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PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LAND CONFLICTS

Practical guide for the implementation of a local conflict management system based on the experience of ProPFR in Cameroon (2023-2026)

MARCH 2026

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SUMMARY

Land conflicts are currently one of the main sources of tension in rural areas of Cameroon. They pit farmers, herders and fishermen, neighbours and even entire communities against each other over the use of fields, pastures, forests, water and other natural resources. These conflicts are exacerbated by demographic pressure, population mobility (including internal migration due to violent conflicts or economic opportunities), changing dietary habits (growing demand for beef and other protein-rich foods, leading to an increase in the national livestock population) and the absence of formal land titles, resulting in informal and often contested transactions. They hinder local development, undermine social cohesion and limit sustainable investment.

This guide aims to provide practical answers to local stakeholders – traditional leaders, administrative authorities, farmer organisations and civil society – to better prevent and manage these conflicts. It draws on the experience of the German Cooperation's project "*Promotion of Responsible Land Policy* (ProPFR) in Cameroon"[1] implemented in the Centre Region, particularly in the municipalities of Nanga-Eboko and Yoko.

The main objective of this guide is to enable communities to establish inclusive and effective dispute resolution mechanisms, while strengthening transparent and legitimate decision-making. The guide will enable readers to:

- Understand the causes and types of land disputes;
- Identify and strengthen existing mechanisms;
- Establish a harmonised and documented procedure;
- Prevent conflicts through planning, awareness-raising and dialogue.

Four major improvements in conflict management and prevention resulting from ProPFR deserve special attention:

- **The expanded council of notables**, which now includes representatives of women, youths, herders, internally displaced persons and others as appropriate, to ensure that all voices are heard in local mediation bodies.
- **The archiving of land disputes and decisions** in registers and reports, which introduces a collective memory and strengthens the credibility of traditional mechanisms.
- **The local charter**, which sets out consensual rules for land use in a village (agriculture, livestock farming, environment) and defines penalties for non-compliance, in order to prevent disputes and protect the community's vital spaces.

1 ProPFR (duration period in Cameroon: 2023–2026) is a global programme commissioned by the German Cooperation on behalf of the German Federal Department for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), implemented by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) *GmbH* in Cameroon and in ten other countries between 2015 and 2026.

- **Grazing agreements**, which formalise in writing the allocation of a grazing area to a livestock farmer, specifying the conditions of use and avoiding double allocations that are a source of conflict.

This guide thus offers a simple methodology adapted to the rural context so that each community can not only resolve existing conflicts, but above all prevent future ones.



Image 1 : Raising awareness among women about land rights and conflicts in Mbengueni © Consoler TAPIMENE / GIZ, 2025

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1 UNDERSTANDING LAND CONFLICTS

Land conflicts are a daily reality in rural areas of Cameroon. They reflect the growing competition between various land uses – agriculture, livestock farming, housing, logging – and are expressed through tensions - sometimes long-standing, sometimes new – that are exacerbated by demographic pressure and migratory dynamics. Understanding the nature of these conflicts, as well as their most common forms and aggravating factors is an essential step in designing effective prevention and management mechanisms. With this in mind, the ProPFR project has conducted several baseline studies in its area of intervention in order to establish a clear typology of conflicts and identify existing local practices.

> *"In Ngouétou, some residents began selling land to outsiders without going through the chiefdom, because they knew it could bring in quick money."* *His Majesty LAMBA NESTOR, village chief of Ngouétou*

1.1 BASELINE STUDIES CONDUCTED BY ProPFR

In order to better understand these dynamics, ProPFR has conducted several baseline studies in collaboration with consultancy firms and partner organisations:

- "Study on local mechanisms for resolving land conflicts in Nyong-et-Kelle" ("*Etude sur les mécanismes locaux de résolution des conflits fonciers dans le Nyong-et-Kelle*", carried out by the FODER association (*Forêts et Développement Rural* ; May 2023 – Nyong-et-Kéllé)
- "Identification of traditional and innovative mechanisms for resolving agropastoral conflicts", conducted by the association MBOSCUDA (*Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association*; August 2023 – Centre Region, Municipalities of Nanga-Eboko and Yoko)
- "Identification of customary or local practices for securing land ownership in the Mbam-and-Kim Division" ("*Identification des usages coutumiers ou locaux de sécurisation de la propriété foncière dans le département du Mbam-et-Kim*") conducted by the ECODEV association (*Ecosystems and Development*; May 2024 – Mbam-and-Kim Division)

🔗 For a better understanding of the existing mechanisms, consult the three studies by FODER, MBOSCUDA and ECODEV (2023).

These studies have made it possible to establish a clear typology of conflicts, understand the central role of chiefdoms and highlight local innovations already in place to manage or prevent tensions.

1.2 TYPOLOGY OF CONFLICTS

The reference studies carried out by the ProPFR project in its area of intervention have identified the main types of land conflicts:

- **Agro-pastoral conflicts:** These are the most frequent disputes, linked to transhumance (periodic migration of livestock) and interactions between farmers and herders (destruction of crops, occupation of agricultural areas by herds, failure to follow designated routes and grazing areas).
- **Boundary conflicts**[2] : These arise between neighbouring villages or between families when territorial boundaries are not clearly defined or recognised by all parties.
- **Conflicts related to informal transactions** ("land sell-offs"): The arrival of new players with financial resources has led to the informal transfer of many plots of national land. These transactions, which are not recognised by law, create tensions between local populations who feel dispossessed, the buyers and, potentially, the State, which retains ownership of the national land.



1.3 AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Several factors are currently exacerbating the emergence and severity of these conflicts:

- D**emographic pressure and migration dynamics:** the arrival of populations from other regions, particularly transhumant pastoralists and internally displaced persons, especially from English-speaking regions due to the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions, is intensifying competition for land;
- **New infrastructure:** the extension of National Road No. 15 facilitates access to previously isolated areas and fuels land greed;

2 The conflict resolution mechanism of the expanded council of notables (see below) was set up to deal with, among other things, land disputes at village level. Despite the successes already achieved through this mechanism, there are of course still disputes, particularly those concerning the demarcation of village boundaries, which exceed the mandate of the village councils and must be brought before the sub-divisional office. The competences of the various bodies must be clarified on a case-by-case basis.

- **Lack of land titles and security:** most land remains unregistered due to complex procedures that are difficult for rural populations to access, which fosters multiple land occupations and disputes.
- **Failure to involve relevant stakeholders:** when livestock farmers, young people and women are not included in local mediation bodies, decisions are less readily accepted and conflicts persist.

2 LEVEL 1 – INITIAL DIAGNOSIS

The first step in establishing a local land conflict management system consists in understanding the prevailing situation. The assessment identifies the types of conflicts that exist in the community, the actors already involved in resolving them, and the limits of the current mechanisms. It thus provides the basis for defining improvements that are appropriate and accepted by all.

> *"During the assessments carried out in Nanga-Eboko and Yoko, it became apparent that the chiefdom was the central actor in conflict resolution, but that women, young people and herders were not represented. This lack of inclusion made it particularly difficult to manage agropastoral disputes."* *Marc NTANKO, ProPFR technical advisor*

The key actions of the initial diagnosis are:

- **Identifying past and present conflicts**
  - Identify the most frequent disputes (agropastoral, boundaries, land transactions, etc.);
  - Note their frequency, severity and how they were resolved.

- **Mapping existing actors and mechanisms**
  - Analyse the role of chiefs, notables, heads of families and vigilance committees;
  - Observe the place (or absence) of women, young people, livestock farmers and ethnic and social minorities in existing mechanisms.

- **Assessing gaps**
  - Check whether conflicts are documented or only settled orally.
  - Identify gaps in technical skills (e.g. use of GPS, archiving, drafting minutes);
  - Determine whether certain population groups are under-represented in dispute management.

- **Analysing the local context**
  - Take account of demographic dynamics, migration, and recent infrastructure developments (roads, markets) that may influence land pressure;
  - Gather the community's perspectives on how conflicts have evolved over time.

Practical advice

Draw up a simple inventory: a list of conflicts that have arisen in the last three years, their causes and how they were resolved. This provides a concrete starting point.



Image 2 : Transhumance in the Central Region of Cameroon between mid-November and the end of February © Tarra films / GIZ, 2025

3 LEVEL 2 – STRUCTURING AN INCLUSIVE MECHANISM: THE EXPANDED COUNCIL OF NOTABLES

Once the assessment has been carried out, the community must establish or strengthen a conflict prevention and management mechanism adapted to its context. This mechanism must be legitimate, inclusive and effective to ensure that the decisions taken are accepted and respected by all stakeholders.

"In the municipalities of Nanga-Eboko and Yoko, ProPFR helped the chiefdoms expand their council of notables and organised training sessions on dispute resolution. The introduction of young GPS operators brought a technical skill to the table, while giving young people an active role in the system." Dr Tobias Feldt, Senior Technical Advisor, ProPFR



3.1 COMPOSITION OF THE SYSTEM

The core of any system remains the traditional chiefdom, composed of the chief and the notables. However, the ProPFR experience has shown that it is necessary to expand this structure to better represent the diversity of stakeholders involved in land conflicts.

What ProPFR has introduced:

ProPFR introduced the concept of an expanded council of notables, bringing together representatives of women, young people, herders and internally displaced persons alongside the traditional chiefdom, in order to make conflict management more inclusive, legitimate and effective.

Composition options:

- **Traditional representatives:** chiefs, notables, heads of families;
- **Social representatives:** women, young people, internally displaced persons;
- **Sectoral representatives:** farmers, herders, producer organisations, local civil society;
- **Other specific actors depending on the context:** representatives of ethnic minorities, transhumant pastoralists or local agricultural investors.

Reasons for this opening:

- Strengthening the legitimacy of the mechanism by giving each social category a place;
- Promoting equity and inclusion, particularly for often marginalised groups (women, young people);
- Integrating a variety of skills (mediation, local knowledge, technical management).

3.2 CLARIFICATION OF ROLES

During validation by the community assembly, the enlarged system must clearly specify each party's responsibilities in order to avoid overlap.
Concrete example of an enlarged chiefdom:



- The **traditional chief** remains the final arbiter of disputes and the guarantor of social cohesion.
- The **notables** support the chief with their advice, particularly on the history of the village and land boundaries.
- The **farmers' representative** reports damages on crops and defends the interests of food producers.
- The **herders' representative** ensures that transhumance corridors are respected and relays the commitments and needs of the herders.
- The **women's representative** defends women's right to access land, participate in decision-making and secure their food plots, while ensuring the protection of vital spaces (water points, markets, places of worship).
- The **youth representative** defends the land rights of young people, who often have not yet received agricultural or residential land, and often plays a technical role (GPS mapping, digital archiving, awareness-raising via WhatsApp[3] , or community radio).
- The **representative of internally displaced persons or other minorities** ensures that their land and social rights are respected, alerts others to the risks of exclusion, and relays their specific needs for peaceful and equitable coexistence.
- The **mechanism's secretary** is responsible for drafting minutes, filling in registers and filing documents.

This example shows that the council's expansion is not merely symbolic: it allows for a functional distribution of roles, with each social group contributing its skills and priorities. Roles can be assumed by both men and women. Other roles necessary for the proper functioning of the system, such as treasurer, auditor, assessors, etc., can also be assigned as needed.

3.3 VALIDATION OF THE SYSTEM

Once the composition of the expanded council has been defined, the system must be presented and validated at a community meeting. This step is essential to ensure its legitimacy and acceptance by the entire population.

Validation generally takes place in three stages:

3 GIZ does not officially recommend WhatsApp for sharing sensitive data and content. However, this application is now one of the most common means of communication in Cameroon and, as such, cannot be ignored or deliberately dismissed.

- **Presentation of the system:** the chief, accompanied by dignitaries and the support team (e.g. project facilitators), presents the new composition of the council and explains the reasons for the expansion. The roles of each representative (women, young people, farmers, herders, internally displaced persons, etc.) are publicly specified.
- **Open discussion:** the community is invited to ask questions, make suggestions or express reservations. This dialogue phase strengthens support and allows the composition to be adjusted if certain social categories are not yet represented.
- **Formal validation:** the assembly gives its approval by a sign of consensus (applause, show of hands, oral declaration). The mechanism is then recognised as legitimate and its members can exercise their functions. In some villages, minutes of the validation are drawn up and recorded in the register of decisions.

The term of service of the mechanism is in line with village customs or at the discretion of the chief or notables.

3.4 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

An effective body relies on members trained on:

- **Conflict management:** mediation techniques, negotiation, conflict analysis;
- **Documentation:** drafting minutes, recording in registers;
- **Technical tools:** use of GPS, archiving, file management;
- **Leadership and communication:** facilitating discussions and promoting transparency.

There are several organisations that offer training on these topics. ProPFR, for example, has worked with the association *Peace Resources e.V.*[4] to build the capacity of the project's target groups on how to use the most common techniques to effectively resolve land conflicts. The association of young land experts AJEF (Association des Jeunes Experts sur le Foncier) has also made a significant contribution through awareness-raising workshops and advocacy for the involvement of women in conflict resolution bodies, both within platforms and endogenous bodies (application of the "*Inclusive Peace Agents*" approach, IPA, developed by ProPFR). Finally, it is also worth mentioning here the dialogue platforms set up by MBOSCUDA in the two municipalities of Nanga-Eboko and Yoko, which deal specifically with agropastoral conflicts (see chapter 5.3, page 14).

Practical advice

Including groups that are often absent from discussions (women, young people, displaced persons) increases acceptance of decisions.

4 https://peace-resources.de/accueil.html



Image 3 : Training courses on various topics are an important pillar of ProPFR's work © Tobias FELDT / GIZ, 2023

4 LEVEL 3 – HARMONISE THE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

Harmonising procedures helps to **strengthen the transparency and legitimacy of traditional land dispute resolution mechanisms**. The ProPFR experience has shown that a clear, shared and documented method facilitates dispute resolution and limits their recurrence.

4.1 THE 7 KEY STEPS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1) **Filing a complaint**
   - The complaint may be verbal or written;
   - It is addressed to the chiefdom.

2) **Logging the conflict**
   - Entry in a specific local register (improvement to the process proposed by ProPFR, see chapter 5.2);
   - Assignment of a number or reference.

3) **Verification of the facts**
   - Verification on the ground by a vigilance committee, local dignitaries or a representative of the chief;
   - Possible use of tools such as GPS to circumscribe the disputed areas.

4) **Palaver**
   - Meeting organised at the chiefdom;
   - Attended by the complainant, the accused party, the chief and local dignitaries;
   - Hearing of the different versions and testimonies.

5) **Decision or sanction**
   - The chief, alone or with the notables, makes a decision based on the facts observed;
   - Possible sanctions: compensation, restitution of space, warning, symbolic fine.

6) **Notification**
   - The parties are informed of the decision.
   - Minutes may be drawn up to formalise the decision.

7) **Possible appeal**
   - If a party is not satisfied, the dispute may be referred to the administrative authorities (sub-divisional office) or security forces (gendarmerie brigade).

Diagram of the 7 key steps in conflict management:

Complaint → Logging the conflict → Verification of the facts → Palaver → Decision or sanction → Notification → Possible appeal

In traditional land dispute resolution mechanisms, several steps already existed and were recognised by the community: receipt of the complaint, hearing of the parties, verification of the facts on the ground, palaver in front of the chief and notables, then decision and notification. These oral practices, rooted in local customs, made it possible to resolve a large number of conflicts without resorting to the administrative authorities. However, they left no lasting trace and the same cases could resurface several years later due to lack of evidence. The major improvement proposed by ProPFR is therefore the systematic archiving of records and minutes, which transforms these oral practices into a documented, traceable and credible system in the eyes of both the community and external authorities.

See also the instruction manual for the use of GPS devices, ProPFR (2025)

4.2 KEY IMPROVEMENT: FOCUS ON ARCHIVING

Before ProPFR's intervention, decisions were mostly oral and rarely recorded. This led to oversights, repeated disputes and a lack of institutional memory within the chiefdoms.

What ProPFR introduced:

- **Two dedicated registers:**
  - A register for land requests (local allocations);
  - A register for conflicts (complaints, decisions, status of resolution);
- **Minutes of the logging of conflicts:** each complaint (including the final decision) is formalised in minutes, signed by the parties concerned and the chiefdom;
- **Secure filing:** provision of metal cabinets or other storage systems that are resistant to termites and climatic variations, as well as filing cabinets for organising documents;
- **Traceability:** possibility of returning to an old case to avoid re-judging a dispute that has already been dealt with.

4.2.1 The register for land requests

This register is used to log all requests for land allocation or use in the village. Each time an individual or group – whether indigenous, internally displaced or transhumant pastoralists – requests space, the request is recorded with the date, the identity of the applicant, the purpose of use and, if possible, the area envisaged. This prevents multiple people from claiming the same plot and provides the chiefdom with a clear record of the authorisations granted.

4.2.2 The register for conflicts

This second register is devoted exclusively to disputes. All complaints, whether verbal or written, are recorded with a reference number, the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and the stages of its resolution (verification, palaver, decision). This register also indicates whether the conflict has been resolved, is being dealt with, or has been transferred to the administrative authorities. This monitoring process allows the chiefdom to report on its actions and avoid a repetition of the same disputes.

Practical advice

Use a reference code (e.g. 2025-05-CONFLICT-03) for each case in the register so that documents can be easily retrieved.

4.2.3 Minutes of the logging of conflicts

Minutes are a central part of the archiving system. Each decision taken by the chiefdom or the council of notables is formalised in writing, dated and signed by the parties concerned. The minutes specify the facts, deliberations, final decision and, where applicable, any penalties or compensation provided for. These documents serve as evidence in the event of subsequent disputes and reinforce the credibility of the traditional mechanism by introducing a formal dimension that brings customary practice closer to administrative standards. Finally, the minutes are archived in the registers.

See the template for a land dispute settlement report in the appendix.

4.2.4 Filing

To ensure proper storage, ProPFR has provided the chiefdoms with metal cabinets, filing cabinets and other office equipment. Each register and each report is filed by type of case and by year, making them easy to consult. Metal cabinets were chosen because they are resistant to termites and climatic variations, unlike wood, which deteriorates quickly in rural areas. Methodical filing prevents documents from being lost and ensures that the village's collective memory remains intact. Beyond local archiving, a municipal land tenure information system should centralise these documents in a digital database ("Local Land Tenure Information System", LLIS). Training in archiving was necessary for chiefs and notables and was provided with the support of ProPFR.

For further details, see the 'Archival Procedures Manual for Municipalities', ProPFR (2026).

4.2.5 Traceability of conflicts and decisions

> *"Previously, decisions were made verbally. With archiving, we can refer back to old files and avoid re-judging the same cases."* *BIH RAPHAËL, notable in Ngouétou*

The entire archiving system introduces genuine traceability for land decisions. Thanks to the reference numbers assigned in the registers and copies of the minutes, it is now possible to quickly retrieve the history of a dispute or allocation. This not only avoid re-litigating a case that has already been decided, but also proves, in the event of an external dispute (e.g. with an investor or the administration), that legitimate decisions have been taken and documented. Traceability thus strengthens land security and public confidence in the system.



Image 4 : Delivery of metal cabinets to the village chief of Mankim, Yoko municipality, for document archiving
© Tarra Films / GIZ, 2025

5 LEVEL 4 – PREVENTING CONFLICTS

Beyond resolving existing disputes, prevention aims to reduce the causes of conflict and strengthen social cohesion. This involves putting in place mechanisms, rules and practices that prevent tensions from escalating into confrontations.

5.1 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

> *"After a few awareness-raising sessions, we noticed that the villagers were talking about land differently: they were more aware of their rights and sought to avoid misunderstandings."* *Marie Martine YOBOL, outreach manager at SAILD*

Informing the population about their rights and duties is essential for preventing conflicts.

- **Content to share:** customary and legal land rights, limits of chiefdom authority, land management rules, importance of documentation.
- **Methods:** village meetings, educational talks, posters, local radio broadcasts.

- **Priority targets:** farmers, herders, women, young people, newcomers.

🔗 The Cameroonian NGO SAILD has developed awareness-raising materials on land security, land categories and obtaining concessions and land titles.

5.2 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Training local actors strengthens their ability to anticipate and manage tensions.

- **Key themes:**
  - Conflict analysis and prevention;
  - Mediation and negotiation techniques;
  - Leadership and participatory management;
  - Inclusive communication and respect for cultural differences.

- **Beneficiaries:** chiefs and notables, members of the expanded system (women, young people, herders), community leaders, representatives of associations.

Practical advice

Alternate theoretical training with practical scenarios (role-playing games simulating a conflict) to reinforce learning.

5.3 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE PLATFORMS (E.G. FARMERS-LIVESTOCK FARMERS)

The creation of regular consultation spaces promotes upstream prevention.

- **Role:** to enable farmers, herders, authorities and CSOs to discuss emerging issues in a structured manner.
- **Frequency:** quarterly meetings or during critical periods (start of transhumance, agricultural season);
- **Facilitation:** facilitated by a neutral CSO (e.g. MBOSCUDA) or a recognised mediator;
- Expected results: amicable agreements, identification of risk areas, joint commitments.

> *"Thanks to the dialogue platforms with MBOSCUDA, farmers and herders discuss before the animals cross the fields."* *Aboubakar BAWURU HAMADU, GIZ Focal Point at MBOSCUDA*

For more information on the experiences shared on the Yoko farmer-herder platform, see the “Module of the guide for building peace along peaceful and inclusive transhumance corridors,” MBOSCUDA (2025).

5.4 KEY INNOVATION: DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL CHARTERS AND GRAZING AGREEMENTS

Prevention rules can be translated into consensual documents accepted by all.

What ProPFR has introduced:

- **Local charter:** effectively the “village constitution”, which sets out common rules (e.g. ban on bush fires at certain times of year, requirement for firebreaks, penalties for livestock trespassing on fields);
- **Grazing agreements:** also known as minutes of agreement, a written document confirming the temporary allocation of grazing land to a livestock farmer, in order to avoid double allocations and disputes between farmers. Grazing agreements will also be archived in the chiefdom.

5.4.1 The local charter

The local charter is a consensual document adopted by the entire community. It acts as a “village constitution” for land and environmental management. Its role is to establish specific, shared rules that prevent conflicts from arising in the first place.
For example, a charter may prohibit the lighting of bush fires at certain times of the year, make it compulsory to set up firebreaks around fields, specify penalties for herds passing through agricultural areas, or establish when communal land can be used. The unique feature of the charter is that it is developed in a participatory manner: each social group (chiefs, notables, women, young people, herders, internally displaced persons) contributes to its definition. It is then validated by a community assembly and publicly displayed to ensure transparency.

A validated local charter will soon be available.

Practical advice

Involve the population in the drafting process so that the rules are understood and accepted, then display the charter in public places.

5.4.2 Grazing agreements (minutes of agreement)

Grazing agreements are written agreements between the chiefdom and a livestock farmer (or group of livestock farmers) to clarify the conditions of access to pastoral areas. They aim to avoid disputes, in particular the double allocation of pastoral land or intrusions into agricultural fields.

> *“ In the municipality of Yoko, a grazing agreement was signed to allocate a specific pastoral area to a group of Mbororo herders. Thanks to this initiative, conflicts between competing herders – who previously received the same area from the chief – have greatly decreased, as each allocation is now recorded and traceable.”* *El Hadj Moussa, herder in Yoko*

An agreement generally specifies: the identity of the herder, the location and size of the allocated land, the duration of use, the herder’s obligations (respecting boundaries, maintaining the space, prohibition on entering agricultural areas), as well as the penalties for non-compliance. This document, signed by both parties, constitutes written evidence in the event of a dispute.

See the model grazing agreement in the appendix.

5.5 RECOGNITION OF CUSTOMARY LAND RIGHTS

Recognition of customary land rights can play a crucial role in preventing land conflicts. By documenting and validating land use rights according to traditional practices, local communities can establish a legitimate basis for land tenure and use. This helps to clarify plot boundaries and reduce disputes over land occupation. Tools such as the *Certificate of Recognition of Customary Land Rights* (*ARDFC*) and the *Certificate of Peaceful Enjoyment of Land* (*AJPTER*) are examples of mechanisms that contribute to this security. These documents have been enthusiastically received and sought after by local populations for their ability to reduce land conflicts and serve as proof of customary ownership or land use rights without having to go through complex and costly procedures to obtain land titles. The certificates were incorporated by MINDCAF in December 2025 and February 2026 in two circular

letters[5] as a means of asserting land rights in the event of the sale of large areas of land; they will come into force in April 2026.

🔗 For a better understanding of the recognition of customary land rights, please consult the guide “Securing land differently: A guide to two innovative tools for rural land tenure security in Cameroon”, ProPFR (2026).

5.6 PARTICIPATORY LAND USE PLANNING

The lack of a clear land use plan is a major source of conflict. *Village Land Use Plans* (*Plans d’Aménagement des Territoires Villageois*, PATV) at the village level and, more broadly, the *Local Land Use and Sustainable Development Plan* (*Plan Local d’Aménagement et de Développement Durable du Territoire*, PLADDT) make it possible to collectively define who uses which space and for what purposes.

- **Key steps:**
  - Jointly map agricultural, pastoral and forest areas, as well as vital spaces (schools, markets, places of worship);
  - Validate the map in a community assembly;
  - Have the plan recognised by municipal and administrative authorities.

- **Advantages:**
  - Reduced overlap of land uses;
  - Securing of vital spaces (cemeteries, water sources, food crops);
  - Guarantee of coordinated planning, with recognised enforceability based on the MINDCAF circular letter of 26 December 2025.

🔗 For more details, see the guide ‘Integrating Participatory Mapping and Essential Lands into the Development of Local Land Use and Sustainable Development Plans (PLADDT)’, ProPFR (2026).

🔗 To get an idea of what the PLADDT is, consult the validated PLADDT of the Ngong Municipality (2024) or of the Yoko Municipality (2026).

5 Circular Letter No. 0006/MINDCAF/CAB/LC of 26th of December 2025 and No. 0001/MINDCAF/CAB/LC of 20th of February 2026

Practical advice
Display the zoning map (PLADDT) in public places so that everyone knows which areas are agricultural, pastoral or forestry areas.

5.7 SUMMARY AND BENEFITS OF PREVENTION

Conflict prevention does not end with implementing actions. It must be followed by regular consolidation and evaluation work. Communities are encouraged to observe the extent to which conflicts have decreased, whether decisions are better accepted and whether the rules put in place are being observed. Monitoring also involves recording the time needed to resolve disputes, assessing the satisfaction of the various parties and checking that the established procedures are being properly applied. This collective learning process makes it possible to adapt practices, correct weaknesses and strengthen trust amongst stakeholders. In the long term, building on what has already been achieved leads to a lasting reduction in tensions, greater social cohesion and a climate conducive to investment and local development.

6 FOCUS: TWO APPROACHES TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE CENTRE REGION

6.1 CASE STUDY – HOLISTIC LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT IN NGOUÉTOU

Agro-pastoral conflicts in Cameroon's Centre Region are distinct from those observed in the Northen and North-West Regions of the country. In the Sahelian and Sudanese zones of the Far North and North Regions as well as in parts of the Adamaoua Region, for example, poor soil fertility and sparse vegetation make herders dependent on agricultural fields after the harvest: a system of seasonal rotation between agriculture and grazing has become institutionalised there. Conversely, in the Centre Region, a transition zone between savannah and forest, the soils are naturally more fertile and vegetation is abundant. Agriculture and livestock farming coexist in close but unplanned proximity, leading to overlapping uses and increased tensions. Furthermore, local practices do not yet incorporate seasonal rotation between cropland and pasture, and livestock farmers often view all vegetation as fodder, while crop farmers see these same areas as arable land. This difference in perception and practice makes the management of agro-pastoral conflicts in the Centre Region particularly complex.
Holistic livestock management is a planned grazing method that aims to reconcile the needs of herders and farmers while preserving natural resources. It is based on dividing a pastoral area into separate plots, which are used alternately by the herds. This rotation allows the soil to regenerate, promotes grass regrowth and improves fertility through animal manure.

Unlike uncontrolled extensive grazing, this approach limits livestock wandering, reduces intrusions into agricultural fields and prolongs the sustainability of pastures. It is often accompanied by specific community rules and the establishment of basic infrastructure such as water points, encampments or light fencing.

The holistic livestock management approach was developed and piloted in Zimbabwe in the 1980s by Allan Savory, a specialist in pastoral ecology, before being adapted by various rural development programmes. It is based on the idea that controlled, rotational grazing of herds can restore degraded soils, improve biodiversity and secure the livelihoods of pastoral communities. As part of its activities in Africa, GIZ organised the participation of technical advisers and representatives of target groups (including the Mbororo and other Fulani groups) in practical training courses where experts demonstrated the positive results of this method: pasture regeneration, increased agricultural productivity and reduced conflicts over land use. Based on this experience, several GIZ projects, including ProPFR in Cameroon, decided to transfer and adapt the holistic management model to their local contexts. Training was provided in Zimbabwe at the *Africa Centre for Holistic Management* (ACHM[6]) in this particular instance, but several other providers have also developed similar approaches.

In order to adapt holistic livestock management to the Cameroonian context, ProPFR, together with other GIZ projects, decided to set up pilot areas to test this approach in various environments. These experimental areas serve as practical laboratories where farmers, livestock breeders and local authorities can observe the benefits of rotational grazing.

At a glance : Holistic livestock management

- Is a sustainable grazing method;
- Organises the rotation of herds on specific plots, regenerates the soil, improves fertility and limits livestock straying;
- Delivers positive results (pasture restoration, increased productivity, reduced conflicts);
- Was implemented by GIZ at two pilot sites in Cameroon (in the Centre and Far North Regions) to test and adapt the approach to local conditions.

In Ngouétou (municipality of Yoko, Centre Region), a 16-hectare pilot site was set up by ProPFR and its partners to experiment with holistic livestock management. The site was laid out with rotational grazing areas, secure access to water and shelter for herders. This initiative brought farmers and herders together to manage the space jointly, thereby reducing conflicts related to wandering herds. Beyond preventing disputes, the scheme opens up new economic opportunities, particularly in the production and marketing of milk, artisanal cheese and organic manure from the herds (not monitored by the GIZ-ProPFR project). Ngouétou has thus become a local laboratory for innovative practices, demonstrating that

6 https://achmonline.org/

collaboration between rural communities can transform a source of conflict into a shared opportunity.

> *"In Ngouétou, a 16-hectare site has been developed for rotational grazing, with water, grass and accommodation for shepherds, in order to limit the movement of herds."* *Adamou, Mbororo herder in Ngouétou*

At a glance: The case of Ngouétou

- 16-hectare pilot site developed for rotational grazing;
- Joint management with farmers and herders;
- Expected benefits: constant fodder, organic fertiliser, diversification (milk, cheese).

6.2 CASE STUDY – ENDOGENOUS SYSTEM IN MANGAI

Land conflicts in the Centre Region of Cameroon do not only relate to interactions between farmers and herders: they also affect customary land management, plot boundaries and usage rights. These tensions are rooted in the overlap of local practices and the absence of shared and recognised regulatory mechanisms. In response, ProPFR, in partnership with the *Network of Traditional Chiefs for Sustainable Ecosystem Management in Central Africa* (*Réseau des Chefs Traditionnels pour la Gestion Durable des Écosystèmes en Afrique Centrale,* ReCTrad), has trialled an endogenous mechanism for preventing and resolving land-related conflicts in Mangai (Yoko commune).

This mechanism is based on a graduated approach comprising five main stages: (i) awareness-raising and ownership by the chief and his notables, (ii) community meeting to present the mechanism and validate it, if applicable, (iii) establishment and appointment of officials and validation, if applicable, (iv) production of facilitation tools (customs and traditions, village charter, village code of conduct, participatory mapping, various agreements, etc.) with a process for their acquisition, and (v) effective facilitation in the village (conciliation, monitoring, reporting, archiving, etc.).

The experience has helped establish a local framework recognised by the chiefdom and the community, reducing land disputes and promoting peaceful dispute resolution. The mechanism is housed within the chiefdom and now has a dedicated space for hearings and archiving minutes, which enhances the transparency and traceability of decisions.

Mangai illustrates how a mechanism rooted in local practices, but supported by external expertise, can transform community dynamics and prevent conflicts at the source.

At a glance: The case of Mangai

- 5 steps for setting up an endogenous mechanism for preventing and managing land conflicts;
- Mobilisation and public validation by the chief, notables and community;
- Tools produced: customs and traditions, village charter, village code of conduct, participatory mapping, various agreements, etc.;
- Effective facilitation: conciliations, minutes, archiving at the chiefdom.

7 EXPERIENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ProPFR experience has shown that most communities already have traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in place, but that these need to be strengthened through greater inclusion, transparency and traceability. The introduction of archiving, community validation of the expanded system and clarification of roles have increased the population's trust in their chiefdoms. Furthermore, prevention remains more effective and less costly than resolution: awareness-raising, local charters and participatory planning contribute to a lasting reduction in disputes. On this basis, it is recommended that these approaches be extended to other municipalities, that the capacities of the members of the mechanisms be strengthened through continuous training, and that closer links be established with the administrative authorities to lend greater weight to local decisions. Finally, it is advisable to provide chiefdoms with archiving and communication tools in order to sustain the gains made and anchor land tenure history at the community level.

8 CONCLUSION

Preventing and managing land conflicts requires a delicate balance between promoting traditional mechanisms and introducing innovative tools. ProPFR has shown that it is possible to strengthen the effectiveness and legitimacy of chiefdoms by broadening representation within the council of notables, harmonising settlement procedures and, above all, introducing archiving as a form of collective memory. Local charters, grazing agreements and holistic livestock management offer practical and tailored solutions for reducing tensions and organising peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

This guide does not seek to impose a single model, but rather provides concrete guidelines that can be adapted to local circumstances. Each community is encouraged to take ownership of these tools, adapt them to its needs and enrich them with its own experiences. Success depends above all on inclusion, transparency and dialogue, which remain the keys to responsible and sustainable land governance that promotes local development and social cohesion.

9 FURTHER INFORMATION ON ProPFR

The project "*Promotion of Responsible Land Policy* (ProPFR) in Cameroon", implemented by the German Cooperation through the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) *GmbH* since January 2023 in the Centre Region, particularly in the municipalities of Nanga-Eboko and Yoko, aims to improve equitable access to land for rural populations, particularly women, young people and other marginalised groups.
It operates in several complementary areas: raising community awareness of land rights, documenting customary and usage rights through simple and legitimate tools, supporting georeferencing, and creating or strengthening local conflict prevention structures. The project also supports traditional and public authorities in land archiving, assists small producers in obtaining securing documents such as certificates issued by the project, and contributes to advocacy for more inclusive land reform. At the same time, ProPFR facilitates the implementation of good investment practices in agricultural sectors in line with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the protection of natural resources, while promoting collaboration between local communities and national institutions such as MINDCAF. The project will end in May 2026.

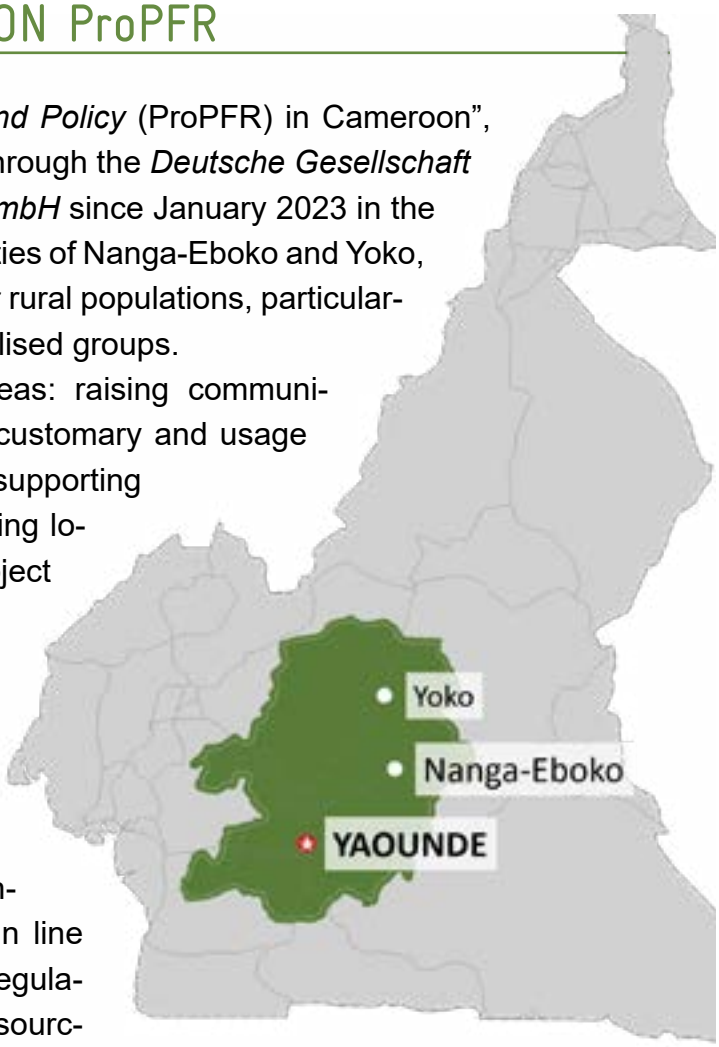


Image 5 : Map of ProPFR intervention areas in Cameroon

More details can be found in the ProPFR project's fact sheets and brochure.

10 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Here is a summary table linking the additional documents, to help you find the type of information you are looking for:

Topic / Type of information	Reference document	Specific content
What local mechanisms exist for resolving land disputes?	Study on local mechanisms for resolving land conflicts in Nyong-et-Kelle, FODER, (2023)	Analysis of community practices: stages (assessment, convening, hearing, visit, decision), tools produced (certificates of transfer, minutes, participatory mapping), advantages and limitations.
	Study on the identification of traditional and innovative mechanisms for resolving agropastoral conflicts, MBOSCUDA (2023)	
	Study on the identification of customary or local practices for securing land ownership in the Mbam-et-Kim department, ECODEV (2023)	
Quelles sont les procédures d'archivage au niveau des communes ?	Manuel de procédures archivistiques pour les communes, ProPFR (2026)	Le guide porte sur les différents acteurs, leurs responsabilités et le traitement des documents physiques et numériques
How to raise awareness among rural communities about land tenure security?	Four leaflets, one poster, one box of images and one booklet on land tenure security, SAILD (2025)	The documents on land tenure security, land categories, and obtaining a land concession and land title are intended to raise awareness among rural communities.
Sharing experiences from the Yoko farmer-herder platform	Module of the guide for peaceful and inclusive peacebuilding along transhumance corridors, MBOSCUDA (2025)	Comparison of three resolution systems: (i) legal, (ii) customary, (iii) alternative management via dialogue platforms. The manual details the steps, advantages and limitations of each system and offers practical modules.

Topic / Type of information	Reference document	Specific content
Comment et pourquoi sécuriser les droits fonciers coutumiers ?	Guide d'informations pour la délivrance des attestations de reconnaissance des droits fonciers coutumiers et de jouissance paisible des terres dans le cadre des procédures d'immatriculation foncière, ProPFR (2025)	Procédure détaillé et conseils comment renseigner les différents formulaires.
What is a PLADDT and why is it necessary to integrate participatory mapping and essential lands?	Participatory Mapping and Essential Lands: Comprehensive guide on integrating these two innovative elements into the development of Local Land Use and Sustainable Development Plans (PLADDT), ProPFR (2026)	Participatory methodology tested in Yoko: identification and georeferencing of "essential land", integration into PATV and PLADDT, advocacy for legal enforceability.
Is there an example of a validated PLADDT?	PLADDT for the municipality of Ngong (2024) and for the Municipality of Yoko (2026)	PLADDT for the municipality of Ngong validated in 2024, supported by GIZ-ABC-PADER, and for the municipality of Yoko validated in 2026, supported by GIZ-ProPFR.
How to georeference a plot of land?	Simplified guide on using a GPS for georeferencing parcels, ProPFR (2025)	The guide explains step-by-step how to use the Garmin GPSMAP 65s GPS receiver model
More detailed information on the ProPFR project	Factsheet and brochure, ProPFR (2025)	

All documents are available on request and at https://landportal.org/library.

APPENDIX[7]

A) MODEL MINUTES OF LAND DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix-Travail-Patrie

RÉGION DU CENTRE

DÉPARTEMENT DU MBAM ET KIM

ARRONDISSEMENT DE YOKO

CHEFFERIE 3ième DEGRE DE .....



REPUBIC OF CAMEROUN
Peace-Work-Fatherland

CENTER REGION

MBAM ET KIM DIVISION

YOKO SUBDIVISION

3rd DEGREE CHIEFDOM OF.....

PROCES-VERBAL DE REGLEMENTS DE LITIGES FONCIERS

L'an deux mil ..... et le .....,

à la suite du conflit entre :

M./Mme.....

Demeurant à .....

Contact .....

Enregistrée sous le numéro n° ..... (d'enregistrement sur le registre des conflits)

du .....

Et,

M./Mme.....

Demeurant à .....

Contact .....

Nous,.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Avions pris les résolutions suivantes :

.....

.....

7 The English versions will soon be available.

Etaient présentes les personnes suivantes :

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

-_____

Le présent procès-verbal est établi aux jours, mois et an ci-dessous.

Ont signé le ……. /…….. /20… **LE CHEF DU VILLAGE**

PROCES-VERBAL D'ENTENTE ENTRE LE CHEF DE VILLAGE …….
ET
M./Mlle……

POUR L'UTILISATION PROVISOIRE D'UNE PARCELLE

N° :……

L'an deux mil ..... et le .....,

Nous, ……, chef du village.....

avons autorisé à Mr/Mlle……

l'utilisation provisoire d'une parcelle de terrain d'une superficie de ……

située à : ……

Département de.....

Arrondissement de .....

Village/Quartier .....

Limitée par :

Au Nord, ……. ;

Au Sud : ……... ;

A l'Est : ……... ;

A l'Ouest :……... ;

Cette parcelle est destinée à ……

……

Par la présente, M…… a l'autorisation d'utiliser, mettre en valeur et jouir des fruits de la parcelle de terrain. Mais Il/elle ne saurait l'aliéner ou la mettre en location.

Etaient présentes les personnes suivantes :

Requérant, témoins et voisins limitrophes

Nom et prénoms	Qualité	Signature ou empreinte digitale

Autres personnes

Nom et prénoms	Qualité	Signature ou empreinte digitale

Le présent procès-verbal est établi aux jours, mois et an ci-dessus.

Ont signé le …….. /…….. /20..

Le Chef de la mission,

