

Possible Synergy Between FLEGT-VPA & REDD+ Towards Improving Forest Governance Framework in Cameroon

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By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been previously published or written by another person; neither has it been submitted nor accepted for any other academic award. It is the result of my original work carried out at Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany, within the framework of the Ph.D. Programme “Environmental and Resource Management”. All materials from other sources have been duly and adequately acknowledged.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Mrs Tanyi-Mbianyor Helen Enow and kids Enow Arielle Kendra Takor and Enow Ian-Adriel Tataw for their constant support during the challenging moments of my PhD studies. I also dedicate this work to my late sister Mrs. Enow Mary Agbor for her financial support throughout my academic career. Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to the Enow family for their constant love and financial assistance throughout my academic life.

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Abstract

Illegal logging is seen as a serious impediment to achieving sustainable management of forests in the tropics. In addition, deforestation contributes in increasing carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere, resulting to biodiversity loss and climate change. Illegal logging and deforestation have affected Cameroon's forest ecosystem negatively since the mid-1980s as a result of the economic crises, which intensified the exploitation of forest resources for multiple purposes. In response, some policy initiatives came up such as FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ to fight against the threats. It is due to the above background that this study was designed to examine the possible synergy between FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ towards improving the forest governance framework in Cameroon. The first part of the study assesses FLEGT-VPA in Cameroon with the application of interviews of key informants who were involved in the negotiation process of the EU-Cameroon Voluntary Partnership Agreement. The second part of the study assesses the management of Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest (BBCF), as one of the REDD+ pilot project sites around Mount Cameroon in the South West Region of Cameroon. The use of surveys, content analysis, and observations seeks to assess these two initiatives in their role in improving forest governance in Cameroon. The first part of the research reveals that since Cameroon ratified the FLEGT-VPA in 2011, there has been progressed concerning stakeholder participation in forest-related issues. Again, the study also reveals challenges faced with the setting up of a system to verify timber from legal origin as recommended by the European Union. The research further reveals a lack of commitment by the government in revising the current forest policies and re-organizing the domestic market for timber trade as part of the commitment made by the government during the ratification of the FLEGT-VPA. The second part of the study finds that the management of BBCF is not governed by the provision of the Cameroon community forestry manual or by its bylaws posing doubts if community forestry can halt emissions of greenhouse gases caused by deforestation, thus helping REDD+ achieve its objectives. The study recommends the need for rapid policy reform and a cross-sectoral transformation to enable FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ to synergize for a better policy outcome on issues concerning forestry and climate change.

Keywords: Cameroon, FLEGT-VPA, REDD+, Illegal logging, Deforestation, Policy.

Zusammenfassung

Die illegale Abholzung wird als ernsthaftes Hindernis beim Erreichen einer nachhaltigen Waldbewirtschaftung in den Tropen angesehen. Darüber hinaus trägt die Entwaldung zur Erhöhung der Kohlendioxidemissionen in der Atmosphäre bei, welches zu Verlusten der Artenvielfalt und zum Klimawandel führt. Seit Mitte der 1980er Jahre haben illegale Abholzung und Entwaldung aufgrund der wirtschaftlichen Krisen das Waldökosystem Kameruns negativ beeinflusst. Die Ausbeutung der Waldressourcen für vielfältige Zwecke wurde verstärkt. Als Reaktion darauf wurden einige politische Initiativen wie FLEGT-VPA und REDD+ ins Leben gerufen, um diesen Bedrohungen entgegenzuwirken. Die vorliegende Studie wurde vor diesem Hintergrund konzipiert, um mögliche Synergien zwischen FLEGT-VPA und REDD+ zur Verbesserung der Forstverwaltung in Kamerun zu untersuchen. Der erste Teil der Studie bewertet FLEGT-VPA in Kamerun durch Interviews mit Schlüsselfiguren, die am Verhandlungsprozess des EU-Kamerun-VPA beteiligt waren. Der zweite Teil der Studie untersucht die Verwaltung des Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest (BBCF), einem der REDD+ Pilotprojekte in der Region Südwestkamerun rund um den Mount Cameroon. Durch Umfragen, Inhaltsanalysen und Beobachtungen wird versucht, diese beiden Initiativen in ihrer Rolle bei der Verbesserung der Forstverwaltung in Kamerun zu bewerten. Der erste Teil der Forschung zeigt, dass seit der Ratifizierung des FLEGT-VPA 2011, Kamerun Fortschritte hinsichtlich der Beteiligung der Interessenvertreter an forstbezogenen Fragen gemacht hat. Die Studie zeigt auch Herausforderungen bei der Einrichtung eines Systems zur Überprüfung von Holz aus legaler Herkunft, wie es von der Europäischen Union empfohlen wird. Diese Arbeit zeigt ferner einen Mangel an Engagement seitens der Regierung bei der Überarbeitung der aktuellen Waldpolitiken und der Neuorganisation des Inlandsmarkts für den Holzhandel, wie es die Regierung bei der Ratifizierung des FLEGT-VPA zugesagt hat. Der zweite Teil der Studie ergibt, dass die Verwaltung des BBCF nicht durch die Bestimmungen des Kameruner Leitfadens für Community Forests oder ihre Satzungen geregelt wird, was Zweifel daran aufwirft, ob Community Forests die Emissionen von Treibhausgasen durch Entwaldung stoppen und die Ziele von REDD+ erreichen können. Die Studie empfiehlt rasche Politikreformen und eine sektorübergreifenden Transformation, um FLEGT-VPA und REDD+ in Bezug auf Fragen der Forstwirtschaft und des Klimawandels aufeinander abzustimmen.

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Stichwörter: Kamerun, FLEGT-VPA, REDD+, illegale Abholzung, Entwaldung, Politik.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABIT	Accord International sur les Bois Tropicaux
ADB	African Development Bank
AEZ	Agro-Ecological Zone
AFD	French Development Agency
AIWO-CAN	African Indigenous Women Organization-Central African Network
ANOR	Agence de Normalization
ANAFOR	National Forestry Development Agency
APV-FLEGT	Voluntary Partnership Agreement/Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
AFLEG	Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
BAU	Business As Usual
BBNRM	Bimbia Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council
BBCF	Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forests
BBNRM	Bimbia Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council
CBFF	Congo Basin Forest Fund
CED	Centre for Environment and Development
CAFI	Central African Climate and Forest Initiative
CAPAM	Artisanal Mining Support Framework
CAPEF	Chambre d'Agriculture, des Pêches, de l'Élevage et des Forêts
CC	Climate Change
CCPM	Coordinating Circle of Partners of MINFOF/MINEPDED
CIFOR	Centre for International Forestry Research
CNSC	National Framework for Climate Service
CFP	Community and Forests Platform, Cameroon (previously ECPF)
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CEMAC	Economic Community of Central Africa
CIFOR	Center for International Forest Research
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CONAC	National Anti-Corruption Commission
COMIFAC	Central African Forest Commission

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COFIL REDD+	Comité de Pilotage REDD+
CR-REDD+	Comité Régional REDD+
DSPD	Document de stratégie de partenariat au développement du Cameroun
DSCE	Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi
EES	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Study
ER-PIN	Emissions Reduction Project Idea Note
EUTR	European Timber Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FIP	Forest Investment Program
FPIC	Free, Prior, and informed consent
FERN	Forest and the European Union Resource Network
FEICOM	Special Council Support Fund
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FODER	Forestry and Rural Development
GICAM	Groupement Inter-patronal du Cameroun
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GESP	Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (Cameroon)
GFI	Governance Framework Initiative
GLOBIOM	Global Biosphere Management Model
Hevecam	Hévéa Cameroun
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IEC	Information, Communication and Education
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
NIC	National Institute for Cartography
NIS	National Institute for Statistics
NGI	National Geographical Institute
IRD	Institute for Research and Development
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture

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KFW	German Bank Group (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau)
MAETUR	Mission d'Aménagement et d'Équipement des Terrains Urbains et Ruraux
MINADER	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINATD	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization
MINCOM	Ministry of Communication
MINDCAF	Ministry of State Properties, Survey and Land Tenure
MINEE	Ministry of Energy and Water
MINEPAT	Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development
MINEPIA	Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry
MINFI	Ministry of Finance
MINFOF	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
MINMIDT	Ministry of Industry, Mines and Technological Development
MINERESI	Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for African Development
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCDE	Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Économiques
ONACC	National Observatory on Climate Change
PFNREDD & CC	REDD+ & Climate Change Platform
R- PP	Readiness Preparatory Proposal
REM	Resource Extraction Monitoring
REPAGE	Réseau des Parlementaires pour le Genre
SESA	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SIGIF	Computerized Forest Information Management System
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SMP	Simple Management Plan
ST-REDD+	REDD+ Technical Secretariat
TRAFFIC	Trade Record Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
TEFSO	Thai-EU FLEGT Secretariat Office
TLAS	Timber Legality Assurance System
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

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UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNESCO	Organisation des Nations Unis pour la Science et la Culture
USFS	United States Forest Service
WEF	World Economic Forum
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

CHAPTER ONE: General Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Rationale

Deforestation and illegal logging have taken centre stage in contemporary climate change talks. Governance is also a cross-cutting problem in this increasing effort to prevent deforestation and forest degradation to meet Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Forest governance is defined as "all the social and economic structures that determine how people interact with forests: including bureaucracy, laws, policies, traditional norms and culture, patterns of land tenure, and markets" (Giessen & Buttoud, 2014). Deforestation and forest degradation have resulted in the loss of over 7.6 million hectares of forest every year, with serious consequences for the environment and the economy (FAO, 2015), and worldwide, man-made CO₂ emissions totalling about 2.1 billion tonnes of CO₂ throughout emerging nations (Neupane *et al.*, 2019). According to studies, one of the causes influencing forest loss is unsustainable forest management and illegal logging, which is highly widespread in many developing nations due to inadequate governance (Enow *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, in the case of Cameroon, the causes of illegal logging and other related forest illegalities are results from poverty, corruption in the award of logging license schemes and disorganization in the informal domestic timber market (Alemagi & Kozak, 2010). International, regional and bilateral initiatives have emerged to respond against illegal forest activities such as the harvesting of timber in violation of national laws and addressing non-compliant behaviours. Natural resource laws are generally impacted by international events, either through legally binding international treaties (hard laws) or by soft law instruments that are not legally obligatory but are acknowledged among governments as guiding and shaping national policies (FAO & UNEP, 2020). Global forest governance is still changing dramatically, with a diverse set of legally and non-legally binding instruments for various types of forests (Adams, 2020). Due to the absence of a binding global convention on forests, there have been some challenges in addressing the above issues concerning deforestation and illegal timber trade globally (Enow *et al.*, 2021). As a result, several Forest Based Approaches (FBAs) try to shape forest governance globally. Some of these approaches are legal, or non-legally binding, with some directly or indirectly related to forests. Examples include the Forest Principles or the Non-Legally Binding Instrument of all Types of Forests (NLBI) adopted at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in 2007.

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Furthermore, some agreements are legally binding such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Although the UNCCD is indirectly related to forests, it has its focus on the conservation of biodiversity (Prill, 2021). International dialogue on forest policies continues as a regular agenda under the United Nations via the Inter-governmental Panel on Forests (IPF, 1995-1997), the G8 Action Plan on Forests (1998), the International Forum on Forests (IFF, 2000), the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), and the US President's Initiative Against Illegal Logging (2003). In addition, the World Bank funded a series of regional debates on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG), the first of which culminated in the Bali Declaration (2001)¹.

Currently, the United States, the European Union, Australia, Japan, and South Korea have enacted legislation to combat issues of illegal logging and associated trade. The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)², the US Lacey Act³, and the Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Acts⁴ all have similar goals, but each has its own set of enforcement tools and consequences. The EU and the US are promoting legality verification to access their markets through the encouragement of the use of legality certifications. These attempts elicited varying responses from both importing and exporting countries, which are directly or indirectly affected by the restrictions, and have influenced national and, to a lesser degree, global forest governance (Forest Trends, 2021).

¹ World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference held in Bali, Indonesia where participating countries committed themselves to address forest crimes and violations of forest laws.

² Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market.

³ The Lacey Act combats illegal trafficking of wildlife, fish, and plants. The 2008 Farm Bill amended the Lacey Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 3371-3378) and extended its protections to a broad range of plants and plant products, making it unlawful to import into the United States any plant or plant product that was illegally harvested. It also makes it unlawful to import certain products without a declaration.

⁴ Act No. 166 of 2012, amended 04/Nov/2021, makes it a criminal offense to intentionally, knowingly or recklessly import wood, pulp and paper products into Australia or process domestically grown raw logs in Australia that have been illegally logged. It also requires businesses to undertake 'due diligence' on certain regulated processes.

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1.2 Forests and Climate Change

Forests play an important role in global climate regulation, watershed protection, biodiversity conservation, and providing shelter, food, fuel and timber to forest dwellers and local communities (Lamma, 2022). The Global Carbon Project of 2015 emphasized the significance of forests in fighting climate change, stating that 30% of global CO₂ emissions from 2005 to 2014 were absorbed by the terrestrial biosphere, 26% by the seas, and 44% ended up in the atmosphere (FAO, 2016). Furthermore, trees absorb an estimated 2.6 billion tons of CO₂, one-third of the CO₂ emitted by burning fossil fuels each year (IUCN, 2021). Thus, the statistics demonstrate the importance of forests in decreasing CO₂ levels in the atmosphere. Climate change and forests are inextricably intertwined, and it has been found that the forestry sector contributes to climate change due to significant unfavourable effects. Research review also revealed that the rate of deforestation and forest degradation in recent decades in Cameroon has raised concerns for many reasons including loss of biodiversity, climate change, negative impact on rural livelihoods and damage to ecosystem services such as the provision of water (Lamma, 2022). According to research studies, forest-related climate change strategies and plans should be integrated into current national forest policies to ensure that efforts toward climate change targets include other forest sector objectives (FAO, 2018). Forest protection against deforestation, degradation, and conversion will go a long way towards mitigating the effects of climate change on forests and the environment (Van Bodegom *et al.*, 2009). To help forests perform their functions as a mitigating option against climate change, two strategies must be taken into consideration; (a) halting deforestation of virgin forests and (b) increasing the area of forests (Hill & Norton, 2014). To accomplish this, economic incentives will be needed to conserve existing forests and stimulate the planting of new forests (ibids). Forests are more than just trees. Forests are not only an important source of lumber, food, and fibre but they also house most of the terrestrial biodiversity and are a key provider of other ecosystem services. They provide a wide range of services, from better air and water to natural foods used by over one billion people and as cooking fuel for over 2.4 billion people (FAO, 2018). Furthermore, forests have a direct impact on human survival providing more than 86 million green jobs, supporting the livelihood of more than 1.6 billion people and playing a key part in the global carbon cycle (UN-REDD, 2019; Kimengsi & Ngu, 2022). To address the links between forests

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and climate change, the UNFCCC advocates for social inclusion ensures effective stakeholder participation and promotes indigenous peoples' and forest communities' rights, as well as gender equality, in conjunction with legislative reforms aimed at more equitable land-use and tenure systems⁵.

As the UNFCCC seeks measures to stabilize the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, policies, particularly in the energy sector, must adapt to embrace renewables during the next twenty years. The European Commission (EC) has issued a comprehensive message outlining a new framework for activities to conserve and restore the world's forests, which sustain the lives of roughly a quarter of the world's population and are vital to our efforts to mitigate climate change (European Commission, 2019). The Commission further reveals that a large amount of carbon is stored in the world's forests; therefore, protecting the forests is an important aspect of the EU's responsibility to achieve its goals under the 2015 Paris Agreement. Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 21) recognized the significant role played by the forest in regulating climate change and acting as a sink to CO₂. Both the developed and developing countries took commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as a measure of climate change mitigation (Van der Gaast *et al.*, 2018). Going by the figures, out of 189 parties that ratified the Paris Agreement, 90% acknowledged the use of renewables and roughly, 70% included quantifiable energy targets in their initial National Determined Contributions (NDCs).

While Cameroon is blessed with abundant natural resources, it has managed to develop a flourishing and sustainable economy based on natural resource management (Mayers *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, the economic importance of the forestry sector in Cameroon gained recognition under the 1994 Forestry Law reforms, which states that "the forests of Cameroon represent one of the country's greatest riches and that the government expects the sector to contribute to its growth and macroeconomic balance". In 2010, fiscal revenue was raised from the forestry sector as taxes amounted to 32.2 million US dollars (Spratt *et al.*, 2018). Unfortunately, the problem of corruption in the natural resource sector is endemic. Corruption is the root cause of most of Cameroon's policy failures as it is perceived that individuals at the

⁵ Article 4, paragraph 1 (d) of the UNFCCC.

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top of the pyramid lack the credibility required to push for improvements (Hoare, 2015; Mayers *et al.*, 2019).

1.3 Intended Nationally Determined Contributions and REDD+ Strategic Options

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) are climate activities that nations intend to use in meeting the Paris Agreement's emission reduction targets. According to Article 4.2 of the Paris Agreement, each party must compile, communicate, and maintain successive INDCs by outlining its goals. Parties must adopt domestic mitigation measures to meet the goals of such contributions. As nations ratify the Paris Agreement, the INDCs are incorporated into the country's climate policy, transforming them into "Nationally Determined Contributions" (NDCs). Parties' pledges made during COP21, as part of their NDCs, must consider the function of forest governance as defined in the Forest Convergence Plan (FCP)⁶. Other policy tools, notably national forestry policies, will also be incorporated into the NDCs to guarantee consistent development in ecosystem management and sustainable protection at the national level. It is important to note that the sectoral focus varies from country to country. Most countries formally recognize the important role of agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors in their proposed mitigation and adaptation measures (EU-FLEGT & REDD+ Facility, 2016).

Because of its forest potential and rainforest size, which covers approximately 46.3% of the national territory, Cameroon is dealing with the negative consequences of climate change as there is increasing pressure on the use of forest resources (Proforest, 2019). To tackle these problems, the government via its NDCs has set a conditional target of reducing GHG emissions to 32% by 2035 from the projected baseline reference year, 2010 (FCFP, 2015). The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) participation committee accepted Cameroon's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), with the forest sector anticipated to contribute more to the achievement of this goal. The target is dependent on the support of the international community, in the form of financing, capacity-building activities and technology transfer. An amount of 28.911 million US dollars was needed to formulate the National

⁶ The Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) adopted a Forest Convergence Plan (FCP) in 2005 to define a common regional intervention strategy for the countries in the sub-region and their international development partners.

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REDD+ Strategy, and 60 million US dollars for the implementation of pilot projects in all the agro-ecological zones of the country (Proforest, 2019). The government of Cameroon has set sectoral goals such as policies for the improvement of agricultural methods, sustainable use of forest resources, increasing energy supply, improved efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy by up to 25% in the electricity mix by 2035. The aforementioned approach is part of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper policy document by the Cameroon government.

Cameroon has shown very strong commitments on issues relating to global efforts to combat climate change, in the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction. The Country's NDCs are packaged within the context of "Vision 2035"⁷, which is a high-level development strategy seeking to ensure that the country attains a middle-income/ industrialized country status by 2035. The strategy would seek ways to reduce the carbon footprint of Cameroon's development process while maintaining growth. To achieve its goals for 2035, the government of Cameroon has to combat poverty and provide income and jobs for its population. The ultimate goal is not only to enhance residents' living conditions but also to break the vicious downward cycle of poverty and underdevelopment, which includes social instability and other security issues.

The success of this strategy will be dependent on the international community's combined assistance of financial and human resources to assist in its efforts to safeguard the environment without jeopardising its battle against poverty and underdevelopment.

⁷ Vision 2035 is Cameroon's strives towards becoming an emerging nation by 2035.

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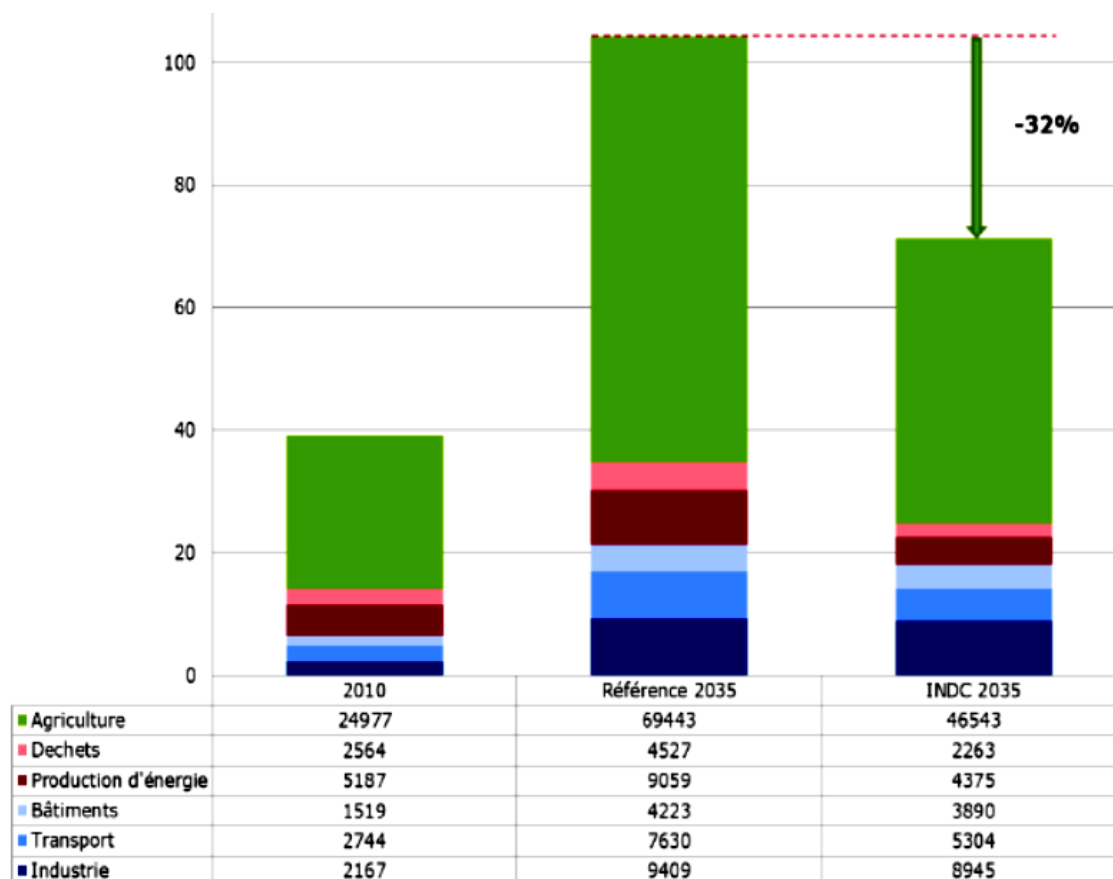


Figure 1. Cameroon's plans for low emissions by 2035 (NDCs)
Source: (FIP, 2017).

1.4 A Comparison of the REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA Strategic Agendas

Effectively managing or governing forest resources has resulted in many international forest initiatives, agreements and conventions. These interlinkages between initiatives or regimes as instruments for better resource management have received little attention, especially in a situation where the regimes pursue different strategic agendas. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation with the Enhancement of the Carbon Stock (REDD+) and Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) are recent examples of Forest Based Approaches (FBAs) or regimes that emerged as efforts to reverse the trends of deforestation and illegal logging, thus promoting sustainable forest management practices.

REDD+ initiative focuses more on fighting climate change and global warming under the UNFCCC. The objective of REDD+ is to bring out efforts to mitigate carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, through the use of financial

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incentives and market instruments as rewards. FLEGT-VPA on the other hand has an objective to reduce illegal logging and improve forest governance in partner countries. Furthermore, FLEGT-VPA covers not only fiscal, forestry and environmental regulation, but also labour law, the health and safety of workers, and the rights of indigenous people or communities (Annex II)⁸. REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA emerged from distinct political origins, but are now co-evolving with identical goals (Neupane *et al.*, 2019).

FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ are both well-suited to this idea of regime interaction since they are only two of the numerous policy efforts that have evolved in response to concerns about forest loss and degradation caused by illicit logging. Both initiatives seek to address the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. The emergence of these initiatives shows some overlaps and questions if these initiatives can succeed in achieving their objectives in isolation or collaboration with each other especially as they are co-evolving in Cameroon (Tegegne *et al.*, 2016). Even though the concept ideas came from different political backgrounds, they share a multitude of comparable goals concerning Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). However, a major objective of the two initiatives is to approach their respective issues holistically (Neupane *et al.*, 2019).

The overlapping objectives between the two initiatives provide opportunities to achieve synergies by harmonising their processes, tools, methods, technical assistance, capacity-building and funding mechanisms to avoid duplication and wastage of resources (Neupane *et al.*, 2019). Cameroon's commitment to participatory forest management gives room for the involvement of the various stakeholders in the FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ process in Cameroon. REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA initiatives have many possibilities and positions to work together to strengthen forest sector governance, facilitate stakeholder engagements, clarify land tenure and address illegal logging as a driver of deforestation and forest degradation. In other words, they have the potential to foster sustainable development and consumption as well as the improvement of local livelihoods.

⁸ Annex II made mention of national collective bargaining agreement with companies involved in logging and in the processing of forest products and associated activities. Exercise of the right to form a union, staff representative, employment contract, working conditions and salaries, health and safety, etc.

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As mentioned earlier, the initiatives have different contextual backgrounds. FLEGT VPA is a bilateral mechanism between the European Union (EU) and partner countries established in 2003 to set up tools that adhere to forest legality compliance. This initiative aims to reduce illicit logging by enhancing forest governance and law enforcement, as well as boosting commerce for legally produced timber (European Commission, 2003). The FLEGT-VPA initiative was designed primarily for tropical nations that produce and sell timber to EU markets, and it was intended to be implemented in tropical countries through the signature of the VPA (Andong & Ongolo, 2020). REDD+, on the other hand, is a multilateral mechanism that was adopted at the international level during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 2007 Conference of Parties (COP13) in Bali, which urges urgent actions to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. This approach is based on financial incentives to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through avoided deforestation. Research reviews hold the fact that leveraging can improve governance by halting deforestation and give backing to why REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA should go the extra mile of providing incentives for investment in forest governance. Engaging in forest investment will increase the relevance of forests in reducing poverty and creating employment in the rural sector. These are some of the projected outcomes if REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA could collaborate to improve sustainable forest management practices and minimise strains on the forests.

Linking or synergizing REDD+ and FLEGT initiatives conceptually with policy nexus could provide for effective approaches against deforestation and illegal logging because they have diverse backgrounds and objectives (Hargitu *et al.*, 2020). In addition, comparing both FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ will give us more information as to why these initiatives can jointly improve forest governance by fighting deforestation and illegal logging as threats to a changing climate. FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ are two commitments made by the government of Cameroon, in which the government imposed its implementation on the sectoral ministries in charge of their steering and those in charge of their implementation. Thus, the government made it clear that developing a national strategy for REDD+ project objectives, deliveries and products during implementation should take into account the country's commitments under the FLEGT-VPA. That means the institutional setup and management of REDD+ in Cameroon should make sure the steering committee under REDD+ works with the

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FLEGT unit under the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), to align actions and develop synergy between REDD+ and FLEGT activities. The commitments should be reciprocal so to speak with both institutions involved in discussions with the support of development partners and other national civil society organisations with the institutional framework of implementing synergy and policy coherency with other missions still in process.

1.5 Similarities and Differences Between REDD+ and FLEGT

The FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ procedures differ in various ways, yet they are also complementary. They use distinct approaches and employ different methodologies, but both seek to address the root cause of forest loss in tropical areas. Thus, they differ concerning their focus, scope, and implementation.

REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA share similar objectives, designed to tackle illegal logging, promote sustainable forest management and contribute to environmental conservation. The objective of FLEGT-VPA is to ensure that timber production follows a country's legislation by granting greater access to the EU's market for assured legal timber as an incentive. FLEGT-VPA establishes regulatory mechanisms, such as licensing and verification systems, to ensure the legality of timber products. REDD+ on the other hand has as its objectives to address deforestation and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the forest sector. In terms of incentives, REDD+ intends to provide performance-based monetary incentives, where countries receive financial rewards for reducing deforestation and forest degradation. Both involve the use of a commodity, either wood or carbon. In contrast to timber, which has a well-established market mechanism that moves via a visible and regulated supply chain, the carbon market is nascent and is reliant on carbon storage (Luttrell *et al.*, 2012).

Another key contrast is that REDD+ provides a global value and service by boosting carbon storage, whereas timber does not. This has important implications for commodity property rights and benefit-sharing agreements, which are currently unclear. The current legal system in Cameroon is unclear on matters such as property rights over trees and carbon stock on trees. As a result, the problems of ownership and rights must be resolved. The FLEGT-VPA design guarantees that markets are the primary drivers of change and that civil society has a strong influence on these markets

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through targeted awareness. The FLEGT-VPA mechanism places a strong emphasis on firms or industries in the forest or wood sector as important change agents, whereas for REDD+, the government is the primary change agent (Brown *et al.*, 2010). The governance reform for REDD+ is quite broad in scope, whereas those of FLEGT-VPA are much more precise and limited in scope, with a focus on verifying that timber is legally produced and that logging is banned in some forest categories with emphasis on governance reforms in very strong terms. In contrast, the REDD+ approach started with funds (financial incentives) that could be channelled to increase carbon stock in trees by avoiding deforestation. That is the reason why the sum of 3.6 million US dollars was to be handed to countries that have finished their Readiness Preparedness Proposal (R-PP)⁹. This led to many governments, especially in developing countries rushing the process with little or no community or stakeholder participation like in the case of FLEGT-VPA.

FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ are again complementary because illegal logging, which FLEGT-VPA is concerned with is perceived to cause deforestation, which REDD+ is fighting against. Therefore, any measures put in place to address illegal logging, which is the main objective of FLEGT-VPA will be of high relevance for REDD+. For example, sustainable forest management (SFM) is a priority for REDD+ that can provide ideas and information concerning fighting illegal logging. Analysing the two concepts separately strives for the researcher to get their impact on the ground concerning their effectiveness in meeting their objectives and in forest governance improvement in Cameroon. Table 1 below shows some distinctions between FLEGT-VPA and REDD+.

⁹ R-PP is a plan with budget and time schedule, which describes how the country can make themselves REDD+ ready by the use of elements such as the development of a national REDD+ strategy in policy development.

Possible Synergy Between FLEGT-VPA & REDD+ Towards Improving Forest Governance Framework in Cameroon

Table 1. Differences between FLEGT and REDD+
Source: (Broekhoven *et al.*, 2014)

FLEGT-VPA	REDD+
Bilateral	Multilateral
VPA's designed through a national participatory approach to consensus building with a broad range of stakeholders to strengthen and enforce the legal framework	Multilateral guidance requires translation into national strategy with a broad range of stakeholders
Focus on monitoring legality verification and timber supply chains	Focus on monitoring carbon benefits and co-benefits
Limited to timber production and trade	Comprehensive, including all deforestation and degradation drivers
Links market access and governance	Links performance-based incentives and land-use sector reforms

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Cameroon's forestry sector keeps on witnessing very poor governance performance due to unsustainable practices. The government enacted the Forestry Law¹⁰ in 1994 with its decree of implementation¹¹ to ensure better conservation and management of forest resources and wildlife. In addition to the foregoing, Cameroon has signed other international treaties, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1997). Unfortunately, there is ongoing pressure on its biodiversity and biological resources, with a deforestation rate of around 0.16% per year, the highest in Africa (FIP, 2017; Enow *et al.*, 2021). According to studies, 50% of Cameroon's round wood is collected illegally, with a majority of the activity taking place within concession-managed forests. At the same time, Cameroon's biggest trade partner, the European Union (EU), is urging that the government, under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), ensure that wood products exported from Cameroon to the EU are from a legal source. Here, the EU opted for Cameroon to put in place a verification system to trace the source of timber from harvesting and transportation to the point of export. Again, REDD+ pilot projects

¹⁰ Law No 94/01 of January 1994 to lay down Forestry, Wildlife and Fishery Regulations in Cameroon.

¹¹ Decree No. 95-531-PM of 23 August 1995 to determine the conditions of implementation of Forestry Regulations, and Decree No. 95-466 of 20 July 1995 to lay down the conditions for implementing Wildlife Regulations

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especially in community forestry are currently active in the country, with the objectives of fighting deforestation and emission reduction through resource conservation, and sustainable forest management with an emphasis on forest governance improvement. According to Decision No. 09/MINEP of 15 January 2009, on the creation of a Steering Committee for REDD+, it is mentioned that any activities or operations towards reducing emissions and deforestation must take into consideration the activities of FLEGT-VPA. However, the article of the Order of June 13, 2012, on the creation, organization, and operation of the Steering Committee based on inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination is still very much questionable concerning institutional collaboration and coordination in the Cameroonian context.

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINFOF) is in charge of FLEGT-VPA activities, while the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) is in charge of REDD+ activities in Cameroon. MINEPDED and MINFOF are supposed to collaborate in coordinating REDD+ activities under the decision taken by the government in 2009. Decision No. 09/MINEP of 15 January 2009 created a steering committee for the REDD+ Cameroon pilot project and a Prime Ministerial Decree of 13 June 2012 spells out the functions of the above committee (Egute & Albrecht, 2014). Institutional coordination has always been a challenge for the public sector in Cameroon. MINEPDED and MINFOF have different and overlapping responsibilities that make coordination difficult. The functions of these two ministries are geared towards addressing governance failures, forest, and land tenure issues and effective use of the participatory process related to improved forest governance.

The present state of the art in Cameroon portrays a picture described as institutional instability because of the constant re-sufflement of personnel within the ministries. Sometimes, the government structures are broken down through a ministerial reorganisation process (Kengoum & Tiani, 2013). This leads to a waste of resources and does not allow continuity as those trained to work with the FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ programs are sometimes sent to coordinate programs in other ministries. There is insufficient or weak coordination between ministries. This situation has been described by some authors as a “coordination tragedy” based on the ways the institutions function and how policies are being implemented in the country (Dkamela,

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2011). Many non-functioning coordinating committees established by the government face logistic problems overlap in functions, inadequate collaboration channels between MINEPDED and MINFOF, as well as an inappropriate monopoly in forest management that constitute some of the fundamental weaknesses encountered (Brown *et al.*, 2010).

The current legal system operational in Cameroon is still complex and needs a lot of clarity and reforms, especially on issues related to natural resource management. Both vertical and horizontal integration are needed among different ministries with a strong political will for collaboration. The present situation depicts aspects of inconsistency between local and national laws and these inconsistencies often create misperceptions, and conflict concerning the planning, and implementation of natural resource management projects. The Property Tenure Law, for example, provides some misperceptions about land ownership and tenure rights. Regrettably, customary title to land is not recognised under the Tenure Ordinance of 1974. Decree No 76-165 of April 1976 states that a formal certification of real property rights should be a land certificate. Without a land certificate, one cannot claim possession of land or forest as property, regardless of how long they have lived on the land. To make the situation more difficult, customary rights are recognised under the 1994 Forestry Law in Section 8(1)¹² but provide for some user rights, which seems provocative to the local communities. Recently, community forestry has been seen as an option for achieving sustainable forest management in Cameroon, with recognition in the 1994 Forestry Law. The aim of the government creating community forests was to decentralize the power of forest management to the communities, and also for communities managing these community forests to use it for livelihood improvement via the sales of non-timber forest products. The government has not yet released fully the management of the community forest in the hands of the local community, creating doubts if the government is serious about decentralising power to the local community as part of the forestry law reforms of 1994.

Furthermore, despite the increasing number of forest-related initiatives that are in place, deforestation, forest degradation and poor management of forests continue to be a problem. Key questions remain on the impacts of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA on

¹² The 1994 Forestry Law Section 8(1) states “within the context of this law, logging or customary rights means the right which is recognized as being that of the local population to harvest all forest, wildlife and fishery products freely for their personal uses, except the protected species”

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the ground. Such gaps need to be assessed since there are limited studies concerning the synergy between REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA, and the factors that hinder the implementation of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA in the Cameroonian context. To address these problems, this research is designed to evaluate and assess possible synergy or interaction of forest-related regimes (FLEGT-VPA and REDD+). The assessment will be analyzed separately taking into consideration the different backgrounds of the two initiatives. Also, the question of how the two initiatives can influence the level of forest governance has received little research attention, especially on the aspect of the achievements of FLEGT-VPA in the governance framework in Cameroon, and also how REDD+ can help in the implementation of community forestry as a pilot project under REDD+ and vice-versa. The findings of this research will provide recommendations on which the government of Cameroon could explore how to make this synergy of FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ effective to tackle illegal logging, and deforestation to contribute to sustainable forest management. The questions that will guide this research are as follows:

1.7 Research Questions

- I. To what degree has Cameroon met its obligations under the FLEGT-VPA process and its goals for community forestry?
- II. How effective is the 1994 Forestry Law in improving community forest management and local livelihood in forest communities in Cameroon?
- III. Has there been any evidence of livelihood or governance improvements in Cameroon because of REDD+ operating under a community forest?
- IV. What has been achieved concerning law enforcement and compliance regarding timber exploitation and forest management practices in Cameroon?
- V. What efforts have been made regarding fighting corruption in the forestry sector?
- VI. What measures or mechanisms exist concerning fighting illegal logging and related timber trade in the internal and export markets, especially in the European markets?

1.8 Significance of the Research

Although several studies have assessed the effectiveness of different forest regimes, this study will focus on the possible synergy between FLEGT/VPA and REDD+ towards

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improving the forest governance framework in Cameroon. Studies that focus on FLEGT and REDD+ do so in isolation. Not much focus has been given to the question of whether possible interaction or synergy between these two regimes exists or could exist. It is interesting to identify how the two initiatives can interact or synergize in achieving their respective goals.

The findings from the research can provide recommendations on how to enhance the effectiveness of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA systems, which could be useful to the current subject matter of sustainable forest management. Furthermore, the study will contribute to the long-term management of Cameroon's tropical rainforest by giving relevant information on which forest management choices may be made at both the field practice and policy formulation levels. In addition, the findings from the study will help the government and policymakers about some of the repercussions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation due to changes in land use, as well as the possible solutions and measures which could help foster proper management techniques within the forest zone.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

This study has two main objectives, which require careful analysis to bring out credible ways of achieving sustainable forestry in Cameroon. Thus, acts in line with the EU's requirement, which states that only legal timber will be allowed in the EU market from March 2013. Looking at the interface between both initiatives (FLEGT-VPA and REDD+), and forest planning processes, it is desirable to strengthen these processes respectively. For example, FLEGT has to strengthen forest governance frameworks on which to build a REDD+ effort. The study will be carried out with the following aims in mind:

1. To assess the extent to which Cameroon complied with its commitments with the EU-Cameroon FLEGT-VPA on issues concerning:
 - ✓ Improving transparency and access to information in the forestry sector;
 - ✓ Strengthen land tenure and access rights concerning natural resources in the country;
 - ✓ Ensure effective participation of all stakeholders in the FLEGT-VPA process;
 - ✓ Established a Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), to verify legal timber along the timber supply chain;

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- ✓ Strengthening of law enforcement and compliance measures concerning FLEGT-VPA;
 - ✓ Organization of the timber domestic market in Cameroon.
2. To examine if the 1994 Forestry Law can help REDD+ operations under CFM achieve its objectives in terms of avoided deforestation and livelihood improvement in forest communities in Cameroon. The Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forests (BBCF) is a case study.
 3. To develop recommendations that can be considered by all stakeholders on how to enhance coherence and coordination between REDD+ and FLEGT processes.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This research was fraught with obstacles and hurdles. To begin with, the research was being conducted at a very tough moment of sociopolitical instability (Anglophone crises) plaguing the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. This started in mid-2016, while I was in chapter two, which focuses on techniques, and data collecting in my research region. The "Anglophone crises" evolved into an armed race between the government's regular army and separatist rebels. My research team faced a lot of challenges, especially with taking pictures of some sections of the case study area under the occupation of the Cameroon military. Taking pictures in these areas was not allowed. Because of this dispute, I decided to halt data collection. Furthermore, several of the respondents who had been captured by forest guards inside the forest reserve for carrying out illegal operations answered questions incorrectly on the exploitation of forest resources from the BBCF. Despite the researcher's assurances that the research was solely academic, such people were still very skeptical. Certain respondents did not understand most questions on the questionnaires, thus we had to reschedule meetings with some of these actors to explain the questions to their understanding. For these reasons, a methodological triangulation of data-gathering methodologies and analysis supplied the strength of this study's conclusions.

My biggest issue was dealing with government authorities in Yaoundé, Cameroon's political capital city. Most of them are hesitant to provide information regarding the country's forest governance predicament. Because some of them had their names on a list for fraudulent activities involving the issue of logging licenses, they were unmotivated to reply to my interviews. Some made an appointment that they did not

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keep. Access to data from government organizations was challenging due to the aforementioned administrative obstacles, but as the study progressed, I was able to obtain all of the information needed from the government.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter opens up with an introduction and rationale for the study, describing the significance of forests and climate change. This chapter also discusses the similarities and contrasts between the REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA strategic objectives in terms of deforestation and illicit logging. Chapter One also discusses the research objectives, study aims, and research questions. The second chapter outlines several ideas related to the issue, such as policy coherence, and institutional links in natural resource management. This part contains the legislative framework and other policy papers pertinent to Cameroon's forest management. The materials and techniques utilized in the research are described in Chapter Three, including the research design, data collection and analysis methodologies. The fourth chapter offers an overview of Cameroon's REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA procedures. This chapter also examined potential constraints that may affect these two processes in the Cameroonian setting. The results of the research are presented in two sections in chapters five and six, as specified in the study's goals. The sixth chapter evaluates governance in the administration of BBCF as a REDD+ pilot project and chapter seven provides recommendations based on findings.

Chapter Two: Conceptual Consideration

2.1 Introduction

Exploring some concepts relating to the subject matter will add more understanding to this research. In this section, I discussed how policy interventions might be connected to enable more logical policy decisions and successful outcomes. The use of a policy coherence framework with consideration of the multi-level governance approach will substantiate why forest policies should be interlinked for a successful outcome such as improving sustainable forestry or tackling climate change. Coherence is needed not only for improving environmental policies but also to enhance synergies and reduce conflicts between interacting policy domains (Nilson, Zamparutti, Petersen, Nykvist, Rudberg, & McGuinn, 2012). Thus, policy coherence and interlinkages will eliminate conflict and promote synergy. With the current complexities of global forest governance, a lack of coherent analysis might result in poor policy formulation and execution, with negative governance consequences (Adams, 2020).

2.2 Concept of Policy Coherence in REDD and FLEGT-VPA

According to Gakou-Kakem *et al.*, 2020, a policy is defined as the programmatic actions developed in response to an authorised decision. Furthermore, they define policy implementation as the process through which activities are focused on putting policies into effect (Gakou-Kakem *et al.*, 2020). For example, REDD+ will have national and subnational strategies, programmes, plans, and initiatives in place to implement the rules and achieve their goals. Another key topic to incorporate in initiatives with various political backgrounds or aims but comparable outcomes is policy coherence. This illustrates where policy objectives and policy tools intersect in forest regimes. For example, the FLEGT and REDD+ programmes in Cameroon have considerable overlap due to their creation and execution from distinct conceptual backgrounds. In the current scenario, Cameroon's REDD+ and FLEGT policies require immediate policy consistency. There is an urgent need for policy objectives and mechanisms to be interconnected to promote a single strategic agenda, such as combating climate change, fighting illegal logging and improving forest governance.

Policy coherence and interlinkage research have identified several forms of coherence, including horizontal, vertical, and internal coherence. The diagram below explains how

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the concept of policy coherence works across different policy domains. My example explains in particular between REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA in the Cameroonian context, bringing out vertical and horizontal policy interactions between the objectives, policy instrument, and policy implementation in the forestry sector, with an outcome or impact, which is better forest governance or sustainable forest management practices. The bottom of the diagram shows outcomes and environmental impacts. Focus is made on the current state of affairs because of the execution of these two policies. The expected outcome might be a motivation of the actors when making decisions. An actor who is satisfied with a particular observed outcome might be influenced to engage in more collaborative policy coherence or interlinkages to achieve more positive impacts. In the case of forest governance improvement, an expected outcome could be a reduction of deforestation and better forest management, which all largely depends on the institutional structures and interests of the actors concerned.

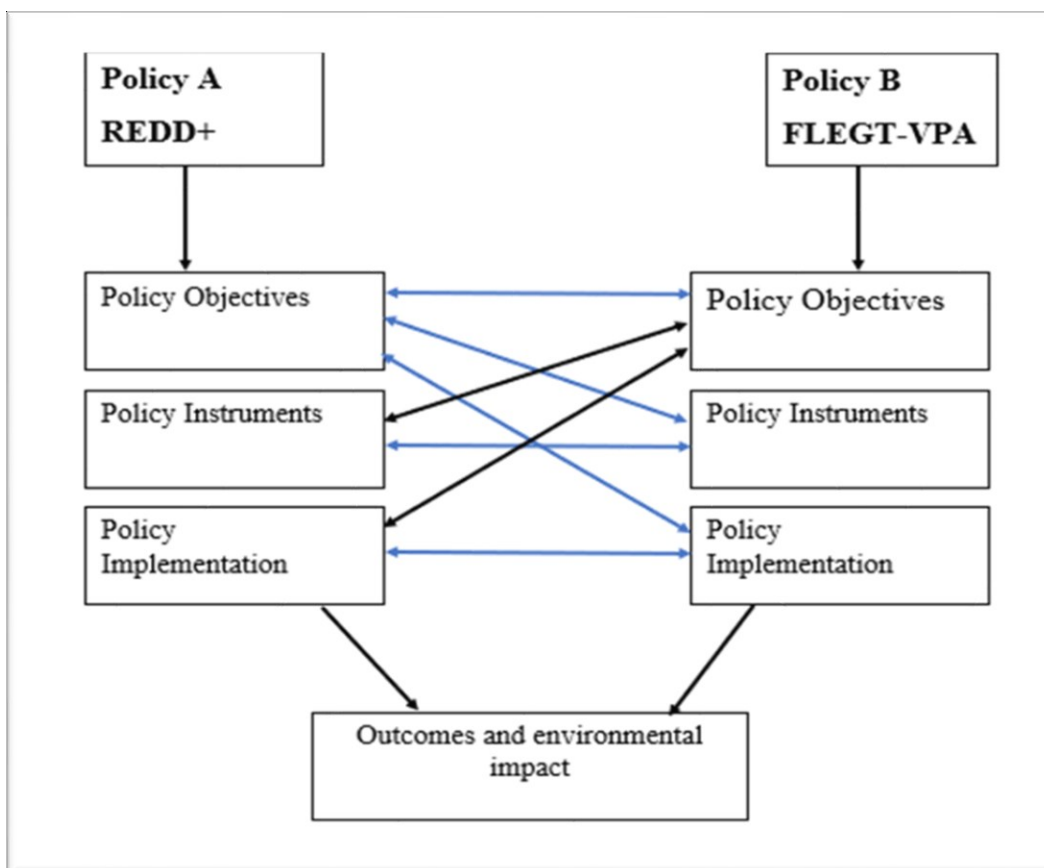


Figure 2. Interaction between policies from objectives to implementation
Source: Adapted from (Nilson, Zamparutti, Petersen, Nykvist, Rudberg, & McGuinn, 2012)

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2.3 Concept of Institutional Linkages or Interaction

My analytical approach to the interaction between REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA processes in Cameroon is from the background perspective of regime interaction proposed by (Gehring & Oberthür, 2009). The questions about regime interaction in this research apply to every level of institutional structure and policymaking, and a deeper knowledge of how institutions influence or interact with each other requires a better understanding. Global environmental governance has grown increasingly fragmented and complicated, necessitating collaboration by multiple institutions. Thus, the efficiency of certain institutions often depends not just on their characteristics but also on their interaction with other institutions (Gakou-Kakem *et al.*, 2020). Research reviews on regime interaction adopt a broad conception of "regimes" to include in its scope all relevant actors and serve as a sufficient basis for understanding the multiple levels of governance in the modern era. Institutional interactions involve a cause-and-effect relationship between two institutions and can occur when one institution influences the development or performance of another institution (Nilson, Zamparutti, Petersen, Nykvist, Rudberg, & McGuinn, 2012). In the context of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA initiatives, the language of synergies comes into play when our expected outcome relates to a positive interaction or linkage (Broekhoven *et al.*, 2014). The potential benefits of synergy in this case study are avoiding duplication of efforts, cost reduction and better coordination, information sharing and a broad base involvement of stakeholders. Natural resource institutions are sets of rights, laws, and decision-making procedures that regulate access to and control over nature by deciding what is banned, permissible, or acceptable, as well as the technique for employing them under a specific context (Gakou-Kakem *et al.*, 2020).

Many scholars have tried to assess different types of interactions that are possible between forest regimes. Their assessments identify interactions as an influence from a source to the target; with different types of interactions that are explained below:

1. Cognitive interaction. This interaction occurs in a situation in which the activities of one regime influence the decision-making process of another regime. Content analysis of policy documents shows that the VPA process in Cameroon has served as a policy model for the development of the country's REDD+ strategy.

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2. Commitment interaction. In this case, players in one regime or process adjust their output as a result of an agreement in another regime (Gehring & Oberthür, 2009). Since overlaps exist between the two regimes, this situation will create synergy or commitments between the two regimes for combined action especially as the REDD+ commitments are voluntary with no legal backing, and the commitment for VPA is legally binding with the obligation of participating countries to implement the commitments they accepted to undertake.
 3. Behavioral interaction. This is quite typical when changes in one regime have an impact on the implementation of another. For example, a policy document in Cameroon shows that the FLEGT-VPA process has put in place a platform for stakeholder participation and public information relating to forest management. This achievement will affect the implementation of REDD+ positively. Thus, behavioral interaction between the two regimes will have a positive impact on outcomes (Tegegne *et al.*, 2014).
 4. Impact-level interaction. This is due to stakeholders' dependency on the regime interaction (Broekhoven *et al.*, 2014). Identifying some institutional interactions or intersections of FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ at this stage of policy implementation could help in developing a common approach that could result in a positive outcome in forest governance improvement and fighting changing climates. For example, if illegal logging is effectively controlled with the implementation of FLEGT-VPA, this action will also result in the reduction of deforestation and carbon emissions, which is one goal of the REDD+ policy.
- The above concept of institutional linkages can be explained diagrammatically below.

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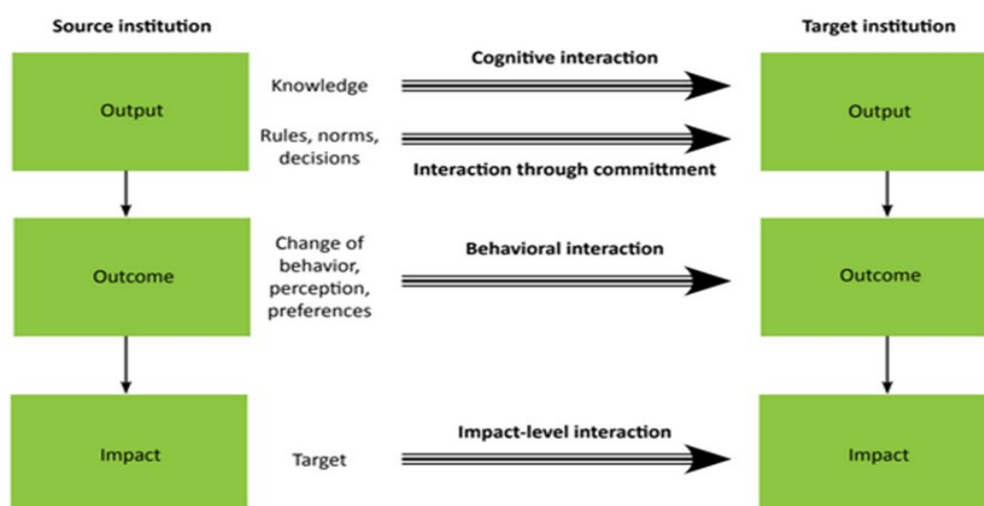


Figure 3. Institutional interaction framework
Source: (Gehring & Oberthür, 2009).

Figure 3 above depicts the relationship between a source institution where the influence originates and the target institution influenced by the source. The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MINFOF) is in charge of FLEGT-VPA activities, while the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) is in charge of REDD+ activities in Cameroon. The government saw the need for collaboration between the two ministries and created a steering committee. The steering committee was established by Decision No. 09/MINEP on 15 January 2009 for the REDD+ Cameroon pilot project, and the Prime Ministerial Decree on 13 June 2012 outlined the steering committee's tasks, noting collaboration and cooperative project implementation.

2.4 Concept of Governance in Natural Resource Management

Governance is a concept that has varied meanings depending on the circumstances. Researchers and development practitioners frequently use this idea to assess the success or failure of natural resource management-related programs (Subroto & Manzoor, 2017). To examine the forest governance process under a decentralized system, a clear theoretical knowledge of the idea of governance is required. A wide spectrum of scholars has attempted to explain the term governance in various ways. However, because governance is an evolving concept, there is no universally recognized definition. Governance refers to the tools, processes, and institutions that persons and groups use to express their interests, exercise their legal rights, perform

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their duties, and arbitrate their disagreements (UNDP, 1997). Governance is distinct from the government in that it entails the interplay of public and private entities that collaborate in a diversified network to address social issues. Different writers describe forest governance in the context of forest management as managing activities of forest resources independently or through mutual interaction between government, markets, organizations, and local levels (Proforest, 2014; Arts, 2014). Nonetheless, most governance arguments have concentrated on the efficiency and effectiveness of institutional outputs without taking into account procedural inputs.

To achieve the above definition of forest governance, different actors are involved. There should be broad representations or participation from different actors like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), governments, and communities coupled with initiatives such as FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ inclusive in decision-making (Somorin *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, through employing principles, good governance aims to produce anticipated project objectives and increase management performance (Cadman *et al.*, 2019). These principles have changed the conventional top-down governance approach, into a participatory, inclusive and pluralistic governance approach. Some of the principles include:

- **Transparency:** Transparency entails acts that are open to scrutiny by rights holders and others. This component aids in making and enforcing judgments as per the law. Transparency characteristics include information's comprehensiveness, timeliness, availability, and comprehensibility, as well as the responsiveness of initiatives to notify affected groups.
- **Participation:** This guarantees that non-state actors participate in government policy in a diversified and relevant way. All men and women should have a direct or indirect voice in decision-making, directly or through authorized intermediary organizations that represent their desires. It enables them to obtain fresh knowledge, incorporate public concerns into decision-making, and handle social tensions by bringing together various stakeholders and special interest groups at an early stage. Such wide engagement should be founded on free association and expression, as well as the ability to act freely and productively.
- **Accountability:** Accountability is concerned with the clarity of various institutions' roles in decision-making and whether they are held responsible. This is

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predicated on the open flow of information to individuals affected, as well as the provision of sufficient knowledge to comprehend how institutions work. This notion has two components: accountability and enforcement. The need to disclose information regarding choices and actions performed by stakeholders and any supervisory organisations is referred to as answerability. When an actor fails to satisfy his responsibilities, enforcement necessitates consequences and remedies.

- **Coordination:** Coordination is very important in achieving good governance. Governance complexities cannot be addressed by a single entity or organisation. Coordination focuses on how actors whose decisions affect forests or natural resource management work together to advance common objectives. Conclusively, governance can be achieved by the creation of new institutions or improved communications between institutions.
- **Capacity:** The concept of capacity in this literature relates to states' capacity and the functioning of institutions. That is the extent to which rules and processes allow actors to work together to address communal problems (Dang *et al.*, 2016). This is the act of a government's role in allowing the public access to decision-making, as well as the ability of civil society to make use of this.

The World Economic Forum (WEF)¹³ in 2004 established a set of principles and guidelines for effective corporate governance through a Governance Framework Initiative (GFI). The GFI framework could help companies and governments enhance their corporate governance practices, and aim to improve trust and confidence in organizations, enhance their performance, and ensure sustainable growth. Furthermore, the above initiative employs three forest governance components: actors, rules, and practices, which may be utilised to analyse the governance framework in the Cameroonian environment. There are:

1. **Actors:** Actors are representatives of various institutions participating in decision-making at all levels, from the local to the national. Government, civic society, academia, and international organisations are examples of such

¹³ World Economic Forum (WEF) is an international organisation that brings together business leaders, politicians, academics, and other influential individuals from around the world to discuss and shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

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institutions. Institutions establish the rules of the game, offering a source of control over how authority is formed, exerted, regulated, and redistributed (Ostrom, 2007). Institutional outcomes are the products of political bargaining and disputes between rulers and other societal institutions and groups.

2. Rules: Rules refer to the content, context, and scope of policies and regulations, as well as the process of establishing and revising them (WRI, 2016). Some indicators are used to explore how policies and laws are established and changed, while others help to evaluate the content of current policies and laws.
3. Practices: Practices refer to the operational levels and outcome of the interaction between actions and rules. In other words, it evaluates how actors define and apply rules to drive operational procedures.

2.5 Legal Framework Governing Forest Management in Cameroon

In this section, the focus will be on specific forest laws and institutions, which are relevant to the implementation of forest resource management in Cameroon. Some elements of the law related to deforestation and illegal logging will be looked into. If laws and regulations affecting forests and their uses are translated into particular legal provisions, they are legal tools for the government to fulfil its forest policy objectives. However, depending on the country's social and environmental demands, forest law objectives may address a wide variety of forest management challenges.

2.5.1 The 1994 Forestry Legislative Reforms

Following Cameroon's participation in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the government engaged in some measures to conserve the country's unique biodiversity and environment. The first step was the establishment of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF). Another significant turning point in the history of Cameroon's forestry sector was the 1994 Forestry Law change. However, between the colonial period and independence, the political and strategic vision for forest management has shifted multiple times. The first was Ordinance No. 73/18 on May 22, 1973, and Implementation Decree, Decree No. 74/357 on August 17, 1974. Ordinance No. 81/13 of November 27, 1974, superseded Ordinance No. 74/357 of August 17, 1974, with its Implementation Decree, Decree No. 83/969 on April 12, 1983. The Forestry Law of 1981 and its following Implementation Decree of 1983 did not offer a suitable legislative framework for land use planning and

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combining forest conservation and production operations with agriculture (Essama-Nssah & Gockowski, 2000). Thus, the 1994 Forestry reforms are an updated version of the 1973 Forestry Code, replaced by the 1981 Forestry Law¹⁴. The Law follows the main lines set by the preceding text but appears to be more thorough in terms of managing various types of forestland, wood allocation processes, wildlife management, hunting regulation etc.

The reforms were largely influenced by international organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as part of the structural adjustment loan program in 1989, as a response to the economic crises that led to the drop in oil prices and crop exports to the global market, as well as government extravagant spending. As a result, the World Bank provides the following recommendations under the structural adjustment program:

- The development of a forest use plan to help forest authorities establish and implement a forest exploitation strategy.
- Reform the current concession structure to provide the private sector with the incentives to regenerate the forest, install new sawmilling equipment, and reduce uncoordinated agricultural encroachment. Extend the current five-year cap on concession leases to at least 20 years (Essama-Nssah & Gockowski, 2000).

Reacting to the recommendations articulated by the World Bank structural adjustment program, the government took action to reform the entire forestry sector. The reforms were based on the premise of changing the narratives and taking corrective action to reverse the trends of irrationality and unsustainable management practices in the past. Aspects of the participatory approach were inclusive of the engagements of other stakeholders in the decision-making process. The new legal framework fundamentally alters resource access regulations by establishing multiple categories of forestlands for varied uses and parties. This led to a clear demarcation of forest units and management rules (Bruggeman *et al.*, 2015).

¹⁴ Law No. 81-13 of 27 November 1981 to lay down Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Regulations.

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2.5.2 Forest Estate under the 1994 Forestry Law

The division of the national forest estate into two main groups based on the 1993 zoning plan created for southern Cameroon is one of the most important parts of the 1994 Law (Foahom *et al.*, 2001). This law has an important bearing on the concept related to deforestation because of the classification of the forest into two categories (Proforest, 2019). Section 20 (1) of the 1994 forestry legislation divides the national forest estate into two categories: Permanent Forest Estate (PFE) and Non-permanent Forest Estate (NFE) (NPFE). While both the PFE and NPFE are subject to some type of state control, they differ in terms of how the state might distribute funds for usage. The PFE category includes forests owned by the state and rural governments, as well as forestlands utilized purely for forestry or animal habitat. The PFE is designated to be permanently forested and sustainably managed. The NPFE includes forestlands utilized for purposes other than forestry, as well as community forests allocated to communities (Egute & Albrecht, 2014). The forests of Cameroon are managed for both production and conservation. Forest management areas for timber production account for 40% of the national forest area, while protected areas like national parks, forest reserves, and hunting zones account for 30% (Mahonghol *et al.*, 2017).

Any development that is set to take place inside the permanent forest should be in line with a management plan that ensures the continued production of forest goods and services without any damage to the environment¹⁵. National parks, game reserves, hunting grounds, state-owned game ranches, animal sanctuaries, buffer zones, zoological gardens, and forest plantations are all examples of permanent forests. In this case, customary rights do not apply. Access to permanent forestlands is restricted, and the local community has little motivation to conserve them to provide products and services in a sustainable manner (Cheo *et al.*, 2011). The diagram below depicts forest categorization in Cameroon.

¹⁵ See section 23 of the 1994 Forestry Law.

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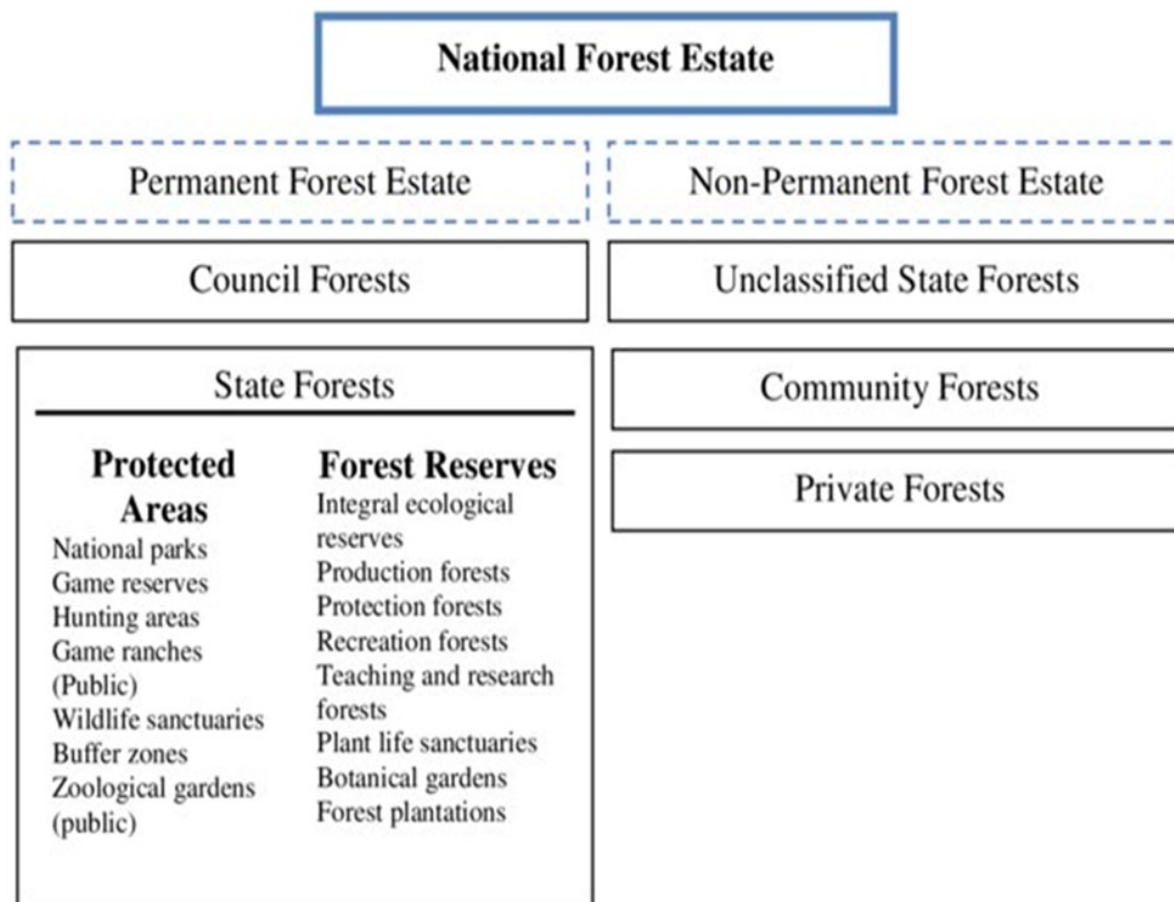


Figure 4. Forest classification in Cameroon

Source: Adapted from Law No.94/01 of 20/01/1994 to lay down forestry and wildlife regulations.

Communal forests are forests that are not the property of the state or individuals. The communal forest involves local dwellers in the management of forest resources, and the local population receives technical support from the state. Customary rights are accepted in this communal forest, but restricted to personal consumption of resources and are not linked to the land. Customary rights mean the rights of the local population to harvest all forest, wildlife and fishery products with pre-conditions, except the protected species¹⁶. The non-protection of customary law creates disputes between the communities and the companies or logging permit holders in that area on one hand, and between the communities and the state on the other hand, since the mindset of the communities considers themselves customary owners of the resources and the land. Other forestlands that constitute part of the non-permanent forest estate include

¹⁶ 1994 Forestry Law.

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orchards, agricultural plantations, fallow land, pastoral land and agroforestry land¹⁷. The national zoning plan was designed to conserve and maintain a portion of the forestland as a permanent forest that could be used for logging concessions. The plan's outcome mirrors the government's aims, which were largely to generate cash for lumber production and, to a lesser extent, forest protection.

2.5.3 Forest Royalties, Offences and Penalties under the 1994 Forestry Law

Law No. 94/01, enacted on January 20, 1994, provides for a part of the royalties earned from forestry businesses to be set aside for community development. The Annual Area Fee (AAF) is the mainstay of the decentralized taxation system (Achu & Vatn, 2012). The Annual Forestry Fee (AFF) permits local communities to profit from forest-exploitation revenues. These royalties are allocated as follows: 50% to the state treasury, 20% to the local council in which the concession is located, 20% to the Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance, abbreviated FEICOM, and 10% to the people around the logging area (Egute & Albrecht, 2014). Benefits from the AFF to the local communities serve as an incentive for resource conservation, encouraging the local people to establish a sense of custodianship in collaboration with the forest authority in ensuring that timber companies practice sustainable forest exploitation. The management of the funds was to be a committee¹⁸. The committee is under the supervision of the administrative authority in that area. The mayor of that locality is the chairperson of the committee, accompanied by six individuals from the village as members.

The Forestry Law of 1994 protects the legacies that allow for penalties and prison sentences for defaulters, as well as compensation for damages done to the environment. According to Article 141 (1) of the Forestry Law of 1994, it states "*Without prejudice to the prerogatives of the legal department and the judicial police officers having general jurisdiction, a sworn officer of the services in charge of forestry...shall, on behalf of the state, local councils, communities or private individual, investigate, establish and prosecute offences relating to forestry.*" The 1994 Forestry Law went further in Article 42 to caution that exploitation licenses are not transferable. Such acts

¹⁷ Section 35(2) of the 1994 Forestry Law.

¹⁸ Order No 00122/MINEFI/MINAT of 29 April 1998 obligates the establishment of a management committee responsible for managing forest royalties in all sub-divisions and villages where forest concessions are situated.

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will result in fines and penalties. Article 14 of the Forest Law bans anyone from setting fire to a state forest that might cause damage to the vegetation. Such acts risk a fine of about 200.000 to 1.000.000 CFA or face imprisonment for from one to six months. The same penalty goes to exploitation with permits of unauthorized forest products, or beyond the period of your permit. For timber exploitation without a title, a fine of 3.000.000 to 10.000.000 CFA or imprisonment term of one to three years for exploiting in the state forest or council forest (Articles 158 and 159 of the Law of 20 January).

2.5.4 Management Plan and Logging Regulations of the 1994 Forestry Law

In addition to the classification of the forest into different forest estates, the law gives broad guidelines about the management and logging activities in each forest type¹⁹. Section 40 of the 1994 Forestry Law provides that exploitation of any forest shall be subject to a prior inventory of that forest following the rules fixed by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). What is important in this guideline above is the systematic and scientific management of the forest-based on statistical data inventory. An authorized management plan must meet the legislatively prescribed economic, ecological and social aspects of maintaining a sustainable logging operation as defined by the legislature (Cheo *et al.*, 2011).

The new forestry reform law was restructured to exercise new methods for distributing forest concessions. Articles 58(1) and 82(2) of Decree No. 95/531/PM of August 23, 1995 state that grants for exploitation are made via a public tender under the supervision of a ministerial committee in charge of the granting of forest exploitation titles. In other words, it is called an auction mechanism or bidding process. This process allows the market mechanism to set the price and the appropriate taxes to be paid. Initially, Cameroon's national assembly opposed the bidding process, not because they feared the selling away of the country's forest to foreign firms, but because it would prevent them from receiving bribes from the allocation permits. This concession-based model is seen as a viable economic model in Cameroon's forestry sector (Alemagi & Kozak, 2010). To promote the socio-economic sustainability of this model, the provision of social services (like schools, hospitals, good roads and

¹⁹ Decision No. 0108/D/MINEF/CAB and Decision No. 0107/D/MINEF/CAB of February 9, 1998 laying down the application of forest management standards in the Republic of Cameroon

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electricity), to the communities by the concessionaires in the area where logging is to be done (Alemagi, 2011). Also, as a means to create employment in the communities, companies with logging permits are required to set up processing units within their forest concession. In practice, the content of this issue of socio-economic commitments by the concessionaire to the local communities varies substantially. Its implementation varies as well, especially because many logging firms' direct social contributions to local people are now obsolete due to decentralized taxation systems (Achu, 2009). As a result, the logging firm must negotiate several socioeconomic agreements with the local community. Negotiations as such are usually debated at the village meetings in the presence of some administrative authorities. A weakness realized here is that such negotiations on the social aspects normally occur after the forests have been allocated for logging. The local populace no longer has the authority to refuse them access to the forest's timber (Cerutti *et al.*, 2010; GFW, 2000).

The bidding procedure for the granting of forest concessions began in 1997, but it was marred by anomalies, prompting the government to establish an impartial observer to supervise future allocations through the bidding process to promote transparency (GFW, 2000). Some unlawful practices were noticed in which large concessions were attributed to companies without auctions. There are cases where concessions are awarded to bidders with low technical ranking and low bids resulting in the loss of revenue of about 4 million euros per year (Djeukam, 2008). Furthermore, Decree No. 96/076 signed by the Prime Minister on March 1, 1996, made it clear that the maximum area of the Forest Management Unit (FMU) should not exceed 200,000 hectares. However, the companies Coron and Compagnie Forestiere du Cameroun (CFC) were allocated 334,158 hectares respectively based on a mutual agreement between the companies and the state in violation of the law (Djeukam, 2008). Despite the new law's clauses and the forestry reform's stated goals of greater transparency, this initial allocation put into doubt the government's willingness in forest management. Section 23 of the 1981 Forestry Law and Section 8 of the 1983 Decree require the ministry in charge of forestry to conduct a previous inventory of the forest zone, however, this requirement was rarely followed. On the other hand, Logging activities under the 1994 Forestry Law demand approval from the authority in charge of the management of the forests, because the law does not provide for an extension of provisional contracts. Concession holders until date operate with the provisional contracts making their

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activities illegal based on the law. Nonetheless, they are violations of the law and violations that the FLEGT-VPA process will have to address.

2.5.5 Community Forest Management under the 1994 Forestry Law

The 1994 Forestry Law was a game changer in Cameroon's forest management system, ushering in a transition away from the colonial tradition of forest management and toward a more participatory approach (Nkemnyi, 2016). However, there is still a gap between the law and social safeguards, which is short-circuiting tenure issues (Enow *et al.*, 2021). As a result, the present situation shows too much government interference in the management of the community forests. Community forestry as per the 1994 Forestry Law is *"a forest forming part of the non-permanent forest estate, which is covered by a management agreement between a village and a forestry administration. Management of such forest, which should not exceed 5,000 ha, is the responsibility of the village community concerned, with the help of technical assistance of the forestry administration"*²⁰. There have been co-management systems between the state and the local communities in protected areas, with forest tax retrocession for communes and communities, coupled with the creation and management of community forests.

Article 37 (3) of the Forestry Law of 1994, states that any forest product acquired through the exploitation of community forests is wholly owned by the village community in question. The government assists that community with technical aid (Art. 37 (1)). The community is simply responsible for forest management, not for the land itself. Communities eligible to enter into community forestry should be situated adjacent to one or more forests, and conduct their activities in the forest in question²¹. Thus, the allocation of any community forest will depend on the closeness of the community to the forest²². Monitoring of the community forest is the duty of the community concerned or issue. However, the legislators failed to take into account the financial capacity of the community compared to wealthier logging shareholders. Concerning logging within community forests, the 1994 Forestry Law requires that it be done on behalf of the

²⁰ Article 3 (11) of Decree of implementation 95/531/PM of August 1995 lays down the definition of community forests.

²¹ Article 27(2) of Decree of implementation 95/531/PM of 23 August 1995.

²² Article 27(3) of Decree of implementation 95/531/PM of 23 August 1995.

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community concerned, under state management, through the sale of standing volume, individual authorization, or permit following the management plan approved by the forestry department²³.

2.6 Other Policy Documents Relevant for Forest Management

The government of Cameroon is making continuous efforts to address different aspects of policy such as deforestation and climate change. There are other relevant policies in addition to the current laws complemented by international conventions and treaties duly signed and ratified by the government, helping directly or indirectly in forest management in the country. Some of the policy documents are analyzed below.

2.6.1 First National Communication on Climate Change (FNCCC1)

Current projections show that Cameroon's average temperature will continue to rise, with warming projected to be quicker in the interior and slower towards the coast, reflecting an increase in the frequency of 'hot' days and nights and a decrease in 'cold' days and nights (McSweeney *et al.*, 2008). Based on article 4 of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, requires Parties to submit their communications to the Conference of the Parties (COP), such as their national plans to mitigate climate change impacts and measures put in place to facilitate adequate adaptation to climate change that will not result to further increase in the emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

Based on the above context, the country's First National Communication on Climate Change to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) appears to include climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, particularly along the country's coastal region and the Sudano-Sahelian zone, which are the country's two major zones of climate vulnerability. The government intends to build a nationwide strategy based on low-impact technology transfer opportunities, notably in agricultural sectors and other land-use patterns, which account for the bulk of the country's emissions. The document also admits the fact that mitigation measures will enable the country to participate in opportunities involving technological transfer. Among the technologies and strategies specifically outlined in the FNCCC1 are: (1) the development of sinks to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, such as

²³ Article 54 of the 1994 Forestry Law.

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afforestation and sustainable forest management; (2) the adoption of energy-efficient technologies to reduce energy consumption; and (3) the adoption of renewable energy technologies as substitutes for fossil fuels (Alemagi *et al.*, 2014).

2.6.2 Forest and Environment Sector Program Document

Forest resources provide a significant contribution to the economy. Cameroon has high-level biodiversity and a high proportion of land dedicated to conservation. However, the forestland cover in Cameroon has witnessed a decline in the last 25 years due to pressure, resulting in deforestation with an annual average rate of about 0.16%, the highest in the Congo Basin (Enow *et al.*, 2021). The factors responsible for this pressure on the forest's land are weak managerial capacities, inadequate environmental laws, very little ability to implement already existing laws due to institutional weaknesses and lack of monitoring. The Forest and Environment Sector Program (FESP) document, published in June 2012, establishes the legislative foundation for Cameroon's sustainable forest management. It has several measures to assist rural development and economic growth, but it fails to address the impact of climate change and adaptation. This strategy aims to achieve the dual goals of poverty reduction and wildlife conservation, as stated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Program of 2003. In addition, the text aims to foster synergy and collaboration among national agencies, local communities, and the business sector in the sustainable management, protection, and development of forests and other natural resources.

Despite provisions for public engagement and participation with civil society, the FESP does not give proper access to environmental and public goods management information. Furthermore, the implementation of community-based wildlife and forest management plans remains a key source of worry, while illicit logging activities, particularly in protected areas, persist.

2.6.3 Cameroon's Vision 2035

This paper outlines Cameroon's general strategic path toward development. This vision plans to make Cameroon an emerging country by 2035. The general objective of vision 2035 includes:

- Reducing poverty to minimal levels;

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- Becoming a middle-income country;
- Becoming a newly industrialized country;
- Consolidating democracy and enhancing national unity.

Climate change is highlighted as one of Cameroon's significant economic issues in Vision 2035. Overexploitation of natural resources and environmental costs have been warned as it results in climate change, coupled with the fact that part of the country is located in the Sahel, facing threats of advancing deserts, temperature rise and irregular seasons. Furthermore, as a crucial regional plan for Cameroon, the Vision 2035 statement advocates for the reduction of greenhouse emissions to combat climate change. Thus, the government of Cameroon pledges to stand the challenge of seeking high growth levels while at the same time achieving sustainable development concerning the Millennium Development Goals.

2.6.4 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) describe the country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external funding needs. The major focuses of PRSP fiscal and social policies are increasing agricultural output and improving the economic situation of the poor. This is because social malaise and fiscal deficits are causes of unsustainable growth, which might degrade the country's social capital and damage its global competitiveness (Alemagi *et al.*, 2014). To avoid the aforementioned predicament, the PRSPs will create a solid socioeconomic framework targeted at rejuvenating the agricultural sector through enhanced farm-to-market road accessibility, hence facilitating the economic inclusion of disadvantaged communities. Achieving these goals is not without challenges such as structural changes, and poor performances in the agricultural sector, which of course is not competitive. In addition, low energy supply coupled with low production capacities; and poor road infrastructures all undermined the country's social and fiscal flows. With no clear vision, the World Bank requested the government to revisit the PRSPs' plan of action and make necessary revisions. This resulted in the establishment of the growth and employment strategy paper in 2009 (Alemagi *et al.*, 2014).

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2.6.5 Growth and Employment Strategy Paper

After witnessing huge overlaps with the implementation of different policies affecting forest cover, coupled with the increasing rate of deforestation, the government considering the implementation of its new economic policy under the implementation schedule of Vision 2035 called the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper in November 2009. Some of the conflicts reported from literature reviews reveal that about 30 mining exploration permits overlapped with 12 protected areas and this situation conflicts with the government conservation efforts (Proforest, 2019). The GESP was the first phase of the long-term development vision's execution (2001-2010) and is an overarching and integrated strategy paper that serves as a springboard for all operations over the following ten years. GESP is focused on revolutionizing agricultural output through land attribution for large-scale production and has created what is termed in the country as “second-generation agriculture” (Proforest, 2019). The GESP was developed against the backdrop of growing domestic living costs, the international financial crisis, and the global food and energy crises. Climate change control is listed under phase two (2020-2027), and it is now a reference framework for sectorial and sub-sectorial investment policies in the country. The strategic objectives of the GESP are as follows:

- Increase economic growth to about 5.5% on average throughout 2010-2020;
- Reduce underemployment to less than 50% by 2020 by creating 10,000 formal positions every year over the following ten years;
- Achieve the MDGs by 2020 (GESP, 2010).

To achieve these objectives, the GESP will rely on three important strategic pillars from which sectorial and sub-sectorial programs focus, namely:

- The growth strategy;
- Employment, and
- The strategic management of the state and governance (ROC, 2009).

Adopting the above, the government of Cameroon plans to engage in economic policies to promote strong growth, wealth creation and employment, which is a prerequisite for income redistribution and poverty reduction. Economic growth depends strongly on the availability of a reliable, consistent and secure energy supply and resources (Erasmus *et al.*, 2017). The lack of reliable and consistent power supply in

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Cameroon is among the major hindrances for investors and causes the country to lose about 2% of its annual GDP (ibid).

2.6.6 Land Tenure-Related Laws

The land is fundamental in issues related to the livelihood of many forest-dependent populations and indigenous people in Cameroon. Undermining the problem of land in natural resource management will add to an already existing conflict between the government and the community residing near the forest. Ordinances 74/1 and 74/2 of 6 July 1974 on land tenure govern land tenure in Cameroon, which was enacted to regulate land rights uniform to the whole country until date. This law classifies land into public-private and national property, resulting in a land tenure system based on land registration, and all privately held property must be registered and named to keep its status as private land (Proforest, 2019). Given this distinction, the law applicability differs from one ministerial sector to the other. Other regulatory texts on specific areas of land tenure include the 27 April 1976 Decree establishing national sector management criteria, and Law No. 85/09 of 4 July 1985 concerning expropriation based on public utility and terms of compensation. Decree No. 2003/418/PM of February 25, 2003, establishing compensation tariffs to be allocated to landlords' victims of destruction based on public utility, and Decree No. 00832/Y/15/1/MINUH/D of February 25, 2003, establishing compensation tariffs to be allocated to landlords' victims of destruction based on public utility. In addition to the enabling instruments, its application seeks Decree No. 2013/0171 /PM of February 2013, which establishes requirements for conducting international environmental, social, and strategic impact studies, which are carried out by projects whose investment has an impact on land tenure and mobilizes international financial and development cooperation institutions.

One interaction of the regulatory instruments to deforestation is the concerns extended by the 1994 forestry law on issues of customary and statutory land rights. The land tenure system in Cameroon is distinguished by the existence of two systems: the customary system, whose lack of security causes conflicts amongst farmers, and the contemporary system of land ownership, which offers public protection (Alden, 2011). This law on tenure has a lot to play in the implementation of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA, especially on the matter relating to benefit sharing.

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The government firmly supports international conventions on environmental preservation in general and climate change in particular. This demonstrates the government's willingness to contribute to sustainable development and GHG emission reductions. Most of the laws applicable in Cameroon have links to international instruments and are applicable in Cameroon under Article 45 of the 1996 Constitution²⁴. Some other international treaties and conventions ratified by Cameroon with relevance to the study are as follows:

- The 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora,²⁵ ratified in 1981.
- The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,²⁶ ratified in 1994.
- The 1992 Convention to Combat Desertification,²⁷ ratified in 1994.
- The 1994 International Tropical Timber Agreement,²⁸ ratified in 2009.
- The 1997 Kyoto Protocol,²⁹ ratified in 2002.
- The Paris Agreement³⁰ ratified in 2016.
- The 2005 Treaty on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa established the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC)³¹, signed in 2005.

²⁴ Article 45 of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon states that duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws, provided the other party implement the said treaty or agreement.

²⁵ ILM 12 1973, 1085 seeks to protect endangered species from over-exploitation by regulating international trade in endangered species of flora and fauna dead or alive.

²⁶ 1771 UNTS. 107; ILM 31 1992, 849, aims at stabilizing the concentration of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere to prevent dangerous human-induced changes to the global climate.

²⁷ ILM 31 1992, 874. This convention addresses forests as an important element for the prevention of drought and desertification.

²⁸ 33 ILM 1994, 1014, promotes international trade in tropical timber, the sustainable management of tropical forests, and the development of forest industries through international consultation, cooperation, policy and project activities.

²⁹ FCCC/CP/1997/7/7Add.1, Dec. 10, 1997; 37 ILM 32, 1998. This protocol to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is a mechanism to fight against deforestation and enhancing afforestation.

³⁰ Conference of Parties established a framework for cooperative action on climate change beyond 2020 that will replace the Kyoto Protocol.

³¹ Based on the Yaoundé Declaration in 1999, at a summit of the head of state in 2005, the countries in the region confirms their commitment to the preservation of forests and biodiversity in the Congo Basin under the transnational Convergence Plan.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Study Area

3.1 Introduction to Chapter

This section brings out the methods used in carrying out this research. It begins with a presentation and discusses the study approach employed the methods used to collect data and the sampling techniques used. It provides the steps taken to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the techniques used in data analysis, and methods used to ensure data validity and reliability at the end.

3.2 Study Approach

This study is focused on FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ with overlapping objectives of improving governance and conservation in Cameroon's forest sector. The study will assess how these two initiatives contribute toward SFM in Cameroon. While FLEGT-VPA improves enabling conditions towards governance reforms, Timber Legality Assurance Systems and improved harvesting, REDD+ prioritizes SFM through improving institutions, revising laws and frameworks, mobilizing new extra financial resources, and boosting social and ecological resilience (Neupane *et al.*, 2019). This research applies both qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve its objectives. The qualitative design will focus on understanding the phenomenon under study. The qualitative research approach involves respondents' accounts of experiences in the form of data, which is descriptive. The qualitative research technique is non-statistical, gathering information from a small purposively sampled group, generally on a little-studied issue (Polit & Hungler, 1997). The qualitative technique is appropriate for probing people's mental processes and how they build meaning from the world around them (Devine, 2002). On the other hand, a quantitative approach is a method of collecting data numerically and analyzing it using statistical models or procedures. For the quantitative research approach, the method used was primarily a questionnaire. To answer some of my research questions, there was a need to use both approaches in the research methods. Furthermore, the research also relied on an in-depth content analysis of reviewed legal documents about forest policies, climate change and governance in the Cameroonian context, added to other statutory texts concerning forest management. The policy documents include action plans (Cameroon's R-PP, FLEGT-VPA Annexes), position papers, and press releases from the EU. The above documents were systematically reviewed and the content was analyzed for purposes

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of literature on the topic under investigation. In addition, to investigate how the REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA procedures are being applied in Cameroon. The primary data collection methods used were questionnaires and personal interview surveys, as well as observation and focus group discussions. Personal observation and focus group discussions were used to establish trust in the data obtained from content analysis and surveys.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

The survey questions were developed after a visit to the study area, and the questions were based on an extensive review of secondary data related to the background of the research. The questions were both open-ended and closed-ended. Some questions were designed on a Likert-type scaling technique, which required the respondents to indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement with the statement (that is, strongly agree, agree, disagree, and no opinion or undecided). It should be noted that "no opinion" is another way of neutrality.

An open-ended questionnaire was used with in-depth unstructured interviews (face-to-face), carried out between November 2018 and January 2020. The interviews did not follow prescribed questions but focused on other issues like:

- The forest law reforms in conformity with the VPA process,
- The level of corruption in the forestry sector of Cameroon,
- Public participation of stakeholders, and the land tenure and access rights in Cameroon,
- Civil society participation in both REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA processes in Cameroon.

This technique was to help the researcher gather much information concerning the interaction between policy actors and their influence during the negotiation process of the VPA. The table below (Table 2) shows the various stakeholder groups that were interviewed, with some of the groups that took part during the negotiation phase of the FLEGT-VPA between the European Union and the Government of Cameroon.

The second part of the questions focuses on the assessment of a REDD+ pilot project, which is a community forest. The Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest (BBCF) was the case study to be analyzed, based on the management style of the community forest. In this case study, 119 questionnaires were administered.

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3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Some national documents were reviewed to assess how REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA processes are carried out in the Cameroonian context. The documents reviewed consist of government legislations and strategies, plans and programs concerning the forest governance framework. In addition, journal articles, and working papers about the subject matter were reviewed, as reports from civil society organizations. Data for this research were also obtained from related works on the subject from library sources, the delegation of forestry, and internet sources among others. The above method of data collection forms part of my secondary sources.

3.4.1 Focus Group Discussion

To better understand the FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ processes in Cameroon, qualitative methodologies such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used, along with an open-ended questionnaire as a data collection instrument. The FGD included key stakeholder groups of one to five individuals. During the FGD, interview questions for important respondents were shared, revised to incorporate criticism or suggestions from FGD participants, and then corrected accordingly. Besides FGD, I also took part in some workshops and meetings with other actors concerned with natural resource management in Cameroon, to understand the current situation of forest management and forest governance issues in the forestry sector of Cameroon. During field visits and data collection, I carried out observation of the management practices in the forestry sector, especially in the management of BBCF. Observations are a type of proof that does not rely on spoken behavior, and the approach allows the investigator to witness the phenomena under research firsthand (Yin, 1982). Miller and Brewer (2003), categorized observation into "unobtrusive observation" and "participant observation" based on the degree of participation by the researcher (Miller & Brewer, 2003). In carrying out this study, fieldwork was conducted with some of the management committees of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council (BBNRM). The observation was based on the management of the BBCF towards improving governance and enhancement of livelihood activities in the communities around the forest area.

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3.4.2 Interviews and questionnaire

Interviews constitute the primary source of data collection and constitute the source of knowledge for the researcher, coupled with field observation. There was the collection of data through the interview of specific authorities concerned with the study. Semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with stakeholders from the state and non-state actors from institutions such as the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), the Ministry of Environment Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), and other relevant ministries that are involved in REDD+ or FLEGT-VPA processes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key actors to explore in-depth their perceptions and experience in forest management and forest governance issues. Perceptions are assessed by conducting an empirical analysis of the discourses carried out by the responses, and these discourses are aggravated by the school of thought (Tiani *et al.*, 2015). The administration of the questionnaires in the field was done by the use of purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling involves the selection of sampling units based on the researcher's judgment of who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2005). The selected actors or experts in the subject matter were asked to identify and forward requests to other actors or experts within or outside of their institutions or community, who can provide information relevant to the study. Thus, snowball sampling was also used which involves the selection of sampling units using a network (ibids).

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Table 2. Stakeholder groups involved in the survey
Source: Author

Stakeholder group	Number Interviewed
Government	20
Civil Society Organizations (represented by the Community & Forest Platform)	10
Regional/International Organizations	5
Timber Concession Holders	5
Domestic Timber Market Traders	5
TOTAL	45

In the first part of the survey, which has to do with the assessment of FLEGT-VPA implementation in Cameroon, 45 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. The interviews focused mostly on stakeholders that were involved during the negotiation process of the FLEGT-VPA between the European Union and the government of Cameroon. Initially, 50 interviewees were previewed, with the Community and Forest Platform (CFP) as the main representative of civil society organizations. Government actors, timber traders and some concession holders also took part in the survey. Finally, 45 interviews were conducted.

In the second part of the survey, which has to do with the governance assessment of BBCF management, 119 questionnaires were administered to the management committee, complemented with interviews with indigenes of the area, local elites, and representatives of forest users groups, and members of the forest patrol team. In addition, the objective of the community forest concerning livelihood improvement to the locality, and the use of the forest for household consumption and income leaves many questions unanswered. Gaps exist in current published information to examine if the REDD+ initiative can help BBCF achieve its aims, or if BBCF can help REDD+ achieve its objective via avoided deforestation and improvement in natural resource management. One of the reasons for the interview was to gather information about the local population's level of awareness about the concept of community forestry, and

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their perceptions concerning the management of the community forest. In addition, the engagement or the level of participation in the decision-making process was of importance to this study. The data obtained will bring out the impact of community forestry concerning sustainable livelihood and poverty alleviation to the community concern, which is one of the reasons for the creation of the community forest.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data will be content analyzed using a qualitative (descriptive) method. Cartographic analysis in the form of maps was drawn to a convenient scale to suit the physical environment, the use of charts, graphs, tables, excel spreadsheets and SPSS. The qualitative data from interviews conducted with all other categories of respondents were content analyzed to get the perspectives, views and opinions of the respondents.

3.6 Data Validity

Reliability and validity are the two most important features in the evaluation tool for good research. Validity concerns what an instrument measures, and how well it does so (Mohajan, 2017) Reliability concerns the faith that one can have in the data obtained from the use of an instrument, that is, the degree to which any measuring tool controls for random error (ibid). Therefore, reliability and validity are needed to present research results. This study employed the use of triangulation of both its methods and sources. Triangulation of methods and sources is a key strategy for enhancing the internal validity of a study. The two methods described above, interviews and document analysis resulted in the triangulation of methods.

3.7 Study Area

This chapter presents background about Cameroon, in its geographical, ecological, and historical context. A presentation on the economy will provide information concerning the government's national income statistics. Environmental concerns affecting Cameroon will be discussed, and a historical overview of forest management in Cameroon from the colonial period to the present day will be examined. A deep insight into the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Cameroon will also be discussed with some challenges encountered in sustainable forest management in Cameroon.

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3.7.1 Geography and Location

Cameroon is located on the Gulf of Guinea, at the intersection between Western and Central Africa, and stretches from 2⁰ to 13⁰ latitude north and from 9⁰ to 16⁰ east of Greenwich. The country covers a land area of 475,442 km², with a population of about 25.8 million people (Worldatlas.com, 2021). Cameroon shares borders in the west with Nigeria, in the north with Chad, in the east with the Central African Republic, in the south with Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea and a 400 km stretch of the Atlantic Ocean in the south-west.

The Country is referred to as "Africa in miniature" as it features a variety of geographical regions like mountains, desert, savanna, rainforest and coastal plains, meaning all that is in Africa is found in Cameroon. The country is mountainous with hills, fault lines and a chain of active volcanic mountains. Mount Cameroon is the highest point in West Africa (4,095m). The country is divided administratively into ten semi-autonomous regions that are subdivided into 58 divisions. These divisions are then divided into sub-divisions and finally districts. The East Region of Cameroon has the largest surface area of 109,002 Km², and the Centre region represents the most populated region with a population of about 3.9 million inhabitants (Worldatlas.com, 2021). The Far-North and North regions are located in the Sahelian zone while the West, Northwest and Adamawa regions are located in the moist savannah zone (Foahom, 2001; Neba, 1987).

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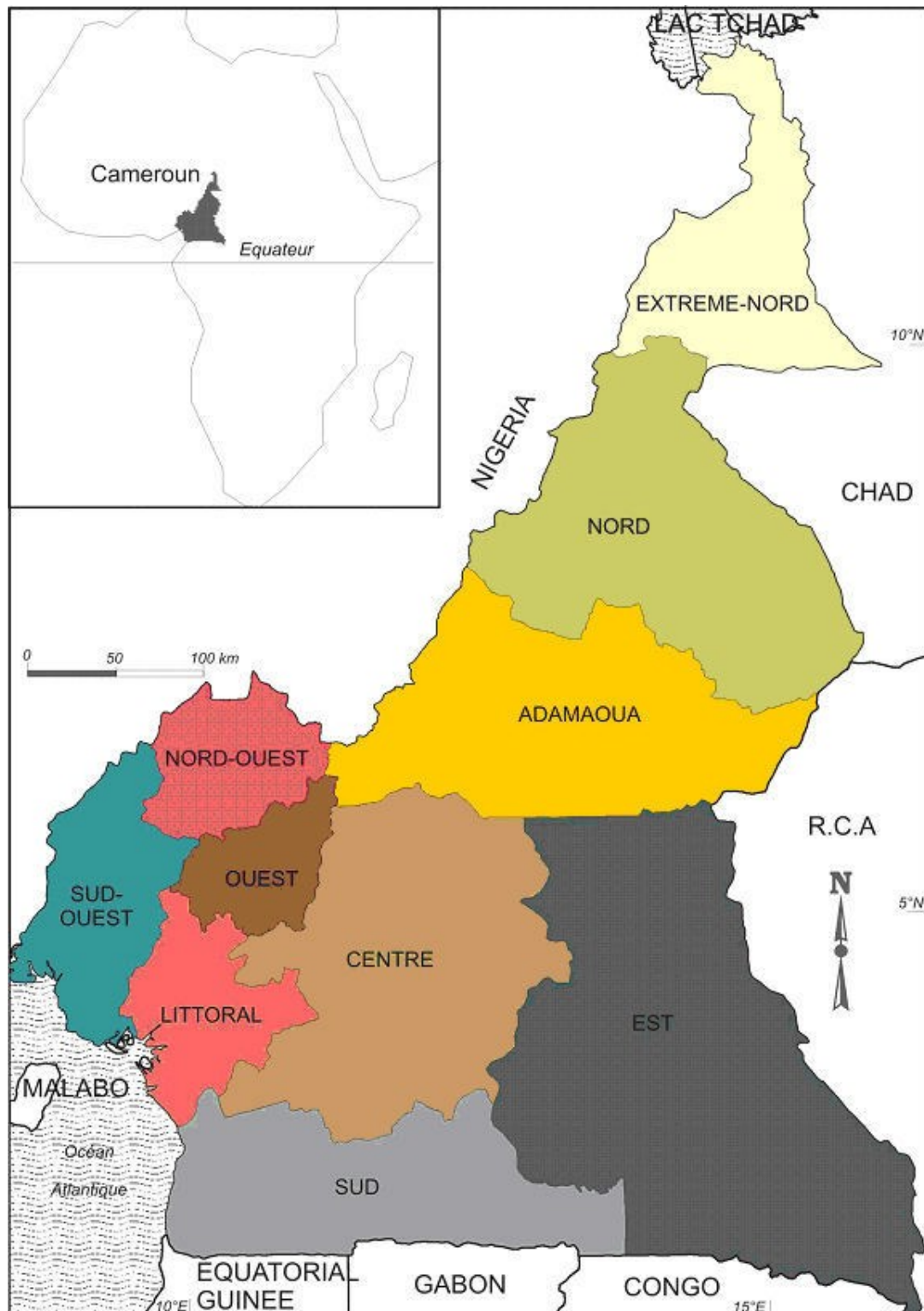


Figure 5. Map of Cameroon with administrative and international boundaries
Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/cameroon>

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3.7.2 Climate and Vegetation

Existing literature regarding the ecosystems and vegetation types in Cameroon has different views. Due to its geographical position, the country was characterized by varied geomorphology and climatic diversity. However, it is important to note that Cameroon has a wide range of climatic types ranging from the wet southern region near the equator to the dry north extending towards the Lake Chad basin (Urama, & Ozor, 2010). The climate is hot and humid in the forested south and western regions. Climatic data shows that rainfall is declining with an increase in temperature. The northern regions are already experiencing climatic changes with the advancement or encroachment of the deserts because of the reduction in rainfall (ibids). Studies in other regions of the country reveal the effects of increasing temperature on watersheds. In the classification, the climate is described as “Climate Type AW/BS”, characterized by tropical humid with dry winter and semi-arid. The country has four main climatic zones that can be distinguished as explained below:

- The Sudano-Sahelian Zone is characterized by semi-arid ecosystems located in the Far North region. This zone extends between latitude 7° 30' to 13° north and longitude 9° to 15° east (Techoro & Schmidt, 2014). It embraces the Mandara mountains and the Benue valley. The vegetation in this area consists of degraded shrubby steppes with periodically grassy flood plains. The rainfall distribution in the humid area is monomodal or unimodal, with a long dry season with rainfall of about 800 to 900 mm annually (Yengoh, Hickler, & Tchuinte, 2011). The temperature varies between a maximum of 40 to 42°C and a minimum of 17°C. The climatic conditions have always been held responsible for the poor vegetation types that are resumed in steppes, land open lands, savannah and thorny shrubland and shrubland dominated by species such as *Acacia*, *Balanites aegyptiaca*, *Ficus platyphilla*, *Khaya senegalensis*, *Tamarindus indica* (Molua & Lambi, 2007). The rainfall patterns in this region as compared with the other parts of the country are usually attributed to what is called the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), which has a great influence on Cameroon's rainfall patterns and their variability.
- The Savanna Zone is dominated by tropical wooded Savanna vegetation types also characterized by shrub, grassland and mosaic savannas, made up of some samples of trees. This area extends from the North-West, Adamawa, part of the

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Center and Eastern regions. The rainfall in this area measured about 1,700 and 3000 mm annually with an average temperature of 19°C. The shrub savannas of these regions are dominated by *Daniella oliveri* and *Lophira lanceolata* and the grass savannas are by *Imperata cylindrical* and *Pennisetum purpureum*.

- The Marine and Coastal ecosystem consists of mangroves and tropical rainforests with a warm and humid climate, with an average rainfall of 5000 mm per year and temperature variation between 24° to 26°C. Trees species here consist of *Saccoglottis Gabonese*, *Andira inermis*, *Cynometra hankie*, *Coula edulis*, *pycanthus angolensis* and an abundance of *Lophira alata* (Molua & Lambi, 2007).
- The tropical forest zone covers up to 46% of its national area by forest with nearly 182,000 km². It comprises the coastal forests, Biafran forests, semi-deciduous forests, swamp and flood forests, and the Congolese forest. It covers the southwest, littoral, centre and southern regions.

3.7.3 Demography and People

With recent figures showing a population of about 25.8 million inhabitants, Cameroon's population is increasing with a growth rate estimated at 2.59% (Worldatlas.com, 2021). The proportion of the urban population was 54.4% and grew by 3.6% annually between 2010 and 2015 (World Bank, 2019). The population of the forest zone is estimated at some three to 3.5 million people (Egute, 2012). Cameroon is one of the culturally diverse countries in Africa with more than 200 ethnolinguistic groups and more than 20 ethnic groups including the indigenous Pygmy people (Topa *et al.*, 2009). The Sawa, Bassa-Bakoko, Bakweri, Beti, Ewondo, Ballou, and Fang belong to the Bantu family. The Pygmies are divided into several sub-groups like the Bakas, Bagyeli and the Bedzang (Nguiffo *et al.*, 2009). The main ethnic groups of the West and North West regions are the Bamileke, Bamoun, Kom, Bafut, Nso and Widikum. They are Semi-Bantu-speaking people who also came from the North. Furthermore, the ethnic groups in the Northern region are the Mandara, Arab Choa, and Kokoto.

A study in 2009, on forest perceptions, reveals that 51% of Bantu perceive the forest as a source of wealth, while 73% of the Pygmies saw the forest as a living environment (Mbairamadji, 2009). However, both the Bantu and Pygmies used the forest resources

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for medicinal purposes. In Cameroon, the forest peoples³² are the Baka, Bakola or Bagyeli and the Bedzang. These forest peoples are traditionally nomadic, living from hunting and gathering. However, their activities are restricted today because they are being subjected to pressure on their ancestral lands because of forestry and mining operations, as well as conservation activities and agribusiness (ILO, 2015).

Indigenous peoples and other local communities play a vital role when it comes to mitigating the impact of climate change. The lands managed by these community indigenous groups serve as important carbon sinks by allowing standing forests to work as reservoirs, absorbing CO₂ and preventing its harmful emission into the atmosphere (Ortiz, 2017).

The 1989 Indigenous Peoples Convention³³ recognizes the aspirations of these peoples to exercise control over their institutions, ways of life and economic development and to maintain and develop their identities, language, and religions within the framework of the state in which they live. Cameroon is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and must as an obligation protect indigenous and tribal communities. These communities do not feature in the monitoring and evaluation of the poverty reduction strategies, and their population figures are staggering because of disregard on the part of the government (Tchoumba, 2006; CED *et al.*, 2017). They live under threats of expulsion, are excluded from the sharing of benefits of forest resources and do not participate in the developmental projects in their territory (Tchoumba, 2006). If indigenous peoples and tribal communities are not given legal recognition and government protection, the current rate of deforestation will continue unabated, and CO₂ emissions will increase due to the absence of forests to serve as a sink to CO₂ (Ortiz, 2017).

3.8 REDD+ Strategic Options as per Agro-Ecological Zones (AEZs)

The strategic options are measures put in place by the Cameroonian government to achieve its REDD + objectives of reducing deforestation and forest degradation while ensuring sustainable forest management, improving carbon stocks, and conserving

³² Because there is lack of a legally defined definition of Indigenous peoples, reference is made via the international criteria for identifying communities like the Pygmies and the Mbororos within the framework of the World Bank Operational Directives 4.20. Cameroon uses this framework to acknowledge the existence of indigenous peoples in the country.

³³ The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 is an International Labour Organization Convention, also known as ILO Convention 169, or C169. It is the major binding international convention concerning indigenous peoples and tribal peoples, and a forerunner of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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forest biodiversity. There are two key national processes underway in Cameroon, both linked to international efforts around reducing deforestation and the fight against illegal logging (FIP, 2017). Other Strategic options to address deforestation and forest degradation in Cameroon comprise a series of interventions (packages) that will be implemented in an integrated manner to improve the management of land and forests and develop agricultural and forest value chains (ibids). Concerning the R-PP, two kinds of strategic options are proposed: cross-sectoral strategic options (political and institutional) and sectorial strategic options (investment options). In addition to the two preceding strategic options, specific interventions for production sectors identified as major deforestation drivers must be developed. Below are some policy options for REDD + in Cameroon:

- Potential cross-cutting strategic options involve policy and institutional adjustments. It also involves options addressing governance issues, land management improvement, tenure security, gender and social equity, Payment of Environmental Services (PES), financing its implementation and also focuses on the root causes of deforestation and forest degradation (FIP, 2017).
- Potential sectorial strategy options that involve adjustments to sectorial strategies and action plans to increase productivity without deforestation and forest degradation, and; Strategic investment options are specific interventions for the development of certain value chains' flagship channels selected by the Agro-ecological zone (AEZ) (FIP, 2017). Investment opportunities are classified according to the sectors (forestry, agriculture, infrastructure, and mining) that have a significant impact on the forest domain. In terms of productive sectors (agriculture and forestry), the strategic options described include numerous value chains. Each value chain and production system necessitate interventions or well-defined investments (ibids). Interventions in the forest sector must be directed at the national level to improve the sector's governance, traceability, and control like in the FLEGT-VPA initiative, make Small and Medium Forest Enterprises (SMFE) activities sustainable and formalize the informal sector, modernize processing capabilities, and organize and profitably develop the wood energy sub-sector (FIP, 2017).

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Table 3. Strategic options and sub-options of Cameroon REDD+ mechanisms
Source: (CED *et al.*, 2017)

	Cross-cutting strategic options	Sub Options
1	Improving governance to ensure effective management mechanisms related to REDD +	Coherence of economic development policies and sectoral strategies with the REDD+ strategy Improved stakeholder participation in land use decision-making Creating an enabling business environment and financial frameworks for cost-effective investment in sustainable intensification Improving transparency and access to information for people and maintaining Cameroon's ecosystems
2	Improved territory management and strengthening tenure security	Strengthening and promoting a national policy framework that can ensure optimal land use planning Creation of multi-sectorial consultation frameworks at national, regional, divisional and council levels Simplification of procedures to facilitate land title acquisition by vulnerable groups (young, IP, women etc.) Promotion of land-use scenarios that reduce SD trends
3	Payment for environmental services in the agricultural sector (zero deforestation)	Development of a political and legal framework for PES, as well as incentives at local, community and council levels Capacity building of local communities in PES management
4	Financing the implementation of REDD+ activities	Participatory development and adoption of a policy and strategy to promote "green products" Development and strengthening of sustainable crop certification systems
5	Strengthening the mainstreaming of gender and indigenous peoples (pygmies and Mbororos) in different stages of REDD +	Promotion of gender equality and social inclusion in the REDD+ process implementation Capacity building of women and indigenous people to facilitate their effective participation in the decision-making related to REDD+ Promotion and valorisation of indigenous people's traditional knowledge and knowhow in natural resources management
Sectorial strategic options		Sub Options
Infrastructures and mining sector		
6	Strengthening the environmental criteria in the implementation of large industrial mining and infrastructure projects	Improving standards that control the planning and implementation of infrastructure and industrial mining projects Strengthening the monitoring of environmental and socio-economic conditions of mining and infrastructure project contracts Promotion of good practices and compensation mechanisms for biodiversity damages related to industrial mining and large infrastructure projects
7	Mitigation of environmental impacts related to artisanal mining activities	Capacity building to improve the monitoring of industrial and the supervision of mining craftsmen Systematization of compensation mechanisms for biodiversity damage related to mining projects
Forestry sector		
8	Improving sustainable forest management governance	Improved regulation and standards for sustainable management in PFD and NPF Promotion of investments in the production and sustainable use of forest products
9	Improving the economic and environmental value of forest and agroforestry landscapes	Development and implementation of land use plans for different forest types and their uses Promotion of business enterprises and development of SMFE Support the development of forest plantations and landscape restoration
Agricultural sector		
10	Improving the productivity and the intensification of agricultural systems	Adoption of standards aimed at reducing deforestation and forest degradation Development and promotion of good agricultural practices and quality inputs

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The government predicts from the above strategic options that REDD+ can contribute to environmental preservation and socio-economic development. The success of their implementation may, however, be hampered by certain risks or barriers of the cultural, institutional, and regulatory framework applicable in the country (FIP, 2017). An example of such barriers may be the limited participation or involvement of some key stakeholders.

Because of the diversity of the five AEZs in Cameroon with distinct biophysical and climatic features that influence the forest, types and the corresponding drivers of land-use change. These diversities of the landscape of Cameroon has made it easier to identify some deforestation hotspot across the country, and where intervention is urgently needed. For the success of REDD+ implementation, an assessment of the different AEZs will be important. The AEZs are described as follows:

1- AEZ 1 – Sudano Sahelian

This zone covers 100,353 Km² and extends from the borders of Adamawa to Lake Chad. It is the administrative region in the North and Far North regions, and is characterised by a dry tropical climate with a long dry season; with rainfall amounting to 500 to 1,000 mm. The average temperature is around 28° Celsius. This zone is densely populated, accounting for 30% of Cameroon's total population in 2005. Statistics from the office of population and census show that the population increased from 2.5 million in 2,000 to more than 5.1 million in 2015 given a population density of about 50 persons per Km² (BUCREP, 2015). The reason for this increase is a result of migration flow from the Central Africa Republic, Nigeria and Chad because of insecurity like the Boko Haram insurgency (Fofiri Nzossie, Temple, & Ndamè, 2016). The soil is the mosaic type with varied formations, but is very sensitive to water and wind, leading to the disappearance of vegetation cover. The plant types are very diverse; largely dominated by grassy and wooded savannahs. Agriculture, livestock and fishing are the main activities of communities. Agriculture is mainly based on the practice of cash crops (cotton, rice) food crops (cereals, beans, and yam), and livestock (cattle, sheep, and goats) (MINADER, 2018). It is ecologically the most fragile zone in Cameroon (Kenfack Essougong, Slingerland, & Mathé, 2020).

2- AEZ 2 – High Guinean savannahs

This zone covers a surface area of 123.077 Km². The area corresponds to the Adamawa plateau, a peculiar intermediary unit and constitutes a buffer zone between

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the dry zone and the wetland to the South. The precipitation is relatively abundant without being excessive and leads to the development of a savannah landscape with long grasses that are periodically burned for pastoralism. The abundant rainfall varies from 1,000 to 1,500 mm, with a temperature from 20 to 26° Celsius. The population witnessed an increase from about 1,031,903 inhabitants in 2010, to about 1,200,970 inhabitants in 2015, given a population density of about 9.7 persons per Km² (BUCREP, 2015). The socio-economic situation in the area is based on agriculture and livestock farming, oriented toward self-subsistence food crops. There is also large-scale production of corn, and this resulted in the creation of Maiscam in the 1980s. Livestock breeding is an extensive cattle type, with the practice of transhumance (MINADER, 2018).

3- AEZ 3 – Western Highlands

This zone covers 31,192 Km², and it is the administrative regions of the West and North West. This zone consists of the Bamileke highlands, their massifs (Mount Bamboutos), grass fields highlands, and mountains (Mount Oku). This zone is characterised by diverse microclimates because of the highly contrasting topography, and moderate temperatures due to the high altitudes (1,000m to 2,500m). The average annual temperature is around 20° Celsius. The natural forest is composed of wet forests (about 55%), and savannahs (about 45%). The regions of Noun, Menchum and Donga-Mantung shelter the most important forest areas, but also non-tree savannas are present in the agro-ecological zones. The population statistics show an increase from 3,418,778 inhabitants in 2006 to 3,890,168 inhabitants in 2015, given a density of about 124 persons per Km² (BUCREP, 2015). Agriculture occupies the most activity in the zone with a focus on the small-scale system, with beans and corn dominating.

4- AEZ 4 – Mono-modal rainfall

This zone is the coastal plain or littoral lowlands bordering the Atlantic Ocean with about 400 Km² of coastline characterised by a mangrove ecosystem. It is bordered by Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea covering an area of 45,658 Km². This zone covers the Littoral and South West administrative regions. It is surrounded by mountains located less than 150 km from the coast thus influencing both the relief and surrounding climate. The average rainfall is around 4000 mm per year, with 11,000 mm recorded around Mount Cameroon. Average temperatures are stable at 25° Celsius, while relative humidity remains above 70% to 80% for most periods of the year (MINEPDED,

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2016). This zone's proximity to the sea and the ports of Douala and Kribi has encouraged logging activities because of the proximity to the export market. Presently, the forests in the coastal zone are partly transformed into agricultural potentials, characterised by large agro-industrial plantations of rubber, banana, oil palm, and tea (SOCAPLM, CDC, and HEVECAM. Other diverse food crops like cocoyams, corn, cassava etc are also cultivated in this zone. The average population density is estimated at 132.6 inhabitants per Km², and 86% of the population of the littoral region lives in urban areas, particularly in Douala (MINEPAT, 2015).

5- AEZ 5 – Bi-modal rainfall

This zone covers the Central, Southern and Eastern administrative regions, with a population size of about 3,564,000 inhabitants and a population density of 42.7 inhabitants per Km² (MINEPAT, 2015). Some variations in population density are recorded in the South-East with a population density of 10 inhabitants per Km², and more than 100 inhabitants per Km² in Lekie, North of Yaounde (MINEPAT, 2015). This zone is dominated by a bi-modal climate regime that maintains a dense humid forest that has been fragmented by human activities (agriculture, logging, mining etc.). Rainfall is between 1,500mm to 2,500mm. The forest covers about 17.3 million hectares that are about 86% of the agroecological zone (IGN France, 2016). The forests are dominated by 90% humid rainforest and savannah is present in the areas of Lom-et-Djerem, Mbam-et-Kim and Kadei area. The prevailing economic activity of this zone is agriculture, based on small family farms with the application of extensive slash-and-burn farming methods. Crops cultivated are very diverse including food crops (banana, plantain, cassava, cocoyams, maize), as well as cash and industrial crops (cocoa, coffee, sugar cane, palm oil, rubber). The area is the main forest production area in Cameroon with log lumber being harvested.

Because of the above diversities concerning the AEZs, areas which have been identified as deforestation hotspots, especially in AEZs 4 and 5, will have intervention programmes geared towards emission reduction from deforestation and forest degradation. Other zones will also need a REDD+ intervention programme concerning their needs under an integrated scheme, for example, AEZs 1, 2, and 3 will receive REDD+ interventions under the programme of climate change mitigation, and integrated watershed management respectively (Mosnier *et al.*, 2016).

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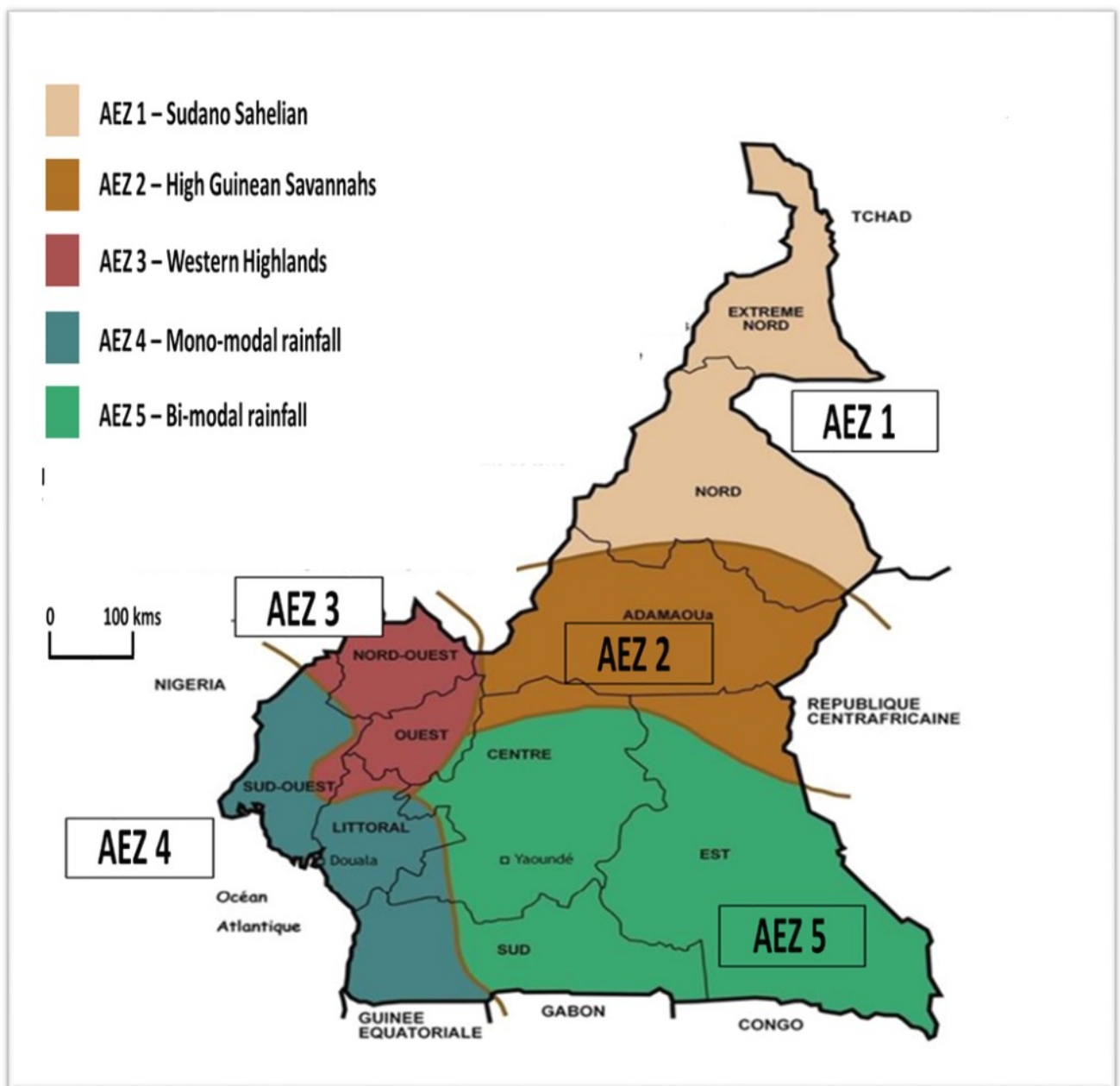


Figure 6. Agro-ecological zones in Cameroon
Source: (FIP, 2017)

Chapter Four: FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ Processes in Cameroon

4.1 FLEGT VPA and REDD+: An Overview

Due to the lack of binding multilateral measures to regulate forest governance, and in addition to the use of private, voluntary, certification regimes, progressive international actors have increasingly started to focus on bilateral approaches based on enforcing domestic legislation and capacity building in timber-exporting countries (Bekoe & Ozinga, 2014). Illegal logging is one of the drivers of deforestation in Cameroon. Experience shows that approaches to reducing deforestation and forest degradation and strengthening forest governance such as REDD+ and FLEGT can be far more effective in countering forest loss if they are jointly implemented (FAO, 2016). These two initiatives are co-evolving in Cameroon as the government is sorting for ways to reduce illegalities in the forestry sector, and at the same time making efforts to promote sustainable forest management.

Entrenched in a vibrant international context striving for sustainable tropical forest management, the EU moved forward substantively in this issue in 2003, with the adoption of its Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan (Pirlot, 2019). The EU is one of the largest importers of timber and forest products, with over 40% share coupled with an export value of about 695.3 million US dollars (FAO, 2015). Figure 7 below shows Cameroon's main export markets in terms of the export value of wood products in 2017.

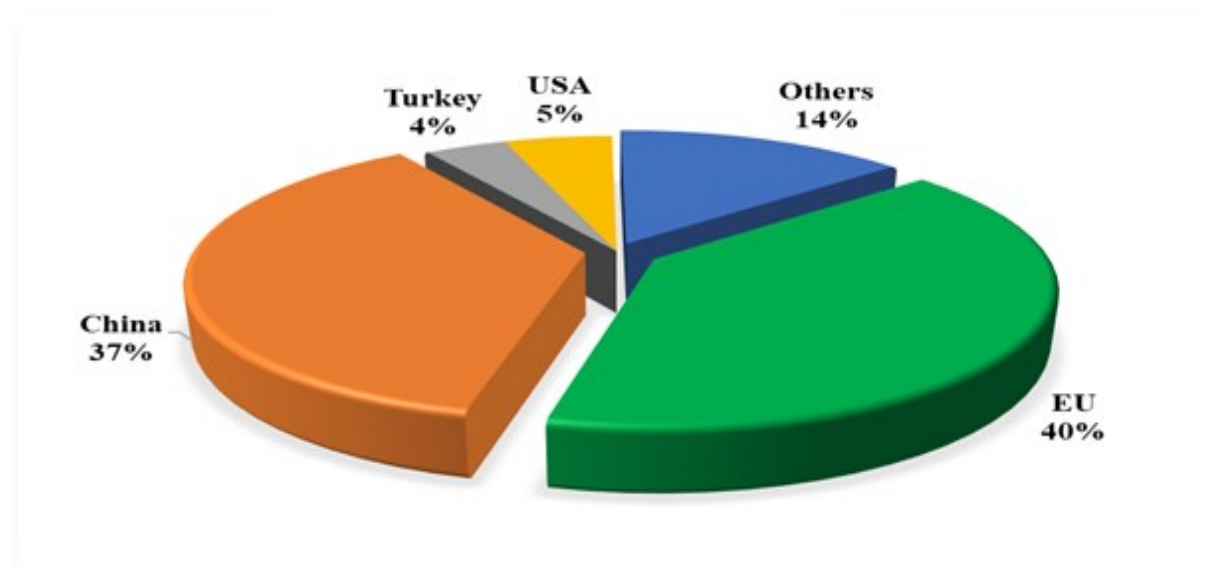


Figure 7. Cameroon's main markets in terms of export value in 2017
Source: Adapted from (ITTO, 2018)

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Both the private sector and the government have started to acknowledge that some of the supply chains in the forestry or timber sectors were not fully in compliance with the national laws of the countries of origin (Sanial, Lescuyer, Ruf, & Tsanga, 2019). It is obvious, that the consumption of the EU member states may have been encouraging illegal logging and associated criminal activities. Thus, the timber trade between Cameroon and the EU has a role to play in addressing the problem of illegal logging. The European Commission (EC) also recognizes that law enforcement on its own can make the situation worse for local communities when unjust laws are not changed (FERN, 2016). Thus, the need for law reforms will be of importance to avoid contradictions with the project implementation. Strategically, the EU's FLEGT-Action Plan assumed that improved procurement policies, transparency initiatives, reforms in the legal framework in the forestry sector and improvement in stakeholder capacities would foster good governance in timber legality. Again, improved knowledge sharing via communication transparency will enhance knowledge of best practices in the legal timber trade. Achieving the above objective requires policy measures whose main goal is to promote sustainable forestry, especially in less developed tropical countries. The following measures are contained in the EU's Action Plan:

- Strengthen traceability and verification systems for timber legality. This measure will support the setting up of a verification system to identify timber from a legal origin destined for the EU market, thus promoting transparency of information and decision-making in the forestry sector. There will be also the support to build the capacity of government and civil society to implement governance reforms, tackle corruption, enforce the regulatory framework and monitor the forest sector;
- Facilitate policy reform to improve coherence, inclusiveness and feasibility of the relevant regulatory framework via multilateral and international collaboration with the engagement of major timber consumers to restrict illegally harvested timber;
- Promoting public procurement policies such as the Green Procurement Handbook with clear rules and guidance in public procurement procedures in producing countries;
- Strengthening Small and Medium Forest Enterprise (SME) compliance with legal frameworks and value chain competitiveness. By doing this, the

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private sector in the EU will be encouraged to work with the private sector in timber-producing countries to implement good practices;

- Facilitating resolution of conflicts related to local access to forest resources. Here the focus is on conflict timber. That is timber traded by armed groups to fund armed conflicts. The discussion will be initiated with member countries and other states to be aware of the role of forests during conflicts

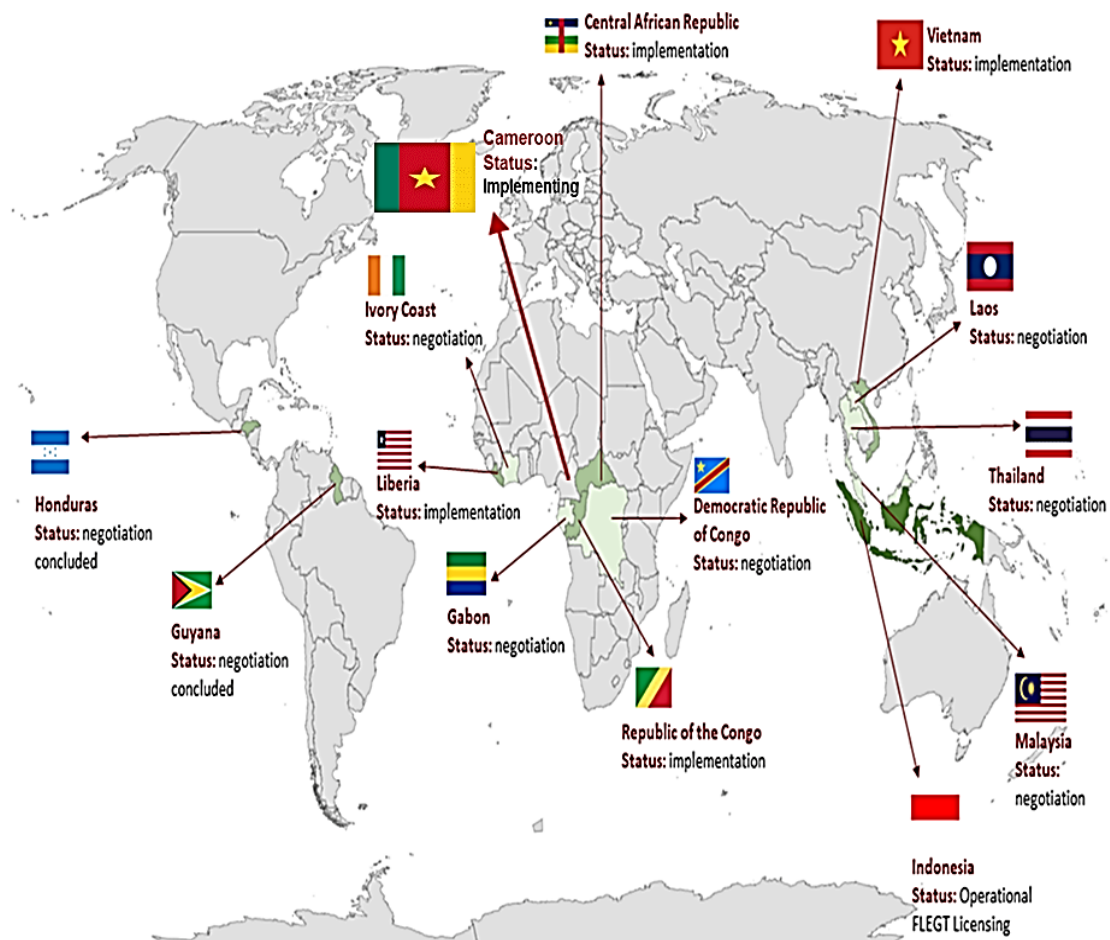


Figure 8. Representation of FLEGT-VPA countries
Source: Adapted from (www.tefso.org/eu/vpa/agreement).

4.1.2 Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA)

Before signing, the FLEGT-VPA with the EU, timber traceability and verification were under the control of MINFOF. In compliance with Article 124 of the 1995 implementing decree, a control system was established. This system includes provisional control brigades with observers to carry out control and verification functions. The timber tracking system and follow-up under the control of MINFOF before the VPA includes checkpoints and documentary tracking, which is not computerized, errors, and fraud

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are noticed along the traceability system. In addition, the staff trained to carry out this mission were poorly equipped for field investigation and at times went for months without salary (Fomete & Cerutti, 2008). Because of the poor organization of the control system, irregularities and other malpractices in the forestry sector continue. Figure 9 below shows the conceptual framework for timber flow and verification in Cameroon before the VPA came into force.

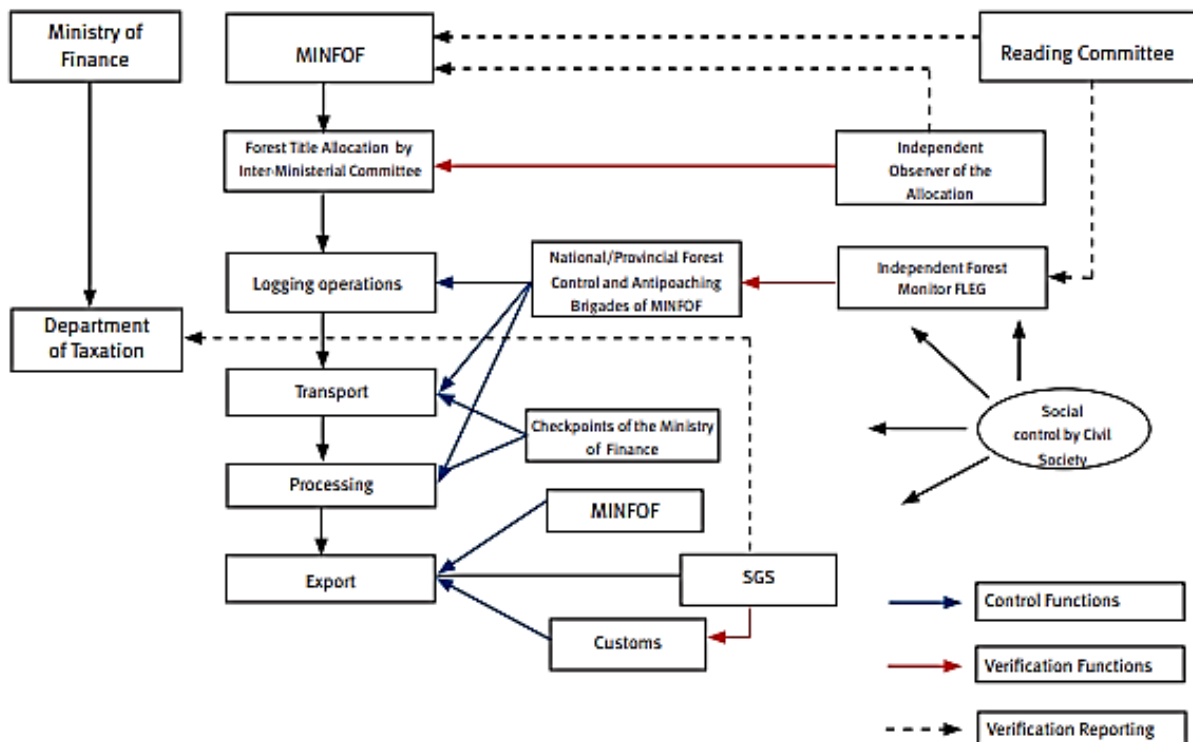


Figure 9. Conceptual framework of verification of timber, actors and functions
Source: (Fomete & Cerutti, 2008)

Two very important aspects of the flow chart are the role of the Reading Committee and Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS). The Reading Committee is an institution created to process information gathered from the field from Independent Forest Monitors and then report this information to MINFOF. SGS, which is still in existence today at the port of exit Douala has as its function to handle the control of exporting timber and collection of related export taxes. The control system above was not very convincing to the EU members to self as a framework to verify timber from legal origin. Thus, the EU opted for a new traceability system under the VPA to serve as the channel for the issuance of the FLEGT license or certificate.

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The Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) is an important component of the FLEGT Action Plan. Under these agreements, exporting countries develop systems to verify the legality of their timber export into the EU, to ensure that only legal timber and timber products are imported to the EU. The FLEGT-VPA is voluntary, that is there is no obligation for any country to be a member of the VPA. On the other hand, once a country signs the agreement, it is now legally binding on both parties. The main base of the VPA is a Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS)³⁴. Countries entering the VPA are required to develop their TLAS based on their existing control mechanism and legislative frameworks (FAO, 2022). The TLAS functions are based on the following components:

- 1- A clear definition of legal timber: Defining what is legal timber, is a key activity during the negotiation of the VPA. Therefore, it is important to determine the set of laws and procedures of the timber-producing countries, which mostly include social, environmental, and economic aspects of forest management.
- 2- Verification of legal compliance: Here, the process must verify if the timber companies are harvesting in compliance with all applicable and relevant laws and regulations. An institution set up by the government or any credible Non-governmental Organization (NGO), or a combination of them can carry out the verification (EU-FLEGT Facility, 2009).
- 3- Control of the supply chain: Here the VPA ensures the traceability of the timber from the point of harvest to the port of export. This is the mechanism to ensure that legal timber can be traced throughout the supply chain. It is also an effort to avoid the mixing between legal and illegal timber.
- 4- Independent audit or monitoring: The independent auditor monitor is responsible for the monitoring and functioning of the whole process. In the case of Cameroon, the government points to an independent auditor, after consultation with the European Commission. This third-party monitor is responsible for checking all aspects of the system using the best auditing practices and reporting to the Joint Implementation Council (JIC).

³⁴ Decree n° 002 of 7 February 2013 to implement SIGIF provides details about the management of the verification and traceability of the timber and timber products within the supply chain. A FLEGT licensing authority will issue FLEGT licenses for consignments of timber products, if the verification system has evidence consignments are legally compliant.

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5- Issuing of FLEGT licenses: The final product of the FLEGT-VPA is issuing the FLEGT license for timber export. This is a measure to ensure that only timber products that have been legally produced per the national legislation, taking into consideration the definition of legal timber endorsed in the context of the VPA may enter the EU. With the FLEGT license, timber and timber products destined for the EU are free from the further requirements set up by the European Timber Regulations (EUTR). Figure 10 presents a flow diagram of the FLEGT-TLAS proposed by the EU.

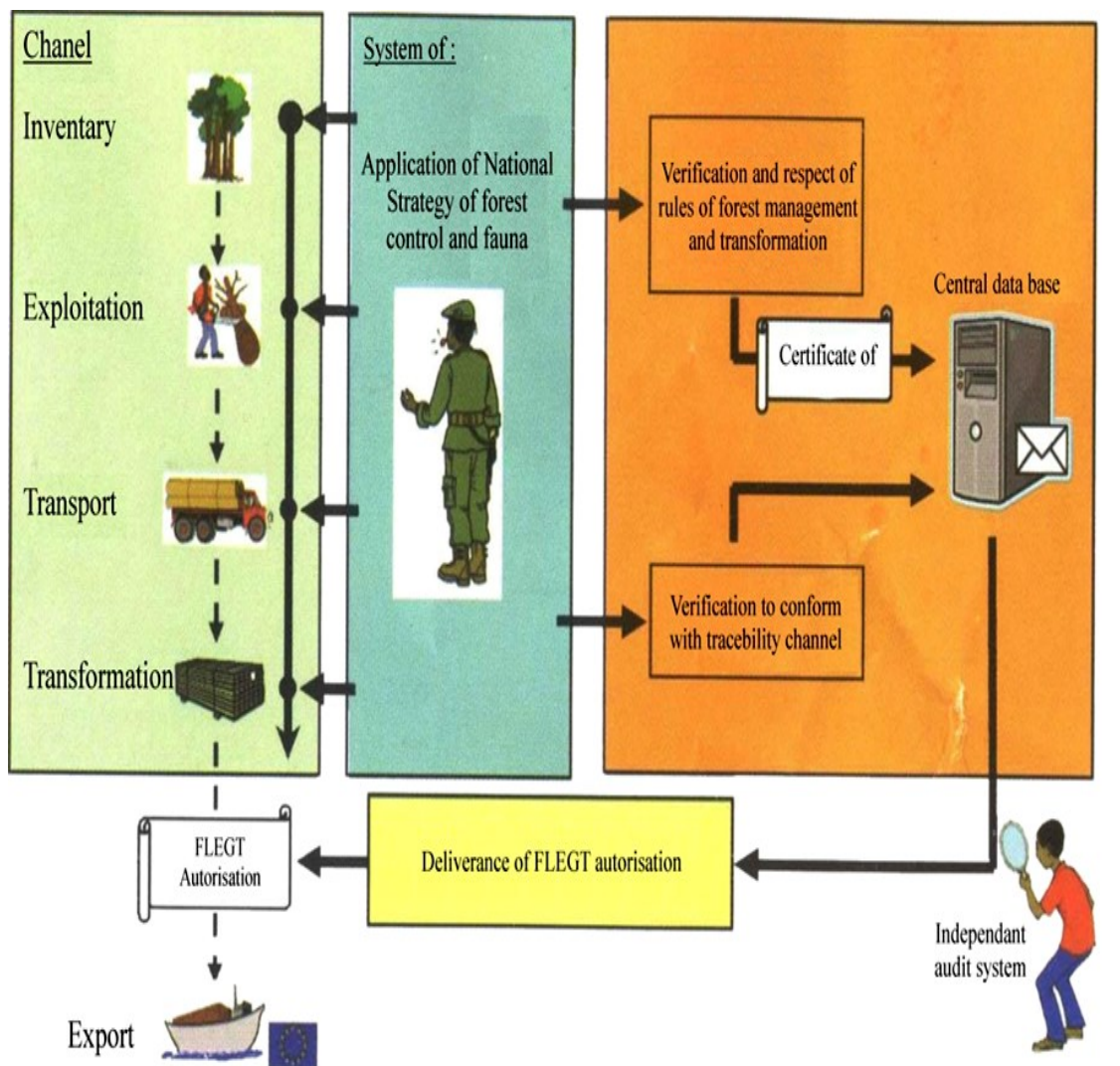


Figure 10. Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS)
Source: Adapted from (EU-FLEGT Facility, 2009)

Another timber traceability system proposed by the EU-FLEGT program is the establishment of a barcode-based system. This new system comprises a software program to generate unique barcodes for trees, stumps, and logs, with the use of a smartphone application for scanning and recording information in the field. The

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advantage of the barcode system is that it eliminates the need for labor-intensive paperwork, and combats fraud and illegal logging.

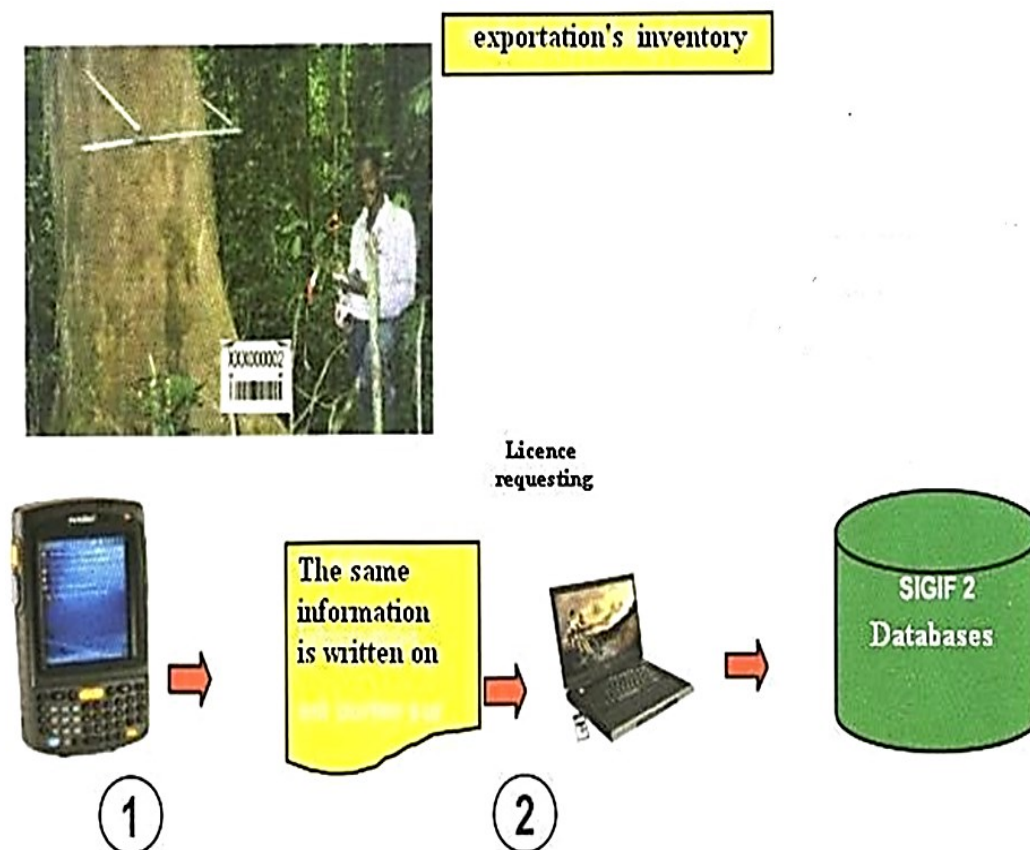


Figure 11. Example of the new bar code to go operational in Cameroon
Source: (EU-FLEGT Facility, 2009)

4.1.3 EU Timber Regulation (EUTR)

The EU Timber Regulation was adopted in 2010 and entered into force in 2013 under regulation No. 995/2010³⁵. This was an important step taken to increase the effectiveness of the FLEGT Action Plan. The EUTR aims to curb the EU's import and consumption of illegally harvested timber, by applying due diligence procedures from operators placing wood and wood products on the EU markets. The EUTR is focused on the demand (import) side, while VPAs aim at the supply (export) side of the timber product trade. The EU operators are expected to minimize the risk of illegal timber entering the value chain. The EUTR, therefore, requires operators placing timber on

³⁵ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market. It also prohibits placing illegally harvested and produced timber products on the EU market.

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the EU market for the first time, whether imported or harvested within the EU, to have access to information about the origin and species of the wood, the volume of the load, and compliance with national laws and regulations (Josson *et al.*, 2015). Based on the above information, the operator importing the timber and timber products into the EU should assess the risk of illegality and, if necessary, mitigate that risk by demanding additional information and verification from the supplier³⁶. Operators are held accountable for the products they bring into the EU and are required to have a due diligence system that is based on adequate documentation and risk assessment to assess the legal provenance of imported timber products. Figure 12 below is a diagrammatic representation of the FLEGT Action Plan with its features and instruments.

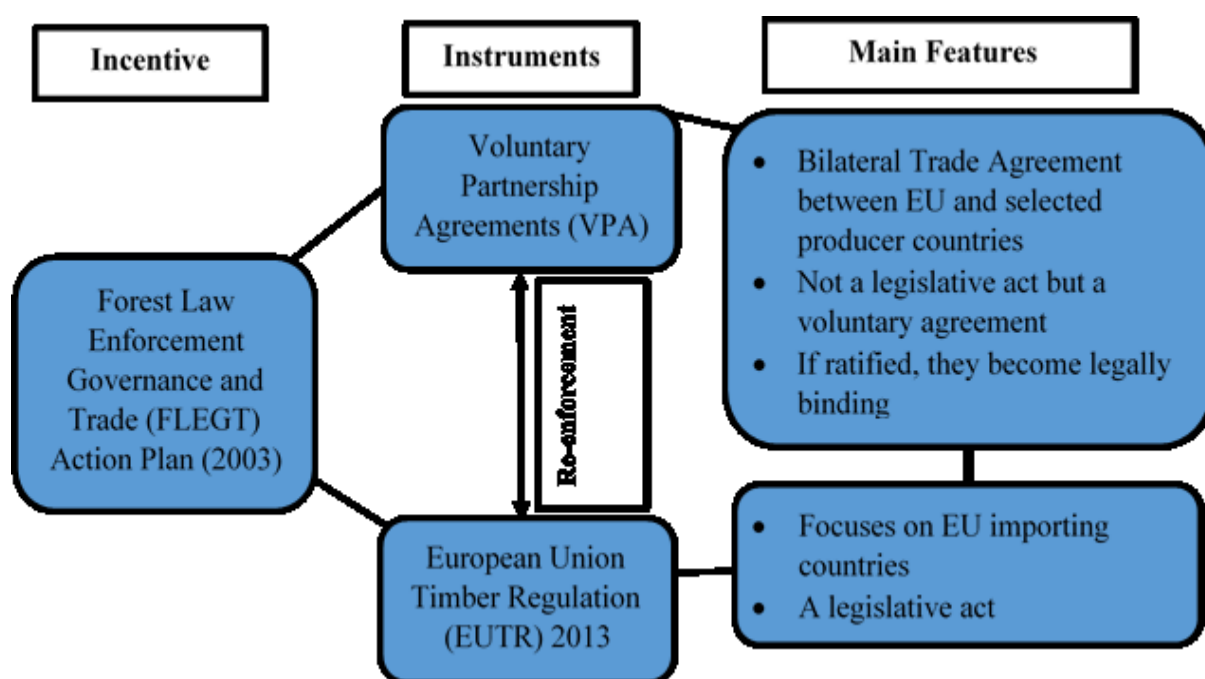


Figure 12. FLEGT Action Plan with its features and instruments
Source: (Josson *et al.*, 2015)

4.1.4 Public Procurement

Public procurement is the acquisition, whether through formal contracts or otherwise, of work, supplies and services by public bodies. It ranges from the purchase of routine supplies or services to formal tendering and placing contracts for large infrastructural projects (White, 2019). Public procurement policies are used to ensure that only legal,

³⁶ EUTR 2010 lays down obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the internal market for the first time, as well as the obligations of traders. Article 4 specifies obligations of operators, Art 5 specifies obligation of traceability, while Art 6 specifies measures and procedures with respect to due diligence systems.

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and in some cases, state purchasers buy sustainable timber products. This policy is perceived to play a significant role in the EU markets for forest products and related trade (White, 2019). Within the EU, this policy is handled by state competence, although rules are set at the EU level. The European Commission (EC) encourages member states to adopt a green procurement policy. The policy on green procurement states that legality should be a minimum requirement for wood-based products.

REDD+ is another initiative or mechanism that is under implementation in Cameroon to help tackle the issue of climate change by avoiding deforestation. REDD+ is based on the idea that halting deforestation could be a cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Protecting forests in the tropics could mean improving the livelihood of local communities. Halting deforestation has proved difficult in the past because of conflicting interests between the actors in charge of the process, and the complexities of the factors that drive deforestation. The REDD+ initiative is receiving increasing political and scientific attention as a climate change mitigation approach (Somorin *et al.*, 2014).

The Warsaw Framework for REDD+³⁷ set out international rules, which were agreed upon under the UNFCCC in 2013. Developing countries' parties to the convention must put in place systems to effectively coordinate REDD+, report progress and manage benefits. Thus, measures must be taken to either adapt or reform their existing legal frameworks not only in climate change mitigation but also to protect communities from the social and environmental risks that could be created by REDD+ (Denier *et al.*, 2014). REDD+ is also recognized in Article 5 of the Paris Agreement, where parties reiterated the encouragement to implement REDD+ activities to be an integral element of COP21.

The REDD+ process is built along with three overlapping phases:

- **Readiness Phase:** countries prepare a national REDD+ strategy through inclusive multi-stakeholder consultations, start building capacity in monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), and begin demonstration activities.

³⁷ The Warsaw Framework for REDD+ is a collection of seven decisions adopted at the UNFCCC- COP 19 in Warsaw.

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- Investment-Demonstration Phase: countries implement policies and measures to reduce emissions (the national REDD+ strategy that proxy indicators will verify).
- Results-based Payment Phase: countries are compensated solely for reduced emissions and enhanced carbon stocks relative to agreed reference levels (UN-REDD, 2013).

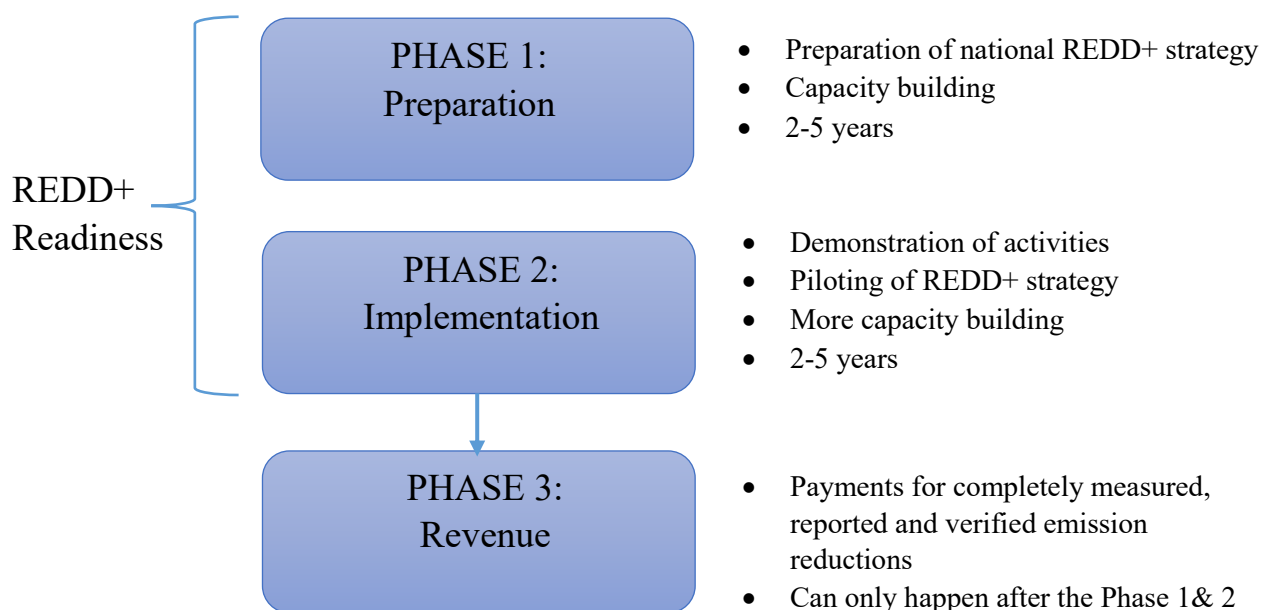


Figure 13. Three phases of the national REDD+ strategy
Source: (UN-REDD, 2013)

4.2 Cameroon's FLEGT-VPA Process

The FLEGT-VPA process in Cameroon had a rocky start and faced difficulties from the beginning. The entire VPA implementation in Cameroon consists of three phases. The first phase involves the informal pre-negotiation phase (2005-2006), which mainly involves a Cameroonian assessment of the VPA's ability to increase timber product exports to Europe and help reinforce ongoing governance reforms. This included several multi-stakeholder consultations on issues such as how to define legality, traceability and control systems. The second phase consisted of formal political and technical negotiation sessions (2007-2009), with multi-stakeholder negotiation and then bilateral negotiation with the EU continuing until 2009, which concluded with the

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signing of the agreement in 2010 and ratification in 2011 by presidential decree³⁸. The third phase runs from the period of the VPA entry into force until the present. Cameroon is now in its implementation phase of VPA and reforming the regulatory framework, developing a methodology for VPA impact monitoring and LAS system to get the FLEGT licensing and building capacity (Sirviö, 2016).

The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) oversaw the negotiation representing the government of Cameroon. Other major NGOs that were also involved in the negotiation include the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the European Union Resource Network (FERN) (Ngendakumana *et al.*, 2014; Tegegne *et al.*, 2017). Implementation of the agreement will be the responsibility of a Joint Implementation Monitoring Committee, which has two structures: the Joint Implementation Council (JIC) and the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) created by MINFOF. At least one of the two agencies includes representatives of the Prime Minister's office and five government ministries, the National Assembly, the private sector, civil society, indigenous people, and community forests (Brusselaers & Buysse, 2018). This shows clearly that there was a high level of stakeholder involvement and perceived by many as a good process (Tegegne *et al.*, 2014; Dooley & Ozinga, 2011). There are also consultative structures in the JMC whose role is the monitoring and evaluation of the FLEGT-VPA and facilitating the communication of information between the different stakeholders (FLEGT-VPA Cameroon, 2012).

4.3 National REDD+ process in Cameroon

Because of its great forest potential, Cameroon has been a major player in international climate change discourse and strategy development in the Congo Basin. As with the case of many countries in the Congo Basin, Cameroon is grappling with the adverse effects of climate change and with the increasing pressure on forests. Furthermore, the country has its ambition to become an emerging country by 2035. To realize this ambition, much focus has been on agriculture, livestock, energy, forestry, ecotourism and Mining. Also, the government wishes to make REDD+ a development tool to help it achieve its goal of sustainable development, with the help of a framework document

³⁸ Decree No.2011/238 of 09 August 2011.

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named the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (Vision 2035).

In 2014, Cameroon launched the national process for the development of its national REDD+ strategy, following the approval of its R-PP in February 2013. According to the draft National Strategy, the country opted for a sub-national approach coupled with a national approach that considers the specificities of its five Agro-Ecological Zones (AEZ). The REDD+ process is considered an opportunity to implement sustained, coherent, legitimate and sustainable development in a way that respects the specific social, economic and environmental requirements of each of its various AEZ. REDD+ must ensure sustainable and equitable development in rural areas while reducing deforestation and forest degradation, soil degradation and impoverishment of wildlife (FCPF, 2013). The forest sector is expected to contribute significantly to the realization of this objective. The contribution of the forest sector will be achieved through the country's engagement in the REDD+ process and the government's efforts are simultaneously addressing the three phases of REDD+. The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) approved the Cameroon Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), in 2013 with an estimated sum of 28.911 million US dollars to start the formulation of the National REDD+ Strategy, and roughly 60 million US dollars to implement pilot projects in all AEZs in the country (FCFP, 2015).

About REDD+ Readiness, the self-assessment process for the preparation of the Readiness Package (R-Package), which signals the completion of the readiness phase and paves the way for full-fledged implementation, is still ongoing. Financial support for the readiness phase came from FCPF estimated at 3.6 million US dollars, and the German Development Bank (KfW) through the Basket Fund of the Forest-Environment Sectorial Program (FESP) estimated at 2.8 million US dollars for climate change and REDD+ (FIP, 2017). Cameroon received an additional sum of 5 million US dollars from the FCPF in 2017 to continue the REDD+ process readiness. Other technical and financial partners are providing support through the implementation of activities jointly identified with the REDD+ Technical Secretariat (TS), in conformity with the R-PP and emerging issues related to the national strategy (UN-REDD, 2013).

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4.4 Institutions in Charge of the REDD+ Program

The institutional arrangement within the REDD+ policy process in Cameroon falls into two broad categories: the negotiation for designing new (formal and informal) rule systems to structure actors' participation in the REDD+ governance process; and existing institutional practices and norms within the environment and forest sectors that REDD+ mechanism could build on (Somorin *et al.*, 2014). MINEPDED provides leadership for the REDD+ process as the political and operational focal point of the UNFCCC, in collaboration with MINFOF. National coordination has been set up to manage the REDD+ process, and the entity is made up of members from both MINEPDED and MINFOF and was named the "Consultation Circle of Partners" (CCPM) of MINEPED and MINFOF. The draft of the R-PP was developed with technical and financial assistance from the government, the World Bank through the FCPF funds, the IUCN, GIZ and civil society. Thus, with the objective of the early mobilization of the different sectors in Cameroon's REDD+ process, several sectorial ministries started to work on drafting the R-PP well ahead of time without the steering committee put in place.

The management of the REDD+ process in Cameroon consists of a decision-making body at the national level (steering committee) and an operational body (technical secretariat). The technical secretariat handles the implementation of the REDD+ process through its branches at the regional and departmental levels. This is relevant to strengthening multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder involvement essential for the successful implementation of REDD+.

4.4.1 National REDD+ Steering Committee

The national REDD+ Steering Committee is the main decisional organ of the REDD+ process, with its mode of operation set up by the Prime Ministry³⁹. The Steering Committee will provide political leadership and strategic coordination, ensure the commitment and involvement of all sectors, and ensure interactions with the parliament and other stakeholder groups. It will also carry out strategic functions responding to

³⁹ Prime Ministerial Decree No.103/CAB/PM regarding the creation, organization and operation of the Steering Committee for activities to reduce emissions from deforestation, degradation, sustainable management and conservation of forests, REDD+.

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different thematic issues and contexts, oriented towards influencing existing operational and coordination processes among various ministries and related institutions at the national, sub-national and local levels. To respond to the multi-stakeholder exigencies of the REDD+ process that cuts across from the national to the local level, the steering committee also comprises institutions such as the Presidency, the Prime Ministry and other ministries down to traditional rulers (UN-REDD, 2013).

4.4.2 REDD+ Technical Secretariat

REDD+ Technical Secretariat is the technical arm of the REDD+ Steering Committee. It will perform all the technical functions of the REDD+ process from the local to the national level in collaboration with decentralized structures. Furthermore, it will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of REDD+ activities to ensure coherence with sectoral development strategies and policies, and the objectives of REDD+; and to report to the REDD+ Steering Committee. The technical secretariat has as responsibility, to ensure that serious work is needed to reduce deforestation and forest degradation over a defined land area and to enhance understanding of the direct and indirect causes of deforestation and forest degradation in specific areas of Cameroon (Carodenuto & Cashore, 2018). The technical secretariat also works closely with the MINFOF-led FLEGT initiative to promote good forest governance as well and the National Observatory on Climate Change (ONACC) will contribute to the construction of the REDD+ strategy, especially in carbon monitoring-related activities (Tegegne *et al.*, 2014). Unlike the Steering Committee, the functioning of this structure will be under the State budget. However, technical and financial partners may provide support for the realization of certain activities.

4.4.3 Regional REDD+ Committees

The Regional REDD+ Committee will be responsible for monitoring REDD+ activities at the regional level i.e. sub-national programs and projects. It will relay central or national-level decisions to the local level to ensure effective implementation, in addition to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Furthermore, the Regional Committee will act as a bridge between the local level and the REDD+ Technical Secretariat on administrative matters. Specifically, the regional committee's role will be to:

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- Facilitate the implementation of the decisions of the Steering Committee and the REDD+ process at the level of the region concerned;
- Facilitate debate among all stakeholders at the regional level;
- Formulate proposals for the regional or local framework for REDD+ implementation;
- Mediate conflicts that may emerge between stakeholders in the REDD+ process at the regional level (MINEPDED, 2014).

4.4.4 REDD+ Local Operational Unit

This operational unit will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of REDD+ activities at the local level. It will ensure the implementation and evaluation of decisions taken at national and regional levels. The operational unit will be composed of experts who will work under the technical supervision of the Divisional Delegate in charge of the Environment and close collaboration with administrations at divisional and sub-divisional levels, local communities' indigenous peoples and civil society organizations (CSOs).

Stakeholders' inclusion and participation are some of the principles for implementing the national REDD+ strategy. The government aims at implementing an inclusive bottom-up participatory process that ensures the participation of all stakeholders in the conceptualization and implementation of REDD+ projects and programs. To enable the active participation of stakeholders in the process, a communication strategy and consultation plan were necessary (UN-REDD, 2013). Because of the above advantages in stakeholder participation in the REDD+ project, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has been identified as the tool to guide consultations among stakeholders. As a first practical step to implementing the consultation and participation plan, the government in collaboration with international and local NGOs have elaborated and validated national operational guidelines for obtaining FPIC of local communities during the development of REDD+ projects (MINEPDED, 2014). Cameroon's national FPIC document provides practical guidelines on how to obtain FPIC during the development and implementation of a REDD+ project and initiatives. Thus, nine guiding steps to undertake FPIC under the REDD+ process in Cameroon include:

- Establishment of a technical team for FPIC implementation

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- Analysis of the physical, socio-economic and legal context
- Development of an information and communication strategy
- Taking appointments
- Information and sensitization meeting
- Negotiation with stakeholders
- Formalizing agreements between parties
- Developing a road map
- Monitoring verification and evaluation (MINEPDED, 2014).

Furthermore, four principles with clear criteria, indicators and specific guidance for obtaining the different components of FPIC are also outlined below:

- Principle 1: Absence of force, pressure, unwanted obligation, manipulation and intimidation
- Principle 2: Provision of information regarding REDD+ activities sufficiently in advance
- Principle 3: Disclosure of the information about the REDD+ activity
- Principle 4: Community agreement or approval of the proposed REDD+ activity (MINEPDED, 2014).

The planned consultations will be based on principles established at the national and international levels. It should be noted that several national and international texts state that consultation and stakeholder participation are required for a natural resource management project, programme, or policy to be successful.

Figure 14 below represents the organizational structure of the REDD+ process in Cameroon. The structure also features the MINFOF-led FLEGT-VPA initiative and the National Observatory on Climate Change (ONACC) to promote good forest governance and contribute to a developing REDD+ strategy, especially in carbon monitoring-related issues.

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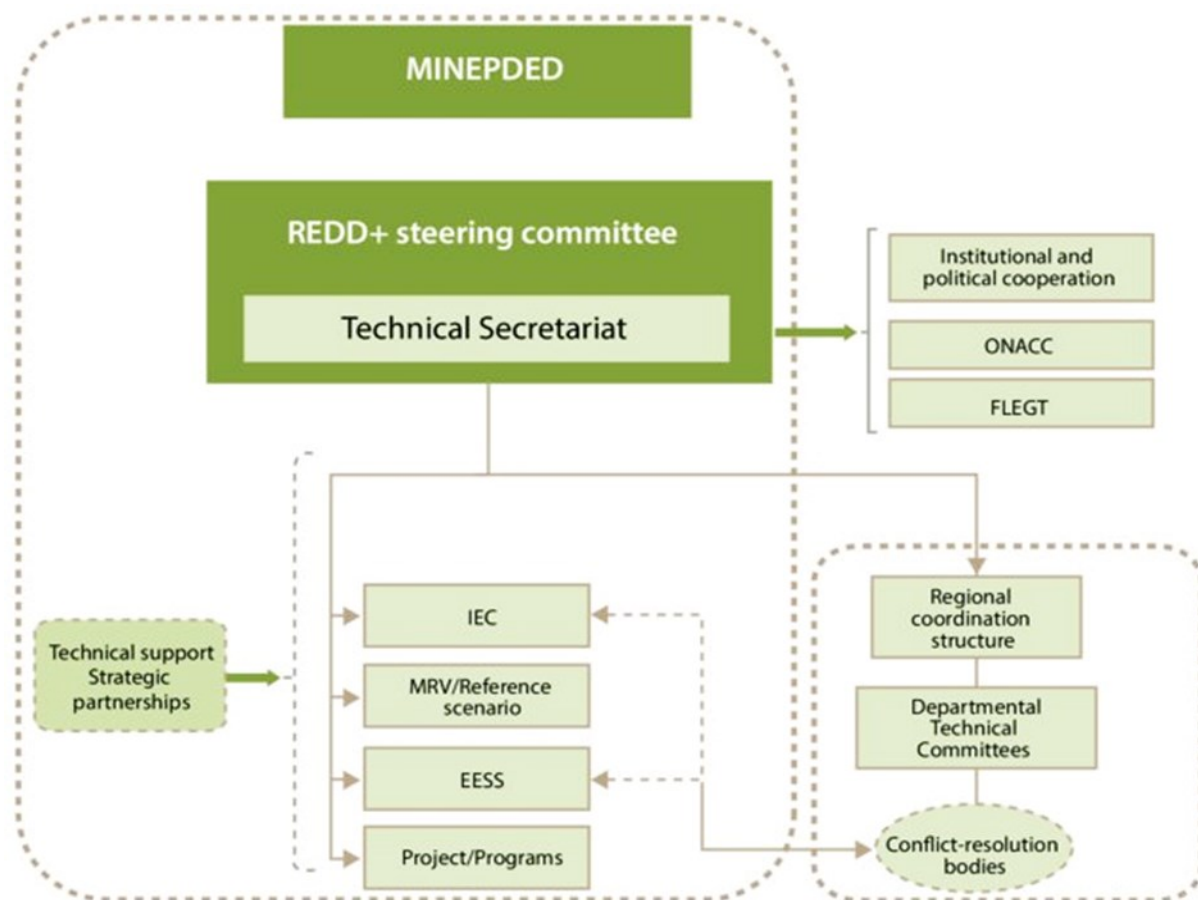


Figure 14. The organizational structure of the Cameroon REDD+ process
Source: (UN-REDD, 2013)

4.5 Analyzing Possible Limitations in Implementing FLEGT VPA and REDD+

There are some REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA activities ongoing in Cameroon. The implementation of these initiatives has been met with some challenges. The analysis of the possible limitation, which could hinder the smooth operations of FLEGT VPA and REDD+, is based on an extensive desktop content analysis of policy documents and my observations. Some contradictions are recorded in the implementation of these two initiatives. The policy or law that deals with forest management and the environment in Cameroon is the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law and the 1996 Framework Law on the Environment. Rapid policy reforms or policy nexus will make a lot of sense when implementing these two initiatives to avoid duplication and conflicts.

Managing or overseeing the implementation of FLEGT-VPA in Cameroon led to the creation of three deliberative bodies. The Joint Monitoring Committee” (JMC) which composed of relevant government bodies, parliament, civil society, the private sector,

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the EU, and local communities. The National Monitoring Committee (NMC) is the decision-making body with representatives from the government, private sector and civil society, and the bilateral Joint Implementation Council which was co-chaired by the EU and the Ministry of Forestry. All the above compositions gave substance to the FLEGT-VPA process because of its broad-based multi-stakeholder participation. The government organized a workshop in 2016 geared towards reforming and amending the 1994 Forestry Law. A draft revised Forest Code had been submitted in 2016 to the Prime Ministry, however, follow-up from the workshop is still unknown to date. With no recent review studies on illegal logging activities by the government, information on illegal logging activities is documented by civil society organizations as part of their independent monitoring activities. The introduction of independent observers has some setbacks with the government (MINFOF) which refuses to accept the reports from independent observers. Further reports reveal that most of the illegal activities involve top government officials (CIDT, 2018), that why there is a conflict with independent observers.

The Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) proposed by the EU was to eliminate timber and wood products destined for the EU's market and the domestic market. The 1994 Forestry Law carries no provision governing the informal sector. Thus, the domestic timber market until the present date remains illegal as per the 1994 Forestry Law. The domestic timber market needs reforms to fit well into the implementation of the FLEGT-VPA process. Furthermore, Ministerial Order No.002 of 7 February 2013 provides the entry into force of the SIGIF (Computerized Forest Information System) to manage imported and transit timber in the supply chain. This system is still suffering from an administrative bottleneck. Controls and inspections are taking place along the road checkpoints, but their consistency remains irregular. Cases of suspected illegally harvested domestic timber are disguised as transit timber from the Republic of Congo. Furthermore, there is currently no Independent Observer actively checking the legality of logging operations, or an independent auditor checking the progress of the VPA (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Investigation in the field reveals that not a single logging permit complies with the criteria stipulated in the VPA legality grid or complies fully with the forestry law in the country (Greenpeace, 2015). Several reasons for the failing SIGIF system are the lack of consensus among the different stakeholders as to what constitutes legal timber and the lack of good project steering (Mbatu, 2020).

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Timber trade divergence with other countries could be one of the limitations in the implementation of FLEGT-VPA and REDD+. Negotiations between Cameroon and the EU on timber export have affected trade negatively in favour of China. Timber import to China from VPA-engaged countries increased significantly between 2010 and 2019, by 155% and 106% in volume and value respectively (European Commission, 2021). The reason for this trade divergence to China is due to the absence of legality measures or less stringent rules concerning timber harvested or from a legal source. Within the last ten years, there has been a steady decline in wood exports to Europe in terms of both volume and value. Even though tropical exports to the EU were dropping by 35% between 2011 and 2019, exports to Asia from Cameroon increased in that same period by 87% (European Commission, 2021). While export to Europe is declining, that of the Asia and Africa sub-region was increasing. China has consolidated its position as a dominant market for tropical timber export. Between 2009 and 2014, some 2,586,282m³ of forest products were exported from Cameroon to China. Logs-sawn timber and others accounted for about 85% of these products on average per year. From 2007 to 2016, China imported 4,972,746m³, 702,976m³ of sawn wood and 13,936m³ of veneer from Cameroon (Mayers *et al.*, 2019). Another investigation reveals that Compagnie de Commerce et de Transport (CCT) a European company that historically supplied the European market with sawn wood products is now reportedly Cameroon's main exporter of sawn wood to China, again trading on illegally harvested wood (Forest Trends, 2021).

Another hindrance to the FLEGT-VPA implementation is the issue of timber from conversion forests. In other words, it is timber originating from land conversion. In Cameroon, no reference is given to such timber. Only Indonesia possesses a conversion permit for forest clearance. Thus, the issue of forest conversion is now a new challenge to be addressed by FLEGT-VPA. Conversion of timber from natural forests to commercial concessions is a source of timber in many countries. The legality of such timber remains questionable, especially its implications for the implementation of the VPA with the EU. Considering the results of the surveys carried out by the Regional Delegation of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), of the South-West region concerning the Cameroon subsidiary of the American firm Herakles Farm (SGSOC). SGSOC Company received authorization to clear 57,000 cubic meters of commercial value, it was estimated that about 1.6 million meter³ of timber volume of

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commercial value would emerge from this process of forest conversion (Greenpeace, 2015). The company got involved in illegal sales of timber within and out of Cameroon. This adds up to the level of uncertainty in the various supply chains. Even though timber from land conversion is increasingly significant as one of the main supply sources of timber in Cameroon, no formal response has been made by the government to address the above problem.

The issues of forest tenure and rights in Cameroon could hinder the smooth implementation of REDD+ projects in a community forest based on the current national laws governing forests or natural resource management. Community forestry has been identified as a core strategy or interesting option for the implementation of the REDD+ initiative (Enow *et al.*, 2021). Community forestry can credibly reduce carbon emissions in the fight against climate change, and at the same time improve the well-being of the poor and vulnerable people in society. Some social benefits could be gained with the implementation of CFM since its effects on livelihood and poverty reduction are noticeable in countries such as Nepal, Tanzania, and Indonesia. Nepal reported a 37% reduction in deforestation and a 4.3% reduction in poverty because of community forestry (Enow *et al.*, 2021). The government showed a strong political will toward REDD+ implementation by establishing a formal framework to manage the REDD+ readiness process by Decree No. 103/CAB/PM of 13 June 2012 creating the REDD+ Steering Committee. The study also reveals substantial progress in the institutional arrangement for monitoring REDD+ activities in the country. A National Task Force for Monitoring Reporting and Verification of Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation has been created. Nevertheless, the opportunity and challenges in integrating the two concepts of REDD+ and community forestry to achieve their objectives require careful analysis, taking into consideration the tenure system of the country. Thus, to ensure community forests achieve their objectives under the REDD+ initiative, some actions or reforms in the forestry law are needed to make clarity, especially with the tenure system, carbon rights, and the establishment of a benefit-sharing mechanism at different levels, which will clarify the existing discrepancy between tenure and the right to carbon. For example, if REDD+ activities are ongoing in a state or communal forest, the resource is owned by the state as provided by the

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1994 Forestry Law⁴⁰, and the natural resources found within a private forest are owned by the individual as defined under section 39(1) of the 1994 Forestry Law as read with the 1974 Land Tenure Ordinance⁴¹. Given this discrepancy, reforms geared toward REDD+ policy in Cameroon must address this issue taking into consideration the advantages REDD+ will bring to the country concerning carbon credits. Any uncertainty concerning ownership and the right to benefit from carbon credits will pose a threat to those whose rights have not been clarified (Enow *et al.*, 2021). The current review reveals that the government is not willing to transfer management responsibility to the community 100%.

4.6 Possibility for Synergy between REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA

In this section, emphasis will be focused on forest policy and programs in Cameroon to get inside how REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA are currently coordinated to bring about improved governance in the forestry sector. Cameroon is currently participating in these two global initiatives for improving forest governance and trade (VPA), which is part of the FLEGT Action Plan, and the REDD+ initiatives. The principal objectives of the FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ initiatives are to provide a political and financial framework to bring about improved forest governance. There is a link between the two initiatives, which makes them competitive, and a strong potential link that could help them achieve their objectives is visible and needs to be developed. However, in reality, the initiatives risk reinforcing the status quo and worsening the position of forest-dependent communities (Broekhoven *et al.*, 2014). FLEGT-VPA even though in an advanced stage, can certainly build on new experiences from REDD+ still under development. These two initiatives work on different aspects of the same challenge of reducing deforestation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and other global initiatives including achieving countries' NDCs or reducing greenhouse gases (FAO, 2018). As the FLEGT process is well advanced in Cameroon, its achievements can be used to support the successful implementation of REDD+, thereby promoting improved forest governance and law enforcement, addressing some drivers of forest degradation and establishing strong and effective multi-stakeholder processes (ProForest, 2014).

⁴⁰ Article 32(3) of the 1994 Forestry Law states that forest products of all kinds resulting from the exploitation of council forest shall be the sole property of the council concern.

⁴¹ Ordinance No. 74-1 of 6 July 1974 to establish rules governing land tenure and Ordinance No. 74-2 of 6 July 1974 to establish rules governing state lands.

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Improved forest governance is key to addressing deforestation and forest degradation. This is because it reinforces inclusive decision-making and transparency in the forestry sector, and promotes the rule of law. FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ processes are bottom-up approaches that focus on specific issues on land-use governance or land-use planning, which strengthens national ownership. The synergy between the two initiatives can work well to achieve their objectives.

The REDD+ process should reinforce some key aspects of FLEGT-VPA such as increasing transparency and accountability for improving forest governance. For instance, the national monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems being developed for REDD+ should align with the VPA's Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) and Independent Monitoring (IM) system (Bekoe & Ozinga, 2014). This means it will make sense to set up only one system for monitoring and verifying key aspects of the forest sector, which meets the requirements of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA. This will require reforms in some aspects such as access rights, benefit rights and participation in forests policy-making and implementation.

There has been a positive response to this issue of synergy between REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA. For example, the European Council has stressed the prioritization of activities with the FLEGT member countries by urging members to develop a detailed and coordinated work plan that reprioritizes current areas of activities, gives clarity on objectives, establishes milestones to track progress, and facilitates monitoring, while avoiding duplications of efforts (European Commission, 2019). The commission went further to caution states to focus on tackling the challenges of deforestation and illegal logging. Thus, giving their support to countries whose focus is aligned with REDD+ efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (ibids).

Despite the above differences in their foundation and the different ministries involved in the implementation in the Cameroonian context, running independently from each other, the two initiatives share the objectives of improving forest sector governance. This led to the two initiatives affecting each other positively in the domain of poverty alleviation and livelihood improvement. The initiatives are in a unique position to work

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together to strengthen governance in the forestry sector. They both address the legal, regulatory, and institutional measures necessary to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, the two initiatives share many challenges as well on issues concerning land tenure and customary rights. The FLEGT Action Plan identifies strengthening tenure rights as a part of the key policy tool. It was also a commitment to the government to investigate the problem of secure tenure rights during the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). Unfortunately, REDD+ policy documents in Cameroon do not consider tenure as a crucial issue, though the respect of property rights in the context of customary law and community rights was mentioned (Sirviö, 2016). This situation gives a good reason for synergy between the two initiatives. Both initiatives stress the need for tenure reforms. Any reforms concerning tenure in the VPA should be re-enforced to apply also to REDD+.

Furthermore, since REDD+ has the advantage of more funding to the sector than the VPA, the release of funding for REDD+ by donors could be made contingent on newly defined governance targets (Bekoe & Ozinga, 2014). In Cameroon, funding for REDD+ readiness has built capacity and institutions to address deforestation and forest degradation, but the challenges remain in moving from readiness to implementation. Success towards these efforts requires strong integration with other economic development sectors. Presently, the opportunities of REDD+ remain largely untapped with the need to redirect existing investment to more sustainable uses still needing to be identified (EU FLEGT Facility, 2018).

Another possibility or potential for synergy between the initiatives proves visible in their operations or activities carried out. Given the functional linkage of the ultimate goals of the two initiatives, both at the national and international levels, the VPA could serve as a policy model for the design of the national REDD+ strategy (Ochieng *et al.*, 2013). They all have a strong focus on stakeholder engagement, particularly the FLEGT-VPA with a very effective stakeholder engagement process in the context of legislative review. Participation and engagement of local communities including indigenous people is an important factor in the Cameroonian VPA and REDD+. The development of the VPA legality definition is an excellent opportunity for potential synergy between FLEGT-VPA and REDD+. A multi-stakeholder process was involved with the possibility to identify gaps, inconsistencies and overlaps for legislative reforms. The Community

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and Forest Platform (CFP) initiated the multi-stakeholder participatory process for FLEGT-VPA, with a coalition of civil society organizations. This is another good opportunity for REDD+ and FLEGT to join efforts to adopt a common methodology known as “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” (FPIC). FPIC are guidelines to follow when preparing to undertake any REDD+ activities in a community, ensuring that people’s rights are respected when undertaking projects related to reducing emissions and carbon stock enhancement.

Concerning the approaches of FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ initiatives, to ensure consistency and avoid contradictions from a substantive legal standpoint, coordination of work under the two initiatives could add value to the development of new laws by ensuring consideration of multi-dimensional and cross-sectorial aspects. Laws and regulations reviewed and developed under FLEGT-VPA can be used to address other issues of relevance to REDD+, and vice versa. New regulations can, therefore, be developed with the objectives of both initiatives, rather than for the initiatives to be operating separately.

Conclusively, Cameroon must learn from the situations in other countries where there is advanced synergy and collaboration between REDD+ FLEGT-VPA initiatives. For example, in Colombia REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA have supported the development of a timber traceability system and a community forestry program through the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS). Again, in Ivory Coast, the REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA programs have jointly supported the ministry of Water and Forests (MINEF) in implementing a Forest Code setting out laws and regulations that govern forestry in the country (FAO, 2018).

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART ONE

5.1 Introduction to Chapter

Since the signing of the VPA in 2010, Cameroon has committed, along with its European partners, to implement this bilateral trade agreement, which aims to combat illegal logging exploitation of timber and improve governance within the forestry sector. The conception of the EU's effort as part of a multifaceted and global program to address illegal logging for over ten years now compels me to examine the evidence for what the existing FLEGT-VPA has achieved in the Cameroonian context. The general assumption underlying the FLEGT Action Plan and the VPA, in particular, is that improvement in governance will lead to improvement in sustainable forest management and rural livelihoods in producer countries. Improvement in governance is understood as greater transparency, stronger accountability, clearer legal frameworks for forest management, more equitable access to forest resources, more effective environmental protection, appropriate taxes and royalties for the timber harvesting trade, and stronger law enforcement (FLEGT-VPA Cameroon, 2012). The figure below (Figure 15) represents a summary of support for the FLEGT-VPA initiatives in Cameroon. The investment covers a broad spectrum of activities ranging from TLAS, monitoring, information sharing, and transparency and policy reforms.

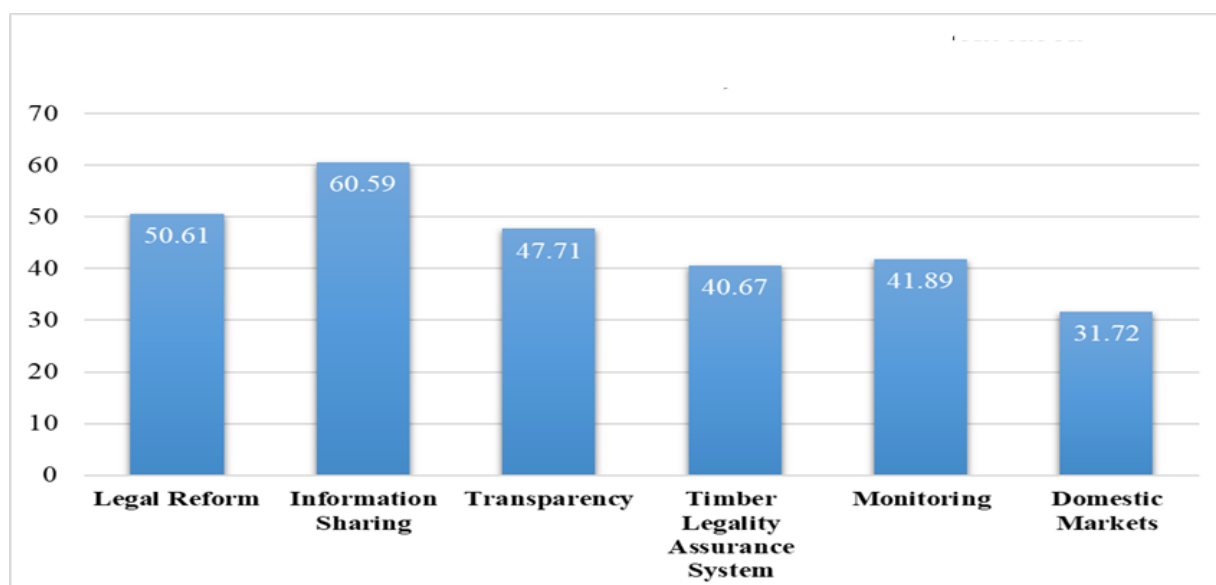


Figure 15. Summary of support for FLEGT-VPA initiative in Cameroon
Source: (European Parliament, 2017)

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Over ten years after the signing of the EU and Cameroon FLEGT-VPA, Cameroon is still in the implementation phase, or the system development stage. The assessment will be based on the EU and Cameroon FLEGT-VPA package signed, and Cameroon's compliance to meet its obligations and commitments to put in place a functional operating system to deal with timber illegality. Issues relating to progress or roadblocks hindering the EU and Cameroon FLEGT license scheme will be examined. The results from the assessment will give us an inside of the actual situation on the ground regarding the EU and Cameroon FLEGT-VPA. Reports on any noticeable change or contributions to change were based on face-to-face exchange and interviews, and individual perceptions with help from desk review. The samples for the interview were selected based on their relations and the role-played during the FLEGT-VPA process in Cameroon.

5.2 Assessment of Transparency/Access to Information and Corruption in EU-VPA

Transparency is the ability of citizens to access, understand and monitor processes, institutions and information (Carodenuto, 2019). Lack of transparency in the forest sector in many countries is among the governance challenges that enable illegal logging to flourish (EU-FLEGT FACILITY, 2016). The ratification of the EU and Cameroon VPA is a breakthrough because it introduces a new binding obligation to the government concerning transparency and the publication of information. The EU therefore, makes it a commitment to Cameroon's authorities to make information available for public scrutiny to improve transparency and accountability. Disclosure of information strengthens governance in the forest sector and enables the implementation of the VPA to be monitored (EU-FLEGT FACILITY, 2016). In addition to the Agreement, Cameroon will make available to the public all legislation and information confirming compliance described in the legality definition, forest production, concession contract, allocation information, harvesting, processing and management documents and data, financial revenue data, export information, verification and control reports and processes, audits, and the institutional framework of the forestry sector (European Commission and Cameroon, 2010).

In Annex XI, article 19 of the agreement between the EU and Cameroon articulates the importance of transparency and urges the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to

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execute its duties transparently and to make sure associated information and results are accessible to the public. Furthermore, article 21 of the VPA gave MINFOF the responsibility to publish information and to guarantee the transparent functioning of the FLEGT licensing scheme, monitoring the timber supply chain to ensure that all legal requirements concerning timber legality have been met. The range of information includes information on timber production, allocation of titles, forest management, taxation, audits of the FLEGT system and the amount of FLEGT licenses that were issued or rejected (Carodenuto, 2019). All the information mentioned above is supposed to be constantly available online. The EU and Cameroon further agree to use appropriate communication mechanisms such as the internet, workshops, and written and audiovisual media, with publications to make information available (Annex VII).

Nevertheless, with the signing of the FLEGT-VPA, Cameroon has made improvements in recent years towards the publication of a range of information about timber production, allocation of titles, management, taxation and financial transactions, as a commitment to the agreement. The government went further to create an operational website dedicated to the publication of the listed information in Annex VII (<http://apvcameroun.cm/>, www.minfof.cm/). World Resource Institute (WRI) created an online timber portal to access information on timber legality in Cameroon. A similar platform has been created also by the Center for Environment and Development (CED) to provide information on land use and forest conservation, also reporting cases of illegalities. Publication of information on the VPA site started on a good footing and was rated as satisfactory. An assessment of the VPA information disclosure saw an increase from 34% in 2015 to 72% in 2018 (Carodenuto, 2019). The problem now is for the administration to take responsibility for publishing information online and with regular updates on the website. Another review reveals that about 80% of the information listed in Annex 7 of the agreement is now available online (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). Regrettably, the stability of the website is still concerning to ensure permanent access to documents and information. The information available on the website lacks consistency and some are incomplete, outdated or missing, because of the lack of consistency and up-to-date public information, many actors continue to rely on informal channels to get access to information. Furthermore, the website suffers from crashes most often (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The government is still to come to terms with the

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concept of transparency. No information concerning public awareness is found on the website of VPA. The government published a list of the titles granted, without providing information on the processes or criteria used to grant the titles. Independent verification is still very challenging. A broader approach to transparency is necessary if the VPA is to bring accountability to the forestry sector in the country. Generally, significant efforts have gone into increasing transparency, but corruption remains a concern.

In addition to the commitment taken concerning transparency, the EU urges Cameroon to reduce corruption in the forestry sector. Corruption is the misuse of entrusted powers for private gains (Transparency International, 2010), which has undermined the rule of law and threatened even treaties including the VPA. It can occur in both private and public sectors and may involve actions that are designed to provide benefits for others close to the perpetrators, such as family and political elites. Alemagi and Kozak, 2010 reported that collusive and non-collusive forms of corruption could cripple the socio-political, economic, and moral integrity of a country (Alemagi & Kozak, 2010). While non-collusive corruption refers to a corruption practice in which the government demands a bribe for the provision of service (such as a logging permit), collusive corruption is defined as a situation where government officials and the private sector conspire to deprive the government of its revenues (Alemagi & Kozak, 2010). The forestry sector of Cameroon has been noted to suffer from corrupt practices and any attempts to reform the law are likely to be contested by MINFOF officials who supplement their income with bribes (Tropenbos International, 2012). The situation is complicated because most of the perpetrators of the acts are workers in the forestry sector of the government (MINFOF officials). There is also evidence that Chinese timber companies found such malpractices with government officials concerning informal payments and misappropriation of forestry-related taxes for example, the allocations of small logging permits (*Vente de coupe*) are based on personal relationships, and not merits (Greenpeace, 2015). According to studies by Greenpeace, Herakles Farms, a multinational in Cameroon, used a front company called Uniprovince to export illegally collected timber to China. Furthermore, the company has been clearing 70,000 hectares of forest land in Cameroon's southwestern region, which it obtained through a controversial presidential decree issued in 2009. The study also mentioned that China is a quick and easy destination for illegal Cameroonian timber, with a large amount of timber from these illegal sources

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destined for China at Douala seaport (Greenpeace, 2015). A survey on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in the forestry and wildlife sectors reveals a deteriorated situation of dishonesty since 2017. The assessment in the 2017 perception index, shows that from the year 2010 to 2014, corruption drops from 7.27/10 to 5.13/10. Unfortunately, from 2015 to 2017 witnessed an increase in corrupt activities from a 5.78/10 index score to 7.25/10 (FODER, 2018). According to the CPI reported by Transparency International, on a scale of 0-100, where 0 indicates highly corrupt and 100 indicates highly clean. Cameroon has a corruption index of 27, meaning it has very high levels of corruption. It ranked 144 out of 177 countries assessed (Transparency International EU, 2021). The CPI ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. A country's rank is an indication of its position relative to countries in the index.

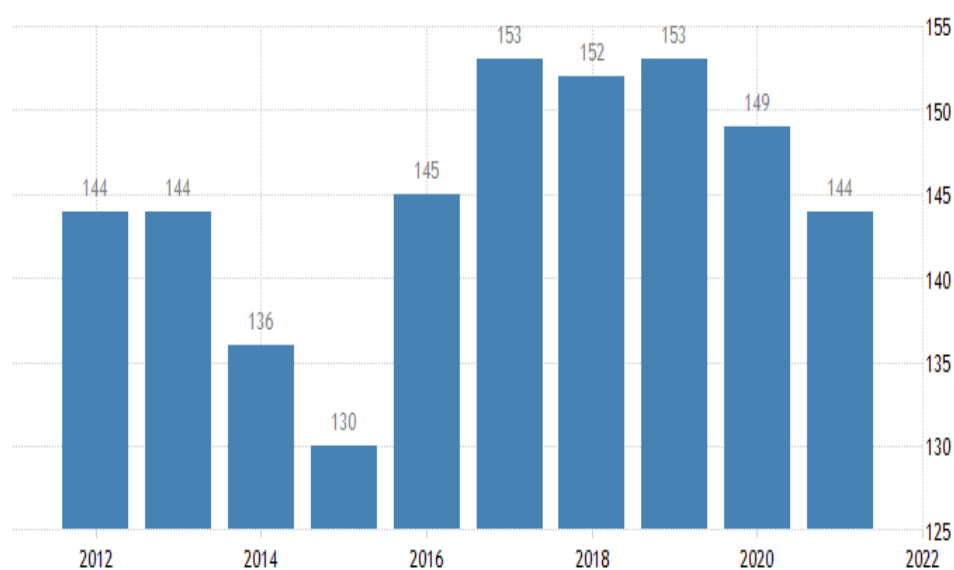


Figure 16. Cameroon's corruption ranking 2021
Source: (Transparency International EU, 2021)

In line with the above reports on corruption and malpractices, the government opted to reverse these trends of corrupt practices and brought in the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC), to check on the illegal activities of MINFOF. Before establishing CONAC, the penal code under law No. 67-LF-1 of 12 June 1967 identified and punished several forms of corruption, and bribery. Corruption is punishable by a prison term in the country, but enforcement remains very weak with state officials

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allegedly collecting more than 46 million euros in bribes per year from illegal logging practices (Forest Trends, 2021). The government already put in place procedures for financial and management audits in MINFOF targeting specific issues. The government is now engaged in the training of community volunteers who with the use of a smartphone could take to take images of freshly cut stumps of timber and relay the information to the forest authorities. Community volunteers can make toll-free calls to report suspicious activities, not just to the police and forestry ministry and CONAC. The government is now employing the help of independent forest monitors to carry out field inspections. The independent monitors earned some credit for exposing some illegal activities, but after a while, their activities became questionable (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Instead of arresting illegal practices, the monitor team were involved in fraud and bribery concerning fines and fake logging documents. Very few companies receive sanctions based on reports by independent observers (Greenpeace, 2015). In 2016, the government suspended the concessions of 23 logging companies and licenses of four logging companies because they were guilty of unauthorized logging, fraudulent use of documents, and failure to comply with contractual obligations and operational standards. All of the above sanctions were on paper while the companies continued with their activities freely (Adams, 2020).

Reports from transparency international reveal high perception scores regarding corruption in Cameroon and despite all the activities put in place to promote good governance and fight corruption; malpractices still occur in the country (Transparency International EU, 2021). This might suggest clearly that the anti-corruption initiative could be inadequate or ineffective.

5.3 Assessment of Cameroon's Land Tenure and Access Rights

Uncertainty over land ownership, rights and access to natural resources is one of the greatest challenges faced by forest dwellers in Cameroon. This precarious, inequitable, and insecure nature of current land tenure systems in Cameroon has left communities marginalised from their rights to forest resources, and also from the decision-making process regarding the use of natural resources. Land and forest tenure laws in Cameroon create confusion regarding land ownership and tenure rights. For example, Section 7 Part 1 of the 1994 Forestry Law, provides that the state, local councils, village communities and private individuals may exercise on their forests and

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aquacultural establishments all the rights that result from the ownership, subject to restrictions laid down in the regulations governing land tenure and state lands and by this law. The above situation creates complexities over land ownership and rights to natural resources resulting in no motivation by forest dwellers or communities managing community forests to feel marginalised. Tenure rights have a great impact affecting the ability and motivation of indigenous people and local communities to manage natural resources sustainably. It is like an incentive structure not only to provide access and use rights but also to address ownership rights (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The country inherited a myriad of legacy institutions that contributed to shaping the current regime (Njoh, 2013).

The EU and Cameroon FLEGT VPA identifies the above discrepancy and tries to strengthen tenure rights as a part of the key policy tool under Annex VIII⁴². The EU makes it an obligation to the government to make reforms concerning its land and forest tenure to transfer power and ownership to the forest-dependent communities and to use the forests as a means for livelihood improvement via the sales of non-timber forest products. In addition, the EU and Cameroon VPA mention benefit-sharing mechanisms as part of their social obligation. Regrettably, the development of a benefit-sharing mechanism under the VPA is still weak and no further discussion in this regard has been initiated (Enow *et al.*, 2021). Currently, the forests and tenure laws are still under revision. Without any revision or reforms on the Forestry Law and other aspects of the legal framework as stipulated in the EU and Cameroon, VPA will be challenging to control the domestic markets and trace timber of legal origin within this framework.

5.4 Assessment of Stakeholder Participation in the FLEGT-VPA Process

Participation in governance refers to citizens' rights and opportunities to be informed about, consult on, and participate in policymaking. Citizens can push for and maintain accountability through participation mechanisms (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Natural resource managers are frequently faced with difficult decisions, many of which involve a diverse set of stakeholders, competing objectives, multiple management options, and

⁴² Annex VIII of the EU and Cameroon FLEGT VPA states that there should be a clear delineation of areas where forest resource rights have been allocated and the holders of those rights have been identified. Annex VIII also states, "Respect for parties' legal tenure or rights of use of land resources that may be affected by timber harvesting rights, where such other rights exist".

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uncertainty about the outcome, thus, participatory decision-making has emerged as an effective method for dealing with such issues (Crawford *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, stakeholders in natural resource management decisions are also multifaceted individuals and members of communities, they bring to public participation processes complex histories, experiences, values, aspirations, and relationships. Multiple issues can arise when these processes fail to take this social context into account, including a perceived lack of process trustworthiness, a perceived focus on issues that appear immaterial or irrelevant, a failure to equitably represent and take account of diverse voices, and a failure to engage participants in productive dialogue (Cumming, Campbell, & Norwood *et al.*, 2022). Stakeholders' Participation is emphasized for the reasons of democratic necessity, management legitimacy, sharing knowledge, understanding, transparency and accountability (Glucker *et al.*, 2013.).

The major impact of the Cameroon VPA process is seen as the increased and growing participation of civil society organizations, the private sector, and communities in forest governance. Although participation is now regarded as a key component of good governance, there was very little participatory process in forest governance before the start of the VPA negotiations in 2007, and it was uncommon to directly involve stakeholders outside the administration (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The EU realized that without inclusive multi-stakeholder processes, the VPA could lack credibility. Before the signing of the EU and Cameroon VPA, the public participation process especially in natural resource management in Cameroon was considered very weak without active participation or consultation processes (Adams, 2020). By signing the VPA, the government of Cameroon has committed to strengthening the participation of all stakeholders, especially forest-dependent communities and civil society organizations. Therefore, broad stakeholder participation in the VPA process is important. Article 16 and Annex III-B of the EU/Cameroon VPA lay down commitments to establish a participation mechanism that will guarantee key stakeholders' involvement in the monitoring and implementation of the VPA. The following stakeholders took part during the EU and Cameroon VPA negotiations as prescribed under Annex VIII⁴³ of the agreement. They include:

- The representatives of the administrations involved,

⁴³ Annex III states that Indigenous Peoples and communities will be regularly consulted on the implementation of the VPA via the NMC.

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- Members of Parliament,
- The representatives of the forestry communes,
- The representative of the civil society organizations
- The representatives of the private forestry and timber sector.

The FLEGT-VPA multi-stakeholder platform as mentioned earlier was unprecedented. The dialogue between the European Commission and Cameroon was critical in allowing the government to present proposals during the negotiations that were well grounded in the realities and challenges faced by the forest sector and received widespread support from stakeholders (European Commission and Cameroon, 2010). Reacting to article 16⁴⁴ of the EU and Cameroon FLEGT-VPA, the government has engaged in capacity building of government officials and civil society concerning public participation with positive results recorded especially during the negotiation phase of the FLEGT-VPA process. Furthermore, the government acted positively again with the creation of a National Monitoring Committee (NMC) by Decree No. 126/CAB/PM of 10 September 2012. The only problem with this decree creating the NMC is the absence of methodological guidelines concerning community representation. The roles and responsibilities of community representatives in decision-making have been neglected (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The question now is who should represent a community or make the voices of the community heard in the area of decision-making.

Studies reveal that stakeholder participation is improving with the creation of a multi-stakeholder negotiation board⁴⁵ managed by MINFOF. Huge improvements are also recorded in terms of participation and inclusiveness in the VPA process in Cameroon with the establishment of a civil society platform gathering 28 Cameroonian NGOs with support from external donors such as Forest and the European Union Resource Network (FERN)⁴⁶. Unfortunately, local communities, indigenous peoples and small-

⁴⁴ Cameroon shall regularly consult Cameroon stakeholders on the implementation of this Agreement, within a National Monitoring Committee or through other consultative platforms, taking into account its legislation on the forest and fauna scheme and all the laws and regulations in force governing access to information, public participation and access to justice on environmental matters.

⁴⁵ The multi-stakeholder negotiation board is to ensure representation by all relevant stakeholders during the process. The stakeholders are public administration, parliament, private sector, donors and partners and civil society. This board was a good step in the right direction because of mistrust relationship that existed between public administration and civil society in Cameroon.

⁴⁶ Fern is a non-governmental organization created to keep track of the European Union's involvement in forests and coordinate NGO activities at the EU level. Its work centers on forests, forest peoples' rights, and the issues

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scale chainsaw operators and traders did not directly participate in the meetings, despite being important concerning the topic of legality in Cameroon's forestry sector (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). They rely on information feedback from representatives who most often do not report feedback on decisions arrived at in meetings. In general, the VPA process has significantly contributed to developing a multi-stakeholder structure in Cameroon with improved participation of state and non-state forest sector stakeholders' consultation in decision-making regarding natural resource management.

5.5 Assessment of the Legality Verification Procedures

The definition of the legality of commercial timber is based on the knowledge and application of the laws and regulations in force in Cameroon and in compliance with the international legal instruments duly ratified by Cameroon in the forest, commercial, environmental, social and human rights field (European Commission, 2003). The application of which is necessary to guarantee the viability of forest management by the producing and exporting enterprise, its suppliers and subcontractors, in the name of the owner of the forest (the state, the local government district, a private owner or a community (European Commission, 2003).

Annex III of the EU-Cameroon VPA outlines the control of the supply chain to track timber from the forest to the point of exit or export. Thus, the timber legality assurance system should be designed to verify the legality of timber from the forest through the entire supply chain to the point of export. Article 9 requires the establishment of a timber legality verification system and Annex II-B give details of the system for verifying the legality of wood products. Cameroon was obliged to set up a system to verify timber known as the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) as per Article 9⁴⁷ of the agreement. The EU and Cameroon FLEGT-VPA start by defining the term legal timber⁴⁸. Before entering the VPA, MINFOF and Forest Revenue Security Program

that affects them, such as trade and investment, climate change, illegal logging and deforestation and forest governance.

⁴⁷ Article 9 of the EU and Cameroon VPA states that Cameroon shall establish a system for verifying that timber and derived products have been produced or acquired legally with the operation components (TLAS). This system will also involve a web-based information management and traceability system in French known as SIGIF II to assist in verifying the chain of custody (COCs) of timber.

⁴⁸ Annex II of the EU and Cameroon VPA defines legal timber as any timber which has been verified or controlled as originating or coming from one or more production or acquisition processes that meets all the statutory and regulatory provisions in force in Cameroon applicable to the forest sector shall be deemed to be legal timber.

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(PSRF) with the help of the Computerized Forest Information Management System (SIGIF in French) ensure that all outgoing timber has a legal source, with all related taxes paid. The system was well designed but was rendered inefficient by corruption and overlaps with other departments within the Ministry of Taxation (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Corruption is considered an issue hindering the progress in the implementation of the TLAS (UNEP-WCMC, 2020). The SIGIF system is reported as very slow, unreliable, and not transparent. For example, the timber domestic market, which was planned to be included in the TLAS, has not been integrated into the system (Atyi, 2018). Thus, several logging operators have developed their due diligence tracking system to enable their customers to trace their products along the supply chain (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). There are cases of mismatch between the legality standards and the principles and procedures for verification of compliance with those standards. For example, there is a description of legality concerning human rights, but not replicated in the TLAS (FPP, 2016). Furthermore, the verification process relies on the government or company like the forest stewardship council (FSC) that make sure the procedures are followed.

Recent reviews reveal that TLAS have reached a deadlock and is still not operational, over ten years after the signing of the VPA (UNEP-WCMC, 2020). Full implementation of the system has been hindered by disagreement between the EU and the government of Cameroon on the design of the second-generation Forest Information Management System (SIGIF II), poor internet connections, unreliable electricity supply in many areas in the country, increasing rate of corruption and lack of reconciliation by field controls and the timber tracking system (FAO, 2022). The above difficulties in setting up TLAS and SIGIF II are an indicator of the slow progress of the FLEGT Action Plan in Cameroon. The current legality grid set out in the VPA is difficult to implement because it is not compatible with the forest concession model, which needs to be reformed or revised to align with the FLEGT-VPA model relating to forest management and traceability verification. After all, the forest concessions cannot provide the complete set of documents requested to be included in the TLAS (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Until the FLEGT legality grids on which the TLAS operates are revised, everything else is blocked, including FLEGT (FAO, 2022).

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Currently, MINFOF is issuing a certificate of legality⁴⁹ under Cameroon law to show that their activities concerning the timber trade take into consideration the national laws. MINFOF claims to have issued 18 certificates of legality to 16 operators in their timber processing units. The same with MINEPDED claim to have awarded 21 compliance certificates concerning meeting environmental obligations (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). All the above moves by the government are still very questionable. MINFOF compliance check cannot serve as a FLEGT license because of a lack of trust in the timber supply chain. Since the compliance system is not as robust as the FLEGT system, many producers may aim for a private rather than FLEGT certification.

There is a positive attitude toward environmental certification, especially the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which is the standard officially recognized in Cameroon as evidenced by the involvement of some timber companies involved in the certification process (FIP, 2017). The use of a label or logo provides consumers with credible guarantees that products come from environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable forest management (Diangha & Wiegler, 2014). The FSC certification granted by Bureau Veritas (BV) is serving presently as the EU's verification of legal harvesting since the TLAS is not operational to issue the FLEGT license. The FSC certification has relieved the EU importing companies who can now use the FSC as evidence of legal sourcing, thus in line with the due diligence obligation required by the EUTR. Even though the FSC is not an approved FLEGT license, in practice is a reliable tool for verifying legality with a high possibility of alignment with FLEGT-VPA (FSC Briefing, 2016).

Another issue arises about the traceability of transboundary timber. These are timber in transit passing through the Cameroon port for export. For example, timber from other CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States) land lock countries, especially Chad, Congo and the Central African Republic (European Commission and Cameroon, 2010). These countries operate different national traceability systems that are not compatible with that of Cameroon. However, the

⁴⁹ Certificate of legality is one of the requirements needed for a FLEGT licences to be issued, but do not constitute proof of legality because they do not attest to the legality of the supply chain for timber or related products. Most of the certificates are accorded to processing companies. This is just to certify that operations on their sites are legal.

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issues relating to transit timber were resolved, and a decision was arrived at acknowledging that timber in transit will not require a FLEGT license in Cameroon.

5.6 Assessment of Law Enforcement and Compliance

In this section, the assessment is based on the effectiveness of the forestry laws operating in Cameroon, to see if there is any noticeable change in the laws to assist FLEGT-VPA in achieving its objectives. Cameroon's governance institutions have historically been inefficient and weak. Significant progress has been made in recent years towards sustainable forest management, with forest logging concessions managed following an approved management plan (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, several logging companies selling to EU markets have voluntarily applied for FSC certification. Regrettably, in the last decade, the country has also seen a significant decrease in the number of registered forest offences in large-scale logging concessions (ibids). The EU had requested the government to revise certain aspects of the 1994 Forestry Law which they consider to be a roadblock to the FLEGT-VPA implementation. Thus, government administration should have the capacity to enforce and assess the legal compliance of operators, since the recent review regarding enforcement and compliance was not satisfactory (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). MINFOF reacted positively to this regard and employed forest guides to control forest activities. The guides received training on a variety of issues geared towards good governance and on the management of the VPA website. This gesture was short leaved because of a lack of resources to maintain the law enforcement staff, thereby working towards improving the situation with the recent recruitment and training of new staff (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The government has also been involved in other initiatives to improve governance in the forestry sector like the appointment of international NGOs as independent observers to monitor forest law enforcement operations (Atyi *et al.*, 2013). Global Witness was replaced by Resource Extraction Monitoring (REM) as an independent monitor of forest law enforcement. However, the number of enforcement officers remains low, and despite progress towards SFM, there is a clear disconnection between what is stipulated in the law and what is implemented impacting negatively sustainable development of the industrial forest sector (Cerutti *et al.*, 2016).

Reports reveal very poor follow-up by the government concerning reporting illegalities and sanctioning defaulters added to weak enforcement and compliance by the

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government as a result of inadequate financial resources, unavailable documentation, and poor application of legal texts. For example, the legality grids seem difficult to implement and also inadequate to verify legal timber because some relevant indicators such as the tax system were removed because of complexity (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The lack of political will is another reason for weak law enforcement by the government as can be noticed by its trade divergence with Asia and China in particular. Cameroon's timber trade with China increased by 60% between 2010 and 2016, and China consumed about 550 million m³ of timber and wood imports in 2018 from Cameroon to China (TRAFFIC, 2018). Furthermore, the present forest conversions occurring in the country, especially in the South West region where a large area of forests are converted into large-scale agro-industrial development, puts to question the government's commitment to the fight against deforestation and illegal logging. The agro-based company (SGSOC) received authorization to clear 57,000 cubic meters of commercial value, it was estimated that about 1.6 million cubic meters of timber volume of commercial value would emerge from this process of forest conversion (CED, 2013). This practice of forest conversion is still associated with unethical practices, undermining existing management plans and the corruption phenomenon (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020).

5.7 Assessment of the Timber Domestic Markets

Cameroon has committed to broad governance reforms in the forestry sector by signing the VPA. Existing legislation is not designed to sustain a healthy, small-scale domestic timber market (CIFOR, 2014). Furthermore, many people in Cameroon are involved in domestic timber harvesting. The domestic market, which is dominated by artisanal and micro-scale informal enterprises, was overlooked by the Forest Law of 1994 (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the Law allows for access to several types of small-scale timber permits, including 'ventes de coupes', (VC) or cut timber sales, and harvesting permits (ibids). Other types of permits, such as individual cut authorizations and the exercise of customary rights are not allowed by the law. The private forestry sector is made up of diverse timber companies ranging from small chainsaw loggers to large industrial timber producers owned either by national or international companies. Some are engaged in timber exportation, while others are serving the domestic market. The amount of timber traded in Cameroon domestically roughly

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equals the volume which is exported out of the country, and research has revealed that the local timber consumption is higher than the industrial export production (CIFOR, 2014; Tropenbos International, 2012). There is a need to improve and simplify access to the resource; to develop and implement specific fiscal regimes for the domestic timber sector (such as royalty rates, processing, transport, and marketing levies); to improve small-scale operators' access to credit on favourable terms; to create incentives to comply with the law; and to improve information flows to smaller operators (CIFOR, 2014). The majority of the domestic timber sector in Cameroon is marked by informal practices, from felling trees to selling timber with mostly temporal workers struggling to comply with the requirements to formalise their enterprise (UNEP-WCMC, 2020). To improve access to formal supply sources, MINFOF made it easier for artisanal enterprises to purchase timber rejects from industrial permit holders in 2016. Overall, however, the incentives for formalisation have remained insufficient, resulting in a situation in which the majority of artisanal enterprises operate without proper registration and are thus considered illegal operators, adding distrust to corrupt government officials (Hoare *et al.*, 2020). Also, most of the timber production is aimed at serving the domestic markets, produced mostly by small or individual enterprises largely working illegally and functioning outside the law (FAO & CIFOR, 2017). This informal sector has been growing rapidly due to population increase leading to the rise in demand for the domestic market (CIFOR, 2014). The irony here is that about 75% of timber trade in the sector is largely illegal, however, in terms of job creation, it is estimated that the sector created 45,000 direct jobs and generated more than 54.6 million US dollars (CIFOR, 2017). The above situation according to international or large-scale operators will negatively affect the VPA implementation if actions are not taken to organise the sector, especially with only 13,000 jobs created by the formal sector (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the public sector has been identified as the main wood and furniture buyer with an estimated volume of 13,000 m³ of timber for infrastructures such as schools and hospitals. From the above volume, sawn timber from legal sources supplying the domestic market is estimated at 27%, while 73% of the total timber volume in circulation in the domestic market is illegal (FLEGT-VPA Facility, 2021). The inclusion of the domestic market into the TLAS is considered fundamental for the integrity of the EU and Cameroon FLEGT-VPA, and the system applies to all sources of timber and timber products produced, acquired or in circulation

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in Cameroon (Lawson & MacFaul, 2010; Tropenbos International, 2012). Thus, organising the domestic timber market to sell legal timber was a priority to the EU and Cameroon VPA. The domestic timber market was attached under the TLAS (Article 9 (3)). The Government took the commitment and pledges as follows:

- Improvement of the legal framework relating to the domestic timber trade,
- Monitoring the domestic timber market,
- Establishment of a statistics-gathering system to record what is produced and the amount of money generated by this domestic timber market in the country (Tropenbos International, 2012).

There is little achievement recorded with the organisation of the domestic market since the TLAS has not yet gone operational. Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) is helping Cameroon in this direction to strengthen private sector involvement in the VPA, by providing help to small and medium-sized enterprises involved in the timber trade. The FAO is already celebrating success with a total amount of about 2000 m³ of timber from legal sources supplied by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) between 2019 and 2020. A joint ministerial decree No. 0162/MINFOF/MINTP/MINMAP of 15th December 2020 fixing modalities for the utilisation of wood from a legal origin in public contracts has been signed by the Prime Minister, making the use of legal timber mandatory in public procurement in Cameroon. The decree confirms the engagement of national authorities in promoting sustainable forest management and their commitment to the VPA in timber legality objectives (FLEGT-VPA Facility, 2021). Research review holds the fact that reforming the timber domestic market is a necessity with its inclusion in the legislative process, however, the process remains very slow with some socio-economic obstacles to meeting the demands for sawn wood with timber of legal origin (FAO & CIFOR, 2017).

5.8 Conclusion and Discussion

The issue of illegal logging and related cross-border trade especially with tropical timbers is supposed to have found a solution with the emergence of the EU-FLEGT Action Plan. In the beginning, the FLEGT-VPA were attractive from the start concerning its potential for better market access to the EU, more tax revenues, and open-source development assistance, but the agreement is very challenging concerning its demand for reforms in the forest sector governance. Some of the challenges include unclear

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rights to land and trees, inconsistent or weak enforcement of existing laws, and the absence of legislation to back up the FLEGT-VPA process in the Cameroonian context (EU-FLEGT FACILITY, 2016).

Undeniably, there are reasons for some frustration concerning the EU and Cameroon VPA implementation because the process turns out to be more complex than expected. Cameroon has shown strong political will from the onset, with the application of Appendix XI⁵⁰ of the EU-Cameroon FLEGT-VPA. For example, Decree No 126/CAB/PM of 10 September 2012 establishing the National Monitoring Committee (NMC), Order No.004/MINFOF of February 2013⁵¹, and Decision No 0546A/MINFOF/SG/DF/CJ/SDIAF of 05 October 2016⁵². This committee's work should be transparent, with information and results made available to the public, and the committee comprised of all stakeholders in the forest sector, which is supposed to be consulted on all issues before implementation of the VPAs (CED, 2013). Decisions from the above committee should ideally be made by consensus, however, decisions are made by a simple majority of the members which poses a real risk in terms of effective consultation with civil society and indigenous communities which, in addition to being under-represented, lack real powers to ensure that their concerns or points of view are taken into account (CED, 2013). The EU-Cameroon FLEGT-VPA initiative faced a lot of political obstacles, especially related to divergent interests between the promoters and beneficiaries of proposed policy reforms (Ibids).

With the technical and political roadblocks, no operational verification system (TLAS) is in place for the process to go operational. Actors are now engaged in a blame game, accusing each other of the shortcomings of the FLEGT VPA implementation in the country. The VPA is faced with some challenges that should be resolved before the full implementation of the process. Cameroon still faces problems concerning installing SIGIF II at the port of exit to trace the sources of timber and related products. The ineffective setup of SIGIF II goes beyond mere technical capacity. It has been

⁵⁰In application of Article 19, the Parties shall establish a decision-making structure designated the 'Joint Implementing Council' (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') and a joint committee responsible for undertaking and facilitating monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of an agreement, designated the 'Joint Monitoring Committee'. The JMC shall also facilitate dialogue and the exchange of information between the Parties

⁵¹ This order lays down the criteria and procedures for the issue of certificates of legality under the FLEGT licensing scheme.

⁵² This decision makes the Exploitation Inventory Guidelines enforceable.

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hampered by possible political bottlenecks as suggested by some actors. Corruption persists, and corrupt individuals in the government cycles want the situation to remain as usual for their self-interest. Lastly, it was noticed that the government felt frustrated and took measures at some point to wave out the commitments they made with the EU. They engaged in timber trade diversion to other countries especially China where no stringent measures are required for timber export. China is trying hard to explore this situation and consolidate its position as a dominant market for tropical timber export. The decline in exports of wood products to Europe has been attributed to this background (TRAFFIC, 2018). With the EU and Cameroon VPA unable to issue FLEGT licenses, it shows clearly that Cameroon's efforts towards good governance especially in the forestry sector are just a political window dressing.

However, from the desk review, there has been some positive changes or improvement in the forest governance framework because of the FLEGT-VPA implementation in Cameroon. Research reviews also reported an increase in forest tax revenues since the verification of legality began, and as a result, the government was able to transfer approximately 50% of the area-based forest tax collected to the local councils in the forested area concern. There has been an increase in forest areas with voluntary legality verification and certification. About 45% of the largest area was verified against Verified Legal Origin (VLO) standards, which is the lowest existing standard against only 20% of the area that had sustainability certification (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020). The justification is that the EUTR and VPA are more favoured, and businesses will prefer legality verification over certification since the latter is difficult and expensive to comply with. Recent reviews reveal that illegal logging in Cameroon has been reduced due to the implementation of the VPA and other international responses to illegal logging and deforestation. It is estimated that illegal logging reduced by 37% in permanent forest domain (DFP), 8% in non-certified timber titles (UFA), 16% in cut timber sales 'ventes de coupes' (VC), 21% in communal forests, 10% in community forests, 5% in salvage licenses, and 3% in harvest timber removal licenses (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020).

CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION PART TWO

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will assess how REDD+ and CFM concepts can work together to achieve sustainable forest management and a reduction in deforestation and forest degradation. REDD+ proposes to deliver multiple outcomes, including emissions reduction, livelihood support, and sustainable forest management and thus appears largely compatible with community forests (Pelletier *et al.*, 2016). CFM is believed to have a very promising potential for addressing climate change, especially with REDD+ moving into its implementation phase in many countries like Cameroon (Duguma *et al.*, 2018). Community forests are defined by Cameroonian law (Article 37 (3) of the 1994 Forestry Law) as that part of a non-permanent forest estate (not more than 5.000 ha) that is the object of an agreement between the government and a community in which communities undertake sustainable forest management for 25 years renewable. The concept emerged as part of a policy reform process aimed at enabling better participation of local people in forest management, enhancing the contribution of forests to livelihoods and the economy, and enhancing sustainable forest management (Minang *et al.*, 2019).

My case study site is the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest (BBCF) in the South West region of Cameroon, created under Article 37(3) of the 1994 Forestry Law on May 18, 2002. This study site was selected because it is one of the remaining coastal rainforests in the Mount Cameroon region or the Fako Division consisting of diverse habitats including fresh water and coastal forests, swamps, mangroves, endemism of trees and fruits (Nuesiri, 2022). Furthermore, its contribution to livelihood sustenance to the communities located around the BBCF, and its location, close to urban development were the factors considered for the creation of the BBCF. However, the forest is facing immense threat and pressure from human activities such as illegal chainsaw exploiters, farmers and encroachment into the forest zone. Over twenty years and counting after the creation of the BBCF is enough time for an evaluation concerning the management of this community forest because its potential as a community forest has to be met with criticisms. These research findings will help address some of the management lapses and shape future development approaches by which CFM could help in reducing deforestation and improving the livelihood of the

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communities as one of the objectives of the REDD+ initiative. The approach adopted for this research is based on a framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance with the guidance of the FAO and PROFOR⁵³ frameworks. This framework was much preferred in this assessment because it provides comprehensive principles which are linked to specific well-defined pillars of forest governance with clear analytical measures on the ground, and allows for subjectivity in analyses in a structured and statistically interpretable manner (Adams, 2020). Furthermore, the FAO and PROFOR framework looks into the issues of legality in a country's forest sector seriously, and understands forest governance in the context of a variety of actors with competing and conflicting claims over forests (Adams, 2020). This framework is also very important for my assessment because it recognizes governance in the context of interactions among a range of actors and stakeholders with diverse interests and consists of acceptable pillars and principles of good governance. Again, the framework has the potential to reduce the overlapping assessment, monitoring and reporting requirements and eliminate contradicting outcomes from other initiatives (Piabuo *et al.*, 2018).

Community forest governance relates to community-based management and decision-making process, which is carried out by community actors with, or on behalf of a community (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022). Concerning the forestry sector, the concept also refers to new modes of governance that go beyond the confines of the state, such as policy networks, social corporate responsibility, public participation and markets for ecosystem services (Arts, 2014). Good governance in this context is generally characterized by the application of these principles to the different pillars manifested by stakeholder participation, transparency in decision-making, accountability from decision-makers, and the rule of law. In other words, governance in decision-making is good when it is participatory, accountable, transparent, effective, efficient, and equitable concerning the rule of law (Secco *et al.*, 2014; Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). The governance processes are essential in my case study because aspects of the sustainability of the resource and the management style of the resource will reveal the costs incurred in the management processes.

⁵³ The Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance, available at <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/27526-0cc61ecc084048c7a9425f64942df70a8.pdf>

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The principles adapted from FAO and PROFOR will help my assessment to evaluate and compare good practices while taking into consideration local realities. The principles are as follows: (1) Accountability, (2) Effectiveness, (3) Efficiency, (4) Fairness/Equity, (5) Participation, and (6) Transparency. Questions for my assessments were developed reflecting the principles, serving as indicators to help my research findings via the use of a questionnaire survey (survey on public perceptions). The indicators or questions will be described to make an understanding and monitor governance in the management system. The outcomes of the survey will be analyzed and interpreted as findings or results. The corresponding indicators were obtained from published and unpublished works and reports with some legislative review or related documents.

Table 4. Principles and indicators for assessing forest governance
Source: Adapted from (*PROFOR & FAO, 2011*)

Principles	Indicators
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management council of the BBCF is held accountable to its members • Representatives of the local community receive updates on forest activities • Rules of the community forest are observed by the management committee • Information concerning decision-making and funds generated is accessible to the community.
Effectiveness/Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are restricted from cutting plants for fuelwood. • Forest guards have been kept monitoring the BBCF forest • Penalties are levied on defaulters of the BBCF laws. • Hunting still takes place in the BBCF
Fairness/Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the creation of the BBCF, the income you get from the sales of forest products has increased appreciably. • Since the creation of the BBCF, your nutrition intake has increased from the consumption of forest resources • The benefits of the BBCF are shared among the communities • The management council of the BBCF provides special provisions for poor people
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participated in community management of forest activities • Participated in training offered by the community forest management council • Regularly participated in community management meetings
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is transparency in the management system • Funds and decisions arrived at during meetings are made public

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6.2 Location of the Study Area

The Bimbia-Bonadikombo Forest Reserve is located in the South-West Region of Cameroon, Fako Division. The BBCF is part of the Mount Cameroon Forest Region, widely known as a biodiversity hotspot (Mittermeier *et al.*, 2005). It lies within the landscape commonly referred to as the Mabetamoliwe forest area and it is situated east of the main massif of Mount Cameroon. The Mabetamoliwe forest lies south of the busy highway linking the cities of Limbe, Mutengene, Tiko and Douala. The community is peri-urban, located on the fringes of the Limbe urban community. The BBCF comprises five villages (Bonadikombo, Bonabile, Bonangombe, Liwanda, and Dikolo), divided into nine compartments for management purposes. Three of these compartments (Dikolo, Likomba la Mbenge and Likomba Lelu), with a surface area of 1200 hectares have been set aside for research, ecotourism and environmental education (Ngalim & Terence, 2016). The majority of the land in Bimbia-Bonadikombo is on long-term lease from the government by the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), which has developed palm plantations within the BBCF. Thus, the CDC has the legal right of ownership over the forest (Ngalim & Terence, 2016). Given its fertile volcanic soil, a greater portion of the landscape is under plantation agriculture from the German colonial era to date, adding to population pressure for settlement and agriculture for sustenance.

The Mabetamoliwe forest area is completely hemmed in by CDC agricultural plantations. The BBCF occupies an area of 3735 hectares in the Mabetamoliwe Forest and stretches from the Bimbia Atlantic coastline in the south to the Moliwe Hills occupied by CDC plantations in the north. Its western boundary is adjacent to the outer limits of the city of Limbe and the eastern boundary borders the Mabetamoliwe fishing settlement.

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The Bakweri tribe predominantly occupied this area in the eighteenth century (Minang, 2003). The people make up 10% of the population and the remaining 90% are immigrants (Nkemnyi, 2016). The establishment of plantations in the area encouraged huge immigration from the western part of the country, and this situation weakened cohesion within the native Bakweri tribe enabling a less traditional power structure. Given the heterogeneous situation, setting control of forest management by the native authorities proves difficult. Today, the paramount chief, village chiefs and quarterheads constitute part of the management team of the community forests. The chiefs and natives in the Limbe area created two institutions to identify and bring justice to those who illegally occupy or use the forest. The institutions are the Victoria Lands and Forest Conservation Committee (VL FCC), and the Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group (VARCIG). Figure 17 below represents the location and land-use map of BBCF

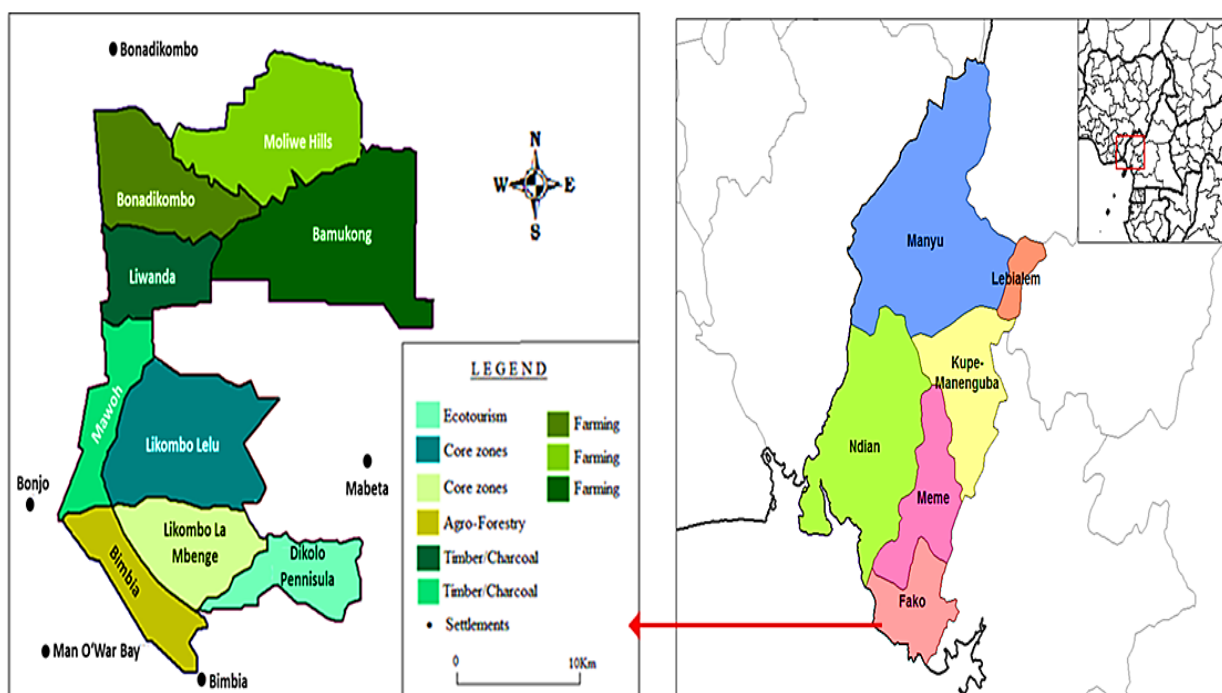


Figure 17. Location and Land-use of BBCF area
Source: Adapted from (BBNRM, 2002)

6.3 Climate and Vegetation

The Mount Cameroon region inhabiting Bimbia-Bonadikombo is gifted with very beautiful scenery. The area comprises two seasons, the relatively short dry season (four months), which begins from November to February and the rainy season of eight months starting from March to October with months of heavy rainfall from June to

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August with peaks in July. Annual rainfall is between 4,000 to 5,000 mm per annum (Nkemnyi, 2016). The dry season is usually hot, humid and sunny while the rainy season is very wet. Clouds and foggy weather occasionally during the rainy season. The vegetation is an evergreen tropical rainforest type, which comprises lowland afro-montane forest and is dominated by mangroves towards the south-west coastline, freshwater swamp forest, littoral vegetation, coastal bar forest, lowland forest and freshwater ecosystems (Minang, 2003). All constituting the rich and diverse biodiversity environment of the BBCF.

Degraded forests, plantations, and farmlands make up the vegetation. Lowland rainforest, stream and riverside vegetation, freshwater swamp forest, mangrove, coastal bar forest, and littoral vegetation predominate in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest (Ngalim & Terence, 2016). BBCF's diverse vegetation types account for its rich diversity of plant species of high conservation importance (Nuesiri, 2022). BBCF was identified as the last remaining coastal lowland forest between Douala and Limbe by botanic surveys in 1992 and 1997 (Ngalim & Terence, 2016). The southern section of the forest is important for conservation; of the 1,500 specimens collected, 24 were strictly endemic and 43 were rare or new to science, impressive totals given the small size of the area (Ibids). The above information is of importance illustrating the importance of conserving the forest while expecting the discovery of new species. Table 5 below is a representation of flora and fauna species, and also some commercial and non-commercial forest products of the 9 compartments of the study area. Some of these products grow in the wild in combination with other trees for example eru classified as a Non Timber Forest Product (NTFP) (Ngalim & Terence, 2016).

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Table 5. Community Forest Use
Source: (BBNPMC, 2002)

Compartment	Area	Main Use(s)	Resources	Secondary Use(s)
Dikolo Peninsular	250 ha	Ecotourism and Research	Wildlife: white-nosed Monkey, Dwarf Crocodile. Monitor Lizard Mangrove Timber: Lophira alata, Terminalia, Staudtia, Ceiba pentandra.	Collection of forest products, Indian bamboo, Bush onion, Njangsang, Bush mango, Bush pepper
Likomba La-mbenge	334 ha	Research and Beekeeping	Wildlife: Cane Rats, Red-tailed monkeys, vipers, squirrels. Timber: Lophira alata, Desbordesia glaucescens,	Sustainable collection of NTFPs (chewing stick, Bush onion, Njangsang)
Likomba La-lelu	645 ha	Research and Beekeeping	Wildlife: Red-tailed Monkeys, Vipers, and Squirrel. Timber: Lophira alata, Desbordesia glaucescens, Entandrophragma spp.	Sustainable collection of NTFPs (chewing stick, Bush onion, Njangsang)
Bimbia	252 ha	Fuelwood extraction, Beekeeping	Wildlife: Red-tailed Monkey, Mona Monkeys, Monitor lizard Timber: Alstonia congensis, Coelocaryon preussii, Erythroxyllum ivorense	Charcoal burning (on fallen logs) NTFPs collection (chewing stick, Bush onion, Njangsang)
Mawoh/Motondo	229 ha	Charcoal burning, Commercial fuelwood extraction	Wildlife: Red-tailed Monkey, Mona Monkeys, Brushtail Porcupine, Squirrel Timber: Albizia spp, Lophira alata, Pycnanthus angolensis	Beekeeping, Agroforestry NTFPs collection (chewing stick, Bush onion, njangsang)
Liwanda	286 ha	Commercial fuelwood extraction	Wildlife: Dwarf Crocodile, Pangolin, Squirrel, Mona Monkeys. Timber: Lophira alta, Pterygota macrocarpa, Staudtia kamerunensis	Beekeeping, Agroforestry NTFPs collection (chewing stick, Njangsang)
Bamukong	774 ha	Timber exploitation, Bee farming	Wildlife: Cane Rat, White-nosed Monkey, Antelope, Tortoise Timber: Lophira alata, Terminalia superba	NTFPs collection (chewing stick, Njangsang Bush onion, Bush mango)
Moliwe Hills	565 ha	Timber exploitation, Bee farming	Wildlife: Mona Monkey, Pangolin Timber: Afzelia bipendensis, Dacryodes eduis, Coelocaryon preussii	NTFPs collection(chewing stick, Njangsang Bush onion, Bush mango Eru)
Bonadikombo	400 ha	Timber exploitation, Bee farming	Wildlife: Pangolin, Viper, Squirrel Timber: Lophira alata, Ricinodendron heudelotii	NTFPs collection(chewing stick, Njangsang Bush onion, Bush mango Eru)

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6.4 Soil

The Mount Cameroon region is an active volcano and so Bimbia-Bonadikombo is made up of volcanic soils. These soils are dark with high moisture because of the frequent heavy precipitation. The richness of the soil is because of volcanic activities which favour the growth of both palm and food crops. These soils have coarse grains and suffer from erosion and leaching because of the heavy precipitation for the greater part of the year and the sloping nature of the landscape.

6.5 Relief and Drainage

The mountain rises gently from sea level at the coast through the forest to the rough steep slopes. The community forest area rises from sea level with a gentle slope of about 800m above sea level. The forest areas protect those slopes and so minimize erosion and landslides. All the streams of this area take their rise from the watershed of Mount Cameroon and flow across the western and eastern slopes and water catchment and sources of several river networks exist that empty themselves in the sea. The drainage system shows the existence of two types of streams that flow in the area, seasonal (which flow only during the rainy season) and permanent streams, which flow all year round.

6.6 Previous Use of the BBCF

The communities that live around the forest have always depended on some products harvested from the forest before the creation of the reserve. Over the past years, the uses of these products have evolved from traditional, and subsistence uses to more economic-driven uses to support the livelihood of the people. Many different groups of people, as well as local institutions and users, make demands on the community forest. The community exploits non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for home use and for marketing to raise money to feed their families. NTFPs found in the forest are mostly spices like Bush pepper (*Piper guinensis*), Eru, Bitter kola (*Garcinia kola*) and Bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*), just to name a few.

Traditional rites are carried out in certain parts of the forest, notably in Bimbia during cultural festivals. Traditional herbalists (native doctors) use some particular plant species to prepare traditional medicines for the cure of common illnesses like malaria, typhoid, and epilepsy. Timber exploitation within the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Forest has

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been ongoing in the last decades, with some timber species destined for export, followed by small-scale timber exploitation by chainsaw owners. The timber harvested is used for furniture, building and roofing of houses. Consequently, different parts of the forest have experienced various levels of degradation and transformation. Between the 1950s and 1960s, (during the banana boom), farms were opened in parts of this forest, notably in southern Bimbia (BBNRM, 2002). These farms were later abandoned. It was only after 1990 that a new move to open farms in the forest began.

Despite the value of the BBCF, changes in land use, and resource use patterns resulting from pressure on land and forest resources pose a great threat to the sustainability of the forest as well as the socio-economic and ecological functioning of the ecosystem. These changes are mostly caused by an expansion in agriculture, and economic factors and population growth, are causing severe stress on forests and biodiversity. Agriculture and settlement in some areas have replaced forests. The encroachment stems mostly from the use of the forest areas for agriculture, charcoal making, settlement, the collection of fodder, lumbering and fuelwood search (Nkemnyi, 2016).

6.7 Management of Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest

The Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council (BBNRM) is in charge of the management of activities in the BBCF. The management of the BBCF is via a constitution and by-laws⁵⁴ with a focus on conserving biodiversity, enhancing the livelihoods of forest users and fostering partnerships between all stakeholders. The BBNRM has a board, headed by a board chairperson, with elected representatives, with some appointed or elected in the following categories based on article 4 of the constitution of the BBCF asserting the institutional and leadership structure of the community forest. The traditional authorities are automatically members. Article 4a of the constitution states “the general assembly is the collection of all users of the forests, and the village communities surrounding the forest area”. Thus, other members’ general assembly’s include farmer's representatives, charcoal union representatives, and representatives of timber exploiters. Constituting the board, we also have government officials like the government delegate of the Limbe urban council, the

⁵⁴ By-laws and Regulations of the BBNRM are separate documents appended to the constitution of the BBNRM

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chairperson of the Limbe urban council, the divisional delegates of the ministry of forestry and wildlife, also with the divisional delegate of the ministry of environment. There is also the presence of the divisional officer of Limbe III, the mayor of Limbe III municipality, forces of law and order and a forest manager. Article 5 of the constitution of the BBCF provides that the general assembly is the supreme organ of the BBNRMC and shall meet to review the work executed during the year by the BBNRMC once a year. However, the constitution fails to elaborate on the roles and responsibilities of the BBNRMC executive positions as provided for in the by-laws such as the board chair. The position of the vice chair, secretary, public relations officers, financial secretary and treasurer remains vacant until present (Nuesiri, 2022). Even the role of the forest manager as stated in the community forest manual was not elaborated in the constitution and by-laws, thus the community forest manual gives the forest manager the prominent manager role in community forest management (Nuesiri, 2022).

The activities carried out by the BBNRMC must be in line with the management plan of the community forest that has a duration of 25 years with the following objectives, which include:

- To maintain biodiversity and generate income through non-consumptive use of the forest for financial sustainability, and re-investment into forest management activities,
- To conserve biodiversity and research while providing sustainable livelihoods at the subsistence level,
- To carry out reforestation and maintain soil and water for sustainable production of forest products,
- To raise income through sustainable timber exploitation, support livelihood and enrich highly degraded areas (BBNRMC, 2002).

6.8 Local Awareness of the Concept of Community Forestry

About twenty years after the creation of BBCF, it was important to find out respondents' knowledge about the concept of community forestry and their level of awareness about the creation of the BBCF reserves. The focus on local awareness is motivated by the argument that effective participation should be backed by full awareness of the concept of community forestry. From the response, the Bonadikombo and the Bimbria communities show similar ratings concerning their awareness of the BBCF reserve.

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The majority of the respondents were not aware that BBCF was a reserve (70%). They believed that the community forest reserves were the property of the local chiefs. Another group of respondents (30%) thought the forest reserves were the property of the community, with little awareness that the forest is a reserve. They had no idea about the management team put in place to manage the community forest.

Regrettably, the local chiefs have taken advantage of the little knowledge of awareness, with impunity with some government officials to sell forest reserves for developmental purposes, even encroaching into the forest reserve. This is a similar situation in the Bonadikombo and the Bimbia communities where encroachment into the reserve due to farming and urbanization is very common without any corrective action from the authority concerned. Figure 18 below shows encroachment into the community forest with the construction of houses and some farming activities within the BBCF boundaries.



Figure 18. Image showing encroachment into the BBCF reserve
Source: Author's image

Presently, due to the Anglophone crises, part of the forest reserves are under military occupation, with the establishment of a military base to fight back the separatist fighters. What makes the situation worse is the sealed lips on the side of the government to reverse the above situation. Many people cannot understand the

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reasons for these actions from the government if they are aimed at sustainable forest management, improving forest governance and encouraging the development of community forestry.

Table 6. Description of demographic variables used in this study
Source: Author

Variable	Description	Unit of Measure
Gender (Nominal)	Gender of respondent	Male
		Female
Age (Ordinal)	Age of the respondent	20-30
		31-40
		41-50
Educational level (Ordinal)	The educational level attained by the respondent	No formal education
		Primary
		Secondary
		Diploma and More
Occupation (Nominal)	Occupation of respondent	Farmer
		Trader
		No formal employment
		Student
Number of Years of stayed in the community (interval)	Number of Years of stayed in the community of respondent	1-5years
		6-10years
		11-15years
		>15years
Origin (Nominal)	Origin of Respondent	Indigene
		Non-Indigene

6.9 Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

After eliminating missing or inconsistent answers to valuation questions, 119 (79.3%) responses are considered the valid representative sample for the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community residents' population. The sex distribution of the sample is 74.8% males and 25.2% females. The age group with the highest frequency is 20-30 years, that is, 42.9% of the respondents, 31.9% were between 31-40 years, while

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25.2% were between 41-50 years. The mean age of the respondents is 35.5 years. The above information implies that respondents are economically active and mature enough. This can influence their response concerning their knowledge of Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest management. Most of the respondents (64.7%) have attained the secondary school level of education. This implies that the majority of the respondents have acquired basic educational knowledge, a factor that can influence their knowledge and awareness of community management activities in their environment. Occupational distribution revealed that the majority of the respondents had no formal employment (37.8%) while few were traders (24.4%), farmers (25.2%) and students (12.6%). The majority have lived in the area for quite a reasonable period of more than six years. Concerning ethnic origin, the majority of respondents (79.8%) were non-indigenes of the community.

Table 7. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents
Source: Author

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	89	74.8
	Female	30	25.2
	Total	119	100.0
Age (in years)	20-30	51	42.9
	31-40	38	31.9
	41-50	30	25.2
	Total	119	100.0
Educational level	No formal education	18	15.1
	Primary	15	12.6
	Secondary	77	64.7
	Diploma and More	09	7.6
	Total	119	100.0
Occupation	Farmer	30	25.2
	Trader	29	24.4
	No formal employment	45	37.8
	Student	15	12.6
	Total	119	100.0
Number of Years of stayed in the community	1-5years	45	37.8
	6-10years	30	25.2
	11-15years	29	24.4
	>15years	15	12.6
	Total	119	100.0
Origin	Indigene	24	20.2
	Non-Indigene	95	79.8
	Total	119	100.0

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6.10 Variable Description of Mean score Range

The variable description of the mean score range sought to clearly explain the mean response provided for a specific question as the overall response to that particular question or statement as can be seen in table 8 below. To have a summarized judgement or assessment of the aspects under investigation, a composite mean will be used which involves the combination of all the variables under investigation to create a score.

Table 8. Variable description of mean score range
Source: Author

Rate	Variable Scale (5-point Likert scale)	Mean Range
1	[SA] Strongly Agree	1.00-1.80
2	[A] Agree	1.81-2.60
3	[UD] Undecided	2.61-3.40
4	[DA] Disagree	3.41-4.20
5	[SD] Strongly Disagree	4.21-5.00

Legend: [SA] Strongly Agree (1.00-1.80); [A] Agree (1.81-2.60); [UD] Undecided (2.61-3.40); [D] Disagree (3.41-4.20); [SD] Strongly Disagree (4.21-5.00)

6.10.1 Assessment of Accountability

The findings under this section assessed the community responses to the accountability of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community management council concerning the management of forest activities. Accountability is the biggest challenge in community forest management (Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). Accountability in this context means the clarification of resource needs for community forest users, keeping clear records and information sharing with the community forest users (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022). Accountability ensures that there is oversight of the actions of decision-makers and resource managers, as well as appropriate sanctions for wrongdoing (Nuesiri, 2022). Again, accountability and good governance are more assured when it is top-down and bottom-up with mechanisms which are operational and interdependent with the engagement of pro-active citizens, who pressure decision-makers concerning compliance rules (Nuesiri, 2022). The results from the survey are based on the means and standard deviation for the data that was collected through the 5-point Likert scale

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measuring the level of agreement of the respondents concerning the given aspects of Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest management. Based on the means, [1.00-1.80] Strongly Agree, [1.81-2.60] Agree, [2.61-3.40] Undecided, [3.41-4.20] Disagree and [4.21-5.00] Strongly Disagree.

Table 9. Assessment of accountability

Source: Survey results

Items	Count	Mean	Sta. De	Decision
The Management Council of the BBCF is held accountable to its members	104	2.000	0.7632	A
Representatives of the local community receive updates on forest activities	104	1.856	0.3530	A
Rules of community forest management are observed by the management committee	104	2.423	0.6964	A
Information concerning decision-making and funds generated is accessible to the community	45	3.667	0.4767	D
Composite mean = 2.487				A

From table 9 above, based on the first statement that the Management Council of the BBCF is held accountable to its members, the mean is 2.000 and the standard deviation is 0.7632 which indicates that the respondents agreed that the Management Council of the BBCF held accountable to its members. The next question was to know if representatives of the local community receive updates on forest activities. The mean was 1.856 and the standard deviation of 0.3530 indicated that the respondents agreed that representatives of the local community receive updates on forest activities. The third statement sought to know if the management committee observes the rules of community forest management, the mean is 2.423 and the standard deviation is 0.6946, which indicates that the respondents agreed in their response that the management committee observes the rules of community forest management. Lastly, was the statement to know if information concerning decision-making and funds generated was accessible to the community; the responses show a mean of 3.667 and a standard deviation of 0.4767, which means that respondents disagreed that

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Information concerning decision-making and funds generated, is accessible to the community. The composite score from the above assessment of accountability is 2.487 indicating that the respondents agreed that there is accountability with the management of BBCF. The results above contradict the research by Nuesiri in 2022 specifying that the BBNRMC was accountable to the forestry department by submitting annual reports, however, the same study revealed that BBNRMC has never held a general assembly since its creation in 2002 bringing to question how accountable was the management council (Nuesiri, 2022). The above information can be presented graphically (Figure 19) for further explanation as follows.

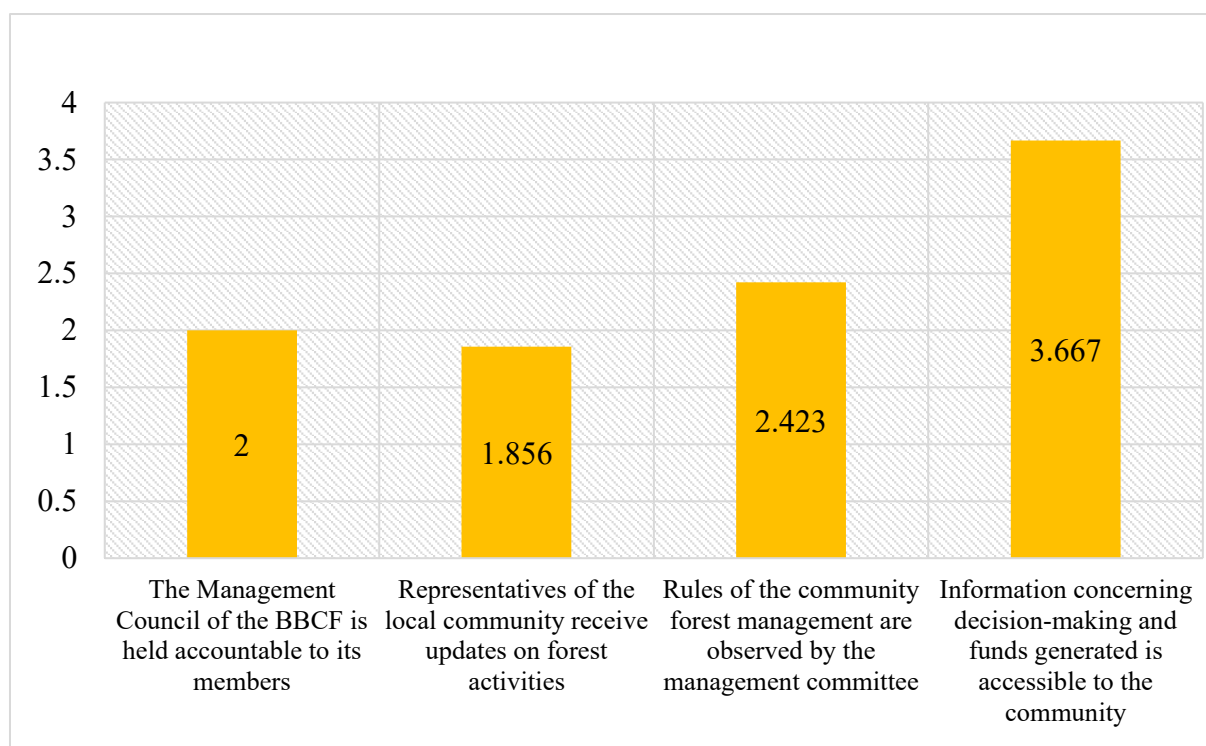


Figure 19. Accountability of community management of forest reserves
Source: Survey results

6.10.2 Effectiveness of Community Forest Management

Overexploitation of forests in Cameroon persists because of insufficient monitoring and excessive corruption, with communities reaping less in terms of benefits (Merlet & Fraticelli, 2016). The above statement could be true looking at the role played by some communities concerning forest protection. This section seeks to examine if the creation of the Bimba Bonadikombo Community Forest (BBCF) has increased forest protection by reducing forest loss and endemism and how effective the management is. The

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results are based on the means and standard deviation for the data that was collected through the 5-point Likert scale measuring the level of agreement of the respondents concerning the given aspects of Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest management. Based on the means, [1.00-1.80] Strongly Agree, [1.81-2.60] Agree, [2.61-3.40] Undecided, [3.41-4.20] Disagree and [4.21-5.00] Strongly Disagree.

Table 10. Assessment of effectiveness
Source: Survey Results

Items	Count	Mean	Sta. De	Decision
People are restricted from cutting plants for fuelwood.	119	1.756	1.3082	SA
Forest guards have been kept monitoring the BBCF forest	119	1.378	.9999	SA
Penalties are levied on defaulters of the BBCF laws	104	1.433	1.0591	SA
Hunting still takes place in the BBCF	104	2.846	1.3637	UD
Composite mean = 1.853				A

Table 10 above, is based on the first statement that people are restricted from cutting plants for fuelwood. The mean is 1.756 and the standard deviation is 1.3082, which indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that people are restricted from cutting plants for fuelwood. The next question was to know if forest guards have been kept monitoring the BBCF forest; the mean was 1.378 and the standard deviation of 0.9999 indicated that the respondents also strongly agreed that forest guards have been kept monitoring the BBCF. The third statement sought to know if penalties are levied on defaulters based on the BBNRMC constitution or by-laws; the mean is 1.433 and the standard deviation is 1.0591, which indicates that the respondents strongly agreed in their response that penalties are levied on defaulters of the BBCF according to the laws. Lastly, was the statement to know if hunting still takes place in the BBCF; the responses show a mean of 2.846 and a standard deviation of 1.3637 meaning respondents remain undecided in their response that hunting is still taking place. With

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a composite mean of 1.853, the results reveal that there is effectiveness in the management of BBCF.

The constitution of BBNRMC⁵⁵ recognized the need for sanctions against malpractices in the forest reserve but did not mention the amount to be paid by defaulters or sanctions against illegal forest activities. Research findings reveal that exploitation permits for chainsaw owners are 60 US dollars, but when a chainsaw operator is caught carrying out illegal activities, a penalty of 100 US dollars is requested from him or his equipment is seized (Nuesiri, 2022). Relating this finding with that of other researchers on this topic, (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022), reveals that actors in community forest management in Cameroon share about 76% of the income generated from community forests activities, while just 24% is secured as an investment for community development. These all result from the lack of an explicit internal regulation guiding the management of income derived from community forests (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022). The above information can be presented graphically (Figure 20) for further explanation as follows:

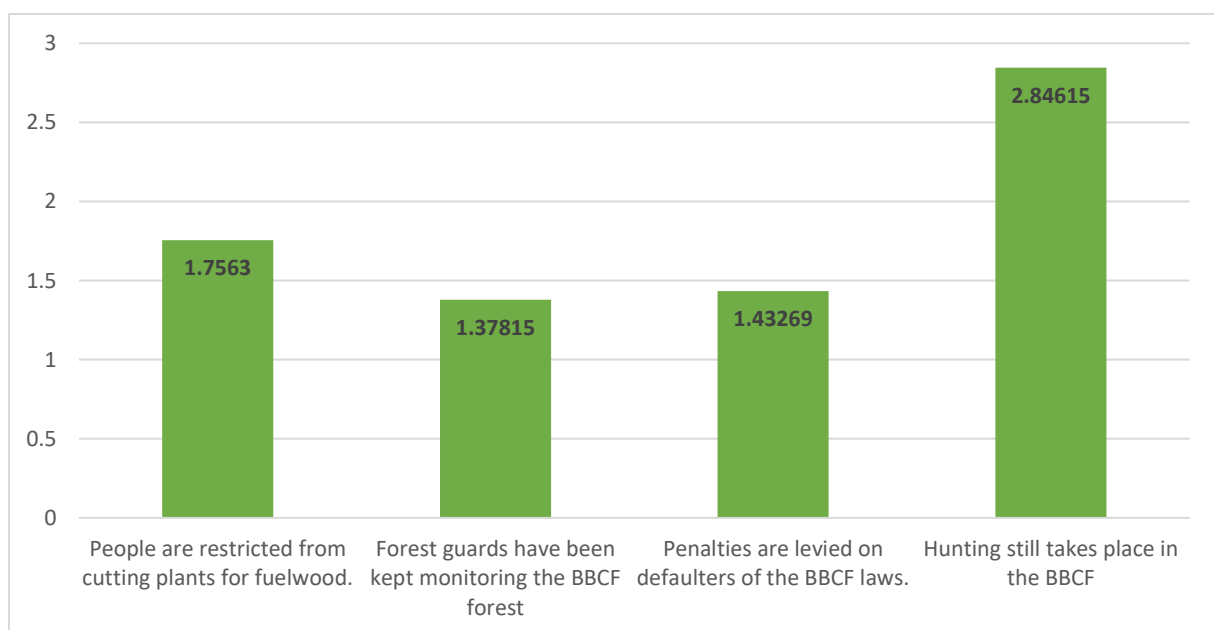


Figure 20. Effectiveness of community management of forest reserves
Source: Survey Results

⁵⁵ Article 11 of the Constitution states that ‘the flagrant disregard of the provisions of this Constitution shall be subject to disciplinary sanctions by the management council’.

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6.10.3 Fairness/Equity

Equity is linked to a fair share among stakeholders of socioeconomic benefits derived from resource management (Minang *et al.*, 2019). Good governance at the national, state, and local levels reduces inequalities and promotes participatory decision-making and sustainable forest resource management. Poor governance, on the other hand, exacerbates rural poverty and promotes elite capture and poor resource management (Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). In the case of Cameroon, legal reforms reveal a positive social outcome concerning procedural equity such as the recognition of the Baka and Bagyeli minority groups in forest management. However, other marginalized communities have received little benefits which resulted in the communities engaging in the illegal sales of timber while others have resorted to revising their management plans to respond to the non-timber needs of their communities (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022). This section examines if the creation of the BBCF has improved local community livelihoods through benefits from the sustainable use of forest resources. The results are based on the mean and standard deviation for data collected through the 5-point Likert scale measuring the level of agreement of the respondents concerning the given aspects of Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest management. Based on the means, [1.00-1.80] Strongly Agree, [1.81-2.60] Agree, [2.61-3.40] Undecided, [3.41-4.20] Disagreed and [4.21-5.00] Strongly disagreed.

Table 11. Assessment of fairness/equity
Source: Survey results

Item	Count	Mean	Sta. De	Decision
Since the creation of the BBCF, the income you get from the sales of forest products has increased appreciably	104	2.721	1.0377	UD
Since the creation of the BBCF, your nutrition intake has increased from the consumption of forest resources	75	2.200	1.1740	A
The benefits of the BBCF are shared among the communities	104	2.856	.9992	UD
The Management Council of the BBCF provides special provisions for poor people	104	2.846	1.2523	UD
Composite mean = 2.656				UD

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From Table 11, on the first statement about the fact that since the creation of the BBCF, the income from the sales of forest products has increased appreciably, the mean is 2.721 and the standard deviation is 1.0377. This indicates that the respondents remain undecided in their responses that since the creation of the BBCF, the income you get from the sales of forest products has increased appreciably. The next question was to know if, since the creation of the BBCF, the nutrition intake of respondents has increased as a result of the consumption of forest resources, or if their living standards have improved. The mean was 2.2 and the standard deviation was 1.1740, indicating that the respondents agreed that since the creation of the BBCF, their nutrition intake has increased from the consumption of forest resources. The third statement sought to know if the benefits of the BBCF are shared among the communities; the calculated mean is 2.856 and the standard deviation is 0.9992. This indicates that the respondents remain undecided about whether the benefits of the BBCF are shared among the communities. Lastly, was the statement about whether the Management Council of the BBCF provides special assistance for poor people; the responses show a mean of 2.846 and a standard deviation of 1.2523 which means that respondents remain undecided in their response that the management council of the BBCF provides special assistance to the poor. A composite mean of 2.656 reflects a position of neutrality concerning fairness and equity in the management of BBCF. This does not mean there is no fairness and equity in the management. There is fairness but to a limited extent. The above information can be presented graphically (Figure 21) for further explanation as follows:

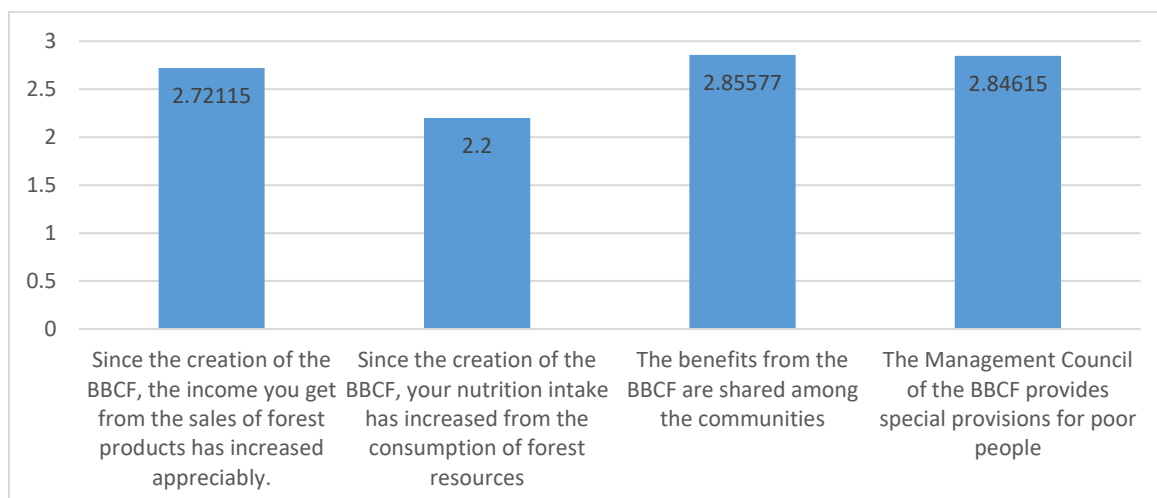


Figure 21. Fairness/equity of community management of forest reserves
Source: Survey results

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6.10.4 Participation

The focus of participation in this assessment was to know the level of inclusiveness in decision-making targeting the poor or marginalized groups in forest management decision-making. Participation in this context refers to the involvement of rural people in shaping, implementing and evaluating programmes as well as sharing the economic benefits. This is an active process which is intended for positive outcomes through collaboration and shared ownership for developmental purposes (Kimengsi & Ngu, 2022). It is a legal obligation for the inclusion of local people towards sustainable forest management as stated by forestry law N° 94/01 of 24 January 1994 and law N° 96/12 of August 1996 for environmental protection. Furthermore, the participation of local people in forest management has proven credible in many countries such as Tanzania, Nepal, the Philippines etc (Kimengsi & Ngu, 2022). This section examined the participation of the local population in the management of BBCF management. The results are based on the means and standard deviation for the data that was collected through the 5-point Likert scale measuring the level of agreement of the respondents concerning the given aspects of Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest management. Based on the means, [1.00-1.80] Strongly Agree, [1.81-2.60] Agree, [2.61-3.40] Undecided, [3.41-4.20] Disagree and [4.21-5.00] Strongly Disagree.

Table 12. Assessment of community participation in BBCF management
Source: Survey results.

Participation	Count	Mean	Sta. De	Decision
I actively participate in community management forest activities	106	3.264	1.1816	UD
I participate in training offered by the community forest management council	104	3.202	1.1855	UD
I regularly participate in community management meetings	105	3.057	1.3994	UD
Composite mean = 3.174				UD

Table 12 above, is based on the first statement on whether respondent actively participates in managing forest activities. The mean is 3.264 and the standard deviation is 1.1816, which indicates that the respondents remain undecided about whether they actively participate in the management of forest resources. The next

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question was to know if respondents participated in training offered by the forest management council. The mean was 3.202 and the standard deviation of 1.1855 indicating that the respondents also remain undecided about their participation in training offered by the forest management council of BBCF. Lastly, concerning whether respondents regularly participate in community management meetings; the responses show a mean of 3.057 and a standard deviation of 1.3994 which means that respondents remain undecided about whether they regularly participate in community management meetings. A composite mean of 3.174 shows that the respondents maintain neutrality with the aspects regarding participation in the management of forest activities at BBCF. To investigate more on this aspect of participation, it was noticed that most of my respondents were non-indigenes of the area since they were a majority in the sample. My survey focused on a sample of the population living around the community forest without any affiliation or tribal background. Further findings reveal that there was high motivation from the side of the local population (Bakweri elites and non-Bakweri) forest users and other stakeholders during the signing of the management agreement with the forestry department. With time, participation in forest management activities was in the hands of Bakweri elites making the hold scenario a tribal affair. (Nuesiri, 2015), also reported on the actions of the native Bakweri strongly opposing the inclusion of non-natives in the management of the community forest. (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022), confirmed the above allegation concerning participation in community forest activities in Cameroon in general. They report that there is much ambivalence on the forest users in Cameroon fuelled by the indigene-migrant dichotomy and that users 'recognition is incumbent upon the formation of a legal entity which breeds elite capture. Another study of community forest governance involving 36 community forests in Cameroon reveals that 78% of all the case studies did not meet the standards for participation (Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). The above information can be presented graphically (Figure 22) for further explanation as follows:

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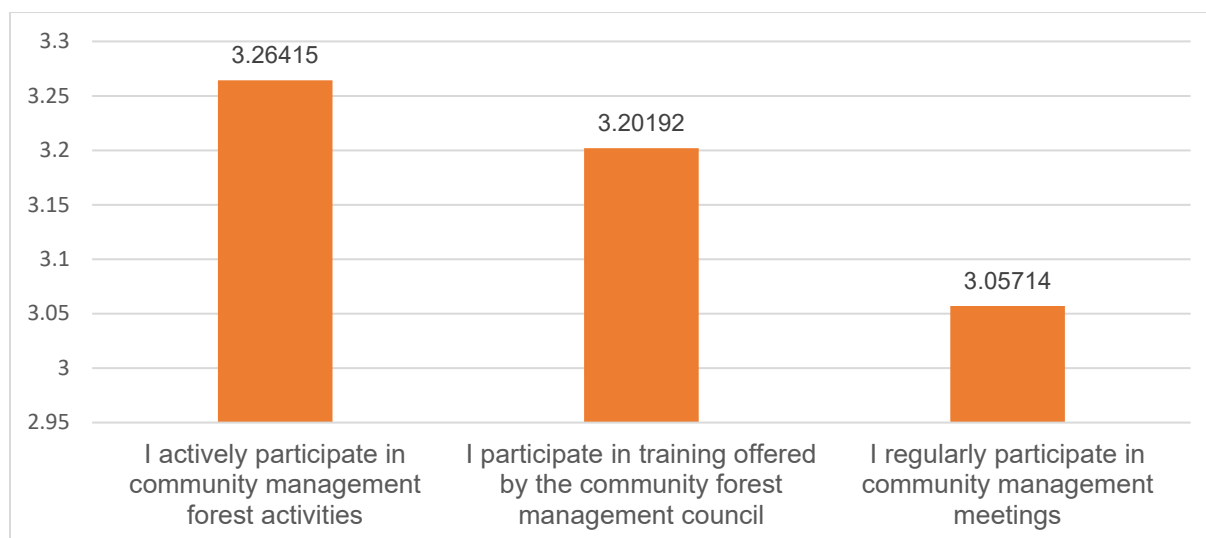


Figure 22. Participation of residents in management of forest reserves
Source: Survey results

Women can make a significant contribution to environmental protection and restoration by having direct interaction with natural resources with knowledge of local watersheds and food. Furthermore, their role and responsibilities in forest management are central as they are contributing to family livelihood through the utilization of forest resources. As a result, involving women in community forestry and related projects is a critical mechanism for long-term development and climate justice (Lamma, 2022). Regrettably, their limited knowledge of REDD+ benefits is a very important factor which triggers deforestation and degradation in community forests such as in Bimbia Bonadikombo community. The constitution or the by-laws of BBNRMC do not elaborate on the role of women or the participation of women in forest management activities. Contrary to Nepal, the community forest users group operational plan clarifies this issue of gender and grants women up to 50% of the positions on the executive committee. Since the death of Mrs Gwendoline Etonde who was the president of the BBNRMC, the role of women in forest management has witnessed a decline. However, studies concerning participation and voice in the Cameroonian context principally examined the inclusion of women and marginalized groups in decision-making and community forest activities (Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). In a follow-up question to find out the reasons for the low representation of women in the management of the BBCF, on a sample of 30 women (25.2%) of my sample. The women were given options to select if their low representation was because of: (1) Marginalization, (2) Because of their tradition and culture, (3) low self-esteem, and (4)

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limited access to forest resources. Results from the survey show that 13 (43.3%) cited marginalization as a reason for their low participation, 9 (30%) cited low self-esteem, 5 (16.7%) cited limited access to forest resources, and only three (10%) cited tradition and culture. In a related study concerning the low participation of women in community forest management in Bimbia Bonadikombo, it was revealed that the majority of women in these communities because of their limited educational background are not aware of what climate change is and the benefits REDD+ is to offer. Also, it was revealed that the project stakeholders have skipped several stages, especially local community sensitization and awareness raising on the REDD+ project in community forests (Lamma, 2022). Figure 23 below represents the reasons for the low participation of women in forest management activities.

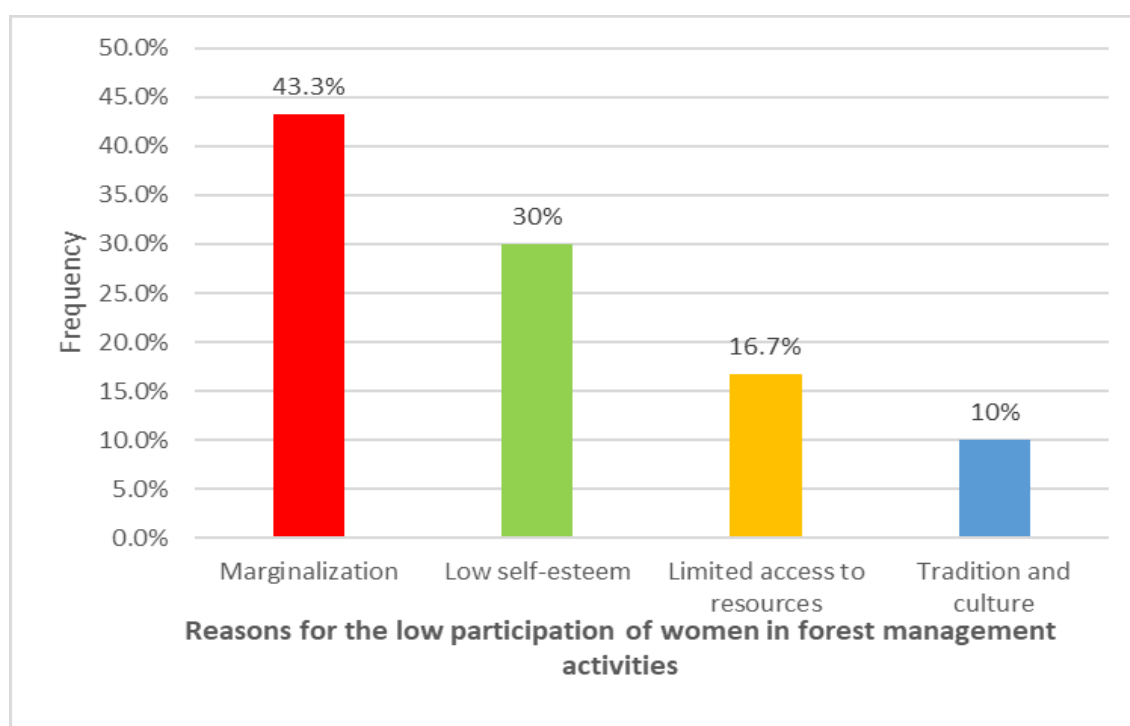


Figure 23. Reasons for the low participation of women in forest management activities

Source: Survey results

A case study in Madhya Pradesh in India supports the above assessment where it was revealed that there is value when women are included in joint forest management programmes for the sustainability of the forest, however, at times they seldom themselves the opportunities due to socio-cultural constraints (Bhattacharya & Basnyat, 2003). Studies from Sama-Long in 2022 also reveal that the limited role

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played by women in community forest management is due to the absence of gender not mainstream in the forestry law. This makes it gender-biased and difficult for most rural women to effectively play their part in community forest management (Sama-Long, 2022).

6.10.5 Transparency

Based on the constitutional design of the BBNRMC, one of the objectives of the management council of BBCF was to foster transparent actions that will lead to their desired outcomes such as improvement in sustainable forest management and livelihood improvement. Thus, transparency requires full information disclosure to all actors with rights and stakes in the forest resources, regarding actions that influence the resources so that they too can monitor and evaluate if these actions lead to agreed outcomes (Nuesiri, 2022). Article 10 of the constitution of BBNRMC provides that the general assembly shall appoint auditors who shall carry out an annual audit to ensure transparency of all financial transactions. This section examined the aspect of transparency in the management of BBCF. The results assessing transparency in BBCF are based on the means and standard deviation for the data that was collected through the 5-point Likert scale measuring the level of agreement of the respondents concerning the given aspects of Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest management. Based on the means, [1.00-1.80] Strongly Agree, [1.81-2.60] Agree, [2.61-3.40] Undecided, [3.41-4.20] Disagree and [4.21-5.00] Strongly Disagree.

Table 13. Assessment of transparency
Source: Survey Results

Items	Count	Mean	Sta. De	Decision
There is transparency in the management system	104	2.240	1.1533	A
Funds and decisions arrived at during meetings are made public	104	3.404	.7442	UD
Composite mean = 2.822				UD

From table 13 above, based on the first statement on whether there is transparency in the management system, the mean is 2.240 and the standard deviation is 1.1533 which indicates that the respondents agreed that there is transparency in the management system. Lastly, with regards to whether funds and decisions arrived at during meetings

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are made public; the responses show a mean of 3.404 and a standard deviation of 0.7442 which means that respondents remain undecided whether funds and decisions arrived at during meetings are made public. A composite mean of 2.822 shows that the respondents remain undecided on the aspect of transparency with the management of BBCF. The respondents' position of neutrality here does not mean that there is no transparency in the management system. There is transparency but only to a certain extent. To have further knowledge on this issue of transparency, findings reveal that since 2002, the position of auditors as stated in the constitution remains vacant till the present date, and budgeting and operational plans are solely in the hands of the forest manager with the approval of the board president, sometimes without the knowledge of the general assembly (Nuesiri, 2022). This paints a picture of a personalized style of decision-making on the part of the board president without consulting other board members. Studies on community forest governance in the south region of Cameroon also reveal that only 10% of the composition of community forest management committees were democratically elected, 20% took seats on the committee by consensus and 43% of members of the management committee were self-appointed (Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the problem of transparency is limited to BBCF. The above information can be presented graphically (Figure 24) for further explanation as follows:

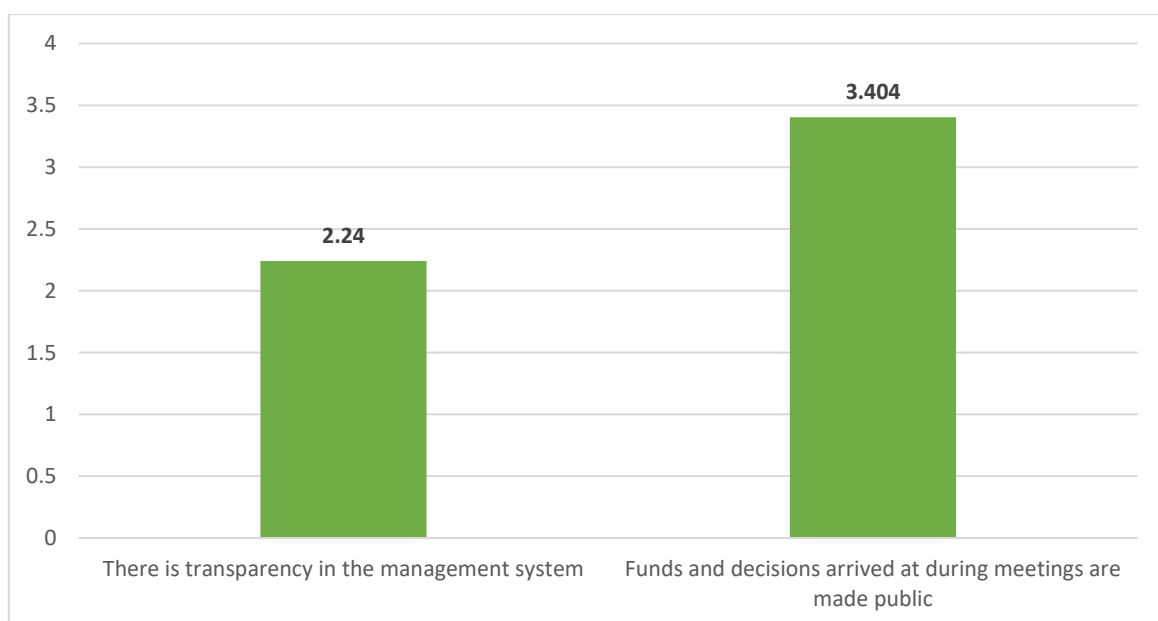


Figure 24. Transparency in the BBCFM
Source: Survey results

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6.10.6 Respondents' views on sustainable forest management at BBCF

This section presents some of the various suggestions or measures that could be put in place to strengthen the sustainable management of the BBCF reserves. Concerning the idea of planting more trees, (59.3%) were in favour of reforestation, and (50%) were for the strengthening of institutional rights. Only (29.3%) mentioned reducing complicity by elites and administrative authorities, others suggested the transfer of complete ownership of the community forest to the local communities (30.0%). Furthermore, some respondents hold the opinion that both the community and government should be integrated into the management of community forests (44.0%). Added to the above, some respondents suggested that the government should partition part of the forest for farming activities (28.0%), while small fractions proposed that the management of the forest should be under complete control by the government to avoid inter-tribal wars between indigenes (10.0%) as this will help prevent conflicts. The majority of the respondents (63.3%) expressed the need for the provision of basic facilities such as hospitals, roads, water, and electricity. The above findings can be represented graphically (Figure 25) as below.

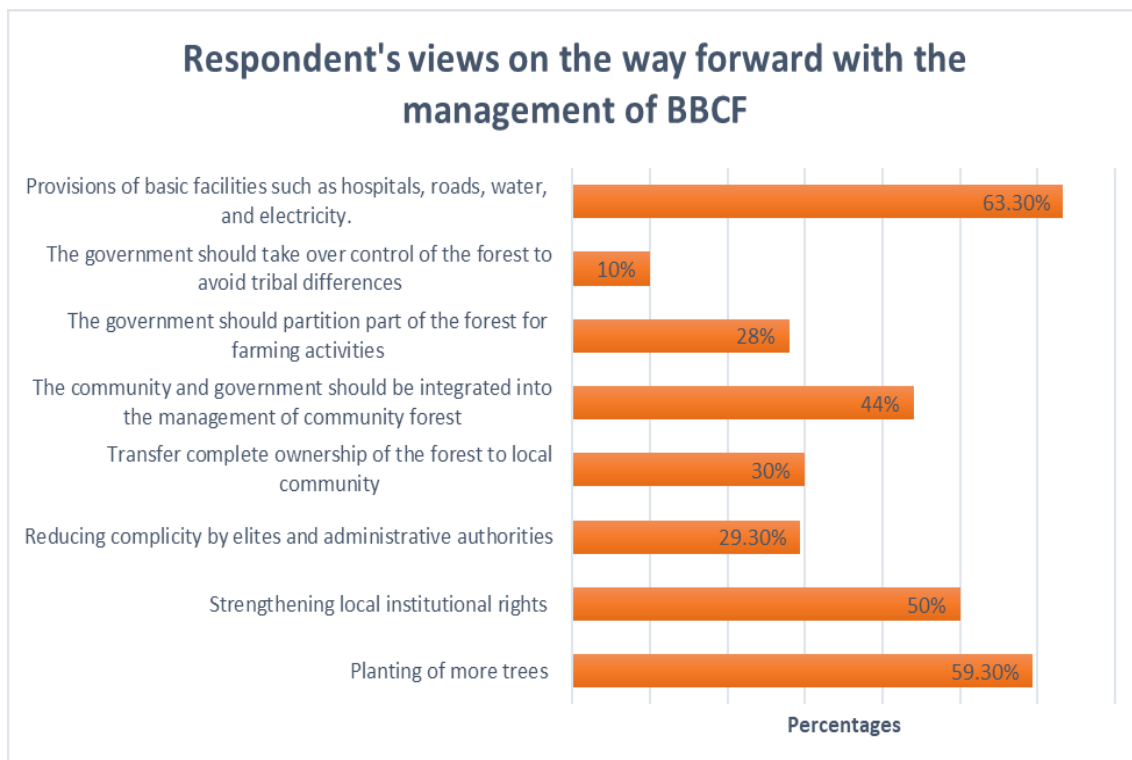


Figure 25. Respondent's perception of ways forward in CFM
Source: Survey results

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6.11 Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter reveals that community forest governance in the case of BBCF shows a gloomy picture depicted in many aspects such as inadequate integration of local participation and the lack of capacity in the management of the community forest. The communities around the forest area from my findings have not yet felt the impact of the community forest vis-a-vis the reasons behind the creation of the community forest. Many issues need to be revisited to make the BBCF successful and relevant for the REDD+ initiative. Even though the finding of the research shows improvement in sustainable forest management, care should be taken to ensure that the benefits from the community forest have a positive impact on the local community members when it concerns improving the livelihood of the community.

The 1994 Forestry Law reforms, which created community forest management contain certain prerequisites such as the community applying community forestry to have a legalized association. The law created socio-legal gaps because, in most situations, the initiative to create community forests does not usually come from the communities, but from external actors in the forestry sectors who are usually state elites. These elites are businesspersons who want to take control of the management of the forest for their selfish gains without necessarily for the benefit of the community or environment. To produce a simple management plan is also costly and requires specialist input, and be made available by these elite groups. The estimated cost of producing a management plan in Cameroon ranges from 12,000 US dollars to 55,000 US dollars (Kimengsi & Bhusal, 2022). The consequence of the above action is a lack of social mobilization to get the communities involved in the management activities. All the above constraints are factors limiting the participation of the local population in the management of forest activities, and the local communities seem vulnerable and captive. The state of representation in the management of BBCF has not created an institution, which can defend the interests of the local population. The activities of the elite's management of the forest are for their self-interests instead of the interests of the communities.

Though the concept of REDD+ and CFM is still in its infancy in Cameroon, the government and other stakeholders working in synergy can bring better results in reducing deforestation and forest degradation significantly. Any project idea that focuses on reducing carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation in a

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community, should have effective participation of the local communities concerned (Enow *et al.*, 2021). One thing to make clear is that it does not suffice to have laws without a proper mechanism for implementation. For community forest management to gain credibility for effective REDD+ implementation in Cameroon, it will require robust responsive and accountable governance structures at different levels. These structures will provide an opportunity to engage different actors involved in forest management in a dialogue that involves sectoral policies and investments for real economic and social transformation. This has not been the case in Cameroon, especially in the BBCF. Given the high hopes held for it at the onset, the results of some governance aspect on community forestry, with a focus on the BBCF is considered problematic especially as a community forest is considered one aspect under the REDD+ initiative. For the above reasons, there is still a heated debate about whether community forestry is an ideal strategy for sustainable forest management and poverty reduction. Although it is one of the principal innovations in the Forestry Law of 1994, in practice, the applications are full of flaws and contradictions. It has not led to widespread forest management by communities living in the forested areas (only 1.8% of the surface area of Cameroon is under a community forest regime). Nevertheless, Community forestry is essential for sustainable REDD+ implementation in Cameroon because of the success stories recorded in Tanzania. Community forestry is a success in Tanzania because it secured land tenure law which makes it possible for a community operating community forestry to benefit 100% from their activities through the Forest Act⁵⁶. The revenue from the timber harvest was used to build schools and fund other community projects (Watts *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, an NGO, the Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative (MCDI), based in southern Tanzania, assists communities in managing and harvesting high-value timber from coastal forests and woodlands in a sustainable manner. There is a new momentum through legal reforms in the forestry sector to face new challenges because of new initiatives. MCDI's model can be broken down into four parts:

- Secure rights: assist villages in establishing Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFRs) to secure legal rights over their forests,

⁵⁶ The Forest Act provides incentives to rural communities to progressively “reserve” unprotected woodlands and forests currently outside forest reserves.

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- Strengthen local institutions: establish local forest management bodies through which villages manage and protect their VLFRs from illegal harvesting, encroachment, and forest fires,
- Create benefits: establish procedures for harvesting and sustainably selling timber to generate revenue,
- Manage profits: strengthen VLFR local governance to ensure transparent community decision-making, including revenue allocation from sustainable timber harvesting (Trupin *et al.*, 2018).

The MCDI has assisted some villages in obtaining Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification to gain greater market access and potential price premiums (ibids). Unlike in Cameroon, the forest and tenure system lacks clarity which could impact negatively the management of community forests by the community themselves. All the forests and land are state-owned. Ownership of land is possible only with the possession of a land certificate. The Tanzania model could be implemented in Cameroon if the government is serious regarding efforts in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable forest management. To implement fully REDD+ projects in the Cameroonian context, we recommend reforms towards improving the forest governance framework based on strong laws or the creation of new ones, and institutions to address specific points, where the current laws cannot be adapted to accommodate REDD+. Thus, to ensure community forests achieve their objectives under the REDD+ initiative, some actions or reforms in the forestry law are needed to make clarity, especially with the tenure system, carbon rights, and the establishment of a benefit-sharing mechanism at different levels, which will clarify the existing discrepancy between tenure and the carbon rights. The government should transfer full ownership to the community to run the affairs of the community forest and benefit from its rewards 100%. This action will limit pressure on the forests and contribute to the sustainable use of the resources since the community will be confident about their ownership and rights to benefit. With the current framework in which the benefits or rewards for keeping the forest standing, are passed via the government, and from past experiences, it is uncertain if the community will receive any benefit. It will be challenging at the time of rewards (performance-based payment), and conflict may occur if the rights to carbon credits are not clarified under the Cameroon forestry law, thus, putting REDD+ implementation in jeopardy.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The situational analysis in Cameroon shows clearly that the forestry sector needs some form of institutional and program coordination to improve synergy among actors involved in improving forest governance in the country. The following recommendations are focused on building efforts towards a partnership based on the REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA initiatives at the country level. The following actions emerge as the way forward.

7.2 Improve Stakeholder Participation

Increasing coordination between efforts to address governance could be beneficial when actively facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms at the national and regional levels, by encouraging the participation of government agencies and civil society organizations involved in the REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA processes. Localized collaborative efforts are also required to solve governance issues within REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA. Further investigation of a synergistic approach between the two efforts might be beneficial in building a more systematic approach to addressing forest and land governance concerns. To accomplish the foregoing, it is preferable to create a type of capacity-building program for stakeholders with an emphasis on actively engaging in forest governance, employing REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA as case studies. They might also be linked to a grant system to test a new approach to forest governance. It is also critical to hone facilitation abilities in communicating and listening to stakeholders. This element will assist them in successfully participating in meetings, workshops, and training sessions by providing their perspectives.

Also, the enhancement of inclusive stakeholder dialogue, and empowering communities to exercise rights to resources, are other recommendations for REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA initiatives in Cameroon. FLEGT-VPA and REDD+ have established successful models of multi-stakeholder participation, and these have served as tools to open a space for inclusive dialogue between stakeholders (forest-dependent communities, private sector, governments and civil society) that has resulted in real change. In general, stakeholders have understood how their input is utilized and the

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process has been transparent (EU-FLEGT & REDD+ Facility, 2016). When this dialogue does not work, there must be governance systems, which help traditional forest owners to exercise their rights to forest resources. In situations where VPA dialogue is already underway, they can potentially provide a basis or inspiration for consultations for REDD+. Similarly, where the REDD+ platform exists, and VPA negotiation comes afterwards, collaboration may provide access to important and influential stakeholder groups. On the other hand, if VPA or REDD+ dialogue already exists, but is not given a role in the new mechanism, the existing process may be undermined, wasting investment in building trust and capacity thereby giving room for a negative response from stakeholders that feel undermined. In the context of viable and successful community forests, the decisions taken by the community concerning the management of the community forests should be respected. Imposing administrative structures with no local precedent could lead to elites and external actors gaining control and monopolizing benefits meant for the community concerned.

7.3 Secure Forest Tenure

Advocating for land and forest rights for local communities to encourage them to participate actively in sustainable investment in land and forest management, is of utmost importance to REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA initiatives in Cameroon. When there exists a secure land and forest tenure in a country, there will be motivation concerning fair and more equitable partnerships between the government, local communities, and the private sector. In the same way, strengthening the enabling environment for sustainable investment could result in more incentives for new economic drives towards better governance and sustainability. Investment in forests will increase their value and relevance in successfully contributing to poverty reduction and rural employment.

7.4 Clarify Mandate and Improve Cooperation between Actors of the Forest Sector

It could be of importance to promote effective collaboration, among stakeholders associated with REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA processes in the areas of communication and coordination. Much emphasis should be based on the need for a joint REDD+ and FLEGT coupled with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) network to support the government in improving the forestry sector by ensuring that community benefits can

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be achieved. Support for the above recommendation can be achieved through improved cross-sectoral land-use planning, which involves forestry, agriculture, and other land uses that drive deforestation. There has been more than one initiative in Cameroon working towards improving cross-sectoral land-use policies, but all have experienced failures in their functioning or operationalization. One of the initiatives grouping multi-stakeholders under a committee is the inter-ministerial committee for facilitating the implementation of a sectoral program for forests and the environment, created by Order No. 100/PM of 11th August 2006. Unfortunately, this committee has met with little success. The failure has been attributed to the fact that the committee is headed or chaired by the Ministry of Economy and Finance rather than being technically administered by MINFOF (Ngeh *et al.*, 2016). Clear evidence exists showing the poor relationship between MINFOF and other actors in the forestry profession such as the timber or wood union's operators on the one hand, and independent observers on the other (Ibids). Again, a collaboration between MINFOF and the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), is not the best. Such relationships should be improved given the overlapping missions of each Ministry. The necessity of understanding and taking common actions to improve forest governance, land governance and agricultural-sector governance needs to be addressed in the Cameroon context. This is because improvement in governance and land-use planning can only take place via cross-sectoral dialogue that involves all sectors and actors.

7.5 Improve Forest Law Enforcement

One of the main challenges to the government of Cameroon is the lack of technical and operational capacities of law enforcement agencies compounded by weak collaboration between agencies. There is a need to strengthen the capacity and cooperation of forest law enforcement agencies, notably the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) and the Ministry of National Security (Police) in charge of law enforcement. There is a need to build a common vision and direction by designing and implementing consistent and coordinated Terms of Reference (TOR), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and environmental law enforcement strategy with all law enforcement partner agencies in Cameroon. This can be achieved with the inclusion

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of the public prosecution office (police) carrying educative awareness concerning law enforcement agencies from the central to the regional level. Also, there is a need to educate village communities on their rights and responsibilities, and the communities should also serve as informants to the state to report any wrongdoing in their communities.

7.6 Strengthen Anti-Corruption Drive

Corruption is deeply rooted in Cameroon (Transparency International, 2016). From the survey results, it is clear that corruption is one of the problems affecting the progress towards improving the forest governance framework in the country. The government have shown positive willpower to arrest the situation of corruption by the creation of a National Anti-Corruption Unit (CONAC); regrettably, corrupt practices are still on the rise. This means that the efforts to fight corruption in Cameroon are not only inadequate but also ineffective. There is a need to develop relationships with other sectors like the customs office, the police unit, the Ministry of Finance, state inspection and the anti-corruption agency to fight corrupt practices in the country. REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA saw corruption as an impediment to the realization of their objectives. Strengthening the drive against corruption in Cameroon is the right thing to do.

7.7 More Powers to Non-state Actors as Forest Stewards

Some governance challenges are too big and too important to be solved by governments alone. There is potential relevance in the inclusion of so-called non-state actors in governing national and international issues. Non-state actors are all those actors that are not (representatives of) states, yet that operate at the international level and that are potentially relevant to international relations (Arts, 2014). Giving more powers to non-state actors through the process of effective multi-stakeholder dialogue leads to better-informed decisions, and greater public support for decisions, and creates more prospects for the effective implementation of decisions taken. Examples of non-state actors in Cameroon include World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Greenpeace, Oxfam, etc. Identifying civil society organizations working to improve forest governance and supporting them to actively engage relevant government agencies in forest-related issues is one of the best options for Cameroon. The non-state actors should be involved in drawing up governance strategies for these civil

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society organizations, including guides on how to develop plans and proposals concerning forest governance projects.

7.8 Develop a Performance-Based Monitoring System

The implementation of REDD+ and FLEGT-VPA initiatives in Cameroon without setting up a system to evaluate performance could be a waste of time for the crusaders in the fight against illegal logging, deforestation, and forest degradation. It is important to develop and implement a monitoring and reporting system on forest governance that will help evaluate progress on the ground. This is one of the conditions for REDD+ implementation in Cameroon. Therefore, synergy could be created to use the same procedure for FLEGT-VPA also with the government-led forest monitoring system. This system needs to be developed because the performance-base-payment in REDD+ can only be achieved with the setting up of a performance-based monitoring system. To achieve the above, investments in capacity building beyond monitoring, tracking and oversight would be extremely beneficial to sustainable forest management and livelihood benefits from forest enterprise. Investment in capacity building is important in terms of knowledge, skills, and resources, and has to be based on tools development and training on the use of these tools.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire Survey

TO THE INDIGENES/ MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE BBCF

Assessment of Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest Management

To assess how REDD+ and CFM concepts can work together to achieve sustainable forest management and a reduction in deforestation and forest degradation in the Cameroon context, with BBCF as a case study.

The approach adopted for this research is based on a framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance with guidance from FAO and PROFOR frameworks. The principles are as follows: (1) Accountability, (2) Effectiveness, (3) Efficiency, (4) Fairness/Equity, (5) Participation, and (6) Transparency. Questions for my assessments were developed reflecting the principles, serving as indicators to help my research findings via the use of a questionnaire survey (perception survey). The indicators or questions will be described to make an understanding and monitor governance in the management system (see some indicators below).

Please provide a tick (√) in the appropriate boxes and open a response where necessary.

SECTION A: Demographics and Background Information

1. Gender: a) Male (b) Female
2. Age: (a) 20-30 (b) 31-40 (c) 41-50 (d) 51-60 (e) > 60
3. Educational Level: (a) No formal education (b) Primary (c) Secondary and Tertiary Diploma
4. Occupation: (a) Farmer (b) Timber exploiter (c) Trader (d) Civil servant (e) Student (f) No formal employment
5. How long have you stayed in the Community: (a) 1-5 years (b) 6-10 years (c) 11-15 years (d) >15 years
6. Resident origin: (a) Indigene (b) Non-Indigene

SECTION B: Sustainable Forest Management

Instruction: Please tick (√) in the box the correct response to the following questions. You are required to respond whether you; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	Accountability	SA	A	D	SD

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1	The Management Council of the BBCF is held accountable to its members				
2	Representatives of the local community receive updates on forest activities				
3	Rules of community forest management are observed by the management committee				
4	Information concerning decision-making and funds generated is accessible to the community				

S/N	Effectiveness	SA	A	D	SD
1	People are restricted from cutting plants for fuelwood.				
2	Forest guards have been kept monitoring the BBCF forest				
3	Penalties are levied on defaulters of the BBCF laws.				
4	Hunting still takes place in the BBCF.				

S/N	Efficiency	SA	A	D	SD
1	What methods are used to notify members about meetings?				
2	Members are well informed ahead of time about community forest meetings				

S/N	Fairness/Equity	SA	A	D	SD
1	Since the creation of the BBCF, the income you get from the sales of forest products has increased appreciably.				
2	Since the creation of the BBCF, your nutrition intake has increased from the consumption of forest resources				
3	The benefits of the BBCF are shared among the communities				
4	The Management Council of the BBCF provides special provisions for poor people				

S/N	Participation	SA	A	D	SD
1	I actively participate in community management forest activities				
2	I participate in training offered by the community forest management council				
3	I regularly participate in community management meetings				

S/N	Transparency.	SA	A	D	SD
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1	There is transparency in the management system				
2	Funds and decisions arrived at during meetings are made public				
3					

SECTION C: Measures that can be put into place or strengthened to increase forest protection and local livelihoods in and around BBCF

Instruction: Please tick (√) in the box the correct response to the following questions. You are required to respond whether you; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	Measures	SA	A	D	SD
1	Planting of more trees				
2	Strengthen local institutional rights				
3	Transferring complete ownership of the Community Forest to locals				
4	Reducing complicity by elites and administrative authorities				
5	Non-intervention of government in the management of the BBCF				

Thanks for your Time

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Appendix 2: Interview questions for the managers

1. Are you a trained manager in forest management?
2. Who employed you to manage this CF?
3. Describe some of your duties, and how long have you been working in this CF?
4. What information can you give about the management of the CF, before and after the 1994 Forestry Law?
5. Is there any impact of this law concerning the management of the CF?
6. Are you influenced by the government or the board members in terms of decision-making?

Interview with the Guards

7. Are you employed by the local community or by the government?
8. What are your functions?
9. What is your opinion about the 1994 forestry law concerning the management of BBCF?
10. What are some of the challenges faced?
11. Are you on a monthly salary?