

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



Salihine – Touboro, Cameroon



Salihine with his bicycle and wood he has collected to sell

Salihine Eloi has lived in Touboro, a Cameroonian town a few kilometres from the borders of Chad and the Central African Republic, for all of his 40 years. Touboro has a savanna climate with a four to five month rainy season, which allows for cattle breeding and better agricultural outcomes than some drier areas of Cameroon. But with the rains can come floods, and, in the past few years, high water has devastated crops and housing.

To eat, as well as earn a living, Salihine and his household - which includes his wife, mother, sibling, and five children - farm cereals and cotton. During the dry season, Salihine also works as a bricklayer and construction worker (rains destroy the mud bricks during the wet season). He also collects wood to sell. Along with the flooding, Salihine and his family have been negatively affected by the death of his father and the increasing costs of farming inputs.

The cotton Salihine raises is sold, as is all cotton in the country, to the state cotton company. The company provides seeds and fertilizer and receives payment for these inputs in the form of cotton at the end of the season. Their family is paid for whatever cotton remains after this balance is settled.

The family also grows corn, millet, and other cereals – primarily for their own consumption. When available, a daily meal is usually made from millet, which is first made into flour and then prepared as couscous. This can be combined with vegetables that the family grows. Families with greater resources may enjoy meat and fish with their couscous. As the circumstances of Salihine's household have declined, they no longer eat regularly. The family is malnourished, and they have experienced the loss of two children under the age of five.

However, Salihine says he is proud to be able to fulfill his responsibility as the eldest son to take care of and lead his family after his father's death. He has a very full schedule each day, as he works three or four jobs to try to gather enough resources for his family.

A typical day for Salihine consists of planting and maintaining a vegetable garden, and working on the farm, which is rudimentary and subsistence level. Salihine's workday also includes laying bricks

for construction work and gathering wood to sell at the local market. Salihine’s family also uses some of this wood, along with charcoal and dung, for cooking fuel.

The family’s rudimentary hut has an earthen floor and no electricity. Their water is sourced from an unprotected well, and they and their neighbours use a slabless pit latrine in the bush as a toilet.

Although his own household’s circumstances have deteriorated, Salihine believes the lives of others in the community have improved; they have better harvests and they own cattle, he says.

In order for his own life to improve, Salihine requests that his family be given access to better agricultural machinery, seeds, and fertilizer. However, even now, when the household is required by necessity to engage in agricultural practices that are inefficient and labour intensive, all five of his children are in school.

Salihine is poor according to the Global MPI. The coloured boxes in the graphic below show the deprivations he faces.

