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Abstract

Purpose: Before 1990s, the decentralisation process in Cameroon has gone through several stages. This process really materialised with the revision of the Cameroon Constitution in 1996. Owing to that, several laws concerning this process were promulgated. Decentralisation should eventually make all decentralised territorial authorities autonomous. This government policy, which is part of the bottom-up approach, has the responsibility to promote the participation of the population. Thus, one is entitled to ask how decentralisation in Cameroon can impact women's participation in rural development in the Tubah council?

Materials and Methods: To answer this question, primary and secondary data were mobilised and processed according to appropriate methods for the variables studied. Primary data were collected from observation, interviews of key informants and administration of questionnaires addressed to a sample of 145 people in the council area. Secondary data were obtained from internet sources, textbooks as well as documentations and libraries. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptives and inferentials statistics meanwhile content analysis was used for qualitative data analysis.

Findings: The results show that even if the decentralisation process does not pay particular attention to women, it contributes to the creation of

a favourable framework for local development initiatives. Thus, 79% of the women in the Tubah area act individually, compared with 21% who take part in group actions. Their actions varied, with 40% in the field of agriculture and 30% to drinking water supply projects. Identified as one of the pillars of development in rural areas, the intervention of women, if well supervised and structured, it can boost development in a sustainable and effective way.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:

The study recommends that councils within the process of decentralisation should encourage women participation in rural development by ensuring their high representativeness. It also goes in line with the theory of decentralisation, which states that in order to promote local and participatory development, the transfer of power to local authorities must be effective. The study emphasises on the fact that, the transfer should not only be at the level of power and finances, but it should also include the social categories, must especially women, who are one of the main actors of rural development in Cameroon.

Keywords: *Rural Development, Decentralisation, Gender, Tubah Council, Nord-West Region of Cameroon*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Decentralisation is the transfer of powers from the State to legal persons of public law distinct from it. For liberals, decentralisation is seen as a counter "power" phenomenon (Rabarivelo, 2017). The theory of decentralisation assumes that in order to initiate local and participatory development, some power must be granted to constitutionally recognised local governments (Sékou, 2008). For Le Roy (1997), decentralisation has the effect of bringing political decisions closer to the territory in which they are made and to the people to whom they are addressed.

The origins of the decentralisation process in Cameroon go back to before independence with the creation of the Yaounde and Douala councils in 1941. It really took shape with the law N° 96/06 of 18 January 1996 revising the constitution of 2 June 1972 which gave a new impetus and an increased and determining role to decentralisation to improve and boost the political, social and economic development of Cameroon. It is important to mention with Cheka (2007) that: "Decentralisation constitutes part of the framework of national policy on democratisation that started in the 1990s". Since then, this process has continued to evolve. In 2002, decentralisation appeared for the first time at the ministerial level and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation was given the task of leading the decentralisation process. At the communal level, the new General Code of Local Authorities, promulgated in December 2019, following the law N° 2004/017 of 22 July 2004 laying down the rules applicable to councils traces the main lines of the decentralisation.

At the current stage of the decentralisation process, councils are the only existing decentralised territorial authorities. They are headed by elected mayors. On the practical level, the competences transferred by the Cameroonian State to the basic decentralised territorial authorities which are councils, including Tubah council which is the subject of this study, are centred on three main sectors including: the economic, the social and health, also the educational, sports, cultural and youth. Among the local development actors envisaged by the decentralisation process, we distinguish between state actors, support institutions, civil society, NGOs, associations, and the United Municipalities and Cities in Cameroon (UCUCC). Women are not specifically mentioned as a category in their own right among local development actors, whether in urban or rural areas, in this decentralisation process. However, women have always shown a particular dynamism over the years, especially in rural areas.

In the developing countries such as Asia, the Pacific rural women play a critical role in ensuring rural development and transformation. Rural women play a crucial role in rural economies of developing world thus acting as actors in rural development and transformation. They participate in crop production and livestock care, provide food, water and fuelwood for the families and engage in off-farm activities to diversify their livelihoods (UNO, 2015). In addition, they carry out vital reproductive functions in caring for children, older persons and the sick. In much the same way women in rural areas are highly involved in off farm activities as such as investment in businesses, infrastructural development and contributions in village development projects in a bid to give a new face lift to rural areas (FAO, 2015). Through the process of decentralisation, women in rural areas have been empowered to be involved in rural development through measures that ensure access to land, income and political positions (UNO, 2018).

In Africa women play a crucial role in rural development especially through their participation in the agricultural sector. In Africa, 80% of agricultural production comes from small farmers who are mostly rural women (Saquina, 2015). Though women in Africa have a reduced access to production resources, for example in sub-Saharan Africa, 15% of land holders are women and they receive less

than 10% of the credits and 7% of extension services. This is a limitation to productivity as it affects their livelihood, families and their ability to contribute to rural development and transformation. However, they contribute to rural development and transformation by ensuring food security, provision of labour for local village development projects such as contribution for school, water development projects and investment in business activities. In Mali, the decentralisation process is done through the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in rural areas where a percentage of female entrepreneurs are benefiting from microenterprise as PRSP progress indicators (Quisumbing, 2014).

The decentralisation process through the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper has led to the promotion of rural development through businesses, setting up of industries and investment in agriculture by rural women in Mali (Tibaijuka, 2015). In Rwanda, the promotion of rural development within the framework of decentralisation is also prominent. There, legal issues related to gender equality has led to the revision of the family code which offers couples the option of common ownership of property and assets and has brought in a new labour code and land regulation which removes restrictions on women's ability to work and own property (Spindel, 2010). Thanks to these measures, women in Rwanda are actively involved in rural development through the informal sector, agriculture and investment in businesses and industries (Sweetman, 2016).

In Cameroon women have been identified as important actors in rural development and transformation. Activities of women are coordinated by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (FAO, 2010). The ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of women's empowerment work with women in areas of food security, family health, education, income generating activities, savings and credits. There is the need to decentralise these ministries to local areas so as to effectively enhance women participation in rural development. A women's unit in the Department of Community Development in the Ministry of Agriculture promotes the organisation of women into cooperatives and farmers associations with the aim to promote rural development and transformation in rural areas in Cameroon (Ngalim, 2016). Women participation in rural development is highly rooted through their involvement in the agricultural sector which is aimed at ensuring food security and revenue generation. Women in Cameroon are actively involved in contributions to villages development projects, they are also involved in politics where some of them are ministers, parliamentarians, senators and mayors and play a crucial role in the development and transformation of their areas of competencies (Mbanga, 2003).

In the North West Region of Cameroon, women are actors in rural development in respective villages. This is seen through their active participation in agriculture, business activities and contributions to village Development Associations (Mbanga, 2003). They are also involved in the promotion of rural development through participation in village development projects through the supply of labour financial contributions. Women are actively involved in politics in their respective localities where some of them are mayors and parliamentarians.

In Tubah council, women are highly involved in agriculture aimed at ensuring food security to the population despite the fact that many of them are not land owners. The majority of women in Tubah council are not highly educated. To this effect, they are not aware of their rights and they are highly challenged by cultural norms. Their participation in political activities is limited. In that council, there seems to be inadequate implementation of decentralisation policies as it requires the transfer of power and competences to local levels in Cameroon through institutions and services. The absence of a Women Empowerment Center in Tubah council appears to play a negative role in promoting women's participation in rural development.

Women are also involved in the supply of labour and financial contributions to village water development projects. This study intends to examine how women as actors contribute to rural development and how they can be empowered through the process of decentralisation in Tubah council. To achieve its aim, the hypothetico-deductive method was used. The primary data came from field surveys by questionnaires with a sample of 145 people. They also came from interviews with resource persons indicated for the subject matter. This method led to the results that in the Tubah council, the decentralisation process is not more advanced than in other councils with the same status in Cameroon. Nevertheless, women as development actors benefit from the framework set up by the ongoing decentralisation process to act. They intervene as associations (21%) but mostly as individuals (79%) in various domains with 40% of their activities related to agricultural development and 30% for potable water projects.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Women individually or collectively have been the focus of many studies as actors of development in developed countries as well as in developing ones most especially in rural areas. In the USA for example, Taylor (2013) argues that, women's triple role in development has been recognised as meeting their strategic and practical gender needs. In Sweden, Ahl *et al.* (2023) showed the contribution of women to rural development, through entrepreneurship policy. In the same light, FAO (2017) pointed out that individual women in most countries in the developing world contributed to rural development and transformation through their participation in activities like farming, fishing and animal husbandry.

According to Jayaweera (2010), more women in Kenya are taking up the role of income earners in the community which are as well used in rural development through investment and transformation of the society. In the same direction, Kiribamune (2012) conducted studies in Nigeria and found out that individual women play a crucial role in rural development through investment in businesses and agriculture which contributes significantly to rural transformation. In Cameroon, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER, 2003), economic and social activities for women were carried out by Government services, NGOs and the projects.

In Bamenda III, Eta (2016) carried out studies on the role of NGOS on poverty alleviation and noted that women groups have empowered women to contribute to rural development and transformation through investment in poultry, agriculture and opening up of businesses. In the same light, FAO (2015) argues that, women empowerment in the process of decentralisation helps economically in both developed and developing world. Diversification can take various forms, including: farm-based income via the production of non-traditional exports through own-farm work or wage employment in agribusiness; non-farm income via micro-industry and trading enterprises in rural areas; and wage labour, either in rural industries or via labour migration by family members to work in urban industry and export processing zones (Moser, 2016). Women involvement in rural development and transformation faced a lot of challenges through marginalisation especially as a result of land tenure systems and subjugation. This study goes further to examine the challenges faced by women within the context of decentralisation in the process of rural development in Tubah council.

The study was guided by the theory of decentralisation which states that in order to promote local and participatory development, the transfer of power to local authorities must be effective. In the context of this study, this implies the transfer of power and financial resources from the various ministries located in the city capital Yaoundé to the North west region, which will also continue the transfer to the various councils under its control among which we have Tubah council. The process

will enable the local authorities to use the physical and human potentials to enhance the living standards of their population.

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area and Methods

This study focuses on the Tubah municipality in the Mezam Division located in the North West region of Cameroon. The data collection and processing involved a methodology centred on the collection of primary and secondary data as well as the processing of these data using appropriate tools.

Study Area

Tubah council is located in Mezam Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. It is one of the seven municipalities in Mezam Division. Tubah council lies between latitude $10^{\circ}15.25'$ and $10^{\circ}16.05'$ East of the Greenwich meridian and between latitude $5^{\circ}54.95'$ and $6^{\circ}09.56'$ North of the Equator. It is situated between several Sub Divisions; Belo to the North, Ndop to the East, Bafut and Bamenda to the West, and Balikumbat to the South (Tubah Sub-Divisional Council Area Development Plan, 2014). It covers a surface area of about 450 km^2 and has four villages namely: Kedjom Keku, Kedjom Ketinguh, Bambui includes (Finge and Baforkum), Bambili (Figure 1).

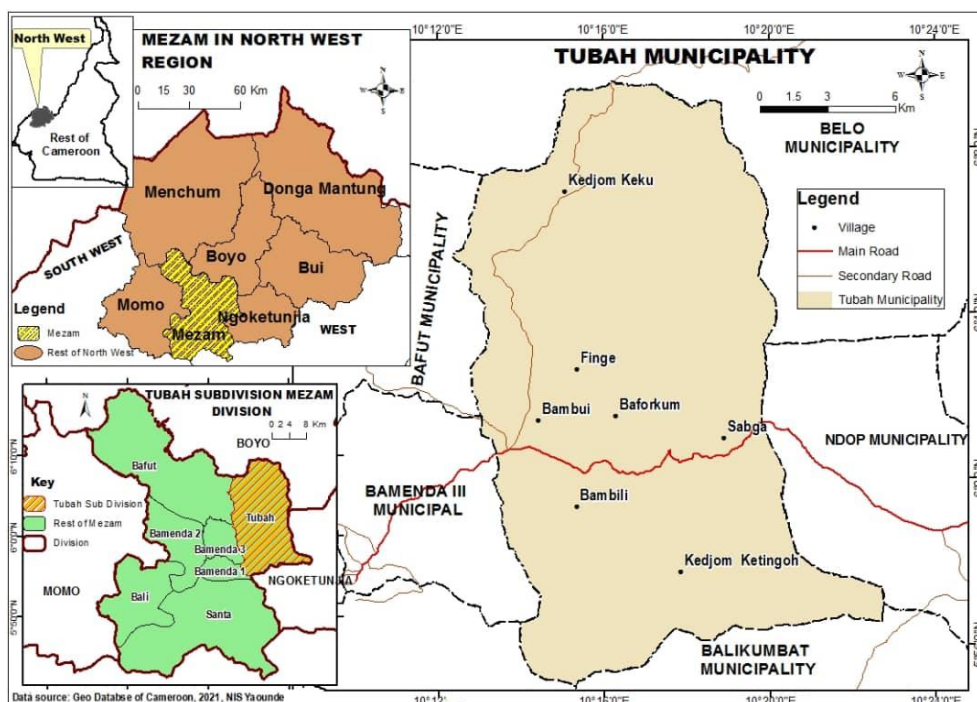


Figure 1: Location of Tubah Council in the North West Region of Cameroon

Source: Geo Database of Cameroon and NIS Yaounde, 2021

Figure 1 shows the location of Tubah council in Mezam Division of the North West Region. Tubah council lies strategically along the ring road criss-crossing two divisions of Boyo and Ngoketunja and it is located closer to Bamenda the head quarter of the North West Region of Cameroon. This offers an opportunity for farmers carrying out the various cropping systems such as market gardening, mixed cropping to be able to access ready markets provided by the capital city of Bamenda and other divisions. This increases the profit margins of farmers and offers then income for their livelihood sustenance in the study area. The development of local resources being a key

aspect of decentralisation and the resulting local development, the Tubah council is sufficiently endowed in physical and human terms.

Methods

This study adopted a survey as well as a co-relational research design. Primary data came from observation, interviews and administration of questionnaires. The questionnaire were addressed to a sample of 145 people in the council area. Some keys stakeholders were also interviewed to provide information necessary to achieve the objectives of the work. Data collected from questionnaires were sorted manually, analysed descriptively and inferentially used SPSS version 21 to transform data in to statistical tables and charts. The chi square was also used to analyse data to meet up with the main hypothesis of this study. This statistical tool was chosen with the intension to compare the degree of association between the variables related to women involvement in rural development as groups or individuals. The P value was set to be statistically significant at 0.05. To obtain the expected frequency (fei) in each cell of the contingency table, the total number of rows along that cell are multiplied by the total number of columns vertical to that cell. Next was the critical X^2 value computed at the various degrees of freedom. The level of significance was 0.05 meaning, at the end of this research there can be an error margin of about 5%. The X^2 critical value is read on the table using the degree of freedom (df). The study also used content analysis to analyse qualitative data obtained through interviews.

4.0 FINDINGS

The results reveal that the evolution of the decentralisation process in the municipality of Tubah has implications, albeit indirect, for the participation of women as developmental actors. On the whole, it is a question of improving the living conditions of the population in Tubah council. Women in this municipality act through well-structured groups but as well as individually. Their actions are felt in several areas of development in the Tubah municipality.

Decentralisation Processing Tubah Council and Women Empowerment

Decentralisation consists of the transfer by the State to decentralised local authorities of specific competences and appropriate means. It is a devolution by the state to elected local authorities of means and competences for the implementation of public services. This means that local authorities, municipalities and regions, become fully responsible for decisions in their areas of competence. These authorities are better than a centralised administration to respond to the immediate concerns of the population, by taking better account of their needs and improving their living conditions. In the Tubah council, just like in other municipalities in Cameroon, this decentralisation process has been endorsed by the revision of the Constitution of 18 January 1996 which made the Republic of Cameroon a unitary decentralised State. This implies the recognition of the existence of local communities and the maintenance of the unity of the state.

Eight years later, Article 2 paragraph 2 of Law N° 2004/017 of 22 July 2004 on the orientation of decentralisation clearly states that: "Decentralisation constitutes the fundamental axis for the promotion of development, democracy and good governance at the local level". Still under the provision of the Laws of the 2004, Cheka (2007) noted that there is a devolution of powers accompanied by the transfer of means, financial, material and human, to local entities that are made of 10 Regions and 339 councils. The main challenges of this political strategy are: the entrenchment and deepening of local democracy, local development and good governance. The State only made the first transfers of competences to municipalities in 2010, and the completion of the transfers as provided for by the law took place in 2015 with the transfer to communes and urban communities of 63 competences initially exercised exclusively by 21 ministerial departments.

In the Tubah council, as in other councils, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the process, but many stumbling blocks have appeared at the level of the Central State. Among the advance are: the publication of the Law N^o 2009/011 of 10 July 2009 on the financial regime of decentralised territorial authorities and Law N^o 2009/019 of 15 December 2009 on local taxation; the provision of additional budgetary resources to communes and urban communities either through the FEICOM and the PNDP, or through the General Allocation for Decentralisation, to enable them to carry out projects for the benefit of their populations.

The process of decentralisation in Cameroon in general and in Tubah council in particular is piloted by a number of stakeholders (the State, some key Ministries, NGOs, council associations like UCUC) all of them exercising roles that are complementary. These stakeholders work through a lot of operational institutions to ensure development. In Cameroon, active donors in the decentralisation domain are the United Nations system, Germany, France, Canada, European Union, the Dutch and the Swiss governments (Cheka, 2007). Through these stakeholders and institutions, women are able to be empowered, involved in local development and transformation. The political dimension is indicated by the election of women as female councillors in Tubah council. Through this election, the females are able to participate in the decision-making body of the council which implies that women are empowered to participate and enforce the decisions on rural development in their municipality.

The administrative dimension of the concept of decentralisation has three variables which are deconcentration, delegation and devolution. In line with deconcentration, there is the transfer of responsibilities from the central government in Yaounde to the municipality of Tubah. There, women have the responsibility to carry out development and not only to wait on the central government. There is the delegation of powers from the central government to the municipality for the execution of projects. This power is also extended to women in Tubah council as they are able to carry out or execute projects in Tubah council as a result of powers delegated to them. In line with devolution, there is a progressive transfer of financial autonomy or powers for the management of financial resources to the Tubah municipality.

In the fiscal dimension, there is the expansion of revenue through property. This has encouraged women to invest in hostels especially around the university area where they raise revenue from the collection of rents which are used in rural development and transformation through the construction of houses and other investment projects in the municipality. In line with women involvement in rural development in Tubah council, they are able to raise revenue through loans which are gotten from credit unions and banks in the study area. This helps them to carry out development projects aimed at ensuring rural development and transformation in Tubah municipality.

Types of Intervention of Women in Rural Development in Tubah Council

Women participate in rural development in Tubah council within the face of decentralisation as groups and individuals. Even if there is a variation in the degree of participation in groups and individuals amongst the villages that make up Tubah council as presented on Table 1, individual initiative are more that collective ones in all the villages.

Table 1: Women Participation in Rural Development in Tubah Council

Villages	Individuals	Groups	Total frequency
Bambui	45	7	52
Bambili	42	12	54
Kedjom Ketinguh	12	6	18
Kedjom Keku	16	5	21
Total	115	30	145
Percentage	79%	21%	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 1 shows the nature of women’s participation in rural development within the context of decentralisation in Tubah council and ranked in percentages. According to the table 1, 79% of women in Tubah council participate in rural development and transformation as individuals and only 21% participate as groups.

Women Groups Involved in Rural Development in Tubah Within the Context of Decentralisation

The decentralisation policies in Cameroon have led to the transfer of power from the central to local areas so as to enhance development. This has led to the creation of women groups in Tubah which are actively involved in rural development. Figure 2 shows the spatial distribution of women groups and their areas of specialisation.

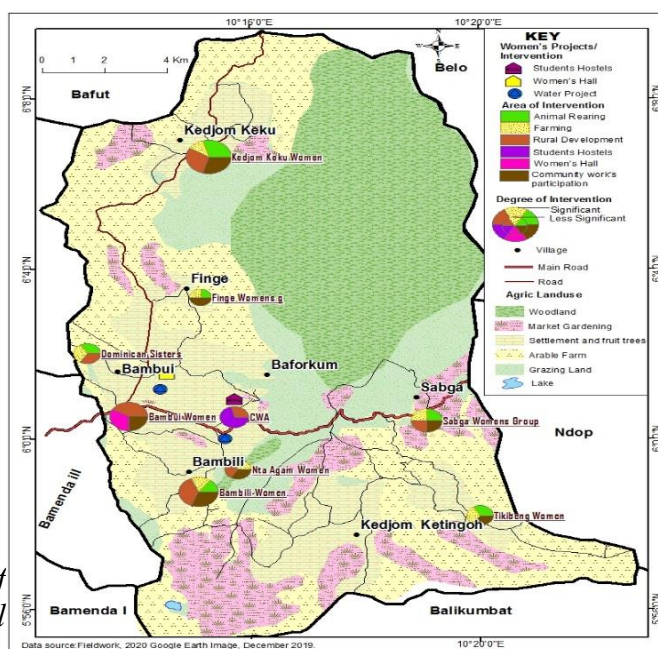


Figure 2: Spatial Distribution of Women’s Groups in Rural Development in Tubah Council

Source: Google image and Fieldwork, 2021

From Figure 2, one can notice a diversity of areas of intervention by women's groups and other associations in the development process in Tubah. In a village like Kedjom Keku, that intervention is really significant meanwhile in Kedjom Ketinguh, it is less significant. Some sectors such as livestock farming and participation in community work are recurrent. Table 2 shows the various women groups and their areas of involvement in rural development.

Table 2: Women’s Groups and Domains of Rural Development in Tubah Council

Women Groups	Location	Main Aim
Sabga Womens Group	Sabaga in Kedjom keku	Agriculture and rural development activities
Bambui Women’s quarter women’s group	Bambui	Agriculture and community development activities
Association of women’s empowerment in all works of life	Bambui	Training of women and empowering them in all aspects of life
Nta-Agam Quarter Women’s Group	Bambili	Contribution of ideas of agriculture, business and rural development
Catholic Women association Group	Bambui	Raise funds buy plots and build hostels for students

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 2 indicates the main activities carry out by those women are related to agriculture which is normal since it is the main activity in the area. The following section of the study examines the various activities carried out by women in rural development within the various groups. These groups and activities are presented as follows:

Bambui Catholic Women’s Association

This is a group made up of women from the Catholic Church who comes together to raise funds for infrastructural development. Their main focus is to raise funds, buy plots and construct student hostels in Bambili and Bambui so as to raise revenue. The revenue generated from rents helps them to carry out their church activities. The funds generated from their hostels also help them to give assistance to other mission’s stations in Tubah council. Plate 1 shows a student hostel owned by this group in Bambui.



Photo A: Catholic women hostel in Bambui

Photo B: Signpost of the catholic

women hostel Bambui

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Plate 1: Catholic Women Hostel in Bambui

The construction of this hostel led to women empowerment through income generation. It also leads to rural development and transformation through improvement in aesthetics.

Nta-Agam Quarter Women Group in Bambili

This is a *Njangi* group where women come together, share ideas, information on weekly bases and contribute money. These contributions help them to acquire loans to invest in businesses and to contribute financially to village development Projects.

Association of Women's Empowerment in All Works of Life

This association is based in Bambui. The association is in charge of empowering and training of women in all aspects of economic life. Some of the activities carried out by the association are training of women on decor, organic oil, tailoring, and hair stylist. This association also sales ingredients and equipments use in production of detergents body oil amongst others at affordable prices. The group was created in 2020. Since then, the following number of women has have been trained in the following domains (Table 3).

Table 3: Domains and number of women trained in women empowerment center of Bambui

Domains	Number of Women Trained
Tailoring	4
Hair stylist	3
Decor	3
Production of organic oil	4
Detergents	2
Cookeries	2
Total	18

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 3 shows some of the activities offered by the Association of women empowerment of all works of life in Bambui and the number of women trained since 2020. A total of 18 trainees have graduated from the association. Knowledge gotten from this center helped to empower the women and this contributed to women economic empowerment. This helped women to contribute to rural development through investment and financial contributions in village development activities and the construction of houses.

Sabga Women Group

This group started in 2016 with 11 Members. The membership has increased to 32 in 2021. The group is divided into two. The first group is involved in the cultivation of vegetables and onion. The second group is involved in the rearing of animals. The group started with two goats and of 2021 there groups now boast of 13 goats. Apart from the rearing of goats and cultivation of vegetables, the women are also involved in other development projects such as road and school construction, and water projects and health sensitisation campaigns.

Bambui Quarter Women Group

These women are involved in the health care campaigns in the quarter. They organise clean up campaigns so as to improve on the hygienic conditions of the village. They also participate in cleaning up water facilities such as stand pipes and water tanks. They are also involved in small *Njangis* which assist them to raise money for their businesses.

Women Participation as Individuals in Rural Development in Tubah Council

The decentralisation policies in Cameroon have capacitated women in Tubah council to be actively involved in rural development in a number of domains. This section of the study examines the various domains of women involvement in rural development in Tubah council.

Political Domains of Women Involvement in Rural Development in Tubah Council

The decentralisation process in Cameroon has led to the transfer of powers to local areas through the municipal Councils. Through these councils' women have been empowered to hold key positions in local politics where they are able to exercise powers and contribute to rural development. Through this measure women are involved in politics in Tubah council as they are elected as councillors and their voices are heard in the decision-making process of Tubah municipality. Field work showed that there are 4 female councillors in Tubah Rural council.

Election of Women into Important Positions in Village Development Projects

In Cameroon, the decentralisation process has also given local areas the powers to involve in local development in the domains of water and other social infrastructural development. Through these measures, there has been the increase of village development organisations to pilot the development affairs of the rural areas. Consequently, women are elected into important positions in the executives of the various development associations of their respective villages. Table 4 shows the various village development organisations in Tubah council, number of executive members and the percentage of women representation in the executive members.

Table 4: Village Development Associations and women representation in Tubah council

Villages	Number of Exco-members	Number of females	Percentage of representation
Bambili	15	6	40
Bambui	17	5	29
Kedjom Keku	16	4	25
Kedjom Ketinguh	15	4	26.6

Source: Field work (2021) and Tubah Village Development Archives

On the Table 4 presenting village Development Associations in Tubah council and the number of women involved, one can notice that, they represent at least 25% of the Exco-members. These women participate in rural development through decision making are evidences that where their voices are heard and their ideas are used in rural development in their respective localities.

Domains of Women Involvement in Rural Development and Transformation in Tubah

Women are involved in many aspects of rural development and transformation in the Tubah council. This section of the study identifies the areas of women involvement in rural development in social domains according to the population. Figure 3 presents the various dimensions of women involvement in rural development and percentages.

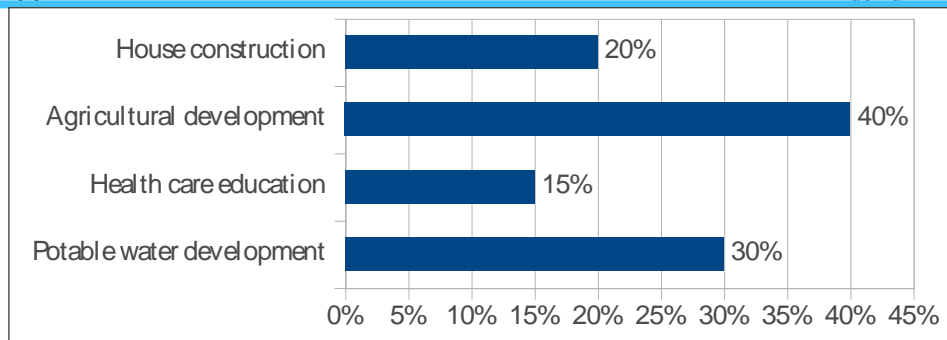


Figure 3: Activities of Women Involvement in Rural Development in Tubah Council

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

According to the figure 3, the highest contribution of women is to agricultural development (40%) and health care education been the least areas in social development according to the population with 15%. The following paragraphs examine the various activities.

Women Participation in Portable Water Development

Portable water development is an important aspect of rural development which is aimed at ensuring the availability of portable water to the communities so as to meet up with Sustainable Development Goal N°6. In this direction, the decentralisation policies in Cameroon have given local authorities powers across Village Development Associations to be involved in portable water supply; owing to that, women's participation in portable water development in Tubah is done through the supply of labour and intellectual contribution. Photo 1 shows women participation in portable water supply through manual labour in digging water pipeline in Bambili village.



Photo 1: Women Participation in Digging Water Pipeline in Bambili

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

These women also participate through the transportation of material such as sand and stones as well as assisting and they also assist in the provision of food to the workers. All this contributed to rural development and transformation in Bambili village. Women also participate in portable water development through the intellectual contributions. The realisation of water scheme is based on the level of knowledge which is strictly gender based in Bambili village. Most of the knowledgeable people are members of the WMCs. Table 5 shows the educational level and position of some members of water committees as well as sex composition.

Table 5: Positions and Educational Levels of Members of the Water Managing Committee in Bambili

Position held	Educational level	Percentage		Age
		Male	Female	
Caretakers	Primary	80	-	40-55
Finance	GCE/O Level	10	85	40-60
Vice president	GCE/A Level	41	60	35-60
Secretary	Dipes I	38	62	25-40
Advisers	BSC/Ba/Bs	50	50	45-60+
President	DIPES II	92	8	45-60+

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The table 5 indicates that women form a reasonable proportion of the Executive members in Bambili Water Authority committee. This shows that women participate in water development in Tubah through intellectual contribution.

Women Participation in Rural Development through Housing Construction

This is one of the activities of women involvement in rural development in Tubah council. Through these measures, women are involved in the construction of houses for business and family needs. The construction of these houses by women helps to improve on the aesthetics of the study area. Plate 2 shows some of the houses constructed by women in Bambili village.



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Photo A: Rose Villa Hostel in Bambui Photo B: Mami Anna’s VIP Hostel in Bambili

Plate 2: Some Students’ Hostels Constructed by Women in Bambui and Bambili

The construction of these hostels presented on the plate 2 for economic reasons contribute to rural development through the improvement in social infrastructure and aesthetics of the village.

Implications of women in rural development in Tubah council

Women involvement in rural development has brought a lot of implications in Tubah municipality. These implications vary according to the population ranked in percentages (Table 6).

Table 6: Socio-Economic Implications of Women in Rural Development in Tubah

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Agricultural intensification and food security	45	31
Promotion of scholarisation	28	19
Improvement of houses infrastructure	26	18
Contribution to the provision of social amenities	28	19
Contribution of ideas for rural development	18	12
Total	145	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

According to the Table 6, there is a variation in socio-economic implications of women in rural development and transformation. Agricultural intensification and food security is the highest implication 31% and contribution of ideas towards rural development is the least according to 12% of the population. The following paragraphs explain the implications in detail.

Socio-cultural implications of women in rural development in Tubah council

Women's participation in rural development and transformation has a number of positive socio-cultural implications in Tubah area.

Promotion of Scholarisation

Findings revealed that this is one of the most positive implications of women involvement in rural development. Women through rural development and transformation have been able to empower themselves financially and they are able to sponsor children in schools at all levels. Table 7 shows some of the students and pupils sponsored by women at all levels of education in Tubah.

Table 7: Number of Children and Pupils Sponsored by Women in Tubah Municipality

Village	Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Bambili	Nursery education	14	19
	Primary education	25	34
	Secondary education	15	20
	Higher education	20	27
Total		74	100
Bambui	Nursery education	14	17
	Primary education	26	32
	Secondary education	17	21
	Higher education	25	30
Total		82	100
Kedjom Keku	Primary education	13	32.5
	Secondary education	13	32.5
	Higher education	14	35
Total		40	100
Kedjom Ketinguh	Primary education	15	42
	Secondary education	14	39
	Higher education	07	19
Total		36	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 7 reveals that the percentage of children sponsored by women in higher education is higher in Bambui and Bambili than Kedjom Ketinguh and Kedjom Keku. This is attributed to the fact that women in Bambui and Bambili are highly involved in diverse economic activities than women in Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh and have more income than those in Kedjom Ketinguh and Kedjom Keku. This is also because of proximity in terms of distance to the University of Bamenda located at Bambili not far from Bambui. In much the same way, women in Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh are not highly involved in education of children at higher level and the burden is highly felt by men in these areas who have the resources than women.

Improvement in Housing Infrastructure

This is one of the positive implications of women involvement in rural development especially in rural infrastructural development. Through this dimension, the construction of houses by women has led to the improvement of the aesthetics of rural areas as shown on plate 2. The study also found out that women involvement in rural development and transformation have led to contribution in rural developmental projects through the raising of funds. This study found out that amongst all the villages in Tubah area, women are involved in annual contributions which are done in the villages to raise funds for the development of villages projects (Table 8).

Table 8: Women annual contributions to Village Development Associations in Tubah area

Village	Village Development Association	Annual Contribution by Women in FCFA
Bambili	Mbeli Cultural and Development Association (MBECUDA)	3000
Bambui	Bambui Cultural and Development Association (BACUDA)	3000
Finge	Finge Cultural and Development Association (FCDA)	2500
Kedjom Ketinguh	Kedjom Ketinguh Cultural and Development Association (KEKULDA)	3000

Source: Adopted and Modified from Mbanga, 2018

Table 8 shows that women in Bambui, Bambili and Kedjom Ketinguh contribute an annual amount of 3000 FCFA and 2500 FCFA in Finge each towards village development associations. Village Development associations are held mostly in the month of December to raise funds for the provision of social infrastructure in the respective villages. Women participation through annual contributions shows that they play an instrumental role in village development and transformation. This is observed through the construction of village development hall, roads, and bridges.

There is also the contribution of ideas for rural development. This is done by women who are executive members in the Village Development Meetings and those who represent their villages as councillors in Tubah area.

Economic Implications of Women Involvement in Rural Development and Transformation in Tubah

The economic implications of women in the development process are founded in the domain of agricultural and food security and animal rearing.

Agricultural Intensification and Food Security

This constitutes one of the important dimensions of positive socio-economic implications of women involvement in rural development in Tubah. Women have benefited from institutions such as the Divisional Delegation of Agriculture and Rural Development and NGOs to gain skills and acquire inputs which are used in agricultural intensification. This has led to agricultural intensification and an increase in output such as the use of tractors as the case with women of Sabga group in Kedjom Ketinguh as shown on photo 2.



Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Photo 2: A Hired Tractor by Farming Women Group of Sabga

Photo 2 shows a tractor in Sabga in Kedjom Ketinguh village hired by a women farming group for the cultivation of farms as a means of agricultural intensification. This has led to increase in the farm sizes of the farms and food availability in the study area.

Rearing of Animals

It is one of the measures put in place by women as a source of economic empowerment. Women involved in animal rearing are higher in Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh than in Bambili due to the fact that there is vast unoccupied land in Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh than in Bambili and Bambui for the rearing of ruminants. Another reason is the fact that animal rearing in Bambili and Bambui is highly done by men due to intensive care and input which is highly supplied by men and women are highly involved in agriculture.

Correlation between Women Involvement in Rural Development and Implication

The research objective was to examine the relationship women involvement in rural development and implications in Tubah area within the decentralisation context. The Pearson's Product Movement correlation was used to test the hypothesis. This was chosen because it is a robust non parametric test when variable are measured on an ordinal scale. This was done women participation in rural development (independent variable) socio-economic implications (as dependent variable). Table 9 shows the correlation between women involvement in rural development and socio-economic implications.

Table 9: Pearson’s Correlation of Women Involvement in Rural Development and Implications in Tubah

Correlations						
Women’s Participation in Rural Development		Agricultural Intensification	Promotion of Scholarisation	Food security	Provision of Social Infrastructure	Increase in Savings
Agricultural intensification	Pearson Correlation	1	.186*	.307**	.427**	.134
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018	.000	.000	.090
	N	145	145	145	145	145
Promotion of scholarisation	Pearson Correlation	.186*	1	.216**	.117	.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018		.006	.140	.805
	N	145	145	145	145	145
Food security	Pearson Correlation	.307**	.216**	1	-.107	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006		.178	.271
	N	145	145	145	145	145
Provision of social infrastructure	Pearson Correlation	.427**	-.117	-.107	1	.424**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.140	.178		.000
	N	145	145	145	145	145
Increase in savings	Pearson Correlation	.134	.020	.087	.424**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.090	.805	.271	.000	
	N	145	145	145	145	145

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Computed from Field Survey, 2021

Based on Pearson product movement correlation interpretation guide, the correlation coefficients between all the dimensions of implications are positive. All the variables correlate each other at 1 showing a perfect positive correlation. The correlation between agricultural intensification incomes is 0.186 which is a positive correlation. The correlation between promotion of scholarisation is 0.307 which is a positive correlation. The correlation between cropping systems provision of social infrastructure is 0.47, and the correlation women participation in rural development and increase in savings is 0.13 which is also positive. Regarding the significance level (0.001) at 2 tails, the probability (P Value) is less than it (0.000<0.001). This shows that the results obtained is statistically significant. This compels us to accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative.

Discussions

The theory of decentralisation is based on the principle that in order to initiate local and participatory development, it is necessary to grant a certain amount of power to local authorities recognised by the constitution or by law (Sékou, 2008). This implies a transfer of competences in all aspects of local development with the state as supervisor and regulator. In the long term, it should strengthen the capacities of all local development actors by giving them more power and financial means to carry out their projects. It gives a predominant place to the local populations individually or through the associations representing them.

In the Tubah municipality, as in other municipalities in Cameroon, some competences have so far been transferred to the various council, but Cheka (2007) argued that: “The process is currently hampered especially by financial constraints on local authorities and limited capacities of the actors

and beneficiaries of devolved powers”. Since the 1990s, various African countries have adopted measures of decentralised governments as a means to development, and improve the democratic space and enhance socio-economic inclusion. In Chad for example, the process started in 1996 and in 2003, regions, divisions, councils and rural councils were created. This was also observed in Mali for example, where some authors assumed that the strategy of transferring competences adopted is progressive. It is based on the capacity of the territorial entities to assume the competences to be transferred. However, the law has determined a level of competences devolved to each collectivity. The principle of progressiveness obliges to access the transferred competences in instalments (Kassibo, 1997; Coulibaly, 1997). During investigations, many stakeholders complained about the slowness of the decentralisation process in Cameroon.

As far as local actors in the decentralisation process are concerned, no particular attention is paid to women as development actors, who are nevertheless very dynamic, especially within associations. To support this argument, In Ghana for example, Ofei-Aboagye (2000) noticed that: “Various provisions in the design of the decentralisation process should have made the participation of women in public decision-making easier. These provisions include those for a non-partisan local government system, the freedom to use the local language for the business of the assembly and the discretion in creating additional sub-committees. But it did not”. Women represent more than half of the population in many countries around the world and yet have lower presence in the elected political bodies (Khan, 2011). Nevertheless, the framework set up by the decentralisation accompanies women in their activities. Generally, women with a maternal instinct are more inclined to work in the social field. This is generally the case with other categories of women acting in their community such as urban women's associations, and international female migrants (Yemelong Temgoua, 2021). International and bilateral development agencies have designed women specific policies to integrate them better into economic and social processes (Khan, 2011).

Findings also revealed that in Tabuh, women are involved in rural development more individually than collectively. This situation has been also observed in other countries. According to FAO (2018), in the developing countries, women participate as individual in rural areas. In the same light, Kiribamune (2012) conducted studies in Nigeria and found out that individual women play a crucial role in rural development through investment in businesses and agriculture which contributes significantly to rural transformation. We therefore see that even individually, women can effectively contribute to the development of the community even if joint initiatives are more to be encouraged. If group initiatives are encouraged, it is because associations have more possibilities of receiving bank loans and various types of aid to boost the productivity.

Concerning the domains of intervention, findings showed that the majority of actions are concentrated in agriculture which is the main activity in rural areas. This involvement in agriculture gives women a certain financial autonomy allowing them to contribute to the development of their community. According to Jayaweera (2010), more women in Kenya are taking up the role of income earners in the community which are as well used in rural development through investment and transformation of the society. These studies by Jayaweera (2010) and Kiribamune (2012) focused on the role of women in rural development at national levels by assessing the roles through agriculture and investment in business. Women in most countries in the developing world contributed to rural development and transformation through their participation in activities like farming, fishing, and animal husbandry. This is done through the formation of women groups through which women are able to receive assistance for rural development projects in most parts of the developing countries (FAO, 2017).

Women's participation in rural development has positive implications in socio-economic development and transformation of Tubah through the promotion of housing infrastructural, investments, and education of children amongst others. Women involvement in rural development through the spread of agro-industries and rural industrialisation has significantly increased the possibilities for some women to gain access to cash income. In Cameroon, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper has recommended and promoted the role of women in rural development through the provision of funds, through the Ministry of Women's empowerment for the carrying out development projects everywhere within the national territory. Women's triple role in development has been recognised as meeting their strategic and practical gender needs (Taylor, 2013). These women's triple roles have been classified into reproductive, productive and community management. Transformation in rural areas is linking women more closely to the global market. A woman involvement in rural development has led to rural livelihood diversification .

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

At the end of this study on women's contribution to rural development in the Tubah municipality within the decentralisation process, several observations can be made. The decentralisation process in Cameroon started effectively with the revision of the constitution in 1996. Many competences have been transferred from the government to territorial entities. In the decentralisation process in Cameroon, women are not specifically identified as development actors, however, the decentralisation process offers them more opportunities to act in various domains. Women in Tubah act more individually than in associations. The study pointed out that women involvement in rural development and transformation is felt in economic, social and political domain. Findings showed that women's participation in rural development has positive implications in socio-economic development and transformation of Tubah through the promotion of housing infrastructural, investments, and education of children amongst others. Empirical findings with the use of the chi square at 0.05 significant value resulted in a calculated chi square value of 3.61 which is less than the table value which was 6.25 and this compelled us to accept the hypothesis which stated that women involvement in rural development and transformation in Tubah council is highly constraint by political challenges.

Recommendations

In order to optimise the work of women in development, the study recommend that they should organise themselves to more groups and lobby for funds which could assist them in rural development projects. The study also recommend that in Tubah council, the process of decentralisation should encourage women participation in rural development and transformation by ensuring that there is high representation of women in politics. Definitely, the proposals made in this work are in line with the theory of decentralisation, which states that in order to promote local and participatory development, the transfer of power to local authorities must be effective. It is not only a matter of transferring power and finances, but including all social categories with an emphasis on women who are the driving force behind rural development.

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