The management of customary land can lead to disputes; thus, it is important to provide equitable customary land dispute resolution mechanisms that do not discriminate against women and youth.

Traditional rulers are key players in the resolution of disputes arising from customary land management. This function, which is not only based on established customs, is assigned to them by Decree No. 77/245 of 15 July 1977 on the Organization of Traditional Chiefdoms which confers to them an important role in preserving peace.

3. Mechanisms for settling customary land disputes

Traditional rulers must ensure family heads and other administrators of family land fully respect the principles of equality.

The classification of conflicts by category (youth land disputes with youth involvement, women’s land disputes with greater women’s participation) is an important asset in informing policymakers on specific aspects related to customary tenure for better integration of the latter within a context of reforms in Cameroon, the code also aims to inform the parties about accepted customary norms that can reduce the marginalisation of women and youth. The code is intended for all social actors and, in particular, for those involved in customary land management. It aims to inform policymakers on specific aspects related to customary tenure for better integration of the latter within the framework of land reform. The classification of conflicts by category is an important asset in informing policymakers on specific aspects related to customary tenure for better integration of the latter within a context of reforms in Cameroon.

The code is intended for all social actors and, in particular, for those involved in customary land management. It aims to inform policymakers on specific aspects related to customary tenure for better integration of the latter within the framework of land reform.

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WHO ARE WE?

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Purpose: Connecting the actors, Mobilizing the actors, Influencing policies and texts on land tenure and related areas.

Objectives: Contributing to the improvement of land and natural resource governance through the adoption and implementation of laws and practices that allow for equitable and sustainable management that can ensure the well-being of all. NES’s strategy is based on three main objectives: Establishing the actors, Mobilizing the actors through knowledge production and capacity building, and influencing policies and texts on land tenure and related areas.

Our approach: Building the platform and networks of the actors with the aim of building the platform’s activities, which are coordinated by a secretariat in charge of facilitation and member support. Empowerment of members based on their competence, capacity-building of members, experience sharing, and division of labor following the joint development of objectives constitute a means to achieve results as well as to ensure the members’ full participation.

Target: The code is intended for all social actors and, in particular, for those involved in customary land management. It aims to inform the parties about accepted customary norms that can reduce the marginalisation of women and youth.

Our slogan: Together, we can effect change.

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A guideline for equitable customary land management for youth and women in Cameroon

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Preamble

• Considering that recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of justice.
• Considering that the lack of consideration for women and young people remains a real challenge in the context of customary land tenure in Cameroon.
• Considering that transitioning customs from oral to written is a means of empowering customary authorities in land management in Cameroon.
• Considering that the constitutional recognition of customary land rights is a fundamental guarantee against their violation.
• Considering that the use of quotas for allocations of customary rights may sometimes vary based on the customs or the community in question.

1. Rights

1.1. Youth rights in customary land management

There are provisions, even though marginal, for young people's access to customary land, ranging from legacy inheritance, rights based on the 'right of the axe', temporary or definitive acquisition, etc. However, these measures sometimes vary based on the customs of the people who use them, hence the need to clearly define customary land rights that support young people. These are:

- the right of real access to the collective or individual customary property;
- the involvement of young people in decision-making bodies in the field of customary land management;
- the establishment of land certificates for the head of the family before his death and their validation by the traditional ruler;
- the right to engage in economic transactions on land, provided such transactions serve the interests of the community and are carried out in consultation with the family members.

1.2. Women's rights in customary land management

The situation of women is not homogeneous and depending on their characteristics and status, they face specific problems. For example, these categories and status may include the young girl, the single woman who stayed in her family with or without children, the married woman, the divorced woman, the deserted woman, and the widowed woman. All these women have problems to access land rights in the customary governance system, hence the need to grant them a place in customary arrangements. These include:

- the enshrinement of equal inheritance rights for boys and girls;
- the recognition of equal rights to family land ownership;
- the establishment of land certificates for women after the death of the husband;
- the recognition of customary property for women even after the death of the husband;
- the involvement of women in decision-making bodies in matters of customary land ownership;
- insights into economic transactions on land, provided such transactions serve the interests of the community and are carried out in consultation with family members.

2. Obligations

2.1. Obligations arising from women's management of collective customary land

- Women must refrain from engaging in economic transactions that transfer the collective customary land ownership granted to them;
- Women must develop the customary acquisition in the presence of family members.

2.2. Obligations resulting from the management of collective customary land by young people

- Young people need to manage customary lands in a rational and sustainable way;
- Young people must refrain from economic transactions that transfer the collective customary land ownership granted to them;
- Young people must develop and use land in line with the community's interests.

2.3. Obligations arising from individual customary land ownership

To avoid transfers that may improperly plunder customary property:

- Women and young people should refrain from economic transactions on individual customary land, provided that such transactions are carried out in the presence of family members.
- The validity of property transfers on individual customary land is contingent upon the issuance of certificates of customary acquisition in the presence of the customary authorities and the approval of family members.