

Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) – Case Studies from the Ground



Nathalie – Touboro, Cameroon



Nathalie at home with her children

Nathalie Longman is 20 years old, and lives in a tiny village called Djibbordé, near Touboro in the northeast of Cameroon. Her household encompasses 15 people, including her husband and co-wife; their five children; and five of her husband's siblings.

The family lives in rudimentary huts (pictured) with earth floors. They have no sanitation, and defecate in the bush, as do all their neighbours. The water they use for drinking, cooking and washing comes from an unprotected well and, during the rainy season, from a nearby river a ten-minute walk away. They have no electricity, and cook over fires made from wood or dung. The only asset they possess is a bicycle; they have no mobile phone, or even radio.

Nathalie and her family have always lived in Djibbordé, making their living as farmers growing cotton, peanuts, corn and other cereals, and tending cattle which they used for agricultural work. However, over the past five to ten years, life has become harder for Nathalie and her family. They and the rest of their community have been the victims of livestock theft, and now no one in the village has any cows left for their farming work.

They have also experienced flooding, which badly affected their harvests. This meant they defaulted on their payments to the national cotton enterprise which had provided them with tools and fertilizers, and now have now less access to these credits. With limited support to continue farming, they produce a local beer known as 'bil-bil', which is made from sorghum, and also make bricks for construction to supplement their income.

Nathalie spends her day looking after the children and doing housework: cooking, cleaning the house and doing the washing. She also helps her husband with farming work, and takes bil-bil the family has made to nearby markets to sell. Despite the hardships she faces, Nathalie is full of cheerfulness and laughter, maintaining a convivial environment for her family.



A member of Nathalie's family prepares 'bil-bil'



Nathalie and her household. The fermented grains on the tarpaulins are sorghum for making 'bil-bil'.

Three of the five children in the household are currently attending school; the six- and seven-year-olds are in Grade 1, and the eight-year-old is in Grade 2. The other children are too young to go to school. The household has experienced the death of one child.

Nathalie and her family's living conditions have worsened over the past few years, as it has become harder for them to farm successfully with the loss of their cattle and reduction in support from the cotton enterprise. They say other people in their community are also finding life harder, with theft a particular problem; the bandit groups

that stole their cattle are still active in the area, and villagers feel that even if they were able to buy a cow, someone would quickly take it.

Insecurity is a big problem in the Touboro region, which is close to the border with Chad. In addition to livestock theft, people worry that by travelling on the region's roads they risk being robbed and even killed.

Nathalie and her family say they would like to receive some support from the government for their farming activities, which are now barely at subsistence level: they desperately need subsidies and more affordable inputs such as tools and fertilizers in order to make their livelihood viable again.

Nathalie is severely poor according to the Global MPI. The coloured boxes in the graphic below show the deprivations she faces.



Fetching water for drinking, cooking and washing.

