



AFRICAN FORUM
ON URBAN FORESTS

2nd African Forum On Urban Forests

Green Horizons: Shaping the Future Resilience of African Cities through Urban Forests

18 March 2025 - 21 March 2025



in partnership with:



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN AGRICULTURE:

Increasing the bread basket of the Bamenda City through Youth-led urban Agricultural programme

Jacob Ngock Nwachan

Urban & Regional Planner/ Technical Advise No. 1

Bamenda City Council- Cameroon

Email: nwachantiku2@yahoo.com

•

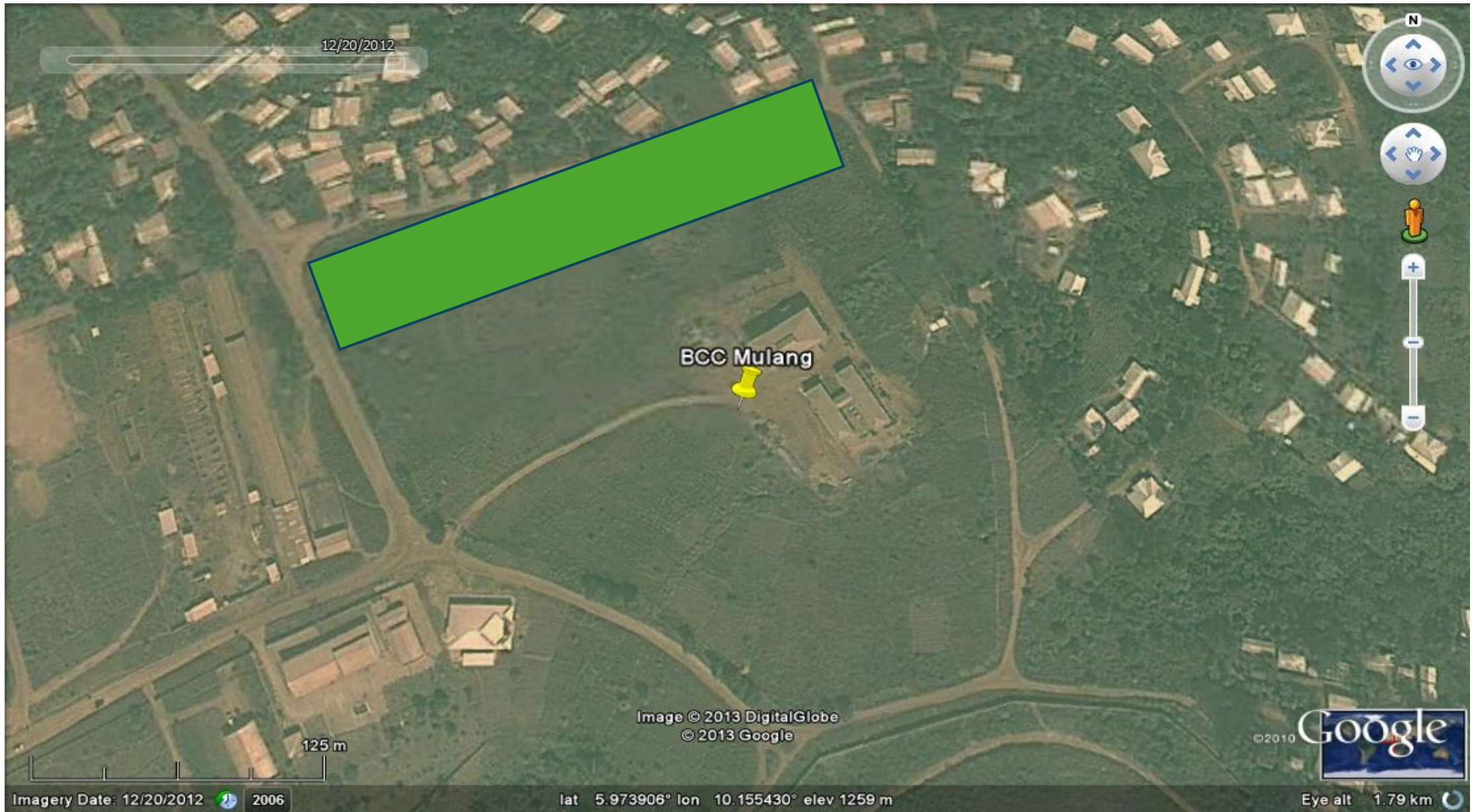


INTRODUCTION

The Challenges related to the nutrition of people living in urban areas of Africa goes beyond just food production. **Africa will continue to have the fastest urban growth in the world, and hence need more food attention from FAO and other food organisations.** But the question remains whether Africa cannot be self-sufficient in food production, given the vast arable lands and research stations we have. **70% of the food produced is consumed by urban dwellers, and food systems transformation is increasingly becoming an issue closely linked to urban food production and processing.**

Agriculture today must besides serving as a catalyst for combating climate change, also be seen as a source of employment within the growing cities; and hence helps reduce the rate of unemployment in our growing urban areas. The GDP of the Cameroon stands presently at 46.25 billion USD in 2023, with 19 .7% inputs from the Agricultural sector.

FARM AREA LOCATION WITHIN COUNCIL PROPERTY.



TRIGGERS OF THE PROJECT.

- The youth-led urban Agricultural programme is an initiative of the Bamenda City council Mayor Mr. Achobong Tambeng Paul. It was developed after city cleaning volunteering by the youths and equally the goal to tilt their minds away from the ongoing social political crises and see them become productive citizens .
- Bamenda has a training school for Agriculture next door in Bambili whose benefits are not fully exploited by these youth. **They have massively not showed zeal to be trained here as they do not have the eyes to quantify what adequate nutrition can contribute to the City urban economy and nation at large.**
- Some of the youths go rather searching for white collar jobs, forgetting that Agriculture does **not only reduce unemployment level of the country which stands presently at 4.12%, but also fight hunger in the country.**
- **Some of these unemployed youths were tempted by the crises to join the group fighting for the separation of North West and South West Regions from the Cameroon statehood.**
- The Crises had resulted to mounting tons of garbage with 70% of it bio-degradable and these more than 150 youths joined the city mayor as volunteers to clean the city in early days of his mandate.
- The area being used as the urban farm today and located within the seat of the council was left to the wild and served as hideouts for hoodlums and Ambazonian fighters.
- **Urbanisation coupled with the Socio- political crises presently in its seventh year has only increased the pressure not only on city space, but also on the need for more food supply to the city. .**



.DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

The development of this youth-led programme originated from the Garbage situation of the city when the City Mayor took over command. Abandoned heaps of garbage along the streets saw these youths join the City mayors as volunteers to assist in the mission of keeping the city clean. When this cleaning was done, and coupled with the problems identified, the goal was to keep these volunteers focused on positive aspects of urban Economy. An urban farm on a space of 2 hectares was opened within the 6ha city council area which has been bushy and served negative purpose besides council inputs to clear same periodically. This engaged the youths with the first goal being to produce tomatoes and vulgarize the products in the long run. Test runs were made and tomato paste produced by some of them. With one or two of these youths being graduates from the Agricultural schools, insitu learning was instituted and the farms metamorphosed from being just a tomatoes farm, to a horticultural farm where other produce were encouraged. Today the programme has developed and other food crops like Irish potatoes, yellow yams and other horticultural produce have been introduced and the passion for farming seen in some of these youths. 10% of the youth have today not only diversified their learning and extended the farms to the neighbourhoods, but have seen some of them developed passion for Agriculture.





SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME

- This programme contributes to the local attainment of targets in **Goals 2 and 3 of the Sustainable development goals**
- **It has kept more than 100 youths** busy, with 5% of them making a living either because of allowances they received or from produce from their own farms.
- Increased bread basket of the city in 2022, by 50 tons of tomatoes, 20 tons of tuber yams, 5 tons of Irish potatoes, 2 tons of grains and other horticultural produce
- Developed passion for Agriculture by 10% of the initial volunteers. These small numbers have exhibited resilience and seen the farm continue to produce and evolve.
- Improved clean City as the Biodegradable waste became a resource in the farm within the early days of conception.
- Increased city greening and contributions to the fight against climate change
- Increase in the supply of certified pure organic horticultural produce to the food market



CHALLENGES

- **Crop failures.** The farms saw very high yields in 2020 and even won the 2nd prize during the Agricultural show. But crop failure during the preceding year reduced the tonnage of tomatoes supplied to the urban market by 50%.
- **Storage.** The initial dominant produce of this farm was tomatoes. Though the tomatoes of this farm could stay for at least one week after harvest before getting decayed, there were moments of peak harvest which posed storage challenges as the City Council did not foresee this in the initial design of the project.
- **Financial Inputs.** Besides pesticides needed, which have to be bought, and more manure from Poultry and Pig farms within the city, the programme which thrived on a HIMO approach consumed from the City yearly budget, 131, 000 USD; 60% of this amount used as monthly allowances to the youth volunteers. This balanced against the sales of the produce, valued at 10% of that amount showed that the
- **Irrigation challenges.** The farm which was mostly horticulture within the initial pilot years during dry season faced irrigation challenges and this contributed to experienced crop failures.



MITIGATIONS

- **Diversification of the produce types.** Today the Tomatoes which were the main crop have given way to Cereals like corn and beans which can be farmed twice a year. These do not need the intensive care and constant farm inputs that was accorded when the tomatoes were the main produce.
- **Introduction of a farm marketing unit.** This unit works with Whole sellers who buy the produce from the farm in bulk and then supply to the markets of the city.
- **Teen down of the youth volunteer population.** The population was first teened from 150 youths in 2021 to 50 youths in 2023. This reduced the cost of running the farm by 40% from the first year's inputs and this could be handled from council budget
- **Construction of a 2nd borehole and storage tank.** A second borehole and storage tank of 3000cubic meters was constructed and has ensured proper irrigation of the present horticulture section of the farm.



TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

The City farms have exhibited its low and high periods within these five years but have seen resilience as the City mayor himself keeps a close watch. These will be opened to researchers to make inputs and enable them contribute to targets in sustainable development goals. **The practical way forward is for the Bamenda City council to put in place a management mechanism which enables it budget for the farm while encouraging same to be self-sustaining in the long run. This can be done through a management approach which puts a Board chaired by the City mayor with stake holders from the ministries of Agriculture, Environment, livestock, Economy Regional Planning and the Regional Assembly.** These stake holders can then sit, vote a farm budget, work with the council and guarantee sustainability of the farms while looking for external support .



CONCLUSION

The Youth –led agricultural programme has seen a degree of sustainability as witnessed in the resilience put in by some of these youths. **Some of them have developed individual farms and can be considered graduated from the programme. Others have gathered the monthly wages of Average 72 dollars and started small commercial activities linked to agriculture like poultry farming and others.** The yearly tonnage of produce from these farms has not experienced any significant increase within the past three years. The farms have experienced some low moments when the crops did not do well and the results have been a learning process for the youths. **The outcome is positive contributions to the overall bread basket of the city. The farm turned out produce all these 5 years and will remain a learning ground for more youths.** What remains to be done is putting in place of a management policy that will guarantee sustainability of the programme and enable same continuously contribute to attainment of Sustainable development goals.

.





Thank You.

