

UNITED NATIONS  
TRUSTEESHIP  
COUNCIL



GENERAL  
T/495

3 March 1950

DOCUMENT ORIGINAL IN ENGLISH  
INDEX UNIT

20 APR 1950

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Dual Distribution

Sixth Session  
Item 5 of the Agenda

PETITIONS FROM THE BANYANG IMPROVEMENT UNION (1),  
MR. F.T. TAMBE (2), ASSUMBO NATIVE AUTHORITY (3),  
MR. N.D. FONGUM OF WIDEKUM (4) AND THE  
EJAGHAM PEOPLE (5) CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER  
BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Observations of the Administering Authority

Note by the Secretariat: The following observations were communicated to the Secretariat on 3 March 1950 by the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the Trusteeship Council.

1. These petitions all consist of representations regarding development in the Mamfe Division and it may be convenient to discuss them together. The petition of the Banyang Improvement Union (which comes from the largest tribe in the Division) and the address of Mr. F.T. Tambe (until recently engaged in brick-making on his own account in Mamfe) relate to the situation in the Division as a whole: the petitions of the Ejagham Community (who occupy the areas numbered 18, 19 and 20 on the 1:1,000,000 scale map in the 1948 Report to the Trusteeship Council), of the Assumbo Native Authority (representing the area

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- (1) T/PET.4/42
  - (2) T/PET.4/41
  - (3) T/PET.4/44
  - (4) T/PET.4/46
  - (5) T/PET.4/8

in the extreme northern corner of the Division) and of Mr. Fongum (from Widekum on the Bamenda Road) have particular local application to these three outlying parts of the Division.

2. The general views expressed in this address, revealing a natural impatience for rapid development, are discussed at length in the Administering Authority's Observations on document T/FET.4./16, where the references are as follows:-

Communications: paragraphs 27-31.  
Education : paragraphs 5-8.  
Health and Medical Services : paras.17-21.  
System of Administration: paragraphs 22-26.

3. Regarding the situation in the Mamfe Division in particular, it is broadly true that this Division, on account of its former isolation, has lagged behind others in the provision of amenities. The difficulty, as may be inferred from these petitions, has been one of communications. The Division contains 73,400 people living scattered over some 4,300 square miles of mountainous, wooded and heavily watered country. Small isolated villages stand in most inaccessible places, anything up to 10 days hard walking from the Divisional Headquarters. Hills and wide rivers make road building extremely difficult and costly. The Divisional Headquarters itself was not connected to any road system until 1939, and then only to the North East to Bamenda and thence to the Cameroons under French Trusteeship. Recently, however, the position has been revolutionised by the opening, in 1947 and 1948 respectively, of the two road links between Mamfe and Ikom and Enugu on the one side and Kumba and Victoria on the other. A third link, with Calabar, is nearing completion. These enterprises, together with the provision of an aerodrome, also nearing completion, which have accounted for a great proportion of recent expenditure in connection with the Trust Territory, will convert Mamfe into a centre of considerable importance. Development in the Mamfe Division will then be greatly accelerated and it is hoped that popular enthusiasm for community development will extend its advantages far into the presently inaccessible parts of the Division.

4. The following matters of interest to the Division generally, which are mentioned in these documents, call for separate comment.

(i) Mamfe Government Hospital.

The Ten Year Development Plan includes a project for replacing the existing 60 bed Government hospital with a modern one of 90 beds. In view of the delay which is likely to occur in implementing this scheme consideration is now being given to improvement of the existing facilities as an interim measure.

(ii) Water Supplies.

The rural areas of the Mamfe Division are on the whole blessed with abundant and good supplies. This has meant a low priority for the Division in work under this aspect of the Ten-Year Plan. The question of improving the supplies for those villages where shortages occur is receiving the attention of the Administration, and a well-boring team will transfer its attention to the Mamfe Division after more urgent tasks in the Victoria and Kumba Divisions have been completed.

(iii) Closing in 1948 of the Mamfe Leper Camp.

This camp was in many respects unsatisfactory and was closed on the advice of the Director of Medical Services. Only non-infectious cases, in respect of whom clearance certificates had been issued, were returned to their villages when the camp was closed. A scheme for a leper settlement for the Mamfe-Kumba area is at present under consideration. In the meanwhile the Mamfe Native Authority maintains thirty leper patients at the Church of Scotland Mission leper colony at Itu.

(iv) Trade.

It is the case that the only large concern at present operating in the Division is the United Africa Company, at Mamfe. The questions whether this firm should extend its activities, or whether other firms should enter the field are ones which must be left to the firms themselves to decide according to their appreciation of the potential volume of trade.

5. Turning to the complaints of more localised application, the Ejagham people, whose petition is reproduced as document T/PET.4/8 live in the South Western area of Kame Division, and consist of three clans, the Ekwe, Keaka and Obang Clans. The area inhabited by these three Clans is approximately 900 square miles and the total population is between 10,000 and 12,000, giving a density of between eleven and thirteen per square mile. This population is located in sixty-four scattered villages, many of which are no more than hamlets with less than a score of adult male inhabitants. Communication within the area is rendered extremely difficult owing to the hilly nature of the country, while the low-lying ground is intersected by numerous rivers and streams which add considerably to the difficulty of road construction. The Administration naturally sympathizes fully with the desires for advancement expressed by the petitioners but difficulties of communication, in this sparsely inhabited area, make progress slow.

6. The present position with regard to the matters raised in the petition is as follows:-

(a) Water Supplies.

As a whole the area is fortunate in possessing a good and abundant natural water supply but there are exceptions to this general rule. Attempts which have been made in the past to sink wells in these areas have proved unsuccessful. A boring team is expected to operate in the area when it has completed work in the Victoria and Kumba Divisions where the problem is even more acute.

(b) The Government station at Kame is in the Kembong area and not in the area of the three Ejagham Clans. It is held by Government in accordance with the Land and Native Rights Ordinance. It is assumed that the petitioners refer to the Kembong Native Authority Forestry Reserve, constituted under the Forestry Ordinance and enacted by an Order made in 1934 by the Kembong Native Authority. (This Native Authority is a federation of the three Clans which together compose the Ejagham people). The creation of this Forest Reserve in no way affects the ultimate ownership of the land but is designed to protect in the interests of the people themselves the natural forest of the area included in the reserve.

(c) Education.

It is estimated that there are between 2,500 and 3,000 children of school age within the area. Attention has been drawn to the wide dispersal of the population which makes the provision of educational facilities a matter of difficulty. There are within the area one Native Administration school and five Mission schools, all of which receive liberal financial assistance from the Nigerian Government and which at present provide for some 630 pupils. Facilities will be extended as opportunity arises.

(d) Health.

There is a Native Administration dispensary run by the Kembong Native Authority. During 1949 this dispensary dealt with 7,438 cases at 12,913 attendances. Until communications are improved thus enabling adequate supervision by the Medical Officer further facilities of this nature cannot with advantage be provided. The closing of the Mamfe Leper Camp in 1948 has been discussed in paragraph 4 (iii) above.

(e) Communications.

The difficulties of opening up communications in this area have been briefly mentioned. A preliminary survey of possible traces for roads has been made but this reveals that the cost would be in the neighbourhood of £170,000. This cost has to be considered along with the general problem of improving communications in the very difficult terrain of the Trust Territory as whole.

7. The Assumbo Native Authority represents the extremely inaccessible area in the far North of the Division in what is known as "Mamfe Overside", the wild and sparsely populated country lying to the North of the Cross River. Their petition raises three issues:-

- (i) The construction of a motor road from Mamfe to Tinta;
- (ii) The provision of a travelling Medical Dresser in the area;
- (iii) The establishment of Tinta as an Administrative Headquarters.

8. With reference to the first request the distance of Tinta from Mamfe is some sixty miles and at present six days hard trekking on foot is necessary to reach Tinta from Mamfe which involves climbing some 5,000 feet up the continuation of the Bamenda escarpment. No trace for this road has yet been approved, but a recent very rough estimate by the Provincial Engineer, Public Works Department, Victoria, assesses the cost of its construction at £150,000.

9. With reference to the second request increased medical facilities are dependent upon improved communications.

10. With reference to the third request consideration has been given in the past to proposals to divide the present Mamfe Division into two districts. In pursuance of this project it had been suggested that Tinta should become the headquarters of one of these two districts, but this again is dependent upon communications. No decision has been reached upon this matter but it now seems unlikely that the splitting of the Division will take place.

11. Mr. N.D. Fongun writes from Widekum and complains that:-

- (a) The Widekum Store has no goods in it;
- (b) The Widekum Kumo River has no bridge suitable for lorry traffic;
- (c) Widekum has no adequate Court building.

12. Widekum is 54 miles from Mamfe on the motor road to Bamenda. It is the traditional and administrative centre of the Widekum Clan, now a subordinate Native Authority.

13. With reference to the first complaint that there is a United Africa Company buying station at Widekum which concentrates solely upon the purchase of locally produced palm kernels. It is not a retail agency, and it is a matter for the Company to decide whether a venture in distribution would be profitable.

14. There is a Native Administration suspension bridge across the Konni at Widekum. This bridge has, however, recently been declared unsafe by the Provincial Engineer owing to a large crack which has appeared in one of the towers. The bridge, built about 1937, was never intended to carry motor traffic

as there is no road in the area on which motors could travel. The Widekum Native Administration does, however, benefit greatly from the Mamfe-Bamenda motor road which passes through the centre of the clan area and makes possible the export to Mamfe of their very considerable palm produce.

15. The court building at Widekum is a mud and thatch building - like most of the others in the Division. The Native Administration could not, at the present afford a permanent structure.

Elufa.