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REDD in Cameroon

The Republic of Cameroon is a country on the western side of Central Africa, renowned for its biophysical and social diversity. Cameroon is considered to be a high forest cover country, and these forests provide an important source of livelihoods, ecosystem services, and habitat for over 9,000 plant species, 910 bird species, and 320 mammal species.

Amongst the Congo Basin countries, Cameroon holds the fourth largest amount of dense tropical forest, with around 42% of the total land area (equivalent to roughly 20 million ha) covered in forest (FAO 2011). However, Cameroon's official forest cover and deforestation rate is debated amongst scholars and research institutes, which is mainly due to the diversity of the agro-ecological zones

and the lack of an official definition of forests. The estimated annual deforestation rate ranges between 0.06% - 0.2%, the latter placing Cameroon amongst the highest among Congo Basin countries. Although the country has historically low deforestation rates, it is increasingly hypothesized that Cameroon, and the Congo Basin in general, may soon experience higher rates (Megevand 2013). This is due to increasing international and national investments in agro-business, especially in oil palm plantations, mineral extraction, and road development in forested areas. Recent infrastructure developments in hydro-dams and deep-sea ports also places significant pressure on forests.

According to Cameroon's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are agriculture, particularly shifting slash and burn cultivation, and wood extraction (R-PP 2013). One of the main underlying drivers may be the Government of Cameroon's ambitious Vision 2035 which aspires to make Cameroon an emerging economy by 2035. The country's development policy as laid out in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) bases the country's growth on infrastructure development, modernization of the productive sectors and regional trade integration, amongst others. Cameroon suffers from stagnating per capita income, a relatively inequitable distribution of income, a top-heavy civil service, economic mismanagement, pervasive corruption, and a challenging business environment for both local and foreign investors. International development partners urge for reforms, including increased budget transparency, privatization, and poverty reduction programs.

Cameroon has been engaged in REDD+ since 2005 and at the national level, the Government opts for financing options through both funding and market-based approaches. In REDD+ negotiations, Cameroon supports the voluntary engagement of non-Annex I countries.

Cameroon is an active member of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and the COMIFAC's Working Group on Climate Change. COMIFAC countries generally engage in the UNFCCC negotiations with a common position regarding REDD+, as this increases the weight of their arguments. Within this context Cameroon has contributed to the preparation and communication of five Congo Basin country submissions to the UNFCCC that helped to highlight the role of forest degradation and sustainable forest management in the REDD+ discussions. In line with COMIFAC's position, Cameroon supports a historical reference emission level with development adjustment factors. COMIFAC countries recently agreed they would like to see agriculture given a more prominent role in the UNFCCC, especially as for their countries this is a priority area for climate change adaptation. Given the majority of those living in COMIFAC countries rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, COMIFAC generally considers climate smart agriculture as a key option for REDD+.

Cameroon is a Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Country Participant since September 2010 when the first grant agreement to develop an R-PP was signed. Since November 2011, Cameroon is also a UN-REDD Programme Partner Country but the FCPF plays the main role in the national REDD+ Readiness process. Cameroon is in the first phase of REDD+, during which capacity is built, the REDD+ strategy is developed and reference levels established, amongst others.

In February 2013, the country's R-PP was approved by the FCPF, which triggered 3.6 million USD for its implementation. Signed in November 2013, this "readiness grant" will be used to develop Cameroon's national REDD+ strategy. Cameroon's R-PP proposes to develop legislation on a range of topics, including stakeholder engagement, carbon rights, and distribution of benefits from REDD+ programs. Numerous legislative reforms already underway demonstrate the slow pace of the law-making processes in Cameroon.

During the REDD+ preparatory phase, Cameroon will implement REDD+ pilot projects throughout

all agro-ecological zones, which will serve to inform the development of the REDD+ strategy with concrete actions. A number of REDD+ pilot projects are currently in operation in Cameroon. These projects range from Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) to forest communities to biodiversity conservation at the regional level through landscape management. In general, these projects remain limited in their ability to influence the national REDD+ process due to a general culture of low transparency and limited information sharing. At the national level, the main activities to date include a range of capacity-building for example in forest monitoring and institutional strengthening. R-PP preparation has also entailed broad stakeholder consultation with national experts and stakeholder workshops throughout the five agro-ecological zones.

Cameroon is also engaged with the EU FLEGT process to combat illegal logging. After five years of negotiations, the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the EU and Cameroon was signed in May 2010 and ratified into national law soon thereafter.

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Last updated:
11/2013

Institutional arrangements

The body governing environmental and climate change issues, including REDD+, is the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED). According to the R-PP, MINEPDED will work in close cooperation with the Prime Minister's office, the National Assembly and the other sectoral ministries in order to integrate REDD+ into the country's development strategy. Specifically, the Ecological Monitoring and Control Unit (CMSE) in MINEPDED is in charge of all matters concerning climate change. The Unit hosts the REDD+ Technical Secretariat and the UNFCCC national Focal Point.

The Technical Secretariat is the operational body responsible for the implementation of the REDD+ readiness process. This Secretariat will establish decentralized branches at the regional and departmental level. To support the establishing and functioning of the Technical Secretariat, the Forest and Environment Sector Programme's basket fund recently approved a 3.7 million US dollar grant. Once operational, the Secretariat will play an important role in expediting up scaling the national REDD+ process in Cameroon. The team of experts for the Secretariat was still under recruitment in November 2013 and will consist of four units: Information, Education and Communication (IEC) unit; Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) unit; Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) and reference level unit; REDD+ Projects and Programs unit.

A steering committee, presided by the Minister of Environment with the Ministry of Forestry and

Wildlife (MINFOF) as vice-chair, has been set up to monitor and orient the process and is the REDD+ decision-making body at the national level. This committee is composed of the different ministries relevant for REDD+ and includes representatives from civil society, indigenous groups and the private sector. The steering committee's first meeting took place on October 18, 2012 and these continue on a bi-annual basis.

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Stakeholder engagement and participation

The Technical Secretariat's Information, Education and Communication (IEC) unit will be charged with developing the consultation and participation plan to involve all relevant stakeholders in the development of Cameroon's REDD+ Strategy. According to the R-PP, this plan will explain how to involve the range of relevant stakeholders in the development of the REDD+ Strategy. These stakeholder groups include local traditional rulers, hunter-gatherer indigenous communities, community forest organisations, municipal and regional councils, the forestry industry, agribusiness, and civil society organisations. In parallel, a REDD+ communication strategy is currently under development, financed by the COMIFAC's regional REDD+ programme.

Broad-based stakeholder engagement in REDD+ is mainly organised through the national Civil Society Platform on REDD and Climate Change. This platform received a USD 140,000 grant from the World Bank to set up regional and departmental level branches, carry out technical workshops and promote broad-based awareness on REDD+. The civil society organisations engaged in this initiative include PEOPLE EARTHWISE (PEW) in Buea and Cameroon Ecology in Edea, both located in the Southwest region. At the project level, there has been some civil society and private sector engagement with grassroots communities for example through the Making REDD Work for the Congo Basin project, Pro-Poor REDD project and a Centre for Environment, Development (CED) initiative with Baka and Bagyeli pygmies and the Forest Peoples Programme which supported the communities to come up with a statement to influence the readiness preparation process during the R-PP validation meeting in July 2012.

The degree of stakeholder participation that has characterised the country's VPA processes is often cited as one of the greatest strengths of the FLEGT initiative. Prior to finalisation of the R-PP, the REDD+ process, and specifically the R-PP preparation, was criticized by civil society in Cameroon for its lack of effective stakeholder engagement. As a result of suggestions for improvement by the FCPF Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), the R-PP was improved accordingly and Cameroon plans for broad consultation with all relevant stakeholders, with special emphasis on marginalised forest communities, during the preparation of the national REDD+ Strategy. Cameroon has also pointed out that the REDD+ steering committee -the multi-stakeholder decision-making body for REDD+ - is a flexible institution and it can be modified if necessary to increase the representation of both civil society and indigenous peoples groups. This however, would require the passing of legislation such as the Prime Minister's Arrêté that created the steering committee.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of External Relations are currently carrying out a study to identify the groups that are considered indigenous, which is often considered a controversial topic in Cameroon. Currently, the term is mainly applied to the pastoralist Mbororo and the hunter-gatherer forest communities or so-called "pygmies", comprising the Baka, Bagyéli, Bedzang and Bakola groups.

While several governmental agencies are to be engaged in the design and implementation of the

REDD+ strategy, very few have the actual capacity to engage and are therefore not effectively involved in the process. Further, the MINEPDED has relatively less financial resources compared to other ministries such as those on forestry and mining, and its mandate to engage with those other ministries is considered weak.

Updated date:

11/2013

Land tenure arrangements and carbon rights

Cameroon's 1994 Forestry Law divides its forest into two domains: a Permanent Forest Estate (Domaine forestier permanent; DFP), which must permanently serve as forest and be sustainably managed according to approved plans, and a Non-Permanent Forest Estate (Domaine forestier non-permanent; DFNP) that is set aside for development and if so planned, conversion. The DFP accounts for the majority of the country's forests, covering 80% of the total forest area, with the DFNP accounting for the remaining 20% (de Wasseige et al. 2009). Whilst both of these areas are under some form of state control, they differ in terms of how the state can grant use and enjoyment rights to civil society or the private sector. The DFP includes both production and protection forests and can be in the public or private domain as well as in the domain of a local council. Forests in the DFNP are in the national domain and community forests can be established whereby local communities are granted management rights for 25 years. Under the 1994 Forestry Law, with the exception of protected areas, the local population has the right to harvest forest products for their household use. The commercial sale of harvested forest products is subject to licensing.

Ordinance No. 74/1 of 6 July 1974 establishes the rules governing land tenure in Cameroon. Under this law, all land that is not privately registered is owned by the state and private ownership can only be acquired on land that is used productively through a registration process. In practice however, obtaining a land certificate is quite a rigorous, remote, complex and expensive process, subject to corrupt procedures. Only a small percentage of land has been registered and most forest people gain access to state-held land through local systems of resource tenure (Cotula and Mayers 2009). Currently, Cameroon grapples with land grabbing and high demand for farmland by multinationals and the domestic elite (Nguiffo et al. 2012). Cameroon has no regulation on carbon ownership per se, although it is likely the carbon is owned by the owner of the land. It will be difficult to determine who owns the carbon credits when land tenure is not clearly established.

Last updated:

11/2013

Forest management

The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) is the primary body responsible for Cameroon's forests. Around 34% of Cameroon's forestland is classified as production forest, 24% as hunting zones, 12% as national parks, 20% as national forest and the final 10% of forestland includes recreational forests, botanical and zoological gardens, eco-reserves, protected forests, wildlife reserves and sanctuaries and council forests. More than 40% of publicly owned forests are managed by private corporations for timber production, most of which are internationally owned (FAO, 2011). State forests are managed by the state in accordance with objectives of conservation, production, recreation and protection of biodiversity. Private landowners with forests are required to submit a management plan to the forest department that indicates how forest resources will be managed

sustainably.

Through its 1994 forest law reform, Cameroon was the first in Central Africa to introduce community forestry as a way to involve local communities in forest management. This, combined with its forest revenue distribution mechanism, the Annual Forestry Fee (Rédances Forestières Annuelles- RFA), demonstrates Cameroon's efforts for promoting local stakeholder participation in forest resource management. The RFA provides lessons for benefit-sharing arrangements for REDD+. It redistributes half of area-based forest revenues to decentralised public authorities, or councils (40%) and villages (10%) that are adjacent to exploited forests. However, much room for improvement remains for effective decentralised forest governance (Cerrutti et al. 2010; Cuny 2011). Studies have found that forest tax redistribution has in many cases not had the intended beneficial impact on local forest communities because of diversion of funds, elite capture, inadequate accounting systems and lack of transparent management of funds (GOC Forest Law 1994; Morrison 2009). A case study undertaken by the Accra Caucus goes so far as to state the RFA may in some cases have "negative impacts on local development and poverty reduction" (Accra Caucus 2013).

Under the community forest legislation, communities with customary rights to forestland can organise as a legal entity and apply to register up to 5,000 hectares as a community forest. To establish a community forest, communities must map the boundaries and inventory the forest resources. The community and the forest service enter into a management agreement for a maximum period of 25 years. As of 2009, 177 community forests covering 632,000 hectares had been registered and 143 had approved management plans (GOC Forest Law, USAID 2010). Current legal arrangements do not support community-based Payments for Environmental Services (PES), which may be a strategy option for REDD+. This has been included on the agenda of the forest law reform process. Studies of Cameroon's Community Forest Management Committees have found that many operate without full community participation and lack transparency and accountability, especially with regard to benefit-sharing (Cuny, 2011).

Illegal logging has long been a major concern in Cameroon and illegal practices occur at many stages from the issuance of fake concession permits that are not registered in the official figures to illegal transport and export processes that do not comply with official annual cutting limitations. Although there is now a quarterly publication of illegal logging cases and fines, only a small proportion of fines are actually paid and in a number of cases, fines are negotiated down to between 70-98% of their initial amount (Dkamela, 2011). A partnership between MINFOF and the Last Great Ape Organization (LAGA) has set up a system to track and halt practices that jeopardize biodiversity, in particular the commercial poaching and sale of protected species. LAGA is involved with legal proceedings, from field investigations to bringing cases before the law courts (Dkamela, 2011).

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11/2013

Reference levels

Cameroon's monitoring capabilities are still relatively weak and much more is yet to be done to establish a reference scenario. Cameroon proposes setting up an MRV unit under the Technical Secretariat which shall establish the scale of reference scenario, the definition of forests, estimate historical emissions and develop projected emissions / sequestrations. This unit will collaborate with the National Observatory on Climate Change (ONACC) and the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) to fulfil the monitoring requirements for REDD+. Cameroon proposes a national

reference scenario established via historical and adjusted data. However, given the specific properties of the various agro-ecological zones that comprise the first stratification of national territory, sub-national reference scenarios related to these zones will be established in order for the expected results to take into account their specific dynamics. Other parameters such as the type of forest and the type of use of the land will contribute to finalizing these scenarios (R-PP, 2013).

Through the REDD-PAC project, Cameroon receives support from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) to develop a set of policy scenarios at the national level that represent the impact of these scenarios on forests. This is a continuation of the work undertaken for the development of the CongoBiom model, which hypothesizes that the Congo Basin may very likely experience much higher deforestation rates in the coming decades due to investments in agro-industry and infrastructure.

Last updated:
11/2013

MRV

Cameroon's capacity to monitor deforestation remains relatively low. Whilst there are several sources of official data including forest concession data, financial data and general statistics, at the national level Cameroon does not currently have institutional capacity to monitor emissions from the forest sector. Several forest cover change analyses have been performed in Cameroon, across different periods and areas. For example, in 2005, as part of its national communication to the UNFCCC, Cameroon estimated its total greenhouse gas emissions based on 1994 national statistics and IPCC guidelines. In 2007, GAF-AG and GIZ supported a REDD pilot project that developed a methodology for remote sensing-based forest monitoring for the whole country and established a baseline projection of carbon emissions caused by deforestation.

The country is limited in part by the lack of appropriate satellite images, as most forested areas experience semi-permanent cloud cover. Numerous past and on-going initiatives have done extensive work and capacity building for remote sensing and forest monitoring. Amongst the most recent initiatives include l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which provides SPOT images free of charge to all REDD+ projects through the MINEPDED. Also, Cameroon receives UN-REDD Programme targeted support for MRV through the FAO regional MRV project. This project covers the ten COMIFAC countries and builds capacity for MRV at the national level while maintaining a regional approach for technical support.

A partnership between the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the World Resources Institute (WRI) has also contributed to the development of information for monitoring compliance with logging standards and the state of forest resources (Mertens et al. 2007). The government is cooperating with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on building capacity of Cameroonian institutions to develop a national forest monitoring system (NFMS) and supporting technical knowledge for collecting the data required for estimating forest carbon stocks and greenhouse gas emissions/removals.

At the project level, initiatives such as the Reducing Emissions from All Land Uses (REALU) project and the REDD Cameroon Pilot Project will be helpful in constructing MRV systems, especially those relating to emissions from the forest sector.

Last updated:

Safeguards

The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), with technical and financial support from WWF, GIZ and the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), is currently developing national methodologies and guidelines for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for indigenous people and local communities in the context of REDD+. This initiative seeks to ensure REDD+ in Cameroon is in line with the UNFCCC COP 16 REDD+ safeguards and the FPIC principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of which Cameroon is a signatory. The guidelines will serve as a tool to be used during the elaboration and future implementation of Cameroon's national REDD+ Strategy.

Cameroon does not have a formal system for addressing safeguards at the national level. The 1994 Forestry Law stipulates that Permanent Forest Estate (DFP) zones should be representative of the national biodiversity and serve as a habitat for wildlife. At the project level, voluntary standards such as the Plan Vivo standard ensure that projects deliver additional environmental and social benefits.

The National REDD & CC Platform, created in July 2011, is a main interface between civil society organisations and the entities involved in the REDD+ and climate change process in Cameroon. The platform brings together more than 20 networks of organisations and social movements of the national Civil Society networks working in the forest/environment and social sector (including the Forest platform set up for the VPA/FLEGT of Cameroon). An important part of this entity's mandate is to ensure safeguards are met and provide quality control of stakeholder participation in Cameroon's REDD+ process.

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Gender Equality

Cameroon's R-PP underlines the dependence of women on forest resources and the gendered division of labour as women usually cultivate land and collect non-timber forest products. Women are identified as one of the key players in REDD+ engagement. They are to be represented on the REDD+ Steering Committee and all REDD+ management committees are to have a minimum of 30% women on their boards. Further, the Technical Secretariat aims to integrate gender as a cross cutting issue into all REDD+ activities and developments (e.g. in the MRV process). Women are represented in the SESA unit of the Technical Secretariat. Special consideration will be given to women's issues in SESA in an effort to address equality between men and women that depend on the forest. For instance, in order to prepare for SESA, field visits will be made to hold discussions with women.

Several information tools to build capacity on REDD+ relevant issues have been created by MINEPDED, its technical partners and civil society. These range from brochures to magazines and videos and many of these information tools have been personalised and distributed to women's groups. Women are also identified as key stakeholders during consultation and participation processes. However, participation of women in regional workshops in 2012 to validate and consolidate the R-PP only averaged 25%.

As part of the activities planned in the R-PP is a plan to develop a strategy for integrating women

and indigenous peoples into the REDD+ process. Regarding energy-related issues, the R-PP plans for the role of women in the production and sale of fuelwood to be reinforced by facilitating access to microloans, improved hearths, training and revision of legislation on use of fuelwood. Women will also be specifically engaged in the development of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). In terms of benefit-sharing, matters related to women will be taken into consideration to prevent monopolisation of benefits at the hands of local (male) elites. Benefits are also foreseen by giving property titles to women leading to enhanced tenure security.

The implementation of the R-PP is informed and supported by a variety of women's organisations such as Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour la Gestion Communautaire des Forêts (REFACOF), Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour le Développement Durable (REFADD) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO).

IUCN is currently implementing the Towards Pro-poor REDD+ project in collaboration with a number of stakeholders to support the mainstreaming of human rights-based approaches and Pro-poor Principles to national climate change mitigation initiatives (REDD+ strategies and others). The project is implemented in 5 different countries. The Cameroonian activities are situated in the Sangha Tri National (TNS) and Dja-Odzala-Minkébé Tri national (TRIDOM) Landscapes. Within this project, several field analyses, including consultation processes, were carried out to take into account the interest and needs of women in order to ensure their better inclusion in the national REDD+ process.

A Gender and REDD+ road map to encourage better participation of women in the REDD+ process was developed by IUCN and WEDO in 2012, after a consultation process with rural and urban women which began in 2011. As part of the implementation of the activities of the road map, a National Gender Task Force for REDD+ and Climate Change was established in March 2015, to coordinate, support and accompany gender-enhancing REDD+ and climate change actions at the national level. The development of the Gender and REDD+ road map was an important result which led other projects to identify gender priorities within the REDD+ process. For example, a National Strategy for the Involvement of Women in the REDD+ Process was developed in December 2014 within the framework of an IUCN CBFF-sponsored REDD+ project, in collaboration with the Towards Pro-poor REDD+ project.

This Strategy incorporates a Gender Action Plan for REDD+ and climate change. The Gender Action Plan involves a wide range of activities to be carried out with women from the local to national level to ensure their rights and participation in climate change actions (capacity building, field-based women empowerment activities, local and national advocacy etc.).

Property and use rights are particularly problematic for women in Cameroon due to contradictions between statutory law and customary law. Even though the former grants equal rights to own and use property, women merely own 2% of land. This obstructs women's access to productive resources which may hamper economic opportunities. The Gender and REDD+ road map calls for special attention to be given to these issues through capacity-building, institutional collaboration, tenure security and the strengthening of women's networks (IUCN and WEDO, 2011).

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