

**DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES AS
AGENTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE:
AN HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE
UPPER NUN VALLEY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(UNVDA) IN THE NDOP REGION OF CAMEROON,
1970–1995**

CANUTE A. NGWA

University of Buea, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

Ndop Region, the area of study, was more or less a rural backwater at the turn of the 1960s. It lacked basic social amenities, employment opportunities and vital economic structures. As a consequence, in 1970, the Cameroon Government after considerable thought established the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority, (UNVDA) to stir meaning development in the region. This was to be achieved through the development of the agricultural potentials of the region. Through agriculture, the UNVDA has influenced the lives of the people in the locale. The study isolates the social and economic changes consequent upon the establishment of the UNVDA for scrutiny. The research findings are that by 1995, the UNVDA had radically influenced the social-economic setting of Ndop. The worrying problem was, however, the appropriateness of its development paradigm.

Keywords: UNVDA, socio-economic change, Ndop region

INTRODUCTION

The centrality of rural development in the development process of Africa is no longer a matter of conjecture. A consistent approach to achieving this goal has, however, remained problematic. Consequently, development experts have been caught up in a morass of heuristics evident in the number of development models that have been adopted and jettisoned over the years. Cameroon, like most African States, has used parastatals as the principal agents of socio-economic development. The result has not been entirely a success story. On aggregate, Cameroon has registered a mixture of successes and failures.

In 1970, the government, in the wisdom of the era, established the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority (UNVDA) in the Ndop region of Cameroon. This Authority was widely expected to bring the benefits of modern agriculture to the local population as well as launch the region on the trajectory of sustained economic and social development. In consequence, since its

inception, the UNVDA has tried, albeit with severe difficulties, to accomplish its stated objectives which include the following: to introduce new crops and technology in the region; to provide basic ancillary infrastructure and, in general, try to raise the standard of living of the local populations. Some of these goals have been accomplished, some only partially and yet, a good deal abandoned for various reasons.

The cardinal interest of this paper is not to catalogue the successes and failures of the UNVDA but, rather, to assess the extent to which the UNVDA has influenced social and economic change in the Ndop Region within the time scope of our study.

Social and economic change refers to any change that occurs within the social and economic structures of a given society. Even though social change includes changes in the social, economic, political and religious spheres of life, this study, concentrates largely on the social and economic. Change could be exogenous or endogenous depending on where the change agent comes from. Bearing this in mind, it becomes apparent that changes introduced by the UNVDA were essentially exogenous. The attempt was mainly to improve on the indigenous situation. The extent to which these changes affected the people of Ndop will form the focus of the study.

Ndop Region consists of thirteen villages, viz: Bamunka, Babungo, Baba I, Babessi and Bangolan to the east, Bali Gashu and Bali Gansin to the West; Bamessing and Bamali on the gate way from Bamenda, and to the south, Balikumbat, Bafanji, Balikumbit and Bambalang situated near the River Nun. These thirteen villages are coterminous with the Ngoketunja Division of the North West Province of Cameroon. The region shares common boundaries with Kom in Boyo Division to the northwest, with Tubah Sub-Division to the west and with the River Nun and Bamboutus Division in the West Province to the South (UNVDA 1991: 4). The area of study covers a total of 1,151 sq. km and lies on an altitude of 1,100 metres above sea level (Hughes-Lartey 1994: 1).

1. INTRODUCTION OF NEW CROPS AND THEIR IMPACT

The decree creating the UNVDA allowed the corporation unrestricted latitude to experiment on a wide variety of crops suited for the Ndop ecological zone.¹ Following a period of experimentation,² the Corporation settled for the cultivation of rice and lately maize, soya beans and green beans. Of these four crops, rice has received more attention than the others. This is not only manifest

¹ The area covers a total of 1151 sqkm with an altitude of 1100 metres above sea level.

² The UNVDA used the first six years of its existence, 1970-1976, to experiment on the various varieties of rice suited for the Ndop ecological zone. The UNVDA used the first six years of its existence, 1970-1976, to experiment on the various varieties of rice suited for the Ndop ecological zone.

in the number of person engaged in cultivating the crop but, equally, in the total acreage of land allotted for its cultivation.

First, Ndop is endowed with ecological conditions favourable for the cultivation of rice. It has a relatively long rainy season and swampy soil both of which favour rice cultivation.

Second, the second Five-Year Development Plan of 1966–1971 on which the establishment of the UNVDA had been based had as one of the main planks, the desire to boost the production of rice. The plan had set the national target for rice production at 34,000 tons per annum (Ndongko 1977: 89)

Basically, some of the appeal of the crops adopted by UNVDA was predicated on their dual roles as subsistence and cash crops. John Tosh (1980: 89) has stressed the overwhelming predilection of African farmers for crops which can be held back for domestic consumption in times of bad harvest, that is to say, crops which yield income for farmers and also act as famine reserve. A careful examination of the four crops would show that they fit into Tosh's paradigm.

Of the several crops introduced to the Ndop ecological zone, rice has had the most profound impact on the people and the economy. This is no frivolous assertion. The unwavering attention paid to the cultivation of rice, the vast expanses of land allotted to its cultivation, its ubiquity in the region and the proportion of the population engaged in its cultivation are all indices of its importance. The current study will limit its inquire on the impact of rice in the Ndop region between 1970 to 1995.

Table 1. The expansion of rice fields in Ndop.

| Year | Area cultivated in Hectares |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 70/71 | 33 |
| 71/72 | 26 |
| 72/73 | 23 |
| 73/74 | 123 |
| 74/75 | 632 |
| 75/76 | 800 |
| 76/77 | 941 |
| 77/78 | 824 |
| 78/79 | 869 |
| 79/80 | 774 |
| 80/81 | 894 |
| 81/82 | 1,273 |
| 82/83 | 1,231 |

| | |
|-------|-------|
| 83/84 | 1,518 |
| 84/85 | 1,753 |
| 85/86 | 2,178 |
| 86/87 | 2,058 |
| 87/88 | 1,612 |
| 88/89 | 1,087 |
| 89/90 | 1,243 |
| 90/91 | 1,215 |
| 91/92 | 1,299 |
| 92/93 | 1,247 |
| 93/94 | 1,245 |
| 94/95 | 1,246 |

Source: Collated from UNVDA Annual Reports between 1970–75.

Even though data on the UNVDA in the period preceding 1977 is manifestly uneven and patchy, the post-1977 period has fairly accurate data. From such data it is instructive that between 1977 and 1995, the UNVDA invested an approximated CFA 3.4 billion into the Ndop economy through payments to farmers for their paddy rice.³ On average, therefore, farmers received approximately CFA 188 million per annum. Muenyi Mathias, former mayor of Ndop Rural Council, recollects vividly that at the initial stages of the project, rice money gave farmers enormous leverage in social circles. Money accruing from the UNVDA was called “hot money” because of the tremendous and dramatic impact it had in transforming the status of the people who earned it (Muenyi 1996).

Perhaps, one of the striking features of rice wealth in Ndop is that it provided the initial capital for people to start other businesses (Tamanjong, Vasongi, Ndifon, Njoya & Burowa 1996). Money derived from rice was injected into projects like the establishment of provision stores and liquor/beer parlours. In fact, the major shops in the Ndop region today are owned by veteran rice farmers. While some farmers used their extra earnings derived from rice to diversify their investments, others saw it as an escape route from the laborious rice cultivation. Therefore, while the former oscillated between their stores and their farms, the latter abandoned the enterprise altogether. A direct consequence of these injections into the Ndop economy was the establishment of a credit union in 1981 to enable people save their earnings (Muenyi 1996).

³ This figure represents the total sum of money UNVDA paid to farmers between 1977 and 1995.

Between 1970 and 1995, social life in Ndop had improved by leaps and bounds. This is particularly evident in the area of better housing. Bomuva Bernard (1996), former Deputy Mayor of Ndop Rural Council (NRC) was apt to observe that there had been a marked shift in the architectural designs of houses within the region. The population has shifted from the construction of single – room styled structures to constructing very comfortable self-contained apartments (Beucheh 1996). Muenyi (1996) puts it clearly, “for every five houses you see in Ndop, three are built by either UNVDA workers or by rice farmers”.

On his part, Fon Njoya (1996), traditional ruler of Bamunka, remarked that the once prevalent thatched roofs in Ndop have almost disappeared giving way to corrugated iron roofing sheets. He recalls that in the past there were several fire incidents which razed down entire quarters because of the highly inflammable nature of thatched roofs. Farmers have confirmed collectively and individually the positive impact of rice money in the construction of their houses (Forbah, Tata & Lema 1996). Pa Bonjoh (1996) has stressed that the first ambition of every rice farmer is to construct a personal house. In fact, within the farmers’ circle, the number of houses one owns is taken as a pointer to how successful a person is in the profession. The researcher also observed that most of the community halls in Ndop were built with contributions from rice farmers. Mallam Usman Ndibelleh (1996) has attested to this fact. He stated that the Banda Hall in Bangolan, like others in the region, was constructed with money from rice. In the case of Bangolan, every male rice farmer contributed CFA 1000, while their female counterparts paid CFA 500. Farmers have also pointed out that they were required from time to time to make contributions towards the maintenance of the palace of the fon of Bangolan.

Another contributory factor is the positive role rice money has played in the education of children in Ndop (Ahmadu, Maufor & Muh 1996). Most farmers take great pride in sponsoring their children in good schools. While it is evident that rice cultivation, for some, is quite lucrative and that children are usually drafted into the industry during holidays, most parents would not want their children to become full-time farmers. To them, it is demeaning when compared to white-collar jobs. In fact, it is a common practice among farmers to challenge their colleagues on the basis of the number of their children they sponsor in school. Albert Ndi (1996) told the researcher that with money from rice, his father was able to sponsor four of them in the University. By 1995, there were approximately 83 primary and post primary educational institutions in the entire region.⁴

In the areas of health, farmers have pointed to the fact that they are able to take proper care of their medical needs. They are able to pay their bills with relative ease; they are able to take even minor illness to the hospitals and their wives, for the most part, deliver in the maternities. There is, therefore, an

⁴ This information was gathered by the author from the Divisional Delegation for Education, Ngoketunjia Division during his field trip.

evident preference on the part of the local farmer for orthodox medicine (Ngienda, Ntohkom, Ngah, Cheh & Seufon 1996). However, Dr. Fonyam (1996), former Medical Director of the Divisional Hospital in Ndop, is less categorical on the matter in the absence of hard data, especially, for the pre-UNVDA period. He noted that the prevalent diseases in Ndop are malaria, schistosomiasis, hook worm, hynia and rheumatism. These illnesses are difficult to be treated traditionally hence, the preference for orthodox medicine. The incidence of malaria, the former medical director stressed, is highest in children between 0 – 14 years, while hynia is common among rice farmers.

All in all, farmers have attested to a more enhanced ability to obtain modern medical care.⁵ They also attested to the positive impact this has had on their efficiency as farmers on the fields. It is common knowledge that a severe malaria attack, for example, may get a farmer off his farm for a precious length of time. Because rice cultivation is intensive and arduous labour, a rice farmer has to be in very good health to be productive.

For all practical purposes, the introduction of new crops, such as potatoes, Soya beans and rice has had a marked influence on the dietary habits of the people of Ndop. Apart from extending the variety of food stuffs available to the people of Ndop, the introduction of these crops, especially, rice and Irish potatoes have helped in breaking the myth surrounding crops especially as they were considered as the Whiteman's preserve. Reminiscences are today told of how rice and Irish potatoes were associated only with White missionaries in Ndop. Until its introduction in Ndop, it had been fashionable to eat rice only on special occasions. At the initial stages, therefore, the cultivation of rice accorded a special social status to the farmers involved in the enterprise (Ngwala, Botuh & Sobenjia 1996).

2. RURAL–URBAN MIGRATION

Studies on migration trends in developing Countries are usually beset with several difficulties. An obvious problem a research on Cameroon's migration trend encounter is the severe dearth or total absence of statistical data. Where some data are available, they are often based on poorly conducted censuses, and so, need to be treated with utmost caution, if not scepticism.

Rural–Urban migration remains a major nagging socio-economic malaise for Cameroon, as well as other developing countries. This phenomenon has been blamed for its baneful effects on meaningful development. Accordingly, the establishment of UNVDA in Ndop was expected to stem the tide of rural–urban drift in the Ndop region. It is, however, instructive to point out as Njoku (1990: 5) has done, that,

⁵ This is a consensus view from farmers in all the rice sectors. Notwithstanding the view in particularly strong among the farmers in Bamunka.

Rural–urban migration is not an undesirable phenomenon per se. In fact, most theories of economic development, based on historical experience of the industrialized nations of the West emphasize economic transformation from a rural agrarian base to one with industrial, urban – oriented focus. The process was made possible by the transfer of surplus rural labour to the growing industrial sector. But in most parts of Africa the magnitude of rural – urban drift has greatly exceeded the capacity of the urban – based industrial sector to absorb the immigrants.

Migration from our area of study has been mostly to the coastal plantations of the South West and Littoral Provinces. This pattern, as A. A. Dinga (1995: 103) has demonstrated, is of long standing. In fact, the Germans had imported the bulk of the labour for their coastal plantations from the North West Province. This trend resulted in a large concentration of North Westerners in the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) plantations. The large concentration of North Westerners is fondly referred to as the “Graffi Phenomenon” (Dinga 1995: 103). However, projections were that by 1985, the rural population would reduce drastically to about 62 per cent (SEDA 1976: 8). Similarly, it was estimated that the rural zones in the North West Province, Ndop inclusive, would maintain an estimated annual growth rate of 1.7 per cent (UNVDA 1987a: 8).

The creation to UNVDA was in part an attempt to stem the tide of rural–urban drift in Ndop in particular and the North West Province in general. This was to be achieved by creating job opportunities for the local population thereby, raising incomes of the region. Recent studies show that the per capita income of Ndop is today relatively higher than that of most rural areas in Cameroon. It is estimated that revenues in Ndop have increased by 80 per cent per head representing a plus 4 per cent per annum and that people’s earnings have increased three –fold (UNVDA 1987a: 8).

Ndop town, as well as some of the outlying villages like Balikumbat and Bamali, have developed into small townships. The establishment of several educational institutions, the presence of a growing civil service and the emergence of private business concerns have provided avenues for employment.

In the opinion of the Deputy Mayor of Ndop Rural Council, Ndop had developed into a pull-centre for the surrounding villages (Beucheh 1996). The influx of rice farmers and civil servants has resulted in an in-migration of several people into Ndop.

However, there is no denying the fact that Ndop, as at 1995, still experienced a trickle of out-migration to the Littoral, Centre and South West Provinces. Researchers on migratory patterns have propounded theories to explain the persistence of rural-urban migration even in the face of rising urban unemployment. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (1991: 17) has, for instance, propounded the push-pull theory which asserts that the unfavourable economic reality of the rural area pushes out the potential migrant, while the attractions of urban environment pulls him/her. According to Gerald M. Meier (1976: 206),

rural-urban migration stems from the combination and interaction of two variables, namely: “the urban – rural real income differential and the possibility of securing an urban job”. According to the argument, these two variables have determined the rate and magnitude of rural-urban migration in Tropical Africa. M. Todaro (cited in Arthur 1991: 67) avers that the decision to migrate is predicated on the individual’s cost-benefit calculations provoked by the relative stagnation of agricultural earnings in the rural sector against the index-linked wage structure of the urban worker.

The continuous trickle of the rural population out of our area of study can also be blamed on the lack of institutions of higher learning and, more so, on the inappropriateness of the educational curriculum (Arthur 1991: 67). Sandbrook (cited in Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 45; Elkan 1967: 581–589 for further details) has, for instance, stated that the more formal education a person in the rural area possesses, the more likely he or she will be to move to the cities.

Thus, while Ndop town and, to a lesser extent, Balikumbat and Babessi are magnetizing the peripheral villages, the other ten component villages in Ndop are largely still rural. Accordingly, some people still prefer to migrate out of the entire Ndop region to other more attractive parts of the country.

3. THE URBANIZATION OF NDOP

The phenomenon of urbanization is difficult to define. Some commentators confuse it with modernization (Sandbrook in cited Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 45). Coquery-Vidrovitch has pointed out that while the two phenomena are intricately interwoven, it is nonetheless rewarding to draw a line of distinction between them. Such distinction is necessary because since the intrusion of colonialism, the growth of urbanization has been subsumed in the process of modernization.

Urbanization, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1991a: 332) is “the process of investing with an urban character, to convert or transform into a city”. Modernization on the other hand means “to make or render modern, to give a modern character or appearance to something” (Oxford English Dictionary 1991b: 949). Professor Akin I. Mabogunje (1968: 23) defines urbanization simple as the “process whereby human beings congregate in relatively large numbers at a particular spot of the earth surface”. Sociologists and anthropologists view urbanization as a mere social process of both cultural concentration and diffusion (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 17–16).

Urbanologists have delineated ten facets of societal life which are affected in the process of urbanization. These include the following: economy, politics, transportation, communication, information, cultural patterns, education, religion and migratory patterns (Knight 1972: 4). Against these criteria, we shall examine the urbanization process in Ndop and its impact on our area of study.

Ndop, before the advent of UNVDA, has been described by Muenyi (1996) as a “dull village without lights, pipe borne water and anything to entertain the public”. The scenario by 1995 had, however, radically changed in many respects, especially, in such component villages of Ndop as Bamunka, Bamali, Babungo, Babessi, Balikumbat and Baba. It is, however, important to stress that the urbanization of Ndop should not be attributed to the creation of UNVDA alone. Administrative developments have played their role, namely, the raising of Ndop to a Sub-Division and lately to a full Division.⁶

The creation of UNVDA in Ndop attracted government’s presence to the region. From the status of a community of small insignificant villages, the region was raised to a full Division. The Division represents the third rung of the five-tier government structure operating in Cameroon. Ngoketunjia Division, which comprises the 13 villages of Ndop, is made up of three Sub-Divisions: Ndop Central, with headquarters in Ndop town; Balikumbat with capital in Balikumbat; and Babessi with capital in Babessi. Of all the component parts of Ngoketunjia Division, Ndop town (as distinct from Ndop region) is the hub of urbanization. This has been facilitated by the fact that Ndop town is the location of the headquarter of UNVDA as well as Ngoketunjia Division. The implication of creating a Division and three Sub-Divisions in our area of study are many. For instance, the various departments of the central government are represented in the region in the form of Divisional and Sub-Division Delegations. For example, there are Divisional and Sub Divisional Delegations of Agriculture, Health, Education and Environment to name but a few.

One distinctive feature of contemporary Cameroon is that administrative centres often rapidly metamorphose into urban centres. The advent of UNVDA and the emergence of administrative centres in Ndop region resulted in the influx of people into Ndop from neighbouring villages and ethnic groups. It is informative that the introduction of rice in Ndop, coupled with employment opportunities offered by UNVDA has attracted people from as far as Kom, Bambili, Oku and Banzo. In the same vein, the creation of new administrative structures meant the influx of civil servants from virtually every part of the country to man the new departments. It is instructive that the emergent urban centres were decidedly the key centres of socio-cultural intermingling among the people. In effect, they assisted in knitting together the diverse peoples. But, it is necessary that we guard against overstating the pull impact of UNVDA and the administrative structures. Apart from farmers and civil servants who benefited directly, other migrants found the South West, the Centre and the Littoral Provinces more attractive in terms of employment opportunities.

Reminiscences are recalled of how Ndop by 1970, was more or less a hamlet. In fact, Pascal Siewe (1996), former Commercial Director of UNVDA, says Ndop was simply a linear settlement with little or nothing to show for. From an inventory supplied by the Ndop rural Council,⁷ Ndop as at 1995 had the

⁶ Ndop town is the capital of the Ngoketunjia Division.

⁷ These statistics were supplied by Beutch, interview cited.

following structures: a modern daily market with 100 close up shops and 88 open shops provided with a large space for hawkers, tow filling stations, Total and Shell; three rice mills; three bookshops; a pharmacy; several drug stores; two computer centres, a bank, and a credit union. Ndop also enjoyed other facilities like pipe borne water, electricity and telephone services.

Judging from the above infrastructures, it is clear that Ndop witnessed major transformations in its economy. First, many traditional manufactures had been replaced by urban-industrial products like clothes, tool for production as well as agricultural implements, to mention but a few.

Similarly, the traditional architectural designs had virtually disappeared. This is evident in the roofing of houses and also in house furniture. Fon Njoya (1996) can still remember vividly that there were hardly any houses with corrugated iron sheets in Ndop. The vogue then was to construct with sun dried bricks. Siewe (1996) prides that he was the first to construct a self-contained house in Ndop town. Today, however, there are modern structures dotted all around Ndop, ranging from well-designed bungalows to sophisticated duplexes. Lucas Djoumessi (1996), Divisional Chief of service for Town Planning and Housing, however, laments that Ndop town is not well planned. He blames this fact on the Ndop Rural Council which he says had no competent town planner. Notwithstanding, Ndop town can boast of well-pave streets provided with streetlights, pipe-borne water and a functioning telephone system. While it is true that Ndop town has emerged as an urban centre, it is equally true that other villages in the region are not fortunate to have undergone the same transformation. Perhaps, the most striking feature of urbanization in Ndop is that as one moves away from the three administrative centres, namely, Ndop town, Babessi, and Balikumbat, and the outlying villages, the influence of urbanization diminishes.

The educational sector has equally expanded significantly. The region can boast of several primary schools, Teachers' Training Colleges and a Rural Artisan College.

In the area of transportation Ndop underwent major developments. Ndop is situated on the Bamenda 'ring road' which runs in a circular manner from Bamenda through Ndop, Bansa, Nkambe, Wum, Bafut and then back to Bamenda. The importance of an efficient road network in the urbanization of an area, and the larger society in general, cannot be over-emphasized. P.S. Villanueva (1966: 776) has pointed out that:

The tremendous effects of roads in the economy are fairly evident. Almost everything that one buys is moved once or several times by land transport. Roads have equally important social values. Roads accelerate acculturation and culture innovation. One might even say with some validity that roads are also highways of ideas.

Wilfred Owen (1966: 767–768) in his article "Transport, Technology and Economic Development" has examined a different dimension of the importance of transport to the society. He states that:

There is a definite relation between immobility and poverty. Countries with low standards of living are characteristically countries with poor transport facilities. The reason for this relationship is obvious. Transportation is an essential ingredient of almost everything man does to supply himself with the necessities of life... It follows that transportation can be the key factor in the success or failure of the entire development effort... While food, shelter, health, education and useful jobs are the ultimate goals, transport may be the catalyst essential to the realization of these objectives.

The central focus of UNVDA with respect to roads was first, to construct and maintain farm to market roads and, secondly, to maintain the Ndop portion of the Bamenda Ring Road. This was to facilitate the transportation of inputs to the farms as well as evacuate agricultural produce to other parts of the country. However, the farm to market roads have turned out to be the major arteries of communication within the region. It would be recalled that the former mayor of Ndop town described Ndop as a linear settlement. Today, however, Ndop is criss-crossed by paved streets and the component villages are linked up by fairly good roads.

Available sources suggest that from 1980 onward, UNVDA has been engaged in constructing and maintaining roads. They have been assisted by the Ndop Rural Council. In 1980, the UNVDA maintained the Ndop portion of the ring road by grading it and providing drainage facilities at the cost of CFA 1,800,000 (UNVDA 1980: 2). In 1983, UNVDA constructed three bridges providing vital links between lower Bamunka and Ndop town (UNVDA 1980: 2).

In 1984, the Corporation constructed 56.1 km of new roads, 6 bridges and 25 culverts (UNVDA 1984/85: 12). Between 1 July, 1986 and 31 December, 1986, the following structures were constructed: 6.8 km of roads between Babessi and Mambim, 5.5 km of access roads to Mufua water supply, 1.3 km of the Bamunka Fon's palace roads and 4.9 km of roads linking Hausa Quarter, Mbefelo and Munkwo (UNVDA 1986: 7-8).

In 1991, the Corporation constructed and maintained 25 km of roads, constructed 2 bridges and culverts. The following year, the Corporation maintained 53.5 km of roads and constructed 5 culverts. This effort provided vital links within the region (UNVDA 1991/92: 2).

During the 1994 session, UNVDA constructed 2 bridges and several culverts in the Monoun sector of Ndop. Meanwhile in 1995, the following roads were constructed: 5 km in Monoun, 12.4 km in Baba and 4 km in Bamessing. The following roads were equally maintained during 1995: 1 km in Monoun, 8.6 km in Bangolan, 8.1 km in Bamessing, 14.2 km in Baba and 39.4 km in Bamunka (UNVDA 1993/94: 4).

Once the principal roads within the region were constructed, vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles began to ply the length and breadth of the region on a regular basis. The obvious impact of these roads is the swift movement of goods

and people within the region and between the region and other places. Today, traders come from as far as the West Province to buy rice, beans and corn to sell to other provinces. Another impact of these roads is the emergence of cottage industries like carpentry workshops, tailoring shops, bicycle and shoe repairs as well as auto mechanic workshops.

4. SOCIAL LIFE

Since the inception of UNVDA, the quality of the life of the ordinary person in Ndop has improved considerably. This is not to say that every person and every community has been equally favoured. For instance, the urban centres like Ndop town, Babessi and Balikumbat are favoured with several opportunities and amenities vis-à-vis the outlying villages which have remained more or less a rural backwater.

Injections into the economy in the form of UNVDA's circulation capital and payment for farmers produce greatly improved the economic standing of farmers in particular and the Ndop economy in general. From UNVDA's estimates, the revenue of an average rice farmer has increased three-fold. Additionally the region's economy has experienced an annual growth rate of approximately 4 per cent.

Apart from improved housing and medical services, social life especially in Ndop the Divisional headquarters, has improved markedly. Perhaps the most striking feature in these locations is the overwhelming presence of beer and liquor parlours. These parlours are always richly stocked with assorted beer and palm and raffia wine. It is common sight to see people drinking after working hours, at times, well into the late hours of the night. These parlours are complemented by nightclubs, video clubs and hotels. Even though some commentators have emphasized the corrupting influence of all those outfits on children, on married life, on the culture of the people, on crime and delinquency etcetera, these places have, however, served as centres for socialization as people from diverse cultural backgrounds and walks of life congregate to relax.

With regard to health, Ndop has witnessed some improvement. Ndop has one Divisional Hospital and several health centres. These institutions have greatly improved the health situation of the local population and enhanced their productivity. UNVDA itself has also contributed immensely to the improvement of the health sector in Ndop. In 1982, UNVDA established a medical centre which became fully operational only in January 1984 (Tabey 1996). The centre caters only for the health needs of UNVDA workers and their dependents. In its early days, the centre provided free medical care to the staff of UNVDA and dependants. However, if a patient were referred to another hospital, the Corporation bore 80 per cent of the cost. The medical staff in the centre includes a medical doctor employed on contract basis to consult on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, two nurses and a laboratory attendant.

During the 1983/84 season, 407 patients were treated in the clinic at a total of CFA 3,188,196. A break down of the sum shows that CFA 1,185,627 was spent on drugs dispensed to patients while the sum of CFA 2,002,569 was reimbursed to employees (UNVDA 1984/85: 9). During 1986/87, an estimated 25,900 patients attended UNVDA clinic. A total of CFA 912,892 was spent on reimbursement to employees (UNVDA 1986: 4). In the next year, a total of 1,955 patients were treated. However, because of the financial crisis in which the Corporation had found itself, the supply of free drugs was suspended. The percentage of the medical bills of staff borne by the Corporation was reduced to 70 per cent (UNVDA 1987: 4).

1988/89 season witnessed drastic cuts in subsidies. Thenceforth, employees and their dependents could only consult free but paid fully for other services (UNVDA 1988/89: 4). It is, however, pertinent to point out that this scheme greatly alleviated the sufferings of the people and went a long way to enhancing their productivity.

UNVDA has also been instrumental to the electrification of such major towns as Ndop, Bamali and Babessi. In these communities, the local populations have taken advantage of the situation and established small enterprises like hulling and grinding mills, welding workshops, discotheques and tailoring workshops. By 1995, the National Water Corporation (SNEC) had established in Bamunka. There is another side to the general picture. Some 12 villages still depended on their village water projects. These projects are riddled with enormous problems which range from technical to financial.

In the area of administration, the people of Ndop are closer than ever to government. The upgrading of Ndop to a full Division and the establishment of three Sub-Divisions within the region brought government very close to the people. The people can now solve most of their administrative problems without necessarily referring to the central government. This has, therefore, obviated the need of taking minor matters to Bamenda the province headquarters and Yaounde the national capital.

5. FARMER-GRAZIER RELATIONS

Feasibility studies on any given project, if well conducted, should give a fair idea of the impact such as project would have on the people and the environment. Under such circumstances, decisions of planners would be predicated on the cost/benefit analysis of the studies. In another sense, feasibility studies would enable planners take rational decisions in order to mitigate some of the problems which the project might create. Unfortunately, however, the creation of UNVDA actually preceded feasibility studies on the project. This abnormality has had several backwash effects. One is, however, relevant to our study, namely, the farmer-grazier problem,

Professor E. N. Ngwa (1985: 168), in his extensive study of the problem in the N.W. Province of Cameroon has given useful insights into the intricacies of the problem. He, for instance, describes the farmer grazier problem as:

The continuous struggle for the use of one and the same piece of land between two sets of people: grazier and crop cultivators and among graziers themselves. In so doing there is trespassing by one of the groups in each other's preferred zone of activities. It is summarily the struggle to use one and the same piece of land by more than one group of people at the same time.

While the Northwest Province is known to be rife with farmer-grazier conflicts, Ndop appears to be the deuce of the conflicts. Before the construction of the Bamendjim dam, and the subsequent development of UNVDA rice fields, Ndop plain had a total pasturage of 30,000 hectares on which 50,000 cattle grazed. This has been drastically reduced to about 10,000 hectares by the ever-expanding lake of the Bamendjim dam (UNVDA 1987b: 7).

The reduced pasturage had set off a wave of transhumance, especially, during the dry season. It is more or less the tradition for the Bororos herdsmen to migrate to the rice swamps for 3 months in a year, between November and March in search of pasture. Ngwa (1985: 169) states that:

During such movements, most of the flocks are left unherded and there is often disregard for transhumance tracts to water points and dry season grazing areas. The consequences are trespassing into farmlands and crop destruction year in year out.

Farmers were unanimous in their complaint about the destructive effects of marauding cattle on their crops. Rice farmers are the hardest hit. Grazing cattle destroy the banks of canals, drainage systems and the walls of rice plots thereby disrupting the proper functioning of the system. As a consequence farmers spend a lot of time and money repairing these structures every year. More so, those of them who try to cultivate dry season crops end up having their crops destroyed by cattle. Attempts at hammering out an acceptable compromise between farmers and graziers have proven unfruitful. In the ensuing crisis, both parties have resorted to acrimonious quarrel and, in some cases, outright confrontations resulting in deaths and litigation. Between 1981 and 1984, 147 cases were taken to court. Of this number, the courts had treated 127 while 20 were still pending. Altogether, CFA 367,125 was paid as compensation of farmers (Ngwa 1985). Another direct consequence is that the number of cattle in Ndop dropped from 50,000 to 30,000.

Unfortunately, like their colonial predecessor the authorities concerned have remained reticent on this perennial problem. This attitude seems to be related to revenue the state derives from cattle tax. A lasting solution to the farmer-grazier problem remains to be found. The Southeast Asian solution could be instructive. Professor Ngwa has pointed out that in parts of that region cattle are integrated into rice production as a form of labour and also a source of manure. In this

circumstance, there is ample room for reciprocity between farmers and graziers. Besides, government can, as a matter of policy, improve available pasturage by planting grass and also find a way to start a programme of fodder storage to ameliorate the problem of scarcity of grass during the dry season. This would make possible intensive cattle rearing thereby reducing the transhumance of the Bororo herdsmen.

6. CONCLUSION

In creating the UNVDA, the Cameroon government was motivated inter alia, by the desire to stop rural exodus of youths to the urban centres, increase rural incomes, raise the standard of living of the rural population of Ndop and increase national rice production to meet the country's consumption level. To a large extent, by 1995, the UNVDA had succeeded in its mission. The worrying factor is, however, the choice of the development paradigm adopted by the UNVDA which provides little or no scope for local input. There was the apparent failure on the part of government to realize that a sounder and therefore, more sustained development process lies in developing the strength of Ndop and in mobilizing local resources, that is, applying the endogenous or bottom up approach to rural development. Without the active participation of the local population in the development process, UNVDA's activities in Ndop, in the year ahead, will end up in futility.

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About the author: Dr Canute A. Ngwa, previously of the Department of History, University of Nigeria, currently teaches economic history at the University of Buea, Cameroon. His research interests include aspects of African social and economic history in which he has published extensively in learned journals.