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Community Forestry: Facing up to the Challenge in Cameroon

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COMMUNITY FORESTRY: FACING UP TO THE CHALLENGE IN CAMEROON

David Brown and Kathrin Schreckenber

SUMMARY

The Cameroon case presents one of the greatest challenges to community forestry in the tropics, and has generated exceptional interest in the international community. A radical overhaul of the forest legislation in 1994 opened the way for community involvement in the management of forests for commercial timber production. The story which the papers in this mailing collectively tell is that, despite the enormity of the challenges, real progress can be made where there is a critical mass of local and international concern, and that the benefits to be had may spread beyond the forest sector, and extend into the wider realms of public governance. But progress takes time, and demands tenacity and long-term financial commitment from local actors and international funders alike.

INTRODUCTION

This mailing takes as its theme the many and important values which can be derived from community involvement in forest management in the humid tropics, focussing on one of the major timber producers of the tropical world – the West African country of Cameroon. The values in question relate to: poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods and community regeneration; sound and sustainable resource

management; the conservation of critical biodiversity; and ultimately, the conservation of unique ecosystems to the long-term benefit of the global population at large. The aim of this overview paper is to provide the international context for the Cameroon case and to highlight the lessons that an international audience can learn from it.

THE CAMEROON CASE IN CONTEXT

The international stage

Community involvement in forest management is now a major pillar of most internationally-supported programmes of forest sector development in the tropics (Brown, 1999), but remains a challenging option (Box 1 overleaf). Encompassing a variety of people-based forms of forest management, the origins of community forestry are very closely linked to government-initiated programmes such as user group forestry in Nepal and joint forest management in India (Hobley, 1996). In both of these countries, the initial focus was on degraded land situations with Forest Departments reluctant to release 'well-stocked' forests for community management. In both, the transition from strict conservation and subsistence use of forests to more commercially-oriented timber (and non-timber forest product) management has proven difficult (Poffenberger, 2000).

Box 1 Involving communities in forest management

Improving the benefits to rural communities from forest management has been one of the major motifs of tropical forestry in the last decade. Nowhere has it been easy to achieve. Trees – particularly those in high value forests – have many potentially problematic attributes:

- they are by their nature bulky and indivisible;
- they compete for space with other resources, which may well give quicker and more consistent returns, of particular importance in uncertain political environments;
- they may require expert tending over long periods;
- their harvesting can be capital-intensive;
- they may offer different returns to different people (and may require differential investments over different time-frames for these returns to be realised);
- rights in them are often insecure, particularly for those who rely on them most (that is, the rural poor);
- because of the national and international values which they represent, they engage the interest of powerful stakeholders, including not only government bureaucracies, but also timber industries and international agencies and environmental NGOs.

Forests which contain timber species of high commercial value are even more problematic. Worldwide, there has been relatively little experience of involving communities in the management of such forests. One exception is Mexico, where the attempts of the *ejido* communities of Quintana Roo to develop sustainable forest management systems centred on the production of high value timber has been closely scrutinised (e.g. Primack *et al.*, 1998). The *ejidos* are unusual, though, in having had a long history of secure tenure as enshrined in the constitution of 1917 following the Mexican revolution. This is not the case in most other tropical countries where the tenure systems prevailing in forest areas are often complex and unclear.

The literature describing Asian community-based natural resource management experiences is extensive, but there is less awareness and documentation of the African experiences (Danso *et al.*, 2000). Some of the many examples of attempts to involve local

communities in forest and other resource management in Africa were presented at the Banjul ‘International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa’ in April 1999 (FAO, 2000). In the short time since then, developments on the continent have been rapid and nowhere more so than in Cameroon.

The challenge of Cameroon

The Cameroon case has generated exceptional interest in the international community. The high level of interest relates not only to the country’s importance as a producer of tropical timbers, repository of biodiversity and store of environmental values, but also to the fact that its forest resources have long been managed in a way which has excluded forest dwelling and dependent communities from almost all of the benefits to be derived from them. Indeed, the type of forest management which it has manifested has in many ways been the antithesis of everything which might be sought from ‘community forestry’.

In any context, there are likely to be groups with conflicting interests in the resource, but this is particularly true in Cameroon where the main stakeholders have quite disparate levels of purchasing power and political influence. On the one hand are the dispersed, disorganised and powerless forest dwellers who are heavily dependent on the forest and the resources which it provides, but whose security of tenure and national voice are often minimal. On the other are the timber companies which have invested heavily in logging and timber transformation, have close links to the national political establishment and have much to lose from the exercise of public control (and even more to gain from the lack of it). To these must be added an increasingly vocal and strident international environmental lobby to whom, in the main, the values of Cameroon’s forests lie more in their long-term environmental, option and existence values, than in their direct uses, and for whom neither of the major national constituencies represents the overriding interest group.

Reconciling these competing interests is not proving easy, and its feasibility cannot, even now, be assumed. But there is a need to rise to the challenge, if the notion of sustainable use of the forest is to be given real meaning in the lives of the rural poor. The story which the papers in this mailing collectively tell is that, despite the enormity of the challenges, real progress can be made where there is a critical mass of local and international concern, and that the benefits to be had may spread beyond the forest sector, and extend into the wider realms of public governance. But progress takes time, and demands tenacity and long-term financial commitment from local actors and international funders alike.

Radical change: the 1994 Forest Law

The starting point for any discussion of community involvement in forest management in Cameroon, in the last decade, must be the Forest Act of 1994. Cameroon opted for the politically high-risk strategy of radically overhauling its legislative framework as a means both of increasing the efficiency of the industry and promoting community participation in forest management (Brown, 1999). The strengths and weaknesses of this Act, and its progress into legislation, have been discussed in detail by Ekoko (1997) and Egbe (1998). What soon became apparent was that the passing of the Act into law was only the start of the process. In the first instance, the legal system which Cameroon inherited from the French depends heavily on enacted law (much more so than, say, British law, which relies more on precedent), and this meant that the content of the various decrees of application and *arrêtés* (implementing orders) proved at least as important as the Act itself. Secondly, defining any legislation on ‘community’ involvement in resource management has been problematic in the Cameroon case, in that the notion of ‘community’ has no legal status, and is anyway open to interpretation on a variety of grounds (residential, ethnic, associational). Community tenurial rights are also exceptionally weak in countries such as Cameroon which have inherited French colonial tenure regimes.

Coming on top of both of these sets of influences was the fact that the political context was in many ways unfavourable: the new law had, to a significant extent, been imposed on the Government of Cameroon as a Bretton-Woods conditionality, and there was little sense of ownership of it at the higher political levels.

In addition, large sections of the forest industry were hostile to community involvement. This was understandable given that they stood to lose a share of the profit to their local partners, and that the administrative requirements (e.g. inventory, etc.) were so much greater than those for existing ‘Sales of Standing Volume’ (*ventes de coupe*) logging options.

Paper 25b(i) by André Djeumo takes the story forward. As a founder member in 1997 of the Community Forestry Unit (CFU) in the Ministry for Environment and Forests (MINEF), which was supported by the UK’s *Community Forestry Development Project* initiative, the author experienced at first hand the problems of establishing from scratch not just a concept – of community forests – but also a public institution for community forest management. After setting out the system of forest classification and timber management in Cameroon, Djeumo traces the history of the CFU, and then examines the experience of the first batch of applications for community forests.

LESSONS LEARNED

Drawing on this and the other papers in this mailing, this section bears witness to the variety of ways in which Cameroonians and their international partners are seeking to address the challenges of community forestry, and suggest some important ways forward not just for Cameroon but for tropical forestry at large.

What is a ‘community’?

Nowhere in the Cameroon legislation is there any attempt to define the nature of the ‘community’ into whose hands the management of a ‘community forest’ is to be placed (Brown, 1999). Djeumo discusses at

length the different types of legal entity that a ‘community’ can choose to adopt and the fact that none of the options available adequately reflects any of the types of community that exist in reality. The heterogeneity of the notion of ‘community’ is highlighted by Ruth Malleson in Paper 25g(ii) together with the difficulties that this poses for community-based resource management. Malleson’s area of research is the anglophone South West Province, where high levels of population movements are traditional, with important implications for the definition of social identities. She concludes that understanding the diversity of community identities is essential if appropriate ‘community-based’ forest management initiatives are to be promoted in such an environment.

Effective participation

Both the Djeumo and Malleson papers point to the need for effective methodologies of participation, if the ‘community’ is to be used to represent, rather than obscure, the public interest. Paper 25c by Guillaume Lescuyer *et al.* describes a particularly interesting attempt to ensure that all stakeholders are effectively drawn into a process of public consultation. Though not concerned with a ‘community forest’ in the legal sense, the project – carried out within the Tropenbos Cameroon Programme – offers an impressively painstaking and comprehensive application of the participatory principle, which is likely to be of wide interest, not just in Cameroon. That it was not entirely successful, despite the immense efforts of many of the staff and villagers involved, is a reflection of the overriding importance of the political context, and of the need for clear commitments by government at the highest levels.

Attempts to engage wide public participation figure strongly in three other articles in the mailing. Paper 25d by James Acworth *et al.* (on the Mokoko area on the border of the South West Province), Paper 25h(iii) by Charles Tekwe and Fiona Percy (on the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest remnant also in the South West Province) and Paper 25h(ii) by Anne Gardner *et al.* (on the orchard bush zone, in the more northerly North West Province) all illustrate the importance of close engagement with local communities. Furthermore they highlight the need for long-term commitment by external partners (in the first two cases, the Mount Cameroon Project, co-funded by MINEF and DFID, in the third, the Kilum-Ijim Project, co-managed by MINEF and Birdlife-International, with co-funding from DFID).

Contribution of community forests to poverty alleviation

Two papers in the mailing deal with the potential for community involvement in downstream timber processing, which is revealing itself as a theme of critical importance in shifting the balance of power towards the resident population and away from the timber industry. Paper 25f(i) by Philippe Auzel *et al.* and Paper 25f(ii) by Martha Klein *et al.* deal with neighbouring locations in the francophone Eastern Province. They show the significant benefits that communities can derive from the exploitation of their timber resources, and the advantages to them of resisting the overtures of the less scrupulous members of the logging industry. The importance of these two papers relates not only to the ways in which they document the high economic values which can be captured by communities if they retain control over their own resources, but also the

benefits to be derived from giving communities a long-term interest in the forest resource. Both papers are likely to be of wide interest in community forestry circles internationally, given the growing importance of the theme of downstream processing, and the need to link this to, on the one hand, the theme of poverty alleviation and, on the other, the conservation of the resource.

Experiments such as those reported by Auzel *et al.* and Klein *et al.* are beginning to allow for an assessment of the potential of community forestry to contribute to poverty alleviation in Cameroon’s high forest zone. In Paper 25h(i), Timothée Fomété and Jaap Vermaat look at the ways in which some of the first communities to obtain community forests decided to distribute the benefits, ranging from distribution on an individual basis, to more complex arrangements resulting in significant multiplier effects for the whole community. What is becoming apparent is that, while there are no guarantees that community forestry will alleviate poverty, it does have the power to do so, provided certain conditions are met. Fomété and Vermaat point to the crucial importance for communities of the following factors:

- full and enforced legal protection;
- sufficient leverage to obtain and maintain ownership over their organisational and planning processes;
- adequate organizational, administrative and technical skills;
- access to finance.

Clearly, these are major demands, and it is far from certain that they can be met on a national basis. But where they are met, the revenue streams which flow to the communities may be very substantial, and quite beyond their

previous experience. And combined with the knock-on benefits from increased community capacity to handle their share of the logging taxes, and the value of proper long-term management of the resource, they offer the prospect of real advancement to populations which have hitherto been marginalised and impoverished.

The need to consider forest resources in their totality

Unlike the originally subsistence-oriented forest management promoted in community forestry in Nepal and India, the focus in Cameroon has been almost exclusively on managing community forests for timber. While for many rural populations, particularly in the high forest areas in the South of the country, timber resources do represent the major interest, they are rarely the only one. Evidence is increasingly pointing to the comparable importance of non-timber forest products (including bushmeat) to local communities, and to the long-term benefits that they can derive from their active management.

Wildlife and hunting

Four papers in the mailing deal with wildlife resources which, in addition to their potential contribution to poverty alleviation, are of growing concern internationally. Samuel E. Egbe sets the scene in Paper 25e(i) by reviewing the legal provisions of the 1994 Law, which permits the establishment of community hunting zones in a system parallel to that of community forests. He points to the ambiguities in the Law as regards wildlife, and the urgent need for clarification of the institutional framework for its exploitation. Two papers then consider attempts to involve communities in the consumptive use of wildlife:

Kristin Olsen *et al.* (Paper 25e(ii)) focuses on community involvement in controlled hunting around Mount Cameroon (an area of high biodiversity but depleted wildlife stocks), while Mark van der Wal and Elias Djoh (Paper 25e(iv)) describe the process of establishing a community hunting zone in the Eastern Province, where wildlife stocks are much higher though increasingly under threat. Both of these focus mainly on the bushmeat trade.

In Paper 25e(iii), Djoh and van der Wal also document an attempt to develop a community ecotourism site, based on a resident population of lowland gorillas. Such an experiment in non-consumptive use is of particular interest in the present context, given the importance of ecotourism to the long-term sustainability of many of the protected area sites being established in the Central Africa region. While tourism development would appear a risky venture in many parts of the sub-region, given the problems of political instability, low tourist infrastructure and wildlife populations unconditioned to human observation, there is little doubt that if it is to succeed anywhere in the area, then it is most likely to be in Cameroon. Securing real benefits for local communities is one of the major challenges to be faced, and this paper provides important early documentation on how this might be done.

The need for integrated planning

The wildlife papers described above all raise the difficult issue of the permissible size and location of community hunting zones which, perhaps not surprisingly, in no way resemble traditional hunting ranges. These papers and that by Lescuyer *et al.* all suggest that there is a need for a more integrated planning approach, in which both timber and non-timber resources

are placed within an overall framework of natural resource management (see Box 2).

This is supported by Denis Sonwa *et al.* in Paper 25g(i), in which they discuss the potential importance for sustainable forest management of cocoa agroforests. In this land-use system, which is widespread throughout the South of Cameroon, cocoa is grown under the shade of planted indigenous fruit species (such as *Dacryodes edulis*), formerly found only in the forests. The authors make a strong case for the championing of cocoa production as a means of securing the long-term viability of the forest, in a way which is well-integrated with other aspects of the rural economy. They argue that you cannot force a 'community perspective' on a community, but it may well be possible to engage with many individually-based activities that already achieve some of the aims hoped for from community forests.

Different uses of the forest may compete, however, and thus communities and their partners need to be able to clearly weigh up the benefits of alternative courses of action. This most obviously applies to the tension between preservation and use (as regards hunting and

ecotourism, for example). Communities need to be able to ensure that they can enforce compliance of all their members with decisions taken by the collectivity. Conservation also requires close cooperation between adjacent settlements, both to ensure that villagers' conservation efforts are not thwarted by their neighbours and free-riders, and to obviate the danger of sustaining projects by fining and penalising transgressors from outside of the local community, with no long-term benefits to the condition of the resource.

The process of policy innovation

Major policy innovations require time and resources

Seven years after the passing of the new Forestry Act into law, and major commitments by international donors (of the order of several million dollars per year), community forestry is only now beginning to bear fruit. However, the benefits to the nation from improved management of the forest resource are potentially enormous (this is an industry contributing 12% of GNP, and 25% of exports, over US\$600 million per year), as are the knock-on benefits regarding public governance.

Box 2 Community forests or participatory forestry?

In Paper 25b(i), Djeumo explains that, in Cameroon, community forests have been seen to be the doorway into a more broadly defined process of participatory forestry. Participatory forestry can include all aspects of tree resource management whether on farm or in the forest and whether with individuals or communities. The papers in this mailing clearly illustrate the need for a significant investment of time and resources to address the critical issue of how best to establish community forests. Yet, there is also a concern that too narrow a focus will one day lead to a situation in which a large number of community forests are scattered like islands in a sea of unregulated forest resource use. The indications are that, in the longer term, an integrated and participatory landscape approach to planning is essential, with community forests seen as just one piece of a bigger whole.

Achieving such benefits will certainly not be without costs. Proper supervision of the forest estate is everywhere problematic in Central African conditions, and the opportunities for abuse are immense. Transferring part of this estate into the hands of rural communities has the potential to limit these abuses, but it will require institutional arrangements and systems which as yet hardly exist. And monitoring numerous small-scale forests, and ensuring that their exploitation conforms to diverse management plans will be expensive both in terms of staff time and logistics. Undoubtedly, the industry has the capacity to support such costs. Allowing it to do so to the benefit of rural populations rather than the logging companies will require real political will at national level (something which has, to date, been in rather short supply).

Policy and projects have complementary roles

In most African countries, community-based management has been introduced through project interventions (Bojang, 2000). DFID's programme in Cameroon was a pioneer in the attempt to link project level interventions to policy influence in the forest sector. In the case of community forestry, the establishment of a favourable policy framework was clearly a major precondition for community forestry, without which no real progress could have been made. At the same time, continued field-level experience was necessary to translate this policy framework into a workable basis for community-based management. Firstly, the new law left many issues of implementation unresolved. And secondly, 'ground truthing' the new legislation was also a major challenge, given the heterogeneity of the national context and the specificity of local conditions. The papers in this mailing attest to the efforts of a

wide variety of Cameroonian organisations, and at least four sets of international donors (DFID-UK, Netherlands Cooperation and SNV, the European Commission and Coopération française), to take forward the legislation through a combination of pilot field experiences and policy influence.

There is need for continuous feedback to the policy arena

Projects which draw upon the policy level need to be able to feedback their experience effectively to it. Poffenberger (2000) describes how the early guidelines for forest devolution in Nepal and India have gone through repeated revisions. The state of Orissa even rewrote its Joint Forest Management resolution four times in ten years and most Indian states have also repeatedly reformulated their strategies in response to feedback from the field. Although at an early stage in Cameroon, feedback from projects is already having an effect. For example, the decision of the MINEF Minister to allow for delegation of his authority over *exploitation en régie* to community forestry committees¹, not just to licensed forest industrialists, opened the way for community involvement in downstream processing, and is likely to prove a major landmark in the history of community forestry in Cameroon. This was not, however, foreseen when the new legislation was first announced.

¹ This decision allows communities to manage and exploit their own forests and prohibits the entry of large logging machinery into community forests.

Community forestry requires good governance

The need for transparency

The evidence from India and Nepal clearly shows the close relationship between the emergence of democracy as a form of governance and the growing demand for its application to the management of forest resources (Khare, 1996). In the Cameroon case, the current large-scale experiment with community forests emphasises how important these governance dimensions are.

A key element of governance is transparency. This is illustrated in Paper 25b(ii) by Timothée Foméfé, who discusses the severe funding problems faced by Cameroonian groups trying to establish community forests. A decentralised taxation system is in place to provide benefits to communities from nearby logging, and this income could theoretically be used to fund a community forest application. Unfortunately, the system is so abused that it ends up benefitting only a few community elites, if at all. Part of the reason for this is a serious lack of transparency – communities (or certain members of communities) are unaware of the resources (both financial and technical) they have a right to, and neither the local administration, forest service nor judiciary provides a clear and consistent service.

Involvement in downstream processing empowers communities

The initiatives reported by Auzel *et al.* and Klein *et al.* are particularly interesting – and in all probability important – ones, in that they not only attest to the high value which is added through processing, but also offer a way to overcome the marginalisation of rural communities in political processes. Although

it is as yet early days, in both instances, the evidence is that *in situ* processing shifts the balance of authority crucially towards the resident population, and away from external elites and logging interests.

There is need for multiple partnerships

Most obviously, successful community forest development implies a requirement for genuine commitment from the agencies of the state. However, where the political risks are high, and stakeholder power is unbalanced, the unequivocal support of bilateral and multilateral agencies is also essential. Furthermore, communities are likely to need help from a number of other agencies, particularly national and international NGOs. Community forestry is very knowledge-intensive, and offers significant economies of scale. These relate both to the need to keep abreast of the latest developments in the legislation and in the interpretation of the law, and the importance of being able to act at both the political centre (in Yaoundé and regional capitals) as well as at the periphery (in the local community). In addition, there are a number of upfront investments (such as forest inventories and the preparation of the required Simple Management Plans) which are unlikely to be within the scope of most poor forest dwellers, either technically or financially, though they may trigger significant downstream returns. The knowledge- and resource- intensive nature of community forest development (see Box 3 overleaf) only contributes to the danger of capture by community elites. Foméfé argues that one of the major functions of civil society must be to ensure that this does not occur by creating and maintaining a transparent flow of information.

Box 3 Capacity for partnerships

Community forestry is new territory for all the potential partners. As such, there is a broad need for capacity-building in many areas:

- communities are embarking on production of timber for a demanding market, often finding themselves in direct competition with experienced and well-resourced industrial logging companies. Not only do these communities need technical skills, but above all they need the organisational strength to see them through periods of uncertainty, complex internal and external negotiation and rapid change;
- many of the NGOs providing support to the communities are themselves novices in the field of commercial timber production; those that are primarily conservation-oriented perhaps also need training in broader community development issues;
- the Forest Service in Cameroon, as in so many West African countries, has traditionally been regarded as a forest police, enforcing a host of obscure regulations mostly with a view to supplementing their meagre salaries. A major shift is needed if these same staff are to become the forest extension agents needed to facilitate the process of community development;
- the local judiciary must begin to enforce the legal protection of communities against external 'incursions';
- the private sector too, needs to rethink its role and develop innovative models for collaborating with communities as this becomes increasingly necessary in order to access desirable timber stocks.

Entry points are crucial

This relates to both logging company contacts and to those of NGOs. For example, initial contact with a forest community by a logging company – prior to contact with NGOs and other support agencies – is unfavourable to an effective community forest development, and is likely to result in schisms within the community as different factions fight for control over the windfall benefits.

As indicated in several of the papers, intervening agencies also need to plan their own interventions carefully so as to inculcate local trust and support. Communities need to be reassured of their partners' commitment to the principle of sustainable use. Where community forestry is presented as primarily

(or significantly) a preservation issue (in the sense of preservation of a public good), this is likely to create distrust in the community, and a suspicion that community forestry is just another means for outside interests to expropriate the forest. Equally, much harm can be done to community relations by presenting preservationist interests in the guise of sustainable development.

Situation specificity

Much will depend on the particular community concerned. As the papers in this mailing make clear, there is no off-the-shelf prescription for community-based management in Cameroon, and much depends on local social conditions. Community-based management is particularly challenging in the forest zone, because of the

high timber values which are at stake. External support and guarantees are important means to redress the balance of power between local communities and the forest industrials. However, even outside the timber zone, the risks are significant, though they relate more to financial sustainability and self-sufficiency than to commercial interests. At some stage, it will be necessary to address the particular needs of communities in the drier North and determine models of community forests that are appropriate to their conditions. A situation-specific approach is called for, and this argues in favour of well-targetted and adapted NGO support.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the collection in this mailing that effective forest co-management in Cameroon still faces many obstacles, and that there are no grounds for complacency as to the difficulties ahead. But there are also several encouraging signs. After much frustration at the slow pace of change, there is now a sense that things are starting to move ahead, as well as much greater clarity as to what still needs to be done to secure effective and sound community involvement in the management of the resource.

Finally, it is apparent that in an area of major innovation such as this, there is immense value in sharing experiences and learning from each others' successes and mistakes. Danso *et al.* (2000) argue that Africa may well take the lead in the design of supportive policy and laws and the implementation of community-based resource management, but that the key is the need for more networking, improved exchange and flow of information. This mailing is a

contribution to this endeavour. In keeping with the aims of the *Rural Development Forestry Network*, many of the experiences reported here are new to the literature, and bring innovative practice to the attention of a wider public at a relatively early stage. We look forward to hearing the views of others working elsewhere, and will seek, through the vehicle of the *RDFN*, to pass your experiences on to our collaborators in Cameroon.

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ACRONYMS

CFU	Community Forestry Unit
MINEF	Ministry for Environment and Forests
NGO	non-governmental organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
SNV	Netherlands Development Corporation

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SUMMARIES OF OTHER PAPERS IN THIS MAILING:

25B(I) THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY FORESTS IN CAMEROON: ORIGINS, CURRENT SITUATION AND CONSTRAINTS

André Djeumo

The introduction of the concept of community forestry into Cameroon's forestry legislation by means of the idea of community forests was a great innovation in the Central African sub-region. Observers in the forestry and broader development sectors alike felt that this represented a revolution in the Cameroonian forest sector. However, seven years after the adoption of the new law of January 1994, the expected level of change does not seem to have been achieved. Only around 10 community forests have been assigned and are now more or less managed by the communities. This paper outlines the origins of this new concept in Cameroon and the strategies developed by the forest administration to put it into practice. It then presents the current situation as regards applications for community forests, analysing their geographic distribution. This is followed by a reflection on the difficulties of implementing the concept of community forests with a particular focus on the difficulties faced by village communities. The key constraints highlighted are socio-cultural (including a very varied understanding of what is meant by 'community' or 'legal entity'), institutional and financial (relating to the costs of

preparing an application file and the management plan necessary for any community forest to be assigned).

25B(II) THE FORESTRY TAXATION SYSTEM AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN FOREST MANAGEMENT IN CAMEROON

Timothée Fomété

Cameroon's forest sector is of great national importance, accounting for 25% of exports in 1998/99. This paper looks specifically at how the forest taxation system can benefit local communities. It begins by outlining some of the changes the sector has seen since the passing of the 1994 Forest Law, and the ban on log exports in ????. These have included an unprecedented expansion in primary processing activities which, alongside the decline in forest formally available for logging, has led to a large increase in illegal logging.

The paper outlines two types of decentralised taxes that are intended to contribute to local development. Although not important in absolute terms, the decentralised portion of tax is significant at local level, amounting to up to three times the annual local council grant on a per capita basis. The annual royalty for forest area (RFA) is applied in concessions and 50% is destined for local councils, with 10% going to the forest-adjacent communities. The so-called 'CFA 1000 tax' is only applied in the much smaller Sales of Standing Volume logging permits and is destined wholly for local social projects such as schools and roads. However, neither tax is well monitored and misappropriation of funds is the dominant

practice. Instead of benefiting local development, the taxes have led to undermining of traditional power structures, connivance between certain community members and loggers, deterioration in the relations between local councils and village communities, and conflict over land ownership as communities seek to extend their land in order to accommodate the more lucrative Sales of Standing Volume logging permits (rather than concessions or community forests). The major problem highlighted is one of a lack of transparency due to a lack and/or misinterpretation of information at all levels. Civil society has an important role to play in combating this lack of transparency. The paper finishes with a recommendation to establish an equalisation fund to redistribute taxes from forest-rich councils, together with an independent management of the 'CFA 1000 tax'.

25C COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN FOREST MANAGEMENT: A FULL-SCALE EXPERIMENT IN THE SOUTH CAMEROON FOREST

Guillaume Lescuyer, Alexandre Emerit, Edouard Essiane Mendoula, Joseph Junior Seh

In Cameroon, local community involvement in the process of forest management is a requirement. Within the specific context of the Tropenbos Cameroon Programme, an approach has been developed to achieve this. After a varied phase of awareness-raising, the principal users of a 42,500 ha ecosystem were brought together to discuss the uses to which this forest land would be put, and its boundaries. It is this experience, from the initial negotiating conditions to the

final result, which is described in this paper. It shows how a strategic group of local stakeholders was able to force players at the macro-level to comply with its point of view concerning the management of the forest. In order to avoid increased competition for both land and resources, an integrated mode of forest management is proposed, which goes beyond the administrative distinction between permanent and non-permanent forest estate.

25D TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE ONGE-MOKOKO FORESTS OF CAMEROON

James Acworth, Henry Ekwoge, Jean-Marie Mbani, Grace Ntuba

Over a period of five years, the presence of the Mount Cameroon Project has helped local people understand and articulate their concerns and interest in gaining a say in the management of forest lands in the Onge-Mokoko area. For a long time suspicious of the project, the adjacent Boa Plain community planned their own independent 'deal' with a private logging company. With project advice and support, an Environmental Impact Assessment became a participatory decision-making tool, resulting in better knowledge and discussion of the options for land use, and the planned large-scale logging was abandoned. The participatory activities have since led to a dynamic and organised community-based mapping and land use planning process, and a broad range of individual resource management initiatives that promises to contribute directly to improved livelihoods, good governance, increased local capacity

for forest and land management, and biodiversity conservation - the project goal.

25E(I) THE LAW, COMMUNITIES AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN CAMEROON

Samuel E. Egbe

A range of countries have sought more equitable governance of their natural resources, by devolving decision-making and resource control to local populations. In 1994, Cameroon adopted a new law granting local communities the possibility of greater control over forests and wildlife, principally in response to donor conditionality on Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs). However, the enactment of this law lacked significant domestic support. Conflicting interests and Cameroon's highly centralised administrative machinery have prevented effective devolution of wildlife management. This paper examines the opportunities and constraints presented by Cameroon's reform process, in an attempt to encourage the development of a more forward-looking and better-integrated wildlife management policy.

25E(II) A COMMUNITY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT MODEL FROM MOUNT CAMEROON

Kristin B. Olsen, Henry Ekwoge, Rose M. Ongie, James Acworth, Ebwekoh M. O'kah and Charles Tako

The forest areas surrounding Mount Cameroon host some of the highest biodiversity in West Africa including many rare and endemic species of plants and animals. Wildlife populations are in decline,

due to an increasing trade in bushmeat, as well as problems of forest encroachment from farmers and large-scale plantation development. In collaboration with forest authorities, the Mount Cameroon Project (MCP) has adopted a "participatory biodiversity conservation" approach to wildlife management. It is working with local communities in two forest areas to develop a viable model for participatory and sustainable wildlife management appropriate to local needs in terms of use, capacity and resources. This has involved organising local groups and working with communities and government to develop systems for local wildlife management: hunting licenses, developing and allocating sustainable quotas, sanctions, monitoring and control. Other resource management groups are now seeking to emulate this model and to collaborate on a regional level to ensure effective control. Although developed together with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, some aspects of the model are not catered for within existing legislation. It is hoped that the model will serve to influence policy changes at national level so that realistic community management of wildlife can be achieved throughout Cameroon.

25E(III) GORILLA-BASED TOURISM: A REALISTIC SOURCE OF COMMUNITY INCOME IN CAMEROON? CASE STUDY OF THE VILLAGES OF KOUNGOULOU AND KARAGOUA

Elias Djoh & Mark van derWal

In the southern forest belt of Cameroon a trial is underway to develop a 'community-based gorilla research and tourism site'. This

is taking place within the context of government policy to involve local populations in the management of wildlife, and is an attempt to address the desire of a local community to develop some sort of tourism in and around their community forest. This paper discusses some fundamental questions related to the feasibility of the trial, such as the difficulty of working within existing legislation, the need to habituate the gorillas to the presence of humans, and the problem of helping the community to organise such an activity effectively.

25E(IV) COMMUNITY HUNTING ZONES: FIRST STEPS IN THE DECENTRALISATION OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE VILLAGE OF DJAPOSTEN, CAMEROON

Mark van der Wal and Elias Djoh

This short paper recounts the experiences of the village of Djaposten in East Cameroon in trying to establish a Community Hunting Zone that realistically reflects its existing hunting territory and fits in with current legislation. The case raises several fundamental questions about how to cope with an inappropriate legal framework and the difficulties of achieving communal management of a moving resource.

25F(I) SMALL-SCALE LOGGING IN COMMUNITY FORESTS IN CAMEROON: TOWARDS ECOLOGICALLY MORE SUSTAINABLE AND SOCIALLY MORE ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISES

Ph. Auzel, G.M. Nguenang, R. Feteké and W. Delvingt

Community forestry has now been tested for 5 years in Cameroon. Against all expectations, it is becoming established in forest zones, in spite of the difficulties which village communities face in the long process towards the allocation of a community forest. With access to forest resources decreasing, the smallest forest plot is now a major issue for a whole range of players. The forest economy has to meet many different challenges, the main one being to carry out logging without irremediably destroying the whole resource. Reconciling the social, economic and ecological factors is at the core of the current debate on the sustainable management of forest resources. It seems, increasingly, that the small-scale logging of community forests, along with logging under State management, could represent a serious alternative to the rather conservative solutions found so far (Sale of Standing Volume, salvage logging, etc.), which have been shown to have limitations. The comparative benefits clearly favour the small-scale logging of community forests. This situation has not escaped the attention of a good number of entrepreneurs in the informal sector, who have built up *le sciage de long* (artisanal sawing with a chain saw) to an almost industrial level. The scarcity of wood resources and the uncontrolled actions that this can provoke, together with the

development of illegal logging, is a serious threat to the future of community forestry. Small-scale logging does, however, offer unprecedented possibilities for development, as demonstrated by the enthusiasm of so many of those involved for *le sciage de long*. Small-scale logging is thus a serious option which must be supported, as must the initiatives of forest communities.

25F(II) ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH COMMUNITY FORESTS IN LOMIÉ, CAMEROON

Martha Klein, Brice Salla, and Jaap Kok

In the Lomié region, Eastern Cameroon, the implementation of the new national policy concerning the development of community forests is already well underway. The first management agreements have been signed, but their implementation is still at the experimental stage. This paper describes the experience in the field of the SDDL project of the SNV including the difficulties encountered and opportunities for the future.

25G(I) THE ROLE OF COCOA AGROFORESTS IN RURAL AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN SOUTHERN CAMEROON

Denis Sonwa, Stephen F. Weise, Mathurin Tchata, Bernard Nkongmeneck, Akinwumi A. Adesina, Ousseynou Ndoye and James Gockowski

Over 70 years of familiarity with cocoa agroforests enables the farmers of southern Cameroon to obtain food, medicinal plants and income from this ecosystem. Since 1994, social forestry activities in Cameroon

have focussed primarily on the idea of community forests, despite the fact that this approach is likely to encounter problems inherent in the way that the Administration works and in the structure of the communities concerned. In addition, the ban on individuals exploiting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and timber from community forests for profit increases the appeal of 'private' land (such as cocoa agroforests). Such land is also the ideal place for forestry activities, in a context where community spirit is not strong enough to encourage general participation in group initiatives. This paper argues that the objectives of the community forestry programme could partially be met through the good management of cocoa agroforests. There could be complementarity, in ecological, economic and social terms, between farmer management of agroforests and community forestry if the latter were designed to take into account the general management of the land area in question. Unfortunately, cocoa farmers receive no help from either the agriculture or forestry departments, and 85% of them have no contact whatsoever with extension services. This paper therefore recommends that: (1) community forestry projects be designed to form part of a general land management concept which includes cocoa agroforests; (2) NTFPs be domesticated in cocoa agroforests to reduce pressure on the forest; and (3) that domestication projects take account of the intra- and inter-specific diversity of forests in the zone.

25G(II) OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR 'COMMUNITY-BASED' FOREST MANAGEMENT: FINDINGS FROM THE KORUP FOREST, SOUTHWEST PROVINCE, CAMEROON

Ruth Malleson

Community forestry can only succeed with the full support, and active involvement, of local people. This paper draws on experience from the Korup forest area in Southwest Cameroon to highlight the multifaceted nature of communities. The level of access to forest resources and markets, the mixture of *indigene*- and *stranger*-headed households, the type of demographic changes that are taking place and livelihood strategies vary greatly from one community to another. Communities are also strongly demarcated along political lines between different groups of *elites*, *elders* and *youths*. Understanding this diversity is essential if appropriate 'community-based' forest management initiatives are to be promoted.

25H(I) COMMUNITY FORESTRY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN CAMEROON

Timothée Fomété and Jaap Vermaat

This paper is concerned with the potential impacts of community forestry on rural poverty. Whilst development of community forests is still at an early stage in Cameroon, the limited information available does indicate a clear trend. The communities with the first community forests tended to distribute the benefits on an individual basis, leading to rapid consumptive behaviour. More recent experiences, however, show communities looking for more complex

organisational and decision-making arrangements which may benefit the community as a whole and may have a significant multiplier effect. Drawing on four case studies, the paper concludes that community forestry does have the potential to contribute positively to the improvement of rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation. But for this to occur, a number of key conditions have to be met. These include enforced legal protection from outside 'incursions', community ownership of the organisation and planning process, available technical and management skills, and access to finance.

25H(II) A CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP: COMMUNITY FORESTRY AT KILUM-IJIM, CAMEROON

Anne A. Gardner, John DeMarco and Christian A. Asanga

Community forestry in Cameroon is oftenseen as a way to redirect some of the benefitsof timber exploitation to local communities. This paper presents a case study from the Kilum-Ijim Forest which is in an area that has insufficient valuable timber to be of logging interest but is, on the contrary, of great conservation value. Although the interests of the conservation community and local people differ, there is significant overlap and a common interest in maintaining the forest in its present extent and natural state. This has permitted the development of community forestry as a partnership between the conservation community and the local population.

25H(III) THE 4RS: A VALUABLE TOOL FOR MANAGEMENT AND BENEFIT-SHARING DECISIONS FOR THE BIMBIA BONADIKOMBO FOREST, CAMEROON.

Charles Tekwe and Fiona Percy

A key issue that needs to be resolved when establishing a community forest, is how the costs and benefits will be distributed. This paper reports on the use of the 4Rs tool to facilitate decision-making about management and benefit-sharing in the Bimbia Bonadikombo forest, Southwest Cameroon. The 4Rs tool allows for the analysis of the *rights* and *responsibilities* held by each stakeholder group, as well as the *revenues* (or benefits) they receive from the forest. This enables stakeholders to understand the links between these, analyse stakeholders' interests more objectively and hence make more equitable decisions on benefit sharing. In addition, it analyses the *relationships* between the different stakeholders, providing useful information about possible entrypoints for negotiation of difficult issues. In the Bimbia Bonadikombo case, a particularly welcome outcome of the process was a recognition by the Operations Committee of the planned community forest that they were responsible for negotiating on behalf of the whole community rather than according to their own personal views.

Please send comments on this paper to:

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