



# Summary Report of the **Cameroon Regional Forest Governance Forum**

## CREATING SPACE FOR STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN FOREST GOVERNANCE

16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March 2016, Hotel La Falaise, Yaoundé, Cameroon





## INTRODUCTION

The Cameroon Regional Forest Governance Forum held 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at Hotel La Falaise, Yaoundé was the first to be held under the auspices of the **Congo Basin VPA Implementation - Championing Forest Peoples' Rights and Participation Project (EU-CFPR)** project. It is the tenth under a series of similar international conferences implemented under the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT)'s previous project 'Strengthening African Forest Governance' (SAFG). The EU-CFPR project is supported by the European Union and DFID and is implemented in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Cameroon.

The project is led by the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT), University of Wolverhampton, working in partnership with Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable (CIEDD), Maison de l'Enfant et de la Femme Pygmées (MEFP) in CAR, Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CED) and Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER) in Cameroon, FERN and Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) in Europe. The Cameroon Regional Forest Governance Forum was also delivered with the generous support of a number of organisations and initiatives. These included the EU FAO FLEGT Programme, the DFID funded FLEGT-VPA support programme, the Forest Stewardship Council, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR Regional Office, Cameroon) and the Cameroon Ministry of Forests and Wildlife. The Cameroon Regional FGF was the first in which the FSC was officially involved.

The aim of the Cameroon Regional FGF was to contribute to the wider aims of the EU-CFPR project through experience sharing and raising awareness, and the profile of FLEGT-VPA process.

The specific objective of the Cameroon Regional FGF was to provide a free, deliberative and open space for the exchange of information, experiences, lessons, ideas and up to date research around Forest Governance, FLEGT-VPA and other initiatives seeking to improve forest governance and combat illegal logging. This objective was met in full as will be highlighted in this report.

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The University of Wolverhampton, Centre of International Development and Training (CIDT) and its partners strongly appreciate the active engagement and participation of different stakeholders during this regional exchange forum and the financial and technical support provided by the European Union, DFID, EU FAO FLEGT Programme, FSC, the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife in Cameroon and CIFOR.

The information and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and participants in the forum and do not necessarily represent the political views of the European Union, the Department for International Development nor any other funder or project partner that contributed to this event.

## ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

The overall organisation of the event was coordinated by CIDT through an organisation committee that also involved representatives of the EU-CFPR project partners. For the first time a National Steering Group was set up that ensured national ownership of the process, ensured all stakeholders were adequately represented and participating and also ensured that all issues pertinent to specific stakeholders groups were addressed and/or covered in the agenda. In terms of specific roles the National Steering Group was responsible for:

- acting as the umbilical cord between the organisers and the stakeholders;
- advising the organisers on agenda, themes, structure and relevance;
- informing stakeholders and encouraging involvement;
- assisting organisers in reaching out to key national actors, such as MINFOF and other government ministries;
- publicity and communication before, during and after the FGF;
- advising how to define and target communication especially to government;
- helping to communicate with stakeholders;
- advising or preparing stakeholders in terms of how and what they can benefit from and contribute to the FGFs;
- writing terms of reference for each session/theme and giving guidelines for presenters/speakers, including dealing with expectations and outlining the objective or aims of each thematic session.

More than 200 participants attended the event. These were drawn from government, civil society, the private sector, forest-dependent communities, indigenous peoples, international organisations, the academic community, the media and donor organisations from Cameroon, the region and internationally. Participants at the FGF came from Belgium, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Spain, Republic of Congo, United Kingdom and the United States.

The 3 day event was divided into an Opening ceremony, 7 normal sessions, 6 working group sessions (comprised 3 working groups running simultaneously) and a closing ceremony. The full agenda is available at the FGF website (<http://www.forestgovernanceforum.com>).

The Cameroon Regional Forest Governance Forum was officially opened by the Cameroon Secretary of State Ministry of Forests and Wildlife, Mme Koulsoumi Alhaji. Other dignitaries that officiated during the opening ceremony included Her Excellency Francois Collet (Head of the EU Delegation in Cameroon), His Excellency Brian Olley (British High Commissioner), Professor Philip Dearden (Director of CIDT), Mr Valere Akpakoua (representing indigenous communities), and Martin Tadoum (representative of COMIFAC).



## FIRST SESSION FLEGT PROGRESS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTION PLAN

### Overview

This session focussed on providing an update on the FLEGT process and achievements at both the global and Congo Basin region level. The presentations were delivered by four key speakers, reflecting on the achievements and progress made by FLEGT-VPA processes to date. These were:

- Stéphane Sourdin, EU Delegation, Cameroon: **Update on FLEGT-VPA processes globally.**
- Bekollo Ferdinand, MINFOF, Cameroon: **Cameroon VPA update.**
- Jean Soh Ndeh, Prosygma: **Support for the establishment of a traceability system for ONAB wood in Benin.**
- David Ouangando, DGI des Eaux et Forêts, **RCA: Central African Republic – State of the forest sector.**

### Key Highlights

Since the adoption of the FLEGT Action Plan by the European Union, 15 countries worldwide have decided to be involved in the FLEGT process in order to combat illegal logging and promote transparent and sustainable governance of forests. These countries represent 80% of EU importation of tropical timber.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon and Ivory Coast are in the phase of negotiation, while Cameroon, Congo, the Central African Republic, Ghana and Liberia are in the phase of implementation. In Latin America, Guyana and Honduras are in the phase of negotiation. In Asia, Indonesia is the only country actually implementing the FLEGT agreement, while Vietnam Thailand and Laos are in different phases of negotiation.

All implementing countries are engaged to fulfil main requirements of the FLEGT agreement by realising activities in the following 4 'clusters' of the FLEGT process:

1. System of legality check and traceability;
2. Work of the Independent Auditor and activities on Independent Observation;
3. Reform the legal and policy framework (land and forest law, land zoning, etc.) which deeply influences the FLEGT implementation;
4. Multi-stakeholders policy dialogue, particularly with the CSO, concerning ongoing challenges for implementing the FLEGT agreement.

### Key Issues

#### There is a need to make systems of legality checks and traceability user friendly for all private operators

and not only for bigger companies that have better resources and capacity to employ these systems. The issue of internet connectivity remains a major concern for small and medium forestry enterprises, including community forest artisans.

#### Alternative ways to track and monitor must be explored

Jean Soh Ndeh, Director General of Prosygma Cameroon, presented the development of the ONATRACK system, similar to the SIGIF in Cameroon, which is a centralised system, based on the collection of data on timber through a simple web-based application capturing information which derive from a barcode. This is then transferred to a central database which stores and updates it across the entire 'chain' and is always available for different users (operator, administrator, client, etc.).

#### Control of timber in transit across neighbouring countries is still a big problem

There are difficulties in ensuring that inter-African transactions comply with the legality check and traceability requirements for timber which transits through neighbouring countries such as Chad, Nigeria and Central African Republic. However, as Bekollo Ferdinand explained during his presentation on the legality verification system in Cameroon – SIGIF, the SVL (système de verification de la légalité) is based on the idea that all timber exported must be legal at the origin, before leaving the producing country. Thus, guarantee of legality relies predominantly on the timber producing country.

#### In some cases new forest concessions are allocated without complying with the VPA FLEGT requirements

According to a report by Global Witness published in July 2015, many foreign companies (particularly European) continued to get concessions and to log CAR's forests at scale in the middle of the conflict, without any form of control by the government or any sort of sanction by the EU. David Ouangando, government representative from CAR, at the Ministry of Water, Forest, Wildlife and Fishing (Ministère des Eaux, Forêts, Chasse et Pêche) underlined how these accusations have been addressed already and found inaccurate by the government who investigated the situation and provided a reply following a consultative process with national CSOs.

#### Participants expressed concerns over the difficulties in integrating Domestic Timber Markets with FLEGT regulations

The domestic market still represents an important percentage of timber illegally exploited; the application of FLEGT rules even for local producers has become an urgency in order to reduce illegality and make clearer the relation between domestic and foreign transactions.



## SECOND SESSION TRANSPARENCY AND CORRUPTION IN THE FOREST SECTOR

### Overview

This session explored issues of transparency and corruption with a focus on civil society activities and issues regarding access to information. Key speakers include:

- Martin Mbongo, FLEGT Focal Point, MINFOF: **Progress with Annex VII of the Cameroon VPA.**
- Samuel Mawutor, Civic Response and Forest Watch Ghana: **Progress with addressing transparency in Ghana.**
- Anouska, Perram, Forest Peoples Programme: **Community access to information: some examples in practice within Cameroon's VPA process.**
- Rodrigue Ngonzo, FODER: **Development of the REDD+ Transparency Guide based on experiences from FLEGT.**

### Key Highlights

During the second session of the Forum, panellists presented the work to improve access to information in two different cases:

**Case 1:** Cameroon's annex on transparency is rooted in a communications strategy detailing types of data and the channels through which it is published. This has been supported by the EU through two projects providing a dedicated website, personnel training and a manual on procedures.

**Case 2:** Ghana's VPA does not include a transparency annexe. Work in this area is therefore conducted by CSOs, which are 'learning by doing'. CSOs have developed and submitted a list of major documents to be made available. There is concern about the general culture of secrecy and confusion about procedures and roles.

Anouska Perram spoke about a provisional concession granted to Biopalm in 2012 in Cameroon, and confirmed that access to information in the context of forest exploitation is still a great challenge for FLEGT implementation both at national and at local level.



### Key Issues

**Information is available and there is an agreed obligation to publish it, but there is an attitude of fear and/or unwillingness** generated by many factors, such as lack of knowledge, misunderstanding, misperception, intimidation, lack of coordination between government departments.

**Access to information for local communities remains a concern**

beyond the problem of internet connections and level of understanding. The correct place to find information may not be known. The general feeling is that managers of information (administrators) are responsible for this.

**Information does not exist and it is challenging to produce it**

This is the case particularly where forest communities are in conflict with forest concessionaries, where information may be produced in a non-participatory, unclear manner and also where companies are reluctant to provide necessary data.

**Certain information cannot be published**

(for example in Cameroon where some information on economic and commercial issues of forest exploitation cannot be provided to the public) causing a problem with lack of clarity about which kinds of information cannot be published. There is a lack of time and sustainable funding to enable the public administration to produce periodic reports stating the situation of information for each aspect of forest exploitation.



## THIRD SESSION

# THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT FOREST MONITORING (IFM) IN IMPROVING FOREST GOVERNANCE

### Overview

This session involved speakers presenting cases of IFM, examining the actors involved and the end results. Key speakers included:

- Essylot Lubala, OGF, DRC: **FLEGT Mandated Independent Observation. Role, achievements and lessons, Example from the DRC.**
- Roland P. Harris, Liberia CS-IFM Monitors: **Civil Society led Independent Monitoring. Role, achievements and lessons. Example from Liberia.**
- Hervé Joël MOUNPEN, FODER and Ghislain FOMOU, SAILD: **Standardised External Independent Monitoring System.**
- Duclaire Mbouna, WRI: **Congo Basin forest atlas platforms: a contribution to forest resources governance.**

### Key Highlights

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, forest monitoring is in the form of a mandated observation carried out by the CSO, Observatoire de la Gouvernance Forestière.

In Liberia, the CS-IFM (Civil Society Independent Forest Monitors) operates as a technical arm of the NGO coalition of Liberia in order to improve the capacity building and advocacy skills of local organisations responsible for the external independent observation (not mandated). One central achievement of the CS-IFM work has been the realisation of the first social audit exposing government failure to pay into community funds.

Independent forest monitoring in Cameroon is a CSO-led observation. The most advanced monitoring system developed so far is SNOIE (système normalisé d'observation indépendante externe) set up by FODER, together with SAILD, supported by EU FAO FLEGT Programme Funding. The system is based on a detailed methodology that integrates the rule ISO 9001: 2008 related to the management of quality in Independent Monitoring systems. This quality is guaranteed by a coordination team that is responsible for overseeing the work of two clusters

of monitoring actors: one acting on the investigation of potential illegalities, through field visits and reporting; the other acting on the advocacy strategy that is addressed towards competent authorities in order to take into account measures for sanctioning eventual infractions.

### Key Issues

#### Difficulties remain in accessing, managing and retaining information

Accessing relevant data for investigations of infractions remains problematic as administrations are reluctant to provide data. Moreover, when administrations are able to provide information, there are scarce capacities and human resources to maintain this information accessible and available over time.

#### Addressing the challenge of information management

Governments in Central Africa in partnership with the World Resources Institute developed forest mapping databases that categorise the information on forest management and exploitation by monitoring forest titles and other land uses. These databases are online forest atlas built on a geographic information system (GIS) platform that aims to strengthen forest management and land use planning by bringing information on all major land use categories onto the same standardised platform. The forest atlases are managed by the staff of the ministries in collaboration with the WRI.

#### Low staff capacity of administrations makes IFM a challenge

Additionally, the capacity of CSOs to follow the sanctioning of illegalities and verify and disseminate these results is challenging.

#### An absence of knowledge of the forestry code and related legal instruments characterises legal and administrative bodies.

#### African countries should clarify how they will make the IFM system sustainable

IFM has been reliant predominantly on external funding for more than 10 years.



## FOURTH SESSION LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT AND TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

### Overview

This session discussed the issues around forest usage, synergies between REDD+ initiatives (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and FLEGT and their contribution to achieve sustainable and climate friendly development goals. Key speakers included:

- Anne Marie Tiani, CIFOR: **Synergy between adaptation and mitigation and forest management in the Congo basin: Some lessons from COBAM project.**
- Richard Sufo, CIFOR: **Implementation of REDD+ at the local scale: Challenges of inclusive MRV at the pilot project level in Cameroon, DRC and Rwanda.**
- Philippe Guizol, CIRAD: **After Paris: some realities and challenges to move ahead with INDCs in Central Africa.**
- Gervais Ludovic Itsou Madzous, COMIFAC: **COP21 and commitments for the Congo Basin.**

### Key Highlights

**REDD+ commitment obliges each country to set up a reliable and credible system of measurement, reporting and verification (MVR)** of changes in forest carbon stock in order to establish the reference level of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

Overall **results of this research suggested** that the MRV method to measure REDD+ contributions for GHG reduction is effectively applicable where there is a good law enforcement, good knowledge and education of actors working on REDD+ and good organisation of communities and/or local civil society (good participation).

Discussions revealed that for REDD+ initiatives the **critical elements of success** are essentially:

- a) willingness of the administrations at all level to enforce the law;
- b) good knowledge and prepared professionals working on very technical aspects of forest governance;
- c) the possibility for CSOs to be an effective and active actor in the process.

**The issue of secure land tenure is critical to both REDD and FLEGT.**

**REDD+ activities can be successfully put in place only if there is a good multi-sector coordination** between different ministries (forest, mining, agriculture), at all levels, which must constantly interact in order to define interconnected responsibilities in the realisation of climate change adaptation initiatives.

**Conflicts between ministries** reduce not only the access to information but also the comprehension of different rights and interests in the targeted REDD+ area.



## FIFTH SESSION EXPLORING SYNERGIES BETWEEN FLEGT AND CERTIFICATION

### Overview

This session of the Forum aimed to debate how the synergy between existing certification and future licences can be exploited in order to guarantee the credibility of the FLEGT system. Key speakers included:

- Romain Lorent, PPECF: **The role of certification in improving forest governance and sustainable forest management.**
- Mathieu Auger-Schwartzberg, FSC, Congo Basin: **What are the opportunities for FLEGT and certification synergies?**
- Belinga Solomon, MINFOF, Cameroon: **Lessons from the pilot project on synergies between FLEGT and certification.**

### Key Highlights

Romain Lorent, explained that FLEGT licenses and certification schemes share the main objective to combat illegal exportation by verifying the legality of timber across the entire supply chain.

While waiting for the delivery of FLEGT authorisations, private certification remains a critical tool to help EU companies verifying the legality issue in accordance with the criteria of Due Diligence that operators must fulfil in order to conform to the EU timber regulation.

According to the presentation of Mathieu Auger-Schwartzberg, FSC certificates can be an added value for the FLEGT licensing scheme because they are delivered following a set of ten principles and relative criteria which allow to strictly verify if timber exported is the result of environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable forest management.

Efforts to exploit the synergy between private certifications schemes and FLEGT have been scarce until now.



### Key Issues

#### Understanding the relation between VPA, private certification and EUTR is still a challenge

Participants questioned the utility of private certificates once the FLEGT licenses will be delivered. Speakers clearly explained that private certificates existed before FLEGT and that companies are linked to these schemes for reputational and credibility reasons.

#### There were questions over whether once the authorisation will be issued, operators will have to continue to exercise the due diligence.

#### Synergy between private systems and FLEGT must be promoted

Private systems which have, among other issues, a democratic system of decision, a robust conflict resolution scheme and a system compliant with the TLAS.

#### If these conditions are met, legality verification by private system cannot be considered duplication nor a reason for conflict with VPA requirements

They are an additional tool for maintaining credibility and reputation of the entire supply chain process, from the forest exploitation step to the labelling and branding.



## SIXTH SESSION MARKET AND TRADE

### Overview

This session concentrated essentially on the analysis of the role of the informal domestic market. Speakers included:

- M. Norbett Sonne, GFTN, WWF Cameroon: **Study by WWF on the mapping of Chinese investments in the forestry sector in Cameroon (2015).**
- Richard Eba'a Atyi, CIFOR presented **two case studies of informal timber transactions between Cameroon, CAR (VPA) and Chad (non-VPA) and Cameroon ad Nigeria (non VPA).**
- Mr. Akagou Zedon Henri Charles, MINFOF, Cameroon: **The impact of illegal domestic markets.**
- Germane Yene: **Update on the Global Timber Forum.**

### Key Highlights

A study by CIFOR led by Richard Atyi found that flows of 79,000m<sup>3</sup> of sawn wood from Cameroon to Chad for the last six months of 2015. These results are not in line with official statistics and are biased by illegal timber in transit from CAR.

Arguably, one of the main reasons of this illegality is determined by administrative constraints. In particular, bribery practices at the level of customs checkpoints are causing delays at clearing goods. This reduces the overall volume of timber declared and facilitates unsustainable exploitation of timber resources with social and ecological impacts that are unknown today.

The representative from MINFOF wanted to underline how the implementation of the VPA agreement has raised new attention on the condition of the domestic market and the necessity to improve support to local producers.

One concrete result of this new momentum is the launching of a pilot project to operationalise the MIB (marché intérieur du bois) following the MINFOF decision N°0563/D/MINFOF/SG/DPT/SDPB/PFmib in October 2015. This project aims to guarantee that wood from the domestic market coming from the permanent and non-permanent forest domain is legal; to facilitate transactions that comply with domestic market requirements in the pilot zones of the project; and to propose new fiscal arrangements for improving investments and support to the domestic market. However, the ability and willingness of small producers to conform to FLEGT requirements remains a critical challenge.

### Key Issues

#### Domestic timber markets in tropical countries are often bigger than export timber markets

Domestic markets are poorly regulated and informal suppliers serving them often lack clear legal status or are illegal.

#### Private sectors argue the VPA system is too demanding

Both in terms of legal knowledge and of means to comply with the TLAS.

#### Private operators see compliance with the FLEGT agreement risks to force less experienced small producers to essentially stop their activities and totally be excluded from the process

#### Discussion arose on encouraging better dialogue between China and Cameroon on the issue of timber trade

The representative from MINFOF informed that attempts to exchange on FLEGT with China are undertaken through the FOCAC – Forum on China African Cooperation.

#### There is overall urgency to improve resources for and knowledge of private sector operators, particularly S&ME.

#### An effective way to support S&ME

and make more transparent their relation with large-scale exporting companies is to:

- **Promote Information sharing** on marketing, value addition and national timber development strategy;
- **Facilitate Marketing development** for export and inter-regional timber trade;
- **Increase Legality compliance knowledge and capacity building** for associations;
- **Improve capacity building** in management, technical skills and political lobbying.

#### The central challenge is to find effective resources to accelerate the process



## SEVENTH SESSION INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

### Overview

This session attempted to address the issue of inclusive engagement in the FLEGT process by describing the attitudes, concerns and challenges of parliamentarians, NGOs and indigenous peoples who have been directly or indirectly involved in FLEGT, REDD+ and general forest governance issues. Speakers included:

- Jean Jacques Mathamale, from CIEDD Central African Republic: **How FLEGT's making a difference – lessons from multi-stakeholder collaboration to influence constitutional reform in CAR.**
- Honorable Zam, Réseau des Parlementaires, Cameroon: **The role of parliamentarians in promoting good forest governance.**
- Indra van Gisbergen, Fern: **The role of coalitions and CSO platforms in forest governance initiatives.**
- Felicia Kengoum, CIFOR: **Structures of power, climate change mitigation and forest management in the Congo basin.**
- Mr Valere Akpakoua (representing indigenous communities): **Indigenous Peoples participation in VPA implementation.**

### Key Highlights

In 2015, REPAR Cameroon decided to be directly engaged in the monitoring of Government's forest activities by setting up the so-called 'Groupe de Veille'. The specific objective of this group is to guarantee a permanent evaluation of governmental action on anti-corruption activities and the respect of legality requirements in the management of forest resources.

Mr Valere Akpakoua underlined how IPs continue in practice to be marginalised from the above-mentioned dynamics because they have scarce access to information and scarce knowledge of the legal and political issues influencing forest exploitation.

### Key Issues

**VPA processes have generally been highly inclusive during the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases**

However, once the agreement signed, several countries seem to have experienced a reduction in multi-stakeholders consultation and, in some cases, even a breakdown of relationships between actors especially CSOs and administrations, essentially due to monitoring activities and other sensitive issues such as the debate on forest conversion.

**Critical element of success to promote inclusive engagement in VPA processes**

is underscored by the initiative of the CIEDD from CAR and the 'Groupe de Travail' of REPAR-Cameroon, which is the capacity to do advocacy and to coordinate the work with most influential actors (parliamentarians and the member of the CNS).

**Access of information remains problematic for indigenous peoples**

**Power dynamics can influence the FLEGT policy environment in a number of ways**

Felicien Kengoum, explained how international actors are perceived as more influential than national actors and there is a well established interaction between and within them. Governmental actors are perceived as most influential among national actors, due to the leading role of ministries in charge of environment and forests over the process. This leads both to collaboration and to competition between governmental agencies.

**Key message: Inclusive engagement needs, among other things, coordination, capacity building and information sharing**



## WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

During the second and third day of the Forest Governance Forum participants had the opportunity to further discuss some aspects of the FLEGT implementation already touched upon in the plenary session and to analyse some critical issues which are often marginalised in the forest governance debate. The working groups were divided into six thematic areas. Highlights and recommendations of five of these are detailed on the following pages. The sixth session was a Proposal Writing workshop.

### 1. TENURE AND RIGHTS



Presentations during this working group had the objective to discuss the importance of recognising and respecting customary users' land rights in the context of large-scale forest exploitation and land-based investments.

- The group firstly listened to a presentation from Sa Majesté Mvodo Bruno who wanted to underline the importance of protecting customary rights and reminded the pivotal role of the local communities for the sustainable management of forest and land. He reiterated the position of traditional authorities with regards to the reform of the forest and land law that, according to them, should recognise the legal personality to the village structure.

- Secondly, the group had the opportunity to exchange on the challenges of land law reform and the potential ways of recognising and protecting customary rights in the legal framework.
- A comparative study of the land law reform in Burkina Faso and in Mozambique was presented and the audience had the opportunity to learn that different forms of customary tenure have been fully integrated in the new land laws of these two countries. The main message of this presentation has been that there are multiple possibilities to recognise customary rights and to let them cohabit with statutory law.
- Finally, the group had the chance to know the first results of an innovative project on cartography implemented by diverse Cameroon NGOs in the framework of the so-called Tenure Facility<sup>1</sup>.

#### The following recommendations were formulated:

- to continue the multi-stakeholders dialogue on land and forest law reform and integrate the recognition of customary rights.
- to envisage measures in the law which allow the identification and recognition of collective owned land.
- to recognise the status of legal person to the village structure.
- to put more attention on the gender issue in land tenure transactions.
- to well define in the law clear rules of consultation, compensation and benefit-sharing mechanism.
- to debate the possibility of including in the law rules regulating community-investor partnership.
- to clarify in the law the notion of large-scale industrial investment and investment for reason of public interest.
- to foresee in the law under revision some provisions defining the objective of land zoning and land planning and its relation with rule regulating land transactions.
- to promote the recognition of the instrument of cartography and its use in decision-making processes concerning land tenure at all level (institutionalisation, codification etc.).

## 2. BENEFIT SHARING MECHANISMS



Discussions developed during this working group concentrated on the analysis of the ways to increase benefits from forest exploitation for communities' stakeholders.

- Speakers exchanged firstly on the vacuum and the incoherencies of the legal framework that does not sufficiently define the mechanisms of compensation and benefit-sharing in areas where companies operate in Cameroon and the sub region in general.
- Secondly, they exchanged on the negative impacts for community development caused by the suppression of the 10% ratio of the Annual Forest Revenue to be allocated to community (Rédevance forestière annuelle)<sup>2</sup>. This suppression has already had negative consequences for many forest communities and CSOs are doing strong lobbying in order to abort the circular and restore annual forest revenue shares destined to local populations.
- Finally, speakers exchanged on potential solutions to improve the mechanisms of benefit-sharing by comparing the way this aspect is framed under the REDD+ initiatives.

### The following recommendations were formulated:

- to continue the advocacy for legal adjustments more in favour of communities for the and resolution of law incoherencies concerning benefit-sharing mechanisms (see the issue of the FAR).
- to augment and ameliorate the monitoring of companies' commitment towards communities as regards the issue of compensation and benefit-sharing.
- to organise and assure advocacy and watchdog initiatives towards other administrations directly concerned by the issue of benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- to provide financial support to local communities which are the most committed actors for the sustainable management of natural resources;
- to exchange experiences at the regional level (COMIFAC) in order to find innovative ways for addressing constraints in the process of benefit-sharing mechanisms, particularly in relation with companies.

## 3. GENDER IN FOREST GOVERNANCE



This working group aimed to discuss the importance of promoting a gender-sensitive mindset in the forest governance sector and more specifically to mainstream women into VPA processes.

- Panellists identified and discussed the constraints and obstacles to the participation of women in forest governance.
- A key barrier to women's participation is that women often have no control over the resources they exploit. Particularly, the legal framework does not clarify neither promote rules that facilitate women use of resources, especially as regards to the so called NLTP/PFNL- Produits Forestiers Non Ligneux which are the ones women produce and trade mainly.
- Another obstacle is that customary practices sometimes continue to discriminate women's control on these resources.
- Women also have serious difficulties to access information and to participate in decision making at the community level.
- The VPA approach is seen as an 'holistic': programme which target communities in a homogenous way (for example: impact of deforestation on forest communities rather than on female and male right holders and/or small producers).
- However there is evidence of change: Cameroonian CSOs have created the national REDD+ platform and integrated a specific working group on gender in the framework of this platform.

### The following recommendations were formulated:

- to further invest on the creation of space for dialogue in order to better involve rural women and improve their engagement beyond the simple participation.
- to reinforce women's access to training, information and leadership position.
- to do advocacy towards political and financial institutions in order to push them to invest more in activities which boost PFNL products and the role of women in their commerce.
- to promote women's access to decision-making positions in the framework of projects and programmes for REDD+, FLEGT and community forestry.
- to develop a regional programme on gender in REDD+, FLEGT and community forestry in order to coordinate the efforts, to mobilise more human and financial resources and to make them more usable to the objective of gender-sensitive mindset promotion.

## 4. INDEPENDENT FOREST MONITORING



The plenary session of the first day discussed IFM and helped to identify common problems which CSOs and administrations face when dealing with monitoring, especially at the level of access to information (to investigate the presumptive infraction). Debates during this working group aimed to further exchange on the legitimacy and relevance as well as on the effective and qualitative functioning of the IFM and on the way to improve this work.

- The group discussed how unsustainable funding of IFM initiatives was limiting the full potential for reducing illegalities and improving forest governance. The group stressed the need to mobilise alternative sources of funding for IFM while acknowledging the fact that the role of CSOs in IFM is often contested.
- The group underlined the pivotal importance to continue the advocacy and lobbying work in order to make possible that CSO-led IFM is institutionalised.
- A presentation from the OFAC-Observatoire des Forêts de l'Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC) stressed the importance of measuring and monitoring not only the forest covering (forest superficies and evolution of this cover based on the phenomenon of deforestation) but also forest exploitation.

### The following recommendations were formulated:

- to integrate the new information and communication technologies in the systems of IFM.
- to promote the appropriation and funding of IFM, included the one of CSOs, by the national institutions.
- to reinforce the capacity building and advocacy skills of organisations involved in IFM.

## 5. FOREST GOVERNANCE IN ACADEMIC CURRICULUM



This working group had the objective of presenting and debating experiences, challenges and opportunities of promoting forest governance issue in academic curriculum.

- Integrating forest governance into teaching and learning stimulates the research and creation of new knowledge and professionalism. It helps to initiate and promote debates on technical issues (providing knowledge to potential future experts who then can afford a technical debate). It also contributes to analysis and judges policies based on results of scientific research. Finally, it helps to create the conditions for engagement of future informed generations on the topic of sustainable forest governance.
- Analysis of the situation helps to identify specific needs that are then useful to better define the most adapted pedagogic method to form future forest experts.

### The following recommendations were formulated:

- to attract more financial resources in order to better identify needs, study innovative methods and propose initiatives that work.
- to involve actively forest governance experts.
- to harmonise diverse programmes related to the teaching of forest governance in academic curriculum.
- to set up a platform for discussion/interaction among newcomers in the sector who have different backgrounds.
- to share experiences and lessons learned between countries in Africa.

## CONCLUSION

Through the forest governance forum, one cross cutting recommendation has been the need to continue to strengthen the contribution of non-state actors (NSA) – civil society organisations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples (IP) and local communities – to improving forest governance and sustainable forest management (SFM) in the Congo Basin and beyond particularly through monitoring forest governance and forest land use change, informing relevant processes particularly FLEGT and REDD+, and contributing to effective responses from law enforcement and policy making agencies. Additionally to engage private sector and the domestic market actors in national processes that directly affect their actions and the livelihoods of those who depend on forests. The University of Wolverhampton remains committed to support the achievement of these objectives.

<sup>1</sup> More information on this new international initiative can be found here: <http://thetenurefacility.org/what-we-do>.

<sup>2</sup> Ministerial order No.0076/MINADT/MINFI/MINFOF (26/06/2012) that allocated 10% of the forest incentives to communities in forest exploitation areas has been substituted by circular No 004/MINFI/DGI/L of June 2015 by the general directorate of taxation. This spells out procedural requirements for tax provisions of law No 2014/026 of 23 December 2014 relating to the 2015 finance law of Cameroon. In particular, it established to allocate 10% of the proceeds of annual forestry royalties to tax recovery agents of the Ministry of Finance and local councils.