



CODESRIA

13

ème

Assemblée générale
General Assembly
Assembleia Geral
الجمع العام الثالث عشر

L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI

إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

DRAFT VERSION
NOT TO BE CITED

**Environmental Communication and Forest Governance Strategy
for Sustainable Management in Cameroon: The Case of
Anglophone Cameroon**

Victor Ngu Cheo
University of Buea, Cameroon

5 - 9 / 12 / 2011

Rabat Maroc / Morocco

Introduction

The global environmental crises and their associated consequences, today, more than ever before, are a cause for concern not only to international and regional organizations but also at the national and local levels. There is much debate on how best to sustainably exploit the various natural resources. Anxieties about forest decline are significant because forests provide a complex array of ecological, social and economic goods and services to humans. About 25% of the world's people depend to some extent on forest resources for their livelihoods and subsistence (GFW, 2000).

In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, deforestation is the major environmental problem and much of deforestation in Africa is attributed to timber companies which trade in wood, thereby, responding to international demand for tropical wood. The resultant effect is that high-value tropical timber is increasingly becoming scarce especially at the local level of economically backward or impoverished countries (Wunder, 2000). Also in Africa, household energy consumption outside larger cities depends almost exclusively on wood sources and cooking is the most energy-intensive activity (Goldemberg, 1996). Population growth and unsustainable wood uses cause ever-increasing imbalance between firewood demand and supply, which then triggers deforestation. Given its current rate of population expansion, Africa is expected to triple from 642 million in 1990 to 1.6 billion in 2025. This astronomical increase portends a greater disaster for an already crisis-ridden continent whose environment has been exploited and plundered for a long time (Lambi, 2001). Furthermore, poverty and high population growth often induce land degradation and deforestation, which lead to growing food insecurity and loss of biodiversity. The severity of these mutually reinforcing constraints is compounded by low investment in human capital, which often forces individuals to continue to rely on their own unskilled labour and short-term exploitation of natural resources as the only way to survive (World Bank, 1996).

Furthermore, Poverty is linked to the environment in complex ways, particularly in African economies which depend on natural resources. It is also a factor in accelerating environmental degradation owing to the fact that the poor, with often less secured access to natural resources, are unable and often unwilling to invest in natural resource management (Mink, 1993; World Bank 1992 cited by World Bank, 1996). This is compounded by the fact that about 80% of forests in Sub-Saharan Africa are state property, a tenure form that is usually

exposed to severe degradation. State enforcement of forest tenure and access rules tends to be less efficient and more costly, and nationalization can be disastrous for local management incentives. Also, tenure insecurity promotes forest mining and discourages long-term timber management (Wunder, 2000). Furthermore, Wunder (2000) notes that shifting cultivators, in many cases forest-dwelling ethnic groups, have traditionally been precluded from legalized forest tenure by an intentional state strategy towards forest colonization. Government tenure and colonization policies thus tend deliberately to favour deforestation activities over sustainable forest uses (Bedoya, 1991; Rudel, 1993). Last but not **least**, poor economic performance together with colossal external debts pushes countries to exploit forest resources for short-term gains in Africa. Generally, economic crisis drives marginalized people towards the frontier and forces countries to promote foreign exchange-generating primary export sectors, some of which are land-using (agriculture) or tree-consuming (timber) (Rowe et al, 1992; Wunder 2000). Increased primary product exports increase pressure on natural resources. Forest sustainability is part of that concern (Sedjo, 2005). Meanwhile, the concern over forest sustainability poses a serious challenge to Africa in general and Cameroon in particular.

The Republic of Cameroon and Current Forests Status

The Republic of Cameroon is found in the Central African Region and located just north of the Equator. It is bordered by Nigeria to the west, Chad to the northeast, Central African Republic to the east, and Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to the south.

Cameroon has one of the largest reserves of rainforest left in the world, which extends into neighbouring Congo, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ndenecho, 2005, Ngwa and Fonjong, 2003). Forests resources are estimated to cover 22 million hectares (an approximate area of 200,000 km²), of which 14 million are tropical forest and 8 million in the Savanna biome. She has the second forest reserve in terms of surface area after the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as the second biodiversity reserve after Madagascar (Ndenecho, 2005). The rainforest covers about 42% of the country and contains trees of economic importance such as *iroko*, *mahogany*, *obeche*, *ebony* and many others. The highly diverse forests of Cameroon are representative of the biological diversity of Forests in the Congo Basin which is home to about 80% of Africa`s moist forests and 20% of the world`s tropical moist forests. Biodiversity in the moist tropical forest ecosystems of Cameroon is among the most extensive

and unique to be found, both in Africa and across the globe. Cameroon is also one of the few places in the world where tropical montane forest systems are found. These are particularly important centers for plant and faunal endemism. On Mount Cameroon alone, over 45 endemic plant species have been described (IUCN 1994).

Anglophone Cameroon, has less than 1% of the total area of flora of the West Tropical African region, but holds about 50% of the total plant species. Its montane forest is unique with the highest levels of endemism in the whole of Africa, particularly among birds and vascular plants. However, their sustainability is highly threatened as Cameroon has the second highest annual deforestation rate in the Congo Basin, after the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ndenecho, 2005).

Problem Statement

The evolution of the forest sector in Cameroon is related to the agricultural and political economy. Between 1950 and the early 1970s, with the blessing of the World Bank, government encouraged the conversion of its moist tropical forests to small-holder coffee and cocoa agroforests. This yielded some positive economic growth, averaging about 5% a year. Furthermore, due to the discovery of commercial oil fields, real GDP per capita increased by 7% a year between 1978 and 1985. But a protracted decline in the terms of trade for its main agricultural exports actuated a dismal depression from 1986 through 1993. Per capita income and consumption fell by almost half and Cameroon's large external debt became unserviceable. In 1993, public-service employment and wages were drastically cut by 70% followed by a 100% devaluation of the franc CFA in 1994. These seriously affected Cameroonians' income and expenditure potential, with a dramatic impact in the rural areas. Rural populations cleared additional forest for subsistence crop production while the government on its part, granted more logging concessions. Impoverished city dwellers returned to the countryside to take up farming. The expansion of food crop, notably in remote forested areas helped accelerated deforestation. Also, a decline in food imports during this period, the phasing out of agricultural inputs subsidies to farmers, forced farmers to cultivate larger areas to maintain significant production.

Forest makes a major contribution to export receipts with timber accounting for about 28% of total export earnings, making it the second most important source of foreign exchange

after petroleum (47%). This figure excludes the considerable levels of revenues lost to illegal logging each year (DFID, 2002). The economic solace gained by government finances from timber revenue became more critical during the early 1990s due to the decline in economic productivity and the low prices of some of Cameroon's other major commodities. In the face of negative growth during the later parts of the 1980s and the early 1990s, and a mounting debt burden, government obviously identified in timber, one sure means to mitigate the situation of inadequate finances (Tesi 2004, Geist and Lambin, 2003; Essama-Nssah et al, 2002; GFW, 2000).

Poverty in Cameroon is overwhelmingly concentrated in the rural areas. Approximately 86% of the country's poor are rural. The entire rural population relies on forest products for food, medicine, fuelwood and construction materials. Also, non-timber forest products play an important role in the households of the urban poor and forest-dwelling communities. They are also an important source of cash revenue for Cameroon's forest-dependent people. The majority of women in rural Cameroon are poor, often refused land ownership and not guaranteed access to forest resources (GFW, 2000; Ndoye, 1998).

In a bid therefore, to bolster Cameroon's economic recovery process, the government, in the early 1990s, initiated a forest policy reform process, in conjunction with a World Bank structural adjustment loan. The Bank sought to improve forest management in the region by using Cameroon as a model. This reform sought to address conflicting economic, social and environmental goals. Major innovations in the new forest management framework included community forestry, new pricing and taxing mechanisms, allocation of concessions through an auction system and the requirements for management plans. However, forests in Cameroon have continued to suffer degradation, (DFID, 2002; GFW, 2000). Ndenecho (2005), attributes this perennial degradation to the fact that the indigenous people, in part, have not always respected forest legislation, especially, when their livelihood or interests are threatened, and also because in most cases, protected area status have often been imposed which ignore the socio-economic and cultural situation of those whose survival depend on the forest as a result of no prior consultation. This approach has often provoked social tension and conflicts which usually undermine the possibility of implementing and achieving sustainability objectives.

Objective

The paper attempts an appraisal of the current approaches of environmental communication and forest management in Anglophone Cameroon with the main objective of reconstructing a valid environmental communication and forest governance strategy for the mitigation of non-sustainable forest exploitation while enhancing sustainable development. This paper further illustrates that forest policies and laws are bound to be less effective unless accompanied by an auspicious implementation strategy. Lastly, it underscores the fact that effective environmental communication is an integral component of any effective sustainable forest management approach

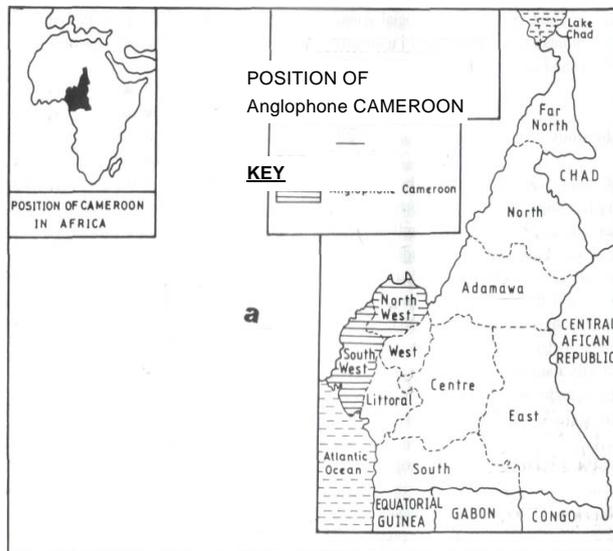
Anglophone Cameroon and Selected Research Case studies

The area referred to as Anglophone Cameroon is a former British ruled colony, consisting of two of the ten regions of the present Republic of Cameroon, the North West and South West Regions. Both regions cover a total surface area of 42,710 square kilometers, representing 9.1% of the land surface of Cameroon. The region has a population estimated in 1998 of over 2.8 million inhabitants, corresponding to 19.4% of the national population. The population is predominantly rural, with farming, fishing, hunting, logging, and petty trading as their main source of survival and income generation. Thus they depend almost solely on nature for continuous existence (Ngwa and Fonjong, 2003).

An area covered by savannah, the North West Region has pockets and large stretches of thick gallery forests, montane forest under threat from human activities. It also has a rich biodiversity uncommon to most part of the African region. Meanwhile, the South West Region on the other hand is an extension of the coastal region of Cameroon that includes the Littoral province. It constitutes part of the Cameroon rain forest that stretches across five provinces; the Centre, East, Littoral, South and the South West. It is a region of dense agro-industrial farming by the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and others. Fishing, logging and tourism constitute other activities. Although the South West and North West Regions have distinct physiography, they are nevertheless bonded by history and culture as British Mandated and Trust territories of the League of Nations and United Nations respectively. Furthermore, both regions have a common characteristic of montane forest whose ornithological importance has

been underscored by previous researchers (Ndenecho, 2005; Ngwa and Fonjong, 2003; MINEF, 1999).

Position of Anglophone Cameroon in Cameroon



Source: Ngwa and Fonjong, 2003

Environmental Communication Analysis in Anglophone Cameroon

Environmental communication is defined as the “planned and strategic use of communication processes and media products to support effective policy making, public participation and project implementation geared towards environmental sustainability (OECD, 1999b)”. It is therefore of prime importance as the foundation for establishing relationships between people and the environment and as a means for enhancing environmental literacy and sustainable environmental practices. However, despite its validity as an environmental management tool, it has not been effectively exploited in Cameroon.

According to Lambi (2007), a critical obstacle to the participation of rural people to sustainable natural resource usage and conservation is the lack of reliable and accurate information. Meanwhile, Balgah (2007) attributes this to the lack of a viable environmental communication strategy which adequately addresses issues like deforestation and the loss of biological resources. Against this background therefore, this section investigates the state of Environmental Communication in Anglophone Cameroon. Given that this is mostly practised

by local and international institutions in collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), officials from both the regional and divisional delegations of MINFOF, German Technical Cooperation, GTZ (now GIZ), Association of forest management institutions in Oku, ASSOFOMI, and journalists of two radio stations (Bonakanda community radio and Oku Community radio) were interviewed. The reason for the inclusion of the media is because the media, particularly the radio is the main channel for the dissemination of environmental messages. These were backed up by personal monitoring and content analysis of the environmental radio slots in the various radio stations in question.

Analysis

The outcome of this composite research method reveal a predominantly supportive and vertical or top-down communication approach adopted by MINFOF and collaborative partners, namely; GIZ and ASSOFOMI. Hence, despite the use of multiple channels (ranging from meetings, seminars/ workshops, newspapers, televisions to the recognition and very frequent use of the rural radios as is the case with Bonakanda in the Mount Cameroon region and the community radio in the Mount Kilum region), the impact in enhancing sustainable forest exploitation has been minimal. This limited success is due to the fact that environmental communication ought to be a multi-stakeholder process involving information exchange, cooperation and participation and consideration of opinions of all key target groups, that is, local inhabitants, municipal state institutions, NGOs and the media. The growing democratization around the world clearly shows the growing desire of people to participate in decisions that affect them. In Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the news of the past two decades has been of increased control of people over their governments. Participation by local residents and stakeholders changes policy. It also makes policy more likely to be effective. The need for public participation is a prerequisite for sustainable forest management. And environmental communication and education techniques can enhance the effectiveness of people or groups seeking to participate. Therefore, providing information to forest dependents about forest policies and laws, global consequences of deforestation as well as education on better land use management is definitely a useful environmental communication strategy but not enough to bring about the desired behavioural

change and to solve environmental problems as well as enhance the badly needed sustainable development (USAID, 2000).

Meanwhile, despite their adoption, due to proximity and accessibility, the rural and community radio stations and their potential for information dissemination in English, Pidgin English (lingua franca) or local regional languages, has not been able to engender maximum cooperation and participation of the various stakeholders. This is explained by the fact that rather than adopt a “pull” environmental communication strategy, a strategy that is pulling the target audience in, engaging them, involving them and enhancing a relationship with them in a more proactive way, dominant stakeholders indulge in a “push” strategy, literally pushing information out to the target audience. This type of strategy is not crucial in generating political pressure from the bottom, which is particularly important in developing countries, as it contributes to the reversal of the structural weaknesses of environmental ministries and agencies and institutions in general. The solution to all of this lies in the adoption of a horizontal communication approach, of course still using the radio as the dominant channel but employing a more interactive or participatory model such as the consensus conference model approach, bring together, journalists, experts, stakeholders and local inhabitants to discuss issues of sustainable forest management.

Despite the advanced level of technology in media production and distribution, the radio remains the key channel of communication to reach the audience and for the delivery of environmental messages. This conclusion is arrived at based on an analysis of the overall media context in Cameroon and Anglophone Cameroon in particular, and specifically at how the information (mainly on environmental matters) is delivered and through which channels stakeholders receive this information and can be best approached. However, while the radio remains the most frequently used medium of environmental communication in Cameroon in general and Anglophone Cameroon in Particular, it will be necessary to also consider other traditional means of communication such as story tellers, local theatres which are very influential in some rural areas .and annual cultural events, very popular in Cameroon also as key venues for active involvement and information sharing with those communities that cannot be fully exploited through the modern media.

Forest Governance Strategy and the case of Anglophone Cameroon

The concept of Governance recognizes and emphasizes the role of interdependence between and among state agencies and society groups, and between the public and the private sphere. It can thus be defined as a governing model that is not produced exclusively by the state, but that involves social, economic, political and administrative actors that guide, steer, control or manage the society. This definition thus assumes that the relationship between state and non-state actors is non-hierarchical and therefore based on mutual dependence (Jachtenfuchs, 1997). The analysis of environmental governance is a rather complex one. It has to consider not only the traditional setting of variables of the physical environment and the political, legal and administrative context, but also the set of variables which deal with stakeholders' cultural values, social norms, interests, and socio-economic conditions. (OECD, 1999a).

In Cameroon, the evolution of a forest policy reform in the post-1990s resulted towards a certain degree of forest democratization and governance regime only slightly open to public consultation and transparency than the previous method of forest management prior to the 1990s. The overall objective of the forest reform is to improve practices of forest exploitation and management. The forest policy is meant to correct the past non-sustainable practices in natural resource management. It assigns a high priority to the protection of the rich and important biodiversity of the country. In this regard, it seeks to eradicate institutionalized corruption, increase public participation in decision making, mitigate poverty, enhance socio-economic development as a measure of reducing livelihood dependence on forest exploitation, and improve on accountability and transparency in respect to accrued revenue from forestry particularly with respect to benefits sharing with beneficiary communities. An assessment of the effective implementation of the above-mentioned forest governance strategies in the Mount Cameroon and Mount Kilim regions of Anglophone Cameroon reveals that very little has been accomplished in this respect.

The methodology adopted in this section is mainly quantitative personal interview survey through the use of questionnaires and qualitative survey through structured interviews, personal observation and secondary source, (books, journal etc). A total of 235 people randomly selected from seven quarters of the case study sites, constituted the sample for analysis in this section. In all, 135 people were elicited from Bokwango, Bova, Bonakanda and Bukwai in the Mount Cameroon forest region with an estimated forest cover of 50,000 hectares and an

estimated population of 200,000 inhabitants as opposed to 100 people from Elak, Mvekei and Manchock in the Mt Kilum forest region with an estimated forest cover of 20,000 square hectares and estimated population of 100,000 inhabitants. Prior to the sampling exercise, the research sites were stratified. The stratification was meant to maximize representativeness. The findings of this investigation are discussed here below.

Discussion

The potential of the Cameroon forest policy to significantly mitigate forest exploitation has been compromised by inadequate logistics as well as incomprehensive and ineffective forest sustainability-oriented strategies. In fact the much lauded 1994 forestry law, the 1996 environmental management regulation as well as the concomittant institutional capacities and incentives to enforce them have lagged in translating the national policy into an effectively implemented forest strategy (Esama-Nssah et al, 2000).

Public Participation

In spite of the importance of effective public participation in enhancing forest sustainability, it is not yet a priority in Cameroon. It is therefore not surprising that more than half of the respondents, 64% agreed to the fact that there is no form of public consultation in terms of forest management decisions. Worse still, forest dependents in these areas are not incorporated in the forest management scheme. Those concerned about and making use of the forest should be actively involved in its management. One of the approaches to sustainable forest management and which reportedly seemed to have the highest future is the joint forest management paradigm. The system involves participative management between the government and the local communities. The incentives for the people to participate include collection right of most of the non-wood forest product, increasing the stakes of communities in the management and utilization of forests, and creating alternative sources of employment to reduce pressure on forests (Abdallah and Kaoneka, 1999). Meanwhile, focus group discussion revealed that women are often marginalise when it comes to decision-making. There is also need for gender equity in public participartion for decision-making. According to Tiani, (2001) women represent more than 51% of the Cameroonian population, and 80% of them live in rural areas. They are important not only because of their numbers but more significantly because

they are the actors more closely related to the forest. Hence, their indispensability in forest management that claims to be truly sustainable.

Government Partnership with Local Institutions.

Another form of public participation is through partnership with local institutions. The recent emergence of local indigenous institutions in the form of Common Initiative Group, for example, Mount Cameroon Prunus Management Common Initiative Group, MOCAP-CIG working in collaboration with the government is proving to be an auspicious approach to sustainable forest resources management. A growing number of scholars and practitioners recognize the crucial role played by local people in natural resource management (Ostrom, 1990; Ascher, 1995). They also assert the need for local-level institutions which according to them are considered better than central government institutions at providing, *inter alia*, rules related to access, harvesting, and management. They can respond to conflict quickly and cheaply and implement monitoring and sanctioning methods that are efficacious. The problem with this approach is that it is not well formalized; hence, maximum collaboration cannot be attained.

Partnership with International NGOs

Still in a bit to mitigate unsustainable forest practices in the country, the government has reached technical and financial agreement with international NGOs working in this domain. NGOs like Birdlife International, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and Living Earth etc, have been working with local forest dwellers, transferring technology and knowledge in the domains of agriculture, bee farming as well as other alternatives to livelihood (Ngwa and Fonjong, 2003). This has greatly boosted Cameroon's sustainable management efforts.

Benefits-Sharing Mechanism

The mechanism of benefits-sharing in state managed forest domains in Cameroon constitutes a serious disincentive for cooperation and collaboration from the forest adjacent communities, thereby jeopardising any sustainable management endeavours. This is the case in the Mount Cameroon region where more than 95% of forest is state owned. Here only 10% of benefits are allocated to the community. Worst still, even for the community to access the meagre 10% allocated for them, they must initiate a good project. And since the local people are

poor in project proposal, the council authorities, the custodian of this money usually syphon it. Paradoxically, the government retains 50% while the remaining 40% is doled out to the council of the area According to Tainter, (2001) people are more likely to manifest stewardship towards forest from which they derive benefit. Hence, unfair distribution of benefits can stimulate purposeful, retaliatory degradation of forest resources as well as other undesirable conflicts.

Transparency and Accountability.

Besides the irrational benefit-sharing mechanism, there is also overwhelming evidence from the respondents' points of view that the procedure is marred by lack of transparency and accountability. Considering the various percentages of responses about transparency and accountability in benefit sharing, it is evident that these constitute a serious cause for concern. However, given the pervasive nature of corruption in Cameroon, it is not surprising that only 10% of respondents, exclusively in the MKR agreed strongly to the application of these variables while 14% and 12% in the MCR and MKR respectively simply agreed. But of greater significance is the 59% and 31% of respondents who disagreed in the MCR and MKR respectively, while another 19% and 35% respectively also disagreed strongly. Respondents, meanwhile, attribute this vice to the corruption syndrome in Cameroon as reflected in their perception of corruption as an incentive for unsustainable practices. This seriously undermines policy implementation and good forest governance.

The Issue of Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is an important determinant of the rate of forest exploitation. Averagely, 60% Of respondents from the Anglophone Cameroon region attributed their reason for forest exploitation to poverty Consequently, their primary objective of forest exploitation is to enhance human wellbeing by either direct usage (personal) or by monetization (commercialization) or both (personal and commercial). Each of these either mitigate expenditure or supplement income or provide the badly need legal tender (Asanga, 2001; Ndenecho, 2007). This of course raises serious concerns given the relatively high degree of nonconformity to policy requirements with a wider scope and intensity of forest exploitation. The challenge, therefore, is to reconcile forest exploitation with economic development and poverty alleviation. They further state that empowered communities may focus more on accessing credits, creating community assets or investing in non-farm economic activities (bee-farming, snail propagation,

mushroom cultivation etc). These economic benefits are often long-lasting and sustaining. McDougall, (2001) seems to buy this idea when he posits that contributing to human wellbeing is directly making a significant contribution to sustainable forest management.

Socioeconomic Indicators

The state of certain socio-economic indicators as well as forest-dependents' access to them is crucial in dictating the pace and pattern of forest exploitation. Thus, in spite of the fact that over 65% of the respondents in the Mount Cameroon region reportedly have access to potable water, or the fact that 60% have access to good transport network has not prevented them from violating the forest policies by invading the forest. In fact, the good road network in the Mount Cameroon region, rather than being an asset, is more of a liability as it facilitates the evacuation of illegal forest products (Tesi, 2004). This is understandably so because these are no substitutes for the limited access of other social welfare elements such as healthcare, education and micro credits. Unfortunately less than 40% of respondents in the MCR have access to these. The scenario is worse in the Mount Kilum region. In this part of Anglophone Cameroon, the majority of villagers rely heavily on traditional medicine. In fact the MKR is famous for its traditional medical practitioners and practices (Ndenecho, 2005). However, despite the assiduity and industrious nature of the people of this region, the lack of any form of microfinance or concessional loan scheme is an obstacle to the economic endeavours of the people. Cases in point include the Oku Honey Cooperative with 209 registered members and the Kilum Craft Paper Group, the only one in the whole North West Region. These two common initiative groups have contributed enormously in mitigating forest exploitation. The cooperative employs villagers and also facilitates the buying and selling of honey from bee farmers. But due to the poor state of the road and high cost of transportation, the dividends that members receive are seriously affected and by extension their well-being and that of their families. Government subsidies could alleviate the effect.

Similarly, the absence of any government subsidies has caused this lone budding paper industry to stagnate. According to the Manager, Solomon Chimtom, the quality as a result of this has remained poor. Ordinarily, government ought to encourage this lofty initiative as the local paper industry no longer debark trees to produce paper, a factor which hitherto contributed to forest degradation and deforestation. The industry now uses corn stalks and the

leaves of *Indian bamboo*. Hence, beyond the obvious environmental impacts of this, it also has socio-economic implication especially, with regard to the strife for economic empowerment

Road Map to Forest Sustainability and Sustainable Development

In view of mitigating non-sustainable forest exploitation and enhance sustainable development in Cameroon as a whole, the government should provide the ministry of forestry, MINFOF with all necessary logistics and adequate financial resources required to enhance the effective implementation of the forest policy currently in force. One pragmatic way of acquiring the required funds is through tourism in protected areas. Besides, eco-tourism contributes to raising awareness of national and international visitors as well as creates jobs and sometimes leads to infrastructure development that contributes to poverty alleviation, provided the funds generated are managed in a transparent and accountable manner.

Also, rather than the often empty threat and verbal rhetoric of ministry officials, corruption and all forms of illegal and unsustainable exploitation of forests should be severely sanctioned. Meanwhile, owing to the potential success of third party monitoring, international NGOs should also be involved in the fight against corruption which pervades the forestry sector in Cameroon. For instance, according to Essama-Nassah et al, (2002) Global Witness, an international NGO, was involved in monitoring corrupt practices and illegal logging in Cameroon from 2002 to 2005. The NGO registered significant results and impacted on some of the companies logging out of limits. And last but not least, as proposed by Nalini and Naresh, (2001), there should be greater decentralization and participatory transparent sharing of forest management responsibilities with local communities as a means of also minimizing corruption.

Effective decentralization by government and participatory sharing of forest responsibilities with local communities could be an effective and significant way of minimizing corruption, enhancing forest governance and ensuring sustainable management and development. A good example is the delegation of responsibility to the Mount Cameroon Prunus Management Common Initiative Group (MOCAP-CIG) by government. The CIG which was created on the 31st of July 2000 in accordance with Law no. 92/006 of 14/8/92 and its Decree no. 92/455/PM of 23/11/92 has as global objective, to contribute to poverty alleviation around the Mount Cameroon region through sustainable management and conservation of *Prunus africana* and other forest resources. This has drastically reduced the illegal exploitation of

Prunus africana. Hence government should collaborate with various civil society groups which share similar or same objectives.

There is equally need for government to create a special trust fund dedicated to poverty alleviation to ensure long-term financial support for addressing the livelihood and employment needs of forest-dependent poor, especially where the incidence of poverty is large. Access to economic alternatives to meet the social requirements of indigenous people is still a big challenge. One way of enhance this is through integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) such as the improvement of road and school infrastructure, provision of support for educational training, healthcare and welfare services and investment in non-timber forest activities such as bee-farming, snail propagation, cultivation of *eru* (*Gnetum africanum*) and domestic livestock and fish farming. The fund apart from promoting traditional income generating activities should also be dedicated towards the promotion and support of creativity and self-help initiatives. These notwithstanding, government should encourage the creation of technical schools and rural artisan centres in Cameroon to train young Cameroonians to be self-employed and hence divert their attention from natural resources. In this regard, there is need for greater cooperation with international NGOs, especially in the domains of participatory management activities in the field of training, technological dissemination and the training of women's group. The focus should be on building social capital. Above all, the government should create employment opportunities for Cameroonians and also cut down the high taxes levied on private businesses such that more people will be self-employed and the pressure on natural resources will reduce.

Also, benefit sharing is a very sensitive issue as people are more likely to manifest stewardship towards forest from which they derive benefit. Fair and equitable revenue sharing with local communities increases their stakes in sustainable management. Also unfair distribution of benefits can spur intentional and retaliatory degradation of forest resources as well as other undesirable conflicts.

Furthermore, given the indispensability of fuelwood, in the short term, it is important to exploit all the potential byproducts of the timber industry such as sawdust and chipboards for use by locally designed cooking stoves oriented towards firewood reduction. Also the formation of briquettes from the dust of charcoal production such as in Kenya by a company called chardust is not only energy efficient but also enhances the efficient use of woody biomass

products. However, government should also invest in both solar and wind energy. Government should invest in biogas and pellets production from the colossal amount of municipal solid waste generated in the area. Also government should exploit the ubiquitous presence of rivers and waterfall in the area for purposes of hydropower. This could eventual be used both for domestic and industrial purposes.

Meanwhile, since smallholder agriculture is a major source of forest degradation, an active policy-led effort to intensify perennial crop and food crop systems to deflect further encroachment on the forest margin is needed. In this wise, Government should revive the loan and credit facilities available to farmers prior to the economic crises, through structures such as micro financial banks. The same holds true for other agricultural inputs or subsidies as fertilizers, etc. Also public knowledge on soil management through conventional practices of organic manure, use of cover-crops and composting should be enhanced. Furthermore, the entrenchment of agroforestry practices through public education could supply part of the badly needed environmental services.

For purposes of more effective environmental communication, there is need for the adoption of the “consensus conference model approach,” whereby environmental communicators, local people and experts are engaged more equitably in the problem solving and management process. The idea here is a kind of public debate in which a consensus is reached, followed by an agenda setting for policy makers and the general public. Last but not the least, in addition to the need for government subvention to sustain and promote the good work of the rural radios, government should also facilitate the public’s access to the audio-visual media.

One of the most heinous push-factors of forest degradation is poverty. Given a window of financial opportunity, many forest dependents will resort to various options of eking out a living. Thus, there is need for not only government financial handouts but most importantly for a review in the loans and credit policies in both state and private banks to accommodate even the poor. Current lending conditions, inter alia collateral security and high interest rates are inimical to socioeconomic development, the growth of local small and medium-size industries and entrepreneurship. Based on practical experience from Bangladesh, micro credit accessibility by the poor could be a potential tool for mitigating forest degradation. According to Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Laureate and founder of the Grameen Bank in 1974, the poor are

neither too stupid nor too passive to earn money. Instead, the struggle for survival has honed their innovative skills such that all they need is a small capital to get them going. Defying all his skeptics and continuing with his vision of providing loans to the poor, Muhammad reveals that 95% of Grameen's loans are paid back. He further, stresses the need that loans should be given on acceptable terms while condemning the issuing of handouts: "Give someone a handout, he will feel and act like a helpless beggar. Give him a loan, and you treat him (or her) as a responsible business partner."

Conclusion

The unsustainable exploitation and management of forest resources in Cameroon and Anglophone Cameroon in particular is, inextricably linked to the limited and unequal access to information and basic necessities by the rural poor. The government of Cameroon is primarily responsible for this state of affairs. It failed to consistently articulate a vision of socioeconomic development compatible with poverty alleviation and forest sustainability. Hence, government lacked the good will and logistics to implement introduced reforms while the majority of local communities were left out in the implementation of the reform process. Also, government agencies in the sector continue to be weak while international logging companies that dominate the sector continue to have a free hand in the exploitation of forest resources due to widespread corruption.

Meanwhile, like the burgeoning democratization process in Cameroon which was stampeded by the media, the sustainable management of the forest resources in Anglophone Cameroon, will also depend to a great extent on effective environmental communication outputs, particularly through the radio which is the dominant channel of information dissemination. Information also carries with it education, and education has been described as the pathway out of poverty. When people are empowered educationally through training for capacity building, they can further empower themselves economically. Empowered communities may focus on accessing credit, creating community assets and investing on non-forest timber products (bee-farming, snail propagation, mushroom cultivation, fisheries and livestock breeding etc) of which the economic benefits are often long lasting and sustaining.

As a veritable tool of sustainable forest management, environmental communication should not only supply policy related information and cosmetic livelihood survival education

but also set an agenda for an effective forest governance strategy which includes economic empowerment and sustainable development.

References

- Abdallah R. and kaoneka, S. (1999) *“Asia – Pacific Forests, Society and Environment”*. In Palo Matti and Uusivuori Jussi (eds) *World Forests Vol. 1*, Kluwer Academic Publishers: Dordrecht
- Asanga, C. (2001) *“Facilitating Viable Partnerships in Community Forest Management in Cameroon: The case of the Kilum-Ijim Mountain Forest Area.”* In Wollenberg, E.; Edmunds, D.; Buck, L.; Fox, J., and Brot, S. (eds) *Social Learning in Community Forests*, 21-44. CIFOR/East-West Center: Bogor
- Ascher, W. (1995) *Communities and Sustainable Forestry in Developing Countries*, ICS Press: San Francisco.
- Bedoya E (1991) *Social and economic causes of deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon Basin: natives and colonists*. Institute for Development Anthropology, New York. IDA Working Paper no.60
- DFID (2002) *Cameroon country strategic paper*, DFID Forest Programme Coordination, Yaounde
- Essama-Nssah B, Gockowski J, Kelley L (2002) *A new deal for Cameroon’s forest*. In Lele Uma (ed) *Managing a global resource: challenges of forest conservation and development*, vol 5. Transaction Publishers, New Jersey
- Geist H, Lambin E (2003) *Forces driving tropical deforestation*, ASB Policybriefs No. 6, ASB Programme, Nairobi
- Global Forest Watch (2000) *An overview of logging in Cameroon*. World Resources Institute, Washington
- Goldemberg J (1996) *Energy, environment and development*, Earthscan Publications Limited, London
- Jachtenfuchs, M., 1997, ‘Democracy and Governance in the European Union’, European Integration On-Line Papers, <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/1997-002a.htm>
- Lambi, C. M., (2001) *“Land Degradation in the North West Province of Cameroon”*. In Dunlop, J. and Williams R. (eds) *Culture and Environment. A Reader of Environmental Education*, University of Buea: Buea
- McDougall, L. C. (2001) *“Gender and Diversity in Assessing Sustainable Forest Management and Human Well-Being”*. In Carol, J. And Byron Y. (eds) *People Managing Forests. Resources for the Future: Washington D.C.*
- Nalini K, Naresh C (2001) *India’s forests: potential for poverty alleviation*. In: Lele Uma (ed) *Managing a global resource: challenges of forest conservation and development*, vol 5. Transaction Publishers, New Jersey
- Ndenecho E (2005) *Biological resource exploitation in Cameroon*, Unique Printers, Bamenda
- Ndenecho E.N. & Balgah S.N. (2007) *The Population-Resource Scarcity and Conflict Trinity*, Unique Printers: Bamenda.

- Ndenecho, E.N. (2007) *Integrating the Livelihoods of Forest-Adjacent Communities in Forest Conservation Projects: Case Study of Mount Oku Cameroon Journal of Applied Social Sciences* Vol 6 No. 1 & 2, pp 56-78
- Ndoye, O. (1998) *The Impact of Macro Economic and Agricultural Policies on Forest Conditions in Cameroon*. International Centre for Forest Research : Yaounde
- IUCN, (1994) *Forest Atlas of Africa*. Gland, Switzerland
- Ngwa NE, Fonjong LN (2003) Actors options and the challenges of forest management in anglophone Cameroon. *GeoJournal* 57(2):95–111
- OECD, 1999a, Environmental Communication, Applying Communication Tools Towards Sustainable Development, 1999a
- OECD, 1999b, Environmental Communication, Working Paper of the Working Party on Development Cooperation and Environment.
- Ostrom, E., (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge
- Rudel T (1993) Tropical deforestation: small farmers and land clearing in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Columbia University Press, New York
- Sedjo R.A (2005) Macroeconomics and forest sustainability in the developing World Resources for the Future, Washington
- Tainter JA (2001) Sustainable rural communities. In: Carol J, Yvonne B (eds) *People managing forests*. Resources for the Future, Washington
- Tiani, A.M. (2001) The Place of Rural Women in the Management of Forest Resources: The Case of Mbalmayo and Neighbouring areas of Cameroon. *Resources for the Future: Washington D.C.*
- Tesi MK (2004) Cameroon's endangered environment: economic policy and forest loss. In: Kalu K (ed) *Agenda setting and public policy in Africa*. Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington
- World Bank (1996) *Toward environmentally sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, Washington
- Wunder S (2000) *The economics of deforestation*. Macmillan Press Ltd, London
- USAID, 2000, *Environmental Education and Communication for a Sustainable World, Handbook For International Practitioners*, Washington, D.C.