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Community Forestry and Poverty Alleviation in Cameroon

Timothée Fomété and Jaap Vermaat

A Conservation Partnership: Community Forestry at Kilum-Ijim, Cameroon

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

The 4Rs: a Valuable Tool for Management and Benefit Sharing Decisions for the Bimbia Bonadikombo Forest, Cameroon

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THE 4RS: A VALUABLE TOOL FOR MANAGEMENT AND BENEFIT-SHARING DECISIONS FOR THE BIMBIA BONADIKOMBO FOREST, CAMEROON

Charles Tekwe and Fiona Percy

SUMMARY

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 entry points 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.

INTRODUCTION

The Mount Cameroon Project (MCP) promotes participatory biodiversity conservation in the Mount Cameroon region of South West Cameroon. The very heterogenous community makes use of a variety of resources from the forests around Mount Cameroon. Coupled with weak traditional authority, low government capacity to agree and implement legal forest management, and confusing land tenure arrangements, this leads to lack of clarity over ownership and regulations for community management of their forest resources. MCP has been working towards community management of the forest in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) since 1995.

In 2000, MCP used the 4Rs tool¹ with the Bimbia Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council (BBNRM) to help its Operations Committee (OC) examine the

¹ Originally developed for understanding power issues in stakeholders' roles by Olivier Dubois, IIED, and documented in Dubois (1998).

factors that might affect the generation and sharing of benefits from their planned community forest. The community using the limited forest resources of Bimbia and now applying for a community forest is a diverse, non-integrated, peri-urban mix of many immigrants and fewer local people, in a highly complex social and cultural environment. Power struggles between indigenous urban-based elites, traditional authorities and immigrant forest users, to win control over decisions on forest utilisation and the accruing benefits, caused a delay of three years before the formation of a functional forest management committee and agreement for organised forest management was possible. During this time the project tried several institutional structures, and relationships with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) developed slowly.

The BBNRMC has a board made up of influential stakeholders who sit two to three times a year and who approve decisions proposed by the OC. The OC is the pro-active elected executive group of the BBNRMC which coordinates the application for a community forest, ensures meetings are held with stakeholders as required and organises monitoring and control of the forest. The OC members represent the different stakes in the Bimbia forest and each member is also accountable to their residential village or urban quarter. The OC provides the board with information on the real status of the forest and proposes action to be taken for the community forest to be successful. In addition there is an advisory group consisting of staff from MINEF, MCP and CDC (the Cameroon Development Corporation, a parastatal which is the leaseholder for the land). The members

of this group give technical advice and are observers, facilitators, collaborators and, in the case of MINEF, actors in joint management and control of key forest resources. They are not decision makers with regard to the community forest. The BBNRMC and its Operations Committee are the result of three years of participatory institutional development work, which had to search hard for a structure to manage the existing complex interests and power relationships.

Box 1 The 4Rs versus stakeholder analysis

The 4Rs tool analyses stakeholder rights, responsibilities, revenues (benefits) and relationships, demonstrating the inter-dependence and interactions between them. While stakeholder analysis looks at the different relationships stakeholders have with forest resources, the 4Rs looks at how stakeholders relate to one another over forest use.

The 4Rs tool (Box 1) was recognised as a useful way to facilitate the OC's analysis of its own and all other stakeholders' situations in the Bimbia forest. No controls over forest use or farming in the forest had been successful up to this time. The traditional authorities no longer reside in or near the forest and are powerless to intervene. Government authority is weak and easily corrupted. Conflict between different forest users, including government forest officers and the Project, but particularly between the indigenous population (who consider themselves owners) and immigrants using the forest, has been common place. The 4Rs tool permits an objective analysis separately for each stakeholder which reveals

the connections between rights, responsibilities and revenues, thereby allowing stakeholders to make more rational decisions for entitlements to benefits from community forestry. It also reveals the importance of understanding relationships between stakeholders as the basis for negotiation and agreement. In this case the BBNRMC has decision-making power over the management of the Bimbia forest, but it is important that it is as well informed and as unbiased as possible. The results of the 4Rs analysis made this possible.

CRITERIA FOR BENEFIT SHARING MECHANISMS

Decisions about benefit-sharing mechanisms must be based upon criteria that acknowledge different stakeholders' rights of access to forest resources and the responsibilities they take for forest management. The 4Rs exercise was intended to inform the OC and MCP facilitating team of the wider picture of the connections between who currently benefits from the forest, who has rights and who takes responsibilities, and use this to inform the development of a benefit-sharing mechanism.

The exercise also helped to highlight the need for a number of technical requirements before decisions could be taken on setting rates for resource rights and benefit shares:

- agreeing 'quotas' of each valuable resource (corresponding to sustainable off take) which are allocated to users over a set time frame;
- agreeing an equitable system for access by users to agreed quotas, managed by the BBNRMC and based on payment of fees, customary entitlement, and accountability by the BBNRMC;
- cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of single

resources to inform the setting of appropriate fees and rates for permits, and to identify operating costs and income so as to predict potential revenues for a Community Development Fund (CDF). The CDF would be derived from a proportion of revenues after deducting direct costs, and would be accessible to communities' surrounding the Bimbia forest for development activities which contribute directly or indirectly to the maintenance of the forest and its sustainable use.

The use of the 4Rs with the OC provided them with greater understanding of the bigger picture surrounding forest use. It also produced a baseline scenario from which much of the necessary negotiations with other stakeholders and social decisions for the community forest could be made, as well as the basis to work out benefit sharing (Box 2 overleaf).

PLANNING FOR THE 4RS

The MCP decided to introduce the 4Rs exercise, realising that it would provide useful information and insights for later decisions by the OC. After initial detailed consideration of the issues, the MCP then looked at the costs of establishing a community forest and the likely expectations of benefits. This reinforced the need to use the 4Rs in a participatory manner with the OC.

Rights were defined as:

- access and use of forest products – these may be customary or purchased rights, and decisions are needed by the BBNRMC on who can obtain such rights and how;
- access to employment deriving from the community forest;

Box 2 Summary of the use of the 4Rs tool, adapted from Dubois (1998) by MCP

The 4Rs tool can be used to:

- develop a future vision or ideal and thereby inform community forest management planning, highlighting which stakeholders will be involved in it and with each other;
- provide the rationale for negotiation between stakeholders over future rights, responsibilities and benefit shares (which considers equity issues);
- provide the rationale for who should in future take more responsibility, and gain or lose rights and or benefits, forming a basis for fee setting and rules and regulations for resource exploitation;
- highlight the importance of relationships and networks between stakeholders for successful organized resource management;
- highlight which stakeholder relationships need to change or be fostered, and to emphasise these in action plans;
- relate rights and responsibilities to benefit sharing by using criteria on which to base negotiation;
- inform priorities for cost-benefit analyses by highlighting imbalances between rights and benefits.

Responsibility refers to:

- forest management tasks: measurement, monitoring and control, coordination, decision making;
- implementing decisions on rules, procedures, and beneficiaries;
- abiding by the rules.

Revenues (benefits) refer to:

- direct benefits arising from proceeds from forest resources accessed;
- direct benefits arising from ‘employment’ in managing the community forest;
- indirect benefits arising from implementation of projects using community development funds accrued from income generated by the community forest, or by the BBNRMC management council.

Income to the BBNRMC must, therefore, cover the direct costs of developing and managing the community forest, including the planned

nature trail and any other non-consumptive use activities, and these will already benefit the individuals compensated to do the work involved. Income over and above running costs will be for use by a Community Development Fund (CDF). This CDF will also need its own procedure for decision making – which could be through a grant making committee assessing proposals from communities adjacent to the forest.

THE PROCESS

The 4Rs exercise took place during a planned two-day workshop together with all members of the OC, an MCP team as facilitators and two local Ministry of Environment and Forest (MINEF) staff as technical advisors to the OC. The OC were asked to brainstorm what benefit sharing meant to them, and then to define rights and responsibilities, to allow for a common understanding before going into analysis

Table 1 Current rights, responsibilities and revenues for 9 of the 18 Bimbia Bonadikombo forest stakeholders

Stakeholder	Rights	Score	Responsibility	Score	Revenue (Benefit)	Score
Charcoal Burners	Part access	2	Registered with OC	2	Direct income	4
Timber Exploiters	Part Access	0.5	None	0	Direct income – timber	4
Firewood collectors	None	0	None	0	Direct income, resource	4.5
CDC (a parastatal plantation company)	Rightful leasehold owners	5	Ensure proper land management	1	None	0
Chiefs	Authorise access to all resources	3	Custodians; Monitor	2	Fees; Gifts	1
Farmers	Access to land; Participation/ decision making	2	Implement land use plan (tree planting); Registration	1	Crop sales; Crop consumption	5
MINEF	Supervision; Management	4	Control exploitation; Collect government taxes; Community forest procedure	2	Auction sales revenues; Exploitation fees	3.5
BBNRMC	Management Authority; Negotiate on behalf of the community; Sanction	3	Implement land use plan; Monitoring and control; Establish community forest	3	Allowances; Training; Gifts; Informant fees	2
Traditional Doctors	User right; Participation	1	–	0	Consultation fees; Treatment; Herb sales	5

(benefits and relationships had clearer definitions).

A brainstorm of important clients of the community forest was done, arriving at a list of 18 stakeholder categories, split into two groups for analysis. The groups fully discussed and

agreed each stakeholder’s **current** and **actual** rights, responsibilities and revenues (benefits) in relation to the forest, before moving on to the next. They recorded key points and gave a relative score (0 = none, 5 = high/maximum) for each of the 3Rs in a table (see Table 1). Where stakeholders with a policy or legal

responsibility were not actually being responsible, the description reflected the policy and the score reflected the reality.

Each group presented their table in plenary, and participants together checked the results. This was done by checking across each row, and checking down each “R” column, for consistency and final agreement. The description and scores were analysed. For example, do MINEF actually take less responsibility than the BBNRMC, and the same amount as chiefs? Are chiefs benefiting almost nothing and yet taking responsibilities? Are timber exploiters and fuelwood collectors and charcoal burners all benefiting to the same extent? Are the descriptions given really the actual situation, or what should be happening? – which if very different was also noted outside the table (eg MINEF should be taking more responsibility than they are). These comparisons led to some adjustments to the scores to make the comparisons between stakeholders meaningful, and agreement was reached on the relative ‘weight’ of different types of rights, responsibilities and benefits.

From the table, it was clear that those who benefit currently are resource users. Most of these stakeholders are illegal users who are not registered either with MINEF or the

BBNRMC. On the contrary, those with much responsibility and rights benefit very little, and are not direct forest users – a situation that jeopardises sustainable use. Table 2 provides a ranked summary of the current situation of stakeholders in the forest revealed in the complete table.

The future vision

The same exercise was repeated, but this time participants were asked to envisage the community forest as it would be in five years time if it was successful. Once agreed, the table produced provides a negotiation tool and reference point or target for the OC for the community forest, it’s necessary rules and regulations, and needs for management and control of stakeholders. It provides a basis for dialogue and negotiation with the other stakeholders to reach an agreement supported by all.

Relationships matrix

The OC then analysed the existing relationships between each of the clients, using a pairwise matrix, and colour codes for different relationship types (represented in Table 3 as ✓ excellent; ✓ fair; ✗ poor; - no relationship).

Rather than repeating this complex matrix for the future scenario, participants analysed and interpreted the matrix, using the colours to

Table 2 Summary of the current situation regarding rights, responsibilities and benefits

Rank	Greatest rights	Most responsibilities	Most benefits
1	CDC	MCP	Farmers / fishermen
2	MINEF	BBNRMC	Firewood harvesters / traditional doctors
3	MCP	MINEF / chiefs / elites / charcoal burners / LUC	Timber harvesters / charcoal makers
4	BBNRMC / Chiefs		

[CDC – Cameroon Development Corporation; MINEF – Ministry of Environment and Forests; LUC – Limbe Urban Council]

Table 3 Current relationships between stakeholders

	Chiefs	Farmers	MINEF	BBNRMC	Villages	Admin	LUC	Trad. Doc	Charcoal	Timber	Fuelwood	Hunters	MCP	MINAGRI	CDC	Elites
Chiefs		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✗	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Farmers			✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✗	✗	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
MINEF				✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	-
BBNRMC					✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Villages						✓	✓	-	-	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Admin							✓	✓	-	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
LUC								-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Trad Doc										✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Charcoal										✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
Timber											✓	-	✗	-	✓	✗
Fuelwood												-	✗	-	✗	✗
Hunters													-	-	-	✓
MCP														✓	✓	✓
MINAGRI															✓	✓
CDC																✓
Elites																

discover stakeholder trends and problematic relationships. Points raised and lessons learned were converted into recommendations of what the OC could do to improve relationships, and to make use of potential entry points for making new relationships or starting negotiations. For example, the OC is working collaboratively with charcoal burners, who in turn work with and depend upon timber exploiters for felling and cross cutting their wood. Hence a plan was made to bring timber exploiters into the community forest process through the charcoal burners group, and another to use the good relationship of the elites with CDC to help release land to the community.

OUTCOME

A comparison was made between current and future scenarios. Participants were asked what differences they saw between the two tables, and therefore what changes would be required if the futures table was to become a reality. Additional responsibilities and reduced revenues will certainly require increase in rights, or may not be possible. Extra responsibilities should come together with benefits that provide sufficient incentive to take on the responsibility. The futures table was adjusted until all agreed that it realistically showed the future rights, responsibilities and

revenues appropriate for the community forest and that it could be used by the OC as a working guide to monitor progress towards achieving a sustainable community forest.

From these comparisons and the recommendations for improved relationships, a list of recommendations for action by the OC was developed (see Box 3).

Participants also articulated the new insights they had gained through doing the 4Rs exercise. This highlighted to MCP where capacity building of the OC may be required, for example, for increased leadership capacity to support its legal authority once the community forest is approved. Lessons learned included:

- understanding and agreeing RIGHTS helps to guide rules for resource users which are fair to all stakeholders;
- agreeing RESPONSIBILITIES helps to guide participation for planning and establishing systems for monitoring and control of resource use and for facilitating

registration and fee payments for resource users;

- understanding BENEFITS in relation to rights and responsibilities helps to guide planning of the benefit sharing mechanism;
- understanding RELATIONSHIPS now, and those that are needed for future forest management, helps the OC decide how to facilitate awareness-raising of other stakeholders, whom to negotiate with, and whom to use as entry points into new relationships;
- looking at the roles of all stakeholders now and in the future and knowing who can offer what to forest management now, enables step by step planning from the current reality to a desired (and realistic) future scenario;
- there are currently beneficiaries without responsibilities or rights – these stakeholders are therefore by definition illegal forest users;
- current lack of equity and conflict in the process of establishing forest management can be understood by observing which relationships between actors are a problem;

Box 3 Actions planned by the BBNRMC Operations Committee

1. Improve the participation of actual resource users (farmers, timber exploiters, firewood collectors, charcoal burners, hunters) through:
 - sensitisation (information on rules – for some will lose out from a restriction on current practices);
 - negotiation;
 - agreement and sanction;
 - sensitisation committee of the OC.
2. Improve MINAGRI participation by including them regularly in field trips.
3. Strengthen links with elites to take up the issue of land from CDC leasehold.
4. Request charcoal burners to organise a meeting of all timber exploiters.
5. Designate OC members to organise a meeting with fuelwood collectors.
6. Look at the 4Rs for ecotourism stakeholders.
7. Hold a meeting with selected OC members to develop the community forest benefit-sharing mechanism using the results of the 4Rs.

- the results of the 4Rs can become a guide for planning and developing strategies for the BBNRMC work;
- through the 4Rs exercise, participants realised for the first time that the BBNRMC will be the leader of the Community Forest when it is approved, and hence legitimately holds responsibilities and rights equal to or greater than both MINEF and MCP;
- OC members realized that they are responsible for negotiating on behalf of all the community (not just according to their own personal views) with resource users and other stakeholders to gain the necessary agreements for a Community Forest. This was an important step towards genuine representation of and responsiveness to all forest stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS

The 4Rs is a complex tool which in this case took more than a full day to complete. Participation was excellent due to the varied tasks and group work and the interest of the participants in the results and their implications. Despite the complexity of facilitation, the tool enabled the participants themselves to generate all the information and analysis, strengthening their ownership of the results and their commitment to plans made. Using the 4Rs for a single purpose with a single stakeholder for an analysis of benefit sharing is inadequate. Using it early on in forest management planning with organised forest management groups and communities to address all of the issues it raises, particularly as a basis for negotiation over rights and responsibilities between stakeholders, would make the time taken to implement it more worthwhile. Bringing different stakeholders together for the 4Rs

carries the danger of causing conflict, but can be productive if managed well. Harmonising the outcome goes a long way to negotiating agreements.

The 4Rs and benefit sharing

Although it seemed as if the OC was being taken a step back from implementing its existing community forest plans and developing a benefit-sharing mechanism, all agreed that the insights gained from the results and their clear visual presentation were very important to the process of establishing a community forest. It was clear that going straight into development of a benefit-sharing mechanism without preliminary analysis of this kind would have led to decisions favouring the OC, discriminating against resource users, and potentially ignoring traditionally held responsibilities, all of which would have undermined the sustainability of forest use. The results laid a foundation from which criteria and a mechanism for benefit sharing could be developed. It also revealed the need for other work such as a cost-benefit analysis and technical resource assessment before agreeing and setting quota, rates and amounts.

The 4Rs and stakeholder participation

A key result was that the OC members (rather than MCP) defined all the stakeholders and were able to consider them as important as themselves in the community forest process. They began to understand their own role as **brokers** for the community forest, rather than an interest group out for its own gain. This shift in attitude will enable the OC to be more open to building positive relationships with difficult clients, for example farmers, make more objective decisions based on consideration of how all stakeholders will respond to changes

in forest management, and anticipate opportunities, problems and conflicts along the way. The role of the OC and BBNRMC as leaders in the community forest process and resource management, as opposed to MINEF or MCP, was highlighted. Weaknesses in MINEF capacity to control forest resources were shown as a long term issue, and this strengthened OC commitment to developing opportunities for taking on management and control as well as improved joint control of key resources.

The 4Rs, resource use and management conflicts

The OC learnt through the exercise that building constructive relationships is a prerequisite to negotiation and cooperation over resource use and management. Members realised that the 4 different 'Rs' are all interrelated, for example:

- changing rights will alter relationships between those with different rights, because it will alter the balance between how much stakeholders 'win' and 'lose', thus creating incentives for new alliances;
- changing responsibilities is likely to need alterations in the rights of those who have new responsibilities, or who rescind responsibilities to others. For example, the MINEF acknowledgement that the BBNRMC is taking real responsibilities which MINEF, despite its legal mandate, is unable to carry out, requires that MINEF also gives up some rights to the BBNRMC;
- increased rights and revenues through community forestry for particular stakeholders can be linked to incentives for taking increased responsibility in forest management;
- sharing rights and revenues as is the case in

joint management requires, and may lead to, more responsible relationships between the stakeholders concerned.

Where resource users are not participating in or consulted on decisions over management rules, they are unlikely to accept them. Generating and then analysing the 4Rs led to a realisation that:

- rights must be given or sold to enable users to be legal and have the security to abide by rules set for resource use;
- negotiations are not possible with illegal exploiters unless there is an opportunity for them to become legal. Those managing and controlling the resources must be able to offer such opportunities;
- current illegal users or those over-exploiting are likely to lose out in the short term as a result of restrictions on their current activities. This situation must be managed with as much participation as possible;
- there is a need to compensate those who take on responsibilities for resource management as well as rights for resource use;
- resource users and other stakeholders can take on responsibilities as well as indigenous custodians of the forest and the BBNRMC.

The 4Rs – a versatile tool in community forest establishment

While this paper describes the use of the 4Rs tool in establishing a basis for agreeing equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms among a diverse group of forest stakeholders, it also demonstrates its value as a versatile tool useful for many aspects of community forest establishment. Careful thought is required to tailor the specific use of the tool to the particular need and emphasis at the time of its use. It may be used as baseline information of the current

reality compared to the legal and policy situation. It may be used as a negotiation tool to thoroughly analyse a particular resource and the needs for changes in use and management with all stakeholders together. Or, as here, it may be used as a basis for future negotiation between stakeholders by allowing individual stakeholders to do their own analysis of the current scenario and a future desired situation before meeting together. Depending on where the most important imbalances and problems occur, more attention will be given to benefit shares as in this paper, or to negotiating rights, or agreeing responsibilities. In all cases, the importance of relationships between stakeholders and their impact and influence on current forest use and management becomes more visible. Opportunities arise for new relationships and alliances based on rational analysis of all the stakeholders' situation, needs and interests replacing a personalised and biased taking of positions.

The 4Rs can therefore be a widely applied participatory tool in situations requiring more organised and equitable natural resource management by the stakeholders concerned.

ACRONYMS

BBNRM	Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CDF	Community Development Fund
MCP	Mount Cameroon Project
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture
MINEF	Ministry of Environment and Forests
OC	Operations Committee (of the BBNRM)

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