

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agro-Industrial Development in Cameroon: The case of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) within the context of the Anglophone crisis

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Abstract. The Cameroon Development Corporation has been severely affected by the armed conflict in the English speaking (North West and South West regions) part of the country that has been on for close to four years running. How then has the armed conflict in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon affected the Cameroon Development Corporation? How can the growth of the agro-industry be guaranteed? This study looks at the impact of the armed conflict in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon on the Cameroon Development Corporation. Making use of public policy theories, this study establishes a link between government defense strategies/sector development policies and agro-industrial development. The study results show that due to the armed conflict in the English speaking regions, the CDC has incurred major damages including: loss in human capital, drop in production capacity, heavy financial loss and equipment damages. The study results also reveal that, the survival of the CDC depends largely on strategic options to be taken at two separate levels including: political options by conflicting parties - the government and separatist fighters on the one hand, and on the other, options taken by the CDC at both managerial and technical levels. The study concludes that for the CDC to attain structural growth and development that will significantly contribute to the national economy, conflicting parties must come to table for a negotiated peaceful agreement to end the armed conflict.

Key words: Armed conflict, Agro-industrial Development, North West and South West regions, Cameroon Development Corporation, Anglophone crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Plantations are believed to be agents of economic, social and infrastructural development (Kimengsi and Lambi, 2015; Forba, 2015; Fossung, 2001). However, in a context of armed conflict, there is a total halt in development. The Cameroon Development Corporation has been severely impacted by the armed conflict that

has plagued the North West and South West regions¹ of Cameroon since 2016. This English speaking part of Cameroon has been fighting to secede from the French

¹ These two regions form the English speaking part of Cameroon.

speaking section since October 2016. The grievances of the people of former British West Cameroon against the successive Governments of former East Cameroon (French Cameroon), dates as far back as the reunification of the two UN trust territories in 1961. After a UN plebiscite in 1961, Southern Cameroons joined the Republic of Cameroon in October 1961. The country became a federal republic in the same year, with both components retaining their local parliaments. In 1972 the federation was dissolved and the country became a unitary state (the United Republic of Cameroon). A Presidential decree later transformed the country into the Republic of Cameroon in 1984².

Cameroon, on the west coast of Central Africa, covers 475,400 square kilometers (183,695 square miles) and adjoins Nigeria to the northwest, Chad to the northeast, the Central African Republic (CAR) to the east, and the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea to the south (Dinsi *et al*, 2016). Cameroon has a young population with a median age of 18.7 years and 41.25% of the population being between zero to 14 years old with a current population estimated at about 26.55 million people³.

The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) is Cameroon's largest and most established agribusiness in terms of its size and number of jobs created⁴. Found in the English part of the country, the CDC was created by British colonial rulers after World War II. The British subsumed plantations set up by earlier German colonists into a parastatal enterprise. The CDC is still largely government-owned but also attracts international capital through increasing privatization. The CDC is one of the biggest agro-industrial contributors to the state economy and is the second largest employer (after the state), employing over 15,700 people, including seasonal workers (but this is down from an estimated total of 25,000 employees in 2000). CDC plantations cover approximately 41,000 hectares, 38,000 hectares of which are mature and at production stage, growing palm oil and palm nuts, tea, rubber and banana (makossa and sawa banana). It has a share capital of 15,626 billion FCFA (Hoyle and Levang 2012) and its activities affect

conservation and local livelihoods across the southwest region of Cameroon.

The company in its entirety has been reduced to a level where it can barely operate. In a declaration made in 2018, CDC's General Manager Franklin Njie announced that "Nine estates including Boa, Illoani Mill, Illoani Estate, Mbonge, Mukonje, Malende, Mungo, Meanja, and Tombel are not operational. There is no guarantee of selling palm oil next year, Illoani Mill is at zero production since the month of April, Mondoni is partially functioning and the security of workers is a major concern"⁵. The company's general manager further explained that "heavy fighting between the national army and separatist fighters in and around the company's plantation in the South West region have paralyzed activities of the company that is classified as the second highest employer after the state". Since the outbreak of the armed conflict in the two English speaking regions of the country and the South West region in particular which is host to most of the company's plantations, the agro-industrial establishment has progressively witnessed a significant drop in its production capacity. The company's major products such as banana, rubber and palm oil has been dropping along the years as a result of the crisis in the English speaking regions of Cameroon. The progressive drop in the company's production capacity has had seriously affected negative effects on the proper and normal functioning of the industry in particular and also on the economic situation of Cameroon in its entirety. This disturbing situation of Cameroon Development Corporation raises the following two major questions which this study will attempt to provide answers to: What is the impact of the Anglophone crisis on the Cameroon Development Corporation? What are the appropriate options required to trigger the production capacity of the CDC in the context of war? To attempt answers to the above questions, this paper will on the one hand deal with the impact of the Anglophone crisis on the Cameroon Development Corporation (I) and on the other, we shall look at appropriate options needed to activate the growth of the agro-industrial company in the context of war (II).

THE IMPACT OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS ON THE CAMEROON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CDC)

The Anglophone crisis in the English speaking regions of

² <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/cameroon/history/>; 25/05/2020.

³ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cameroon-population/>; 25/05/2020.

⁴ Dinsi S.C *et al*. (2016): Agri-Business and Logging Investment, Great Ape Conservation and Poverty in Cameroon. <https://www.povertyandconservation.info/en/pages/cameroon-pclg>.

⁵ <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/anglophone-crisis-force-cdc-drop-5000-workers/>; 20/05/2020.

Cameroon has imposed severe impacts on the technical functioning of the company. The war has also brought about a significant drop in the production capacity of the biggest agro-industry in Cameroon in the past years.

Impact of the Anglophone crisis on the technical functioning of the CDC

Loss of equipments

The outbreak of the Anglophone crisis has caused serious material damages to the Cameroon Development Corporation. In response to the security situation, CDC was forced to reduce its activities⁶. The agro-industrial company has lost a significant quantity of cultivation and transportation equipments including: tractors, caterpillars, lorries and small vehicles in many of its plantations in trouble zones of the South West region. Vehicles have been vandalized and destroyed by separatists who attack workers in their attempt to prevent them from operating because they consider that the CDC is under the control of the government of 'la Republique du Cameroun' a country they claim not to belong to any longer. Many of the corporation's cars have been seized by armed separatists who use them for their operations to fight the regular army of the state.

Palm, rubber and banana processing plants have been deliberately abandoned by workers of the corporation for fear of being attacked by separatist fighters. The abandoned equipments have remained in the bushes for long and are beyond repairs. Vehicles, tractors and other machinery used for cultivating crops have been abandoned and all of these constitute a great loss to the Cameroon Development Corporation.

Loss of human capital

The Cameroon Development Corporation has lost more than half of its work force as a result of the war in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Workers of the cooperation have been threatened by separatist fighters

to leave the plantations or lose their lives⁷. Thousands of the cooperation's workers have escaped for safety and abandoned palm, rubber and banana plantations in affected areas in the South West region. CDC workers have also deliberately escaped from many plantations in the South West region simply because of insecurity that reigns throughout affected areas where the cooperation has plantations such as: Ekona, Lobe and many parts of the Ndian and Manyu divisions of the South West region.

There have been cases of kidnappings of plantation staff especially top managerial staff and huge ransoms have been demanded. In some cases, the kidnapped personnel didn't receive any assistance from the administration of the corporation in terms of paying ransoms. Some families were forced to pay huge sums as ransoms to kidnappers before they were freed. For these reasons among others, hundreds of workers of the biggest agro-industrial company in Cameroon have abandoned their jobs and joined their families even though in very deplorable financial conditions.

As a result of the financial crisis that the CDC has faced as a result of the war in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon since October 2016, the cooperation has not been able to function normally and regularly pay its workers. The general manager of the CDC in a meeting informed workers that "from June 2018, workers from these estates should be paid 50% of their salaries. If the situation persist, it will drop to 40 % in July, 35 % in August, 30 % in September and after six months, such workers will be laid off"⁸. The company has therefore been forced to retrench⁹ thousands of its workers many of whom have been jobless since they lost their jobs in the plantations. Some workers have fled out of the area to seek other jobs in the French speaking regions of the country like Douala and Yaoundé.

⁶ The general manager of the company revealed that only four out of eleven rubber fields were operating at about 50% of their capacity, and that two out of seven oil palm fields were still in operation. As for the banana sector, the most seriously affected, operations had been completely shut down since the end of August.
<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/712432/politique/crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-la-cdc-au-bord-du-gouffre/>

⁷ On January 2, a dozen company employees were attacked at the Sonne Likomba Estate camp in Tiko, one of the tea fields still in operation. Oliver*, one of the survivors of the attack, took refuge in the nearby town of Mutengene.
<https://www.jeuneafrique.com/712432/politique/crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-la-cdc-au-bord-du-gouffre/>

⁸ See <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/anglophone-crisis-force-cdc-drop-5000-workers/>; 25/05/2020.

⁹ At least five thousand workers of the Cameroon Development Corporation, CDC, could lose their jobs if the crisis rocking the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon persists, management of the corporation has said.

Impact of the crisis on the production capacity of the agro-industrial company

According to a report released by Cameroon's employers' association (GICAM) in July 2018, the crisis cost the country a revenue shortfall of XOF269 billion and 6,434 jobs. Various thriving businesses and resources, such as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and Pamol Plantation, were ravaged amid conflicts¹⁰. The GICAM report further explained that, the Cameroon Development Cooperation has abandoned many of its plantations in the South West region of Cameroon as a result of the heavy fighting in areas where its plantations are found. On the ground information provided by natives of these areas indicate that in Manyu division which is one of the highest hit areas of the South West region, no plantation of the CDC is functional because all workers have fled for safety to other parts of the country where there is relative calm. In the Meme and Ndian divisions where the cooperation had palm plantations, all of the plantations have been abandoned due to the insecurity situation imposed by the war in the area. Plantations of the CDC in the Manyu, Meme and Ndian divisions of the South West regions of Cameroon have all been transformed into camps for separatist fighters. There are serious confrontations going on occasionally in these plantations which have been transformed into battle zones between the regular army and armed separatists. Due to the fighting in these plantations, the corporation has abandoned these sites leaving behind investments including land and crops and this has severely affected the normal functioning of the company leading to a significant drop in production capacity in all of its plantations.

Drop in production

The Cameroon Development Corporation has witnessed significant drop in production in all major productions including; palm oil, banana and rubber.

Drop in banana production

Former flagships of the agri-business sector in the Anglophone region, Pamol Plantations PLC and Cameroon Development Corporation have ceased all

activity. Such is the gloomy state in which Cameroon's Anglophone region is currently plunged¹¹. The corporation's banana plantations in Tiko and Mutenguene have been abandoned in the bushes for long without any major activities of maintenance by workers of the plantation. Heavy fighting in these areas has caused workers to flee for safety. Banana farms have remained in bushes because the usual periodic clearing of the farms is no longer being carried out because the farms have been deserted for longer periods. Banana plantations no longer receive the attention as was the case before the crisis. Plantain plants are not trimmed as a result they don't produce well any longer. The regular spraying of plantations with insecticides no longer happen since there is no work due to the war in the area and workers have escaped for safety leaving the plantations in the wild. Workers are also not available to harvest banana's that are ready for processing, packaging and marketing. The banana's finally gets ripe and serve as food for fighters on both camps including separatist fighters and the national defense forces as they fight in and around the fields. The abandoned banana's also serves as food for birds and other animals who have now found a new home in the abandoned banana plantations in crisis affected areas of the South West region.

The fact that work has been completely abandoned¹² in banana plantations of crisis affected areas in the South West region, the CDC is incurring heavy financial loses despite the huge investments made in plantations. Banana production has dropped in the entire corporation because some plantations have been abandoned and no harvest comes from abandoned farms. The quantity of banana produced for export by the company has dropped significantly since 2017. Consequently, the financial returns of the company from banana production have dropped with serious economic impacts on the national economy, given the fact that the CDC in particular and agro-industry in general contributes significantly to the national economy.

¹¹ See Brise R. Mbodlam in Socio-economic impacts of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon;

<https://www.businessincameroon.com/pdf/BC79.pdf>; 25/05/2020

¹² Due to these perturbations, by the end of March 2018, the company exported 11,631 tons of banana. This represents a drastic drop by 15,209 tons compared to the 26,840 tons exported during the same period a year earlier.

¹⁰ BUSINESS IN CAMEROON N° 79 / September 2019.
<https://www.businessincameroon.com/pdf/BC79.pdf>

Drop in palm oil production

Palm plantations of the CDC in the South West region have also come under serious attack from separatist fighters on the one hand while plantations have also flee from crisis affected areas for safety reasons. In the Ekondo-Titi area and the Ndian division in general, CDC palm plantations have been abandoned to nature due to heavy fighting between the regular army and Ambazonia separatist fighters. Plantations are no longer being regularly cleared as it was usually done when there was no war. Palm trees are not trimmed so the trees also do not produce as much as they should have when properly taken care of, consequently there is the drop in production of nuts. The palm nuts finally get ripe and ready for harvest, but cannot be harvested because of the absence of plantation workers to harvest them. The palms nuts end up being abandoned in the bushes and are consumed by birds, animals and a few courageous persons who have taken the courage to brave the odds despite the war to remain in their communities.

Faced with the situation explained above, the agro-industrial company cannot reach its targeted palm oil production objectives. The quantity of palm oil produced is less because palms didn't produce well, the available quantity of palms produced is not harvested. Consequently, the corporation ends up not milling the required quantity of oil because palm nuts from crisis affected plantations were not harvested and not milled. The quantity of palm oil produced drops and the impact on the financial benefits of the company from the palm oil sector is huge. As a result, the national demand is not met and exports to foreign markets drop. At the end of the day, the national economy which depends to a greater extent on exports from the agro-industrial sector is seriously affected.

Drop in rubber production

Rubber is one of the key products of the Cameroon Development Corporation that has also been affected by the armed conflict in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. The Tiko and Mutenguene rubber plantations unfortunately are found in the seriously affected areas of the Tiko and Mutenguene subdivisions where serious fighting between separatists and the regular army usually occurs. Rubber is one of the industrial products of the CDC that demands close attention. Like is the situation witnesses with the banana and palm plantations discussed above, rubber plantations have also been abandoned by the company's workers

who have escaped for safety to other parts of the country where there is no war. There are no rubber tappers to regularly tap, hence, the quantity of raw rubber produced by the corporation is less than before in a warless situation. Consequently, the quantity of rubber processed by the company for exportation drops significantly hence the national economy is affected.

Heavy financial losses incurred by company

Drop in financial benefits

According to a study by the Cameroon Employers Association (GICAM), major state-owned companies, such as the Cameroon Development Corporation and Pamol, which employ tens of thousands of people in the North West and South West regions, are experiencing serious problems with losses estimated at FCFA 269 billion (€410 million)¹³. The crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon has brought the Cameroon Development Corporation to its knees financial. The drop in quantity of production for banana, rubber and palm products has severely affected the company financially. The quantity of banana produced by the CDC has dropped to the extent that the national demand is not met and the supply to foreign markets is far less than the annual quantities produced in the past before the armed conflict. This has led to a drop in the financial benefits to the company from the sales of banana. The production of raw rubber for the international market has witnessed a significant drop also, causing the company to sell less quantities of rubber than before. The drop in the quantity of palm oil produced by the company doesn't support the high demand by pharmaceutical companies and other companies that rely on palm oil, kenel oil and residue from the production of oil for their companies. Because the company supplies less, it sells just the minimum quantities produced and the financial returns to the company drops significantly.

The CDC has also incurred huge material losses in terms of abandoned and vandalized drilling plants, cars and other farm equipments which have greatly contributed to the drop in production capacity of the company. Despite the fact that plantations in affected areas no longer contribute to the quantity of the

¹³ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-comment-arriver-aux-pourparlers/> 25/05/2020.

company's farm produce, the company faces enormous difficulties to transform the quantity of farm produce coming from unaffected plantations due to the lack of sufficient drilling plants for the drilling of oil. Rubber and banana processing plants are fewer today than was the case before the armed conflict. The shortage in transformation equipment has severely reduced the production capacity of the agro-industrial company, hence, sales of the company have dropped and consequently, the financial returns of the company have witnessed a significant drop in the last three years of the armed conflict which is still on.

Retrenchment of staff due to lack of financial means

The deteriorating financial situation of the agro-industrial company due to the armed conflict in the Anglophone¹⁴ regions of Cameroon has seriously affected the proper functioning of the cooperation. As a result of the bad financial situation, company workers even in areas that have not been affected by the war have been retrenched because the company is unable to support the wages of its workers especially field workers. Hundreds of CDC workers have lost their jobs not because they have escaped from the way, but because they have been temporarily retrenched because of lack of financial means by the company which makes it impossible to regularly pay its workers. The already bad livelihood situation of CDC workers has worsened not only for retrenched staff, but also for their families and school age children in particular.

STRATEGIC OPTIONS CAPABLE OF SAVING THE CAMEROON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FROM AN EVENTUAL COLLAPSE

Two major categories of options to be taken are possible and these could be taken by key stakeholders at different levels including the following:

Political options to help increase the production capacity of the agro-industrial company

Recommended political options to contribute in boosting

¹⁴ The Anglophone region here refers also to the North West and South West regions of Cameroon which are the two English speaking regions of the country with a British colonial heritage which they jealously want to preserve.

the production capacity of the Cameroon Development Corporation concerns two major stakeholders involved in the ongoing war in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon including the government and the separatists.

Government measures to contribute to the growth of the CDC

Cameroon's ability to piece itself back together depends on the government's willingness to sit down with the right negotiators on both sides at the table, take into account the deep historical roots of Anglophone grievances, and engage seriously with Anglophone proposals on ending the crisis (Claire H. and K. Opalo, 2019). The analysis done on the current crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, shows that the said crisis is the major cause of the collapsing state of the Cameroon Development Corporation. Since the start of the crisis, the government of Cameroon has taken a series of measures expected to resolve the problem in the crisis regions including; the creation of an English law section in the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM)¹⁵, the creation of an English Law department in the Supreme Court of Cameroon, the translation of the OHADA Law which had existed only in French into English, the creation of a Bilingualism and Multiculturalism Commission, the creation of a Disarmament and Reintegration Commission for ex-separatist fighters and the holding of a National Dialogue in October 2019 in Yaoundé that was chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon at the instructions of the President of the Republic. Despite all these, measures put in place by the ruling government, the fighting is still on with well known consequences on civilians and the local and national economies.

As a way forward to end the crisis in the two English speaking regions and create an enabling environment for the CDC to function properly and regain its full operational capacity, the government of Cameroon could do more including; accept the organization of a real, genuine and inclusive dialogue between representatives of the separatist camp identified by separatists themselves, representatives of the government of the Republic of Cameroon and the negotiated dialogue should be moderated by an independent party, preferably led by the African Union and a consensus arrived at should be accepted by both parties ; there

¹⁵ ENAM is the French acronym (ECOLE NATIONALE DE L'ADMINISTRATION ET DE LA MAGISTRATURE).

should be a ceasefire on the camp of the regular army and the separatist fighters to ensure that the dialogue is carried out in a calm atmosphere; release all war prisoners captured on both camps; after the war, a commission for reconstructing the crisis affected regions should be created to reconstruct the affected regions and this commission should be composed of representatives of persons from the separatist camp, government, development partners and the African Union; creation of a reconciliation commission led by the African Union and other stakeholders in the domain which will be charged with the role of appeasing the populations and forgiving all those who have been involved in the war in one way or the other.

It is only after an end to the crisis that has been on for close to four years in the North West and South West regions that there will be peace in the area and it is only then that economic, social, political and all other activities in the affected areas can go on as usual. It is only in a peaceful and warless environment that the Cameroon Development Corporation could successfully and smoothly carry on with its activities. Operating in a peaceful environment is the only remedy for the biggest agro-industrial company in Cameroon to regain its full operating capacity.

Measures by separatists to contribute to the growth of the CDC

On the other hand, the separatist camp has its own challenges in order to end the senseless war in the two regions, hence, contributing to efforts for the Cameroon Development Corporation to function normally thereby regaining its full production capacity. The government of Cameroon organized a national dialogue in October 2019 which was boycotted by Key separatist leaders, since their demands had not been met. They demanded, among others, the withdrawal of Cameroon's military from the North West and South West regions, the release of 10 prominent separatist leaders who were sentenced on 20 August 2019 to life imprisonment on terrorism charges, and for the dialogue to take place on a neutral ground and in the presence of an international mediator¹⁶.

Concretely, the appropriate measures to take here

¹⁶ Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cameroon-security/cameroon-releases-333-prisoners-amid-peace-talks-separatists-say-not-enough-idUSKBN1WI23V>, October 2019.

include; accepting a cease fire; accept to get into a well organized, genuine and inclusive dialogue to be led by a team of experts and institutions mentioned above¹⁷, ready to accept the decision arrived at in the dialogue without insisting on very extreme conditions such as total separation in a situation where there is a compromising situation such as returning to the former two state federation composed of the West and East Cameroons'; accept to work together with other partners including the government of Cameroon to reconstruct the crisis affected regions. It is only by aligning to a peace building initiative that the ongoing war could come to an end, and it is also only when there is peace that all sectors in the crisis affected regions can function in full capacity.

Hence, the Cameroon Development Corporation can only regain its full production capacity when it will be able to operate in a peaceful and warless environment. It is therefore only at this moment that all the plantations of the cooperation can regain their full operational capacity which is the only remedy for a return to business as usual in the company.

Internal policies specific to the Cameroon Development Corporation required to contribute to the growth of the company

The Cameroon Development Corporation which is one of Cameroon's biggest employer has to take evasive action in the Anglophone zone¹⁸. On its part, the agro-industrial company has a number of administrative decisions on which to focus on as urgent priorities if they absolutely have to guarantee the growth of the company and boost its production capacity to be able to meet demands of the local and international markets.

Administrative measures

¹⁷ The worsening crisis in the Anglophone regions now calls for the intervention of a credible mediator, such as the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) or the African Union. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/130-cameroon-worsening-anglophone-crisis-calls-strong-measures/25/05/2020>.

¹⁸ Only seven of its 29 production sites are still fully operational, according to GICAM. <https://www.france24.com/en/20181005-cameroon-economy-hard-hit-anglophone-unrest-jihadist-attacks/25/05/2020>.

Cameroon, like other African countries from the “oil palm belt” promotes the development of oil palm amongst other crops such as cocoa, coffee or rubber (Bakoumé, 2006; Jannot, 2010). Since its inception, the CDC has gone through many challenges in ensuring its sustenance and as such adopted several development and management strategies to uphold its ideals¹⁹. At the moment, the Cameroon Development Corporation can barely operate due to the negative effects imposed by the crisis in the two English speaking regions. For this situation to be reversed such that the cooperation can regain its full operational capacity, the board of administrators of the said company has to take very concrete administrative decisions as explained below:

Employment of new workers

Thousands of workers have left the agro-industrial company either forcefully or unexpectedly as a result of the Anglophone crisis²⁰. After the war must have been over or would have temporarily stopped under agreed negotiation terms, the board of administrators of the CDC will have to launch openings for the recruitment of new workers at managerial level as well as field workers. In plantations that were completely deserted due to the armed conflict, technical and field workers should be recruited to be able to respond to the workforce needed at each abandoned plantation including; rubber, banana and palm plantations. In plantations where the number of staff was dropped because of lack of financial means, the staff population should be increased proportionately both for technical, administrative and field workers. The presence of new staff in the company working under a calm and peaceful environment will contribute in restoring and even increasing the usual production capacity of the Cameroon Development Corporation.

Bring back displaced staff

Due to the armed conflict, thousands of workers of the cooperation fled for safety out of crisis affected plantations especially in the Manyu²¹, Meme and Fako

divisions. The cooperation's management board could decide to launch an appeal to former plantation staff wherever they maybe, informing and assuring them of a ceasefire and security measures put in place in the area and also inviting them to commence work in the cooperation in the shortest possible time. It should be mentioned here that the choice of bringing back former staff to the corporation is intended to maintain the working standards and professional experience of people who have been in the company before. In a context where the agro-industry is struggling to catch-up and increase productivity and rebuild the company's standards and productive capacity, it is better to fall back to experienced and skillful workers who have worked in the corporation before.

Purchase modern and adapted mechanical equipment

Apart from human losses (2 employees killed in the crisis according to the government daily), the company's properties are being destroyed and its activities have slowed down²². It should be a priority of the management of the corporation to come out with a commission in charge of making proposals for the type and quality of machines to be bought by the company to replace destroyed and outdated equipment that have higher productive capacities. All vandalized and destroyed palm, rubber and banana transformation plants in the company should be replaced urgently. Tractors used for tilling plantation fields, caterpillars, cars and other machinery used in the company's plantations that had been destroyed should be progressively replaced. New and experienced operators for the newly acquired equipments should be recruited and given short term refresher training to enable them rapidly adapt to the equipments and to the rhythm of work in the company which at this moment is expected to be very intense. It is only by taking careful, and systematic reflection and action on the ground that the CDC can function normally and boost its

picked-up arms and it is also one of the areas where the most dreaded fighting have occurred with heavy human and material lost.

¹⁹ <http://www.cdc-cameroon.com/> 25/05/2020

²⁰ The Anglophone crisis in this context also refers to; the crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon and also the crisis in the two English speaking regions.

²¹ Manyu division is the division of origin of the detained leader of the Ambozonians (separatists), and it is there that the separatists first

²² “Our activities are affected by the socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest. We thank the authorities for their support but we want to restate once again that we are seriously threatened”, Franklin Ngoni Njie, director of CDC said during a medal awarding ceremony presided by the minister of works and social security Grégoire Owona. <https://www.businessincameroon.com/agro-industry/1705-8041-cameroon-development-corporation-s-activities-threatened-by-the-anglophone-crisis>

production capacity which is badly needed to contribute to the local and national economies.

Increase the sizes of plantations and open new ones

The overview of the Cameroon development corporation since its inception has been one of responding to socio-economic changes, recognizing, rewarding and promoting the Cameroonian worker. The management and workers of this corporation are today more determined to preserve this legacy²³. It is of absolute necessity that the Cameroon Development Corporation should increase the present sizes of some rubber, banana and palm plantations in the South West region and open new ones in other divisions in the North West and South West regions and other regions of Cameroon such as the Littoral, South and East regions where the soils are relatively more fertile and suitable for the cultivation of rubber, banana and palms. The sizes of existing plantations could be increased in the Manyu and Meme divisions where there is still cultivable land. An increase in the sizes of plantations will increase yields and the production capacity of rubber, banana and palms will increase. The company will make more profit and the local and national economies will grow and living conditions of Cameroonians will be better.

Put in place Minimum security measures

In response to the security situation, the CDC has been forced to curtail its activities²⁴. The administrative board of the agro-industrial company should take special security measures to protect workers and assets of the company even after the crisis would have been over. It should be noted that in any context of war, there are usually some isolated cases of insecurity that still go on in previous crisis affected areas. The biggest constraint of the company is security²⁵. Therefore, the management of

the company should take special and minimum security measures to guarantee security of workers and assets of the company. More security staff should be recruited and posted to all plantations in the crisis affected areas and the security agents should be well equipped with authorized security materials adapted for basic security in Cameroon. A well-equipped security working under favourable working conditions will certainly guarantee the security of workers and property of the agro-industry. The workers of the company will be more concentrated working in a secured environment and this will enable workers to better, faster and production will increase in the different plantations and also the quantity of finished and/or marketable products will increase and the company will grow and contribute to the national economy in a significant way.

Technical measures

For the Cameroon Development Corporation to function normally as before and increase its production capacity, there are minimum technical actions that need to be taken by the management board among which are:

Build capacities of workers

Capacity building is one of the essential measures that every institution should consider as a priority for any meaningful improvement and innovation to be realized. The management of the CDC should consider building capacities of newly recruited staff and carry out refresher courses for old staff periodically. New staff will be able to learn and this will help them adapt faster to the exigencies of the agro-industrial company. Old staff will also gain new and modern skills that will improve on their capacity to work better. With newly acquired working skills, company workers will be able to produce more in the plantations and transformation into finished goods in the different transformation plants will also increase. The production capacity of the company will significantly increase, the company will sell more and make more financial profit which will contribute to the national economy.

Repair old equipments purchase modern ones

The Cameroon Development Corporation is already in a

the safety of workers in the company's banana, palm and rubber plantations, which are now the target of attackers? ",

²³ <http://www.cdc-cameroon.com/> 25/05/2020

²⁴ Cameroun: La CDC contrainte de réduire ses activités suite aux attaques répétées des milices sécessionnistes contre ses employés

¹⁹ see Franck Foute (2019), "Crise anglophone au Cameroun : la CDC au bord du gouffre ?". <https://www.business-humanrights.org/fr/cameroun-la-cdc-contrainte-de-r%C3%A9duire-ses-activit%C3%A9s-suite-aux-attaques-r%C3%A9p%C3%A9t%C3%A9es-des-milices-s%C3%A9cessionnistes-contre-ses-employ%C3%A9s>

²⁵ Worried about the security challenges in the crisis hit regions, the general manager of CDC, Franklin Ngoni Njie laments on how to ensure

serious financial crisis, so, even after the armed conflict would have been over, the company will need some time to regain its usual financial strength. This implies that it will not be an easy task for the company to purchase all the required equipments such as transformation and processing plants for the transformation and processing of rubber, palm nuts and banana which are relatively very expensive. In addition to transformation and processing plants, there are also other heavy machines like tractors, caterpillars and other equipments that are used in plantation fields that will need to be replaced and which are also very costly. Purchasing all of these within a very short space of time will be a heavy and challenging task for the company given its already bad financial situation as a result of the armed conflict. In order to reduce cost, it is recommended that the management of the agro-industry could embark on repairing partially damaged equipment's first and replacing equipments that are beyond repairs. By engaging in the repairs of reparable equipment, the company doesn't only reduce expenditure, it also saves money that could help in other vital departments that could contribute to the growth of the company. Operating with the necessary machines in the production processes of the company, the agro-industry will be able to increase productivity and this will imply a corresponding increase in the financial benefit of the company which has positive impacts on the operational capacity of the agro-industrial company and to the economy of Cameroon.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to note the fact that the armed conflict that has been going on in the North West and South West regions for close to four years running, has severely affected the biggest agro-industrial company in Cameroon. The fighting has affected the technical capacity of the company destroying machines and causing plantation workers to flee for safety hence seriously affecting the human capacity of the company. In its capacity as the biggest agro-industrial company that significantly contributes to the economic development of Cameroon, it is of absolute necessity that key stakeholders involved in the war on the one hand and the administration of the agro-industry on the other to prioritize major options that will spur the company to a meaningful structural growth and development capable of contributing to the national economy and improving living conditions of Cameroonians nationwide.

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