



World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Cameroon : Mbororo pastoralists

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Profile

Though recognized by government bodies as indigenous, Cameroon's Mbororo are among the poorest groups in the country and frequently face discrimination as perceived 'other' or 'outsiders'. As in the neighbouring countries such as the CAR and Chad, they are confronted with competition and tension over access to land, water and pasture for their herds, most recently in the face of the growth of ranching, agro-industry and national parks.

Current issues

Due to poverty, nomadic practices, discrimination and other factors, Mbororo are among the groups in Cameroon that are insufficiently covered by birth registration and identity documents. National authorities have made efforts to address this, but it remains an area of concern, particularly for those Mbororo who practise cross-border transhumance. Similarly, lack of identity documents, nomadic lifestyle and other factors hamper Mbororo children's access to school.

Nomadic pastoralist Mbororo communities in the northwest accuse landowners of seizing traditional grazing lands and other abuses. As part of a larger land reform, in 2013 consultations opened with civil society groups around the text of a draft Pastoral Code developed with support from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The code would reportedly recognize Mbororos' right to lands they have been using and ease procedures for obtaining titles. It would include provisions for community pastures, demarcated corridors for herders to move their stock, designated watering sites and mechanisms for resolving disputes. The Pastoralist Code has been awaiting adoption since 2014.

In April 2014 Rita Izsák and James Anaya, respectively the then UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues and UN Special Rapporteur on indigenous peoples' rights, expressed concern at the reported eviction of Mbororo families from their ancestral lands in western Cameroon, in the context of a long-standing land dispute with the Catholic University in Bamenda. An estimated 300 people had been made homeless. The university claimed that it had provided compensation, whereas the community stated that it had been misled and would never have agreed to leave their homes.

Cameroon has urbanized rapidly over the last three decades, in part due to drought and famine. Men from the Mbororo community, for instance, have been forced by drought to abandon pastoralism and search for work

in urban centres, leaving their families behind. Climate change has led to the encroachment of invasive plant species, also limiting pasture lands. This has in turn led to a decrease in milk production, traditionally a source of income for Mbororo women; without that extra money, Mbororo women have become more dependent on men for support. These trends have disrupted family structures, damaged family cohesion and increased the risk of violence against women as well as exposure to HIV/AIDS, among other impacts.

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