this area are hardly given consideration. The sad thing is that some countries like Cameroon even talk of equality in gender in their constitutions, yet in reality, men lord over women. Our concern in this thesis is to

examine whether this has any effects on food security especially in rural areas. Agarwal (1994) in a study of Asia contends that exclusion of women from decisions on the use, control and transfer of land has led to a decrease in food security and sustainable Development. This may or may not hold for Cameroon and other sub-Saharan African countries. But it is a point to be looked at from close quarters.

The decrease in food security and sustainable development may become worse as land grabbing has been on the increase within the past years. According to Lorenzo et al, (2009) the acquisitions of farmlands in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and South East Asia have been at the top of the media within and beyond the past 12 months. For them (Lorenzo et al), the land that seemingly attracted less interest is now being sought by international investors in thousands of hectares. The reason underlying this *demarche* is that Governments are keen about the stability of food supplies by promoting the acquisition of farmland in foreign countries and cultivating for their countries than purchasing from the international markets (Lorenzo et al, 2009). According to the World Bank report of September (2010), the reasons are basically those of food security and the growing interest in Biofuels. In order to attract more markets, recipient countries are implementing policies and legislative reforms. The question here is whether the land that is being sold to foreign investors is Government owned or that of the poor especially the women whose rights to own such land has been denied? In Cameroon, for example, land without land certificate can be sold by the Government and the owners of this land are only compensated for their property and not the land. This implies that the situation could be complicated for poor women who cannot obtain land titles and for whom the laws do not permit land ownership. This will have glaring effects on their households especially the lack of food security.

Governments often sale land with the supposed hope of boasting a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic development in the rural areas (Lorenzo et al, 2009). The problem at stake is the question of corruption that characterizes most Governments in developing countries, whose interest is never on the balance development of their nation but more concerned about their personal benefits as persons occupying key positions in the countries. For example, according to Transparency International, a leading global watchdog on corruption, of the ten countries considered most corrupt in the world, six are in Sub-Saharan Africa. A 2002 African

Union study estimated that corruption cost the continent roughly \$150 billion a year (Stephanie, 2009). Consequently, the women, especially those in the rural areas, would tend to suffer plus their households that look to them for sustenance.

1.1 LAND POLICIES IN SSA

Land policies in Africa has gone sky-high as a response to the continuous complex land problems: struggles for access to land for agriculture, the need to meet the varied political, economic, social and environmental objectives. According to Economic Commission for Africa (ECA: 2004), balancing these multiple objectives and the technical capacity to implement policies remain a major challenge in various parts of the African continent. Land policies in Africa therefore, differ from one country to the other and from region to region. As a result of the neoliberal policy framework, land is being treated often by most countries as a market commodity rather than a public good. Consequently, land policies in Africa are shaped by the legacy of the colonial land policies, the development path chosen in the post colonial period, the role of donor organizations and the influence of western countries ECA (2004).

Land policies often define who can own the land and in some cases specify its usage. The most common objective of land policies can be exemplified with the 1998 land policy in Zimbabwe, which includes the need to:

- Ensure equitable and socially just access to land;
- Democratize land tenure systems and ensure security of tenure for all forms of land.
- Provide for participatory processes of management in the use and planning of land and
- Promote sustainable and efficient use and management of land (ECA, 2004: 80)

Table 1.1 below examines the land policies in some African countries. In East Africa, land policies are mostly geared towards addressing the question of tenure security and land administration. Also of absolute necessity in East Africa, West Africa and some other parts of SSA, is the integration of dispute resolution processes in land policy systems. For example, in most part of rural Ghana, there exists a council of elders and the land allocation committee who together with the customary trustees ensure efficient management of land. This includes giving out land to strangers and settling disputes (Kasanga, 2001).

TABLE 1.1. Main thematic issues covered by land policies in Africa

Land policy issue	Example
Improving Security of Tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Côte d'Ivoire's Rural Land Plan which seeks to identify and map all existing rights in order to give them legal status (Delvide, 1999) · Cameroon's 1974 Land Ordinance which rescinded legal recognition of customary and communal tenure rights and imposed land titling as the only means of acquiring private ownership (Hobbs, 1996) · Uganda's 1995 Constitution which transfers title from the state straight to the landholders
Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Niger's 1986 Rural Code which, inter alia, seeks to resolve land tenure conflicts (Lund, 1993) · Chad's land laws and policies fail to provide a framework for solving them prevalent conflict between herders and farmers and other user groups (Eirth, 1996)
Decentralization of Land Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Establishment of Land Boards in Botswana (the idea has since been exported to Namibia and Uganda), Rural Councils in Senegal, Land Commissions in Niger, Community Trusts and Communal Property Associations in South Africa, and Land Committees in rural Lesotho · Improvement of public participation in decision-making through such institutions
Sustainable Management of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lesotho's 1998 Land Regulations which require land committees to revoke an allocation in the event of the allocate refusing to adopt soil conservation measures · Mozambique's National Policy on Land of 1995 which, inter alia, seeks to enforce ecologically sustainable use of natural resources · The White Paper on Land Reform in South Africa states that sustainability of production and the environment are key elements of the land reform process
Land-use Development and Agricultural Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Land consolidation in Kenya as part of curbing land fragmentation and restoration of production efficiency · Introduction of maximum farm size regulations in Zimbabwe · Proposals for Land Taxation in Namibia · The Swynnerton Plan of Kenya which supported African agriculture through agricultural research programs, credit schemes, transfer of new technologies and introduction of high value crops and a new set of institutions · Ethiopia's Agricultural Development led industrialization which seeks to increase the productivity of smallholder farmers through the dispersal of fertilizers and improved seeds, establishment of credit schemes and provision of support services
Equitable Redistribution of Land and Reduction of Landlessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Redistributive land reform policies that seek to give more land to the landless blacks in Namibia, South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe · Mozambique's 1998 Land Law which recognizes the right to land through occupation on the part of rural families, based on oral testimonial
Development of Land Information System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Kenya's tenure reforms which sought to establish a well maintained registry which would be used to, inter alia, monitor land transfers and distribution and Provide the basis for introducing property taxes.

Source: ECA (2004)

Shivji, (1998) construed that the commission in charge of land in Tanzania recommended the creation of the circuit land court and the high court as the main land dispute resolution structures.

Malawi has a scaffolding land resolution order that is so hierarchical in nature; it begins with the village land tribunal, to a village tribunal and a tribunal of the traditional authorities and the central land settlement board (ECA, 2004), and confuses all except those with the power to buy or forcefully own land.

In most cases in Africa, land policy is a shift from the painful colonial expropriation past which is still less than a decade old. The case of the Republic of South Africa may be different as hers is more of answering the question of apartheid. However, in recent times, the story is changing, in which case countries such as South Africa, Mozambique, Uganda, Cameroon, Tanzania and others, now give room for individual groups and associations to register as legal entities that can own land in their own right (Palmer, 2000).

Within the past decade there has been more efforts to improve land policies towards gender equity. Hiehorst (2000) elaborates on some of the specific provisions that have been included in Table 1.2. Land and gender considerations in selected countries

Uganda	The Ugandan Constitution includes a commitment to gender equality and affirmative action (Ovenji-Odida, 1999)
South Africa	South Africa's Constitution provides for equal treatment of men and women
Niger	According to Yacouba (1999), equal rights of access to natural resources without discrimination by sex or social origin are provided for in Niger under provisions of the Rural Code;
Cameroon	Cameroon's constitution provides for equal treatment of men and women;
Malawi	In Malawi, legislation allows women to register land independently from men (Ouedraogo and Toulmin, 1999);
Mozambique	The Mozambican Land Act enshrines the right of both men and women to use and benefit from land (Quadros, 1999)
Tanzania	Women's rights to land are provided for in the National Land Policy of Tanzania
Zimbabwe	• In Zimbabwe, policy provides for the joint registration of land in resettlement schemes between husband and wife; and
Namibia	The Communal Land Bill of Namibia provides for women to be represented in the Land Boards, which are expected to be responsible for the survey and registration of approved Forms of land title in their jurisdictional areas

Source: Toulmin and Quan (2000), and other Sources in ECA (2004)

different land policies for the sake of improving the position of women in relation to access and control over land. From the above table, one can conclude that on the legal and policy level, there is some progress to improve the status of women; although the implementation is still lagging behind in most cases.

Although most land policies in SSA originally did not permit foreigners to own land in Africa, incentives and other mechanism have been put in place to foster this, bringing forth the forces of competition (Mkandaumire and Birenane, 1987). This has given birth, in recent times, to the phenomenon of land grabbing which, in itself, remains a complex problem.

1.2 GENERAL LAND TENURE SYSTEMS IN SSA

Food and Agricultural organization (FAO) defines land tenure as the relationship, whether legally or customary defined among people, as individuals or groups with respect to land (FAO, 2002). From another view point, Land tenure is considered as a derivative of the concept of natural resource tenure, which in essence refers to the terms and conditions under which natural resources are held and used (Bruce, 1986; Moyo, 1995; Shivji et al, 1998). Here, tenure is a socially constructed notion which depicts a relation between individuals and groups of individuals by which right and obligations are defined with respect to control and use of Land. Land Tenure systems differ from one country to another depending on the income level of the country.

The predominant form of Land tenure in rural SSA is customary, which, as Fisher (1993) defines, implies ownership by social groups rather than individuals. In SSA most of the communities are often headed by a man, who is seen as the symbol of the residuary, reversionary and ultimate owner of all land held by the community (Mabogunje, 1992). Other members of this group in the case of the Nso and other tribes in the North West region of Cameroon are responsible for the farms of this main owner and contribute a portion of their produce each year to him (Fonyuy, 2001).

In most cities of SSA land Tenure owes its origin to the different stages of development that these regions have passed through. Mends and Meijere (2002) argue that the present complex mosaic is derived from history, colonial legacy and current economic pressures and

opportunities, as well as from their natural and ecological characteristics. The great diversity at the continental level is a macrocosm of the microcosm at the national level. This creates a difficulty in arriving at conclusions and as such a need for considerable tailoring of national provisions concerning land tenure beginning with the conditions found at the local level (Toulmin et al, 2000).

In the pre-colonial era, land tenure in SSA was customary, whereby ownership of land resided in collectivity and individuals only had rights of use. The main objective is to ensure easy access to land by every household (Maboguinje, 1992). During the colonial era there was a shift from the traditional way of land management and allocation systems, with the aim of adapting to the needs of the colonial state and capitalist mode of production (Mends and Meijere, 2002). The emphasis was on individual ownership, any land that was not owned was considered state land, a step which Payne (2002) calls “real right”, in which land is a property of the state and any transfer of occupancy right has to be done by the state – introducing statutory land tenure.

Ownership and control of land is therefore a strong concept in SSA especially in the urban areas where it was introduced for the benefits of the European settlers (Maboguinje, 1992). Yet, as Africa bid farewell to colonialism, there was a return by most Africans to the traditional way of tenure giving rise to the dual system of tenure in most African countries (Mends and Meijere, 2002). This was not without abnormalities. After independence, some changes were made in the land tenure system in Africa, especially during the 80s and the 90s, during the imposition of regimes of state ownership of all lands in many African countries. Half of the 40 countries in SSA claim to have nationalized all lands thus excluding private ownership (Mends and Meijere, 2002). Cameroon is one of the countries that nationalized all their land, following the 1974 ordinance. This ordinance put an end to customary ownership of land, only all who had land and exploited it before August 1974 could be allowed to obtain land certificates (Ngwasiri, 1998). The difficulty here is that others who had not exploited land before this date or whose grandparents did not exploit their land could not claim ownership of land. Further still, due to much bureaucracy and poverty, many could not achieve this stage and as such their rights remained compromised, especially the poor women.

1.3 GENDER DESPARITY AND LAND IN SSA

Women play a pivotal role in both maintaining and strategically using land and natural resources. Shiva (1988) contends that women are often regarded as having stronger links with the environment than men, yet women do not control land and related natural resources such as forest. In most cases, occupational use of communal lands is often granted by some Government bodies in accordance with customary laws, in which case an adult man is allocated land for use by his family (Moyo, 1995). As a result of this, women remain subordinated to men in land issues. They do however, constitute the larger part of the population especially in the rural areas and are responsible for the well being of the family.

In Malawi, women constitute 52 percent of the country's population and of which 93percent of them live in the rural areas. 65percent of the population of Zimbabwe live in communal area and about 85 percent of them are women, women constitute 50.05% of the population of Cameroon and 84% of the women live in rural areas. In Mozambique 51.4% are women and 80% of them are in rural areas. The bigger populations of Tanzania (68%) live in rural areas and of which more than half are women. (Cf. Byers, 2000). These statistics therefore drives in a message, that in any debate on land, Gender relations are very important. Yet in most of Africa, the predominance of patriarchal system relegates women and children to minority positions (ECA, 2004).

1.3.1 GENDER DIVISION OF TASKS IN RURAL SSA

In rural SSA, women are more centered on labor provision and men on decision making and income control. In the process of crop production for example, studies show that women do most of the work than men (ECA, 2004). Often men are responsible for land clearing, burning and at times they plough while women specialize in weeding, ploughing, transplanting, post harvest work and in some areas land preparation. Women in SSA are involved in all types of household animal production. Below is a summary of the contribution of women to family livelihood.

Table 1.3. Contribution of African Women to Family Livelihoods

General workforce	33%
Agricultural workers	60-80%
Labour to produce food for household consumption and sale	70%
Processing of basic foodstuffs	100%
Household water and fuel wood collection	90%
Food storage and transport from farm to village	80%
Hoeing and weeding work	90%
Harvesting and marketing activities	60%

Source: FAO, (2002)

1.3.2 WOMEN AND LAND INHERITANCE IN SSA

Simply put, inheritance is the practice of passing on property, titles, debts and obligations upon the death of an individual. In most of Africa, when a man dies his property including land is given either to his first son or his brothers take control of the property. Very often widows do not have the right from the customary stand point to control their late husband's estates. This stems from the fact that, as Joireman (2008) observes, that marital property is typically owned by the husband and not jointly, and women face disadvantages under such traditional systems. In a study carried out in the northwest and western Cameroon, it reveals that women cannot inherit property because they are equally considered as property themselves. They are considered as property in the sense that the men have to pay their *dowry* in order to marry them (Fonyuy, 2002). This practice is common in many parts of Africa and some parts of Asia.

Additionally, the inequality still abounds when we consider that only male children have the right to inherit the property of their fathers. In most parts, only the first born has the right to inherit, save for the Kikuyu in Kenya where social norms dictates that land and other productive assets are allocated in equal shares to each son and these norms are codified into law in the 1963 registered land Act (Mackenzie, 1989).

1.3.3 WOMEN, LAND AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Land is a fundamental asset in most parts of the world. It could be a determining factor for the status of an individual or a community: it represents wealth, in a certain light, power. Thus being an asset, its value in the market economy rises continuously as its utility becomes more intense and its scarcity increases. Land also serves as collateral for loans that can be used to improve

future streams. (Ellis, 2000). Yet the disheartening part of it is that, in every society in the world, as Dwyer and Bruce (1988) state, women's ownership of, and access to land are hardly recognized and honored as those of men. This situation, for Argarwal (1994), is one of the most pernicious of all gender inequalities, and therefore, one that urgently requires commitment to change. Cameroon for example operates a dual system of statutory law, inherited from their French and English colonial masters, which posits gender equality, yet the presence of the customary laws which are patriarchal in nature and more rigid makes the practice of law to be biased towards women. This happens especially when dealing with issues of land and property ownership (Henry et al., 2009).

Hema et al (2007) identify a number of effects resulting from the lack of women's rights to land and property in SSA, which they attribute to the vulnerability of the woman. They look at the socio-economic implications of land in a larger frame work. According to Cotula (2007) these socio economic processes are: population pressure, urbanization, increasing value of land and changing patterns of livelihood. So many factors come in when one considers the complex socio-economic dimensions of women's right to ownership of land.

In SSA, women's access to land is very much dependent on their marital status and their being part of other kinship groups, giving them the opportunity to claim familial land holdings (Cf. Walker 2002, Whitehead and Tsikata 2003). By implication, therefore, women have access to land by being wives, mothers, sisters or relatives to men who own the land. This conclusion is arrived at solely due to the social status of women, which is based on the fact that in traditional SSA setting, women are considered "secondary" and "weaker" than men (Toulmin and Quan, 2000).

Other research carried out in recent times propagates a shift from the former. They leap from the traditional way to looking at the implications and applications of women's land and property rights from a larger framework. For Aliber and Walker (2006), they have their foundation on the negotiations within the conjugal unit as well as on the bonds with natal kin and extended family, and are mediated by broader institutional and social changes.

According to Hema et al (2007), whether or not women get access to land as secondary to men, there seems to be an agreement that, irrespective of some ability to negotiate land rights, women

are generally more vulnerable to losing their land rights. This is due to their relatively low social status, particularly in an era of rapid economic transformation. The situation becomes lamentable when one considers the legal framework in most of SSA, where the national constitutions propagate equality between men and women. Yet the laws governing land and property rights are dependent upon a complex web of statutory Law, Customary law and local norms and practices. Hema et al, (2007). Toulmin and Quan (2000), observes that, in recent times there has been a backward movement toward the customary practice based on the argument that “customary institutions are more flexible and accessible to women when viewed alongside formal institutions. For Peters (2004) customary laws can better address land relations in larger institutions because they are negotiable, flexible and less ambiguous in addressing land issues.

Whether customary laws or national laws are capable of enhancing women’s rights or not, one thing remains clear that when women’s rights to access and own land are limited, the effects are many. According to Ellis (2000) the lack of land and property rights by women reinforces women’s dependence on men and curtails their capability to make independent livelihood choices. For Hema et al (2008), the lack of land and property rights by women increases their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, and other related health hazards. There also exists a link between women’s land and property rights and food security. FAO (1996) report observes that, improving on women’s rights to land enhances food production and family food security.

1.4 FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The concept of food security can be traced back to international literature in the 60s and 70s. This came as a result of the world oil crisis and related food crisis of 1972-74. When Africa experienced famine in the mid 80s, many in developed nations started looking for ways to help the situation. This led to a rapid growth in the literature on food security. A number of definitions started cropping up to define food security. Maxwell and Frankenberger’s (1992) project has a list of 194 different studies on the concept and definition of food security and 172 studies on indicators. Synthesizing the definitions, they came up with the phrase, “secure access at all times to enough food”.

In general terms the issue of food security brings to mind the idea of having access to food, its availability and its utility. The 1996 world food summit defines food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and

active life” (FAO, 1996). In 2002 the definition was modified and here food security was viewed as “a situation that exists when all people at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2002). This definition sees food security as a concept including both the physical and economic access to food that is capable of meeting people’s dietary needs as well as their food preferences. On the other hand Simon Maxwell, following a research carried out in Sudan defines Food security as: “a country and people are food secure when their food systems operate in such a way as to remove the fear that there will not be enough to eat” (Maxwell, 1988). Also another simple definition is that food security is the success of local livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food household level. (Devereaux and Maxwell, 2001)

Furthermore, the notion of food security viewed from these perspectives seem to agree with some legal commitment of the united nations, the 1948 universal declarations on human rights, which fosters the “right to adequate standard of living,” including food; the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights of 1966 which ensures an “equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need” and the universal declaration on Hunger and malnutrition (1974) which states that “every man, woman, and child has an inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition.”

In recent times, due to the apparent lack of clarity and, at times, the misuse of the concept of food security, a fairly young concept was developed, food Sovereignty. However it does not take away nor has the intention to replace food security but seems to apprehend the world food crisis from another angle. Food sovereignty could be defined as:

“the right of peoples to define their own food and Agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.” (www.viacampesina.org in Pimbert, 2008 pg3)

In this light, food sovereignty could therefore be considered to be a transformative process aimed at recreating the democratic arena and regenerating a diversity of autonomous food systems

based on equity, social justice and ecological sustainability (Pimbert, 2008). In this way food sovereignty posits advantages both at the national and international level as it helps to identify the need for a number of mutually supportive policies that strengthen autonomy and resilience of more localized food systems. (Pimbert, 2008)

1.4.1 FOOD SOVEREIGNTY VERSUS FOOD SECURITY

According to Windfuhr and Jonsen (2005) while food security is more of a technical concept and the right to food a legal one, food sovereignty is essentially a political concept. There is also a growing consensus among advocates of the concept of food sovereignty that food security is almost limited to the concept of everybody having enough food to eat. This, for them falls short of the thoughts of who produces it, where it comes from or the conditions under which the food is grown. (Peck, 2005; GRAIN editorial, April 2005; and La Via Campesina, 1996, in Puberty 2008) The possible weakness of food security here is that some poor countries tend to feel that the best way to achieve food security is by importing cheap food or to receive it as “free aid” (Peck, 2005) rather than trying to produce it themselves. In this way, those poor countries will remain dependent on the international market and as such forcing peasant farmers, pastoralist, fisher folk and indigenous peoples who are unable to compete with subsidized imports to migrate off their land into cities worsening food security. (Pimbert, 2008)

On the other hand food sovereignty promotes commonsense notions of communal autonomy, cultural integrity and environmental stewardship. (Pimbert, 2008) The possible outcome of such a situation is that the people determine for themselves what seeds to plant, what animals they raise, what type of farming methods to pursue, what economic exchange they engage in and what they will ultimately eat for dinner (Peck, 2005; GRAIN editorial, April 2005; and La Via Campesina, 1996, in Pimbert 2008). We can conclude here that genuine food security may be impossible without first achieving food sovereignty (Pimbert, 2008).

1.4.2 WOMEN’S LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS AND FOOD SECURITY

In a study carried out in India and China, Burgess (1999) construed that, beyond its income and land effects, improved land access makes the relative price of food for families cheap and controlling for income results in better nutritional outcomes. The question here is whether this is dependent on who has access to land or not? Deere and Leon (2001) argue that it matters

whether men or women have access to land. They base their arguments on two principles: the first which Deere and Leon (2001) refer to as “women’s well-being and the family” underlines the fact that property rights are a form of economic access to the market that constitutes the rural economy. And secondly what Deere and Leon call “the empowerment of women” is founded on the thought that land rights can improve and strengthen women’s ability to participate effectively in important economic decision-making processes at the household, community and broader levels. In this case improving on women’s land and property rights can be expected to have positive income and welfare effects for both women and children and in enhancing food security (Cater and Olinto, 2003).

Furthermore, some researchers have demonstrated the fact that while men rely more on markets, for crop sales and wage labor, women are more concerned with social networks and setting up and maintaining non-market reciprocal exchanges to ensure survival, food security and livelihood security (Berry, 1989; Vaa; et al., 1989; Dennis, 1991; in Ellis, 2000), the direct implication of which is assured food security. Although these studies were carried out in Latin America and Asia, this could also apply for SSA and for Cameroon in particular. The basis of the FAO (1996) report which observes that improving on women’s rights to land enhances food production and ensures family food security.

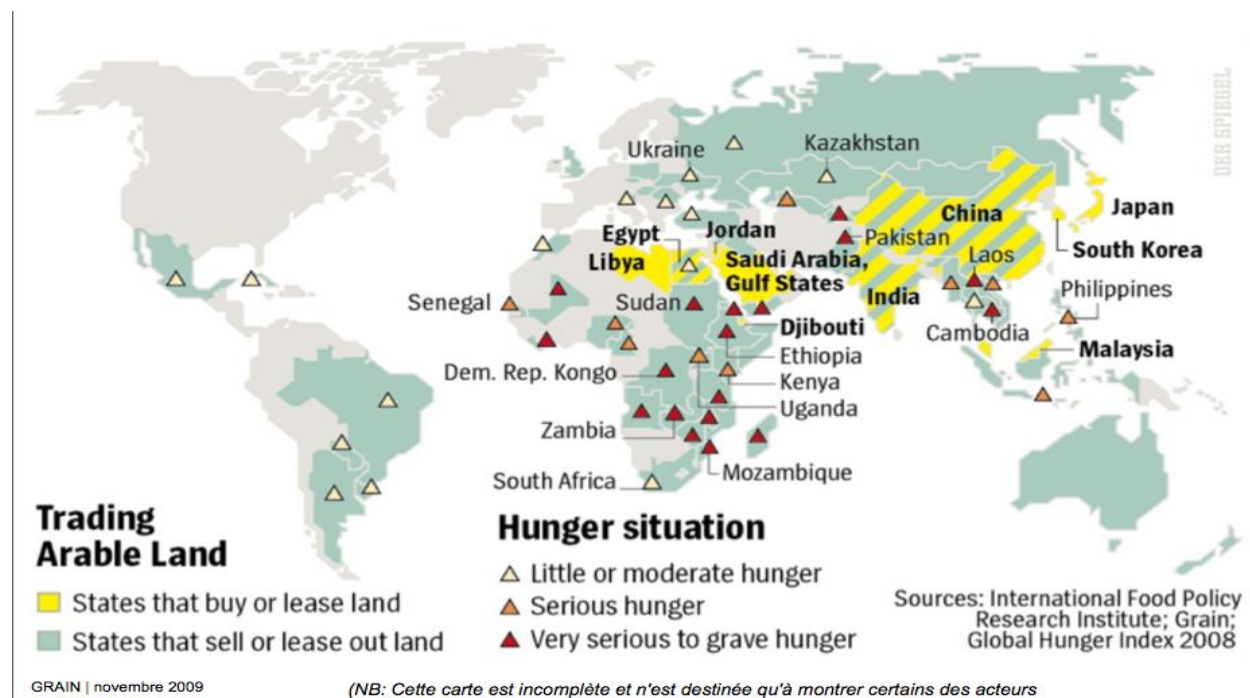
It is therefore clear that if women are not able to decide on issues of land and food production, household food security in Africa will be compromised. This is clearly evident of the 2008 food crisis that led to high food prices which was a logical outcome with frequent riot in the urban areas that took place in most countries in SSA. Many people lost their lives and property in Cameroon. The response to this crisis was the new phenomenon of land grabbing.

1.5 LAND GRABBING, WOMEN AND FOOD SECURITY

In this section we will consider some of the literature that has been done on land grabbing. The literature articulates the problem from a gender-driven perspective. The view here is to consider the possible effects of land grabbing on food security if women’s rights to land and property are limited, or if the laws do not favor women. In recent times land grabbing especially in the developing countries has been on the increase. It has been at the headlines of the news and other media channels. According to the world bank report of September (2010), in 2009 alone, about

45 million hectares of land were bought, and in a research carried out in 11 African countries by Friends of the Earth (2010), they observed that at least five million hectares of land (an area the size of Denmark) has been acquired by foreign companies for the production of Biofuels.

Most of the countries that buy this land are from the fast growing economies of Asia like China, the oil-rich countries of the middle east, some countries of North Africa especially those affected by desertification and a few from Europe and America (see figure A below) with France taking the lead among the European countries (GRAIN, 2009). The situation becomes pathetic for those countries that sell land, yet they suffer from a lot of hunger like those in Africa. Paradoxically, African countries that are relinquishing their farmlands are so acutely food-insecure that they depend on world food program (WFP) for sustenance. The example of Ethiopia that receives 116million USD in WFP food aid which is not much more than the 100million USD Saudi Arabia is paying Addis Ababa



Source: <http://globalsociology.com/files/2009/12/Land-Grab.png>

Figure A. Countries that buy land and those that lease or sell land.

to grow grains on Ethiopian farms for Saudi consumption (Kugelman, ed, 2009). And Sudan that receives a billion pounds of free food from international donors still grows wheat for Saudi

Arabia, tomatoes for the Jordanian Army, and sorghum – a Sudanese staple – for camels in the United Arab Emirates (Gentlemen, 2008 in Kugelman ed., 2009).

Lorenzo et al, (2009) identifies a few reasons for these land acquisitions. This is mainly food security concerns especially by the investing countries. Food security problems arise from the limited availability of water and arable land caused by bottlenecks in storage and distribution and by the expansion of Biofuel production competing land and crop use. Urbanization and changing diets are also pushing up global food demand (Lorenzo et al, 2009).

FAO (2009) statistics show that 1.2 billion people in the world live in poverty which represents an increase of more than 100 million people in 2006. This shows a draw-back in the commitment made by the governments to halve hunger in the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. Because of this, policy makers came to an agreement that much investment can be done in the agricultural sector especially in the developing countries in order to address hunger and poverty, develop and diversify their economies, and to stop the steady erosion of arable land even as food continues to grow (Murphy, 2009). The difficulties here have to do with the kind of technology to employ and how to cultivate in a manner that will be beneficial to all, local, regional and international markets.

The year 2008 ended with what Murphy considers as the extraordinary negotiations on the parts of governments and private firms looking to sign agreements that will confer ownership of, or long-term leases on land abroad (Murphy, 2009). In April of 2009, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) examined the risk and opportunities associated with land grabbing. On the one hand IFPRI examined the views of proponents of land grabbing. They argued that the rural poor would benefit from it significantly as land grabbing had the potentials of increasing off-farm jobs, developing the rural infrastructure, and reducing poverty strategies such as construction of schools and health posts (IFPRI, 2009). Other positive spillovers could be resources for new agricultural technologies and practices as well as future global price stability and increased production of food crops that could supply local and national consumers in addition to overseas consumers (IFPRI, 2009). Others contend that governments often sold land with the supposed hope of boosting a country's GDP and economic development in the rural areas (Lorenzo et al, 2009).

On the other hand, the IFPRI report also considered the view of those who argue against the issue of land grabbing. Such persons or entities argue that land grabbing is seen as unwarranted optimism (IFPRI, 2009). They base their arguments on the threats that land grabbing poses to people's livelihoods and ecological sustainability. Those who argue against, do so on the grounds these deals may not show equality between the investors and the local communities even if the land lease agreements make provisions for investment in rural development, (IFPRI, 2009) The small holders who mostly are women may not have much to say even if the deals do not favor them should the international investors fail to provide promised jobs for the locals whose voices are not heard (IFPRI, 2009).

Moreover, although on paper some countries have progressive laws and procedures that seek the local voice and benefit, big gaps between theory and practice, between statute books and reality on the ground (Lorenzo et al, 2009) pose problems for the local people. This is because smallholders whose land is sold for foreign investment projects have no formal title to the land, having used it under customary tenure; they run the risk of being pushed off the plot in favor of the investor without proper consultation or compensation (IFPRI, 2009). When this is done the immediate consequence will be that the small farmers will experience food insecurity and consequently most will migrate to the cities where they end up as prostitutes or beggars. The situation becomes worse especially in SSA where land rights are patriarchal in nature and where women who lack land rights depend on their farms that are being sold without their consent and without any compensation.

The issue of land grabbing in SSA could be seen as a consequence of many factors and perhaps the most obvious is the perceived notion that there is plenty of available land in SSA. This is partially true given that the population of Africa is less than a billion and yet the geographical area is very large. Furthermore, there is also the notion that there is still much virgin land in SSA. However, this perception may not be entirely correct as there are still many countries like Cameroon that still do not have functional land tenure policies. Under such conditions, women are usually on the disadvantage. Therefore the purpose of this thesis is to examine whether the lack of legal land rights and property ownership by women promotes land grabbing and constitutes a threat to household food security in rural SSA.

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

To examine whether the lack of legal land rights and property ownership by women can promote land grabbing and constitute a threat to household food security.

1.6.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To examine how many of the laws in relation to land ownership specifically indicate women as owners of Land.
- To examine if the laws permit women to inherit property
- To examine how the laws make provision for women against land grabbing
- To determine the number of household experiencing household food security in relation to land ownership.

1.6.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How could National land policies promote women's welfare and security in the context of land grabbing in Cameroon?
- How does household food security in Cameroon vary when there is gender disparity in land ownership?

2.0 STUDY AREA

The name Cameroon owes its origin from the Portuguese who ventured in to the country around 1472 and found many prawns in a river and named it *Rio dos Cameroes* and later on the Spanish who named it *Rio Camerones* for the same reason as the Portuguese. Later on it was colonized by Germany and finally by Britain and France after the first world war upon the defeat of the Germans. Cameroon is located in the central and western Africa. It is located slightly above the equator and has a surface area of about 475,440 square meters. Because it is located between the Niger and the Congo River basins, Cameroon shares both the physical, natural and cultural characteristics of all (Mbaku, 2005). Given its geographical, physical, cultural and natural diversity, Cameroon is referred to as *Africa in Miniature*. It has natural features like the beaches, deserts, mountains, forests and savannas with its highest point being mount Cameroon.

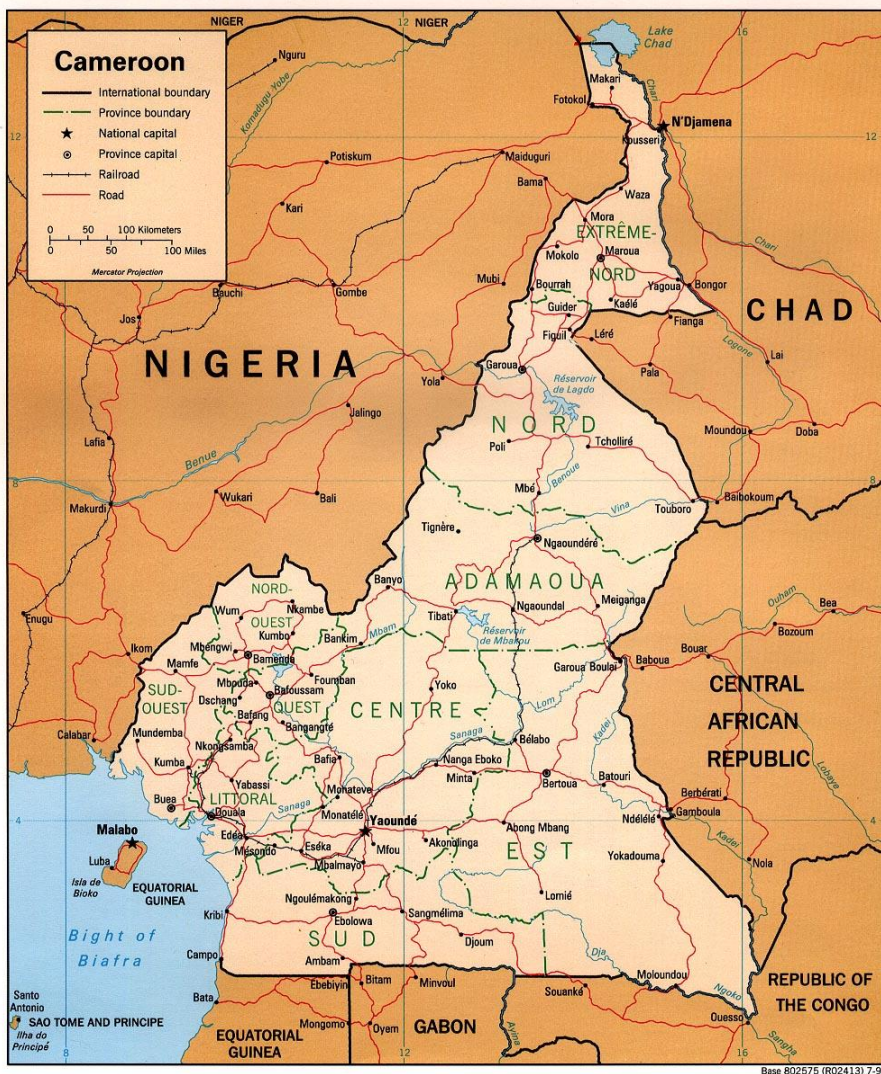


Figure B. The Map of Cameroon

The capital of Cameroon is Yaoundé. Cameroon is looked upon as a very peaceful country for lack of war and political instability. It has over 200 ethnic and linguistic groups, with French and English as the official languages thanks to its colonial past. It is also known for its successful football team called the indomitable lions. The 2009 UN estimate placed Cameroon's population at 19,522,000. The population is young and estimated that 40.9% are below age 15 and 96.7% are under 65. Birth rate is estimated at 34.1 births per 1000 lives and death rate at 12.2. Life expectancy is 53 to 69. Being a low-income country, Cameroon is ranked 144th out 177 countries in the 2007 Human development report. 40.2% of its total population lives below the poverty line of one US dollar per day of which 52.1% are in the rural areas.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

In SSA women are both reproducers and producers of what sustains life. It is the same women who are responsible for the welfare of their families through agriculture despite their small land holdings. Due to gender bias and customary laws, especially those that deal with land ownership and inheritance of land, women are being considered very often as property and are denied their rights to own land.

The weak applications of statutory laws together with bias customary laws are directly proportional to food production and household food security. In other words, if there is a fair application of the statutory laws and less biased customary laws, then there will be an improvement in food production and consequently household food security.

Women do not have the capital to purchase and own land since most of them are poor, deprived them of the privilege of growing crops. This is mostly aggravated by the gender-driven ownership of land which offers a greater advantage to men over women. This could be blamed on the weak policies that govern land ownership and tenure.

Women in SSA live in poverty and consequently lack the technology and the inputs to utilize the available land. And with the view that SSA has a low population density, there is the perceived notion that there is available land in SSA. On the other hand since there is an increase in the population in some countries in Asia like China, and the availability of capital in the oil rich countries of the middle east, there is a rush to SSA to grab land in order to meet the food security needs of their growing population and to adapt to the possible effects of climate change.

Figure B, shows the conceptual framework for approaching the research questions. This helps in the understanding of the consequences of land grabbing using a problem tree approach. Underlying cases were identified through the pathway leading to women and food insecurity.

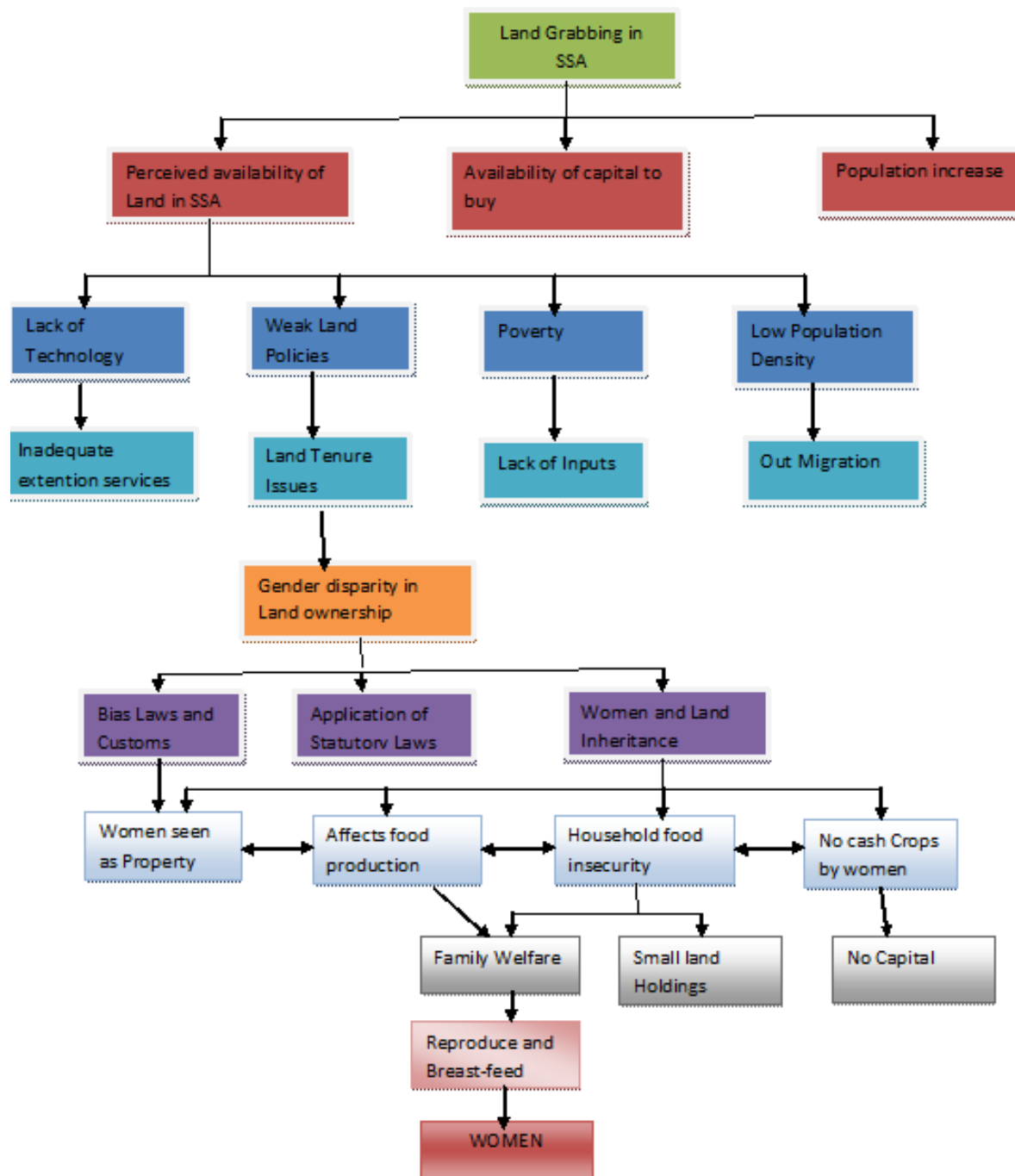


Figure C. Conceptual Framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This research concerns SSA and particularly Cameroon with most of the examples drawn from the British southern Cameroons. Most of the examples came from this area because I had worked with issues of women in this area and have had access to some personalities that directly or indirectly deal with law in this part of the country.

Although I basically conducted a desk study, I also interviewed some eleven experts by email and phone, those who were unable to grant me the interview by phone, answered the questions through their emails. I also visited and had interviews with two formal Cameroonian notaries who are presently studying in Europe: one here in Uppsala, and one in Denmark. Our analysis of the work shall therefore be based on the information gathered from these persons and related literature. This study was carried out within the period of about 14 weeks. These weeks were characterized by library studies, internet surfing and then conduction of interviews and email correspondences.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

I employed a stepwise procedure in my data collection. This was as follows:

- Literature review
- Brainstorming
- Interviews and questionnaires

3.2.1 LITERATURE AND DESK STUDY

A literature and desk study was done throughout the period of study. I used Google, Google scholar, Scopus, web of knowledge and the SLU database (Libris). In order to get my information, I used key words which included: Women, land and property rights, land grabbing, food security and when it gave me so much volumes of work, I had to narrow it by using the word SSA or Cameroon in order to get just what was linked to my research. The table below shows the results I got from the various search engines. However, a total of 73 documents were

used for the research writing process. My sources therefore include academically published articles in scientific papers and journals; I also used reports and other publications of development agencies such as FAO, IFAD, FIDA, and IFPRI. Also, text books available at my disposal were used

TABLE 3.1. Indicates Results From The Various Search Engines During The Study Process.

Search engines	Main key words	+SSA	+SSA+Cameroon
Google	50,200	25,000	9,130
Google scholar	27,300	6,890	177
Scopus	7,840	497	17
Web of Knowledge	7,375	875	55

3.2.2 INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

In order to obtain grounding information, two sets of questions were prepared, all semi-structured (see appendix). The same questions used for interviews were used as questionnaires. Two of the people were not ready to respond to me by phone and preferred to answer the questions through email and send them as written texts. The first sets of questions were addressed to Law experts and a few women who work with FIDA Cameroon (those I consider as key informants). The selections of the interviewees were based on:

- Their knowledge of land tenure issues in Cameroon
- Work related to the promotion of issues relating to land and property rights.
- Their knowledge of the various systems of law in Cameroon.
- Their knowledge on gender issues especially in relation to land and property ownership.

Five Cameroon-based interviewee responded by phone, and two others residing abroad offered to be interviewed personally. Two others in Cameroon responded through electronic mail messaging. The other questions were addressed to village farmers of which two interviews were conducted. I didn't follow any determined criteria in interviewing the farmers. In fact, I had them by chance. These interviews helped me not only to have good material for my thesis but also to

deepen my knowledge of the Cameroonian situation at the moment and to help formulate and structure my primary research data.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results are presented in two parts, the findings from literature reviews and the interviews and questionnaires. They are organized on the basis of the Key emerging themes.

4.1 LITERATURE REVIEWS

4.1.1 LAND TENURE AND POLICIES IN CAMEROON

Cameroon land tenure has evolved from one form to the other since the pre-colonial period to what we have today. In the pre-colonial period land tenure was simply customary. In this sense the land belonged to a group, which could be a tribe, a village or a family and not individual members (Anyangwe, 1984). The logic here was simple and well understood by the people. For them it was preferable for a group to own land because a group is perpetual to existence and its property could not be subject to succession. This is in accordance with Miller's (1977) view that succession of property cannot occur unless it belongs to the individual.

In the traditional customary tenure in Cameroon, the land that is owned by a group of people often has one man (Fon, chief or village head, or family head) who is in charge of allocating the land (Anyangwe, 1984). Allocation here means that the land is given out for people to farm or use in other means and there is no full transfer and no absolute title to guarantee the grant. In this case land is distributed to those in need and no one owns it. This is different from allotment whereby the chief or village head gives out land along side absolute transfer of rights. Further individual families own small portions of land that the sons can inherit from their father.

However, this was not to continue for long as things started changing with the advent of colonization thus actualizing Lewis's statement Vs Bankole, speed C.J that at one point there would be the demise of communal land ownership through a legislative or judicial *coup de grace* (INLR 81 1990). The legislative *coup de grace* arose from the promulgation of the 1974 land ordinance which abolished customary land tenure. According to ordinance Number 74-1 of 6th July 1974:

“National lands shall as of right comprise lands which at the date on which the present ordinance enters into force are not classed into public or private property of the state and other public bodies. National land shall be divided into two categories: first of all land occupied with houses, farms and plantations and grazing land manifesting human presence and development. Secondly, land free of any effective occupation”.

At the abolition of the customary land tenure, individuals and families that had land on which they were using before the date of the ordinance were given the opportunity to obtain titles for their land. This was not accepted by all as strong adherents of the customary practices exploited the lacuna to perpetuate the continuous existence of the customary land tenure. For example, professor Ngwasiri (1984) argues that “one cannot abolish any customary law simply by enacting legislation to say that one has done so. Today, most of the rural areas in Cameroon still continue to follow the traditional tenure system.

4.1.2 THE STATE OF LAW IN CAMEROON

Cameroon’s law owes its origin basically to three main sources, namely, the English Law, the French law and the customary law. The English and the French laws in Cameroon were effected by both Britain and France within the colonial framework operating as two occupants of the country thus splitting it into two distinct sectors: the Anglophone and the Francophone Cameroon.

The Anglophone Cameroon operated on the English law system since it was mandated to Britain by the League of Nations, after the First World War and amended in 1932. In which case this part of the country was attached and administered as part of Nigeria. Prior to the independence of Nigeria, the British Southern Cameroon had set up its own high court making it autonomous. Therefore what we have as the English Law in the Anglophone Cameroon includes laws enacted in Nigeria since the two states shared the same court systems prior to the independence of Nigeria and the English law, made up of common law, doctrines of equity and statutes of general application. (Ebi, 1964)

Cameroon received the French law in accordance with a decree signed on 16th April and the 22nd May 1924 promulgating French laws in equatorial Africa (Anyangwe, 1984).

The term customary law here refers to the native laws and customs which, thanks to the colonial masters (Britain and France), constitute an integral part of the making of land laws (Ebi, 2008). In present day Cameroon some judges seem not to recognize customary laws as such, they feel they are mere conventions based on sentiments ((Ebi, 2008). Yet both the English and the French laws that operate in Cameroon gave validity to the customary laws. Section 27 of the southern Cameroon High Court Law of 1955, authorizes the courts to ‘Observe’ and to “enforce the observance” of customary laws as having legal validity independent of the judicial legislative intervention (woodman, 1996). The French law did same by the 1921 and 1927 decrees empowering the courts to apply customary laws when dealing with natives (Yoengo, 1994).

Cameroon also relies on presidential ordinances laws and decrees. The ordinances include, ordinance number 74/1/06 July 1974 determining the land system, ordinance number 74/2 of 06 July 1974 determining the dominial system and lastly ordinance number 74/3 of 06 July 1974 on the expropriation procedure for public utilities and the indemnification modalities, modified by law number 85/09 of 04 July 1985. In addition to these ordinances are also laws like the law number 80-22 of July 1980 on the repression of land offences; Law 19 of 26th November 1983 deals with the capability of the consulting committee of the jurisdiction authorities and finally law number 94/01 Of 20th January 1994 which classifies the forest fauna and the various fishing systems. Lastly there are also decrees that set forward issues of land; decree number 76/165 of 27 April 1975 that stipulates the conditions for the acquisition of land; decree number 76/166 of 27 April 1975 that gives the guidelines on the management of state property and finally decree number 76/167 of 27 April 1975 laying the conditions for the management of private property.

The 1974 ordinance gives individuals the right to own land, referring to all uncertified land as government land. The possible effects are that the ignorant peasants who cannot have access to the necessary capital to obtain a land certificate automatically lose their land rights to the state which explains why they cannot obtain land certificate or own land and as such expropriations do not require indemnification by the state, (Ricardo ed., 2001). This ordinance empowers the government to sell out land to foreign investors with the view that all land is Government land

and available at its disposal. The 1980 ordinance on marriage which spells out the conditions under which property is owned in marriage – common or private, constitute part of the laws governing land tenure in Cameroon.

With the knowledge of the customary laws as being enforced and the Cameroon ordinance on land and marriage, we realize that the country does not actually have a full stand on the issue of land and property rights, on the one hand they want to follow the statutory laws and the constitution and on the other the native laws and customs which are equally recognized by the French and English law that form the basis for statutory law in Cameroon. This gives rise to judges ruling cases with bias as they are inclined to follow statutory laws often and in some cases customary laws. Women will always be on the disadvantage if customary laws are applied since these laws do not offer them the right to own land.

4.1.3 THE CONFLICT OF LAWS

Given the existence of three different sources of law, there is bound to be conflict if there is no operational harmony between them. This can easily happen between the customary laws and the statutory laws which may have contradictory impact on land issues. This situation is a pity when one considers that Cameroon does not have any existing rules that govern such cases between civil and customary laws (Ebi, 2008). In the English Cameroon the only standard is the 1955 southern Cameroon high court law which states that all customary laws should be enforced only if they are not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience. Yet at times male judges being from a particular locality and being adherents of the customs of that particular area may not see anything wrong in their customs, giving rise to different varieties of the application of law in Cameroon (Fonyuy, 2002).

These conflicts at times arise when someone brings to a law court a case that was never legalized. For example a widow who was married in the customary court and wants legal procedures to fight for the ownership of the property of her late husband when customs of the people under which she was married demand that her brother takes control of that property.

4.1.4 DISCRIMINATORY LAWS IN CAMEROON AND THE PRESENT SITUATION OF WOMEN.

Having considered the three different forms of laws operating in Cameroon, it is worthwhile noting that customary laws discriminate most against women, especially those that have to do with land property. For example, in most cultures women cannot inherit land, and they cannot own land. Yet these laws are at times enacted and enforced by the courts despite other enactments to the contrary (Temngah, 1996). Section 27 of the southern Cameroon's high court declares that:

“..the high court shall observe and enforce the observance of every native law and custom which is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience and not incompatible with any law for the time being enforce, and nothing in this law shall deprive any person of the benefit of any such native law or custom” (Temngah, 1996).

The International federation of women's Lawyers (FIDA) (1999) reports that women have been discriminated against in many cases. One such case is cited in the Achu Vs Achu in which the court concluded that customary laws do not countenance the sharing of property, especially landed property between husband and wife on divorce. This is because the wife is still regarded as the property of the man and property cannot own property (Temngah, 1996). Again FIDA (1999) laments the fact that, despite the Supreme Court's decision permitting women to inherit property, women still are not offered the chance to do so when judges have to apply customary laws in rolling out such cases. Consequently the women are affected by this as they remain legal minors.

Furthermore, based on customary laws, estate letters of administration are invariably issued to male relatives and not to women and children of the deceased, resulting in their being expelled from their marital homes after the death of their husbands; despite the existence of the Cameroon law of succession, which permits widows and children to succeed their parents in property administration (FIDA, 1999). In some cultures, like the Bamelikes in Cameroon and the Betis, widows themselves are inherited under customary laws (Fonyuy, 2002). This led the Inter-African Committee (1999) to describe customary practices in Cameroon as being harmful. Our bone of contention here is to see if they have any effects on the welfare of the women. If the

country has been applying customary practices that discriminate against women then it is probable that they will affect their well-being. For if a woman who seriously depended on land for the well being of her family cannot have access to that land after the death of her husband then the implications are clear that she and her children will suffer in many ways including starvation and health problems (Fonyuy, 2002).

On the other hand, although the statutory law somewhat proclaims equality of men and women, a closer look at some of the laws and the language used indicates that they directly or indirectly discriminates against women. According to the Cameroon civil status registration article 74, a husband can stop the wife's separate trade for the interest of the marriage of their children, but not vice versa. Still, article 77 of the same status gives a woman 180days before she can remarry after the death of her husband but the husband can marry at any time after the death of the wife. In the same vein, a husband can confer citizenship on a foreign born spouse and not the wife, and article 321 of the penal code criminalizes adultery done by a man only if it is done habitually and by a woman even if it happens once. Such and many other laws perpetuate discrimination against women and affect their well-being (FIDA, 1999).

4.1.5 WOMEN AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IN CAMEROON

In Cameroon, women form 52% of the population (Fonjong, 2001). However, being a patriarchal society, the status of women remains very low with inequalities and inequities prevailing in all aspects of the society. Despite the fact that the Cameroon constitution seems to apparently embrace gender equality, and that article 18,3 states that, *"the state shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declaration and conventions"* (Cameroon constitution, 1972 and 1996), the practice of law specifically posits ambiguities as to whether men and women are equal before the law on issues relating to land and ownership of property.

Often when marriage contracts are being signed, one of the main issues is the ownership of matrimonial property. In this case the registrar inquires from the couple if they want common property or separate ownership. Separate ownership somehow empowers the women in the ownership of their property. On the other hand, the marriage contract is usually not respected to the letter (Ngwafor, 1993). Often it remains on paper, and the women who do 75% of the agricultural work in Cameroon lack the basis for generating wealth (Serageldin, 1989). Like the

rest of SSA, women only own one percent of the assets and ten percent of the income. In Cameroon, the few women who own land either do so through matrilineal succession or are among the “few literate, working-class women who have acquired land by purchasing it on the open market with their own hard-earned money (Human Resources and Poverty Division, world Bank, 1994). This has its foundation on customary laws which forbid women the right to own land and property.

When it comes to common property contracts during marriage, the husband is endowed with vector powers over the property (Cf. article 1395, of Civil Ordinance of 1981). This law has its origin in the French civil code which gives more powers to the prenuptial agreements that empower the husband over the management of any property held in common, giving him the right to sell the property they own in common without the consent of his wife (French Law, 1938). In this case, the husband has to manage all the assets and the wife has no rights to use it even for a bank loan. This therefore keeps women in an unequal level with men.

In the past, judges habitually applied customary laws when passing judgment property rights. Despite the variation on customary laws brought about by a multiplicity of ethnic groups in Cameroon, they generally consider women as dependents or legal minors. Based on the English Law, a legal minor cannot go into a binding contract except for basic necessities like food, clothing etc (Ngwafor , 1993) the implication here is that entering a commercial contract on land with a woman is risky as the court may not enforce the agreement. Therefore as minors, women cannot own land of their own but as wives and daughters of men who by the law own the land (Ngwafor, 1993). This implies that for women to be able to own land and to generate wealth for themselves in SSA and in Cameroon in particular, written and customary laws will need some revised since these women (especially the rural women) are the ones that are responsible for the wellbeing of their families. Further still, if they cannot own the land on which they work, the implication is that the real owners of the land (men) may even dispose of it without their notice, and as such this may have an adverse effect on food security.

4.1.5.1 WOMEN AND LAND ENTITLEMENT IN CAMEROON

In Cameroon, customary practices do not permit women to own land as we have already illustrated in the foregoing chapters. The statutory law gives right to everyone who can obtain a land certificate to own Land. However the monopoly of men with regard to land ownership still

prevails. This situation is heightened by the well-nigh monopoly of men to sources of regular income which gives them more financial power and the greater possibility of buying land than women (Ambe, 2003)

Women's access to land is further restricted by the fact that the process for fulfilling the necessary land entitlement formalities is often not only lengthy but cumbersome and complicated, but also very costly (Ambe, 2003). Ambe (1992) clearly indicates that, it is difficult to complete the land certificate procedure since it was enacted on 27th April 1976. In order to fully obtain a decision regarding land entitlement in Cameroon, one needs to travel to the nation's capital before s/he can get it. Ambe (2003) argues that this is disadvantageous to women especially those with children since it is burdensome. This and other constraints not only make women less privileged in land issues but also slow down economic growth in the country since women cannot obtain loans at will due to lack of collateral as well as the returns which can be had from renting such land (Ambe, 2003).

4.1.6 WOMEN AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN CAMEROON

With the advent of climate change, food security has been threatened on four dimensions: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and food stability. Women accounts for about 45-80 percent of food production in developing countries depending on the region (UN women watch, 2009). It is estimated that almost two-third of female labor force in developing countries and more than 90 percent in Sub-Saharan African countries are engaged in Agricultural works (FAO, 2009). With the advent of climate change traditional food sources become more unpredictable and scarce. Since they depend on their farms for the food and income, they then face loss of income and harvests. As such, the recent increase in food prices creates a problem of food insecurity for poor people, and the women and the girls in particular suffer the most, health-wise in times of food shortages(UN women watch, 2009).

In Cameroon women are responsible for about 90% of the food needed for the subsistence of the Cameroonian population (FAO, 2002). This is done mainly through rural agriculture. Although the men are chiefly responsible for the production of cash crops, women also participate in the production of these cash crops. On the average, women spent 6-8 hours a day in the farm during the high farming seasons in addition to their house work (Gosheen, 1988). Further still, women at local levels always devise strategies to improve their farming qualities. At times they group

themselves together to cultivate each other's farms in turns. This is typical among the Nso women in the north west region of Cameroon, where Gosheen (1988) observed a considerable increase in labor among the Nso women in Cameroon since Kaberry (1968) wrote about this group 38 years later.

Despite the fact that some tribes limit women from producing cash crops, women still have some income during the pick periods of the cash crops. For example, in the Beti of southern Cameroon where women cannot inherit land, they are granted food plots by their husbands, but they cannot plant cash crops on them (koopman, 1983). However they benefit in that during the season of cash crops they can sell some of their food crops and gain some money since men are more concerned on the money they make from cash crops (Guyer, 1980).

4.1.7 LAND GRABBING IN CAMEROON

Due to the effects of climate change, some parts of the world have experienced rainfall shortages like Australia that has experienced recurrent droughts in the past years (Johnson, and Sharma, 2009). As a result of this, there has been a rush to Africa in search of fertile land. The British Southern Cameroons has been a prey for foreign investors especially in plantation Agriculture. This is partly because of the weak laws. As a result the establishment of these plantations has always been through expropriation of land from the poor rural people without adequate compensations (Ricardo ed, 2001). Following the Cameroon law, peasants and the poor especially women who cannot obtain land certificate cannot own land and such expropriations do not require indemnification by the state, (Ricardo ed, 2001). This practice dates back to the colonial period when the colonial masters established some of the plantations. It is now that the estates are being privatized. The private owners wanting to expand the plantations obtain the land from the state without the compensation of the poor rural women who farm this land (Ricardo ed, 2001). This implies that the poor farmers who are mostly the rural women are forced to farm on the top of the hills which suffer the effects of the advent of climate change such as erosion and leaching. The consequent is poor yield which creates food insecurity within the rural areas of the country.

The most recent and common deal is that of China that has bought 10,000 hectares of land for the cultivation of rice for the Chinese population (IFPRI, 2009). Also there is the case in which

Cameroonian villagers were forcefully removed from their land because it was found to be fertile and it was being sold to a foreign company (Vidal, 2008).

The growing interest in biofuels has led to more land grabbing especially with finality of the petroleum derivatives. In the same vein, there is the obvious fact that oil (Petroleum derivatives) is a finite source of energy, and as such there is a growing need for bioenergy. Consequently land is needed for the cultivation of this energy which again posits a difficulty to the rural women who depend on it. There is the case of the North West province of Cameroon where 140 hectares of land in Babungo and Ntem is being used for this purpose (WIP, 2008) yet there is shortage of land for the local rural famers. In the same line, the demand for timber in the world is on the rise and it has been proven that sub-Saharan African trees grow faster than they do in the temperate zones hence the need for land to grow trees (Yemi K et al., 2009). In the face of this competition for land, the rural women seem to be the losers as they are legally and economically unfit to handle the situations. In other words they cannot have more land as well as the technology to improve on their yields: the consequence could be food insecurity.

4.2 INTERVIEWS.

The table below illustrates a survey using a questionnaire with a set of 7 questions generated and administered to 9 people. The interviewees consisted of 5women and four men. Their age limit was between 32 and 54. The results are presented on the table below based on the Key emerging themes from the interviews.

Table 4.0. Views of the various interviewees women's land and property rights and land grabbing in Cameroon

Key emerging themes	Men	Women
Gender equality, Statutory and Customary laws in Cameroon.	Most of the men interviewees said the Cameroon Laws rely more on the constitution that preaches Gender equality. Further, that it often put in practice because of the influence from international	Most of the women argued that, some 10 years ago Gender equality was not in practice, but recently, due to agreements signed with international bodies the practice has improved. Further, the women also revealed that it is thanks to

	institutions. For them Customary laws are Gender Bias	associations like FIDA that ensures such practices. Yet all lamented the fact that most of the women are not aware of their rights, they even said three quarters of the women do not know their rights and they attest to the fact that customary laws are gender biased.
Conflict on Customary statutory laws on Gender issues.	Customary laws on women's land and property rights are not always repugnant to natural justice, equity and legality. However they all said in case of conflict statutory law is applied	They noted that the practice was in favor of customary norms 5years ago and that today they (women lawyers) often stand to defend women and as such Statutory laws which are less gender biased are applied.
Property rights Perception.	5-10years ago the court followed only customary rulings but today some cases are being ruled where the daughter of man has to take control of the father's property when the court realized the other family members were incompetent to handle the property. Some argue that women cannot inherit property because they are considered as property themselves.	If the woman was married following the 1981 ordinance on marriage, she can be backed in the law court. But it is lamentable that 90% of the married people in the rural part of the country only marry according to the customs and traditions and as such it is difficult for the law court to apply statutory law where it did not exist.
Land rights and food security	almost all the food consumed in Cameroon is produced by	"women are better managers than men, they need men more for

	women and it really creates a problem when producers do not have a right to their source of production	security”, which imply that they could better manage land than men if they had the rights, enhancing food security.
Land Grabbing in Cameroon.	There is the case in Buea of the expansion of the plantations and the Bakweri people fighting for compensation There is the opening of the biofuel fields in the southwest and North west that has kept many landless.	Said they have learned of the Chinese buying 10000ha of land for the cultivation of rice and the problems encountered in the expansion of the tea estates.

4.2.1 INTERVIEWS WITH FAMERS

I also had two interviews with farmers who had been victims of land grabbing and who share their experiences. These were conducted by phone. Both of them are single mothers. They had similar experiences. Both were never compensated after the sales of their land to a tea Estate. For them, only the traditional rulers who had allocated the farms to them might have probably been compensated. They lamented that their present farms cannot feed their families even for half a year. They have to travel for more than 50 kilometers to beg for farms on which to grow crops. One of the women survived on charity from the family life apostolate of the Catholic Church and the Notre Dame Sisters based in their community.

These interviews (with key informants and the farmers) highlight certain issues that could be of concern: most women are unaware of their rights, women still continue to suffer injustice despite the presence of the constitution and the laws and there is a need for them to own the land on which they farm in order to ensure food security.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 EFFECTS OF THE PRESENT LEGAL SYSTEM ON THE WELFARE OF WOMEN

The antagonism involving the customary and the written law in Cameroon is clearly illustrated in the various notions of land ownership, as well as the authorities' concept of land distribution and in the modalities thereof (Robinson, 2007). The concept of national estate which replaced that of vacant land with no owner has only one objective, that of handing the control of all land in Cameroon to the state. According to Robinson (2007), this notion concretizes the objective of the economic and social developments adopted by the great reform of 1974. This therefore forms the Government's legal instrument for intervention in land property. Yet the Government is not in agreement with the local communities heading the conflict towards an impasse. It characterizes the situation of many women who are deprived of their right to acquire land despite the constitutional and legislative regulations giving equal rights to both sexes (Robinson, 2007). A survey in Cameroon reveals that women own less than 10% of the land certificates (Mason and Carlsson, 2004)

A study carried out in Cameroon on the present land legislation by Mbome, Ndong and Poumie, (1995), reveals increased individualization of land ownership, alienation of previously held community land by outsiders, an increase in the number of cooperatives and privately owned commercial plantations, heightened land speculation in urban and peri-urban areas, greater proletarianization of rural women who have lost access to land and now hire out their labor on coffee, cocoa or palm oil plantations, and an increased state control over land access and use. Fonyuy (2002) registers the attitudes of some of the women who had lost their land as a result of the expansion of the plantations in Cameroon. For him, most women prefer to be under the traditional customary tenure system than to be under the 1974 ordinance. This is because (due to poverty) they cannot be able to obtain land certificates and could not also benefit from the sold land. A great number of these women either migrate out of the village to do prostitution in the cities or have to travel long distances to get other farms. This has an adverse effect on them and those placed under their charge, since many go starving and at times homeless as a result of land grabbing that has crawled in through the notion of state ownership of all land.

5.2 GENDER DESPARITY IN LAND OWNERSHIP AND FOOD SECURITY IN CAMEROON

In order to have a grasp of the Gender disparity in land distribution in Cameroon, it is fitting to examine the laws that govern land ownership in Cameroon to see how bias they are and then to consider the possible effects on food security. This can be clearly seen from the status of the woman in the traditional society, the bias nature of the customary laws and the problems encountered in the application of the statutory laws in Cameroon.

5.2.1 THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The woman's position in the traditional setting in most of the tribes in Cameroon is somehow complex, ambivalent and controversial. The social norms that characterize the role and social status assign to women are of an inferior position when compared to men (Logo and Bikie, 1991). Yet it is paradoxical that by their very nature, their social practices and symbolic representations confer to them a special role in social life. Therefore it is only through the institutions and systems of representations that the contradiction is revealed (Logo and Bikie, 1991). Copet-Rougier (1985) contests that this is inherent to the dynamics of power in the traditional societies. The ambivalent of the issue according to Logo and Bikie (1991), stems from the double logic that the traditional logic seems to submit women to: the logic of submission and subordination in the public space and that of power affirmation in the domestic space. In other words, when it comes to decision making and ownership of property, women are relegated to the background while they are the ones that actually see to the well being of the family. Although in some tribes in Cameroon the women partially take part in management or hold some responsible positions they still always do this under the strict supervision of the men. This is the case with the Baka, Bakola/bagyeli pigmies and the Bassa societies of the forest south Cameroon (Logo and Bikie, 1991) where some of the old women take part in decision making, and in the Nso tradition of the north west region, women can also hold the title of the *shey*, *Yaa*, *Yesum* and *Yee wong* who equally participate in traditional activities (Fonyuy, 2002). Yet only these few women have a say and in their marital home they still are subordinates to their husbands and cannot own land. Generally one can say that in most Cameroonian tribes the men rule and the female obey and are submissive. As such, men have the right to own women like property and among the Betis the fundamental way in which a man exercises his power is to possess women in all senses

of the word: power to acquire them and the power to fecundate them (Laburte – Tolra, 1981). The more the man possesses wives the more he is honored. This dynamics of traditionalist construction of women's status is valid for all Cameroonian societies (Logo and Bikie, 1991).

From the domestic point of view, women become the masters as they do all the farming and are responsible for the well being of the family. Mbock (1989) refers to them as *home office ministers*, because they take care of the families morally and materially. Therefore if offered the opportunity to own land customarily, the tendency is that they will increase their farm sizes and consequently improve on household food security (Fonyuy, 2002). In recent times, things are gradually changing as women are becoming more and more aware of their rights although not all have come to this realization. Some, although aware, still prefer the traditional view.

Studies have shown that women in developing countries produce about 60 to 80% of the food consumed in these areas and about 90% of the food in Cameroon (FAO, 2002). This food is on the greater part produced through rural agriculture. Yet only 2% of land in the world is owned by women (Rural Development Institute (RDI), 2010). Women own only 2% of the land because customary practices and statutory laws or their application do not give them the full rights to own land. According to RDI (2010), women feed the world, and if their rights to land and property were improved upon, they could provide better nutrition for the household, increase food security, increase income and economic growth, and improve the bargaining power and status within the household and community. FAO (2002) reports that improving on women's land and property rights would increase food security. Moreover, RDI's research has shown that even a little bit of land, sometimes as small as one-tenth of an acre, can help women build a sustainable livelihood (RDI, 2010). Based on the literature and interviews, one can therefore conclude here that, since women in Cameroon produce 90% of food in the country, improving their access to own land will lead to better food security.

5.2.2 BIAS IN CUSTOMARY LAWS

With a multiplicity of tribes (about 250) spread throughout the national territory, the role of customary laws in Cameroon becomes a pertinent area of study (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 1998), probably because customary laws still stand out as one of the main sources of law in

Cameroon (Anyangwe, 1969). Studies have shown that women are not equal to men in cases of land when it comes to land ownership and inheritance.

From the point of view of land ownership, women in almost all the tribes in Cameroon do not have the right to own land. The real owners of the land are men and women only work the land for food production. Also women are not allowed to inherit land because they are considered as property and men argue that property cannot inherit property.

5.2.3 APPLICATION OF STATUTORY LAW

Based on the Cameroon constitution, one can claim that men and women are equal before the law in Cameroon. Also putting to place the law number 74/1 of 6th July 1974, one imagines a non discriminatory way of land appropriation by all Cameroonians, for it stipulates, at the beginning, that “the state guarantees to all the persons physical or moral possessing lands and property, the right to enjoy it and to deal with it freely”. And decree number 76/165 OF 27th April 1976, grants the same procedure to both sexes in obtaining a land certificate. As such one can say that the Cameroonian law propagates equality between men and women on land issues. However, it is equally noticeable that the land regulation falls short in case of female succession (Logo and Bikie, 1998). This stems from the view that it lays assumptions on the barriers that do not enable the women’s access to the land heritage. Beyond these difficulties, women are also discriminated against. Given the fact that a majority of the women are poor, living beyond the poverty limit, they also cannot follow the processes to obtain land, due to high costs.

Also, the application of statutory law discriminates against women in that most of them cannot obtain land, since the rules under which they lived before did not permit them to own land (Logo and Bikie, 1998). The implication here is that for a woman to buy land she can only buy titled land which in the Cameroonian context is extremely expensive. Yet it becomes practically impossible for them to obtain land titles from lands that originally did not have land titles. This is because such land would be claimed as never have been owned.

From the above perspectives, we can conclude with Chiwona (2009), in a paper presented at the conference “Rural areas shaping the future” that poor women have weak property and contractual rights to land, and other natural resources. These greatly have negative impacts on

the food security since over 70% of the households in SSA depend on women for food security, and in Cameroon women produce 90% of the food consumed. Therefore the lack of land rights by women has both implications and applications in the wider dimension of food security.

Results from interviews and literature reviews all affirm that women are discriminated against when it comes to ownership and control of land. In Cameroon land issues are by themselves problematic and despite the bits of improvement on the status of women, one cannot ascertain that the struggle is won for them in as much as they remain under the control of men. This could also be because in the social stratification they have an inferior position to men. There is a corresponding parallelism between the social status of women and their status with regard to land ownership. According to Ellis (2000), ownership of land constitutes the measure of social status as it represents a store of wealth. For Logo and Biekie (1998), land is a reflection of the social rapports and the problems that it poses are of a political nature.

The nationalization of all land by the government instead of improving on the status of women creates more difficulties for them. This results from the fact that women constitute 70% of the poor in the world, and they are unable to obtain land certificates (Anyangwe, 1984). As a result of this, much of the land in Cameroon on which women farm has not been certified thus could be claimed and sold by the government.

The preponderance of customary systems of tenure is still a reality in most of the rural areas of Cameroon. Despite the fact that the state regulations in modern Cameroon do not recognize customary land tenure, it is still the practice in most rural parts of the country. It is evident that these customary practices are rigid with regard to women's access to land ownership although they recognize women's right of use. On the other hand, the modern land law is more liberal although it still has limits as far as its applications are concerned. Women always get a leaner boon of it.

One of the effects of the lack of women's land rights is the issue of migration. Fonyuy (2002) argues that when women do not have the rights to possess land on which they depend for the well being of their families they turn to the "dangerous" cities to seek ways of ensuring the welfare of their families. Ben chop (2004) contends that, a great majority of the cities in the

developing countries have a high percentage of their population living in slums and informal settlements. In other words, they live in sub-standard housing, lacking basic services. The possible outcome of this is that they fall prey to diseases such as HIV/AIDS that has been ravaging many in SSA (USAID, 2006).

Besides, Ellis (2000) argues that the lack of women's land rights increases their dependence on men, making them not capable of making independent livelihood choices. Therefore it becomes difficult for them to advance economically, since land brings about the economic power in many ways, like equity for bank loans (Ellis, 2000). As such access to land is of paramount importance for sustainable poverty reduction. Hanstad, Nieslsen and Brown (2004), construed that the livelihood of the rural people without access or with very limited access to natural resources such as land is weak because they have difficulty in obtaining food, accumulating other assets, and recuperating after natural market shocks or misfortunes.

5.3 PERCEIVED AVAILABILITY OF LAND IN CAMEROON

Although at the national and local levels, communities claim ownership of land, the 1974 ordinances that guide land tenure in Cameroon indicate besides the certified land, the rest of the land is owned by the Government. This is indicative of the fact that there is more free land in Cameroon than land that has ownership. Where government projects are not undertaken, the land is considered vacant just like that which the Chinese bought measuring 10000hectares. It goes without saying that most people depended on this land for livelihood. Results from interviews indicate that such people will have to starve or travel for a very long distance to get new farms which is never easy for them. In an article published by the Ethiopian current affairs discussion forum of December 2009, Shewakena sees the perceived availability of land in Ethiopia and other SSA countries as a misnomer and a new form of neo-colonization. He argues that this can only go about to increase the poverty level of his people, since most of the Ethiopian population depend on rural agriculture and they are selling it off to foreigners without considering the fact that the available fertile land in Ethiopia cannot even feed its population. This fact points to the lack of the basic understanding of food sovereignty.

Apiyo (2007), presents the case of Kenya in which he considers land not only as a basic-component of human activity but also, and in most cases, the most important means of

livelihood. It forms the foundation for shelter, food, work and a sense of nationhood. Evictions which are a consequence of land grabbing are a major cause of urban poverty. Many evictions are aimed at people who have occupied and lived in settlements for a long time. When evictions take place, the results are destruction of property and people's development initiatives and displacement as well as interference with the efforts of well-intentioned development agencies and religious institutions. The consequences are far-reaching: lives are lost, children miss school, livelihoods are destroyed, homes are razed to the ground and children are forced onto the streets as parents ponder where and how to start life afresh. The lack of security of tenure has serious social consequences as it demobilizes the people's ability to organize themselves so that they can reinvest in their communities. (Apiyo, 2007). It is clear that land grabbing in Cameroon will not present a better image from that of the Kenyans in the case above. The only confusion that cuts across my mind is what will be the fate of SSA in an age of climate change, if

- women who produce the food do not have access to land, and
- if the land is being sold off to foreign investors?

According to Stephan et al., (2010), those who think the new development of African agriculture can only come from foreign land acquisitions need to understand that this new scramble will only come to the expense of Africa's "undivided Mass". This for him is because many African nations neither have the institutional capability to monitor these developments successfully nor do they sit well with the ideology of the past. Based on this, he concludes that Africa will still remain marginalized, raped by new colonist and a completely new circle of violence can be the outcome.

Due to the aforementioned ills of land grabbing, an accord produced by La via Campesina, FIAN, Land Research Actions Network (LRAN) and Grain of 22 April 2010 and endorsed by many organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America, stipulates that, instead of embracing land grabbing and its ills, attention should rather be focused on:

- Keeping land in the hands of the local communities and implementing genuine agrarian reforms in order to ensure equitable access to land and natural resources.

- Heavily support agro-ecological peasant, farming, fishing and pastoralist, including participatory research, and training programs so that small-scale food providers can provide healthy, safe and ample food for everybody.
- Overhaul farm and trade policies to embrace food sovereignty and support local and regional markets that people can participate and benefit from.
- Lastly to promote community oriented food and farming systems, hinged on local people's control over land, water and biodiversity. Enforce strict mandatory regulations that curb the actions of corporations and other actors (state and private) to agricultural, coastal and grazing land, forest and wetlands.

In September of 2010, the World Bank published a report which many termed the long awaited report on Land Grabbing. The World Bank's report, "Rising Global Interest in Farmland," highlights the sharp increase in foreign purchases of vast tracts of land in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Mittal A (2010), observes that while the report warns of a lack of transparency and the potential harm to poor people, it ultimately endorses land grabs in the name of productivity and sound investment. On its part the GRAIN (2010), dismisses the World Bank's report as a disappointment and a failure, on the basis that the report lacks current empirical substance as they failed to provide anything new on the report. The GRAIN (2010) sees the report as a whole gamut of smoke and mirrors. This stems from the fact that it does not answer some pertinent questions which makes for the clarification of some facts, like: who the investors are? What the investors are looking for? And whether these investment flows are public or private.

6.0 CONCLUSION

From the interview and literature review one can say without mincing words that customary laws are still applicable in many parts of Cameroon and that they are very much Gender bias. That the statutory law does not directly express gender inequality but its implementation and practice perpetuate gender inequality among Cameroonians. Besides, there are some measures that are

being taken to curb down this, namely, education and sensitization of women to be more aware of their rights by some NGOs, FIDA, the church and the Ministry of women's empowerment.

However, this cannot change the laws, since the laws remain what they are except they are revised and strengthened. It would be useless to claim that anybody can own land yet the procedures to go by are expensive and cannot be afforded for by a quarters of the population. As such there is a necessity to preach equality by considering people at all levels especially the rural women.

Since it is clear that there is no gender equality in land ownership in Cameroon, one can also conclude that there is a relationship of proportionality between women's right and food security. It is therefore wise to be more practical in giving women their rights to own land because this will give an assurance of household food security especially among the poor rural women. In order to achieve this government has to take food sovereignty measures; that is, to ensure that the available arable land can provide enough food for its people before going into land grabbing deals. This is because the World Bank in its report while indirectly or directly endorsing land grabbing based their thoughts on transparency, productivity and sound investment. The difficulty that continues to loom my mind is, if they do not in their own report openly state who the investors are, what the investors are looking for, and whether these investment flows are public or private, then will there ever be any transparency? Furthermore there is still a doubt whether if the laws are strengthen and there is transparency, there can be any assurance of food security, and the ills that accompany land grabbing in the so called developing world. Land grabbing to me is therefore an evil as it does not only deprive people of their farmlands but oftentimes of shelter and set them to die of starvation and hazards of health. It will definitely be disastrous to sell land in an era of climate change in which the available land left for the poor women may be less productive due to effects of climate change.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaires

1. Does the Cameroon statutory Law give equal right to men and women. Yes/no if yes is this being put in to practice?
2. Do the customary laws give women the right to own land and property?
3. Do you often find conflicts between customary and statutory law when ruling cases on women's land and property rights? Yes/No, if yes what is normally done?
4. Are women having the rights to inherit property?
5. Do you see any link between women's land right and food security?
6. What can you say about land grabbing in Cameroon?