

7 years after we started the programme, what has happened to the rice farmers in Ndop, Cameroon?

Survey of the Rice Farmers in Ndop, Cameroon (December 2019/January 2020)

Unfortunately, the last couple of years have been difficult in Cameroon. Cameroon was fighting Ebola in 2014/2015, and then in July 2018 the North West Province of Cameroon went into a civil war¹. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has reached Cameroon².

Whilst this has made our continued activities in Cameroon difficult, we wanted to keep in our touch with the women, and in December 2019/January 2020 we undertook a survey of the farmers through our partners.



These are exceedingly difficult conditions in which to undertake surveys; our partners in Cameroon had to leave the area, and we cannot travel to Cameroon. Therefore, we could only reach out to a small sample of farmers by phone.

We surveyed 4 farming groups and 25 farmers, predominantly women. The average age of the farmers we surveyed was 45 years, with each of them having an average of 6-7 dependents (some of the farmers are supporting 10-11 dependents). All the farmers we surveyed tell us that they have been impacted by the conflict, and 11 of the farmers (44%) have been displaced from their village.

In the survey they told us of the fear for their lives due to gunshots and stray bullets; the need to be constantly moving for their safety, their fears and their difficulties to get to their farms have had an impact and have significantly reduced the areas they are farming. However, all of the farmers have remained in their farming groups (even when displaced), which shows the strength of the farming groups as a community group.

All the farmers whom we surveyed were using SRI in their farms prior to the conflict. Of the farmers whom we were able to talk to, 19 (76%) are still doing rice farming. Of these, **18 (95%) are still using SRI methods**. We found that even farmers who had been displaced and started farming in a new area were still using SRI in their farms. SRI is a labour-intensive technique; and therefore, to use SRI in such difficult farming conditions is a testament to the value that the farmers see in the technique.

¹ https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-44561929?fbclid=IwAR2w9NgvNLKIUZ9EWAb3eZu2Kg0eB5TF5997EhsaNEwUj5Y5bF_9rcy9Zl4

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/02/06/Cameroon-elections-anglophone-separatist-insurgency-Ambazonia>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/stories/cameroon-covid-response.html>

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We are happy to see that even in these difficult conditions, SRI continues to benefit the farmers. However, we do anticipate that because of the conflict, the farmers' food supply and income will be severely impaired in the years to come. Although our ability to continue to support the farmers is compromised by the current conditions, we will continue to stay in touch with the farmers, and with our partners and when conditions allow, we will continue our work in Cameroon.