



Review Article

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Rural-Urban Migration in the 20th Century South West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract

Like many birds, but unlike most other animals, humans are a migratory species. Indeed, migration is as old as humanity itself. Of this fact there is no better proof than the spread of human beings to all corners of the earth from their initial ecological niche in Sub-Saharan Africa. A careful examination of virtually any historical era reveals a consistent propensity towards geographic mobility among men and women, who are driven to wander by diverse motives, but nearly always with some idea of material improvement. The objective of this paper is to investigate the factors that necessitated population movements within the South West Region of Cameroon in the 20th century. The main argument of this paper is that a multiplicity of factors led to internal migration within South West Cameroon in the 20th century. Although the migration was from rural areas to urban centers and also from urban centers to rural areas, movements from rural areas to urban centers took precedence. The findings of this paper reveal that the creation of the University of Buea in 1993 significantly changed the internal migration pattern of youths (who were the predominant migrants) who started migrating more to Buea as opposed to Kumba, the largest town in the Region. The study also reveals that the opening of plantations by the Germans on the foot of month Fako and its environs was an important factor that attracted labourers from different rural areas in the region to work in urban centers. The desire to pursue post primary education was another factor that pushed young people to migrate from rural areas to urban centers in the South West Region of Cameroon. Data for the write up of this paper was gathered from a number of sources classified as published and unpublished. Published sources were primarily books and journal articles while unpublished sources were dissertations, theses and archival materials. A bulk of the information also came from the author who is himself an indigene of the South West Region of Cameroon. It is recommended in the paper that the massive movements of youths from rural to urban centres in the Region was as a result of lack of certain social in rural areas amenities such as electricity, health facilities and good motorable roads. If the Cameroonian government should provide these fundamental social amenities in rural areas, it will curb rural-urban migration in the Region. It is also recommended that the government should stabilize the prices of agricultural products in the country. This will fetch rural-youths who are involved in agriculture enormous income.

Keywords: Rural-Urban, migration, South West Region, Agriculture, Cameroon, Labour force

Habitat and History

The South West Region of Cameroon is located between Latitudes 4.16 and 5.71 North and Longitudes 8.9 and 10.06 East. It is spread over a surface area of 25,410 km square and has a population of approximately 1,553,320 inhabitants (*Administrative Census*, 2005). The Region is divided into six divisions. These are in turn broken down into sub divisions. Presidentially appointed Senior Divisional Officers (*Prefects*) and Sub Divisional Officers (*Sous Prefects*) govern each respectively. The South West Region is bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, on the northeast by the Western Region, on the east by the Littoral Region, on the north by the Northwest Region and on the West by Nigeria [1]. Administra-

tively the Region is divided into six divisions which are in turn divided into twenty subdivisions and three districts. The divisions are further divided into urban and rural councils. The Region is headed by a governor, who is a representative of the central administration. Under the governor are the senior divisional officers who head the divisions while the sub divisions are headed by sub divisional officers. Both urban councils and rural councils are headed by mayors who are elected by councilors. At the village level the decision-making body is the traditional council headed by the village chief.

The most prominent feature of the relief of the Region is a chain of volcanic mountains with elevations of between 1500 and 4000 metres running from northeast to south. The most prominent of



these mountains is Mount Cameroon (locally known as mount, Fako) which rises directly from the Atlantic coastline to a peak of 4,095 metres. It is the highest and active volcano in West and Central Africa. It has erupted four times in the recorded history of the region. It erupted in 1909, 1922, 1955, 1959, 1982, 1999, and in the year 2000. Further inland are the Rumpi and the Muanenguba mountains which attain elevations of 2,070 and 2,250 metres respectively. The emissions of these volcanoes have weathered to give rise to very fertile soils along their lower slopes and the lowlands in their vicinities. These soils support the largest commercial plantations in Cameroon. The plateau which range between 500 and 1000 metres form a second topographic region. These flank the high peaks and consist of undulating hills and red, deeply weathered laterite soils. The rest of the Region consists of low lying lands with elevations lower than 500 metres. These cover most of Fako, Meme and Ndian divisions. The coastal portion consists of marshes and mangrove swamps composed of alluvial deposits. Inland the coastal swamps are depositional plains raised beaches of tertiary origin across which lie the lower courses of the rivers Mungo, Meme, and Ndian [2]. Apart from Meme and Ndian, all the rivers rising in the Region have their mouths outside the region such as Manyu with its mouth in Calabar (Nigeria) and Mungo in the Littoral Region. Only three of the rivers in the Region are navigable for any considerable distance: the Manyu is navigable to Calabar, the Mungo from its mouth in the Wouri to Mundemba near Kumba and the Meme is navigable from the sea to Mbonge. These rivers are navigable by river steamers or coasters.

General Group Migration in The South West Region

Migration is the permanent or temporary change of residence from one geographical setting to another. This includes change of residence between villages, towns, districts, countries, provinces, regions, states or countries. For purposes of international comparisons, the United Nations considers migration to involve a change of residence of more than a year's duration [3]. Although our focus in this paper is on rural-urban migration in the South West Region of Cameroon, a brief discussion of group migration within, into and out of the Region is pertinent. After the Germans acquired Cameroon in 1884 as a protectorate, there was a scramble for fertile volcanic native lands in Fako Division by individual Germans and companies for the purpose of establishing plantations of tropical crops that were highly demanded in Germany [4]. The methods of acquisition varied from un-negotiated occupation later acknowledge and registered by the German colonial government, through purchased from native chiefs and elders to private undocumented transactions with individual natives [2]. The general outcome of the acquisition of native lands was the compulsory resettlement of the natives into German prescribed reserves. Also, in the Meme and Manyu divisions, although there was no massive alienation of native lands by the Germans, many natives were forced to abandon their scattered settlements and relocated at selected sites along trade routes (which later became motorable roads) for purposes of easy administration and collection of taxes. These initial forced

migrations or resettlements were within the South West Region. However, the establishment of plantations by the Germans set in motion a flow of migrant labourers from other parts of the country and neighboring countries into the South West Region, a trend which has continued to the present-day [1].

When the Germans established plantations in Fako division, one of the problems they encountered was that of obtaining labour to work on the plantations. The Bakweri and Balong, the principal indigenes of the area, had a hunting and fishing tradition and traditional agriculture at subsistence level. The Germans recruited their labour force from outside the plantations area. During this period the labour force from other regions of Cameroon where there was a developed agricultural tradition was either forcibly recruited and indentured or temporarily enslaved in lieu of taxes. This was mainly because plantation agriculture and its pattern of organizations (such as living in camps, long hours of work, disciplinary measures which included flogging) was foreign to most people and therefore a very limited number of people were willing to work on the plantations. Voluntary members of the plantations labour force were also from other countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and Togo and were composed mainly of creoles who had plantation experience in the Americas [2]. Statistics are not available on the number of labour migrants into the Region during this early period. However, when the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) which took over the German plantations, started the keeping of the origin of the labour force, the indications were that a significant proportion of the labour force was from rural areas in the Region. Apart from the CDC, Pamol (a plantation company) employed over 3,000 workers. While some of the workers were from rural areas in the South West, some came out of the region. Apart from voluntary and involuntary migrant labour into plantations in the South West Region, the Region also received refugee migrants in the last half of the 20th century. The first wave of refugee migrants came from former French Cameroons and mostly from rural areas in the present-day Littoral and Western Regions.

This occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a result of terrorist activities against the colonial and post-colonial governments in these areas. These uprisings were concentrated in the densely populated corridor running from Douala to Foumban. As there were already some settlers in the South West from these regions before the division of Cameroon into British and French spheres, the tendency was for those escaping terrorist attacks to migrate into the Region in order to join their relatives or "countrymen." The international boundary between British and French territories protected those who migrated into the South West Region from terrorist attacks from the French Cameroons. Most of the migrants were sheltered by friends or relatives and most of them returned to their abandoned homes by 1966 when the government had brought the uprising under control. However, some settled permanently at urban areas in the South West Region to work in plantations while others owned and operated small sole proprietor businesses. Civil service and other major employers such as the CDC led to a general out-migration of Nigerians from the region. For example, the proportion of Nigerians in the labour force of the CDC

dropped from 30 per cent in 1959 to 4 per cent in 1966. In the civil service the decline was probably more dramatic because presently there are no Nigerians legally employed in the Cameroonian civil service. Also the fact that most Nigerian-British firms such as R.W. King, united Africa company and Barclays Bank withdrew from the last group migration from the Region was precipitated by the abolition of the federal system of government and the creation of the unitary state in 1972. This political change led to a transfer of about 95 per cent of the civil servants from Buea and Limbe to Yaounde, Douala, Bamenda and other towns in Cameroon. This out-migration of civil servants adversely affected the economy of the Region in general and the tertiary sector in particular. The withdrawal of civil servants meant that less federal money came to the Region. This reduced the purchasing power in the Region and many businesses withdrew from Limbe, Buea and Tiko to relocate in Douala because of the economic advantages of the latter. However, the out-migration of Nigerians created more jobs for the indigenes, particularly in the plantations [1].

Rural-Urban Migration in The South West Region

Migration studies on Africa often attribute rural-urban migration to several factors though economic factors occupy a central position. These economic considerations are often analysed in terms of a "push-pull" model in which certain factors are believed to exert a push effect in the rural areas where the migrants originate, while other factors at the urban centres exert a pull effect. Caldwell's study on Ghana, for example, indicated that the attraction of the town with its opportunities for personal advancement as well as improved material welfare were the main deciding factors inducing migration to urban centres. There was also the rural push such as lack of clerical employment and the lack of certain amenities especially entertainment, health and educational institutions in the rural areas [5]. As to who migrated and from which areas, two opposing arguments were common in the literature. The initial argument was that most of the migration was from rural areas to urban centres because rural dwellers had very little or nothing to hold on to in the rural areas. On the other hand, there was also the argument that a few rich rural residents tended to migrate because they were often the more informed segment of the population and were thus more aware of urban opportunities [6]. It is also argued that areas which are relatively poor in terms of job opportunities and resources would tend to experience higher out-migration than richer areas. For example, in Zambia, it has been observed that the more remote off-the-line-of-rail districts which were impoverished as measured by ploughs, cattle and brick rooms per capita and which offered few opportunities for wage employment, were those with the heaviest out migration [7].

As a result of time constraint, we could not interview rural migrants at the urban centres. However, to get some indication of the general pattern of rural-urban migrations (in terms of causes, destination and characteristics of migrants) firstly, certain questions were structured to gather from the heads of the rural households, characteristics of any known persons who had migrated from rural

areas within the last 30 years (prior to this survey). Secondly, we asked about the plans of those surveyed or their relatives to migrate to the urban centres during the next five years. Thirdly, we also asked traders who originally migrated from the rural areas, about the reasons for their migration. The following observations were made from these enquiries, of those who were known to have migrated to the urban centres, 35.5 per cent did so for the purpose of seeking jobs. 27.9 per cent migrated to attend post-primary educational institutions, 24 per cent found village life boring, while 9.6 per cent had no land to cultivate. The vast majority were aged between sixteen and thirty (83.5%). This was expected as some of the children who completed primary school often moved to the urban centres to attend post-primary institutions, while those young people who found farm work tedious and village life boring tended to migrate to urban centres to seek employment. Of the migrants only 14 per cent were over thirty and 2.5 per cent were under fifteen. At age below ten most children were still in primary schools and since these are generally available in many rural areas, there was limited migration for educational purposes for the minors. Also at below ten most rural parents would consider their children too young to live on their own at the urban centres. At above thirty years of age the number of those migrating from the rural areas to the urban centres was limited, because at this age many rural residents were those who had determined to pursue a rural life style. This group includes some who migrated to urban centres but as a result either of not obtaining employment or of not achieving their perceived goals returned to the rural areas (Table 1).

Table 1: Destination of rural migrants before 1993.

Town	Frequency	Percentage of total Out-Migrants
Kumba	68	28.2
Limbe	42	17.4
Douala	29	12
Buea	26	10.8
Yaounde	21	8.7
Tiko	20	8.3
Bamenda	17	7.1
Mamfe	9	3.7
Bafoussam	7	2.9
Garoua	2	0.8
	241	99.9

*Note: Source: Constituted by author during field survey in 2021.

Destination Of Rural Migrants to Urban Centers in The South West Prior To 1993

Prior to the opening of the University of Buea in 1993, most of the rural out-migrants who were predominantly youths migrated to Kumba, the largest town in the South West Region. The percentage ranged from 28.2 for Kumba to 3.7 for Mamfe. These percentages suggest that there was a positive correlation between the size (population) of the urban centres and the number of migrants they received. Thus, Kumba with the highest population in the Region received the largest number of migrants, while Mamfe, one of the

smallest of the urban centres, received 3.7 per cent. This can be explained from the economic and social perspectives that the larger the urban centre, the larger its informal sector (this is the sector that absorbs most rural migrants seeking employment, since they often possessed relatively low academic qualifications). Therefore most out-migrants seeking employment would tend to migrate to the larger urban centres. Also, those who migrated for the purpose of attending post-primary educational institutions migrated to Kumba, Limbe or Buea where most of these institutions were located [8]. Some of the early secondary schools that attracted rural students to pursue post-primary education in urban centers in the South West Region were: Cameroon College of Arts and Science (CCAS) Kumba, Presbyterian Secondary School (PSS) Kumba, Cameroon College of Commerce (CCC) Kumba, Alfred Saker Secondary School (ASSS) Victoria, present-day Limbe, Government Bilingual Secondary School (GBSS) Molyko-Buea and others.

Outside the Region the main urban destinations of rural out-migrants were Douala (12%) and Yaounde (8.7%), the economic and political capitals of Cameroon respectively. Considering the economic significance of Douala and its proximity to the South West Region, one would have expected more migration to Douala than the present statistics reveal. This shortfall can be attributed to the linguistic difference between Douala and the South West Region. Douala is in the Francophone sector of Cameroon, which means that those who migrated there had to be able to communicate in the French language in order to obtain employment even in many units of the informal sector. This language difference acted as a deterrent to those who had no knowledge of French language. Also, prior to the current Anglophone crisis, the migrants to Douala consisted principally of those seeking jobs, and not educational institutions because the primary and post-primary educational systems in Francophone Cameroon are different from those in the Anglophone sector (*ibid.*). As regards those traders who are migrants from the rural areas, 33.3 per cent migrated for the purpose of trading, 26.2 per cent migrated to join relatives and friends who already lived at the urban centres, while 11.9 per cent migrated with the intention of obtaining jobs in the civil service. Though they ended up becoming traders. Income differentials between urban and rural employment in the Region were one of the main reasons people migrated to seek employment at urban centres, even though they might own land in the rural areas. To the usual causes of urban-rural differentials in salary levels and wage rates, we may add two further explanations in the Cameroonian case; firstly, that while the government wage policy adjusts money wages for government and private sector workers every few years, there is no parallel policy which adjusts prices paid to farmers. Secondly high taxes on export crops depressed real incomes received by farmers.

The heads of rural households surveyed were asked whether they or members of their families had any intention of migrating to the urban centres. Twenty-six per cent of the household heads or relations planned to migrate, 35.6 per cent were undecided, while 38.1 per cent did not intend to migrate. The characteristics of those who planned to migrate (in terms of their ages, reasons for migrating and destination) were similar to those who were known

to have migrated from the rural areas (*ibid.*). Of those who planned to migrate, 63.7 per cent were between the ages of sixteen and thirty. Prior to 1993 that the University of Buea was opened, Kumba remained the leading destination (22.2 %) for those who planned to migrate, Limbe was the second favourite destination (20.8%), while Buea and Tiko each remained the destination of 11.1 per cent of those planned to migrate. Douala and Yaounde were the leading destinations outside the Southwest Region. As regards the reasons for planning to migrate, 31.6 per cent planned to migrate for the purpose of attending post-primary educational institutions, while 23.7 per cent wanted to seek government employment at urban centres. Other reasons included the desire to escape from tedious agricultural activities, and the desire to join relatives who had already migrated to the urban centres. The preceding discussion suggests that most migrants from the rural areas to the urban centres were young and relatively more educated people who could obtain suitable employment in the rural areas or who wanted to attend post-primary institutions at the urban centres. As to whether it was the poor or the relatively rich who migrated from the rural areas, this survey shows that more poor people migrated from rural areas to urban centres. A correlation between total annual incomes of rural households surveyed and plans by their members to migrate or not indicated that 73.8 per cent of those who intended to migrate were from households with annual incomes of between fifty thousand and three hundred and fifty-thousand francs CFA, while 26.2 per cent were from households with annual incomes of between three hundred and fifty-one thousand and one million francs CFA. Also of those who did not plan to migrate, 63.8 per cent had annual incomes of between fifty thousand and three hundred and fifty thousand francs CFA, while 36.1 per cent have annual incomes of between three hundred and fifty-one and one million francs CFA. However, 44.4 percent of those with annual incomes of between fifty thousand and three hundred and fifty thousand francs CFA planned to migrate, compared to 33.3 per cent of those who have annual incomes of between three hundred and fifty-one thousand and one million francs CFA [9].

Secondly students who migrated to urban centres for the purposes of attending post-primary educational institutions were often from rich parents who could afford the high tuition fees except for those who may have rich urban-based relatives. Let us now take a look at how Christianity enhanced the movements of young people from rural to urban centers to pursue post primary education in prestigious missionary secondary schools. Christianity was another important factor that enhanced rural-urban migration in the South West Region of Cameroon. Young students migrated from rural areas in Mbo, Bakossi, Bangwa and others to study in prestigious mission secondary schools based in urban centers such as Saint Francis College Kumba, Bishop Rogan College Buea, Saint Joseph College Sasse, Buea, Christ the King College Tiko, Alfred Saker College, Victoria, currently Limbe and others. Beside the primary aim of pursuing secondary education, some of these youths attended these colleges with the intention of becoming Reverend Fathers in future. Prominent examples are Saint Joseph College, Sasse that served as a minor seminary for the training of Rever-

end Fathers and Bishop Rogan College that replaced it in this function in due course. Being a Reverend Father in the Catholic Church was and it remains a very prestigious profession in Cameroon as a whole and in the South West Region in particular. As regards the argument that poor areas would tend to experience more out-migration than richer ones, evidence from the present study does not support this argument. Taking Mbetta as one of the poor sub-areas within the Region, only 17.6 per cent of those surveyed planned to migrate compared to 26.3% for the entire area. The percentage of those who planned to migrate was as high as 46.7 per cent for the Sasse-Bwighku-Tole sub-area, which is linked to Buea town by an all-season motorable road and which also supports a virile plantation (Tole Tea Estate). In the Tombel sub-area, about 45 per cent of those surveyed planned to migrate to urban centres. Tombel is a rich agricultural area, containing a CDC rubber plantation, and is linked to Kumba by a motorable road. About 34 per cent of its residents fall in the 500.000-2000, 000 francs CFA income brackets per annum. The point we are making here is that the Sasse-Bwighku-Tole and Tombel and sub-areas had a stronger economy than Mbetta, in the Mbo area yet more people planned to migrate from them than from Mbetta. What this suggests is that non-economic factors might equally be important in motivating people to migrate, although the economic factors are often the most mentioned reasons for migrating. In Cameroon, generally, there seems to be some "psychological satisfaction" derived by rural out-migrants in moving into the urban centres, even though their economic conditions might actually deteriorate. This had roots in colonial era when the urban centres were thought to be the symbols of advanced civilization, the home of the "mysterious white man", therefore migrating to the urban centres was perceived as forming a part of that civilization. It was not uncommon for rural residents to style their colleagues who were well dressed and behaved as "Yaounde or Douala boys", which implied that people who lived at the urban centres were of higher status. Also the fact that Mbetta was relatively cut off from the urban centres meant that its residents were less aware of urban facilities and opportunities, all of which acted as incentives to urban-ward migration. Meanwhile some residents of rural areas who were well linked to urban centres were more exposed to urban opportunities and facilities.

Although the general trend of migration in the South West Region was from the rural areas to the urban centres, there was also some migration in the reverse direction. Return migrants were predominantly older people who had previously migrated from the rural areas to urban centers. The present paper reveals that about 51.8 per cent of the rural residents surveyed had previously lived in urban centres. These returned migrants fall into two main categories - those who came back to the rural areas because they were failures at the urban centres, for example, those who could not obtain any paid employment, and those who returned in order to invest their urban-earned income in rural activities such as export crop farming, village provision stores or bars combined with provision stores. Thus not only failures returned to the rural areas, although they generally constituted a greater proportion of returned migrants. The reasons for return migration varied. The

returned migrants were often the more progressive segment of the rural community. They tended to have a higher level of education because of their previous exposure to urban-based educational institutions. They were also the first people to adopt innovation, for example, the use of fertilizers in farms.

Although our emphasis has been on rural-urban migration, it should be noted that current migration in the Region is not limited between rural and urban areas. Although it is the predominant form of migration, there was also migration between rural areas for agricultural purposes, for example, along the Kumba-Limbe high way, there were emerging agricultural communities (Mabunji. Mile 40, Mile 14) consisting principally of people who had migrated from rural areas such as Mbetta, Bangwa, Akwaya for the purpose of farming. There was also labour migration from the rural areas to the CDC and Pamol plantations which were based in the rural areas. The creation of the University of Buea had a profound effect on rural-urban migration in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Influence Of the Creation of Buea University on Rural-Urban Migration in The South West Region of Cameroon

In 1992/93 a series of presidential decrees transformed the Higher Education landscape profoundly by dissolving the University of Yaounde and creating six new universities in Cameroon. Decree No. 92/074 of 13 April 1992 transformed the university centres of Buea and Ngaoundere into full-fledged universities. Another Decree, No. 93/026 of 19 January 1993, created the universities of Yaounde I and II, of Douala and of Dschang. Whilst Decree No. 93/027 of the same date, defined common conditions for the operation of Universities in Cameroon, Decree No. 93/034, also of 19 January 1993, organised the University of Buea [10]. The reforms introduced by the above decrees were aimed at improving the performance of higher education. Specifically the reforms were aimed at achieving among others, the following objectives: To increase the participation of different stakeholders in financing higher education institutions; To provide universities with more academic and management autonomy; To provide all Cameroonians equal opportunity to obtain university education; To expand and increase higher education opportunities and make university programs more professional and more responsive to market forces; To make rational and optimal use of existing infrastructure, facilities and services. The creation of the University of Buea boosted the prices of basic commodities in several markets around the entire Fako Division. For example, the prices of food stuffs increased tremendously in the area. This emanated from the huge enrolment of students at the University of Buea. Due to the attractive prices of food stuffs in the area, many rural dwellers migrated from Mbo and Bangwa village such as Lekwe, Dinte, Elumba, Tangang, Azi, Njawung and Letia to cultivate food crop farms in Buea where they could sell their food stuffs to students at prices higher than in their hinterlands [11]. Again, the number of micro finance institutions in Fako Division in general and Buea in particular increased tremendously from 1993 when the University of Buea was opened [10].

This made several businessmen to migrate from rural areas in the South West such as Nchemba, Taylor, Mbio, Bakut, Alou, Fonge and others to Buea in order to borrow money from the various financial institution and boost up their business enterprises. Some of the migrants did not end up only borrowing money from the financial institutions, a good number of them ended up getting employment there as clerks, cleaners and watchmen. It was not only in the various financial institutions found around the university of Buea that rural migrants in the South West Region gained employment, the University of Buea itself offered employment opportunities 'to some of the rural migrants as cleaners, security men and owners of small sole proprietor businesses on the university campus. The creation of the University of Buea in 1993 led to the opening up of many hotels in Molyko and its environs. Some of the hotels opened were Chariot Hotel, Eta Palace Hotel, King David Hotel, Miss Bright Hotel and others. Residents from rural areas in the South West like Ehu-yampeh, Lebe, Ninong, Mboam, Tock, Ebam, Mbindia, Sabes, Moshi and others migrated to Buea to work in these hotels. Some of them worked like cooks, laundrymen, watchmen and receptionists. Some of these migrants admired Buea town to the extent that going back to their rural settlements became what they detested most. Following the creation of the University of Buea in Molyko, the number of Churches that sprang up in the area became very impressive and alarming (ibid. 29). Many of the Churches came about as a result of the increasing number of students in the area. Most of the churches were Pentecostals. The music sang in these churches was far more attractive than that of Orthodox Churches such as Catholic, Presbyterian and others. A good number of young people who travelled to Buea from the hinterlands of the Region such as Ekwenzo, Bellua, Letia, Njuinye and others remained in Buea to play in the orchestra in the new churches. Due to the attractive nature of the music that the new churches played, a significant fraction of the youths who became choir members progressed to the rank of pastors in their various churches. The creation of the University of Buea in 1993 led to a significant increase in the number of bars, restaurants and night clubs in Buea and its environs. Many young people from rural areas in the South West Region such as Ebonji, Lebe, Ngoh and others migrated to Buea where they served as servants, cleaners and accountants in the different bars that sprang up in the area [12]. Some young women on their part migrated from rural areas to Buea in order to prostitute in the various night clubs that were opened there as a result of the huge student population that Buea had. A prominent night club opened in Buea due to the presence of Buea University include Las Vegas. The creation of the University of Buea also led to a rapid improvement in infrastructural development in the town (ibid.). It was not only the number of modern infrastructure in terms of houses that emerged but also the opening up and widening of some narrow streets that were in the town. The construction of modern and complex buildings coupled with the construction of new streets and widening of the old ones provided job opportunities to the masonry population and technicians from different fields such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians and others. The young and energetic people who were smart enough quickly picked up jobs for themselves in these various construction

sites. A huge number of young people migrated from rural areas where their services as carpenters, builders and others were less needed to work in construction sites in Buea. Interestingly, some Buea University students who graduated and could not find jobs immediately helped themselves by getting temporary employment in construction sites within the Buea municipality.

The First World War and Rural-Urban Migration in The South West Region of Cameroon

The First World War, slavery institution and slave trade had profound effects on rural-urban migration in the South West Region of Cameroon. Before the first gunshot at Nsanaragati in August 1914, slave trade was more or less suppressed in Africa. In Nigeria, the British Government passed an ordinance in 1916 which imprisoned anybody caught in buying and selling of human beings. It also condemned domestic slavery that was a common practice in the Lower Cross River Region in Nigeria and also in the British Southern Cameroons. Even though the Germans supported the abolition of slave trade in the nineteenth century, they did not actually put in place concrete measures for its eradication in places like Ossindinge and its environs in the hinterlands of the South West Region. During the First World War, people in communities in the South West Region where slave trade was still practiced took advantage of the chaos to encourage the illegal trade. They were also motivated by the fact that the price of a slave increased during the war from 6 pounds sterling to 7 pounds sterling. At the end of the war in Cameroon in 1916, the British Government applied the Nigerian Ordinance that banned slave trade and slavery in places like Ossindinge and its environs in the South West Region. However, there were still some individuals who were still illegally involved in the trade along the Cameroon-Nigeria border. According to Eta, the trade was done in a relay system [13]. In the South West Region, the buyers mostly came from the Ikom district in Nigeria. They would approach their collaborators in a place like Ossindinge that was a very prominent slave market. The people would then get in touch with a dealer further east on the Bangwa hills and Dschang, and when a boy or girl was available they were passed quickly through several hands to different destinations. After the battle of Nsanakang in September 1914, a dozen boys and girls were sold to buyers in Nigeria. It was estimated that the people of Ossindinge purchased a boy at about 5 Pounds sterling in Dschang Division and sold him at about 7 Pounds sterling in the Ikom District (ibid.).

Most of the slaves in Ossindinge and its environs took advantage of the war and escaped from their masters. Eta estimates that more than 200 slaves took advantage of the war and escaped. About 150 of them escaped to Calabar and Ikom in Nigeria. The remaining number escaped through Nguti in the South West Region of Cameroon to places like Victoria, Bimbia, Tiko and Mpundu where they were quickly employed in the German plantations that were found in these areas. This is how the First World War, Slave Trade and Rural-Urban Migration became interwoven in the South West Region.

Many others who were under servitude in Banyang communities like Besongabang, Egbekaw, Mbinjong and others escaped to

the Bamenda Grassfields and urban centers in the South West such as Victoria, Kumba, Tiko, Buea and others. The attitudes of the Germans and later the British during the First World War also contributed to rural-urban migration in the area. For instance, the forceful recruitment of people like porters made many to flee their villages of origin in the rural parts of South Cameroon to urban centres such as Muyuka, Ekona, Kumba, Victoria, Tiko, and Buea. Once the defeat of the Germans in Cameroon during the First World War became inevitable in places like Ossindinge and Nsanakang, they began to remove their health personnel and missionaries. And when they finally went to the Bamenda Grassfields, there was a remarkable increase in mortality, especially among the children. Yaws, tuberculosis and other diseases killed incredibly. As the German missionaries and health workers left with their drugs, the people in areas like Ossindinge and other places in the Banyang country had to trek for very long distances to look for drugs and other solutions to their health-related problems. Some of the rural folks moved from rural Ossindinge and its environs to urban towns like Victoria, Kumba or Buea in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Repercussions of Rural-Urban Migration in The South West Region of Cameroon

The preceding analysis strongly suggests that rural-urban migrants were principally the young, the better educated and the richer segment of the rural population. Also most of the successful migrants tend to remain at the urban centres while the failures return to the rural areas. This has certain negative repercussions on the rural economy. First of all, the rural areas do not benefit "enough" from the education of young persons for whom they bear the costs. Even though individual families may benefit from remittances from migrants, the rural areas lose their greater capacity to reason and to innovate through the loss of their more able people to the urban centres [14]. Secondly, the fact that the better educated and the relatively rich migrate from the rural areas to the urban centres means that the strength of the rural areas in bargaining with urban centres is greatly reduced. Thirdly, the selective nature of rural-urban migration means that rural areas not only lose their best educated and most energetic young people, but are left with people who are most likely to resist innovation, creating a cumulative causation process of backwardness in the rural areas.

Although the negative impacts of rural-urban migration on the rural areas often create positive repercussions for the urban centres, the latter are also experiencing adverse effects from the exploding migration process. Unlike in the developed countries, the urban-ward migration rate in the region does not correlate with the rate of availability of urban employment opportunities. This conforms with McGee's findings in other developing countries [15]. This is the paradox that makes rural-urban migration a monstrous problem in many developing countries. As Gwan observed [2] thousands of migrants to the urban centres of the region are often unemployed. Thousands often turn up at labour offices for the few jobs advertised. The resulting effect is that most of the unemployed people often engage in illegal activities such as stealing and prosti-

tution, in analyzing the situation a police report stated: as regard the problem of prostitution in the region, it is difficult to obtain any data that can reveal the magnitude of the problem, because it is neither a legal nor dignified profession and very few women can publicly identify themselves as prostitutes. However, a United Nations Survey indicated that 4.2 per cent of the urban adult females were prostitutes. The proportion was as high as 7.3 per cent for Kumba and 6.1 per cent for Mamfe [2].

Another urban problem that is exacerbated by rural-urban migration is that of housing. Urban housing problems in the region are a direct result of the rapid process of urbanization during the past few decades which has never been matched by adequate planning. The outcome is that most facilities in the urban areas have fallen short of the needs of the population, for example, housing, water and electricity facilities. These problems are compounded in those parts of the urban centres (such as stranger quarters in Buea, Hausa quarter in Fiango and Three corners in Kumba) which formed "native towns" during the colonial period and which since then have often received the bulk of rural migrants. These areas are developing slum conditions characterized by inadequate housing, deficient facilities, overcrowding, congestion, filth and squalor [16]. However, squatter settlements which are common in many large African cities are still uncommon in the Southwest region. Clearly rural-urban migration has negative repercussions on both the rural and urban areas. The problem cannot be abated by rendering rural-urban migration difficult and thus containing the advantages of urban life to those who are already living at urban centres. Leaving the organization of the Cameroon Society and the value system, as they are now, it would be disadvantageous to individual talented people to remain in the rural areas because their talents would not be well rewarded. As *Lipton* (1977: 234) argues, migration may actually, help in bringing skills to areas where they could be used profitably. In order to encourage the talented people to remain in the rural areas, the latter must offer them opportunities for advancement. This can be done by checking those policies such as pricing which tend to transfer incomes from rural areas to urban centres and encourage young and educated people to flow in the same direction. As indicated earlier a greater proportion of the revenue derived from agriculture, accrues to urban centres, also a significant proportion of rural savings are in urban-based financial institutions. Such trends must be checked to allow rural areas to derive greater benefits from the revenue they generate. Apart from devising constraints on this principally one-way-flow of resources, the society also has to recognize and value the role of the farmer vis-a-vis the urban administrator. Unless these fundamental issues addressed, rural-urban migration is most likely to continue and agricultural activities will be left principally to the old segment of the rural society and those who have not succeeded academically, except of course that arbitrary means such as restrictive legislation are used to control rural-urban migration.

Conclusion

From the data collected and analysed in this paper, it is evident that rural-urban migration in the South West Region of Cameroon

in the 20th century was as a result of a multiplicity of factors, including the search for employment opportunities in German plantations, lack of entertainment facilities in rural areas and the need to pursue post primary education in urban centres. Another conspicuous factor that led to rural-urban migration in the region was the search for fertile soils for agricultural purposes. The soils found in Buea and its environs were extremely fertile and therefore very attractive to rural dwellers to the extent that many of them migrated from their villages of origin to cultivate farms on the fertile soils. Some of the ethnic groups whose members migrated to Buea and its environs for agricultural purposes were the Bangwa, Mbo, Bakossi, Banyang, Ejagham, Bassossy and others. Interestingly, some of the rural dwellers who migrated to urban centers and failed to fend for themselves were obliged to migrate back to their rural settings. These ones were described by their contemporaries as failures. They probably failed to fend for themselves as a result of the high cost of living in the South West townships.

The results of this study, therefore, demonstrate the need for the following recommendations:

a. The cost of housing was and remains very high in urban centers in the Southwest Region of Cameroon. The Cameroonian Government needs to step up its urban planning policies/strategies in the region to enable low-income earners to be capable of paying house rents.

b. Talented people in rural areas need to be given the opportunity or chance to showcase their talents. If not all will likely migrate to urban centers and rural areas will therefore be void of talented people, especially the youths.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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