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Chapter

Taking Stock of Local Land Rush and Their Development Benefits for Women Farmers and Rural Livelihoods in Cameroon

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Abstract

Land is a major resource for rural women who are largely dependent on agriculture as a major source of livelihood. The rise in large scale land acquisition by local investors has made land scarcer, affecting the livelihoods of women and the rural population. Because the poor and women are less likely to own land independently, they are more vulnerable and become landless with limited livelihood options and bear disproportionate costs of land deals. The study intends through the use of a survey, interviews and focus group discussions, to investigate the effects of local large scale land deals on women's livelihoods in North Western Cameroon and how this affects household food security in these communities. Drawing on empirical evidence from the study, women who are mainly responsible for subsistence food crop production, have very limited access to and ownership rights to land. While local investors promise employment opportunities and local development in rural areas, women are also particularly deprived of farmland, which is a major source of livelihood and household subsistence. Thus, local land acquisition fails to trickle down to social and infrastructural development and is more likely to restrict women's ability to meet the basic food needs of their households.

Keywords: rural livelihoods, local investors, social development, women farmers, Cameroon farmers

1. Introduction

The dearth of employment and industrial activity in most rural areas make agriculture a predominant economic activity particularly for rural peoples, especially women and the poor. Women in Cameroon provide the backbone of the agricultural sector as a greater majority of economically active female labour force is employed in agriculture [1–6]. Extensive evidence shows that rural women in Cameroon make up a majority of the active labour force in the food crop sector producing about 90% of food crops in the country [7, 8]. As food crop producers and processors, women play a crucial role in ensuring family survival and safeguarding national food security. Women grow food to feed their families, making subsistence food production one of
the major agricultural and livelihood activities of women. While men may migrate to urban areas in search of work and other income earning opportunities, women who are compelled to be heads of households rely on subsistence food crop production for household survival [9].

The place of women’s subsistence agricultural production also calls to mind the significance of women’s access, use and control over production resources particularly land, for agricultural production. This has met with increased efforts to enhance small holder (women) farmer’s access to and control over land. The efforts to increase subsistence agricultural productivity however fall short of meeting the growing needs and demands of agricultural producers in general and rural and female subsistence producers in particular. Despite the predominant role of women in food crop production, they have limited access to and control over land. They lack ownership and inheritance rights though they can acquire use rights to cultivable land through male relatives. This limitation of increasing women’s access to and control over land is exacerbated by land grabbing that has been observed in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa including Cameroon [10]. The social construction of gender that gives women traditional roles within African families as house-keepers only deprive women’s access and control over community land making them more vulnerable and most affected by land grabbing [11–13].

In the process, women and the poor are more vulnerable and become landless with limited livelihood options and bear disproportionate costs of large-scale land deals. While displacement of community members often ignores women’s role of subsistence food crop production, the process also increases pressure on women’s tenure. On the other hand, women are often left out and are not equally represented in decisions concerning land transactions; either because of women’s low levels of education and their lack of information for any informed decision or their lack of legal resources to defend land claims [14, 15]. Also, women are usually marginalized and ignored with respect to the sharing of benefits associated to large scale land deals. Benefits, which can either be in the form of compensation, income generation opportunities or employment, target title holders who are usually men, hence leaving out women who may only benefit as casual labourers in precarious part time work with low wages.

Despite women’s role in food crop production and household subsistence, customary and cultural limitations and negative practices related to property ownership and equal rights to land most often hinder women’s agrarian activities [16]. Similarly, other factors including growing large scale land acquisition (LSLA) also tend to make land a very scarce resource particularly for women and the poor. The LSLA phenomenon, which involves different groups of actors (investors/MNC/TNC, state/governments, communities and community leaders, men, women, etc) has greatly affected the livelihoods of the populations involved.

It has been observed that the effects of these land deals are different on different communities as well as different members of the community. The process usually has differential impacts on members of the community and while some may benefit from the process, it is likely that others do lose. Most often, ignoring the gender impacts of large-scale land transactions is a common practice that overlooks the impact of land deals on women and other vulnerable members of the community. The process and involvement in LSLA including the impact and benefit of these transactions is defined by several factors including how land is acquired and tenure rights, the composition of the teams responsible for or executing the transaction, and the impact of land deals on community members [17–19].

Another major criticism of large scale land deals is the issue of poor land governance and corrupt and unaccountable decision making including the weak protection
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and sidelining of the poor and vulnerable members of the community. Research on LSLA confirms that decisions on land transactions rarely involve those who use the land but are made by and large by community leaders including state and government officials [16, 20]. The process of decision making related to land deals consequently raises concerns about the impact (gendered) of land acquisition processes on the livelihood options of members of the community in general and women in particular.

2. Land tenure in Cameroon

Access to land can in part be defined by customary land rights and practices which are not often secured by law [18, 21]. Rooted in the colonial legacy that enhanced patriarchal norms and structures, land management structures in Cameroon in general and the North West Region in particular usually render women’s access to land difficult by promoting men’s access and control over land. This also defines the right to control and use land giving men more power and authority over land than women [22, 23]. Understanding women’s access to and control over land requires an analysis of various land tenure systems in general and women’s land tenure patterns in particular.

Land tenure according to [24] refers to the terms and conditions associated with holding, using and transacting land, while land rights refer to the right to occupy and use land for various purposes with the ability to make improvements on the piece of land. Land rights also give owners the right to give, lease, rent and/or donate a piece of land [19–21]. This indicates that having more rights to land can be associated with more sustainable livelihoods for those with more rights to land than the landless and those with limited rights to land. In addition to helping land owners build an asset base that may lead to sustainable livelihood, having land rights may provide a source of power, prestige and a basis to recover from shocks and stress, as well as a means of economic production and other activities for a living [14, 19, 21, 24]. Land rights for women increase their bargaining power within the household with a resulting increase to household welfare [15]. Thus, secure land rights are very instrumental to economic development and a catalyst for economic activity.

The formal and customary land tenure systems have been identified as two main frameworks and/or institutions governing ownership and access to land [15, 18, 21]. It is important to note that because of the importance attached to customs, civil law protections are often not respected. Even though many laws recognize and protect the rights of women to land (property and land ownership rights, equal inheritance rights and marital property rights), enforcement of these laws is quite irregular and difficult. For example, Cameroon’s 1996 Constitution gives all citizens the right to own property individually or in association with others, where ownership is defined by the right to use, enjoy and transfer property. On the other hand local restrictions and customary practices against women’s ownership of land most often supersedes written law and therefore determine which rights to land can or cannot be exercised. The difficulty in implementing these laws could be as a result of conflicting legislation, institutional weaknesses and gender bias. The interest of this research is to note the convergence of customary laws and practices, institutions and traditional structures and formal laws to entrench and reinforce the already unequal balance of gender power relations and gender inequality within the community.

As observed by [25], land in Cameroon can be considered as a community resource in terms of space inherited from the ancestors. As a community resource, land is
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managed by community representatives who can either be chiefs or traditional rulers and it is commonplace for land (community) to be inherited and transmitted from one generation to the other. Based on the pre-colonial conception of the ownership of means of production, land was conceived during this period as collective property for collective use and management. This however changed with the advent of colonialism that adopted a Eurocentric view of land as individual resource and thus the infiltration of individual property rights, highlighting the colonialist intention to control and manage land. Thus, it is important to note that the Cameroonian land law is a derivative of this European principle of individual ownership of land [21]. Based on this principle, the land ordinance of 1974 supports and promotes private ownership and the commercialization of land. According to this law, it is imperative for privately owned land to be registered and titled, without which such untitled and unregistered land is classified as national land [25, 26]. It is only when land is registered and titled that the land holder can be associated with ownership rights. Rural communities can also title their customary land, and titles are the only protection against state appropriation. Given the difficult, long and expensive process registering land, it is difficult for customary land owners to register and secure communal land. Thus, such communities enjoy only usufruct rights to their land. This reinforces insecure tenure for most communities and individuals as a greater majority of farmland and communal land held under customary law is classified as national land. Generally, while land in rural areas is predominantly subject to customary law where traditional leaders (Fons, chiefs or Lamidos) administer and manage these lands, individual families may receive the rights to use land which are heritable through male kin [19, 21, 26, 27]. Cameroon’s land tenure regime is therefore based on this and subsequent laws, emphasizing land registration and titling. Nonetheless, most land is still managed informally through local arrangements, whose flexible rules may create uncertainty, foster land conflicts, and hamper local development. Even though land reforms in 2005 simplified land titling by reducing the number of steps and departments involved, and cut the time needed to obtain a land title from several years to less than one, it failed to address significant hurdles including contradictory laws, poor record keeping, and reliance on traditional authorities to allocate land rights [19, 21].

Land registration seems to be more of an urban phenomenon given that rural communal land is more agricultural and is hardly registered. Notwithstanding, an estimated 80% of plots in urban and peri-urban areas are held under customary law. Plots are obtained through renting or purchase on the informal market [28–31]. The gaps in the land administration processes and infrastructure account in part to the slow transition from customary property rights to private ownership of property, increasing rather than diminishing land tenure insecurity. Cases of multiple sales of the same land, false land certificates, and inaccuracies in boundary definitions are commonplace, giving rise to frequent conflicts and disputes, also demonstrating that the registration process does not improve tenure security.

3. Large scale land deals and the socio-cultural context in the north west region

Large scale land deals commonly referred to as land grabs is characterized by the acquisition of large portions of land mostly by foreign and or local investors. These land deals are often negotiated and assisted by national elites and governments on the one hand and local councils or elites longing for foreign investment [16, 18]. While
investors may consider land grabbing as a means of providing development to the locals in terms of better and improved access to better roads and social services such as health centres, access to potable water and electricity, such land deals are characterized by the violation of human rights, are not based on free, prior and informed consent of the land users, and usually ignore the social, economic and environmental impacts including the way the process is gendered [16, 22]. There is increasing concern about the positive and negative impacts of these land deals on the livelihoods of men and women who are those who are usually displaced.

The North West Region (NWR) is characterized by various ethnic groups reflecting widespread ethnic diversity also observed in the country [6, 32]. The major ethnic groups (otherwise considered indigenes) in the province include the Bali, Widekum, Nso, Mbenme and the Aghem. Another population group (minority) in the province constituting about 5–10% of the total population is the Mbororo; a group of pastoralists and Muslim migrants from Northern Cameroon. Deriving from the ethnic diversity is a number of centralized villages and chiefdoms, which are autonomous with similar economic and socio-political structures and are by and large culturally and linguistically heterogeneous [6, 33, 34].

Although there are various forms of religious practices (Christianity, Islam, and traditional beliefs), the people of the NWR are predominantly Christians with the minority Mbororo mainly Muslims [33, 34]. The diverse ethnic background is characteristic of variations in traditional norms and practices (purdah and female seclusion, age and forms of marriage, etc). Whilst adherence to these practices may also define the extent of gender inequality, which does vary by ethnic group, purdah and female seclusion is common amongst the Mbororo and Muslims [32, 33]. There are plausible ways through which these practices can influence women's position within the household. Pelican [32] suggests an association between polygamy, religious practice and ethnicity. Polygamy, which is widespread amongst Muslims and those observing traditional religious practices (than amongst Christians), reinforces negative social standing and limited access to resources for women [6, 32, 33]. For instance, male financial support may be limited in polygamous homes due to greater competition for resources [32], exacerbating the burden of household subsistence on women and greater constraints with access to health care, education and other basic needs for children in such homes. Whilst this may raise concerns as to the changing position of women, it also highlights the role of socio-cultural factors in defining the availability and accessibility of production resources including land to women within the household.

4. Assessing the benefits and impact of land deals: the need and the challenge

Large scale land deals are usually associated with positive development justifying the positive response and acceptance from local populations. Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and local investors involved in the process make promises to local community members in the form of providing social amenities and infra-structure (health centers, schools, roads and bridges, water and electricity and employment) as benefits that will accrue to local communities in exchange for their land [17]. The multi-national companies involved and the state define access to these social services and amenities as positive development that justifies the displacement of community members from cultivable land and livelihood sources. This suggests that while most
MNCs and local investors value and emphasize on meeting their goals and objectives and their own development, they fail to recognize the capability and livelihood security of the people [17, 22]. There is evidence that the poor and rural population in general and women in particular are deprived of their assets, capabilities and activities that provided them with a source of living. There have been diverse implications of land deals on community members registered in different localities ranging from land access, income generating and livelihood options. The nexus between land tenure rights, land grabbing and food insecurity is very prominent and critical in achieving food security in Cameroon. While insecure tenure has attracted the rampant acquisition of large-scale land by foreign and local investors, this has also contributed to the scarcity of farmlands and the shortage of land for indigenous people destroying the natural ecosystem that the local people depended on for their livelihood and also affecting the availability of food crops.

5. Methodology and area of study

The research is descriptive and exploratory and targets women farmers and households in selected communities in the region that have been affected by large scale land deals. It draws on field research carried out in the North West Region (NWR) of Cameroon and employed a quantitative methodological approach that provided an in-depth understanding of the experiences of members of the community studied. The study examines underlying connections between large scale land deals and livelihood activities in general and women’s livelihoods in particular including the link to household food security. Data for this study was gathered using both primary and secondary sources. Primary data, which constituted the principal source of information for the study was elicited using multiple data collection methods. Through a survey and in-depth interviews, the study provides an account of respondents’ views and perceptions of the effects of local large-scale land deals on rural livelihood options by exploring the meanings women themselves and the rural population give to these issues. Information was also sought from respondents on the various actors involved in the process and the effects of land deals on rural livelihoods and household food security. Meanwhile, the survey and interview also collected data on the gender roles and livelihood options or choices of respondents, the land tenure arrangements in the community and how this affects the access and control profile of men and women with respect to land in the selected communities. Data generated for the study was analyzed using themes identified both from literature and interviews, which were also guided and captured by the objectives of the study.

6. Findings

6.1 Women as subsistence food crop farmers

As confirmed by the study, subsistence agriculture remains a major source of employment and economic activity for the population of the North West Region especially women. According to field evidence, an overwhelming majority of rural women in the region are farmers even though there are some women who diversify their income earning opportunities by combining subsistence agriculture with informal business activities as a livelihood option. The dearth of industrial activity in the region
makes agriculture and self-employment predominant economic activities particularly for the rural population, women and the poor. In the region and the country in general, women provide the backbone to the agricultural sector as a greater majority of economically active female labour force is employed in agriculture (Table 1).

While most of the women who engaged in the study (46.6%) are between 41 and 50 years old, it was observed that close to three quarters (70.8%) of the women have only primary education. This confirms the predominance of women in the agricultural sector that requires little or no education and any specialized skills for employment in the sector in general and the subsistence food crop sector in particular. Meanwhile, about two thirds (63.9%) of the study population are married suggesting that this population are likely to have use rights to land through their spouses.

Women in Cameroon can be linked with various socio-economic roles, which cut across a wide range of activities including farming, trading and working in paid labour force. They make up about 38.2% of the total labour force in the country and are a significant part of the labour force in the agricultural sector playing indispensable roles in the production, processing, and marketing of food crops [6, 35, 36]. Approximately 83% of economically active female labour force is employed in agriculture. Extensive evidence observes that women in rural areas make up a majority of

<table>
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<tr>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>31–40</td>
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<td>41–50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single</td>
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<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>100</td>
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<th>Level of Education</th>
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<td>26.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>44.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>3.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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</table>

Source: Generated from field data.

Table 1.
Demographic characteristics of women in the study area.
the active labour force in the food crop sector producing about 90% of all food crops in the country. Women grow food to feed the family, making subsistence food production one of the major agricultural activities of women [32, 37–39].

As shown on Table 2, women are responsible for the cultivation of food crops; as such, in the most part, food crop production is principally an activity of (rural) women, who combine the production, processing and marketing of food crops. They produce, process and market food crops such as vegetables, maize, beans, cassava, coco-yams, and Irish-potatoes. As food crop producers, women continue to play a crucial role in ensuring family survival and safeguarding national food security. Women from urban centres also act as main food crop distributors, commonly referred to as ‘buyam sellams’, ensuring that food produced in rural areas are transported to urban towns and cities [4, 6, 14]. As buyam sellams, women are able to guarantee the availability of food to urban centres.

Despite women’s predominant role in the agricultural sector as food crop producers, they have limited access to and control over production resources. The limitation of accessing and controlling production resources poses a significant difficulty not only for their productivity but for their ability to meet their family basic food needs. For example, women’s ownership and control over land, labour and capital is very limited. Women lack ownership and inheritance rights to land, but maybe able to acquire use rights to cultivable land through male relatives. Consequently, with small landholdings comes the challenge of raising agricultural productivity for subsistence and generating surplus for the market.

6.2 Factors attracting land grabbing by local Investors in the Region

It is important to note that the study lays emphasis on the acquisition of large-scale land by local investors including elites in the local communities. In the North West Region, local investors have acquired great portions of land for the cultivation of agricultural plantations [10] including tea and palm plantations. One key common phenomenon that is also responsible for the acquisition of large-scale land in the region is the advent and presence of cattle grazers who are also responsible for grabbing large portions of cultivable land in the region. Land grabbing by cattle grazers, it is observed, is commonplace in all the Divisions in the Region and raises critical challenges with food crop production particularly with women, who are mainly responsible for subsistence food crop production. As confirmed by the interviews, a
number of reasons were reported as responsible for the presence of local investors in the region. While the main local investor (Cameroon Tea Estate – CTE) acquires land for the purpose of cultivating tea, the major justification for interest in the region is associated with the weather and climate of parts of the region which is suitable for the cultivation of tea. The mountainous nature of the greater part of the region and the cold weather and climate in these areas particularly in Bui and Donga and Mantung Divisions is one of the major factors associated with the cultivation of tea in parts of these localities. In other divisions such as Momo, local investors are more interested in the production of palm oil given the suitability of the climate for the production of oil palm plantations. Some key informants also observed that one of the main reasons attracting small holding local investors is the availability of land in some of these villages. In relation to cattle grazing activities, land for grazing is by and large acquired through the authorization and permission of traditional rulers who are considered as custodians of village land. Meanwhile, the presence of and availability of cheap labour also significantly attracted local investors to acquire large portions of land for investment purposes and opportunities [17, 19, 21].

6.3 Community response to the phenomenon of LSLA by local investors

There has been diverse reactions from members of the community to the phenomenon as shown in other areas in the country; from youths, traditional rulers/chiefs, elites, human rights activists. There have been some responses from women’s secret society as well. There is evidence that the land rights of women are threatened by the privatization and commoditization of land. Women are however responding to the limitations on land by accessing land through church membership and NGO-supported cooperatives [26, 27]. On the other hand, in some cases, women have also been reported to access land and improve their tenure security by way of resistance to some cases of land deals.

Some examples of these women’s secret society include: the takembeng, fombuen and Anlu. I wish to reiterate here that these women’s secret society in this part of the country can be seen as a base of power and agency for women. These secret societies have in the past been used as mechanisms for resistance and have been instrumental in safeguarding women’s voice and access to resources especially access to farm land [40, 41].

The rush for land by local grabbers has taken over huge portions of farm land from farmers. The villagers especially women are of the opinion that the land grabs and rampant purchase of land has caused a reduction in cultivable land used by women for subsistence food crop production. Meanwhile, the villagers in general and women farmers in particular have been displaced from their farm lands making them to relocate further into the villages in search of new and free patches of cultivable land. This also meant that women farmers had to trek long distances or incur additional costs to travel to their farms. In addition, farmers are bound to change farms and pieces of land cultivated given that land becomes scarcer and getting a piece of cultivable land has become more difficult. Given that women farmers have relocated to new pieces of farmland, these are more likely to be abandoned land which is less productive with lower yields justifying one of the reasons for moving and changing plots of farmland. On the other hand, women’s limited and lack of ownership rights to land also accounts for limitations and challenges of getting permanent farm land for the production of food crops either for subsistence or sale. According to evidence from the FGDs, some women farmers observe that they are bound to move further into the hinterlands.
looking for cultivable land in part to avoid land grabbers in case they are in need and in search for more land to purchase. This only confirms the difficulty for women to access farmland given the presence of agricultural plantations on the one hand and the associated effects of a fall and reductions in the production and availability of food crops for household consumption.

6.4 Land acquisition, local development and food security

As evidenced in the study, women are predominantly involved in subsistence food crop production while men concentrate on farming cash crops (coffee, oil palm), underlying women’s frontline role in ensuring household subsistence and their contribution in the supply of household food needs and the maintenance of food availability. Thus, the contribution of women to food security cannot be undermined as women contribute more than 70% of the available food in the household and in the market. Women farmers confirmed the centrality of subsistence food crop production first as a major livelihood option and secondly in promoting household food security as they argued that even though men’s cash crops are a source of income, providing for household subsistence and food needs is predominantly done by women as men are less concerned about food supply but concentrate on other children’s needs such as paying school fees.

The findings speak to extant evidence about food security by showing that women’s contributions to household food security is more than one might expect. We find that while women are at the forefront of ensuring household food security and care more about providing for and ensuring the availability of basic household food needs, men are more concerned with cash crop production. The evidence from the interviews observed that.

“…women in this community are the ones who struggle to provide food for the family; whether children eat or not is a major preoccupation of women and not men, who concentrate on their coffee and/or oil palm plantations, whose proceeds are often used to pay for the children’s school fees”.

Despite promises of providing social amenities to the communities by local investors, this was scarcely fulfilled as confirmed by the findings. Local investors though reaping a lot of benefits from the communities where large scales of land were acquired did not provide any significant infrastructural development and investments in the communities. While some local investors promised to create employment, provide drinking water and electricity, farm to market roads, health centers, build schools and offer scholarships to the children of villagers, this was shelved and did not generate any meaningful development in these communities. The evidence from the survey and interviews show that local investors have made little or no contribution to improve on the health of villagers, neither have they provided farm to market roads and schools to the communities. Some of the villagers argue that “roads constructed by local investors lead mainly to their plantations, while the hospitals provide free consultations only to staff and family members of staff”. The villagers also concord that “when we fall sick, we consult with the integrated health centres in our communities or buy medication from medicine stores; our children attend mainly government and private schools with very few one time and irregular scholarships provided by local investors”. The lack of commitment by local investors in providing social amenities and infrastructural development to these communities is compounded by lack of accountability where
According to [42, 43], the local investors are not made answerable to rural women and the villagers for breach of any development promises made prior to the acquisition. While noting that local investors created employment for villagers, it was argued that employment was mainly menial with very low wages and no social security. According to [17] some key functions and positions are often occupied by expatriates who meet the specific expertise and qualifications for the positions. Meanwhile, given women's low levels of education, they were by and large left out of the employment schemes of local investors.

The acquisition of large pieces of land for the cultivation of tea and palm oil in parts of the region, has taken huge amounts of village land with women affected disproportionately. Women lack ownership and inheritance rights though they can acquire use rights to cultivable land through male relatives [19, 21, 42, 43]. This limitation of increasing women's access to and control over land is exacerbated by the expansion of land grabbing phenomenon that has been observed in parts of Cameroon. This also places especially the rural women who scarcely enjoy security of tenure in a very precarious position as the least pressure on land as a result of high demand affects them as subsistence farmers. Women have experienced a reduction in cultivable land used for the production of food crops (vegetables, cassava, etc) and displacement from farmlands; thus, they have to walk for long distances very far into the villages in search of patches of available land for food crop production. In this regard, the land rush situation is more advantageous and beneficial to the investors leaving the communities and villages including the rural women (whose livelihood is highly dependent on land) in a worse off situation, notwithstanding the assumed benefits of socio-economic development and employment that such could bring [17, 43]. It is worth noting that land deals by and large miss the point that deals may to a large extent lead to landless peasants cum agricultural wage labourers [43] who may not be able to provide for basic household food needs, highlighting the consequences of deals on rural livelihoods and food security. The emerging evidence is that considering the meaning of food security as noted by [10], LSLA by local investors constrains the availability and access components of food security caused mainly by the displacement of women from cultivable farmlands. It also displaces the rural population in general and women in particular from their main livelihood options. From this perspective, local land grabs hinder and exacerbate women's limited access to land whose direct impact is a reduction in food crop production, a fall in women's farm related income, and a plausible shortage in the availability and access to basic household food needs.

7. Conclusion

In Cameroon, extensive evidence confirms the centrality of women in the agricultural sector in general and in subsistence food crop production in particular. They make up a majority of the active labour force in the food crop sector and as food crop producers and processors, women play a crucial role in ensuring family survival and safeguarding national food security. Although women play a crucial role in ensuring household food survival and food security, they lack access to and control over land, have limited ownership and inheritance rights to land with only use rights to land. This gender-based constraint serves as a critical limitation restricting women's access and control over resources, lesser livelihood options and their active participation in generating income for household sustenance. The expansion of large-scale
land acquisition in the country only intensifies the scarcity of land, which is a major productive resource for women. As have others, this study argues that women bear the brunt of land deals particularly given limitations and challenges in relation to their control and ownership of land. While land acquisition by local investors displaces women from cultivable land, the land deals also deprive women of subsistence food crop production, a major source of livelihood for rural women. One is likely to conclude that the large-scale land deals by local investors including the promises of employment, social amenities and infrastructural development failed to trickledown to infrastructural and social development and more incomes for the local population with no positive effects on food security.

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