SWOT Analysis of “In Search of Common Grounds” (ISC G) Project 2013 - 2014

STRENGTHS

1. The ISCG project benefits from strong governance mechanisms (Project Steering Committee & MBOSCUDA’s Board), competent management, committed staff and very active beneficiary communities.

2. The use of dialogue platforms and water management committees as entry points for work on conflict management and the sustainable management of natural resources is effective.

3. Introduction of Alternative Conflict Management approach (ACM) is widely accepted by project beneficiaries (croppers and herders), and other stakeholders. Increasing reliance on Alternative Conflicts Management in reducing / resolving conflicts between Farmers and Grazers.

4. The project’s implementation strategy / approach enhances cooperation between rural communities (croppers & herders), providing opportunities for the croppers and herders to work together. Alliance farming and integrated water management touches on the livelihoods of both crops farmers and cattle herders.

5. The Project’s aims and activities are easily understood by communities because there is a strong connection with grassroots needs. E.g. Dialogue Platforms are reducing the severity of farmer grazer conflicts - changing “negative perceptions” between crop farmers and cattle herders facilitates project implementation.

6. This project has increased MBOSCUDA’s outreach - working in 14 new communities (which includes crop farmers), sharing benefits amongst natural resource users (water catchment protection, alliance farming, etc.).

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7. The ISCG project is improving MBOSCUDA’s visibility and experience through the use of social media, flyers, manuals and annual magazine.

8. The project has skilled and passionate multi-disciplinary staff able to deliver its activities.

9. The project’s innovative and un-bias approach in project delivery especially in conflict mediation gives it much relevance to various stakeholders.

10. The project benefits from sound financial management, timely reporting and MBOSCUDA’s openness to stakeholders.

11. Collaboration with NOWEFOR and their active participation in the Project Steering Committee is helping project staff to be aware of crop farmers’ perspective.

12. The enrolment of external resource persons into the Project Steering Committee provides a neutral point of view thereby enabling project staff to be more open and neutral also.

13. The project has made real progress in its ability to enrol multiple stakeholders (Government technical services, municipalities, etc) and their support to project activities.

14. The target communities are able to make vital contributions in management of local activities, materials and minimal financial support to project activities.

15. The integrated approach of Agro-pastoral development (alliance farming) is a model that is of interest to various stakeholders including (pastoralists) outside Cameroon.

16. The project has resourced MBOSCUDA and continuous technical support and capacity building from Village Aid to staff enables the organisation to deliver project activities.
WEAKNESSES

1. There is much emphasis on People with Disability but the project’s ability to meet this is limited, as it is not budgeted.

2. Pioneer communities (where dialogue platforms were piloted before this project) now feel marginalised because they were not select as target communities.

3. The CBOs (Grazers Associations) do not have sufficient support in implementing their operational plans.

4. The performance of Community Resource Volunteers (CRVs) is very poor because they are not committed to the project. They are engaged in other things that generate them more income and thus pay project activities little attention.

5. Insufficient project running costs compared to the demand.

6. Limited ability of some staff to handle multiple tasks.

7. Staff salaries are low.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. The North West Region is blessed with availability of natural resources to support agro-pastoral development – it is an under-developed sector. There is a need to improve on crops farming and cattle grazing methods (ecological farming).

2. Water management committees and dialogue platforms in target communities are viable vehicles for collaboration and conflict management – there is growing demand for dialogue platforms by communities that do not yet have them.

3. The Alternative Conflict Management approach is popular due to expensive and cumbersome procedures in conflict resolution by customary and administrative/legal channels.

4. There is good collaboration and interest of many stakeholders to support this project. The project’s approach
is attractive to different stakeholders including other donors.

5. Opportunity for scale up of project activities is attractive to many communities not currently included / selected.

6. The merger between Village Aid and Concern Universal can benefit MBOSCUDA in scaling up this project as well as working in other sectors. MBOSCUDA is gaining credibility from both crop farmers and cattle grazers for its activities.

7. The ISCG project offers real local options to empower and transfer ownership of project activities to beneficiaries.

8. The project has carried out an in-depth baseline research on conflict situations between cattle herders and crop farmers, which offer a foundation for future work and innovative approaches in addressing old problems.

**THREATS**

1. Corruption and limited collaboration of some government officials and traditional authorities is a constant challenge – there is a risk of this taking up time and resources in managing or working around the issues.

2. Exploitative third party interventions in conflict management (common in the past) and dishonesty of some Dialogue Platform members can undermine this project’s achievements.

3. Community Projects such as the ISCG that aim to protect and develop natural resources (of which land is key) can provoke more conflicts.

4. Rural communities (such as the project target areas) are usually susceptible and vulnerable to manipulation by elites and wealthy people.