

Stakeholders' Contributions to Rural Development in Mezam Division, Cameroon

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Authors FGN and CMW designed the study, performed the statistical analysis and wrote the manuscript. Author FGN collected relevant field data. Both authors read the draft and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Rural development is a continuous process facilitated by stakeholders who play complementary roles. In rural Mezam Division notwithstanding, there exists a dearth of information on the stakeholder categories, their spatial distribution and intervention domains in the rural development process. This paper examines the stakeholder categories, their spatial distribution within the various sub-divisions and specific domains of intervention in the rural development process in Mezam Division. Field surveys, focused group discussions, interviews and the administration of 260 questionnaires constituted the main primary data sources while a review of institutional, library and internet sources served as secondary source materials of data gathering for this research. The collected data was analysed using descriptive techniques. The results categorized the rural development stakeholders in Mezam Division into four; state institutions (16%), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) (49%), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (27%) and Cooperative Development Agencies (CDAs) (8%). These stakeholders are unevenly concentrated within the four sub-divisions in Mezam Division as follows; Santa (33%), Bafut (28%), Tubah (23%) and Bali (16%). The areas of intervention of the stakeholders include water supply schemes (39%), school construction (20%), agriculture (17%), road maintenance (8%), health (7%), erection of community halls and palaces (5%) and electricity supply schemes (4%). The paper concludes that the rural

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populations should be fully empowered and their local institutions like the rural councils be made totally autonomous. In this way, the rural councils could easily rally the rural people, raise funds, execute projects, coordinate the activities of other stakeholders and serve as the custodian of rural development.

Keywords: Stakeholders; contribution; rural development; Mezam Division; Cameroon.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| CBO | : Community Based Organisations; |
| NGO | : Non-Governmental Organisations; |
| CDA | : Co-operative Development Associations; |
| EU | : European Union; |
| MEDINO | : North West Development authority; |
| VDA | : Village Development Association; |
| CIG | : Common Initiative Group; |
| UNO | : United Nations Organisation; |
| AU | : African Union; |
| ILO | : International Labour Organisation; |
| PTA | : Parents Teachers Association; |
| ADB | : African Development Bank; |
| UNESCO | : United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; |
| WHO | : World Health Organisation; |
| BEAC | : Bank of Central African States; |
| USA | : United States of America; |
| SHUMAS | : Strategic Humanitarian Services; |
| HPI | : Heipher Project International; |
| NAF | : Neba Albert Foundation; |
| SDC | : Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; |
| BHLP | : Bamenda Highland Project; |
| SAILD | : Support Service to Grassroots Initiatives of Development; |
| AWICO | : Association of Women International Information and Coordination Office; |
| SIRDEP | : Rural Development and Environmental Protection; |
| IDF | : Integrated Development Fund; |
| ACDEP | : Association of Church-based Development; |
| HURCLED | : Human Rights Counseling and Education Centre; |
| ADF | : African Development Foundation; |
| NOWECA | : North West Craft Association; |
| GHAPE | : Grounded and Holistic Approach for People's Empowerment; |
| COMINSUD | : Community Initiative for Sustainable Development; |
| RD | : Rural Development; |
| SNV | : Netherlands Development Organisation; |
| AL | : Arab League; |
| ENEO | : Energy of Cameroon; |
| IFAD | : International Fund for Agricultural Development; |
| SSA | : Sub-Saharan Africa. |

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no universally acceptable definition of Rural Development (RD) as the term has different meaning to different people in dissimilar parts of the world. According to [1], RD is a "strategy aiming at the improvement of economic and social living conditions, focusing on a specific group of poor people in a rural area. It

assists the poorest group among the people living in rural areas to benefit from development".

According to [2], it is a subset of the broader term 'development' and connotes the overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people. In this sense, it is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept, and encompasses the

development of agriculture and allied activities; village and cottage industries; crafts, socio-economic infrastructure, community services and facilities and, above all, the human resources in rural areas. The author further conceptualised RD as a process, a phenomenon, a strategy and a discipline. As a process, RD implies the engagement of individuals, communities and nations in pursuit of their cherished goals over time. As a phenomenon, it is the end result of interactions between various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. As a strategy, it is designed to improve the economic and social well-being of a specific group of people, that is, the rural poor. As a discipline, it is multidisciplinary in nature, representing an intersection of agricultural, social, behavioural, engineering and management sciences.

Theoretically, [3] highlighted that RD seeks to alleviate poverty, mass utilization of resources, commercialization of agriculture, food security, creating opportunities, infrastructural development of rural community and modernization of overall society. Again, [4] further understood rural development in the context of the transformation of rural areas and the wider economy-rural transformation and structural transformation. Through this way, developments in urban and rural areas can be viewed together and be seen to be interconnected. According to the report, it is the process of improving the opportunities and well-being of rural people. It is also a process of change in the characteristics of rural societies. In addition to agricultural development, it involves human development and social and environment objectives, as opposed to just economic ones. Therefore, RD encompasses health, education and other social services. It also uses a multisector approach for promoting agriculture, extracting minerals, tourism, recreation and niche manufacturing.

The term relates not only to a sustained increase in the level of production and productivity of all rural dwellers, including farmers, and a sustained improvement in their well-being, manifested by increasing per capita income and standard of living, but also leads to a sustained physical, social, and economic improvement of rural communities [5]. Despite the myriad of meanings above, this study considers RD in line with [2] as 'a process leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of rural people, especially the poor' in studied communities.

In the 1990s, the RD agenda was characterised by two main themes; a strong emphasis on the environment and the protection of natural resources and a continued focus on macro policy, liberalisation, the role of government in relation to the private sector and the importance of effective public management (a particular concern of advocates of agriculture sector programmes). Thereafter, new ideas concerning RD began emerging due to limited success in eliminating rural poverty [6].

Chambers (1983) cited in [2] remarked that "RD is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of RD. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless".

The three basic elements of RD include basic necessities of life (people's needs), self-respect (dignity or honour) and freedom (political or ideological freedom, economic freedom and freedom from social servitude) [2]. Governments looking to advance the goal of sustainable rural development must also take an in-depth look at the existing land and energy price and subsidy policies that so directly impact the overall footprint of agriculture and other non-farm activities. This includes reviewing why so many well-meaning economic initiatives often fail to reach the poor and how they can be better designed to ensure that the benefits accrue to local communities and those most in need [7].

In view of the above, world leaders while agreeing on the ambitious development agenda that seek to end poverty and hunger by 2030, recognised the central role that RD plays [4]. As such, sustainable RD is vital to the economic, social and environmental viability of nations. It is essential for poverty eradication since global poverty is overwhelmingly rural. The manifestation of poverty goes beyond the urban-rural divide. It also has sub-regional and regional contexts. It is therefore critical, and there is great value to be gained, by coordinating rural development initiatives that contribute to sustainable livelihoods through efforts at the global, regional, national and local levels, as appropriate. Strategies to deal with rural development should take into consideration the remoteness and potentials in rural areas and provide targeted differentiated approaches [8].

Therefore, RD is fundamental to achieving the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as some 67% of the populations of low-income countries and 60% of lower-middle-income countries are rural. Rural areas contain most of the planet's natural capital, which is currently being depleted and degraded. Furthermore, about 80% of those below the poverty line live in rural areas, and about one-fifth of rural people live in extreme poverty—a rate that is four times higher than for the urban population. Nowadays, RD should be recognized and its attention urgently pushed to the centre stage of global sustainable development efforts as a result of the deep challenges of poverty and inequality existing in rural area, the current strategies of rural development are proving inadequate for protecting the health of the planet, the advent and spread of digital and other frontier technologies are changing the fundamentals of the present rural-urban divide and finally steady decline of the share of agriculture in the context of globalization RD should be considered central to a sustainable development process, instead of as an appendage of urban industrial development [7].

The progress of RD needs to be monitored systematically. The systematic monitoring of the progress of broad-based RD requires a core set of indicators to measure the multiple aspects of rural development. It also requires a composite indicator that policymakers and development practitioners can use to assess the performance of a country against its own goals or in relation to other countries within the same region or income group. Some of these measures include income poverty reduction (reduce incidence of rural poverty), Infrastructural provision such as roads, markets and communication services, human assets such as primary school enrollment and reduction in child mortality (below 5 years), empowerment and gender equity, and food security [9]. This monitoring is important because there were some 1.4 billion people in the world living in extreme poverty and 70% of these (about one billion people) live in the rural areas [10].

The global economy has experienced major structural shifts, with the emergence of stronger markets in middle-income economies, rising urbanization and demand for food, and several low-income developing countries registering the world's fastest growth rates. At the same time, climate change, erratic energy prices and complex and protracted conflicts have delivered

a variety of shocks. Several regions have seen large-scale population displacements within and across national borders, and the social and political upheavals linked to unemployment are deepening. Despite impressive reductions in poverty and undernourishment globally, that progress has been uneven, and economic inequality across the developed and developing world alike is increasing [4]. Between 1950 to 2005 for instance, the rural population of less developed countries increased from 1.4 billion to 3 billion [11]. This is also the case in the developing world where about 80% of the extreme poor and 76% of the moderate poor live in rural areas make their living from agriculture, as compared to only 44% of the non-poor [12]. Three billion people live in rural areas in developing countries who suffer from extreme poverty, child mortality and inadequate access to electricity and sanitation [13].

The people living in rural settings in Latin America, Asia and Africa do so with diverse forms of deprivation, which has far-reaching implications for initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, improving production and distribution of food and agricultural products, and achieving a better quality of life for all human beings [11]. While population change in the developing world is most evident in the growth of cities and towns, demographic changes are just as marked in rural areas. For decades, those interested in agricultural and rural development have taken as given that rural populations are growing, often rapidly; implying that agricultural output will have to grow even more rapidly, while pressure on natural resources mounts from an ever larger rural population. That pressure may be relieved by migration from country to town, but this is commonly thought to lead to overly-rapid urbanisation marked by the profusion of slums [14]. India for example, is a predominantly rural country with two third population and 70% workforce residing in rural areas. The rural economy of India constitutes 46% of national income. Agriculture (mainly in rural areas) is an important sector of the Indian economy as it contributes about 17% to the total GDP of India and provides employment to over 60% of the population. Some 60.41% of total work force in rural areas in India draw their livelihood from agriculture and allied sectors and poverty mostly persists here (27.1 % in 1999-2000) [15]. Here, one of the strategies used to reduce rural poverty is integrated rural development program and targeted employment generation schemes. The most important of these are the National Rural

Employment Development Program, the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program, the Food-for-Work Program and the Drought-Prone Area Program [9]. In Cambodia also, some of the key Government policies to promote rural development and rural employment are the Agriculture Development Plan; irrigation system development and management; the Rice Policy; and economic land concessions [16]. In Nepal, rural development is a complex phenomenon involving an interaction of economic, social, political and cultural factors linked to infrastructural development, commercialization of agriculture, proper utilization and mobilization of resources, food security, creating opportunities, inclusive social development in the rural community and modernization of overall society [3].

While it is imperative for nations to achieve RD, the process is often confronted with challenges. For instance, [3] found that achievements of RD efforts in Nepal are not satisfactory because of imposed development, unstable political situation, absence of people's participation, lack of research and political commitment. In Cambodia, [16] found that the opening of borders for international migration constrained agricultural and rural development. The increasing number of Cambodians migrating abroad, including working on farms in Thailand, intensified the labour shortage and push up agricultural wages at home. Higher wages in agriculture also exerted pressure on wages in non-agricultural sectors that halted the industrialization process of Cambodia prematurely.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in particular faces many rural development challenges. Its demographic transition has come late and the sub-continent has the highest fertility rate in the world. The process of structural transformation (including rural development) in SSA is also still in the early stages with agriculture being the predominant livelihood activity [13]. In 2020, some 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) had no access to energy services, most of them living in rural areas [17]. This is the case of Cameroon where the above issues constitute challenges in the process of achieving RD by the relevant stakeholders.

The government of Cameroon is conscious of the important socio-economic role of the rural areas and the need to improve on the conditions of the rural dwellers. Since independence, it has

pursued a rural development policy through heavily subsidized agricultural projects in production and marketing, supporting and advising other agricultural institutions and farmers in their areas of operation [18]. As such, the government has created development institutions of regional interest such as the Ombessa Development Authority, the Wum Area Development Authority, the North West Development Authority, the South West Development Authority and the Mount Mandara Integrated Development Authority through which rural development challenges can be resolved and their needs provided in a bottom up approach with the contributions of private, public and international organisation. Also of national interest are the Community Development Support Project and the National Community Driven Program. Significant changes for development in rural areas have been initiated by the efforts of these development institutions in Cameroon. They have multi-sectorial goals and have been a common feature of Cameroon's rural development endeavours. They operate in areas with development potentials, but which are inhibited by problems such as none, few or dilapidated socio-economic infrastructure, low technical endowment and support, remoteness and rural exodus. They also operate at the national, regional and divisional scales and in specific geographical settings [19].

In Mezam Division, several rural development stakeholders are present. However, these stakeholders face problems of uncoordinated activities, insufficient funding, poor infrastructures such as bad roads and state dominance in decision making in the rural development process. The respective areas of intervention of the various stakeholders in rural development are not well carved out leading to conflicts at times between stakeholders. The local population has not also been highly empowered to assist in the rural development process. Until today, the local population still lack the knowledge required to make correct decisions concerning the rural development of their area such as on which basic needs projects to execute, materials to use, where the project should be sited amongst others. From all the above, it is clear that rural development projects and actions in rural Mezam Division are currently unsustainable. This paper examines stakeholders' contributions to rural development in Mezam Division. Specifically, it categorises the rural development stakeholders, determine their spatial distribution within the

various sub-divisions and investigate their specific domains of intervention in rural Mezam Division.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Study Area

Mezam Division is one of the seven Divisions in the North West Region of Cameroon. It is located between Latitudes 5°40'N and 7°50'N of the equator and Longitudes 09°8'E and 11°51'E of Greenwich Meridians [20]. It covers a surface area of some 1,841.45km². Mezam Division is boarded to the North by Boyo Division, to the South by the West Region, to the East by Ngoketunjia Division and to the West by Momo Division. Mezam Division is made up of both urban and rural territories. Rural Mezam occupies the North and the Southern parts of the

Division and constitutes four sub-divisions, namely, Bafut, Bali, Santa and Tubah sub-divisions (Fig. 1).

The region is situated within the highland area of the North West Region of Cameroon. The four sub-divisions which constitute the study area have a combined population of over 498,000 inhabitants. Of this number, Santa sub-division has the largest population which stands at over 223,000 inhabitants, followed by Bafut and Bali sub-divisions with some 129,000 and 89,000 inhabitants respectively while Tubah is the least with some 68,000 inhabitants as of the 2015 projections [21-24]. Rural Mezam has an agrarian economy with over 80% of the population involved in either the cultivation of crops or the rearing of animals. The population of this area constitutes veritable potentials for rural development.

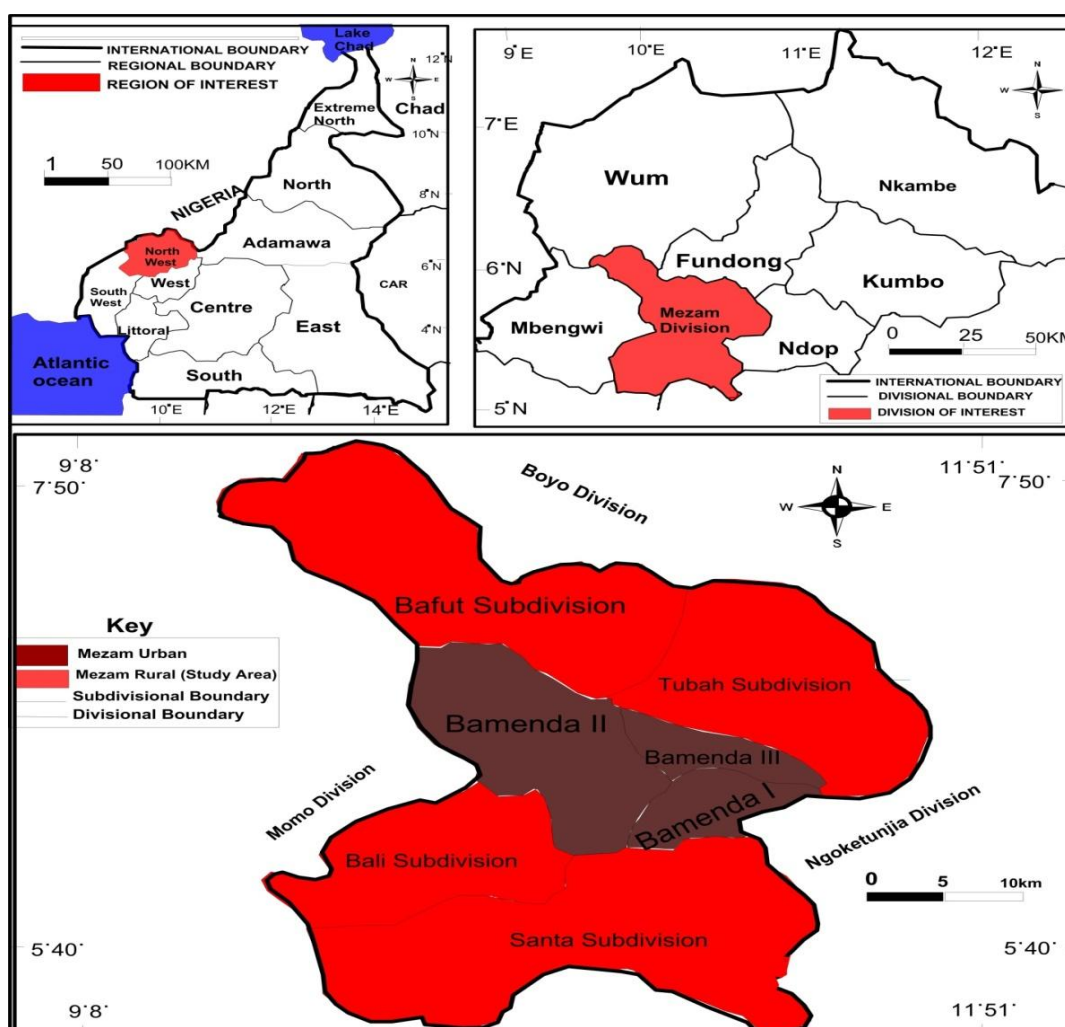


Fig. 1. Location of the study area

Sources: Adapted and modified from Ndenecho and AKum [20]

2.2 Data Collection

Pertinent data for this study was gotten from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data included field observations, questionnaire administration, interviews and focused group discussions. These primary data sources targeted individuals, institutions and groups who are directly involved and contribute to rural development in Mezam Division.

Field observations were ensured on the state of rural development infrastructures present in the sub-divisions. It also helped to identify the rural development stakeholders and their respectively domains of intervention in rural Mezam. This was done between the months of February 2018 and December 2019.

During the period of field observation, questionnaires were equally administered to the rural population in varying numbers based on population size within the four rural sub-divisions of Santa, Bafut, Bali and Tubah. The purposive sampling technique was adopted in administering the questionnaires. This sampling technique involved the deliberate selection of the rural population involved in the process of RD in Mezam. Following this technique, a total of two hundred and sixty questionnaires (260) were successfully administered and retrieved within the four sub-divisions that constitute the study area (Tables 1 and 2). The criterion that informed the number of questionnaires administered in the different sub-divisions was their respective population sizes.

From Table 1, we realise that Santa which is the most populous sub-division in rural Mezam received the largest proportion of questionnaires

(38.46%) while Tubah which is the least populated received the least proportion (15.39%). Table 2 further shows the gender disparity in the administration of the 260 questionnaires to the rural masses in the four sub-divisions combined.

From Table 2, the gender criterion that was used to classify the surveyed actors according to male and female showed that more males (65.8%) were interrogated than females (34.2%). These involved the youths, adults and aged within the population, educationist, health workers, counselors, teachers and political leaders. The 260 questionnaires targeted the rural populations because firstly they are the beneficiary groups and secondly they constitute the main stakeholders who have a pivotal role to play in their rural development process.

To complement questionnaire administration, personal interviews also targeted 50 rural development institutional stakeholders from schools, hospitals, churches, sub-divisional delegations of government ministries in Mezam, municipal council authorities, Village Development Associations (VDAs), Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), all involved in the rural development in one or more sub-divisions (Table 3). Of the targeted 50 personal interviews, 31 were successfully conducted while 19 failed as the interviewees did not respect the programmed schedule with the interviewers because they were absent at the time of the interview. The aim of the personal interview was to determine the specific contribution of the respective stakeholders to RD and also their development sectors of intervention.

Table 1. Questionnaire administration within the four sub-divisions

| S/N | Sub-divisions | 2015 population | No of questionnaire administered | % of total |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Santa | 223,000 | 100 | 38.46 |
| 2 | Bafut | 129,000 | 70 | 26.92 |
| 2 | Bali | 89,000 | 50 | 19.23 |
| 4 | Tubah | 68,000 | 40 | 15.39 |
| Total | | 498,000 | 260 | 100 |

Table 2. Gender disparity in questionnaires administration to the rural population of Mezam

| Actors | Men | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Male | 171 | 65,8 |
| Female | 89 | 34.2 |
| Total | 260 | 100 |

Table 3. Personal interview with institutional actors in rural Mezam

| Actors | VDAs | NGOs | Administrative authorities | School heads | Health center heads | Church heads | Others | Total |
|-------------|------|------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|--------|-----------|
| Targeted | 11 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 50 |
| Interviewed | 8 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 31 |
| Absent | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 19 |

These categories of actors in Table 3 were targeted for personal interview because they are institutions involved with rural development activities in their various sectors (schools, health centres, churches, road maintenance and electricity and pipe borne water supply). To complement the personal interviews, three focused group discussions were held constituting 8 members in each group with livestock breeders association in Bafut, food crop producers association in Santa and one female ‘njanji’ group in Tubah. The essence was to obtain information on the rural development projects that they have participated in and/or are ongoing as Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in their area.

Secondary sources of information were obtained from libraries, institutional and internet sources. These included published and unpublished works. The libraries of the Universities of Buea and Bamenda were consulted from where text books and journals were read. The ideas obtained or gotten were presented in the introduction. Also, archive of institutions such as Bafut, Santa, Tubah and Bali Rural Councils, NGOs, CBOs and CDAs were accessed from where end of year and other reports were reviewed. From these sources, plates were obtained showing community labour initiatives, road development initiatives and donations of classroom by some of these institutions to the local population. Research papers or publications from institutions like the World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), North West Development authority (MIDENO) and the Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS) were also used in the study.

2.3 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data gathered from both primary and secondary sources were analysed using qualitative techniques and presented by help of tables, percentages, charts, histograms and plates for easy appraisal of the results.

3. RESULTS ANS DISCUSSION

Findings for this paper are presented on stakeholder typology in rural development and the contributions of specific stakeholders in the rural development process in Mezam Division.

3.1 Stakeholders of Rural Development in Mezam Division

In Mezam Division, partnership in rural development is a widely used development approach facilitated by a multitude of stakeholders involved in the rural development process. These stakeholders have been categorised into four groups for simplicity and easy understanding. These categorised include CBOs, NGOs, state institutions and Development Cooperation Agencies (DCAs) like the United Nations Organisation (UNO), European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU). The CBOs include Village Development Associations (VDA), cooperatives, CIGs and PTAs. NGOs on the other hand constitute civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations both national and international. The state institutions include rural councils and the sub-divisional delegations of government ministries in rural Mezam while the development cooperation agencies include international organisations (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 presents the stakeholder categories involved in the rural development process in Mezam Division. Four categories of stakeholders are evident as found in the figure, namely, CBOs, NGOs, state institutions and DCAs.

The spatial distribution of stakeholders in rural Mezam is unequal. Findings revealed that the Santa municipality has the highest number of stakeholders given that the municipality has ten villages with different VDAs, traditional councils, CIGs and Parent-Teachers Association (PTAs). This is followed by Bafut, Tubah and Bali respectively due to their comparatively small number of villages and small surface area that they occupy (Fig. 3).

Results equally show spatial variation in the degree of involvement or contribution by the various stakeholders in the rural development process in Mezam Division (Fig. 4).

Mezam of up to 49%. This is closely followed by the NGOs, state institutions and CDAs with 27%, 16% and 8% respectively. Of the 49% of CBOs, Santa and Bafut sub-divisions host the greatest numbers. This follows that they receive more contributions in terms of rural development projects than Bali and Tubah sub-divisions.

Fig. 4 reveals that the CBOs make the greatest contribution to the rural development process in

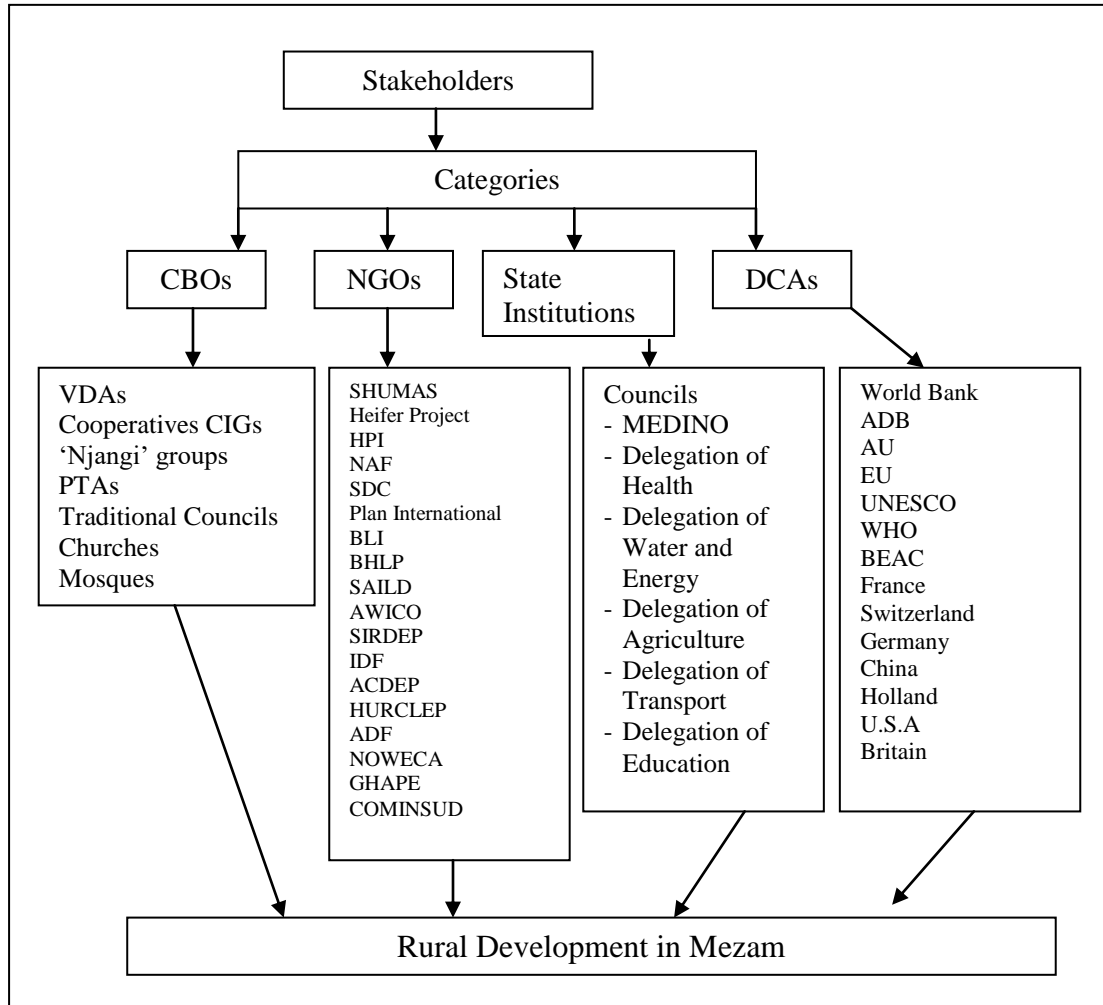


Fig. 2. Stakeholders' categories in rural Mezam

Source: Field Work (2019)

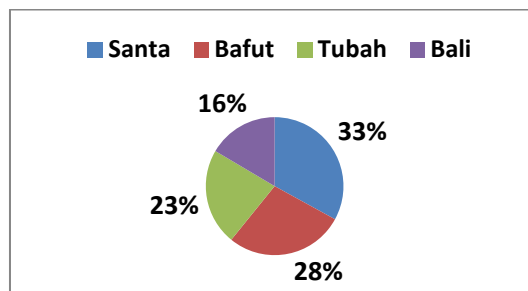


Fig. 3. Spatial distribution of rural development stakeholders in Mezam Division

Source: Field Work (2019)

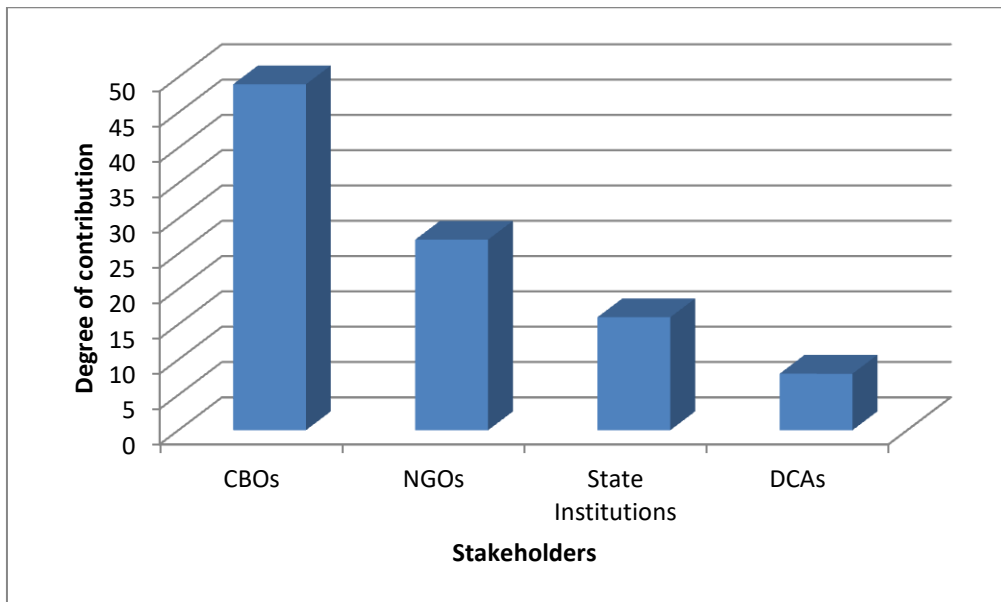


Fig. 4. Spatial variation in the degree of contribution by stakeholders in the rural development process in Mezam Division

Source: Field Work (2019)

Regarding their domains of intervention, the stakeholders intervene in diverse domains in rural areas in Mezam Division where there is little funding available for development. Together, they have been involved in the construction of schools, health facilities, water supply schemes, road maintenance, agricultural development, community halls and palace headed by

administrative authorities and development of electricity supply projects (Fig. 5). The rural population on their part has created community based organisations and elects their representatives to channel their development needs and challenges to relevant higher authorities and partners in rural development for solutions to be provided.

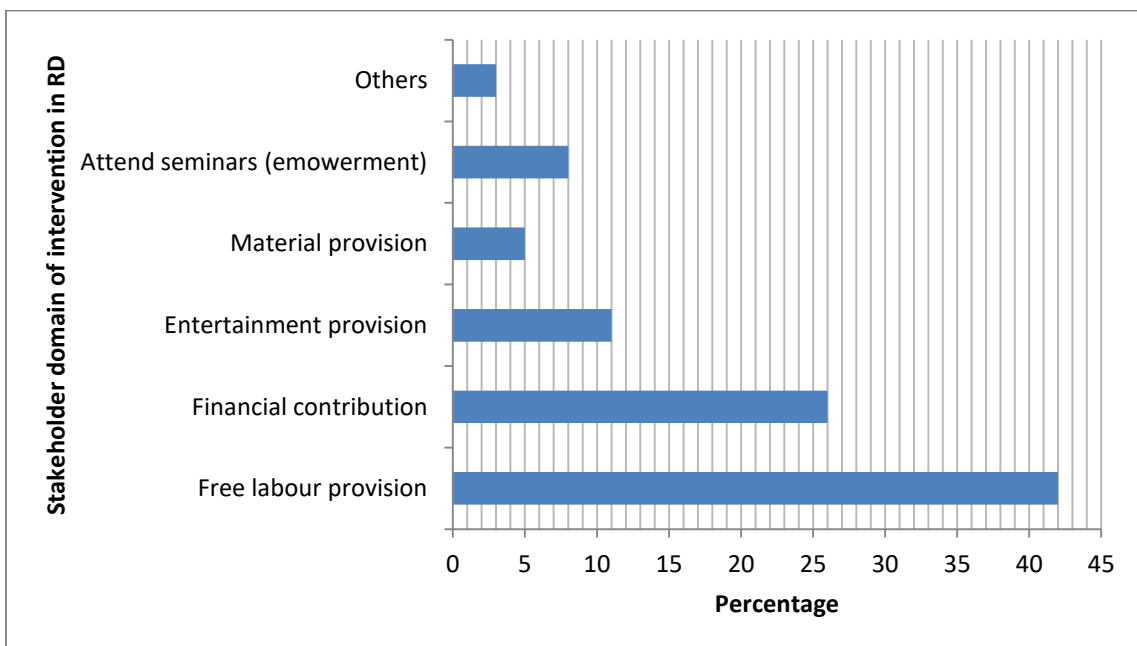


Fig. 5. Domain of intervention by stakeholders in RD in Mezam Division

Source: Field Work (2019)

Fig. 5 reveals that of the stakeholder domain of interventions sectors, water supply is the priority sector of intervention represented by over 39.1% of all the contributions. This is closely followed by schools construction (19.1%), agricultural development in terms of intensification and modernization (16%) and road maintenance (10%). Potable water is being provided through pipes and boreholes. Small water tanks of between 10-30m³ are constructed to provide water to some rural households by the stakeholders. Most of these water schemes however have suffered from breakdown without repairs. With rapid population growth in the area, more than 40% of the rural masses still lack access to potable water. The least intervention sector by stakeholders is in the domain of electricity supply represented by only 3.8% of the total. This explains why the rural masses still suffer from epileptic nature of electricity supply characterised by frequent power cuts from the energy utilization company-Energy of Cameroon (ENEO).

Though the CBOs remain the most active RD stakeholder in rural Mezam, state institutions are the most influential since they have the authority over other stakeholders and determine the nature of rural development to be pursued in Mezam Division. The specific

contribution to RD of the different stakeholder categories in Mezam Division is presented in the following section.

3.2 Stakeholders Contributions to Rural Development in Mezam Division

The respective contributions of CBOs, NGOs, state institutions and DCAs to RD in Mezam Division are presented below.

3.2.1 Contributions of CBOs to rural development in Mezam

The populations of the different villages have organised themselves into CBOs to facilitate the collections of fund and rallying their rural populations to be actively involved in their rural development processes. The CBOs constitute major stakeholders in the development of their villages. The CBOs initiate development projects in the different villages. In rural Mezam, CBOs (traditional councils, VDAs, PTAs, CIG, 'njangi' groups and co-operative societies) contribute to rural development by providing free labour, building materials, financial contributions, entertainment and attending training seminars to acquire more knowledge on how to rally more people as well as manage rural development projects (Fig. 6).

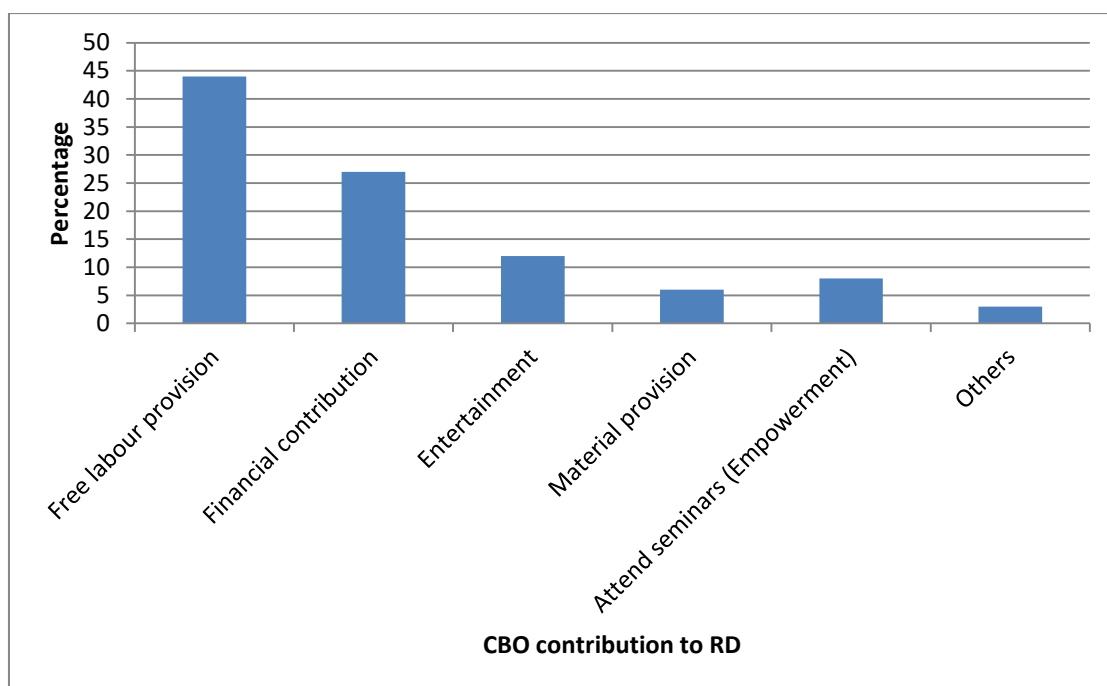


Fig. 6. CBOs contribution to RD in Mezam Division

Source: Field Work (2019)

Table 4. Some CBOs and their contributions to rural development in Mezam Division

| CBOs | Municipalities | | | | Projects in rural Mezam | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| | Santa | Bafut | Tubah | Bali | Classrooms | Health centres | Water supply | Farm tools | Electricity Supply projects |
| Traditional councils | 10 | 1 | 4 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Churches (Denomination) | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 272 | 14 | 30taps | 14 | 9 |
| PTAs | 139 | 127 | 52 | 63 | 682 | -- | 124taps | — | 10 |
| Cooperatives | 14 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 8 | -- | 18taps | 269 | 6 |
| CIGs | 25 | 21 | 14 | 15 | --- | --- | --- | 831 | --- |
| VDAs | 10 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 141 | 18 | 674taps | 456 | 26 |

Compiled from PTAs, CIGs, VDAs and other CBO reports (2019)

Table 5. Development sectors of state institutions in rural Mezam Division

| State institutions | Contributions to rural development in Mezam Division | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--|
| | Agriculture | Transport | Seminar organisation | Classrooms construction | Health centres | Water supply |
| Municipal councils | 356 tools provided | 12 bridges 26 culverts 14 km roads | 7 | 18 | 24beds | 267 taps |
| MEDINO | 223 | 14 bridges 13 culverts 46 km roads | 9 | 13 | 2 centres 12beds | 4 water scheme |
| Delegation of health | — | — | 10 | — | 8centres | 12 taps |
| Delegation of education | — | — | 8 | 382 | — | 18 taps |
| Delegation of water and energy | — | — | 2 | — | — | 2 feasibility studies |
| Delegation of transport | — | — | 3 | 14km road rehabilitated | — | — |
| Delegation of agriculture | 867 tools | 9km road | 9 | — | — | Two water schemes, 14 taps, 3boreholes |

Source: Compiled from various regional sub-delegations of ministries and council reports (2019)

Fig. 6 shows the various areas of CBOs contribute in rural development in Mezam Division. From the figure, CBOs highly contribute in the domain of free labour contribution for development purposes (44%). This is closely followed by financial contribution from youths (1,000-2,000FCFA), men (1,500-5,000FCFA), women (1,000-3,000FCFA) and volunteers (10,000FCFA+) annually (27%).

The traditional councils of villages for example are more involved in rural administration while the churches are involved in the religious, health and educational domains. The PTAs are more involved in the development of the educational, water and energy supply sectors targeting schools in most cases. The cooperatives and CIGs are more involved in agricultural development activities (Table 4).

Table 4 reveals that CBOs have contributed enormously to rural development in the different villages in Mezam Division. This can be seen in the domains of health, education, farm tools provision and water and electricity supply. Plate 1 shows a CBO leading in provision of labour in the laying of water pipeline in Manka'a village, Bafut sub-division.

Findings further revealed that water supply is purely a community based initiative given the fact that the national water corporation 'CAMWATER' does not serve rural municipalities in Mezam. The VDAs are making efforts to provide potable water to the population but the constructed reservoirs are very small in sizes between 10-

30m³ and found only in a few fortunate villages in the municipality. In high altitude areas like Manka'a, streams and springs have been harnessed to run through pipes without reservoirs or treatment plants. These indigenous efforts have improved water supply in villages in rural Mezam. In the educational sector, the churches and PTAs provide the highest number of classrooms and other didactic materials. In the health sector, the churches dominate in the construction of health centres and hospitals. The PTAs dominate other CBOs in the execution of water and energy supply projects while the cooperatives dominate in the provision of farm tools and other inputs to boost agricultural development.

3.2.2 Contribution of state institutions in the rural development process in Mezam Division

The government of Cameroon has pursued rural development by creating development institutions at regional and sub-regional level such as MEDINO and rural councils. The state institutions have been set up to also coordinate the expertise knowledge and the activities of multi-disciplinary teams of technicians, engineers, agronomists, economists, rural sociologists, geographers, soil scientists and doctors to boost regional and rural development. Results show that the contribution by state institutions to RD in Mezam Division is not the same as some are more active than others in the process (Fig. 7).



Plate 1. CBO led community labour in the laying of water pipeline in Manka'a, Bafut municipality in 2012

Source: Bafut VDA report [21]

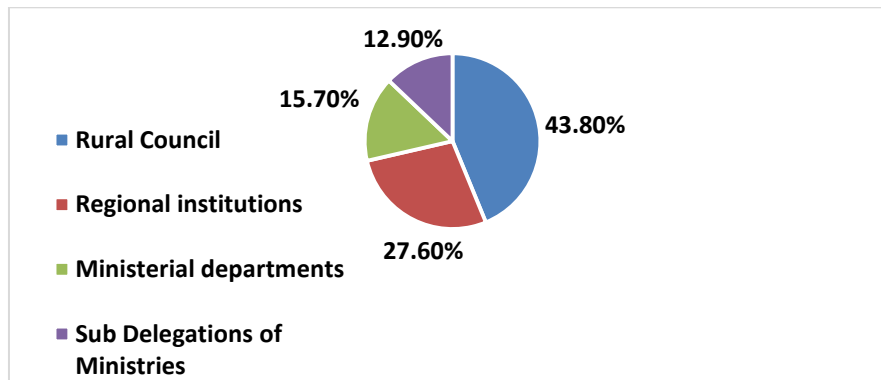


Fig. 7. Extend of contribution of state institutions in RD in Mezam Division

Source: Field Work (2019)

From Fig. 7, we observe that the rural councils in Mezam are the most active government institutions in the rural development process in rural Mezam. However, their activities limited solely to their various municipalities as one council cannot encroach into another council area. MEDINO which is a regional development institution as well as sub-divisional delegations of ministries such as Agriculture and Rural Development also carry out development activities in the whole of rural Mezam. Again, state institutions equally contribute to the different development sectors (Table 5 and Plate 2).

From Plate 2, we realise that rural Mezam benefits from RD projects coming from state institutions. Besides roads, the area benefits from other rural development projects such as creation of permanent and temporary jobs, increased the empowerment of farmers and development of human resources of beneficiaries, promotion of small operators like day workers, artisans, farm workers, support to micro-enterprises and technical support to farmers by state institutions. The beneficiaries benefit from state assistance through the participation of associations and individuals in the implementation of community development.

3.2.3 NGO's contributions to rural development in Mezam Division

Some of the NGOs operating in Rural Mezam Division include Society for Initiatives in Rural Development and Environmental Protection (SIRDEP), Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD), Grounded and Holistic Approach for People's Empowerment (GHAPE), North West Craft Association (NOWECA), SNV, SAILD, Inades Formation,

Plan International, Heifer International and SHUMAS. These NGOs provide funding to CBOs and empower rural people as well as execute projects in the rural communities in Mezam with the participation of the populations. The NGOs involved in RD in Mezam Division and their domains of contribution is presented in Table 6 and Plate 3.

Table 6 and Plate 3 show that NGOs have been very active in the rural development process in Mezam Division in the domains of education, agricultural development, health care, transportation and water supply projects. However, the 'Anglophone crisis' currently on-going in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon which turned violent in 2017 has hindered NGO development activities in rural Mezam. This was particularly felt in the domain of rural empowerment through training seminars and other field-based activities as a result of insecurity experienced in the region via frequent gun shots, kidnapping of workers for ransom, ghost towns and lockdowns. This is further worsened by the Covid-19 global pandemic today.

3.2.4 Contributions of DCAs to rural development in Mezam Division

A number of projects have been financed by development cooperation agencies in rural Mezam. Development co-operation agencies active in the decentralisation and rural development domain in Cameroon are the United Nations and its related structures, the World Bank, International Labour Organisation (ILO), EU, Arab League (AL), African Development Bank (ADB), Bank of Central African States (BEAC), as well as friendly countries like Germany, France, Canada and the Dutch and

Swiss governments. The Grassfield I and II projects were some of the major projects sponsored by the ADB through the African Development Foundation (ADF) implemented by MEDINO and conducted in close collaboration with other on-going projects in rural Mezam Division. The development cooperation agencies sponsor state institutions, NGOs and CBOs involved in the rural development of Mezam. The state institutions, NGOs and CBOs then execute development projects. The contribution of

development co-operations to RD in Mezam Division is presented in Table 7.

Result in Table 7 reveals that CDAs have tremendously contributed to RD in Mezam Division via the provision of farm tools and processing machines, road grading, organisation of seminars, classroom and health centre construction as well as water supply provision to the rural population.



Plate 2. Stretch of road graded by MEDINO in Pinyin, Santa municipality
 Source: Field Work (2019)



Plate 3. Classrooms donated by SHUMAS to SAPACCO college, Babanki Tugoh, Tubah municipality in 2012
 Source: SHUMAS Annual Report [25]

Table 6. NGO's contributions to rural development in Mezam Division

| NGOs | Contributions to RD in Mezam Division | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | Agricultural development | Transport | Seminars organisation | Classroom construction | Health centres erection | Water supply provision |
| SHUMAS | 476 tools | 4 bridges 12 culverts | 6 | 18 | 26 beds | 27 taps 5 boreholes |
| SIRDEP | 613 tools | 10 culverts | 7 | 5 | 28 drinking pales 2 centres | Protected 8water catchments 2 water schemes |
| Plan International | – | – | 9 | – | 14 beds | 3 boreholes |
| NAF | – | – | 4 | 8 | – | 4 feasibility studies |
| SAILD | 12 processing machines | – | 10 | – | – | – |
| HURCLEP | – | – | 8 | – | – | – |
| Hiefer project | 421 piglets | – | 7 | – | – | 3 water schemes 2boreholes |

Source: Compiled from NGOs' annual reports (2019)

Table 7. Contributions of DCAs to rural development in Mezam Division

| DCAs | Contributions to rural development in Mezam Division | | | | | |
|------------|--|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Agriculture | Transport | Seminar organisation | Classroom construction | Health centres | Water supply |
| UNESCO | – | – | 6 | 8 | – | 4 boreholes |
| EU | 63tools | 15km graded road | 2 | 6 | 18 tables and chairs | 5 boreholes |
| AU | – | – | 2 | – | – | – |
| WHO | – | – | 6 | - | 16 beds 20 drinking pales | 6 boreholes |
| World Bank | 10 processing machines 546 farming tools | 20 km graded road | 9 | 14 | 3 centres 8 beds, 6thermometers | 3 water schemes 18taps |
| ADB | 592 farming tools | 46 km graded road | 82 | 11 | 4 weighing scales 2centres | 4 water schemes 28 taps |
| BEAC | - | | 6 | - | - | - |

Source: Compiled from state delegations, NGOs and beneficiary groups reports (2019)

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The contributions of four categories of stakeholders to rural development in Mezam Division have been very visible in the various development sectors like agriculture, water and energy, education, health and transport. These stakeholders play complementary roles in rural development in Mezam. The state in an effort to facilitate stakeholder contributions created Santa, Bafut, Bali and Tubah rural councils. However, these councils which are supposed to be at the pivot and serve as custodians of rural development are weakened and reduced to mere project recipients by state administrators. Rural development in Mezam is thus over-lapping, uncoordinated and fragmented in a 'top-bottom' rather than 'bottom-top' approach as prescribed by the decentralisation law which permits local participation in their development. The end result has been continues rural underdevelopment in Mezam Division with abandoned projects and regional inequalities observed. The rural Population as such continues to suffer from seasonal roads, insufficient supply of potable water and electricity, insufficient staff and classrooms and poorly staffed and equipped health centres. The study recommends that besides providing some physical infrastructure to the rural population, they should also be empowered by the state and NGOs through their CBOs. This can be done through education, training and massive sensitisation to be able to improve on their lives and their communities as they get more actively involve their community development. These will enhance good governance, gender equality, lobbying and advocacy for policy change. This should be backed by an independent legal system which can freely handle corrupt cases and regulate the contributions of stakeholder without state influence.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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