Article

Developing a Tri-Phase Model for Land Conflict Resolution in Some Conflict-Ridden Parts of The North West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract

The North West Region is witnessing unprecedented demographic pressure. The terrain is predominantly hilly with lofty peaks most of which are often perceived as barren landscapes. This therefore pushes the population to the few available relatively gentle sloping landscapes which are "promising". This pressure end increasing arable land scarcity has, in most cases, initiated land disputes (family, tribal or ;£', :^sr-grazier disputes). Indications of these disputes are the persistent inter-tribal conflicts which have rocked the landscape of the region over the years and have worked against peace, stability and development. This study makes use of empirical literature, field observations, focused group discussions with affected persons and the stratified random distribution of 75 questionnaires to areas frequently affected by this chaos so as to identify the nature and causative factors of land disputes, and evaluates the impact it has on the region. Furthermore, it examines the role of stakeholders of the North West Region in addressing these land disputes. A four-point Likert survey scale was adopted in the questionnaire design. The findings indicate that the overall effect of these conflicts (intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic) is further land scarcity and consequent degradation which has been precipitated by the fact that the predominantly highland areas are perceived as "barren landscapes". A tri-phase model for land conflict resolution for the North West Region was developed and it is hoped that the successful implementation of thismodel will promote and sustain lasting peace and security and reduce the incidence of human rights violation which often accompany the manifestations of conflicts in the region.

Key words: land conflict, conflict resolution, tri-phase model, North West Region.

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Introduction

Land constitutes one of the most important requisites for sustainable development (Narayanan and Hanjagi, 2009). Conflicts stand as an inhibiting factor to the process of well being and development and so, conflict resolution can be seen as an integral part of the function of community development. Land is a fixed factor of production whose quantity does not increase with increasing population. Land resource scarcity has become a widespread conflict trigger in most developing countries where land is the source of livelihood of about 60% of the population (Sadik, 1990, cited in Norman, 1991).
The problem of fluid boundaries which are often made and re-made, the conquerous and subjugative spirit of most tribes, the increasing human population and land scarcity has been the major factors behind the upsurge of violent inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. Intra-ethnic conflicts often arise due to the increasing individualization of agroforestry plots or home gardens (Ndenecho and Balgah, 2007) and the persistent encroachment of graziers into arable farm lands (Lambi and Ngwa, 2009). Homer Dixon (1999) and Ndenecho and Balgah (2007) all emphasize the fact that pressure on natural resources, especially land which is finite is a potential source of land degradation, land use intensification and fragmentation, marginalization of weaker segments of the population, and migration and conflicts which are very much evident in the North West Region.

A number of strategies have been adopted to resolve the numerous land conflicts, particularly between farmers and graziers (Ngwa et al, 2007). Some of these strategies include the introduction of a participatory approach to conflict resolution which recognizes the people' rights and responsibilities to manage their own affairs and amicably settle the disputes that break out, the conciliatory approach where dialogue prevails, and the confrontational approach, among others.

While the subject, farmer-grazier conflict has been belaboured in geographic and land management literature, it is important to mention that this phenomenon has rocked the North West Region for a long time. Besides the advancement of cattle grazing into arable farmlands on the one hand, there is also the mutual encroachment into grazing lands by arable farmers. In the quest for more grazing land especially at hollow frontiers (which provides a significant pull to livestock farmers), cattle often destroy crops along the routes through which they move. Such a situation often results in the destruction of crops. Here, the soil fertility tempts some farmers to encroach into "idle land". In another case, conflicts arise between land owners and those who rent the land for farming especially when the yields are consistently high for a number of years.

Conflicting claims over access to and ownership of land have led to inter-ethnic conflicts and disputes that have a bearing on agricultural performances. This aggravates the poverty situation of most communities in the North West Region (Amungwa, 2009). To make matters worse, attempts to resolve these land related conflicts have always followed a distinctly centralized top-down approach without due consideration to the historical and cultural systems and values of the indigenous communities involved.

Conflict as conceived by the Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP) relates to the pursuit of incompatible goals by different individuals or groups of people. It however, does not only mean that conflicts have a negative end because when well managed, conflicts can bring great benefits to the society; but when poorly managed, they can escalate into violence and destruction (Ndi, 2009). Whether a conflict becomes

a problem or an opportunity for peace and growth depends on decisions taken when it occurs. This study develops a tri-phase model that recognizes the causal factors of land conflicts and suggests ways of land conflict resolution in the North West Region of Cameroon.

The Problem and Conceptualisation

The search for sustainable peace and development in the well noted and renowned land conflicts-ridden North West Region of Cameroon remains a major challenge to the government because it can impair the attainment of Vision 2035 which aims at transforming Cameroon **into "AN EMERGING ECONOMY BY 2035"**. This is even more daunting given the fact that these conflicts seem to be going out of control and have tentacular phases and episodes which continually multiply and are increasingly becoming very difficult to handle.

Land conflicts in the North West Region has a long standing history and they are generally caused by a number of factors; they include, the conquest spirit of most communities, poor land demarcation and population increase, land degradation and the migration to hollow frontiers, among others. All these factors have given rise to a series of inter and intra-ethnic conflicts such as inter-tribal wars, farmer-grazier conflicts and farmer-farmers conflicts resulting sometimes in the loss of lives and the destruction of property, the disintegration of family cohesion and mass migration. The responses of the authorities have often ended at the level of the formation of crises committees which have seldom been able to put forth an effective framework for land conflict resolution in the region. This study seeks to present a conceptual model which elicits the connections between the causes and manifestations of land conflicts in the North West Region. As a way forward, it develops a tri-phase model for land conflict resolution which presents a blueprint for lasting peace in the region.

A suitable and applicable concept to this study is the Homer-Dixon's Model (1999). According to the model, environmental scarcity is defined as "scarcity of renewable resources, such as cropland, forests, and water and fish stocks." It can arise in a number of ways, from depletion or degradation, increased demand or unequal distribution (Homer-Dixon, 1999). At a first glance, the unequal distribution aspect may not seem obvious, but it is important because it involves horizontal inequalities, only with regards to the environment instead of economics. While a resource may be abundant in some areas, its scarcity in others can create a situation where groups are forced to compete over it. If the resource is significant enough and available only along the lines of the horizontal divisions, this can then be a source of increased tensions and potential violence. The link between environmental scarcity and conflict has been supported by many researchers, with many case studies having been published in support of the theory (Ndencho and Balgah, 2007; Lambi etal, 2008; Lambi and Ngwa, 2009).

The foremost proponent of this school of thought is Homer-Dixon, who originally started publishing his theory on the causal links back in 1991. Expanding on this, the theory posits that growing scarcity, especially over arable land and other natural resources, can potentially lead to violent conflicts, though indirectly. These environmental scarcity problems interact in a complex fashion with other social, political and economic forces within a society. The social, political, and economic factors interact with the instances of environmental scarcity to create five potential social effects which are not mutually exclusive, constrained agricultural activity, constrained economic activity, migration of affected people in search of better lives, greater segmentation within the society and the disruption of institutions, especially those pertaining to the state (Zaur, 2006).

These conflicts which manifest through fighting/clashes, loss of lives and the destruction of property, mass out-migration, disturbed peace and stability and reduced development are caused by a number of factors. They include, among others, the conquest spirit of most communities, poor land demarcation and population increase, land degradation, land tenure system and the migration to hollow frontiers. Cognisant of the land conflict drivers, the study develops a three-phase conflict resolution model (Figure 1) for solving inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts whose application could redress the perennial problem of land conflict resolution.

Phase one which lays the ground works for land conflict resolution (intra and inter-ethnic) highlights the need to acknowledge the necessity for peaceful co-existence by communities in the region. This step could be made practicable by sensitizing the population and, where necessary, the population should carry out peaceful demonstrations to call the village authorities to order. This will then precipitate a synergy among the conflicting families or individuals in the case of intra-ethnic conflicts, or the clashing villages (inter-ethnic conflicts). Such a synergy will help the parties to identify the root causes of their clashes.

Phase two relates to farmer-grazier conflicts which are the major causes of intra-ethnic conflicts. After laying the peaceful groundwork's for conflict resolution (Phase I), the farners and graziers could then opt for the amicable demarcation of the available land and the respect of such agreements. This should be done in the presence of both parties and other authorities of the area (Fons, D.Os., Mayors, Religious representatives etc). It should be followed by the granting of assistance (technical and financial) by the authorities to farmers and graziers to encourage the adoption of intensive and integrated farming which will limit their possibilities for clashes and counter clashes. The amicable demarcation of land implies that the tribal land management committee formed will set up a network to ensure that they are respected while defaulters should be severely dealt with. A recurrent activity at the tribal level should be the incessant sensitization on the need for mediation and conflict resolution to safeguard peace which is a necessary ingredient for their development. This could also be achieved through the organisation of concerts and demonstrations and the use of the different religious denominations as channels to disseminate this information. The success of maintaining peace at each village level will also guarantee the collective success of conflict resolution for the region.

Phase three which focuses on inter-ethnic land conflict resolution begins with the formation of an inter-ethnic conflict management committee where both conflicting tribes are equally represented. In addition, some neighbouring village representatives should be part of the committee. This will ensure the respect of the agreed boundaries by warring tribes and the forces of law and order should be part of such events to ensure that in the future scenario, the tribes at fault should be severely dealt with. On the other hand, peaceful neighbours should be encouraged to maintain such cordial relationships in order to avoid the multiplicity of inter-tribal conflicts. The control of population growth and the development of "barren" and hilly lands will enhance economic growth, reduce poverty and create a conducive atmosphere for land conflict resolution.

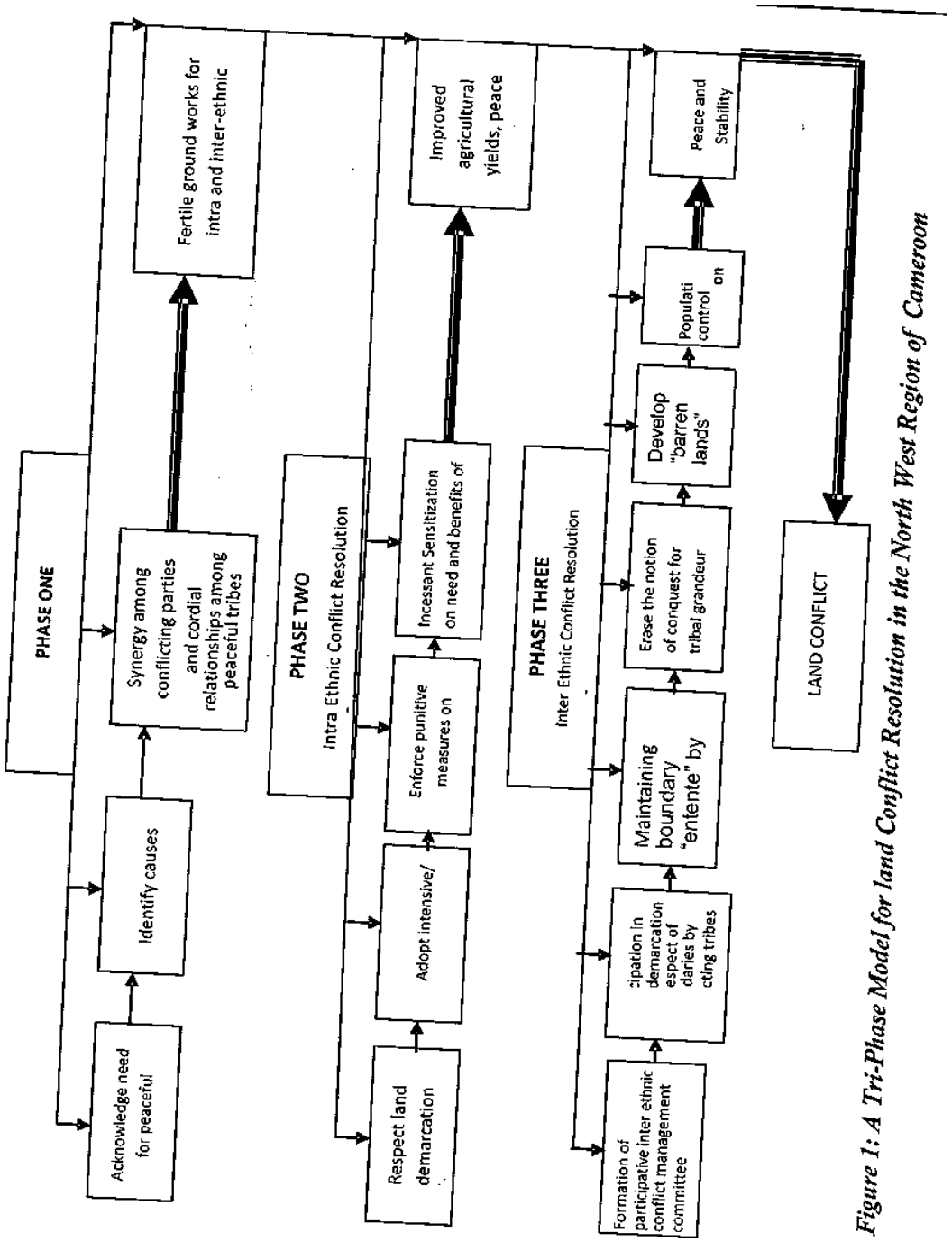

Figure 1: A Tri-Phase Model for land Conflict Resolution in the North West Region of Cameroon

The Study Area and Methodology

The North West Region lies between latitudes 5°43" and 7°9"N and longitudes 9°13"and 11°13"E. and covers an area of about 17,400km2. The population density stood at 104 inhabitants per km2 (BUCREP, 2010). It is bordered to the North and West by the Republic of Nigeria, to the South by West and South West Regions, to the East by the Adamawa Region. Figure 2 shows the location of the North West Region in Cameroon and the major conflict ridden areas.

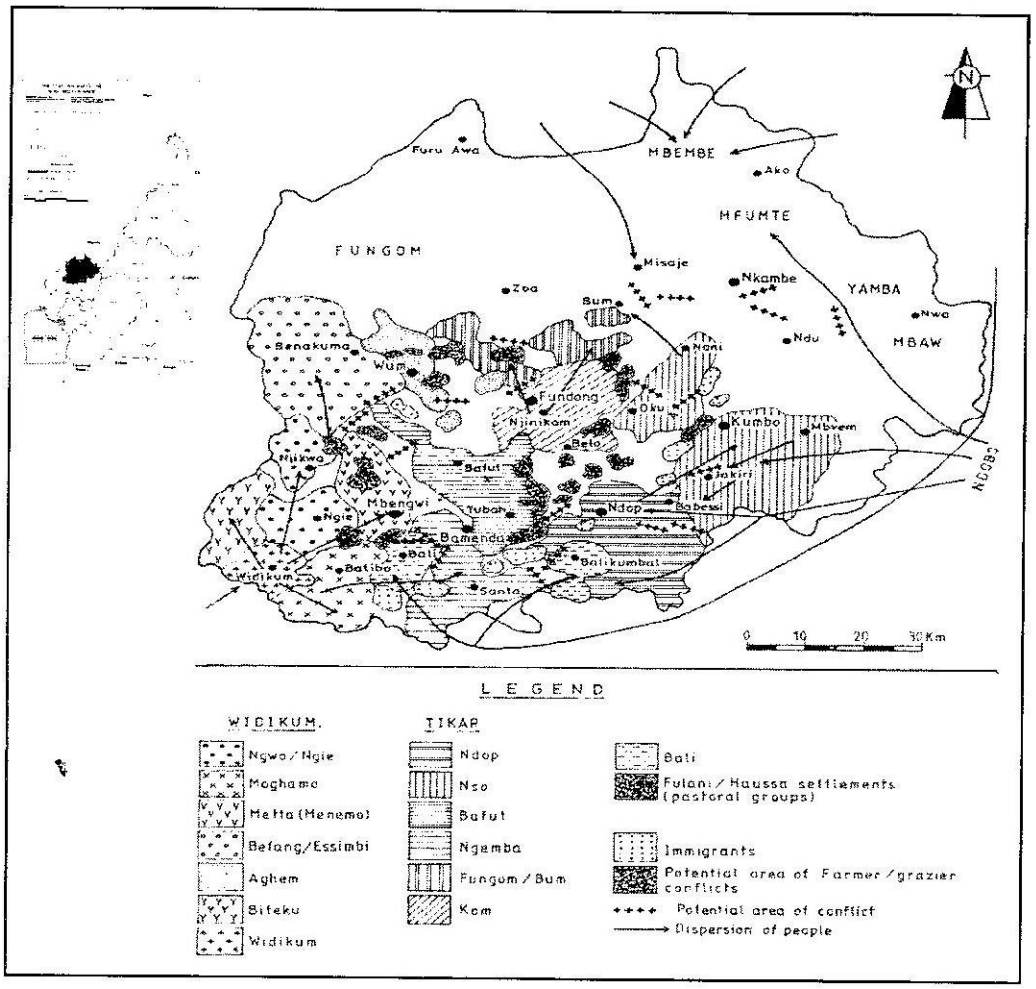

Figure 2: Potential Land Conflict Areas of theNorth West Region.
(Adapted from Lambi et al, 2008)

The region is characterised by the savannah woodland, lowland forest, flood plains, montane forests and afro-alpine forest ecological zones (Lambi et al, 2008). It has a varied relief of lowlands, hills and mountains ranging from 400m to 3000m above sea level and consists of deep valleys, plateaux and steep escarpments. The plateaux, some of which are horst-like massifs, are higher than 1000m above sea level. Some high mountains which are mostly composed of volcanic rocks of Quaternary and/or Tertiary Age rise above the gently undulating plateau and the highest point is the Mount Oku (3011m above sea level). The hilly environment is intersected at some points by plains with the prominent ones being the Ndop and the Mbaw plains. Broad valleys which are rich in alluvium also occur in the region.

The region is characterized by predominantly very hilly terrains which are quite often perceived as barren landscapes which could only pass for grazing lands. In addition, such a predominantly difficult topography renders farming and other land use activities very difficult. Consequently, the hollow-frontier phenomenon operates here as people tend to congregate around the few available plains for agriculture and settlements (permanent and semi-permanent), and other land uses. The climate is varied due to the influence of altitude. There is intense rainfall from April to November followed by a dry season that runs from November to March. The annual rainfall varies between 1300mm and 3000mm but the average

precipitation is 2400mm with peak rainfall occurring between mid-July and mid-September. Temperature fluctuations are great but the general average is 23°C (Lambi et al, 2008). Despite a high amount of rainfall which goes up to 1900mm/year, the area is still void of luxuriant vegetation and this could be blamed on increasing human activities such as arable farming, cattle grazing and settlement expansion, among others. The inhabitants of the highlands are farmers who have cultivated the land very intensively. However, livestock rearing is practised by a relatively small fraction of the population in the highly rugged and lofty uplands of the region.

This study made use of a combination of primary and secondary data. For primary data collection, field observations and focused group discussions were conducted with people affected by conflict in Bafut, Bambili, Babanki-Tungoh, Kumbo and Belo. The stratified random distribution of 75 questionnaires (15 each for the five study sites - Bafut, Bambili, Babanki Tungoh, Kumbo and Belo) to areas frequently affected by this chaos was used to administer the questionnaires so as to identify the nature and causative factors of land disputes in this region and to evaluate the impact it has on the population. A four-point Likert scale survey was adopted in the questionnaire design which had options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", to identify the magnitude of the causal factors based on the mean scores obtained from the results of the questionnaire (Table 1).

Table. 1: The Likert Survey Scale

Code	Meaning	Rating
SD	Strongly disagree	1
D	Disagree	2
A	Agree	3
SA	Strongly agree	4

The mean scores for each of the causes were then obtained by multiplying the number of times that each of the rating on the four-point likert scale appeared by the rating amount (ranging from 1- SD to 4=SA). The values obtained were summed up for each factor considered and divided by the total number of responses (75). The cut off for major or minor causes of the land conflicts was 2.5; mean values above 2.5 were considered as the major causes, while those below 2.5 denoted the minor causes. The study also made use of empirical literature on studies related to conflicts in parts of the North West Region or other parts of the developing world where land related conflicts are common.

Conflict Manifestations

These conflicts often result in the loss of lives and the destruction of property. In the case of the agricultural sector, crops are destroyed, while cattle are killed and all this ignites a situation of tension and instability for the region.

The case of Bambili versus Babanki-Tungoh is pertinent. The fluid nature of boundaries precipitated the Bambili-Babanki-Tungo conflicts as both parties failed to respect their boundaries. It is held that Bambili people were the original settlers of the present land. Subsequently, squabbles led to the migration of Babanki-Tungoh into the area and when land was given to Babanki-Tungoh, there was peaceful co-existence before relations became strained in the second half of the 20th Century, over their common boundary (Nkwi, 2007). This saw the intervention of authorities and farming activities were banned over the disputed land (Figure 3). These contestants violated the ban and continued with their farming activities. As both parties attempted to expand their farms, they encroached into each other's boundary

and this saw the spark up of war which was manifested through the violation of women in their farms, the destruction of crops and the blockage of the Bamenda-Ndop-Kumbo Highway as well as the Bambili-Mbingo Highway. The fact that after the clash in 1993, the officials demarcated the land in the absence of both parties further aggravated the situation as these villages went to war again in 1995.

The Bawock people who migrated from Bangante were an ally to Bali-Nyonga. Ever since their settlement, they had cordial relationships with the Bali-Nyonga people. However, despite their unalloyed allegiance to the Bali-Nyonga chiefdom, they were not spared from the age old syndrome of villages demonstrating their warrior tendencies as they were subjected to raids and attacks. The invasion of Bawock by Bali Nyonga in March 2007 disrupted the agricultural calendar of the Bawock people and led to a considerable destruction of individual and community properties, as well as the involuntary (temporary) resettlement of more than 2000 inhabitants including school children at the Bamenda Congress Hall. In addition, some 487 houses had been looted and burnt to ashes, countless animals killed or stolen, plantations cleared, and numerous bags of harvested staple food (maize) and the main cash crop (coffee) destroyed. This rendered the village lifeless (Loh, 2007).

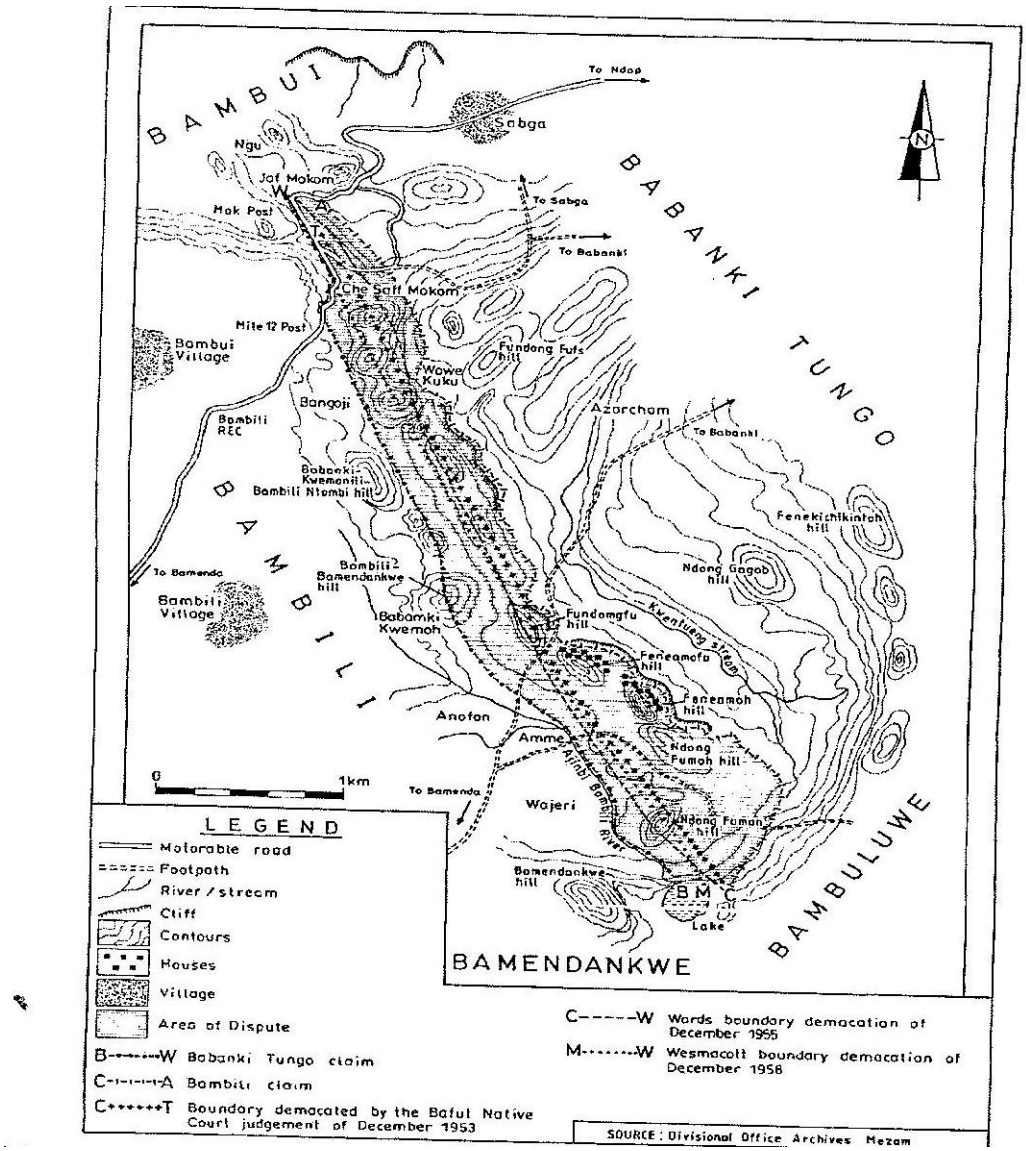

Figure 3: The Disputed Babanki-Tungo-Bambili Land

The precarious situation has been sustained by the increasing involvement of most Fons into politics. Their shear tribal size and political prowess enable them to connive with their elites to invade weaker tribes to acquire land which is eventually shared. Infact, the persistence and seemingly unabated atrocities of the Fon of Bali-Kumbat did not go unnoticed by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission for the North West who established that the people of Bali-Kumbat with the support of their Fon were guilty of gross human rights abuses. In addition, the Human Right boss blamed the administration for negligence and the tardy reaction to the clashes. It would seem that the liberal attitude of the regime in place has also contributed to aggravate these conflicts. The case of Bali-Kumbat and Bambalang comes to the forefront as the former finds pleasure in attacking and inflicting pain on her weaker neighbours all in the name of territorial aggrandizement. This is even further compounded by the fact that some rulers have proven that they are "above the law" as they are never brought to book for their criminal activities, probably due to their unalloyed support to the ruling CPDM Party. Table 2 shows some major land conflict related casualties for the North West Region.

Table 2: Some major Land conflicts Casualties in the North West Region

Inter-ethnic conflicts		
Conflicting Villages	**Year**	**Casualties**
- -	2007	Property damage worth 475 million, 1, 121 people rendered homeless, three schools destroyed and several children reported missing
Bali Nyonga-Bawock	2007	487 houses razed down, over 2000 people displaced and rendered homeless, educational institutions and churches were destroyed and agriculture suffered a significant setback
Babanki Tungoh Bambili	1991, 1993, 1995	Destruction of compounds, several people injured and a eucalyptus forest "chopped" down, blockage of major highways
Balikumbat Bambalang	2011	1 killed, 300 houses burnt and 2 500 people displaced.
Infra-ethnic conflicts		
Wum	1975, 1981, 2003	Destruction of livestock, crops and homes
Taashem/Wvem	2010	Destruction of property and displacement of 50 persons
Banten	2010	Displacement of 33 persons
Rohvitangtah	2010	24 farmers were displaced
Kingomen	2010	14 farmers were displaced
Mbawnsem	2010	1 3 farmers were displaced

Amungwa, 2009 ** Nkwi, 2007, Ngwa et al (2007) Divisional Office, Bui, 2010; Field Work, 2011,

A case in point is Kumbo and Bafut Subdivisions which have registered significant land conflict clashes over the years with a lot of damages incurred. In 2010, a total of 134 farmers were displaced due to farmer-grazier clashes in Bui Division (Divisional Office for Bui, 2010). The case of Kumbo showed that just for 2011, over 126 farmer-grazier and 151 farmer-farmer conflicts were registered (Table 3).

Table 3: Land related conflicts and in Kumbo

Months	Farmer-Grazier Conflicts		Farmer-Farmer Conflicts	
		Percentage	Number	Percentage
Jan	14	11.1	10	6.6
Feb	10	08.0	12	08.0
Mar	16	12.7	16	10.6
Apr	08	06.3	14	09.3
May	13	10.3	12	08.0
June	07	05.6	12	08.0
Jul	03	02.4	13	08.6
Aug	03	02.4	16	10.6
Sept	08	06.3	13	08.6
Oct	15	12.0	11	07.3
Nov	13	10.3	08	05.3
Dec	16	12.7	14	09.3
Total	126	100	151	100

Kumbo Court of First Instance (2011)

The situation for Bafut also shows that between 2003 to 2010, the area has registered a total of 147 farmer-farmer conflicts and 76 farmer-grazier conflicts. This resulted in enormous damage whose monetary amounted to 71,113,775FCFA (Table 4).

Table 4: Land related conflicts and damages incurred for Bafut

Years	Farmer-Farmer Conflicts	Farmer-Grazier Conflicts	Evaluated Amount (FCFA)
2003	13	9	687,075
2004	34	18	4,406,775
2005	11	14	3.690,505
2006	26	12	3,910,610
2007	25	9	7,867,445
2008	15	6	3,018,470
2009	19	5	7,493,495
2010	4	3	4,928,400
Total	147	76	71,113,775

Source: Sub Divisional Delegation of Agriculture, Bafut, 2011

In the case of Bu and Befang of Menchum Division, the poor farmers have very limited resources and could not foot the cost of constructing cattle-proof barbed wire fences round their fields. The graziers, on their part, are relatively wealthy but they have been tied down by cultural inertia which limits their possibilities of constructing paddocks or introducing improved pasture species like guatamala, kikuyu and bracharia. Their inability to adopt these improved farming techniques makes it impossible for the peaceful co-existence of these farming systems which are in constant conflict. The unruly attitude of graziers which often go unchecked by the authorities have often been resisted through the regular writing

of petitions about damages incurred in farmlands, injuries inflicted on cattle and people, prolonged strikes, boycotts and women demonstration (Ngwa *et al*, 2007). This then culminates into armed confrontations. For Menchum, a predictable 400,000 farmers and 5,000 graziers lived in Menchum between 1943 to 2005. During this period, a projected number of 21,074 conflicts were registered making an average of 339 hostilities a year (Ngwa etal, 2007). Table 5 shows some major farmer-grazier conflicts in Menchum.

Table 5: Some Land Conflicts in Menchum

Years	Farmer-Grazier Conflicts	Area
1966	150	Esu
1973	150	Wum
1981	175	Wum
1988	210	Esu
1993	195	Esu
2003	180	Wum
2005	1750	Menchum

Ngwa etal., 2007

As earlier mentioned, these conflicts escalate through invasions and counter invasions by tribes and the result is the destruction of life and property, while some people are rendered homeless.

Causes of Land Conflicts in the North West Region Population Pressure and Land Degradation

The growth of human population has always been blamed for the pressure exerted on our environment today since humanity depends on the natural resource base for sustenance. In the case of the North West Region, population growth and high population density (Tables 6) leads to pressure on land which generates a number of stressors as exemplified by the increasing cultivation of marginal lands resulting in further soil fertility decline, the overuse of chemical fertilizers which have a long run effect on the soil, over-cultivation, deforestation and soil exposure, reduction of fallow periods, and bush burning. This leads to land scarcity and land degradation with the ultimate effect being persistent clashes between and within ethnic groups over the few available "promising land".

Table 6: Evolution of Population Density of the North West Region

Year	Population	Surface Area/ km^2	Density (pers/km^2)
1976	986100	17300	57
1987	1 238 348	17300	72
2005	1 728 953	17300	100
2010	1 804 695	17300	104

BUCREP, 2010

Table 6 shows that the population density for the North West Region moved from 57 pers/km^2 in 1976to 104 pers/km^2 as of 2010 (BUCREP, 2010). These densities vary per division with Mezam, Ngoketunjia and Bui Divisions having the highest, recording 285, 168 and 137 pers/km^2 respectively (Table 7). These

high density divisions have registered a handful of land related conflicts and they were consequently the focus of this study. These densities exceed the national average density of 42 pers / km2 (National Institute of Statistics, 2010), indicating that it is an area of significant demographic pressure.

Table 7: Population Distribution and Density by Divisions for the North West Region

Division	Population	Surface Area	Density (pers/km^2)
Boyo	124887	1 636	76
Bui	321969	2352	137
Donga-Mantung	269931	4340	62
Menchum	161998	4489	36
Mezam	524127	1 841	285
Momo	138693	1 735	80
Ngoketunjia	187348	1 117	168

Source: (GP-DERUDEP, 2006; BUCREP, 2010).

Land Scarcity

Closely related to population increase is the problem of scarcity of agricultural land. A greater proportion of the population of these communities depends on either arable farming or livestock raising for their survival. The hilly nature of the terrain renders arable farming almost impracticable. They are therefore forced to congregate around the few available undulating and agriculture-friendly topography to cultivate their crops. This congregation sometimes results to competition over the acquisition of a greater share of the land resource pie. So, the few fertile and gently sloping areas are the main conflict hotspots. As if that were not enough, graziers who predominantly occupy the uplands also move as a response to seasonal changes to the lowlands to graze their animals.

This is often accompanied by the extensive destruction of unharvested food crops and this generates tensions, thus aggravating inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts. This situation has been sustained by the fact that the herders resist moves for intensive and enclosed cattle raising which makes them sedentary. They cling onto free range grazing which is the brainchild behind farmer-grazier conflicts.

Conquest Tendency and the Non-respect of Boundaries

Most communities affected by inter-ethnic conflicts have a long standing history, and a mistaken notion that they can only prove their grandeur by constantly attacking vassal tribes and subjugating them. This, it is believed, will make them to continuously have domineering power over their neighbours. So, in some cases, the clashes over parcels of unused and uninhabited lands have always been the case. The situation of Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh, Balikumbat - Bambalang and the Bali Nyonga - Bawock clashes were also rooted on the issue of maintaining superiority and subjugating their neighbours, including ally tribes. The fluid nature of boundaries that exist between tribes creates a number of frontiers which call for land-hungry tribes to expand into those frontiers. As a consequence, boundaries are made and re-made at the end of every conflict episode. The case of Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh of 1995 was precipitated by the incessant contestations for their present boundaries (Nkwi, 2007).

In the case of intra-ethnic conflicts, clashes over land are not just due to the fact that cattle encroaches into farmlands and destroys crops, but also because there has been no clear demarcation and protection of what could be described as arable or grazing land. Arable farmers find it difficult to draw a dichotomy

between grazing land and arable land; so, they encroach on the nearby grazing lands and use it for farming. Farmers also compete amongst themselves over cultivable land.

Migration to Hollow Frontiers

The tropical climatic regime characterized by strong seasonal rhythms forces livestock and arable farmers to move down the valleys and plains in the dry season to cultivate crops or graze their animals. The fact that this area allows the haphazard and uncoordinated co-existence of farmers and graziers often results in farmer-grazier and farmer-farmer conflicts since the land is insufficient. These hollow-frontiers (Table 8) are facing significant pressure and their carrying capacities are overstretched.

Table 8: Main Hollow Frontiers in the North West Region

Division	Area
Boyo	Baaiso, Mbengkas, Mughom
Bui	Mbonso, Lip, Lassin, Bamti, Mbokam, Wasi — Ber, and Nkuv
Donga-Mantung	Mbaw, Mbem, Mfe, Mayo -Binka, Fam, Kwar, Dumbu, Ntong
Menchum	Bu, Befang, Modelle, Benakuma Lake Nyamashi Lake Yemnge Lake Nyos, L.Nji (Ipalim) Weh Tchaah Mmen
Mezam	Lake Awing, Tingoh valley,
Momo	Ku, Abbi valley, Bessi, Fomukong, Kai, Efitt, Bassa, Mengom valley, Munam Valley and Andek
Ngoketunjia	Ndop, Babungo, Bambalang, Bangolan, Babessi, Balikumbat Bamunkumbit, Bafanji

GP-DERUDEP, 2006; Fieldwork, 2010

Land Tenure System

The North West Region generally has large family sizes and the question of succession especially for landed property, almost invariably, ensues in the event of the dead of the family head. This problem is mostly rife in polygamous homes where the children from different mothers clamour to obtain a greater share of the land. It has often resulted in clashes with a number of casualties registered within the community, and this situation accounts for intra-ethnic conflicts. The situation is even made worse in cases where women are not given access to own land (Fondufe, 2009). Table 9 and Figure 7 show the causative factors of land related conflicts for the North West Region of Cameroon.

The causes have also been analyzed using the mean scores of the 4-point likert scale as shown in Table 10. The table indicates that population pressure and land degradation (mean=3.35) ranked highest indicating that it is the most important cause of land related conflicts in the region. Similarly, the tendency for community grandeur through conquest and the fluid nature of most boundaries (mean=2.73), the migration to hollow frontiers (mean=2.69) and land scarcity (mean = 2.6) exceed the cut-off point and this makes them major causes of land related conflicts in the region. Competition for land (mean = 2.15) and the land tenure system (mean = 2.13) did not meet the cut-off score of 2.5andso, they fall under minor causes.

Table 9: Sampled Causes of inter and infra-ethnic laud Conflicts in the. North West Region

Causes	Frequency	%
Population pressure/laud degradation	67	89.3
Conquest/ Non-respect of Boundaries	*60*	80
Migration to hollow frontiers	52	69
Land Scarcity	45	60
Competition for land	*23*	30,7
laud tenure system	20	26.7

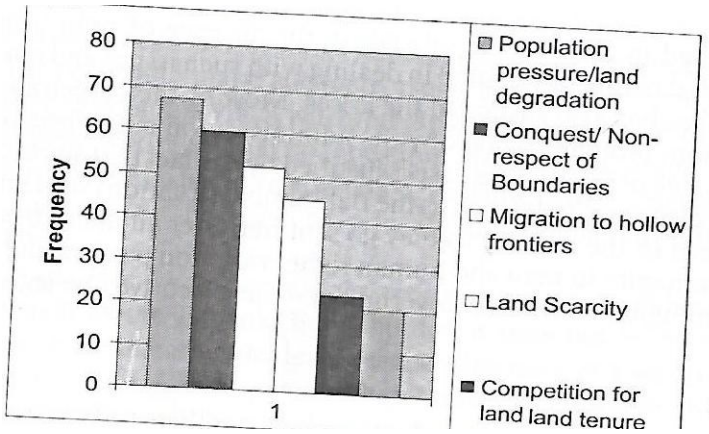

Figure 7: Causes of Land Conflicts in the North West Region

Table 10: Causative Factors of Land Related Conflicts in the North West Region

Causes	Score	Responses	Mean	Rank	SD	D	A	SA
Population pressure/land degradation	251	75	3.35	1	3	5	30	37
Conquest/Non-respect of Boundaries	205	75	2.73	2	10	5	45	15
Migration to hollow frontiers	202	75	2.69	3	15	8	37	15
Land Scarcity	200	75	2.6	4	14	16	28	17
Competition for land	161	75	2.15	5	21	31	14	9
land tenure system	160	75	2.13	6	17	38	13	7

Cut-off =2 . 5 (22 . 5 = major cause; < = minor cause)

SD =1 D= 2A =3SA =4

Interventions in the Conflicts

Interventions by stakeholders during these conflict periods always revolve around the formation of crisis committees, the provision of short term assistance such as food, clothing and other items and the intervention of the forces of law and order to "restore calm"..

These measures are never adequate since the root causes of the land disputes are never resolved. So, the problem is sustained. The government's reaction to such conflicts is always the deployment of the forces of law and order to maintain peace. Ironically, some of these officers only go to worsen the situation of the desperate and displaced villagers. For instance, in the case of the Balikumbat-Bambalang conflict,

some of the troops deployed to salvage the situation instead had a field day raping the women and children who could not escape (Fulai, 2011).

In another dimension, the demarcation of boundaries by officials in the absence of the contesting villages is tantamount to the disrespect of their decisions. It therefore lays the ground works for future land claims and clashes. This was evident in the case of the Bambili-Babanki-Tungoh clash of 1 995 which was also blamed on the non-respect of the boundary demarcated in 1993 by the officials in the absence of both tribes. It seems evident that the liberal nature of the state in dealing with such issues and quelling down such incessant clashes has also sustained the crises. Most of the perpetrators of these unruly acts are seldom brought to book by the administration either because of political leanings or influence or laxity. This case is justified by the fact that some of the raids are organized by recalcitrant Fon's (such as the Balikumbat situation) who seemed to have risen above the laws of the country as they go scot free after all their atrocities. Consequently, man's inhumanity to man and human rights violation persists under the watchful eyes of our seeming laxed arms of government - the executive, the legislative and the judiciary.

Recommendations

The complex nature of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts calls for the need for a model which encompasses the general and specific intricacies of land conflict in the region. Therefore, conflict resolution options are designed taking into consideration some generalities and specificities that must be addressed independently. It was observed that it is not in all the conflict cases that stakeholders take an inventory. So, the paucity of data related to the casualties registered in these conflicts are, in some cases, not documented by the authorities. A good inventory which is presented to the Ministry of State Property and Land Tenure could elicit the importance of legislation in the resolution of some of the inconsistencies that have been fuelling these conflicts over the years, most especially, because of the disrespect by some stakeholders of government established boundaries because of political affiliations or leanings.

Since the population still pays much allegiance to their dignified and peace loving traditional rulers (Fons and Ardos), these representatives could be used as important channels of enforcing principles of the respect of land demarcation. Defaulters should be sanctioned so as to discourage the future occurrence of such practices. Also, family disputes over land should be reported to the traditional authorities who will set up a committee to investigate and pass on resolutions which should be respected strictly.

Since the available fertile land is limited, arable farmers and the cattle graziers should be empowered to adopt intensive and integrated farming techniques. Since, it is evident that the natives and the Bororo grazing populations will continue to co-exist, in the region, a logical way forward to seek lasting solution to inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts is to encourage this system of farming. Here, a successive bush fallow activity and rotational grazing of herds will give room for cattle herders to visit the land under fallow and eat the crop residue as well as graze on it. Their dung will serve as fertilizers to reinstate the fallowed land. As the farmers leave the next parcel of land to return to their fallowed land, the herders could then move their cattle to the new land left to fallow while the farmers will benefit from the organic manure provided by cattle dung. This will definitely result to a win-win situation and it will reduce the tensions and insecurity that go with such conflicts. This will, however, be more practicable in single crop farms. The periodic fallow system may face some difficulties with the ongoing agricultural situation in some areas of region where crop production is gradually assuming an all year round calendar. The

government through her agricultural agencies and Heifer Project International should work in a synergy with these farmers for the success of such initiatives.

Agricultural agents and field assistants should educate and encourage cattle farmers to desist from free range grazing and adopt paddocking and zero grazing. Also, the farmers should make adequate use of soil improvement techniques so as to adopt intensive agriculture which will limit their land thirsty tendencies. The jingoistic attitude of farmers who continue to question the Bororos usage of their land should be discouraged for peaceful co-existence. Pidgin English, English, French and other local languages should be used to educate the arable farming and livestock grazing population.

In cases where boundaries are fluid and the neighbouring communities live in peace such as the Babanki-Bafut border, it may not be necessary to venture on the process of demarcating the land because this may, in a way, spark up conflicts as both natives may struggle to protect their selfish interests. Such a peaceful co-existence should, therefore, not be sacrificed on the altar of land conflict avoidance or resolution. The idea of boundaries seems to be creating problems, maybe the contesting villages should give up this idea and interact among themselves for peace and development to reign.

The cool Bamenda Highlands favour tea cultivation as proven by the Ndu and Ndawara Highland Tea Estates. Tea has been described as the "brown gold" and its cultivation could introduce some socio-economic benefits to the population. In much the same way, the numerous highland regions of the North West which, till date, pass only for grazing lands could be developed for extensive tea culture. It is necessary to propose soil analysis on the suitability of crops in these highlands which were once seen as barren. Educating the girl-child beyond the primary level could limit the high fertility rates which account for high population density and the consequent scarcity of land resources which also disturbs the peace and stability of the region.

The North West Region has very vast hilly landscapes which could be developed for tourism. The population through this medium can gain some non-farm employment and tilt their focus away from the land which they have considered as their only means of survival.

Tribes which find pleasure in attacking and subjugating weaker villages in a bid to reaffirm their superiority should be repressed by the forces of law and order and the leaders who are in support should also be brought to book. The key to conflict resolution rests largely on the willingness of these communities of the region to vie for peace. So, at the heart of these resolution options is the need for the community to come together and "bury the hatchet" so as to.forge a way forward for peaceful co-existence. There is always a mistaken notion that farmers and graziers must always be in conflict, the truth is that if their activities are well coordinated, they can co-exist.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that population increase and demographic pressure stand as the main causal factors of land conflicts in the North West Region. This is corroborated by the ideas of Lambi and Canute (2009) who noted that conflicts are predicated on the quest for land which has become a limited natural resource today in many parts of the North West Region of Cameroon where the teeming population growth has exerted unprecedented pressure on the existing land resources. This factor is intensified by the increasing demographic pressure in the region. Demographic pressure which is

exemplified by land degradation caused principally by overgrazing and bush fires expose the soil to erosion and renders it somewhat barren (Lambi, 2001).

The persistent land conflicts in the North West Region are also caused by the poor demarcation of boundaries. According to Nkwi (2007), the arbitrary lumping of people and the complete ignorance of ethnic composition by Europeans are the main causes of land boundary conflicts which are characteristic of the North West Region. Land competition between communities that desire to own a larger share of the land resource pie often results in conflicts. The mere co-existence of land use competition means that the inevitable results is land use conflicts which occur in some cases around watersheds and degrades them as was noted in Bui division by Suiven (2009).

As a way of solving the persistent farmer-grazier conflicts, a:- conflict management mechanism should be set up. The largely unwritten rules of land acquisition are at the centre of land-related conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon (Amungwa, 2009). Highland areas have become a point of interest to scholars, farmers and scientists. Much controversy has been observed on the viability of highland areas; while some scholars have brandished them as marginal lands, others have emphasized their importance as areas of conservation and preservation of biodiversity and natural resources (Denniston, 1995). The "best practices" for sustainable land management as propounded by the World Bank (2006) that helps integrate land, water, biodiversity and environmental management to meet rising food and fibre demands while sustaining ecosystems and livelihoods could be replicated in the region.

Conclusion

The population of the North West Region largely depends on land for its survival. Ironically, this land is under intense pressure from population increase and poor management. This has generated land conflicts which have rocked the area for a long time. Resource scarcity has been consequently aggravated by population growth which has precipitated movements into hollow-frontiers thereby generating further tensions in these rich frontiers. A number of approaches have been devised to seek ways of resolving these conflicts but they have failed to look for options of harmonizing the solutions. In addition, their resolutions continue to be short-lived. Hence, the identification of the nature and the devising of context specific approaches to resolving these conflicts could be a plausible solution to this problem. This will also depend on the political will of the elites and the willingness of the local population to adhere to such conflict resolution or conflict avoidance framework.

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