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BUILDING ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ROLE IN REDD+ IMPLEMENTATION IN CAMEROON

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INTRODUCTION

Cameroon is found in the Gulf Guinea and is located between longitudes 8° and 16° east of Greenwich and between latitudes 2° and 13° north of the Equator. The country covers a surface area of 475,650 sq km and has a population of over 19,000,000 as of 2010. Biophysically, Cameroon is known mostly by the variability of its climate, its ecosystems or its biodiversity (Tekeu 2004). Cameroon is made up of old African basement, with recent sedimentary components common in the Chadian Basin in the northern part of the country. Similar sedimentary deposits are found in the coastal basin in the southwestern part.

The hydrology is characterized by several rivers that make up several drainage basins. Among these basins are the Atlantic, Niger, Congo and the Lake Chad Drainage Basins. The Atlantic Basin is in the south and its main rivers are the Sanaga, the Nyong, the Ntem and the Cross River. The Niger Basin that extends to Nigeria is drained by the Benue River and its tributaries in the section of Cameroon. The Congo Basin found in the southeast is drained by the Kadeï and the Ngoko Rivers. The Lake Chad Basin in the north has the Logone and the Chari as its main rivers.

The country has a variety of climatic domains that can be grouped as follows: the humid equatorial domain in the south that extends to latitude 6° north with two sub varieties. Next is the Humid Tropical Sudanese type that prevails between latitude 7° and 10° N. The last of these main climatic types is the Sudano-Sahelian type in the north, specifically around the Mandara Mountains and the Plains of Mayo-Danay and Diamaré (Tekeu 2004). Rainfall reduces as one move from the coastal region to the interior of the country. On the contrary, from the south to the north of Cameroon, temperatures increase considerably whereas the thermal amplitude increases from the north

to the south of the country. Temperature variations are very low in the south and high in the north. The northern part of Cameroon is close to the Sahara Desert and its climatic conditions are under the high influence of this desert.

The National Plan for Environmental Management (PNGE) has identified 10 distinct ecological areas that can be grouped into five ecological zones (See Annex 1). These zones include the degraded forest area of the Center and Littoral Regions that extends to parts of the coastal areas of the country. The next ecological zone is the dense forest that covers a surface area of 181,681 sq km in parts of the Southwest and East Regions. The third ecological zone is the coastal area that forms part of the Gulf of Guinea. It covers a surface area of approximately 4, 671 sq km. The savanna zone constitutes the fourth ecological zone of the country and it spreads over a surface area of 165,474 sq km covering the high savanna areas of the Adamawa Plateau, the low savannas of the Center and the East Regions, the Tikar Plains and the entire Western Highlands of the West and Northwest Regions. The fifth ecological zone is made up of the Sudano-Sahelian areas in the northern part of Cameroon. It has a surface area of approximately 10,268 sq km and it extends to the Mandara Mountains, the low lying plains of the Far North Region and the Benue Valley.

Over 16,164,000 inhabitants¹ live in these natural ecological zones of Cameroon with some of them being indigenous. These indigenous peoples are many and varied. The most distinct are the Mbororo (Fulanis) who are nomadic cattle herders and the Pygmies. The Mbororo live in the Adamawa and the Western Highlands while the Cameroonian Pygmies live essentially in the South and East Regions of the country. The Mbororo are about 1.85 million in number while the Pygmies are about 400,000.²

Historically, the Pygmies are presented as the first settlers of the Congo Basin and it has been observed that through their horizontal expansion, they currently live in parts of the East, Center, and South Regions of Cameroon. They are indigenous peoples made up of mainly the Bakas, Bakolas, Bagyélis and the Bedzangs. Although no exact data are available, the total indigenous population of the Pygmies in Cameroon is about 0.4 per cent half of which has been estimated to be the Bakas (Tchoumba

2005). The Bakas live essentially in the East and South Regions of Cameroon. The Bakolas and the Bagyéélis are spread over a surface area of about 12,000 sq km in the South Region of Cameroon, specifically in Akom II Sub-division, Bipindi, Kribi and Lolodorf. Finally, the Bedzangs live in the Center Region, the northwest part of Mbam in Ngambè Tikar area (Nguiffo, Kenfack and Mballa 2009).

Despite the fact that indigenous peoples are widely recognized as the most marginalized groups of the population, they are legally not protected (Feiring 2008). Up to the present, their rights to own and use land are not given priority even though the Preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon makes provision for indigenous peoples to own and use land. They who have lived in harmony with nature from their very inception up until recently and have accumulated enormous indigenous knowledge that is useful in the management of biological resources are least favored by the existing natural resource management policies in the country. These policies neither incorporate their indigenous management systems nor consider their units of social life such as the semi-sedentary life-style of the Pygmies as being pertinent, and therefore, have rendered the issue of their ownership of forest and forest-based resources crucial. Within the domain of managing natural resources on which they wrest a living, there is no effective benefit sharing mechanism in the country that places these groups of people at the central position. Similarly, conservation organizations and government agents have used the issue of national parks and biosphere reserve in the East and Center Regions, respectively, to promote themselves and their agendas especially in terms of fund raising. The carving out of such large areas for conservation, the attribution of forest concessions to logging companies and the granting of safari hunting permits to aliens have accentuated the continuous dispossession of the Pygmies from land and other natural resources with severe consequences on the environment.

The data for this study were gathered from secondary and primary sources. The secondary data used were collected from the libraries of the Ministries of Forest and Wildlife, Environment and Nature Protection in Yaounde (Cameroon), the library of Cameroon Environmental Watch (NGO) and from the per-

sonal libraries of Professor John A. Mope Simo and Dr. Enchaw Gabriel Bachange. On the other hand, Tebtebba Project's funders provided a relevant online document entitled "Ensuring the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in Global and National REDD processes" that guided us in our procedure.

The findings of this study have enabled us to understand those factors that contributed to the degradation and deforestation of the environment inhabited by the forest indigenous peoples of Cameroon, the issue of land and resource ownership rights of indigenous peoples, and the various international conventions ratified by Cameroon vis-à-vis conservation of natural resources and the rights of indigenous peoples. In order to carry out this study effectively, we used interviews, focus group discussions and field observation based on the maintenance guide of indigenous peoples. The data gathered using these research tools threw more light on the challenges of indigenous peoples on concerns of environmental degradation and deforestation, and the inadequate implementation of the international conventions on climate change and indigenous peoples.

Analysis of the secondary data revealed that the government of Cameroon is making insufficient effort to reconcile environmental protection and logging activities. It was also observed that the strategies used in the management of natural resources were suboptimal and never laid emphasis on the well being of the indigenous people and the smooth functioning of the REDD process. The common characteristic of indigenous peoples is their harmonious relationship with forests; they are opposed to any form of deforestation or degradation of forest-based resources.

The primary data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and field observation revealed that carving out of three National Parks in the East Region such as the Lobeke National Park was more eco-centered as the Bakas were forcefully evicted from their natural habitat. Field informants said that the Bakas lost access to their hunting and fishing sites and no alternative livelihood activities that are compatible with their units of social life were offered to them. Their eviction from the forest which served as their own territory has created conflicts over land with the Bantus. Similarly, the informants held that

their cultural and religious activities that used to take place in the forest were distorted. In another dimension, some of the Baka informants said that the categorization of animals into A, B and C classes by the government was unknown to them and would not help them in any way since their life revolves around hunting and gathering.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND DEFORESTATION IN CAMEROON

Wanton deforestation in Cameroon has divested indigenous peoples of their life-sustaining resource base. In Cameroon, a wide range of drivers are responsible for such deforestation and forest degradation. This chapter presents the profile of indigenous peoples in Cameroon and their main features as well as the drivers of deforestation in the country.

Indigenous People's Lifestyle and Organization

In Cameroon today, indigenous peoples differ from the other people in the country in terms of their lifestyle. Though almost the entire landscape of Cameroon is dominated by a sedentary lifestyle, indigenous communities in the forest zone and the Mbororo in the savanna regions are still closely associated with a nomadic lifestyle.

Cultural specificities

The culture of indigenous communities in Cameroon is fundamentally different from that of their neighbors. While the sedentary life style of the populations in Cameroon revolves around crop cultivation, that of the forest indigenous peoples is characterized by hunting and gathering of natural forest products, and grazing of livestock for the Mbororo indigenous peoples. Although the Mbororos are not the only breeders in Cameroon, they have some specific characteristics that make them different from the other groups of breeders. For instance,

the Mbororo are the only breeders that go on long-distance transhumance on foot. They inhabit essentially hill tops or pasture lands which are relatively at a higher altitude. The Mbororo cherished living away from drinking points so that they could have enough time to discuss intimately with their wives when the children go to fetch water. Indigenous communities in the forest are unique in that polygamy is not an integral part of them and the disrespect of women is rife despite the central role played by women in their society. Conflicts among couples are solved as quickly as possible, following the man's initiative. In fact, the man must seek for his wife's blessing as she is the supplier of luck, before any hunting operation and collection. Given that these operations are daily, the man must be permanently available to ensure the kindness of his wife.

Marginalization

Both the Pygmies and the Mbororo face a number of difficulties in integrating adequately into the national community. The working system of the State and the monetization of the economy have indeed been conceived for the sedentary people. They, therefore, have particular difficulties in getting basic social services.

Religion

The cultural and religious life of indigenous peoples in Cameroon is dominated by various masquerades, deities and spiritual communication with their ancestors. The masquerades appear during cultural dances in camps and villages where they perform with a lot of dexterity. Some of the masquerades are reserved only for those who have been initiated. These are those that constitute the regulatory society. This is the case with *Kose* that governs the divination dance of the Ngangas and Joboko. Then, another spirit presides over the *Yéli* ritual, and yet another performs a number of rituals before the hunting of elephants. Religion acts as a binding force between the peoples, animals and forest as well as the construction of a living world where all can communicate, give and take. Moreover, there are protected forest areas that host the spirits of their dead ances-

tors. Thus, there are types of trees that they should not cut because they are sacred.

Handicraft

Handicraft is the fifth most important social and economic activity practiced by Bakolas and Bagyéélis of Lolodorf and Bipindi. It is considered as their third source of income. The results of a study carried out with the framework of the INDISCO Program in Cameroon revealed that the Pygmies also do basketwork, sculpture of mortars, pestles, boards used for crushing, drums and other materials used for traditional dances, braids of raffia plaited for the roofing of slots, the construction of huts, the texture of the lobster pots for fishing, the forging of (knives, spears, arrows, axes), beds and the manufacturing of objects from skins of beasts. Concerning sculpture, it is important to note that it is an art that requires very rare species of wood so this activity brings about a slow destruction of forest resources.

Traditional plaiting is a well-developed art in some Mbororo communities. Beauty shops, fashions parades, and designers would copy some Mbororo plaits without having to pay for a cent. Several Mbororo girls and women are used in this sector in Garoua and in other urban centers of Cameroon, but most of them complain of low wages despite long working hours and the intricacy of the plaits that they create.

Nomadic breeding (Mbororos)

During field work, it was gathered through interviews that cows do not only represent a source of wealth for the Mbororo, but also and especially a source of food and security. When the herd is large and in good health the Mbororos feel secure. Their lifestyle is dynamic and is adapted to the prevailing conditions of the environment. In the North West Region for example, the traditional nomadic practices of the Mbororos were replaced by transhumance in response to the demographic pressure in this region of the country that resulted in the restriction of the grazing areas. Agriculture is also becoming more and more important in the region as a source of income and as a means of achiev-

ing food self-sufficiency. The Mbororo are a force to reckon with when it comes to the domain of the livestock industry in Cameroon. The Mbororo alone hold more than 30 per cent of the estimated bovine livestock in Cameroon. This represents more than five million cows essentially found in the Regions of Adamawa, North and Far-North.

Main economic activities

The economic activities of indigenous peoples in the forest are different from those among the dominant social groups in Cameroon. Indeed, while the latter are active in crop production or subsistence agricultural activities, indigenous peoples in the forest are mainly hunters and gatherers. Their main sources of incomes are:

The sale of products generated from hunting

Indigenous peoples in the forests excel in the hunting practice. This activity is primarily meant for personal consumption, but somehow it has also become commercial. This activity is, in some camps, the main source of incomes of these communities. It was also observed in the field that the hunting techniques of the indigenous peoples are becoming more and more sophisticated with the introduction of hunting guns and slings, which are different from their traditional tools made up of spears and ropes. The products of the hunt, either fresh or dry, are generally sold very close to the roads. The trophies (tips of ivory, skins of panthers, bones and hands of gorillas, skulls of chimps, etc.) are at times sold directly by indigenous hunters. They are used for decoration or therapy in their traditional pharmacopeia.

The selling of gathered products

These products are: peels, roots, wild fruits and various tubers collected in the forest by members of the communities. These are sold either in the camps or through exhibition along the roads. These products are meant for consumption (as spices, medicines or food).

The selling of labor force

This is practiced more and more in regions that host indigenous communities. The labor force is sold to forestry compa-

nies (essentially as ski patrolmen), sport hunting guides, in development projects (generally as facilitators), and to individuals as agricultural workers or even as poachers. Based on observation, there is discriminatory treatment of the indigenous people vis-à-vis the natives. For the same piece of work done, the indigenous peoples are generally paid less than their Bantu counterparts. Similarly, there is a recurrent upsurge of agitations from the natives who are employed by forest exploitation companies. They claimed that their forest knowledge facilitates forest inventory and mineral and noble gases exploration. They held that the absence of higher qualifications such as degrees should not act as enough justification for the low remuneration that they receive. In fact, they want to receive a payment proportional to their output in the companies.

“Traditional pharmacopeia”

In Cameroon, the indigenous forest peoples (the Pygmies) are reputed for their invaluable knowledge of traditional medicine. They use forest products of all sorts to treat various ailments. Through their knowledge of traditional medicine, they are able to generate incomes. Their customers are mainly Bantu neighbors, but more patients from big urban centers come to seek for their prescriptions. The range of their treatment, at times, goes far beyond those intended to relieve physical pain to include metaphysics and the provision of spells. For example, the manufacturing of love philters and decoctions for the protection of their users is also a source of income for these natives of the forest.

Status of the forest

The size of the forest in Cameroon is about 23.8 million hectares and it decreases at a rate of one per cent per year. This natural vegetation is described as degraded forest and dense forest (181,681 km²), coastal area or mangrove (46,671 sq km) and the savanna (165,474 km²). In the year 2008, the issuing of logging permits largely respected the norms of the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law. It appears that in Cameroon, nearly 75 per cent of the forest production is locally transformed although

mainly at the level of individuals. Cameroonians are very active in the domain of wood transformation. There is an improvement in the quality of local transformation and the forest sector makes a significant contribution to the national economy. The main actors of this activity are the administrative authorities and managers of companies (sawmills). This activity is contributing to the improvement of residents' standard of living.

Community and communal logging

Community logging in Cameroon is done for the interest of local communities. The activity is carried out under control either in a part of the non-permanent forest that have been attributed to the communities for wood cutting through personal authorization to exploit wood or through permits issued to local communities in accordance with the provisions of a simple management plan approved by the administration in charge of forests. As for communal logging, it has a management plan approved by the administration in charge of forests.

According to the national plan for the attribution of land, the total surface area that has been carved out into Forest Management Units (UFA) is about six million hectares. Communities that live around forests areas generate a significant part of their income from forestry royalties allocated by the government or by using forest industries such as the exploitation of non-timber forest products. However, a substantial part of forest revenue goes to multinationals that are foreign investors. In the South Region, the village communities of Ekalis I, II, and III suffer severe effects of deforestation caused by logging companies. Their entire forest has been transformed and vast expanses of forests have become bushes with abundant lianas that give a new texture to the forest. Animals have become rare in these transformed forest and only birds and rats still find this degraded environment conducive.

Livelihood of the indigenous forest people

While the logging companies perceive the forest as an entirely economic domain, indigenous peoples associate a lot of symbolism to it. Indigenous peoples perceive it as a common

property of the community owned through history attachment and its members must benefit from it. To the indigenous peoples, ownership of forest is not associated with land titles. Field data showed that nobody among the people living in the camps has a land certificate. Taking into account the modern management strategies employed, it was noticed that the Baka people in the region of Mouloundou in the East Region are marginalized. They have been deprived of the forest that plays host to all their material and spiritual activities as mentioned earlier. The forest is used by the Bakas in various ways such as for agriculture, hunting and gathering. They also use it for their spiritual activities. For them, the forest is a direct link between the living and the dead. Similarly, the forest setting is at the center of funeral ceremonies; through it, they call on their ancestors to intercede on behalf of the living for protection during hunting expeditions or to fight evil spirits. They also depend on the forest for food which is made up of wild tubers and fruits. The carving out of the forest for conservation as national parks has deprived the Bakas of an essential source of food supply. This is for example the case with wild yams that have become very scarce. Baka women with whom the research team had a focus group discussion, pointed out that the destruction of many sites containing this source of food by logging companies has necessitated trekking over long distances for the women in order to find supplies.

The Bakas from Mbateka village told us that spiritual sites and trees having medical value are destroyed due to timber exploitation activities. It is necessary to mention that industrial cutting down of trees is not the only driver contributing to the divestment of the local population of their ownership rights. Forest conservation without alternatives is also a potential driver of divestment. For indigenous peoples, forest management, which generally does not consider forest as their environment is a driver of deforestation. An example of this is the wanton cutting of forest by the Bantu to establish farms and to build roads through dense forests. The consequences of deforestation in Cameroon such as agricultural land erosion, drying of water points during dry seasons, desertification and the disappearance of plant and animal species modify both local and regional environmental conditions significantly.

The Drivers of Deforestation

The main drivers of deforestation and forests' degradation in Cameroon are the following:

- *Agricultural activities:* The intensification of agriculture by big agro-industrial companies such as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in the South West Region that produces mainly rubber, banana and tea; Palm Oil Production Corporation (PAMOL) in Tiko and Lobe; the Cameroon Sugar Company (SOSUCAM) which has sugar cane plantations and others. On the other hand, the creation of access roads by logging companies provided an opportunity for the populations to move into the forest for the cultivation of other crops and to create farms in protected forest areas, thereby accentuating deforestation. The agro-industrial companies cover about 40 per cent of the forest surface area.
- *Charcoal processing:* Charcoal processing sites are found in Ntuisson village which is located at some 20 kilometers from Yaounde. In these sites, a huge quantity of trees is cut down to process charcoal. The activity is favored by the ever growing demand for charcoal from both rural and urban populations. Besides, an area of at least one hectare at the middle of the forest is needed for the burning of the cut down trees. A native medical doctor of the area recounted with a lot of indignation the disappearance of medicinal plants through this activity. "In places where charcoal is burned, nothing will be able to grow even after a long time because the land is completely impoverished." In Ntuisson, one sees on one side a dense forest and an entirely deforested area on the other. In this area, the activity of charcoal production is the main driver of deforestation as it contributes to the cutting down of trees and soils degradation. The charcoal that is produced is sold mainly in the capital city. Although this activity generates incomes to peasants, it also affects the forest and the environment significantly.

- *Industrial logging and economic activities:* The government of Cameroon carries out economic development through industrial logging, oil extraction, mining and the building of dams and plantations. In carrying out these activities, the rules and regulations governing environmental protection are not always taken into account. These investments, therefore, are among the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Despite the existence of both dissuasive and repressive legal provisions, there is still a lot of anarchy in the forest exploitation sector. Logging companies violate the number of trees to be felled within a given period, the sizes of trees to be harvested and the tonnage to be transported at a time with a lot of impunity although the NGO known as Greenpeace has raised awareness on the impact of illegal logging (Greenpeace 2005). This sector is characterized by a high level of corruption. A peasant in the Mbalmayo forest area said that foresters cut down trees and do not care about what happens. This peasant noted with a lot of indignation the “rampant corruption” in the logging sector of Cameroon. “For industrial forest operators, it is necessary to earn money by all means. Just take note of the way timber trucks parade our highways in the evening,” the informant pointed out.

Despite the dependence of millions of people, particularly, indigenous peoples on the forest for a survival, the forest of Cameroon is still threatened by companies involved in illegal and destructive logging (Greenpeace 2005). Logging, however, had been a very lucrative economic activity for a long time as Cameroon generates a lot of foreign earnings from it through the granting of forest concessions, issuing of forest exploitation permits and the collection of taxes from logging companies. These destructive activities are promoted by foreign partners. In 2004, France was the biggest wood and wood-related products importer in the European market. It imported over 817, 000 m³, and this volume was worth over 256 million Euros (Idem 2005).

According to that same report by Greenpeace, European companies such as Rougier and Patrice Bois are involved in illegal logging in Cameroon. Similarly, in the Ocean Division (Cameroon), “local communities have started experiencing the damaging effects caused by the new pipeline that crosses their land.” The construction of the World Bank sponsored Chad-Cameroon pipeline that passes through the East, Center and South Regions of Cameroon has caused enormous loss of lands and forests at the detriment of several communities. The main victims who are the Bagyéélis (Pygmies) that constitute indigenous communities lost a total surface area of 30 sq km of forest that was for hunting, collection, gathering and farming due to deforestation (Idem 2005). Thus, these indigenous peoples have lost their source of livelihood because of an activity that was supposed to bring them development. According to MINFOF, areas allocated as forest concessions summed up to 3,135,889 ha of forests in 2005 (MINFOF 2006). To this area, the extent of some protected areas such as community forests that cover over 1 219 554 ha can be added. These are the community forests whose management agreements have been approved.

Projects involved with the exploitation of natural resources tend to upset the lifestyles and culture of indigenous peoples. Industrial logging has some consequences on the environment and life of the pygmies. The opening up of roads and forest tracks, the construction of bridges, the setting up of logging infrastructure and the organization of cutting operations expose all the sites of the indigenous peoples to a wide range of stakeholders. Their units of social life such as hunting, gathering and fishing are affected with extended ill consequences on their food and nutritional balance.

- *Quest for the “well being” of natives and other people:* Indigenous peoples are adopting various survival strategies for their well being. In the absence of a viable energy policy, especially domestic energy, people opt for a policy of “self help” where everyone uses his/her own

means. The issue of firewood is still very marginal at the level of the ministry in charge of forest management. Although the cutting down of firewood is still not generalized, it increases with time following non-affordable prices of petroleum products especially gas and oil. This situation is affecting both urban and rural populations. It illustrates the continued deterioration of the standards of living of the poor "where the rich become richer and the poor become poorer." This situation leads to the systematic use of forests to solve the problem of energy for heating, cooking food and other uses. This energy related problem of deforestation is nothing compared to agricultural clearing which is one of the first drivers of deforestation. The exploitation of timber and commercial poaching are the first causes of forest degradation (O' Halloran and Shoe 1997). As far as mining activity in the forest is concerned, it is still rudimentary and expensive because of the rugged relief of the regions concerned.

- *Poverty and deforestation:* It is often said that poverty encourages deforestation as it promotes anarchical use of forest resources. Although poverty influences deforestation among the poor, wealthy households such as owners of ranches and plantations also contribute significantly to deforestation. This implies that high levels of income do not necessarily lead to low levels of deforestation. This is indicative of the fact that there are other parameters such as good governance, accountability, equity, transparency and the rule of the law that are more important than just income level. If these parameters are not adequately analyzed and addressed, these would engender corruption, clientelism and subsequently, deforestation.

Studies modeling quantitative impacts of the increase of oil and mineral exports on deforestation have revealed significant variation from one country to the other. These variations are related to government structure, the trends in consumption expenditure, the situation of the job market and other factors. The huge revenue gener-

ated from oil in countries rich in subsoil resources can help reduce the pressure on forests and forest-based resources if a major shift is made from the forest and agricultural sectors to export activities or from the primary to the secondary sector of the economy. In Gabon, the oil boom led to an amelioration of the exchange rate and the growth of non-commercial sectors, but without resulting in an increase in deforestation. On the contrary, an oil boom in Ecuador did not check accelerated deforestation.³ These circumstances indicate that the absence of good governance, accountability, equity, transparency and the rule of the law promotes corruption and clientelism (Karsnty 2007). Besides, the conception of rules governing the exploitation, use and management of natural resources do not often involve indigenous people who directly suffer the effects of externalities from deforestation. In the field, it was observed that conservation stakeholders used either assistencialism or absencialism (Enchaw 2009) to promote themselves and their agendas thereby paying little or no attention to the indigenous peoples. The State is preoccupied with the economic dimension than the ecological consequences that are suffered by the environment and indigenous peoples.

- *Manufacturing of cultural instruments:* In the South Region of Cameroon, deforestation is intensified by cultural practices. Field informants attested to the fact that the manufacturing of instruments for traditional dance and music (drums, rattles, flutes, and xylophones) and masks in the villages of Ovangoul and Médoumou requires felling of selected trees which are sometimes rare species. Even when the group needs just a small portion of wood for their instrument, the whole tree is felled. While moving to the field, the research team observed that the manufacture of these instruments has become semi-industrial as indicated by large quantities of products sold along the road. The commercialization of these traditional instruments has led to a massive cutting down of trees along the Yaounde-Mbalmayo High way. Al-

though limited government data on this activity exists, field research revealed an estimate of two to three per cent rate of deforestation. Whatsoever the case, when the forest or environment is affected either due to political, economic or social factors, indigenous peoples such as the Pygmies are always those who suffer the effects most since they depend on the forest for subsistence.

It has been established that the prohibition of local populations from exploiting timber has not stopped the overexploitation of forest resources by alien European companies.⁴ It is difficult for local populations to know the exact date when deforestation started, however, some of the people interviewed made allusion to the colonial period. In Cameroon, industrial exploitation of timber attained apogee in the 1980s. The activity skyrocketed with the use of unorthodox means due to the growing world demand for precious tropical wood. The high demand for timber led to increased rate of harvesting and wanton violation of forest exploitation norms. The damaging effects on the forest and indigenous populations became enormous. The increase in forest degradation has become an obstacle to the effective implementation of sustainable development policy because it jeopardizes the lives of future generations and particularly indigenous peoples who are forest dwellers.

From the findings presented so far, it can be concluded that logging activities, agriculture and the manufacturing of charcoals are the main drivers of the deforestation process in Cameroon. The main actors promoting the process are: industrial forest operators, farmers (industrial farming) and to a lesser extent manufacturers of handicrafts. A combination of these factors mentioned above leads to forest degradation. The forest is the primary source of food and livelihood for indigenous peoples. It is their source of health and medicine, leisure, cultural and spiritual life. This resource is a collective property based on the sharing of natural resources from the forest. Indigenous peoples consume forest products such as game, yams and wild fruits, honey, leaves and assorted peels. Deforestation renders these forest products scarce. If we can easily get leaves in the surrounding villages, this is not the case with animals, wild fruits,

honey and the peels that are less available. The forest that used to be dense and difficult to access has become more opened due to large roads that have been created by bulldozers for the transportation of timber by trucks. The bush is essentially made up of small trees and lianas that try to rebuild more or less the virginity of this area. Even with the advent of community-based forest management, indigenous peoples do not still benefit from the fallouts of REDD and the process of deforestation and forest degradation is in a steady increase.

Women

Women and children are the first victims of deforestation and forest degradation. Women have gradually become land stewards following their interaction with nature in search of domestic livelihood. They spend a lot of time gathering and moving in order to fend for their families. In this search of livelihood, men are also involved. Through hunting, family heads contribute to the livelihood of their families. Because of forest degradation, animals become very scarce. This obliged men to go over long distances to look for animals. Poachers hunting for commercial purposes destroy everything on their way making it difficult for indigenous peoples to get what they need from the forest. This has led to competition over game between indigenous peoples and some poachers who often come from the cities.

LAWS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS ON FOREST, LAND TENURE, REDD & CLIMATE CHANGE

Laws, Policies and Program on Forest

Laws

The 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law (law N° 94/01 of January 20, 1994) of Cameroon was promulgated in order to involve local communities in forest resources management and conservation. According to this law that laid down forests, fauna and fishing organization, the forest area is made up of permanent and non-permanent forests. The permanent forest domain is made up of areas that are under total protection such as national parks that play host to Class A fauna resources. The non-permanent forest domain is made up of State forests such as reserves and sanctuaries and communal forests. It is in the non-permanent forest that community forests and council forests can be carved out. It is also in this non-permanent forest that forest concessions are allocated to logging companies for forest exploitation. The 1994 law requires inventory and planning for the exploitation of forests in Cameroon's territory. Thus, any corporate body or natural person intending to practice a forestry activity must comply with the provisions stated by this decree.

The adoption of this law in 1994 was instigated by donors who needed a new law granting local communities the possibility of increasing their involvement and participation in the management of forest resources. But the practical application of this law is very challenging as the local communities seldom participate in the design and implementation of forest management norms. As Samuel E. Edge (2001) puts it "it is difficult to reconcile the supposed traditional hunting rights as stipulated by the 1994 Wildlife Law and the way fauna is exploited in the forest controlled by local authorities and communities." The interest of the local authorities and communities on issues of wildlife management and use at local level is not considered especially as synergetic hunting in forests under the *de facto* and *de jure* rights of local authorities and communities is associated with aliens. Similarly, the 1995 Decree on wildlife brings in some new

concepts that are related to the participative management of fauna, although this decree only aims at implementing the provisions of the 1994 law on wildlife.

Law n° 96/12 of August 5, 1996, which lays down the framework related to the management of environment, emphasizes on the sustainable management of forests for economic growth and for poverty alleviation. The law also calls for participative management and conservation of biodiversity through a national network of protected areas. The general trend in the forestry policy of Cameroon is to “perpetuate and enhance economic, ecological and social forest roles within the framework of an integrated management that ensures a sustained and sustainable conservation and use of forests and ecosystem resources” (MINFOF 2006).

During a sensitization day organized by the central and external services of MINFOF on January 22, 2009 on the issue of communal forests, the Ministry drew the attention of the staff on a new approach to forest management. The staff was enjoined to perceive communal forest as a tool for decentralization, good governance and the fight against poverty. The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), which is in charge of drafting and implementing forestry policy in Cameroon, is also the supervisory body. Through the directorate of forests, this ministry implements those forestry policies drawn up by the government. The government laws restrict access of indigenous peoples to forest resources through the creation of protected areas where all human activities are prohibited and monitored by local government agents. A young man in Yokadouma testified that through forest conservation, hunting by indigenous peoples is no longer allowed. He further noted that the law has prevented them from eating meat and they can no longer move freely in the forest. The informant wondered aloud whether we have moved forward or backward in the face of this new dispensation. It is difficult to give a satisfactory answer to the worries of this informant. These restrictive laws do not always take into account the socio-economic and cultural realities of the indigenous peoples. The indigenous peoples have very low levels of formal education and have not been sensitized adequately on their rights and responsibilities. Moreover, the procedure

for them to meet up with their responsibilities is so complex and foreign to them. They are poverty stricken and none of those interviewed in the field had an idea of a land title, a hunting permit and the classification of animals. Yet they are expected to respect the rules and regulations governing hunting. These populations suffer from these restrictions on their freedom.

In the socio-cultural domain, informants said that some men were already losing their grip as family heads since the restrictions made it difficult for them bring back home something to eat (game) as required by their custom. Women considered their inability to bring home game as a sign of weakness. Although laws striving for the mitigation of deforestation are for the general interest, those who have lived in these respective domains since time immemorial must be provided with coping alternatives that are commensurate with forgone opportunities.

In another dimension, those with *de jure* rights to exploit the resources on which indigenous peoples have depended from their very inception do not even respect the norms. This has complicated the reflection on who should exploit them and the rationale for aliens to be exploiting the resources. The map below shows how forests are used in the region inhabited by Pygmies in Cameroon (See Annex 2).

Indigenous peoples in Cameroon are treated differently when it comes to forest royalties although all of them face similar problems associated with loss of access to forests and forest-based resources and climate change. Those living in areas where concessions have been given to logging companies have been allocated yearly royalties while their counterparts in mountain forest areas that conserve their forest for good climate, constant water supply for the whole country and carbon sequestration have no royalties, no incentives and no alternatives to wrest a living out of their protected forests. On the contrary, they are under the heavy arm of the law when they protest due to loss of access to forest and forest-based resources and their shrines and sacred forests where they commune with their ancestors for intercession.

Climate Change and REDD

Climate change has become more of a human issue (as it embraces socio-cultural, economic, political and ecological dimensions of forest resources management) than a purely scientific and technical subject reserved for climatologists. Indigenous peoples inhabit many of the areas of highest biological diversity on the planet. These local populations and the biodiversity constitute what the Declaration of Belem adopted at the First International Congress of Ethnobiology in Belem, Brazil in 1988 calls “inextricable link” between biological and cultural diversity (Posey 1990). Consequently, any REDD scheme that does not guarantee the effective participation of indigenous peoples is bound to fail even before taking off. Attempts by the Catholic Church and the Government of Cameroon to forcefully resettle indigenous Pygmies along roadways turned out to be counter-productive. The dissociation of some of the Pygmies from their natural environment was exploited by some logging companies to deforest the initial sites of the Pygmies. The Mbororos are considered as aliens in all the localities in which they find themselves in Cameroon and their grazing activities are putting them into conflicts with their neighbors. In the savannah grasslands, transhumance calendars of the Mbororo cattle breeders have been altered from January to late October due to a shift in the start of the dry season. This early start of the dry season has increased the number of conflicts they have with their Semi-Bantu crop farmers as they go on transhumance when crops have not yet been harvested in the valleys (Enchaw 2009).

Impact of climate change on indigenous people

Indigenous people are affected by climate change in three ways:

1. The change in seasons (lengthy dry season and the coming of droughts) disturbs the agricultural calendar and the temperature of the surroundings;
2. Their life style is shaken; there is scarcity of forest products (fruits, tubers). Indigenous peoples are therefore compelled to look for other food substitutes;

- 3) Due to the change in the overall activities of the year, religious ceremonies of the year are not held at the proper time.

Actions and Responses to Climate Change

As far as community grouping is concerned, there are few community initiative groups (GICs) or associations that are put in place by indigenous people themselves. The rights of indigenous peoples, however, are protected by some local NGOs and associations. In Djoum, which is part of the study area in the South Region of Cameroon, women are organized in small groups (djanguui) where they raise funds to carry out small scale commercial activities such as the selling of games, tomatoes, oil, maize and fruits. This enables them to satisfy some of their immediate needs. So far, there has been no community initiative group put in place by indigenous peoples, particularly by women, that fights against climate change and REDD. Actually, REDD initiative is still unknown in these communities even the pilot project of REDD that is run by the Cameroon Government.

Issues of tenure have complicated the challenges of climate change and the REDD processes vis-à-vis indigenous peoples in Cameroon. Forest reforms associated with modern land tenure system characterized by titling engendered loss of access to life-sustaining resources and destabilization of the social dimension which encompasses social policies, societal values and norms. All these resulted to cultural conflicts that influence biodiversity decimation even in protected areas under the aegis of governments. This embarrassing situation gave local communities the latitude to blame governments for applying top-down strategies that deplete their traditional forests. On the other hand, the governments blame local communities for much of the damage being done to the forest. These accusations and counter accusations are indicative of the recent unprecedented quest for the adoption of more adaptable conservation strategies.

Forest reforms in the country still give precedence to modern land tenure system with limited practical participation of indigenous peoples in forest managements. Forest reforms of the 21st century in Cameroon have been fostered in ways that

replicate the historical inadequacies of the 20th century. Until the 2nd half of the 20th century, local populations were considered as having nothing to offer in the domain of forest conservation. Effort to redress the situation in 1994 led to the introduction of community forestry as a means to increasing the participation of local peoples in forest management. That effort notwithstanding, the new Cameroon Forestry and Wildlife Law of 1994 accorded a problematic definition to a community with potentials to own a community forest. The establishment of community forests based on user groups did not coincide with the tenure arrangements of indigenous peoples. The subsequent transformation of some forests into community forests, with management entrusted to management officers (FMOs) and delegates of forest management institutions (DFMIs), was a state construct and it meant the transfer of tenure rights from traditional landlords to user groups. Duplication of posts (FMOs and DFMIs) at the head of forest management institutions (FMIs) paved the way for conflicts of authority (Enchaw 2009).

Indigenous peoples are among the poorest in the country and they depend on traditional methods of cropping and livestock rearing which are not adapted to increasing population and limited access to input and output markets. Their agricultural practices are very vulnerable to deforestation, forest degradation, climate change and rugged relief. Attempts to wrest a living and to cope with climate change (progressive increase in the length of the dry season, rising temperatures and inadequate and irregular rainfall) have rather metamorphosed to collective depletion of forests and forest-based resources through covert arrangements. Such clientelism is fanned by logging companies and ivory customers who are mainly from the developed world. REDD programs are riddled with top-down approaches that are cushioned by assistencialism. Forest governance is bogged down by poverty and the fact that sponsors of forest governance facility projects seldom include livelihood in their packages. Similarly, REDD processes have not included a capacity building component that considers the social status of indigenous peoples. The social status of the Pygmies and the Mbororos renders them vulnerable with limited chances of participating effectively in REDD initiatives.

Policies and programs on forest

The 1994 reform has three main objectives (Logo 2007): a political objective, a socio-economic objective and an ecological objective. Politically, it concerns with the implementation of principles that increase the involvement and accountability of villagers in the management of forest resources and the promotion of local democracy and governance in forest resource management. Economically and socially, the reform seeks to make the contribution of the forestry sector to local development and poverty alleviation possible. This could be achieved through the design and carrying out of economic and social projects such as water supply, electricity, construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, equipment and schools and health centers, etc. In the ecological domain, it aims at ensuring a sustainable management of the forest ecosystem.

But by granting the exclusive right to forest operators (70% of the area meant for exploitation), the 1994 law significantly restricts the user's rights of the residents (Lassagne 2005). For local forests that have been classified under permanent State domain, the classification act restricts the forest use rights of local populations. Thus, agro-forestry activities are strictly forbidden within the limits of local forest. In the field, it was noticed that the spreading of local forestry contributed tremendously in reducing arable land. This scarcity of arable land leads to conflicts among residents. In addition, increasing inequality and injustice in resource allocation and the absence of a viable benefit sharing mechanism has engendered conflicts among various stakeholders in the forestry sector (Logo and Dabire 2002). The lack of arable land led to a decrease in the incomes of the residents. Thus, the practice of agriculture, which is the main income generating activity, has become hypothetical. As a result, logging tends to impoverish the populations in spite of royalties generated by this sector.

Natural resource management in Cameroon is a strategy of the national forestry policy. This forestry policy is related to the National Environmental Management Program (NEMP) and is supported by ecosystem perspectives. The strategies, priorities and objectives of this forestry policy are tilted towards the conservation of biodiversity and the involvement of local popula-

tions in order to bring about economic development. In the development of this new policy, the government took into account the entire forest, which in this context, is considered as an ecosystem. The ECOFAC program that began in 1993 focused mainly on the Fauna Reserve of Dja created in 1950 with a surface area of 5260 sq km. This was intended to combine improvement of people's standard of living and the development of a reserve.⁵ The restrictive nature of this program that was focused only on the Dja Reserve has made its functioning difficult. The unstable nature of the reserve personnel disrupts its functioning. On August 2, 2001, several decrees appointing the personnel came up and disrupted the activities of the program and the conservation service. Among these decrees were those appointing a new national director in the Ministry, a new conservator and the representatives of the administration within the program established by ECOFAC. These appointments have created some uncertainties both within the staff and the population (Idem 2001). Difficulties encountered riddled the coordination and the management of the reserves because abusive and anarchical exploitation of the forest reserves in the country set in. Since these programs are considered as a means to enriching those managing them instead of effective conservation, uncertain periods of mandate has given room for clientelism and covert arrangements that are detrimental to the environment and the social fabric of the resident population.

A field informant during a focus group discussion said that leaders of this program are replaced on a daily basis, and this complicates the running of the program with the local population suffering the effects. When the post of the conservator is vacant, operators in the forestry sector take advantage to illegally exploit timber within the reserve with the complicity of the reserve guards.

The problems caused by logging accentuate land disputes. Land policy in Cameroon is based on land and estate tenure even though the Cameroonian land tenure is based on legal pluralism. Tenure in the country is based on tradition or customary law and modernity tenure.⁶ The unrecognized cohabitation of these two tenure systems eschews complementarity and has instead resulted in recurrent conflicts with the State arrogating the monopoly of tenure.

The genesis of such land policies dates back to the colonial period. The colonial land policy that existed since 1901 became generalized following the 1932 decrees in Western and French Equatorial Africa. The policy is based on associating the public and the private and excluding the common. Customary land ownership has led to conflicts between the State and local communities. Customary tenure approach of collective ownership does not coincide with land titling approach of the State. The State uses economic and social development as a pretext to marginalize local collectivities. It is also the case with indigenous peoples whose land rights are violated. The marginalization of indigenous peoples has jeopardized their sustainable development. State land policy lays emphasis on the relationship between land ownership and sustainable development, thus it is a driver of the environmental protection policy. Unfortunately, these environmental protection policies are seldom implemented adequately. It has been difficult to reconcile land ownership, control and the distribution of non-registered lands. Besides, local populations know little or nothing on land registration policy. Ignorance is the root cause of many land disputes noticed throughout the national territory. Amougou Onana (2010), a field informant, related that he inherited his plantations from his parents and those in his community were aware of that. He said he did not see any reason to produce documents. According to him, the land title policy was something that was brought from somewhere. Land disputes are associated with deforestation and forest degradation.

REDD, Indigenous Peoples and their Rights

The involvement of developing countries in world efforts to mitigate climate change within the context of a new climate deal after 2012, led to the establishment of a project on “Reducing Emission from Deforestation and forest Degradation” (REDD) in the forest of the Congo Basin. Cameroon is concerned with REDD due to its 19.6 million hectares of forest potential. This is equivalent to 41.3 per cent of the national surface area. It is observed that 11 per cent of this forest is found in the Congo

Basin.⁷ Thus, the country has been chosen to host that project. The adoption of REDD by Cameroon is aimed at providing the necessary tools that will prepare the country in particular and the sub-region in general to start operating within the framework of the mechanism to reduce greenhouse gases effects (GES) during the post period of the Kyoto Protocol. Cameroon became involved in the REDD process from the beginning of the negotiations in the Copenhagen meetings. In this context, support for launching a REDD pilot project in Cameroon in 2007 came from the State and COMIFAC. This initiative is carried out under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) which is the national focal point of REDD. The implementation of this tentative phase is done through experiences of GAF-AG group—a German structure that specializes in remote sensing. The pilot project is funded by German Cooperation Agency (KfW). Other development agencies and research centers have initiated projects on REDD in Cameroon. This is the case with REDD-Alert Project initiated by ASB Partnership. “Making REDD Work in the Congo Basin” is supported by World Resource Institute (WRI). The most advanced of these projects is that of the government. The State’s project is intended to develop new methodological approaches for the formulation of REDD’s policies while making valid scientific projections for the potential credit/flow of carbon resulting from deforestation and forest degradation at the national level. The project combines the application of earth’s observation technologies through development policies. This approach will lead to the establishment of a basis for the projection of emissions from deforestation, which, in turn, will be associated with regional projections on degradation. The project promotes a south-south cooperation while applying experiences acquired from Bolivia on the calculation of carbon stocks from deforestation in the Congo Basin. The setting up of the pilot phase of the REDD project in Cameroon focused on five main activities which include the analysis of stakeholders, the assessment of deforestation and forest degradation, calculation of emissions and the analysis of political situations and local capacity building. With this pilot project, it will be easier to establish the relationship existing between the system of REDD and the drivers of deforestation. In this perspective, a major question arises. Is it by

increasing forest value or by offering funds to the “owners” that deforestation can be stopped? It is difficult to give a unanimous response to the question.

Tackling the causes of deforestation may seem a suboptimal approach. This approach may contribute to the slowing down, but not to the termination of the ills or externalities of deforestation. As Myers (2007) cited, “the previous projects in the forest sector showed that if one invests in projects of conservation without having identified the reasons associated with deforestation before hand, then, he risks wasting resources without modifying to the least the rate of deforestation.” Another scholar was of the view that it is important “to analyze the indirect causes and not only the immediate causes of forest disappearance. In this case, it will become easier to fight them directly by getting and allocating the necessary funding to the appropriate tasks” (Rawles 2008, 24). Similarly, a member of a civil society group said that:

It will be difficult to stop the hemorrhage of deforestation, for you to understand, you need to spend the evening at the central post office toward midnight, hundreds of trucks transporting timber are parading and that no one can tell you the exact number. Because of this, one cannot talk of the control of deforestation. In order to reduce deforestation, it is indeed necessary to look for indirect causes; you should not focus only on industrial logging. That would be a very easy solution.⁸

This field informant referred to the central post in Yaounde. From the views of this informant, it can be noticed that it is not easy to provide an answer to the impact of REDD project and especially on how to achieve the goals set by that initiative. One wonders if REDD has not been buried before its birth. With such pessimistic views, the strategies mapped out for the fight against climate change may become complicated. The Central Africa Sub-Regional Committee has been involved in international negotiations for the recognition of the role played by tropical forests in the fight against climate change and carbon sequestration since 2006. All member countries of the Central African Forest Commission became signatories to the Convention on the fight against Desertification (CCD). This spurred them to adopt national action plans on the CCC and to step up the fight

against soil degradation and deforestation.⁹ It is within this scope that Cameroon revamped its reforestation program throughout the national territory in 2007. Similarly, at the regional level, the sub-region came up with a plan for the fight against soil degradation and deforestation which included some activities such as water resources management and cross-border transhumance that were expected to be carried out at the sub-regional level through concerted effort (COMFAC 2008).

The January 1996 constitution of Cameroon alluded to minority and indigenous peoples in its Preamble. The meaning attached to the two notions by the constitution seems to be different from that adopted by the United Nations. According to the World Bank Operational Guidelines 4.20,¹⁰ there are, however, two groups of peoples recognized as indigenous in Cameroon and they include the Mbororos and the Pygmies. The Pygmies still live in harmony with the forest ecosystem that forms their environment and serves as a source of livelihood (where they get raw materials, food products, and arable land for agricultural expansion) (Lescuyer et al. 2008). Forest indigenous peoples or the Pygmies are good in hunting and this traditional activity, at times, is in variance with some provisions of the law governing fauna conservation. For instance, the species preferred for hunting by the indigenous peoples such as elephants, gorillas and other large mammals are generally protected by law.¹¹ Whereas the natives are restricted from hunting these species, aliens from Europe and America obtain hunting permits from the Government of Cameroon to carry out sport hunting of these protected species in the forest that serves as a source of livelihood to the indigenous peoples. Hunting regulations in Cameroon do not take indigenous peoples into consideration although they live on hunting. They are always in conflict with forest guards as indigenous peoples refuse to respect the various hunting guidelines which they believe do not safeguard their interest. For indigenous people, eating this wildlife is a fundamental human right just as hunting is to synergetic alien hunters and any restriction is a violation of their basic rights. Prohibiting indigenous peoples from eating these animals is a violation of the provision of the African Charter that clearly states that peoples have free ownership of their surrounding wealth and natural resources, and that everybody has the right

to exist.¹² This shows some of the shortcomings in the policies regulating the management of forest products.

In principle, the Pygmies are Cameroonian citizens, subjected to the same rights and obligations as the other people. The daily realities, however, are completely different as a majority of these Cameroonians neither have birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates nor the Cameroon National Identity Card.¹³ Their lack of identity prevents them from taking part in social or political activities according to the law.

Effort is, however, being made towards their socio-economic integration. The 1997 report sent by the Government of Cameroon to the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) reassured the International Community that projects are being implemented for effective socio-economic integration of the Pygmies in the East and South Regions of Cameroon. It also mentioned the relocation and resettlement of the Baka Pygmies in camps along major road axis in these two regions and the improvement of their intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships with the native Bantu communities. They have been initiated into agriculture, hygiene and sanitation practices and provided with health and educational establishments in order to ascertain their sedentary life style. Some of their children also benefit from special school assistance.

Indigenous peoples are bound by law to forgo some of their customary rights and social practices. A family head of age about 30 observed in Yokadouma that what they are doing in the forest does not only serve their interest because people from the cities come to them for traditional medicines which abound in the forest. The informant acknowledged the fact that other stakeholders want them to have a lot of good things, which unfortunately do not coincide with their units of social life since they are different from the Bantu and aliens. In a bid to protect and to promote the rights of the minorities and indigenous peoples, however, CERD advised Cameroon to take adequate measures with respect to deforestation that could impact positively on these populations.¹⁴ The fact that the interest of indigenous peoples is not safeguarded is a hindrance to them (Nguiffo and Mballa 2008). The absence of good forest governance, justice and equity, as mentioned earlier, is detrimental to indigenous

peoples as it becomes impossible to implement laws.¹⁵ This is prone to jeopardizing effort made in the protection and sustainable management of forest. In order to curb deforestation, it is necessary to implement good governance as stipulated by the UN Forum on Good Governance and to step up the fight against corruption (Brack 2007). Indigenous communities that have been settled along the roads should be given tenure rights over their estates so that the Bantus who have customary land rights should tolerate the presence of the Baka Pygmies. At the core of the forest where their ancestral lands are found, protected areas have been created with many restrictions. They have lost both *de jure* and *de facto* rights to basic resources in these protected areas of their forest.

The perception of land ownership by indigenous peoples does not coincide with that of their Bantus neighbors and the State. The Pygmies and Mbororos believe that land is a collective property that should be used by all without exception. These indigenous peoples, particularly the Pygmies, are aware of the existence of their ancestral lands although there is no clear-cut limit between their lands and that of their neighboring Bantu communities.

The Cameroon Government and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) jointly drew up a National Environmental Management Plan (PNGE) that was expected to be binding to the local populations although they did not participate in its drawing up and did not include the aspirations of the indigenous peoples who are generally the first victims of the decisions taken. Thus, the program is far from meeting the needs of local peoples that live either in the forest or Sudano-Sahelian areas. In the same manner, the National Forestry Action Plan was drawn up without the participation of indigenous peoples, even though they are bound to respect the regulations of the action plan. Laws that aim at protecting the environment and the fight against deforestation do not safeguard the interest of indigenous peoples.

Areas covered by REDD projects form part of those inhabited by indigenous forest peoples. In the Congo Basin, for instance, REDD covers countries such as Cameroon, Central Afri-

can Republic, Gabon, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo that play host to the Pygmies.

In Cameroon, the pilot project of REDD concerns only the technical aspect whereby the stock of carbon and the volume of biomass are estimated from historical satellite data. It is mostly about technical aspects based on the measuring of carbon stock in the forest. Thus, the project excludes socio-anthropologic and economic components that could allow for a better understanding of its impacts and effects on people. Integrating the socio-anthropological dimension would enhance an understanding of the expectations and responses of the people in the forest, especially the indigenous peoples. Knowing that the REDD is a process that will generate income, it is necessary to establish an equitable benefit sharing mechanism both at the national and local levels. Through this approach, REDD will become a veritable development process as many people perceive and believe. For the countries in the Congo Basin, REDD mechanism is considered crucial in the planning of their national development strategies. This indicates that the implementation of REDD doesn't only limit itself to the conservation of forest.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF REDD

Among the issues and challenges inherent in REDD is stakeholders. The stakeholders in REDD are mainly ministerial officials, representatives of development agencies, research institutes and NGOs. The ministerial officials are, at the same time, members of the management committee of the REDD pilot project set up through a ministerial decision N°00009/MINEP of January 15, 2009. No indigenous peoples are included and by implication, therefore, the REDD project is currently the business of just a handful of people. A major question that could be asked is what REDD will do with local populations when it will come to the state of implementation now that they are not part of the pilot phase. The pilot project is based mainly on MINEP-REDD focal point that takes care of the implementation, the follow-up of policies and the various programs of REDD. Field activities are organized by the implementation agency of the

GAF-AF pilot project, with the funding of KFW and a logistical support from the support program of the Central African Forest Commission.

There has also been a Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) which is a document presenting the situation of a country preparing to participate in the REDD program. The R-PIN of Cameroon carries a set of data on the state of the forest of the country and the sustainability with which the forest is managed as recommended by government policies. The R-PIN document of Cameroon has been drawn up in close collaboration with WWF and has been validated by competent authorities. The sending of the R-PIN of Cameroon to the World Bank enhanced its selection among countries that will benefit funding grants to prepare for the REDD mechanism.

The involvement of indigenous peoples in the initiatives of REDD is near absent as they are not represented at the level of the pilot committees charged with the setting up of the pilot project mentioned previously. The statistical measurement of deforestation and degradation, as well as the calculation of carbon stock and the building of capacities are the main activities that are currently carried out by REDD. These are expert-oriented activities that are reserved for the staff of MINEP and those within the focal point of REDD. Little room is given to indigenous peoples to participate because they lack both information and the possibility to act or react to REDD initiatives.

The World Resources Institute, however, organized an outreach workshop through which some Bantus and Baka populations in Lomié in the East Region of Cameroon were contacted. This action was just a drop of fresh water in the sea considering the fact that many projects use the principle of assistencialism to achieve their initially set objectives. In this respect, it has been observed that the sensitization of the population on issues of REDD is a challenge for national and local governments, associations and NGOs that are more enlightened on REDD. A civil society member testified:

It is difficult to talk about REDD in Cameroon now, only experts in the domain can give an opinion on the issue. For me, it is necessary to organize many seminars for people to understand what REDD

is all about. Some of us who have often heard about this process in conferences know little about it, what more with local populations? This makes it difficult for those of us who are always called upon to provide answers to questions asked by some citizens and for officials who are charged with preparing the country for this process. Indigenous peoples have their own way of perceiving things which is different from others. There is need, therefore, to adequately explain REDD's policies to the people in order to avoid misunderstandings and to avert conflicts between traditional systems of natural resource management and REDD policies.

The challenges of REDD are not lived by members of the civil society alone, but also by officials of the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection. One of them, known as Maurice, had this to say, "I have heard about REDD in corridors and discussions with some colleagues, but I don't really know what it is all about. I will try to read books that I have just received to understand the concept."

These statements show the extent to which not only the indigenous peoples but also the officials in the ministries and members of the civil society are still unfamiliar with REDD. The concentration of all REDD-related activities at the level of the central administration (MINEP) further complicates both the implementation of the process and the adoption of the REDD by indigenous populations. With respect to the expected implementation, State policies on REDD had not involved local populations from its very inception and this approach will largely undermine implementation since indigenous peoples who have been eschewed from the process from the beginning will feel less concerned with it during the implementation phase. Women who are effective in door to door sensitization on issues such as the advantages of REDD (improvement in health, food and climate conditions and sustainable development) needed by present and future generations are not involved in the process.

Indigenous Peoples and Forest Management Practices

Recent forestry and wildlife reforms introduced in Cameroon in 1994 paved the way for participative and decentralized forest and forest-based resource management. These reforms have indeed introduced the notions of community forestry, communal forestry and areas of synergetic interest that are under the aegis of local communities from where part of the proceeds from the exploitation of forest and wildlife resources is being transferred to the local populations. The involvement of local populations in the management of natural resources by the government through these reforms appeared to be a potential vector for sustainable development in rural areas especially as the arrogation of resource ownership by the State in the past led to a marginalization of the natives and their exclusion from decision making circles and benefit sharing. That, notwithstanding, local natural resources management institutions complicate the resource management process in community forests or community hunting areas as little impetus is given to the priorities, interests and needs of the surrounding Bantus and indigenous communities. Rural companies in the forest Regions of Cameroon have developed an inextricable relationship with the forest ecosystem since it serves as a natural reservoir for wood energy, construction material, and a source of bush meat, fish and other non-timber forest products such as fruits, nuts, and spices. The forest is also used for grazing, crop cultivation and for the harvesting of rattan for the making of household furniture and utensils, and the harvesting of plants and animals for local pharmacopeia. This use of forest and forest-based resources to meet the socio-economic and cultural needs of indigenous peoples confirms the inherent traditional management of natural resources by local populations.

Indigenous peoples have developed various environmental management skills. The example of bushfire management will illustrate their environmental management skill. When a wildfire occurs, indigenous peoples use concerted effort to put it out with well adapted branches of trees. They use branches that have a lot of foliage since they burn with difficulty when wet or

green. The choice of branches by the populations to face fire is illustrative of the environment protection techniques they have acquired. Similarly, hunting activities, gathering and fishing are not carried out at random. One of them observed that the hunting of animals is selective. Some taboos of indigenous peoples prohibit the killing of young animals and pregnant as well as suckling females. Easily captured species are protected by taboos that prohibit young people from capturing them and the hunting seasons of indigenous peoples do not coincide with procreation periods of animals. In the same vein, care is taken in fishing because only fish that have reached the age of maturity are captured while younger ones are freed. This implies that indigenous people are quite versed with issues of biodiversity conservation. There are even community forests that are managed exclusively by indigenous Baka communities in the Upper Nyong Division. These findings were made with the support of an NGO and they are indicative of the fact that indigenous communities are capable of implementing both traditional and modern conservation strategies provided their capacity is built for them to comply with the prescriptions of the law.

Customary governance system is based on the respect of hierarchy within a local community. The implementation of the customary law is easy as it is binding to everyone in the community especially in matters of conflict management and the sharing of property among family heads. Many studies, however, showed that natural resource management as prescribed by the Cameroonian law does not reflect this traditional reality of natural resource management (Kamto 1996 and Van Walder et al. 1999). The current forestry and wildlife law in Cameroon lacks legitimacy and its implementation is therefore ineffective. Following these weaknesses of the law and the fact that its implementation is ineffective, it does not benefit the State, the ecology or the local communities. The flaws in the law have largely undermined the pilot project of REDD, particularly as it is still at its embryonic stage.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

What emerges from the information gathered, analyzed and presented in this paper have enabled us to conclude that issues of climate change, forest and indigenous peoples in Cameroon are still to be adequately addressed in the REDD project. Issues examined so far reveal that the government of Cameroon is yet to come to terms with the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and to perceive the impact of climate change on indigenous peoples and the capacities of indigenous peoples to adapt to climate change. The government of this country, as well as many governments in the tropical world, lack trend data to monitor impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples and it does not have legal frameworks or policy approaches that are friendly towards carbon sequestration or that safeguard the interest of indigenous peoples that depend on forests for a livelihood. Stating in the preamble of the January 18, 1996 constitution of Cameroon that the government is in charge of protecting the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples in accordance with the law is grossly insufficient.

The findings of this study show that the existing legal frameworks have not addressed issues of tenurial rights, carbon credits and the trading of use rights in forest compartments that have been allocated to local populations as community forests. Government and indigenous people will provide solutions to various problems. While the forest resources in these compartments belong to the local populations, the sub-soil resources are reserved for the State. Local populations are still to be granted rights to trade on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) they harvest from these forest compartments.

Although REDD initiatives have tended to boast the force of argument of indigenous peoples in terms of them benefiting from carbon credits, the REDD mechanism itself would end up being a source of other problems to indigenous peoples as it doesn't tackle the main causes of deforestation. In addition, it will lead to disputes over forests and the placing of value on standing forest against the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. The consequences will be an upsurge of famine and malnutrition in native communities. Based on these findings, a number

of recommendations have been made which are here formulated as follows:

General Recommendations

- The government should put in place a legal framework that addresses land tenure issues and natural resource management. Such a legal system will safeguard the rights and the units of social life of indigenous peoples in protected areas without disrupting the national land right system;
- There should be an impact assessment of forestry activities on indigenous communities. Forest exploiters should have the obligation to assess the specific impact of their operations on indigenous peoples and to provide palliative measures;
- A mechanism should be put in place to ensure the involvement of indigenous peoples in the national political activities. At least two indigenous peoples should represent native communities in the Senate and at least one seat should be reserved for them in the decentralized regional institutions;
- Participative studies should be carried out on obstacles hindering the welfare of indigenous communities in Cameroon so that a national policy should be developed based on the results of the studies. Such hindrances could be sought in the domains of poverty, powerlessness, ignorance, interest, tenure contest between customary and statutory systems, and non enforcement of clear and devolved statutory tenure;
- An efficient REDD policy should be put in place. Cameroon, like many other countries in the Congo Basin, has not yet drawn up a REDD policy. This situation has made it difficult for issues related to customary laws and forest resource management to be addressed. It is therefore important to develop a complementary framework between traditional forest resource management

systems and REDD policies. It is obvious that the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples have become imperative for effective implementation of the REDD process in Cameroon.

Specific Recommendations in the REDD Process

- In spite of changes brought about mostly by various pioneering and innovative actions, it will be necessary to improve the protection of rights of indigenous peoples in order to facilitate their efficient adherence to the evolution of REDD process. To this effect, the government should seize this opportunity to develop the areas in which indigenous peoples live from the fallouts of REDD;
- To succeed in the REDD process in the future, it is important to involve indigenous peoples in all the structures that are concerned with the mechanisms for the conception, implementation, follow-up and assessment of the projects of REDD. Similarly, effective involvement of associations that fight for the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples and REDD-related capacity building is imperative;
- The authorities must try to ensure that the profits from REDD initiatives are shared equitably among all the stakeholders;
- The flaws in the law mentioned earlier are detrimental to indigenous communities; the policies and projects must take into account the cultural peculiarities of indigenous peoples. This will check their marginalization in the domains of health, education, natural resource management and the national political activities. The difficulties are mainly caused by the ignorance of indigenous peoples. This ignorance misleads public decision-makers who conceive fake solutions that at times are even contrary to their cultures and traditional practices. Hence, there is a need to carry out a socio-anthropologic study in the field to prepare for the launching of REDD mechanism.

- In addition, the laws conceived on protected areas are against indigenous peoples as they limit the opportunities of their use rights and the benefits from these protected areas. It is essential to correct these legal biases against indigenous peoples so that they could feel comfortable in their environment;
- The financial support of REDD should be managed in a way that benefits indigenous peoples through infrastructural development in the domains of health, education, transportation and communication;
- Sensitization of the masses on issues of REDD is important for the involvement of everybody in the initiative. The process of REDD should protect areas with high potentials for cultural values from logging operations. The REDD mechanism must encourage efficient conservation of resources that are used by indigenous communities;
- Improvement of the health of women and children should be a priority in the local development process that is triggered by REDD projects.

Monitoring and Assessing REDD

It is therefore necessary to build the capacities of indigenous communities on the activities of REDD especially the most vulnerable groups such as women and young girls. Their capacity can be built through education and training which aim at sensitizing members of indigenous communities and women on their rights and responsibilities towards the REDD process. When awareness has been created on issues of their rights and responsibilities towards the REDD process, they can then strive for their economic and social benefits from the fallouts of REDD.

In summary, it is important to boost women mainstreaming initiatives and to grant funds through REDD for micro-projects set up by women and other vulnerable groups. Health conditions of indigenous peoples must be made an integral part of environmental conservation. The fallouts of REDD could be used

to provide indigenous peoples with hospitals and health centers that have basic equipment and qualified human resources. Such health establishments should have pictures of childbirths and women who have delivered in health centers in order to encourage indigenous women to deliver in health units so that the number of deaths during delivery at home will be reduced.

Endnotes

¹ A 2003 estimate of the National Institute of Statistics.

² Birgitte Feiring, 2008, includes the indigenous population in the strategies of the poverty reduction BIT.

³ Wunder, 2003, Wunder et Sunderlin (2004).

⁴ Capistrano, 1990; Barbier et al. 1994, Vincent 1994.

⁵ ECOFAC, Report on the activity form July–December 2001, p. 50.

⁶ Robinson TCHAPMEGNI communication, The actuality of the land question in Africa, during a conference on land: the problem of the land property in Cameroon, held on November 18, 2005 in Mbalmayo.

⁷ KAGONBE Timothé e and DOGMO MINKEM Mercelin, Presentation of project and steering REDD in Cameroon, Sao José Dos Campos, Brazil, February 06, 2009.

⁸ Pigname Jean Théodore is the coordinator of the NGO Planet Environment At stake. This organization works in the protection of the environment through sensitization on selection and on the recycling of rubbish.

⁹ COMIFAC, 2008, preparation of the 8th FNUF session.

¹⁰ This prescription was revised and substituted for the operational policies PO/PB 4.10.

¹¹ Arrête, N°0648/MINFOF of December 10th 2006 focusing on the list of animal categories (A, B, and C).

¹² Articles 21(1) and 21(2) of the law.

¹³ For more information on pygmies consult: <http://www.fondaf.org>.

¹⁴ 20/03/98.CERD/C/304/Add.53.

¹⁵ REDD+, p. 106.

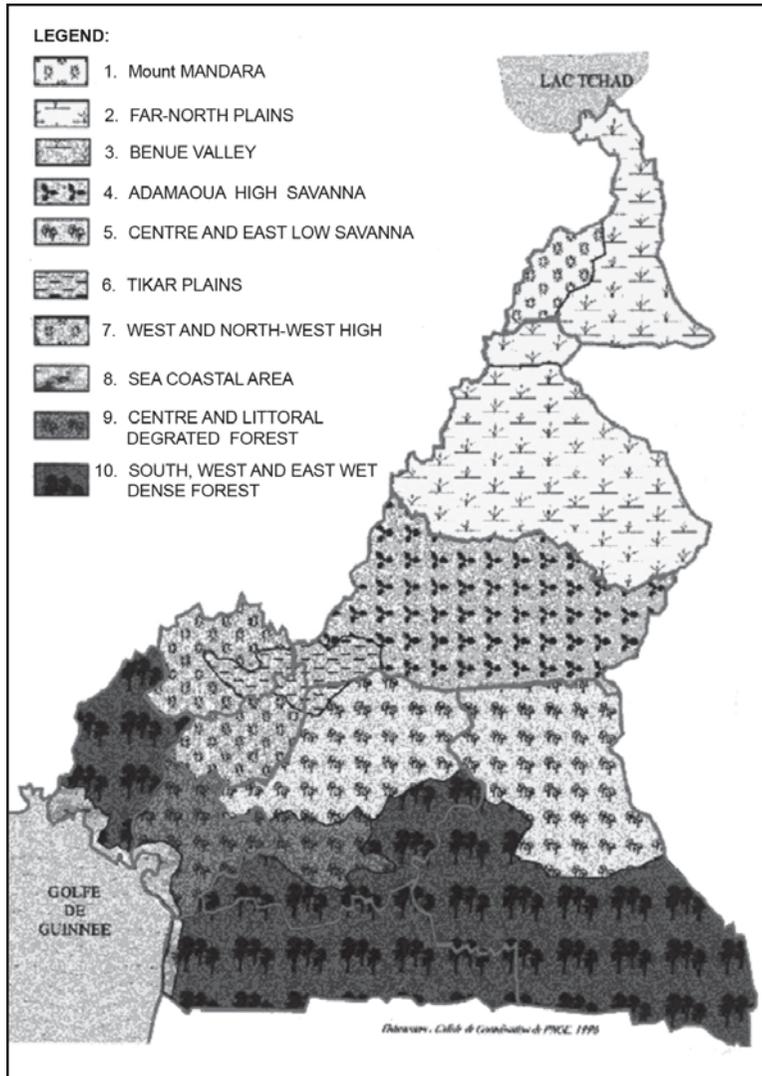
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Annexes

Annex 1. Major Ecological Areas in Cameroon



Annex 2. Area Inhabited by Pygmies in Cameroon

