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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. Delving

Attempts to Establish Community Forests in Lomié, Cameroon

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ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH COMMUNITY FORESTS IN LOMIÉ, CAMEROON

Martha Klein, Brice Salla and Jaap Kok

SUMMARY

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 field experience of the SDDL project of the SNV including the difficulties encountered and opportunities for the future.

LOMIÉ, A SMALL TOWN IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST

Lomié is the main town of the Lomié administrative district in the Department of Haut Nyong, Eastern Province of Cameroon. The Lomié district administration and the neighbouring Messok district administration, together share responsibility for the rural municipalities of Lomié and Messok. The local population is made up of two main ethnic groups: the Nzimé, a Bantu people, and the Baka, a Pygmy people. Both have strong links with the forest environment and depend on it for food, medicines, construction materials, etc. The relationship between these two peoples goes back a long way although, because their cultures are very different, cohabitation is fraught with ethnic problems to this day.

As far as its natural wealth is concerned, the Lomié forest zone, with that of neighbouring Ngoila, could be called Cameroon's final 'forest frontier', because it has remained less affected by industrial logging than other areas. The Lomié district also includes the Eastern part of the Dja Fauna Reserve which, because of its biotic wealth, is on the World Heritage list and is also a part of the international network of Biosphere Reserves recognised by UNESCO. However, the borders of these relatively untouched forests are moving rapidly. Lack of coherent management and the absence of control measures leave the natural wealth of Lomié and the surrounding area more and more threatened by anarchic and destructive exploitation by:

- Logging and mining companies which, as private sector operators, are seeking to maximise their profits.
- Poachers who, with the reduced isolation and greater economic development of the region, have stepped up their commercial hunting activities.

REVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN THE REGION

Political context

In 1993, the Cameroon government clearly stated, amongst the four main aims of its new

Box 1 SDDL Sustainable Development Support project in the Lomié/Dja region

Overall objective: to promote a process of self-development with a view to conserving the natural resources on which this process depends

Specific objectives:

- To increase the flow of information amongst the key actors so that important factors can be anticipated and to spread experiences more widely
- To promote sustainable agriculture
- A more sustainable and equitable management of natural resources
- Institutional development of civil organizations and associations

Duration: 1997 – 2001

Funding: Netherlands (DGIS)

Implementation: SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation)



forest policy, its desire to (roughly translated) "improve the integration of forest resources into rural development, so as to contribute to raising the standard of living of the populations and to enable them to participate in resource conservation" (MINEF, quoted by Nguiffo and Djeukam, 2000). This new policy resulted, amongst other things, in the establishment of community forests, the legal framework for which was provided by the new Law on forests (Law no. 94/01, January 1994) and its Decree of application (Decree 95/531 PM, August 1995).

The Ministry of the Environment and Forests (MINEF), assisted by British aid, then produced and published the 'Manual of the procedures for the attribution, and norms for the management of community forests'. This manual was officially published in April 1998, and widely distributed from 1999.

Parallel developments at local level

In August 1996, a workshop to popularise the new forest law was organised by Enviro-Protect, a national NGO responsible for

implementing the pilot phase of the SDDL project (see Box 1). This aroused the interest of populations in the Lomié district for the new community forest concept, an interest confirmed by the initial PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) exercises carried out by the SDDL in 1997.

The arrival of commercial operators with logging rights in the forests which local communities had always considered their own naturally upset local perceptions and attitudes towards the forest. The idea of a community forest was perceived by the local population as a means of getting a larger share of the benefits gained from all forms of forest use and of protecting their forest against exploitation which they considered to be abusive (for example, felling Moabi (*Baillonella toxisperma*)). In some cases the community forest was also considered a way of getting some security of land tenure.

At the end of 1997, five pilot communities, in collaboration with the SDDL project, took the first steps in trying to establish community

forests. Following political and economic developments (intense development of the forest sector in Lomié) and promising initial results, the promotion of community forestry became the key activity of the SDDL project. Its other aims include:

- Developing community forest ‘know-how’ and transferring this to permanent structures;
- Supporting the classification and management of the Lomié and Messok communal forest;
- Monitoring the allocation of Forest Management Units (FMU, a type of logging permit), in particular the involvement of the local population;
- Improving the management of the revenue from decentralised forest taxation.

Naturally this work is not carried out in isolation. The SDDL project seeks to work in partnership with the relevant authorities, the private sector and especially with local NGOs to increase its impact and ensure the long-term sustainability of its activities. The development and strengthening of local capacity is, we believe, of the utmost importance for the successful development and management of community forests.

On 10th August 2000 an important milestone was reached when representatives of the first five community forests of Lomié and Messok (see Figure 1 overleaf), the Prefect of Haut Nyong and the General Secretary of MINEF co-signed the Management Agreements. This was a historic day for Lomié, and also for the whole of Cameroon, because these are the first community forests developed on the basis of the new forest legislation and the MINEF manual of procedures (MINEF, 1998).

Following on from these five examples, many other communities in the Lomié region have started the process of establishing their community forest: about 20 applications are currently being processed. Clearly our work here is not yet finished. What is perhaps the most difficult but also the most interesting phase has just begun: namely the implementation of Simple Management Plans for the community forests.

But before presenting our ideas and some preliminary results pertaining to the development of community forests, let us return to the process whereby they are established.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY FORESTS: HIGHLIGHTING THE PROCESS

According to the official definition, a community forest management agreement is (roughly translated) “a contract by means of which the Administrative body in charge of forests entrusts a part of the national forest to a community to be managed, conserved and used in the interests of the community” (Art. 3 (16) of Decree 95/531).

How does one validly conclude such a contract with a community where there is little community spirit and where organisational and management ability are still at an embryonic stage?

The SDDL project aims to make the development of a community forest an accessible option for interested communities; accessible from the point of view of both ‘costs’ and ‘technicalities’. The approach taken was

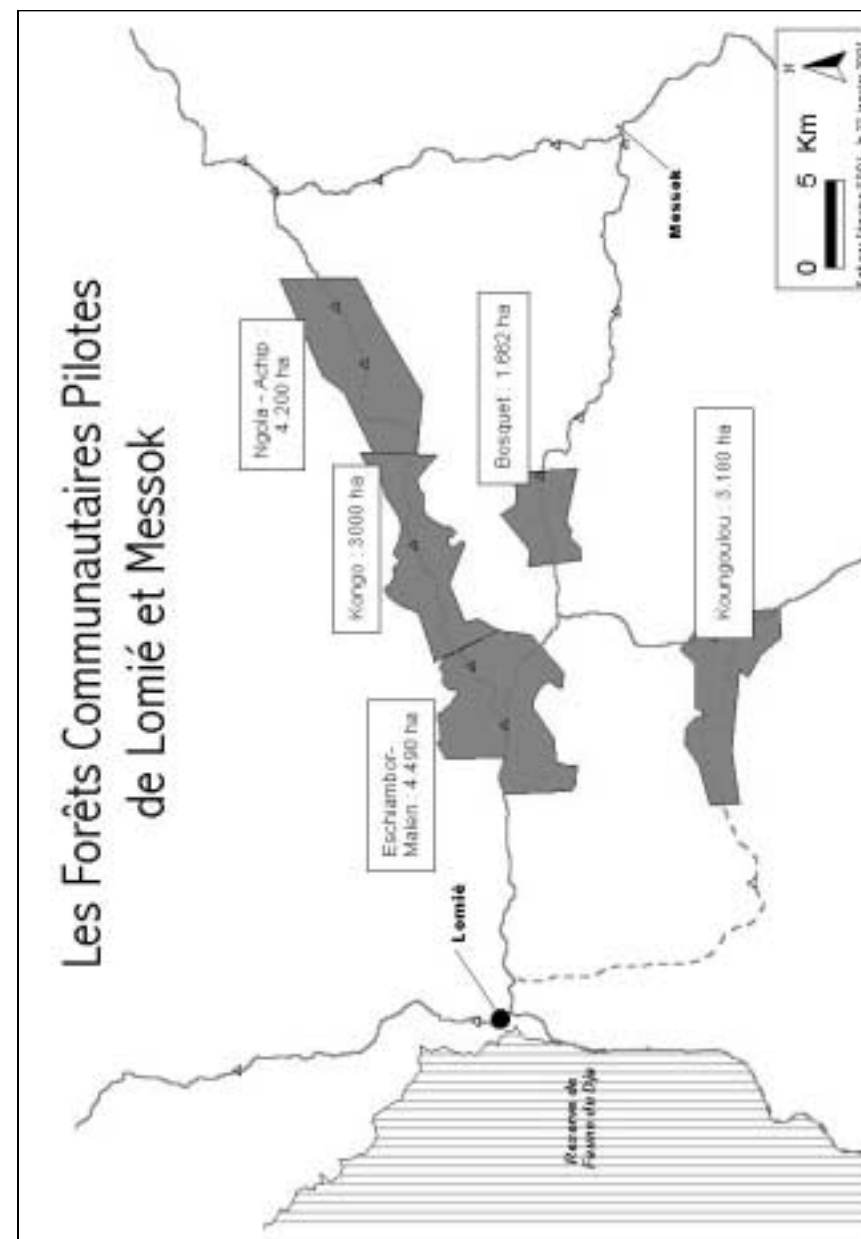


Figure 1 Location of the pilot community forests of Lomié and Messok

above all to be pragmatic: to take the opportunity offered by the new forest law and apply it. This meant that we took the spatial and administrative restrictions of the current Cameroon forest law as a starting point and did not ask too many questions about traditional or current spatial occupation.

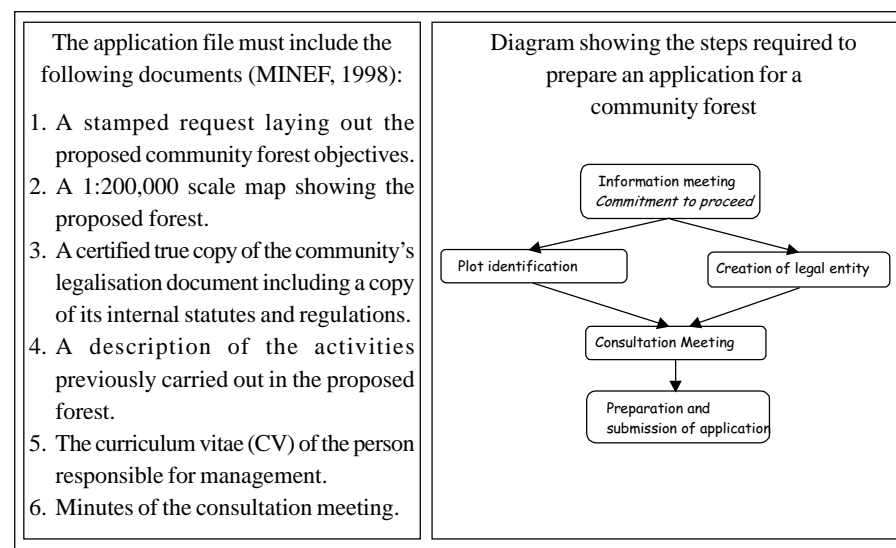
There are two main phases in the development of community forests in Cameroon:

- The preparation of the application file to reserve the requested forest.
- The preparation of a Simple Management Plan which, once approved, will allow a Management Agreement to be signed.

The application file

The content and the different stages of establishment of this application are shown in Box 2.

Box 2 The application file



The most difficult stages were the identification of the forest plot and the creation of legal entities.

Identification of the plot

Stated simply, this involves determining which part of the preliminary zoning plan covering the south of Cameroon can be claimed by the community requesting the forest. In practice, this requires the assistance of a technical cartographer. In Lomié, we were fortunate to find the necessary expertise locally at the International Support Centre for Sustainable Development (a local NGO), and were therefore able to get the maps we needed at low cost.

The legal entity

In order to request a community forest, a community has (roughly translated) “to have

an incorporation, in the form of a legal entity provided for by the legislation in force in Cameroon” (art. 28 (3) of the Decree). Acceptable legal entities in Cameroon are: Associations, Common initiative groups, and Cooperatives or Economic interest groups. None of these actually provides an ideal framework for the management of a community forest but, for practical and legal reasons (to keep the procedure simple and low cost), “the association seems to be the organisational form which is best adapted to the purpose assigned to the management body” (roughly translated) (Nguiffo and Djeukam, 2000).

We decided not to waste time on searching for a definition of the term ‘community’ (village? chief’s district? clan?) because we agree with Nguiffo and Robinson (2000) that (roughly translated) “one can only recognise as communities those who recognise themselves as such”. Thus, with respect to the creation of the legal entity, we left it up to the populations concerned to choose who would manage the community forest. In the majority of cases, the association thus created covered a 3rd level chief’s district (often a village with several hamlets). But there are also cases where two or even several chief’s districts have come together to form one entity, the reason being that their populations jointly use the same forest. Having said this, it should be noted that, to date, none of the structures created in this way functions satisfactorily. It is clear that a village structure for managing community property cannot be built on paper.

Restrictions on community organisation

The following are some characteristic problems encountered in the Lomié and Messok region:

- In spite of the election of an executive board

during a General Assembly and the description of the tasks of each member in the statutes of the Association, we found that all agreements were called into question as soon as real or potential money arrived in the village. Suddenly everyone claimed to have responsibility for, or to be a representative of, the community. At that moment, the customary power structures emerged (based on clans, elites, individualism, tribalism). Unfortunately, too often, the customary leaders do not make their presence felt during the long periods of community work required to prepare the applications.

- Serious communication problems exist within the communities. In part, the linear configuration of villages does not facilitate the forming of community groups. We have also noticed a certain slowness, even a refusal to share newly acquired information or knowledge; people chosen to represent the village community in workshops, seminars and training courses often take this invitation coming from the outside world as a personal invitation and do not automatically feed back all of the information to the village.

- Money management is not part of the traditional way of life of either the Nzimé or the Baka peoples. Furthermore, the arrival of money makes it glaringly obvious that hardly any community spirit exists. Only family lineages count and even these are no guarantee of concerted and coherent management.

We are in the process of examining with the communities concerned ways to improve the organisation of the community forest management structure. But one thing is certain:

only practice makes perfect and in the process fingers will sometimes get burned.

Costs and duration

Based on our experience, it is possible to calculate the costs of different scenarios. Table 1 summarises the costs required to prepare an application for a community forest in the region of Lomié, Messok and Ngoila. The estimates assume that all external assistance necessary is provided by local structures, that is the local NGOs, the public services and/or private structures.

The differences in the estimates relate mainly to:

- *The willingness of the relevant authorities to be of help.* The terms of reference and the budgets of the Administration and the decentralised departments of Cameroon do not cover their participation in community consultation meetings. The authorities therefore often request a contribution towards their travel costs.
- *The cost of transport.* Obviously, the farther away the administrative centres are, the more it costs to get there.

It is difficult to estimate the length of time between the decision of a community to

request a forest and the provisional agreement by MINEF (that is, the reservation of the requested forest). There are several factors which influence this and which make the process difficult to plan. These include:

- a population characterised by an acephalous structure, where individualism reigns over community spirit, does not easily make firm decisions on community projects;
- conflict with neighbours can seriously block agreement on the location of boundaries between two villages;
- authorities and other support structures are not always available when needed;
- there are many reasons for administrative delays in the processing of applications.

The Simple Management Plan

We have developed a six-step process to help communities prepare their own Simple Management Plan (Figure 2, overleaf).

In the process of producing a Simple Management Plan (SMP) the most important thing was to arouse collective awareness regarding:

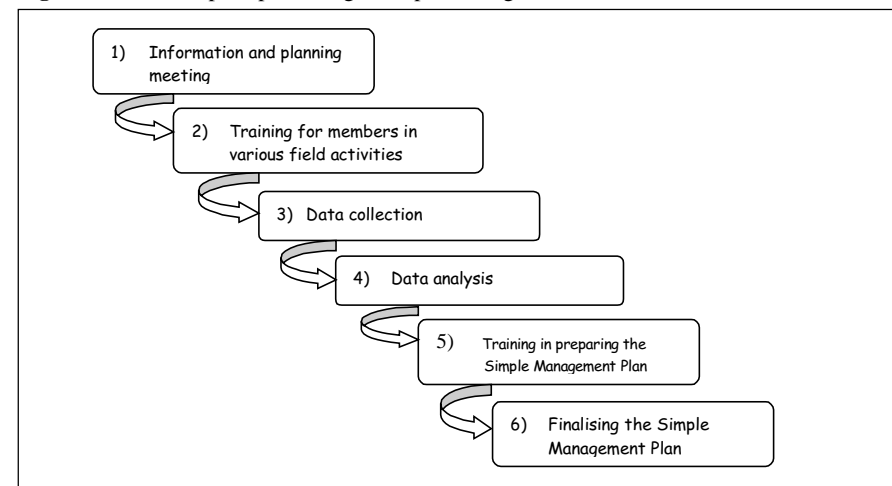
- how the community has managed this forest area over time;
- who makes up the community or ‘has

Table 1 Time and cost required to prepare an application file

Stage	Minimum duration (days)	Minimum amount (FCFA)	Maximum amount (FCFA)
Information meeting*	2	27,000	57,000
Identification of the forest	6?	114,500	152,200
Creation of a legal entity	8?	13,000	71,500
Consultation meeting	1	7,000	160,500
Finalising and duplicating the application	5-10	8,125	14,125
Forwarding the application	?	12,000	106,000
Total	?	181,625	533,825

* This meeting needs to be reinforced or even replaced by a visit to a nearby community which is at a more advanced stage in the process.

Figure 2 The six steps to producing a Simple Management Plan



rights’;

- what constitutes the wealth of the community forest, the ‘community natural resources’;
- how to manage these resources and for what purpose.

The participatory approach

With the help of training, and the provision of technical documentation and other essential materials, the (young) members of the community carried out:

- The socio-economic survey and participatory mapping of the area of activity;
- The delimitation of the allocated forest;
- The forest inventory (Box 3).

According to the directives of MINEF (the forest law, the manual of procedures), the SMP is concerned principally with the technical aspects of the forest, more or less neglecting the socio-cultural aspects. Experience with the first community forests is demonstrating, however, that it is essential that the

community concerned can recognise itself in this plan. So, we have also paid attention to:

- The history of the village (origins of clans, succession of chiefs, etc.).
- A population census: a complete survey including all the names of household heads is attached as an appendix to the SMP. This document is also useful in the discussion about who has what rights.
- The inclusion of some indicators of development, which allow the community to evaluate the development of their village after five years (renewal of the SMP):
 - description of social structures and their staff (e.g. health, schools, churches);
 - school attendance rates;
 - number of houses with or without corrugated iron roofs.

The collection of the data is followed by practical training in analysis at the village level to make data handling transparent and the results comprehensible.

Box 3 Forest inventory

Taking into account that the work is carried out by the local populations who are not professional botanists and that the time they have available for work of community interest is limited, the following methodology was agreed with the MINEF Departmental Delegation:

- Surveying to be done in a systematic manner by means of 10 m wide belts either side of a transect and covering 2 % of the total area of the community forest.
- All trees (timber and construction wood) with a minimum DBH of 40 cm to be inventoried.
- The location of the inventoried trees and either their scientific or vernacular name to be recorded on a suitable inventory sheet.

Following training, and by using the participatory maps and data collected, a drafting committee produces a proposal concerning:

- The division of the community forest into different sectors.
- How to manage each sector over the next five years according to the forest resources at their disposal.
- Priorities for the use of community revenue arising from logging of the community forest.
- Who has rights with regard to (i) the use of forest resources, and (ii) the benefits arising from logging.

The proposed plan is then presented and discussed before a General Assembly of the association so that it can be approved by the majority of the community. The results of the General Assembly form the core of the Simple Management Plan.

Costs and time required to prepare a Simple Management Plan

Table 2 (overleaf) summarises the cost estimates for different scenarios relating to the production of a SMP in the district of Lomié, excluding the services provided by the SDDL project. The calculations are based on an imaginary community forest of 3500 ha with

an external boundary of 25 km.

The difference in the cost estimates for the two scenarios is mainly because of additional costs linked to the distances between the community and administrative centres.

We have based our calculations wholly on local technical capacity. This is not just to reduce costs¹ but also to ensure that there is a high level of local ownership of the contents of the SMP.

Unlike with the preparation of the application file, it is possible to get an idea of the time taken to produce the SMP because there is much less dependence on external services. Nevertheless, 61 days, or about three months' work, is only a rough estimate of the minimum time required and is dependent on:

- The availability of training staff;
- The availability of community members for meetings and training programmes and in particular to carry out field work;
- The motivation of the community to get the work done.

¹ The use of a registered consultancy firm to carry out a 2% inventory would cost about FCFA 1000 per hectare, so the budget needed for a 3,500 ha forest would be FCFA 3,500,000 (Fomété, pers.comm).

Table 2 Time and cost of preparing a Simple Management Plan

Stage	Time (days)	Minimum amount (FCFA)	Maximum amount (FCFA)
Information and planning meeting for the SMP and management agreement	2	50,000	67,000
Training on socio-economic surveys	3	45,000	46,000
Training in basic forestry techniques	3	80,000	103,000
Data collection - Boundary delimitation (25 km) - 2% inventory (30 km) - Socio-economic surveys	33	816,000	1,232,000
Checking of work by the district forester	2	35,000	41,000
Analysis workshops	4	56,000	70,000
Workshop on community forest management	1	35,500	43,500
General assembly	1	-	-
Finalising and submission of the SMP	12	74,600	231,000
Total	61	1,192,100	1,833,500

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PILOT COMMUNITY FORESTS

The five pilot community forests have taught us the following five key lessons:

1. On the technical side, the approval of the Simple Management Plans shows that the technology developed and applied is fully acceptable to the competent authorities (MINEF).
2. On the financial side, the pragmatic approach of mobilising as much local capacity as possible means that the budget for establishing a community forest will be around 1.5 to 2.5 million FCFA. These kind of figures are much more acceptable than previous cost estimates made: in 1997 a consultant made some detailed calculations for the SDDL project and estimated the costs for establishment of a community forest to be more than 29 million FCFA of which 23.5 million were for the forest inventory and production of the SMP (Enyegue, 1997). Another expert, using consulting

firm prices, came up with an estimate of about 14 million FCFA (Fomété, in prep.).

3. We have shown that the money from forest taxes (Box 4) can be released to finance the development of a community forest. Other local solutions have also been found to make the establishment of a community forest, in particular the production of the SMP, feasible and independent of commercial actors.
4. A participatory approach, which helps communities gradually to develop their own management plan, ensures a high level of ownership by the whole community of "this community forest business". This provides a safeguard to avoid non-compliance and even abuse of the SMP and contributes to ensuring more sustainable management for the good of the whole community.
5. The introduction of basic forestry techniques and other training has strengthened local knowledge of, and capacity for, forest management. This is an

Box 4 Decentralised forest taxes

- Annual royalties for forest areas relate to the area of a Forest Management Unit or of a Sale of Standing Volume (*ventes de coupe*) permit². They are divided up as follows:
 - State 50%
 - Municipality(ies) 40%
 - Neighbouring populations 10%
- The annual royalty is calculated on the basis of the offer price of the company to whom the licence has been granted. The Finance Law fixes the bottom price (1000 FCFA/ha in 2000/2001) and since 2000 it has stated that the annual royalty should be applied “from the first year of the provisional agreement”.
- Sales of Standing Volume permits are also subject to obligatory contributions for social initiatives which usually amount to 1000 FCFA per m³ (though this is likely to be withdrawn due to very negative effects).

important asset given the intense development of the forest sector in the region. Two benefits of this have been the recruitment of young people trained through the project by commercial companies and the creation in Lomié of the “Dja Forest Studies Centre”.

THE RACE FOR ‘COMMUNITY TIMBER’

Just after (and in some cases even before) the signing of the Management Agreement, all five communities with a community forest to manage were suddenly approached by a large number of logging companies. Furthermore, these communities suddenly turned out to have elites! These elites had not been involved either at local level or from a distance in the whole process of obtaining the community forests. Worse still, many had only found out through the press that their village had signed a Management Agreement. These elites now returned to the village to take up the key posts on the association boards and to appropriate most of the information. This situation clearly leads to divisions within communities and acute social tension.

When the initial contacts were made for negotiation, neither the populations nor the logging companies contacted the relevant authorities and still less the SNV (SDDL project). As one association president said, “After signing the Management Agreement we didn’t know we would still need help from the SNV”. The end result is that logging companies, which are above all economic actors, have profited from the naiveté and lack of experience of the community to exploit it. At this time, most actors in the timber marketing chain still considered community forests as simply another form of Sales of Standing Volume permit².

There was no getting away from the fact that there are still gaps in the legislation

² A Sale of Standing Volume (*ventes de coupe*) permit can be issued for areas of up to 2,500 ha in the national forest domain. It specifies the exact volume of standing timber to be extracted and is valid for one year (renewable twice).

governing the management of community forests because the current law stipulates that “communities are free to conclude contracts for use of the timber in the community forests entrusted to them, in the form of Sales of Standing Volume, or via a logging licence or a personal felling authorisation.” This tends to subvert the ideals of the community forest concept, as it enables individuals to benefit at the expense of communities.

Other members of the community, knowing that a bad decision would lead to the disappearance of the forest within several months, have bitterly disputed the signed contracts and have gone to the relevant authorities to ask for them to be annulled. The result of this confusion within the communities and the growing uncertainty as to what route to take was that the majority called on the relevant authorities and in particular the SNV for help. To date not a single tree has yet been cut which, in the Lomié context, is indeed remarkable. We are, however, in discussions with MINEF, the communities concerned and many other experts about the procedures and possible contracts for the logging of community forests in Cameroon.

OPTIONS FOR TIMBER EXPLOITATION

Of the various possible options for exploiting the timber in community forests, there are only two we would recommend:

- artisanal exploitation by the community itself;
- exploitation in partnership with a registered company on condition that the timber is processed locally.

The following advantages justify the requirement that timber from community forests be processed locally:

- increase in local employment;
- promotion of national companies, potential creators of small and medium-sized businesses;
- Ease with which operations can be controlled by the local populations;
- Increase in the local value added to timber products;
- Reduction in wood wastage;
- Compatibility with the size and content of most community forests. Large industrial companies are often disparaging about small areas, saying they are an obstacle to sustainable management;
- Small-scale operations (portable and/or mobile saw), which minimise impact on the forests.

The most recent developments concerning these two exploitation options are described below.

Artisanal exploitation

Only recently (November 2000) the Minister for the Environment and Forests stated that ‘*exploitation en regie*’ (exploitation under state management) is the regulatory route for timber exploitation by communities themselves. We await details of the necessary administrative procedures for this type of exploitation.

In the meantime we have carried out a trial using a portable saw to see whether artisanal exploitation would be:

- technically feasible in the given terrain and on the basis of local capacity;
- ecologically sustainable;

- a source of revenue for the community in the long and the short term.

The experimental site chosen was the community forest of Koungoulou where some logs had been left abandoned after fraudulent exploitation in 1997. The organisation of this project has been inspired above all by the example of SWIFT (Solomon Western Islands Fair Trade), which has more than ten years' experience. Although located near Papua New Guinea, the situation and the problems seemed very comparable (cf. Van Helden and Schneemann, 2000; ICCO, 1996; Wyatt, 1996; and Louman, 1996).

The trainee team, called 'Vandikhout' (see Box 5 and Figure 3 (overleaf)), was made up of a trainer/sawyer and a yard foreman recruited from Lomié and four assistant sawyers, one labourer and a checker recruited locally. The team was assisted by a technical assistant, and a male and a female project worker. Three groups of porters (men and women, Baka and Bantu mixed) were trained to move the planks from the forest to the three depots.

Apart from the practical training in sawing given to the assistant sawyers, theoretical and practical training was also given in the classification of square-edged lumber. The training was given by the General Inspection Company (SGS), an internationally approved company. Within this context 20 m³ of converted timber was classified and the FAS standard lumber (First and Second quality Imperial Standard) was given the SGS stamp.

Initial results

During a period of 40 working days the team processed 88 m³ of timber into 32 m³ of planks (a mix of Sapelli, Sipo, Kossipo,

Box 5 The meaning of "Vandikhout"

The name Vandikhout comes from the phrase "Van Dik Hout Zaagt Men Planke"

This is a Dutch expression meaning "planks are cut from a big log"

This expression has the sense of:
"Sometimes force is required"
or
"We will not be turned back"

Assamela and Iroko). Furthermore, it was proud to have attained a 30 % FAS rate, which means that it can already export its products. It is important to stress that this quantity was produced using only abandoned logs and fallen trees dispersed in the forest and not from selectively felled timber.

The highest possible standards of workmanship were set from the start in line with the requirements of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as the aim was not only to achieve sustainable management of the community forest, but also to produce certified timber.

Table 3 (overleaf) summarises the initial results from using the portable saw. The costs established in this trial are shown in Table 4 (also overleaf), from which can be calculated that, per m³ cut, the following amounts remain in the village:

- 28,875 FCFA in community money
- 26,240 FCFA in remuneration for the village labourers
- 7,500 FCFA in business capital

Figure 3 Vandikhout team at work with portable saw



The equipment is based on a small log cutting machine with two STIHL 070 motors and an additional chainsaw for felling and for cutting grooves to produce rafters and slats. Its products are of very high quality, comparable with those of industrial sawmills. This equipment is light and suitable for use at local level. It is relatively inexpensive and will more than pay for itself once efficiently managed. Replacement parts are easy to find. The current processing unit including all costs comes to 3,984,960 FCFA. Based on a three-year hire purchase, this is equivalent to 1,335,765 FCFA per year.

Table 3 Strengths and weaknesses of the portable saw

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technology developed is well suited to local technical capacities • Creation of jobs in the village • Production of high quality timber (30% FAS export standard) • High yield of 45% in spite of generally poor quality logs • Planks sold at a very good price • Development of forestry knowledge at village level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The logs sawn were partially rotten • Low level of organisation and management in the village; difficulties in managing conflicts and irregularities • Almost complete lack of entrepreneurial spirit at community level • Ineffective collaboration between the different stakeholders (MINEF, SDDL, community, plank buyers, etc.) which has made the timber commercialisation stage long and painful

Table 4 Processing costs established in the trial

<i>Breakdown of the price per m³ of wood cut with the portable saw (with an annual production of 150 m³)</i>	
<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount (in FCFA)</i>
Purchase of 2.5 m ³ of rough timber (assuming a 40% yield)	28,875
Labour comprising 6 persons with productivity of ¼ m ³ per day	16,000
Fuel and lubricants	12,040
Replacement parts and consumables	13,375
Payment of porters	10,240
Depreciation of equipment	8,960
Repayment of initial credit including 18% interest	11,210
Administration and marketing (taxes, etc.)	6,000
Operators' insurance	2,800
Services provided by third parties and hiring of large tools	3,000
Entrepreneur's risk and constitution of business capital	7,500
Total per m³ produced	120,000

- This makes a total of 62,615 FCFA per m³ cut, or 25,045 FCFA per m³ of unconverted timber.

Exploitation in partnership

Clearly not all communities managing community forests will have the ambition or the capacity to exploit their forests under state management and will need to consider a partnership with a licensed operator.

As mentioned above, many people in the Cameroon forest sector considered community forests to be another form of Sales of Standing Volume permit, and the current law does not provide any clear proof to the contrary. However, current experiences in the field have led the Cameroon government to state specifically that the allocation of community forests by mutual agreement will not be approved (ref.: meeting on 26/10/2000 in

Yaoundé between the Minister of the Environment and Forests and international donors).

MINEF and its partners are currently working on a decentralised procedure for the regulation of all forms of natural resource exploitation in a community forest as well as a model for possible contracts. The communities concerned are well integrated into this process, the results of which are awaited with impatience in Lomié.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In Lomié, the implementation of Cameroon's new policy concerning the development of community forests is well under way. The route by which a forest community can obtain its community forest has been marked out. The SDDL project intends to gradually withdraw from the process and transfer as much as possible of its knowledge to local structures.

But much still remains to be done, including: a review of the management of all community money at every level; regrettably, too much is still disappearing;

- a study of how to finance the investment necessary to develop artisanal timber processing units;
- the development of practical standards for sustainable exploitation of this type of forest and related work (100 % inventory, felling plan to be followed, etc.);
- a move towards a certified timber marketing chain, based on the production of the community forests.

Finally, in five years time, after the completion of the cycle of the first Simple Management Plans, the time will come to verify whether the community forests are making a concrete and perceptible contribution to:

- a more sustainable and equitable management of natural resources; and
- the fight against poverty.

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ACRONYMS

FAS	First and Second Quality Imperial Standard
FCFA	Currency in French-speaking West and Central Africa. Exchange rate: 100 FCFA = 1 FRF 750 FCFA = 1 USD
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
MINEF	Ministry of the Environment and Forests
MARPP	Participatory Rural Analysis (PRA)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RFA	Annual forest due
SMP	Simple Management Plan
SDDL	(project) Support for Sustainable Development of the Lomié/Dja region
SGS	Société Generale de Surveillance (General Inspection Company)
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SWIFT	Solomon Western Islands Fair Trade

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