

Social Inclusion Challenges in Indigenous Communities: Case of the Baka Pygmies Community of Cameroon

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Abstract : Baka 'Pygmies' is an indigenous community living in the rainforest region of Cameroon. This community is known to be poor and marginalized from the political, economic and social life, regardless of sedentarization and development efforts. In fact, the social exclusion of 'Pygmy' people prevents them from gaining basic citizen's rights, among which access to education, land, healthcare, employment and justice. In this study, social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions were considered. An interview guide and focus group discussions were used to collect data. A sample size of 97 was used, with 60 Baka Pygmies and 37 Bantus from two Baka-Bantu settlements/villages of the south region of Cameroon. The data were classified in terms of homogenous, exhaustive and exclusive categories. This classification has enabled factors explaining social exclusion in the Baka community to be highlighted using content analysis. The study shows that (i) limited access to education, natural resources and care in modern healthcare organizations, and (ii) different views on the development expectations and integration approaches both highlight the social exclusion in the Baka 'Pygmies' community. Therefore, an effective and adequate social integration of 'Pygmies' based on cultural peculiarities and identity, as well as reduction of disparities and improvement of their access to education should be of major concern to the government and policy makers.

Keywords : development, indigenous people, integration, social exclusion

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