

# Development Implications of Ceded Lands by the Cameroon Development Corporation on Fako Division- South West Region of Cameroon from 1960 to 2010

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## Abstract

The availability of Surrendered lands has enormously facilitated the process of transformation and development of Fako Division in the South West Region of Cameroon from a predominantly underdeveloped rural and agricultural oriented society in the latter half of the 20th Century to a developed urban society. This is visible in terms of expansion in the quantity and quality of residential neighborhoods, health and educational establishments. The significant contribution of surrendered land to the urbanisation process of Fako has once again secured an important place for land in planning and development discourse of the division in particular and Cameroon in general. Using the traditional social science methodology, primary data was collected from the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). The data was analysed and presented using a map, table and pie charts. Findings suggest that the expansion and growth in neighborhoods accompanied by a transformation from congested, squalid neighborhoods of substandard housing is an outcome of the availability of new territory surrendered by the large scale plantation company (CDC) to the population for modern investment structures. The transformation in housing has improved health care standard. Such housing development zones have enhanced educational and health standards, through the creation of numerous hospital and schools which have had a combined positive developmental effects on the division. However, to ensure sustainability in surrendered lands, a holistic planning approach must be factored into the developmental strategies of Fake to enhance the efforts of the traditional authorities before, during and after the process of land cessation.

**KEY WORD:** Development Implications, Surrendered Lands, Land Use, Fako Division, CDC.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the African Unification Front (AUF, 1898) the Germans occupied Fako Division in 1894. Plantation agriculture began in 1896 when the two leading German Firms in Kamerun, Woerman and Jatzen Und Thormalen founded two plantation companies. Since land especially unoccupied indigenous lands under German rule belonged to nobody, it was certain that these plantation firms would acquire as much land as possible, leaving the indigenous population almost landless. This landless situation was further reinforced by the German government enactment of the "Kronland" Act in 1896 which especially implemented Native reserves policy that involved concentrating the Backwerians in "inaccessible disease infested and inhospitable Native Reserves" (Rayner, 1898). It also converted all lands not effectively occupied into what was termed "herrenloss land". The implementation of this policy therefore gave rise to the displacement of the indigenous people (Backweri Land Committee, 2000).

Following the 1949 petitions of the Backweri land Committee (BLC) the Germans alienated about 400 square miles of the most fertile land around the Mount Fako Region alone and stripped the Backwerians of over 200,000 acres of their most fertile land (Henry, 1983). Kale (1993) holds that this was so because there were no organised groups or leaders to defend the rights of the Backwerians. This situation continued until the First World War, which ended with the defeat of the Germans and their replacement in the Western part of Kamerun by the British. However, the African Front (2005) reports that despite the enlargement of the Native reserves, population increase and growth of awareness among the natives on how they had been robbed of their land, no serious attempt was made to return the appropriated land to the Backweri people.

At the end of World War II, British Cameroons became a United Nation Trust Territory. In an attempt to extend sympathy to the minority population-the Backward Article 8 of the Trusteeship Agreement on Cameroon were approved by the U.N General Assembly on 13th December 1946 and 1st November 1947. It stated as follows:

*"In framing laws relating to the transfer of land and natural resources, the administering authority shall take into consideration native laws and customs, and shall respect the rights and safeguard the interest, both present and future of the native population".*

After the Second World War, the Nigerian Government passed the Ex-Enemy Lands Ordinance No. 38 of 1946, which empowered the governor to purchase land in Cameroon previously owned by German citizens and companies and which the British had sequestered during the war. A second Ordinance No. 39 of 1946 saw the creation of Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) on certificates of occupancy for sixty years; during which these lands would be developed for the benefit of all people (BLC, 2000). By the deed of Surrender, the CDC surrendered to the Backweris all its rights, titles, and interest under the previous certificates of occupancy. By the same deed, the government of Southern Cameroon agreed to lease to the CDC all those lands for a period of ninety-nine years with effect from January 1, 1960. These rights were surrendered to the government of West Cameroon. At the end of the 99 years, both the government and the CDC lease will expire and so surrender the lands to the legitimate owners-the natives. It is therefore evident that the colonial period was not quite conducive for the indigenous people. By depriving them of their land implies that both in-migrants were deprived of their natural resource. The question then was "what will happen to in-migrants who are considered as users and not owners of the land in a situation where even the natives are landless"?

During the colonial period, settler colonialism was characterized by large scale land alienation for the establishment of plantations for the cultivation of cash crops such as rubber cocoa, palms, tea and banana. Fako division was identified as a favorable location for the cultivation of these tropical crops due to its attractive climate, vast unexploited land and fertile volcanic soils (Henry, 1983). The establishment of plantations required large expanses of land, consequently Cameroonians were confined to small parcels of land commonly called reserves in between plantations. However, the plantation establishments created a labour gap which necessitated and attracted labour from the interior and hinterlands of Cameroon into Fako division without consideration to the issue of space to accommodate them. Labour was employed either voluntarily or involuntarily from the North West, West and other regions of Cameroon. The

influx of large number of labourers to work in the plantations contributed enormously to population growth of the region and the need for more living space. The small patches of land (reserves) which the people had been confined to could not satisfy their entire land needs. Congestion and limited land for agriculture and other activities became common problems within the division. This necessitated the discourse over the leasing/surrendering of lands to the indigenous population coupled with the fact that European settlers alienated these lands without any compensation.

Following the granting of independence and the departure of the colonial masters, the management of these plantations was handed over to the government of Cameroon which in 1946 became the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). Plantation agriculture also developed in other parts of the world and this increased the production of agricultural export crops in the world market. In the face of intense competition, the value of plantation crops reduced and the activity became less productive and profitable to the state. Plantation agriculture could no longer fetch sufficient revenue for the state coupled with several management problems experienced by the corporation. Also the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) by the Breton Woods institution which advocated for privatization of state owned corporations and enterprises instigated the privatization of some plantations like the Cameroon tea estate (CTE).

The administration of land in Fako Division although largely national land which should fall under the jurisdiction of the various national Lands Consultative Board as stipulated by the 1947 Land Tenure Ordinance is still done through customary land tenure or local traditional practices which are common in most African countries. Customary laws, pertained to rules that existed side by side with statutory laws but derived its legitimacy from tradition and custom rather than a government act (Lampetti et al, 2000). Statutory land laws pertain to all parts of the formal legal system, from legislation issued by different levels of administration to regulations and directives issued by government agencies (Kanji et al, 2002). These lands are ceded upon request by the community and the prime motive for the allocation of the lands is for village expansion. Following the cultural norms of the Backwards, these lands are ceded to the indigenes and each family is entitled to a given proportion. The number of plots allocated to each family depends on the number of family members. The major land use which occupy surrendered lands include residential (schools, health, religious centers) and open spaces.

Though there is abundance of land there are acute localized land pressures being experienced by many regions of Cameroon such as Fake which is currently witnessing intense competition for land amongst three main groups: rural communities (mostly small holder farmers) that are continuing to experience population growth, relatively healthy urban-based dwellers who are investing in land at a rapid pace and the CDC attracted to the fertile and relatively cheap lands. Demand for land is intensifying along with rapidly increasing population and the need for food within and out of the division. Within the context, access to arable and productive land has been in decline due to pressures from the rapidly growing population and the presence of huge plantation establishments. This is further compounded by the worsening land degradation as a result of poor land management practices.

In Cameroon the South West Region and precisely Fako Division is one of the fastest growing divisions of the country socio economically. This may apparently be attributed to geological, social and economic potentials of the division. The establishment and growth of the CDC plantation, the creation of the University of Buea, and presence of other industries such as SONARA, the mineral water company (Supermont) have attracted mass influx of people from

within and out of Cameroon which has triggered rapid population growth at an annual rate estimated at about 5% (National Institute of Statistics, 2012). The rapid population growth increased pressure on environmental resources. Some very visible problems generated due to population growth include congestion in houses and homes especially in camps, shortage in food supply, limited agricultural land due to land scarcity and shortage in portable water. In the face of these difficulties caused by the burgeoning population, there is a constant need for more land which are heavily occupied by the plantations.

The combined effects of the influx of migration and population increase in Fako Division have created a complex man-resource relationship that manifests itself in the form of rapid urbanization, pressure on land and problems in land use. All these have far reaching effects on infrastructure, social and economic development of the area. Limited policy attention is given to this new phenomenon of surrendered lands, the factors affecting surrendered land use as well as their micro economic impact on the Development of Fako. Given the current socio-economic and geographic importance of surrendered lands in Fako, this study seeks to answer the following questions. Which areas have benefited from surrendered lands from 1960-2010 in Fako, how have the ceded lands been appropriated and what are the contributions of surrendered lands to the growth and development of the Division?

### **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

This study is modeled on the Modernisation Theory advanced by Michael and Katsillis (2001) who describe and explain the processes of transformation from traditional or underdeveloped societies to developed societies. Development is the process of change towards the social economic and political systems of a society. Societies develop through a series of evolutionary stages. According to this theory, development is defined mainly in terms of meeting basic human needs taking into consideration the social and economic aspects of a society. In the social realm, developed societies are characterized by high levels of urbanization, housing, high literacy rate, portable water availability, health care and transport facilities. Kinship ties are weaker, birth rates and death rates are lower and life expectancy is relatively longer. In the economic realm there is industrialisation, increased division of labour, growth of infrastructure and commercial facilities.

Applied to this study, the concept of development takes into consideration both the social and the economic tenets of the society and various indicators of social development such as high literacy rates, health care, and access to housing and urbanization which have been frequently promoted as conditions for development. The focus however is on the social realm which in this case is considered to include health care of residents and literacy. Though limited to the social realm it is important to note that social components have a bearing on the economic realm, for instance the health of workers together with their literacy level influences the productivity of industries and factories because only healthy workers can work efficiently. The availability of ceded land for residential, educational, health care and the provision of public spaces has contributed significantly to the social development of Fako. The provision of land for the construction of schools implicitly has a direct impact on the level of sholarization and consequently on the literacy level of the society. Thus if residential, educational and health facilities are available and accessible to members of a society they could contribute positively to enhancing livelihoods and the development of the society.

### STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

Fako Division is located in the South West Region of Cameroon (Figure 1) and is situated at the foot of mount Cameroon. It is one of the four divisions and the most thickly populated of the South West Region of Cameroon. It is located between latitude 40 and 40.5" North of the equator and between longitudes 9010" and 9013" East of the Greenwich Meridian. It is bounded to the north and east respectively by Meme and Wouri Divisions and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. It comprises five administrative sub divisions namely Limbe, Buea, Muyuka, Tiko and Idenau. Fako Division owes its origin to western colonization of Cameroon. The South West Region has a total population of 1,316,079 inhabitants accounting for 7.5% of the total population of Cameroon (BUCREP, 2010). The 4100m high Cameroon Mountain, the tallest peak in West Africa is found in this division.

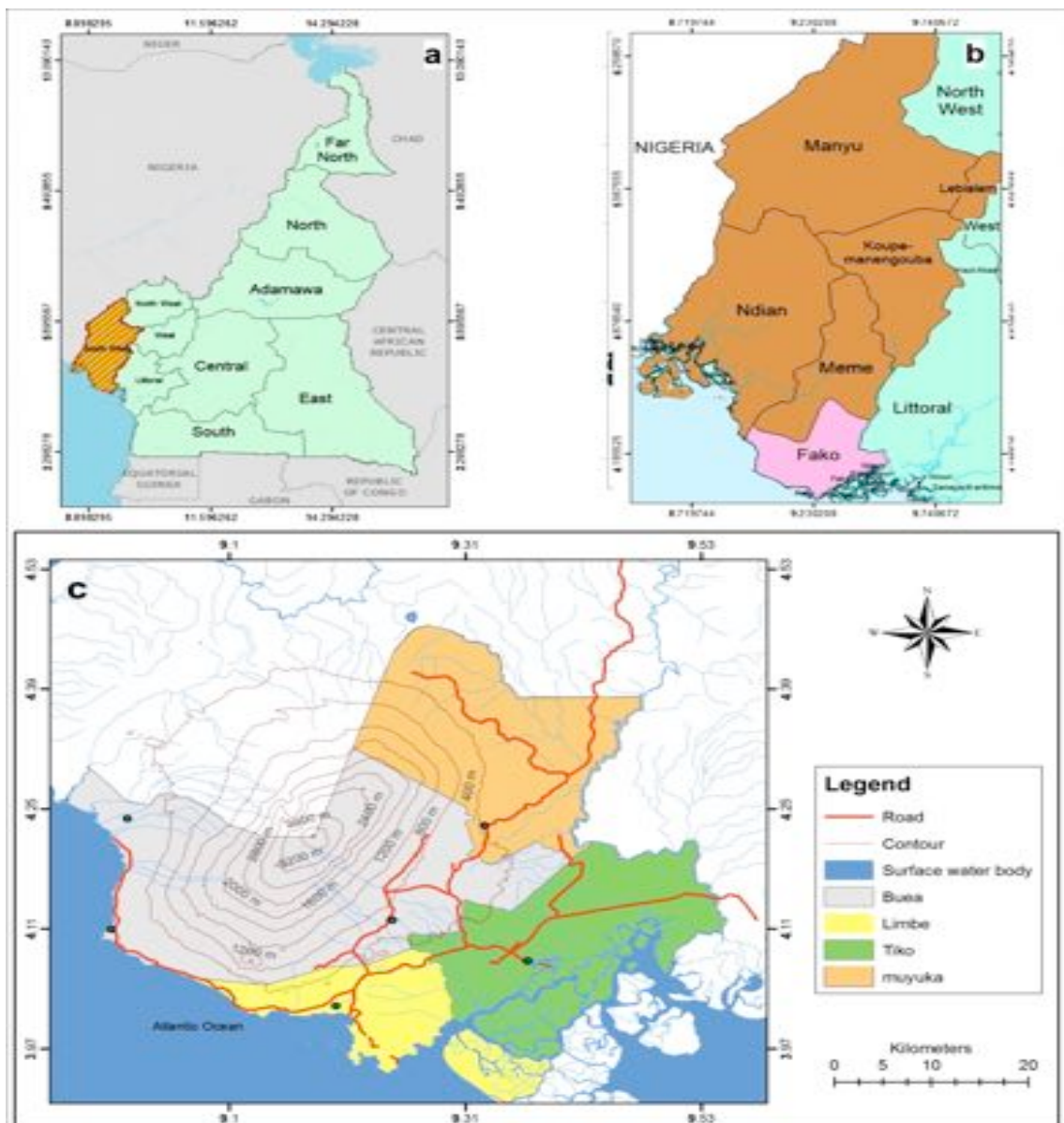


Figure 1: The Location of Fako Division, South West Region

This study covers four of the five sub divisions of Fako which are Buea, Limbe, Tiko and Muyuka. During colonial rule, the Germans and later the British used Limbe and Tiko as port towns. Tiko and Bota wharfs were used for the easy evacuation of agricultural products and other valuable minerals to Europe. Buea was the administrative headquarters of German

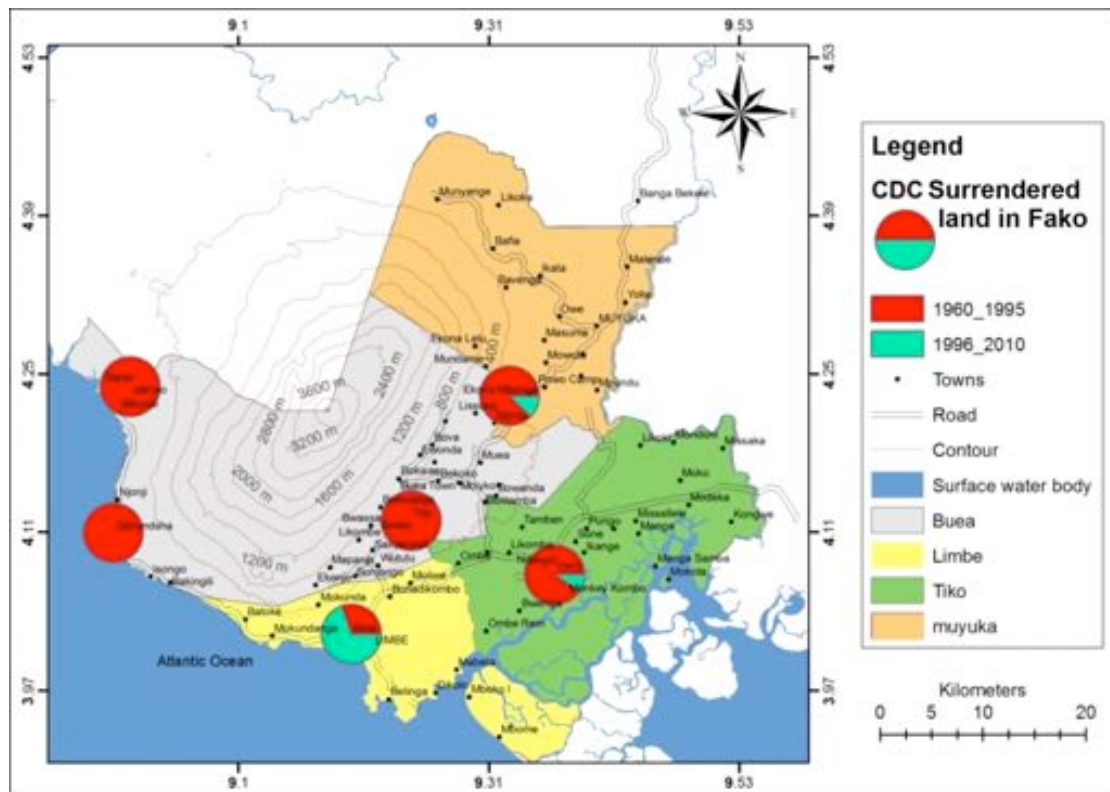
Kamerun from 1901 to 1919 and the capital of Southern Cameroons from 1949 until 1961. These attributes have all combined to render the area attractive to in-migrants.

This study categorically adopts a descriptive research design. The principal source of primary data is from the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) where the total quantity of land surrendered in Fako within the period of 1960-2010 was obtained. This data was further processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and the Excel software to produce pie charts showing the land uses for the different periods under study. Growth statistics of the division were also obtained from varied sources on socio economic indicators such as census data, the National Institute of Statistics and the World Bank. Location and land use maps of Fake Division were produced using GIS software packages such as google earth, global mapper 15 and ArcGis 10.2. Google earth was used to locate the study area where the GPS coordinates of its limits were obtained. These coordinates were later used to download raster and elevation data for Fako as well as satellite images from the Global Land Cover Facility (GLCF) website. The data were later exported to global mapper 15 where the visible features of interest were digitized and their shape files exported to ArcGis 10.2 where they were assembled together with the raster and elevation data to produce (Figure II). The pie charts representing the various parameters were plotted on the map using ArcGis and computed using Microsoft Excel 2013 from data provided by CDC from 1960-2010 which reveals the road network, names of towns and villages within Fako.

## FINDINGS

### **Lands Ceded in Fako Between 1960 and 2010**

Within a period of 50 years (1960-2010), a cumulative total of 3,594 hectares of land was surrendered by the CDC to the indigenes of Fako. Of this, 1,865 hectares was surrendered between 1960-1995 while 1,729 hectares was surrendered between 1996 and 2010. According to CDC Board report (2008) these ceded lands were primarily allocated for village expansion. Backweri villages within Fako had the right to apply as a village through their chiefs to the administration to be able to poses parcels of land.



**Field work April 2016**  
**Figure 2. Distribution and time scales of ceded lands within Fako: 1960-2010**

Between the period 1960 to 2010 a total of 3,596.8 hectares of land was ceded to the four Sub Divisions of Fako. The quantity of land allocated to each sub division is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of ceded lands within Fako between 1960 to 2010**

Sub Division	Quantity of land Surrendered	Percentage
Buea	1,361.9	37.9%
Tiko	155.9	4.3%
Limbe	1,639.1	45.6%
Muyuka	439.9	12.2%
Total	3,596.8	100%

**Source: Field work, April 2016**

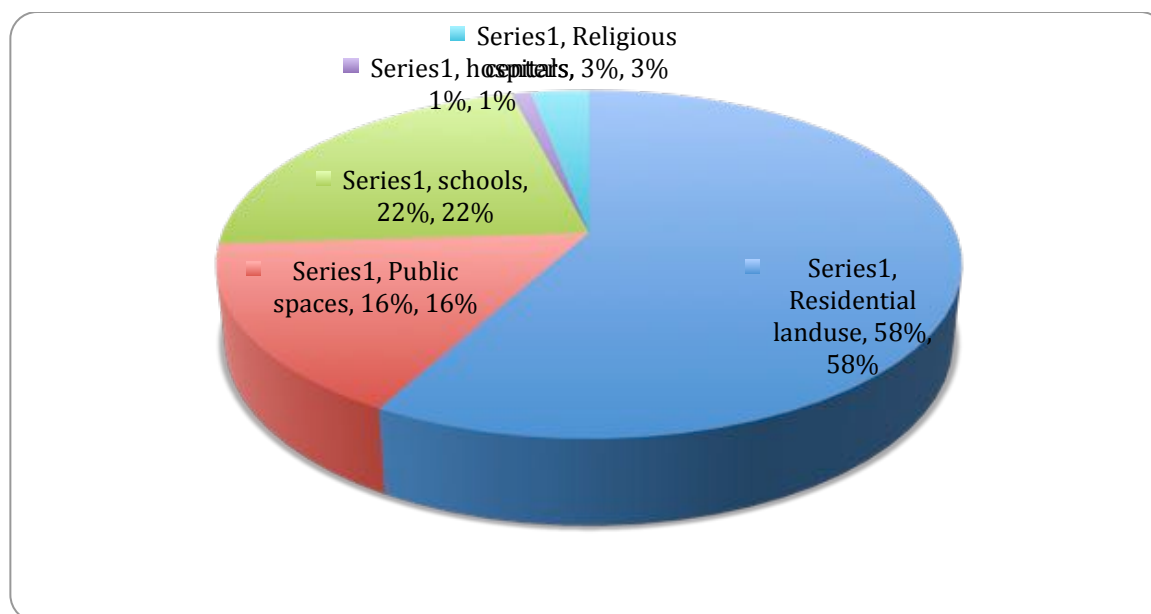
Majority of the land (45.6%) was assigned to Limbe due to the natural physical limitations imposed by the presence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Cameroon Mountain which limits the expansion of the subdivision. Also 37.9% of the land was accorded to Buea because the area gained the status of a University town which attracted the influx of students and workers creating the need for more housing and land for agricultural activities. One of the drivers of growth was the student population of the University of Buea which moved from 1,500 in 1993 to over 52,000 in 2010 (Endeley, 2014).

**Land Ceded between 1960 and 1995**

A total of 1,866.7 hectares of land was surrendered to Fako from 1960 to 1995. Of the total 1,865 hectares, 810 hectares (43.4%) was allocated to Buea, 31 hectares (1.7%) to Tiko and



585 hectares (31.4%) to Limbe and 439 hectares (23.5%) to Muyuka. These lands were used mainly for residence, public spaces, schools, hospitals and religious centers. A closer look at the five principal land uses indicate that 58% was allocated for residence, 22% for schools, 16% for public spaces, 3% for religious centers and 1% for hospitals (Figure 3).



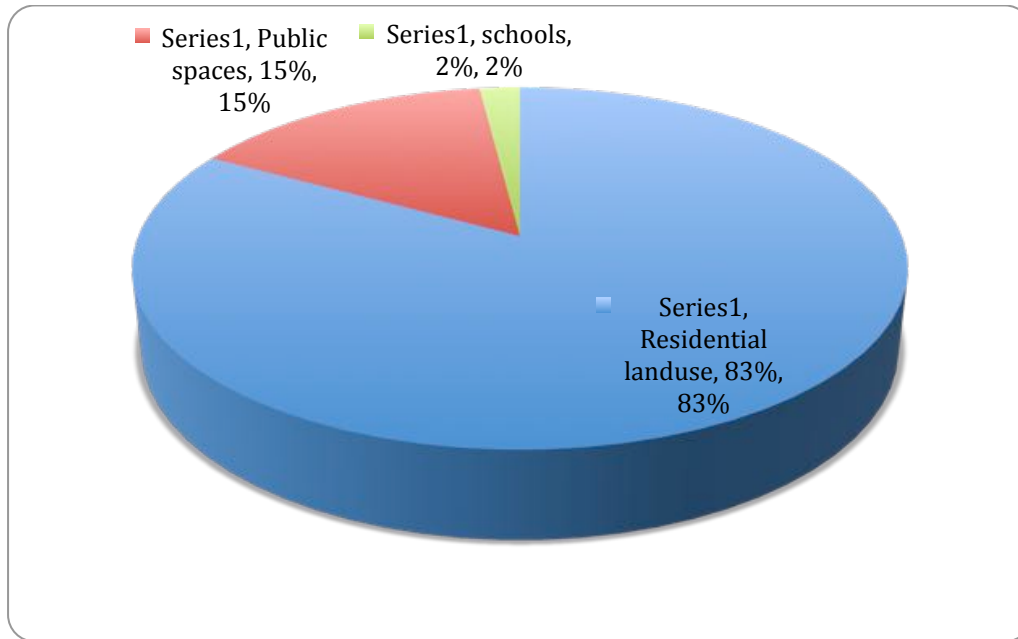
Source: Field work, April 2016  
**Figure 3: Land ceded between 1960 and 1995**

Majority (58%) of the land was used for residential purposes mainly to reduce congestion in most settlements and especially within camps which were rapidly deteriorating into slums due population pressure. Also there was need to accommodate the fast growing population within the division and to make available lands for the construction of standard housing. Some prominent residential neighborhoods which emerged within this period include 'CITE' SONARA, MAETURE Middle Farm, Isokolo and Wovia villages. Also educational establishments such as schools occupied 22% of the land. The University of Buea, Government School Bota and Government Bilingual High School for instance are currently located on surrendered lands.

#### **Land Ceded between 1996 and 2010.**

Between 1996 and 2010 a total of 1,730.9 hectares of land was surrendered to Fako division and these lands were allocated for residential expansion, public spaces and schools. Of the above total, 83% was meant for residence, 15% for public spaces and 2% for schools as shown in (Figure 4).





Source: Field work, April 2016  
Fig 4: Land ceded between 1996 and 2010

Residential land use emerged as the most highly solicited land use on surrendered lands within this period due to the fact that the presence of the University of Buea created in 1995 and other higher institutions of learning attracted large number of students and labour migrants into this area. Also the conducive and attractive climate coupled with the rich and fertile soils attracted migrants from other parts of Cameroon into this area. This influx together with natural increase further exacerbated the problem of congestion in housing especially in the already existing built up areas. This created the need for more housing space to accommodate the fast growing population. Some prominent neighborhoods which developed during this period included Dibanda, Wonya Mavio and Bossumbu layout. In a similar vein the public spaces such as the Omnisport stadium in Limbe and the Limbe motor park have also facilitated the growth and expansion of Fako Division.

### DISCUSSIONS

The availability of Surrendered lands acted as a springboard for residential expansion and rapid urbanization which has accelerated the development of Fako in different dimensions. A total of 2530 hectare amounting to about 70% of the total land surrendered was allocated for residential purposes. The emergence and growth of numerous residential neighbourhoods has facilitated the urbanization process and development of Fako. Lerner (1958) identified urbanization as a vital ingredient conducive to societal development. The urbanization of Fako has triggered the emergence and growth of numerous villages and neighborhoods providing alternative living space for the inhabitants and facilitating the process of decongestion of the squalid camps and several overcrowded neighborhoods. The establishment and growth of new neighborhoods has been accompanied by an evolution in housing from substandard to standard housing. This is equally asserted by Lenski (1999) who establishes a relationship between better or standard housing and development. The emergence of new quarters and neighborhoods has not only increased the provision of standard housing and consequently improve the living environment of most residents, it has reduced the vulnerability of the population to some diseases like typhoid malaria and even communicable diseases such as cholera and measles. In this vein Mikinson (1989) points out that urban areas with poor housing in most cases means underdevelopment due to disease proliferation especially

tropical communicable diseases with different intensities. However, urbanization as a veritable ingredient of development does not work in isolation to influence development especially in third world countries. There is an interplay with several other factors such as literacy level, health care, transport facilities, growth of infrastructure and commercial facilities, falling birth and death rates and the level of industrialisation.

The need for land and its associated value has been increasing because of population pressure, commercialization of agriculture, urban expansion and the increasing demand for public spaces and educational establishments. During the period 1960-2010 a total of 26 public and private educational institutions were established on surrendered land. For instance, of the 26 schools, 11 were primary schools, 10 secondary schools and 6 tertiary institutions such as the University of Buea. These educational establishments occupy approximately 24% of the total ceded lands covering a surface area of 440.5 hectares (C.D.C Report, 2010). Furthermore, public spaces also occupied a total 541 hectares (31%) while hospitals were allocated 22 hectares occupying just 1% of the land and religious centers (3%). The existence of social facilities such as schools, religious centers, hospitals and open spaces for relaxation has buttressed the development of Fako by improving on the literacy level of the population and locating educational facilities at proximity to the population. These educational establishments continue to attract huge numbers of in-migrants to serve as pupils, students and staff in these institutions. In the same vein the World Bank (1997) suggest that a literate society influences development positively since its citizens can take care of their health to ensure a long life expectancy, the society becomes more participatory in the decision making process, people are more receptive to change and more achievement oriented.

The concept of land leasing and large scale acquisition of land in Africa in the past and currently ignored the land needs, land use dynamics, technological development and modernization irrespective of cultural tradition. Today land grab by multinationals is yet another wave of deprivation of land from rural underprivileged especially in the developing world. Moyo (2003b) asserts that this new wave of land grab is a process of accumulation by dispossession with the intention of enforcing African dependence and limiting development. There is need to ensure sustainability in development before decisions related to large scale land attributions to plantation companies be taken by most third world governments. This is because whenever these lands are to be ceded back the decision on the quantity of land often does not depend on the needs of the original owners of the land. Yet land remains a major factor of production and a source of livelihood for a huge majority of Cameroonians and Africans contributing significantly to the growth and development of most societies. As a result, major developmental strategies in Fako should take into consideration the land needs and planning on land resources.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is clear that surrendered lands have made significant contributions to communities in Fako by assisting in the transformation from a dominantly rural underdeveloped to an urban developed society. The importance and contributions of surrendered lands to the social and economic development of Fako cannot be overemphasized as these lands have contributed to the rapid urbanization process, transformation and expansion in housing, education, health and public spaces. There is however the need to integrate planning on surrendered lands into mainstream development agenda of Fako. This approach will significantly improve on the social and economic situation of communities in Fako and maximize their development dividends.

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