

**Institutional Dynamics and Climate Change in the Congo Basin  
Forests of Cameroon  
Report of Preliminary Findings**

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by

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## **List of Acronyms**

**ANAFOR:** National Agency for Forest Development/ Agence Nationale d'Appui au Développement Forestier

**CARPE:** Central African Regional Program for the Environment/ Programme d'Afrique Centrale pour l'Environnement

**CED:** Centre for Environment and Development/Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement

**CERAD:** Centre for Action Research for Sustainable Development in Central Africa/Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour le Développement Durable en Afrique Centrale

**COMIFAC:** Central African Forest Commission/Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale

**IRAD:** Agricultural Research and Development Institute/Institut de Recherche Agricole pour le Développement

**IUCN:** The World Conservation Union

**Living Earth:** The Living Earth Foundation Cameroon Programme

**MINADER:** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/ Ministère de l'Agriculture et du Développement Rural

**MINEP:** Ministry of Environment Nature Protection/ Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Protection de la Nature

**MINFOF:** Ministry of Forests and Wildlife/ Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune

**MINRESI:** Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation/ Ministère de la Recherche Scientifique et de l'Innovation

**RACC:** African Network for a Climate Community/ Réseau Africain pour une Communauté Climatique

**SFID:** Société Forestière et Industrielle Doumé

**TRC:** Transformation Reef Cameroon

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Program

**WCS:** Wildlife Conservation Society

**WWF:** The World Wide Fund for Nature

## Introduction

Predicted future changes in climate, with consequent impacts on ecosystems and physical systems, pose significant challenges for society. The now unequivocal evidence of increasing global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level are attributed to an observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations; carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2007). With the world's concern about a changing climate, the role of forest ecosystems in the global carbon cycle has gained more prominence. Forest ecosystems, particularly in the tropics, influence the global climate as major contributors to the global terrestrial carbon sink which absorbs about 30 percent of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions every year and additionally stores large reservoirs of carbon (Canadell and Raupach 2008). The Congo Basin of central Africa, containing the second largest area of contiguous rainforest in the world, is estimated to contain between 25-30 billion tons of carbon in its vegetation (Hoare 2007). However, conversion of these forests through deforestation and degradation due to selective logging is also a source of carbon emissions (Hoare 2007; Streck et al. 2008). Therefore, international climate negotiations have focused on ways to mitigate climate change through maintenance and restoration of forest carbon sinks.

While playing a role in mitigation, forests are also expected to face significant pressure from climate change over the next century (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2007). This will potentially disrupt the important ecological, economic, social, and aesthetic services that forests provide to natural systems and humankind (Bonan 2008; Eastaugh 2008). The impacts of such future changes will be felt particularly by natural resource-dependent communities through a multitude of primary and secondary effects in both natural and social systems (Adger 2003b). According to the World Bank, more than 1.6 billion people worldwide depend on forests for their livelihoods, the majority of which live in extreme poverty. Of that number it is estimated that 60 million indigenous people are totally dependent on forests, 350 million are highly forest dependent, and 1.2 billion are dependent on agroforestry (The World Bank 2008). In Africa, over two-thirds of the population rely directly or indirectly on forests and woodlands for their livelihood, as well as medicinal plants and common pool forest resources for meeting essential fuel wood, grazing, and other needs (The World Bank 2004). The vulnerability of forest-dependent communities to climate change is also exacerbated by historical and contemporary problems related to natural resource mismanagement, conflict and inequality (Dixon, Smith, and Guill 2003; Annecke 2002).

The vulnerability of tropical forest ecosystems to climate change not only represents a risk to the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities, but also to the development of national economies. The Congo Basin Forests represent a vast transboundary natural resource pool indispensable to the national development plans of the countries of the region. Over the past decade forest-related activities accounted for 10 percent of the GDP in at least 19 African (forest-rich and forest-poor) countries, and more than 10 percent of national trade of 10 nations (The World Bank 2004). These economic activities include industrial timber harvesting, as well as the increasing global market for non-timber forest products (The World Bank 2008). Forests are also an indispensable asset for designing poverty reduction strategies and contributing to the realization of some of the Millennium Development Goals. Unfortunately, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) for most countries tend to show little awareness of the potential

contribution of forests to poverty alleviation, or are at best vague about how the potential can be harnessed (Bird and Dickson 2005; The Program on Forests (PROFOR) at The World Bank 2007).

Given the importance of tropical forest ecosystems for the global climate, the carbon stocks of forests have taken centre stage in international negotiations. Forest carbon payments occur either for carbon sequestration derived from afforestation and reforestation or by protecting carbon stocks in natural forests known as avoided deforestation (Streck et al. 2008; Richards and Jenkins 2007; Miles and Kapos 2008). Such payments for ecosystem services through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the voluntary carbon market or Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) have the potential to contribute to multiple goals in the areas of climate change mitigation, forest conservation, economic development and poverty reduction (Angelsen and Wunder 2003; Streck et al. 2008; Luttrell, Schreckenber, and Peskett 2007). However, these various approaches present both scientific and policy challenges if they are to be effective, feasible and equitable; particularly for low-income communities (Streck et al. 2008; Boyd, Gutierrez, and Chang 2007; Hoare 2007; Rights and Resources Initiative 2008). Therefore, strengthening the capacity of Congo Basin countries to adapt to the effects of climate change and its implications for forest policy is critical to reducing vulnerability in the pursuit of multiple sustainable outcomes.

The aim of this research was to analyse the response of the institutions of the state, the private sector and civil society to the complex challenges of climate change in Cameroon, one country which contains part of the Congo Basin forest. Furthermore, this research sought to determine how these different stakeholders perceive climate change and the role of their institution in responding to climate change. A multi-level governance framework is used to analyse the relationships occurring between different stakeholders. Additionally, the intersection of forest-related, poverty reduction and climate change policies was explored. Implications of these preliminary results for enhancement of Cameroon's capacity to integrate its' response to climate change with other national priorities of sustainable economic development, poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation are highlighted.

#### Institutions, Vulnerability and Adaptation:

Within the climate change literature, the vulnerability of any system (at any scale) is reflective of (or a function of) the exposure and sensitivity of that system to hazardous conditions and the ability or capacity or resilience of the system to cope, adapt or recover from the effect of those conditions (Smit and Wandel 2006; Smit and Pilifosova 2003; Adger 2006). Adaptive capacity refers to the potential or capability of a system (whether environmental, social or economic) to cope with not only climate risks but also climate opportunities (Adger 2003a; Keskitalo 2004). It is similar to other commonly used concepts such as adaptability, coping ability, management capacity, stability, robustness, flexibility and resilience (Smit and Wandel 2006). It is a vector of resources that represent the asset base from which adaptation actions and investments can be made (Adger and Vincent 2005). Some determinants of adaptive capacity are mainly local while others reflect more general socio-economic and political systems. They include economic wealth, technology, information and skills, infrastructure, institutions, social capital and equity (Smit and Pilifosova 2001, 2003). These determinants are closely interconnected and important to consider when examining strategies to enhance the capacity of a system to adapt to climate change.

While considered to be a determinant of adaptive capacity in relation to climate change, institutions have long been identified as a key part of governing human interaction with a changing environment. Broadly defined, institutions are the prescriptions that humans use to organize all forms of repetitive and structured interactions (Ostrom 2005). Institutions apply both to structures of power and relationships as found in organizations with leaders, membership, resources and knowledge, and to socialized ways of looking at the world as shaped by communication, culturally ascribed values, and patterns of status and association (O'Riordan and Jordan 1999). Institutions for monitoring and responding to environmental and social changes determine the tightness of feedbacks among social and ecological components and ultimately affect their adaptability (Walker et al. 2006). Additionally, interactions between local and higher level institutions affect the capacity of a community to respond to change (Smit and Wandel 2006; Agrawal 2008). According to Adger (2000), the institutions of the state, market, and civil organizations are major determinants of collective security, social vulnerability, and environment and resource allocation.

In social-ecological systems, the existence of institutions and networks that learn and store knowledge and experience, create flexibility in problem solving and balance power among interest groups, play an important role in adaptive capacity (Tompkins and Adger 2004; Walker et al. 2006). Furthermore, institutions that fail to plan for changing environmental and policy conditions and risks, constrain adaptive capacity and increase vulnerability (Adger and Vincent 2005). Adaptive capacity is reflected in the adaptations or changes in a system to better deal with problematic exposures and sensitivities (Smit and Wandel 2006). A significant factor influencing the climate policies that are adopted is the way in which decision-makers perceive climate change (Koch, Vogel, and Patel 2007; Pielke 1998). Given the diversity of impacts of climate change, it is a problem that demands concerted collective action involving a multilevel response from many institutions and other actors (Adger 2003a; Thynne 2008).

## **Methods**

This research was carried out in the Republic of Cameroon, West Africa within national, regional and international institutions. Formal institutions were chosen for this research on the basis of their involvement in climate change or forest issues or the impact climate change may have on them in the future (Table 1). The respondents in the institutions were chosen because of their knowledge or involvement in the climate change debate and where, active participation in such issues did not occur, their positions exposed them to the issues in general terms. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were carried out by the author and a research assistant in September and October 2008. Interviews were conducted in French or English, depending on the preference of the person being interviewed. Interviews were tape recorded for later transcription and qualitative analysis (Patton 2002). Preliminary analysis of these interviews is presented in this report. Direct quotations from French have been translated into English. Additionally, policy documents, strategies, press releases and government statements will be analysed.

The chosen institutions represented various government ministries, a parastatal, the private sector and civil society. Within the private sector, data was collected from representatives of six national and international forestry companies who have obtained or are in the process of obtaining certification as practitioners of sustainable forest management by third party review. Within civil society, eight national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Cameroon were chosen for research. One representative of

the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), a regional organization, was also included. Additionally, data was collected from three international organizations. One professor and researcher from the Department of Geography, University of Yaoundé I was also interviewed. Please note that many attempts were made to contact the representative of the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP), who is responsible for issues of biodiversity conservation, but she was on vacation during the research period. Additionally, while a representative of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Family initially agreed to be interviewed, during the interview process he did not feel free to answer questions about climate change as a representative of the ministry. Therefore, this information is not included in the data analysis. Background information was also obtained from a Cameroon consultant with the Rights and Resources Initiative.

**Table 1: Summary of institutions involved in this research.**

<b>Government</b>	<b>Parastatal</b>	<b>NGO</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>International Organization</b>	<b>Other</b>
MINFOF	ANAFOR	IUCN	FIPCAM	World Bank	Professor
MINEP		WWF	Pallisco	UNDP	COMIFAC
MINRESI		WCS	SFID	Coopération Française	
MINADER		RACC	TRC		
IRAD		Living Earth	WIJMA		
		CARPE	ALPICAM		
		CED			
		CERAD			

## **Preliminary Results: Interview Analysis**

### **Perceptions of Climate Change:**

All of the institutions interviewed were aware of the issue of climate change, but many saw its implications for Cameroon as being in the long term. However, some expressed concern that changes were already being observed in terms of variation in the arrival of rains which affect the agricultural calendar and forestry operations. They felt that the northern and drier regions of Cameroon would be more affected by these changes, but that climate change would also affect the composition and biodiversity of the forest in the long term. Additionally, many cited the fact that the poor would be disproportionately affected. Many government institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) expressed concern about the implications of the international negotiations surrounding Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) for the people of Cameroon. One NGO expressed concern that the possibility of financing for Cameroon via such policies as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) or REDD were seen by government officials as a “cash cow”. He expressed concern that, in a manner similar to other international initiatives, such as with HIV/AIDS, there would be little accountability and that the end result would not benefit the people of Cameroon or the climate.

Some government officials were of the opinion that the international community, which bears the weight of responsibility for climate change, should be ready to compensate developing countries financially for their efforts in climate change mitigation. One official expressed the lack of responsibility of Cameroon for the current climate change crisis in this way.

*“...It comes from others, because we are still in a situation where we use our natural resources in the same way as our grandparents. Even if you counted all the vehicles that emit greenhouse gases that we use, all these vehicles would not even reach the number of vehicles in Paris. Therefore, the impact is very weak. On the other hand, there are countries whose impact is very strong: the United States, China – these are the big giants, who are the most responsible but who don’t want to manage in line with the Kyoto accords.”*

Another representative stated,

*“It’s necessary to say that the international community – excuse me, but it is my opinion. – the international community has not produced much. ....If someone destroys a protected area to help himself or to do agriculture, there will be a great quantity of greenhouse gases produced! If you look at what should be paid, it is the whole community that benefits. It is important that the international community supports the efforts of countries like Cameroon. If not then it will be very difficult.”*

Other government representatives expressed concern that Cameroon have a real voice in current international negotiations which they felt was not always the case. One said, *“...that in regards to the climate change process, we are still in a fog as to what the conclusions will be.”* Another added, *“...the risk is that it will all be negotiated without us, without our country being admitted...there are many things that are negotiated, and they are presented to us as a done-deal that we must implement.”*

Several representatives in the forestry companies felt that they were already seeing changes in the timing of the rainy seasons which possibly could be a result of climate change. The unpredictability of the rains as well as the quantity of rain is beginning to affect their business practices. As they are unable to harvest timber during the rainy season these changes result in a disruption in their harvest plans. As one forestry company official said,

*“...we observe the rainfall every month. We have monthly business reports and we have been following the pattern of the rains for many years. It is one of our indicators. The people and our personnel who work in the east don’t recognize the rainy seasons anymore. That is to say, there have been disruptions. Before, they always knew that the rains would come in the month of October. Or there would be a short season in the months of March or April. But there have been disruptions. That is to say, that there are readjustments. Or, the rains come early or end late. There are disruptions. They are less dependable than before. These are impressions. These are in comparison with peoples’ expectations. But we don’t have any reports like that.”*

Another company representative stated,

*“For example, last year we had a really long rainy season with very heavy rains that completely disrupted the work in the forest. We had rain basically from July to December, and that created*

*some problems. These conditions from an economic perspective put us in a very delicate situation.”*

#### Priority of Climate Change in Institutional Operations:

The priority of climate change varied in the work of different institutions. Beyond ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, the national government of Cameroon's main response has been to announce that a climate change observatory would be built. A Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) committee has also been created to begin to develop such projects in Cameroon. Some government departments, however, are more preoccupied than others with the matter of climate change. Notably, Cameroon has a national office in the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) dedicated to the climate change file but unfortunately, the person responsible has not been given many resources to accomplish the enormous task of following all of the issues of climate change in Cameroon. Nevertheless, he has conducted many seminars and attended many meetings, and at the time of the interview was in the process of preparing Cameroon's second communication on climate change.

The Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and its associated parastatal, the National Agency for Forest Development (ANAFOR), responsible for reforestation efforts in the country, felt that the tree planting projects that they were embarking on were a key part of responding to climate change. Additionally, MINFOF is closely following the international negotiations around REDD and its implications for the Congo Basin forest. Some government officials said that it was now Cameroon's policy for climate change to be integrated into all aspects of government.

*“I think that climate change has a prominent place. .... And in terms of policy, it has come into the limelight. All of us have been told to make sure we address climate change issues - in all domains. Now, in all sectors, it has to be highlighted. That is why the international observatory is being created as well - because we know that it is an issue now of global concerns. Everybody. So we have been, in every sector, we're trying to bring out, to address issues of climate change. That is why you see, even the parliamentarians in Cameroon, they're going to plant trees in the North. Everyone's trying to get involved, to show that they are doing something to address climate change.”*

However, the result of all government interviews seems to indicate that there was little concrete integrated action on climate change. Any action that was being carried out was clearly at a very early stage. Other government departments, while being aware of the issue had not begun any work in that area.

Some NGOs and the international organizations interviewed have already made climate change a priority for their work in Cameroon. For example, The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has climate change as a strategic priority for their plan of work from 2009 - 2012. Additionally, it works with the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), a regional body in charge of forests and environmental policy coordination and harmonization, with the objective to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forest ecosystem. This institution is particularly concerned with the implications of REDD for the region's forests. La Coopération Française, which is situated in an advisory role in the offices of MINFOF and MINEP, has been involved in workshops about the CDM and in initiating

reforestation projects in some parts of Cameroon, which potentially could come under the CDM. Another NGO admitted that they were actively integrating climate change into their program, as there was a lot of international money available for climate change that could also be used to benefit other aspects of their work. One local NGO was actively involved in regional initiatives on climate change and was in the process of investigating projects that would be part of the voluntary carbon market. Other NGOs felt that the work that they were already doing in working with forest-dependent communities, while not explicitly about climate change, was laying a solid foundation for helping local people to adapt to climate change. One representative said,

*“...effectively, the activities that we are doing are not immediately tied to climate change. The impact is more at the second degree. That is to say when you are concerned with sustainable management, community development; if you reach these objectives then there is automatically a link, if you are able to reduce the amount of degradation and deforestation, there is definitely a link with climate change.”*

The forestry companies did not see that climate change was an immediate priority for their companies; however they were aware that it might play a larger role in the future. In particular, some felt that international policies such as REDD, the CDM and the voluntary carbon market might affect their operations in the future. The companies interviewed had been certified, or were in the process of becoming certified, as practitioners of sustainable forest management, which they said was a result of pressure from their European customers. Therefore, they felt similar pressure regarding climate change would result in it becoming more of a priority for their companies in the future. Some companies felt that as a result of their reforestation practices that they were contributing to increasing the carbon sequestration potential of the forests. Some companies had attended a workshop held by la Coopération Française concerning climate change. Some companies were embarking on a process of using the wood trash from their operations to generate electricity which will reduce their use of fossil fuels. The representatives felt that this will help reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Some other forest companies said that they were studying the possibility of co-generation as a way to reduce their costs.

#### Institutional Networks:

Questions were posed to determine the primary means by which different government departments communicate with each other, and in particular, on the issue of climate change. Inter-departmental activity on the issue of climate appeared to be limited, although there was some indication that inter-departmental discussions were occasionally taking place (Figure 1). For example, the Director of MINFOF said he had regular conversations about climate change with the Climate Change desk in MINEP, particularly since the role of forests has become more prominent in international negotiations.

*“But equally in all these mechanisms like REDD or CDM, I acknowledge that we, who are responsible for the forests, have the opportunity now to be in perfect harmony with my colleague (Climate Change desk in MINEP). Therefore we try to share together regularly.”*

Additionally, with the announcement of an observatory for Cameroon, the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation (MINRESI) and its research offices felt that this would increase their interaction with MINEP on climate change research. Other departments, such as the Ministry of

Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), felt that since they normally needed to communicate with MINEP during the course of their work, that this would logically continue as the issue of climate change becomes more prominent. One government representative said that they had already participated in some seminars on the issue of climate change. ANAFOR already works in conjunction with MINFOF. It is important to note that while interview results indicate that there may be some institutional links at the national scale on climate change, there was no indication of any linkages with lower levels of government.

Some NGOs, also felt that government departments were beginning to communicate on the issue of climate change. Meetings of regional representatives of government as part of COMIFAC were also beginning to focus on climate change.

*“Not meetings specifically for climate change, but we have for example elaborated an action plan with the parliamentarians, and in this action plan of course there are questions that are related to climate change, notably the natural capital. And you will see that in this action plan of course there are questions that are very much tied to climate change.”*

Based on their experience, other NGOs felt that climate change was not being integrated into the work of government departments. One representative commented on a meeting he had attended to discuss biodiversity conservation,

*“...Minister of Forests, Minister of Environment, all the donors, community, working on the programme, to see how the programme is going. It took four, five hours, but nobody talks about climate change! “*

Additionally, other NGOs commented that government departments had limited collaboration in their work, in general, as evidenced by the granting of mining exploration permits in protected areas and land already designated for other uses such as logging concessions.

*“...this nice lovely map of conservation concessions and national parks, and you have people exploring in them. I've just learned ... that some of the logging concessions are having problems with mining concessions because they're overlapping. So, all of this is serious – isn't this the land-use plan map? So, who is actually ... endorsing this? Who is really implementing this? So this is the sort of conflict that we're having. And you know that's wrong.”*

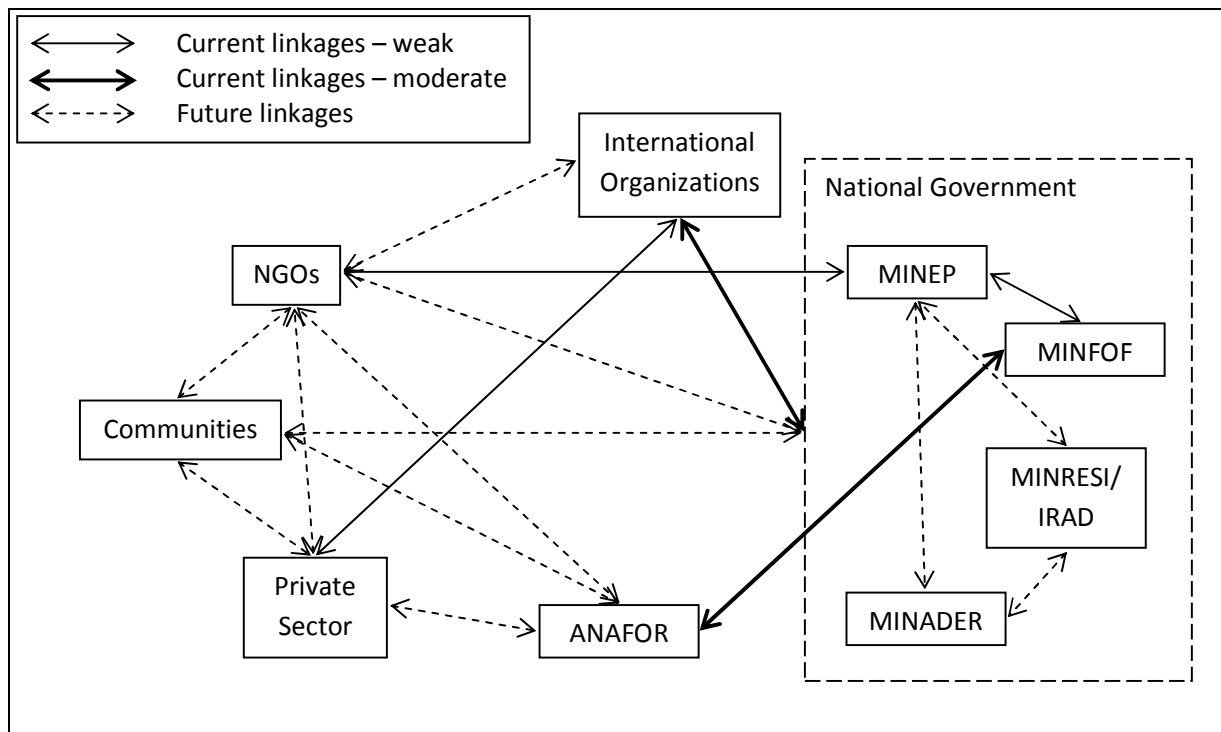
The overlap of logging concessions with mining explorations was cited as a problem by several forestry companies as well. This situation reveals a lack of coordination among government departments.

Questions were also posed to elucidate the linkages between government institutions and NGOs. Some of the larger international NGOs, such as IUCN or the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), work closely with government, in some cases to strengthen capacity in the area of biodiversity conservation. One national NGO, which works primarily with indigenous people, said that they were in communication with the Ministry of Social Affairs but that this was not on the issue of climate change. In reality, most national NGOs felt that they had few links with government in any area and were not currently part of any discussion on issues of climate change. Not surprisingly, in contrast, the international organizations of the World Bank, the

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and la Coopération Française worked closely with the government on the issue of climate change. In particular, la Coopération Française functions as a technical advisor to both MINEP and MINFOF.

While links with government were nonexistent on climate change, the forestry companies work closely with MINFOF which monitors their forest exploitation and reforestation. The forestry companies said that they had some communication on the issue of climate change in conjunction with a workshop that was held by la Coopération Française. Some national NGOs had also been part of such workshops. Others cited the workshop held by the Congo Basin Forests and Climate Change Adaptation program (CoFCCA), of the Center for International Forestry Research, in 2008 as the first opportunity to have discussions on climate change. Generally, forestry companies link with local NGOs in the process of their work in communities.

Another important linkage to consider is that of various institutions with local communities. Since there appeared to be no linkages concerning climate change between national and lower level of governments, it is not surprising that there appeared to be no government action at the community level on climate change. The only possible regular linkage related to climate change appeared to be the tree planting work that ANAFOR carries out in conjunction with local communities. Actors in civil society, international and national NGOs both have close linkages with communities in carrying out their work. The private forestry companies also work in communities by carrying out social service initiatives such as building health clinics.



**Figure 1: Current and future inter-institutional linkages on climate change in Cameroon.**

## Intersection of Forests, Climate Change and Poverty Reduction:

There was broad consensus among the institutions interviewed that the poor would be most affected by climate change. This would be a result of changes that would affect agriculture and the forest which are the source of livelihood. Additionally, it was felt that if there were any climate events, such as floods, the poor would also be the most affected. As one government official said, *“It is the poor people and the people with economic problems like ours, who will undoubtedly be hurt the most.”* There was also concern that international policies that promoted avoided deforestation would need to take into account the needs of the poor. An official from MINEP said,

*”When talking about integrating, for example, the climate change aspect into the poverty reduction strategy, it is at the national level. But it is not sufficient. Because when you speak of CDM projects, it is at the national level. But it is not sufficient because ... people need to live. It must be stated clearly. People also need to be lifted out of poverty. It is necessary to transform the handicap of climate change into an opportunity for development. What does that mean exactly? It means that if we ask the people to not cut, to not destroy, to not deforest, to not degrade forests, it is necessary that the people sense that these actions will improve their lives. If not then they will not respect it.”*

At the present time, Cameroon is in the process of revising their Poverty Reduction Strategy in conjunction with the World Bank. Government officials said that the issue of climate change will be integrated into all aspects of development. One government official stated,

*”In fact, actually, we are still in the process of thinking about the next development document, the strategy to fight poverty, the question of climate change being integrated into all sectors. ... One cannot speak of agricultural development today without talking about climate change! One cannot speak today about developing animal husbandry without speaking about climate change. Energy here is essentially hydro-electricity. One cannot speak of energy production without speaking about climate change! One cannot speak today about health, that is to say the big questions like malaria, meningitis, cholera and others without speaking about climate change. Therefore, the actual objective is to succeed at integrating the climate change question such that it is taken into account in all major development projects.”*

The forest was seen as playing a central role in the document in providing a livelihood for local communities as well as income from the forest industry. The representative of the World Bank stated that its new agreement with the government of Cameroon will be concerned with biodiversity conservation as well as initiatives on climate change. However, some NGOs were not certain that such initiatives were well developed in the government's mind. One representative said, *“I think that there is a lot of work to do in order to make climate change an important axis in the national strategy to fight poverty in Cameroon.”* It will be necessary to review the new document in order to better understand the role that the forest will play in economic development, climate change mitigation and poverty reduction.

## International Policies, Forest Governance and Climate Change:

Government and NGOs were conscious of the potential benefits and challenges of post-Kyoto agreements on the role of forests in mitigating climate change. In commenting on the potential wealth from Cameroon's forests, one government official stated,

*"The forest represents for us the biggest producer of greenhouse gases. But, we must say this - we have no obligation to reduce those emissions. But we also say this - that the forest represents the greatest percentage, or the greatest potential for Cameroon, with respect to the period after Kyoto. Because if forests by way of REDD become part of the decisions, in the post Kyoto accord, that will be the way for the countries of the Congo Basin, and therefore Cameroon, to benefit from the services that the forest provides in stabilizing the climate."*

However, any discussion as to the way in which such international agreements would be implemented in Cameroon is at a very early stage. A representative of an international organization felt that such issues of balancing multiple objectives for the forest and national development would be difficult and had not yet been addressed in Cameroon. He said,

*"When balancing the opportunities for conservation in comparison to the development opportunities, and in regard to forest tenure or forest access rights – I think there is still a debate that has not yet been brought to the table of the political decision makers. Initiatives like REDD ... I believe that there must be much more openness in the dialogue with the government, strongly, to also have a stake. Not only to simply be against the others, but to take into account the local stakeholders. In regards to advising, land rights, rights of access to land, women's access to the forest etc. The importance of large companies, because they are there and they always have a big role to play in the decisions made at the top. Sometimes, when decisions are made, the general populace, no matter what sort of formal tenure arrangements exist, are left out once again."*

Forest tenure was very much on the mind of most institutions. When asked how the discussion of forests and climate change would overlap with this issue, it was evident that it was a major concern for both government and NGOs. There seemed to be recognition that the issue would come to the fore front particularly as a result of discussions about international agreements on forests and climate change. In particular, the concern of traditional tenure had arisen in the course of reforestation initiatives. One government official stated,

*"Therefore the problem of forest tenure is a big problem - that is a big national preoccupation at this time. And when one has not yet resolved this problem definitively, it must in the long term be resolved to effectively do small reforestation projects and to fight against climate change."*

However, NGOs saw that resolving the issues of forest tenure and climate change would be extremely difficult as there is no legal framework to do so. Additionally, they expressed concern that unless tenure issues were resolved that the state, which controls the forests in the country, would take any benefit that was forthcoming from international agreements such as REDD.

*"... if effectively, the REDD mechanism brings money, and the state says, I am the owner –*

*I am going to take it for myself and I will give you a little, logically, that will be counterproductive, because the communities ... if they don't have their part, there will be consequences if the standard of living does not change. In my opinion, I see a disaster coming. That is to say if the resources are embezzled – I am not thinking of embezzlement, that is something else ... there is the law, but I am speaking, that they must take into account who it belongs to, it is theirs, therefore they must be part of the solution to protect it. Because if there is not that sentiment there, there will be as I often say – a scorched earth strategy. You destroy because it does not belong to you. This happens in the community forests! The people don't respect... you are supposed to exploit it over 25 years but after a few years, it is possible that they have already exhausted the entire resource! ... Because somewhere there is a problem with embezzlement. They say that you have given it to us for a short period of time. Therefore, I must use it as fast as possible ... “*

Additionally, some NGOs expressed concern about Cameroon's indigenous people whose rights are often not respected. They felt that international treaties such as REDD would only increase the infringement of their rights.

In terms of sharing of benefits from agreements such as REDD, some in government recognized the importance of involving the communities in benefiting from such international policies as otherwise they would not protect the forests.

*“Then, I would like to say that the users of community forests, the communal forests, let's look at the community forests ... even if there are errors, even if there are difficulties, the benefits that come from REDD could be helpful for communities. But that requires monitoring those communities, participation of those communities in the management of the forest. I am going to go further – you cannot sustainably manage small forests if the communities are not participating. If I have a family, this family has health needs. This family must go to school. There are trees. You tell me to protect the trees. I protect them. But if you do not give me one part, something – I am going to cut them. That is a little of the thinking of the majority of people in the community.”*

However, while NGOs agreed that communities needed to be participants in the discussions about and in benefits from REDD, they remained sceptical of the position of the government in this regard. However, conservation NGOs saw that such agreements could provide additional benefit for the communities who live close to protected areas. Other NGOs were concerned with how any financial benefits from conserving the forests for climate change would be distributed at the community levels. Some have been involved with helping communities manage the money they receive as timber royalties or in working with community forests and therefore are aware of the problems that have ensued. Often elites in the community capture most of the benefit and most community members and indigenous people see very little change in their lives. They cited the example of the way in which communities had been compensated for the construction of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline and the problems that resulted.

*”Now if you must take away their rights, if you must take away what they use from the forests, you must really think of a good system of compensation. I know the specialists must work on how to calculate it ... But initially, it is what is under the systems of compensation; how the*

*compensation will be used afterwards. That is another discussion. It must be done in the way the compensation system was put into place for the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, where they had a system of compensation; compensating those who were implicated – they said that they had raised the national standards, they had gone up. But effectively, if you apply the national standards, it was not a big thing; it improved – that permitted a few people who lost their resources, their fields etc. to have a considerable sum of money. But you know, in fact, because the state had not prepared them to use it, this large sum of money; that (money) at the same time destroyed - it destroyed the social relations, because the people formed a group of those who were compensated. We are the compensated! Yes and now in the village afterward there was nothing but problems.”*

NGOs felt that they would have a role to play in helping to implement any agreements on forests and climate change at the community level. Additionally, government seemed to agree that they would need to work with partners in civil society in implementing any climate change agreements. One representative of MINFOF said that they would need to work with NGOs in this regard. In particular, he said that they would play a role in capacity-building at the community level. “... *but it is still the role of NGOs in civil society which must help the administration to support the communities.*”

## **Preliminary Implications**

Although the results presented are preliminary, it is possible to identify some implications for the Cameroon situation. While it is evident that awareness of climate change is high, a concrete response to climate change is only in the beginning stages in Cameroon, as it is in many countries. In the area of forests, and climate change in particular, given the importance of the Congo Basin forests to the national economy and the livelihoods of millions of local people, it is imperative that there be a coordinated response on climate change. Therefore, the weak linkages between government departments nationally and between different levels of government will need to be strengthened. Additionally, linkages need to be strengthened with other actors in society such as private industry and non-governmental organizations. While actors in international organizations and civil society may have a role to play in strengthening the capacity of government on responding to climate change, further analysis may provide insight into how this may be best accomplished.

The implications of international agreements such as REDD and CDM projects related to the forest are particularly important for the national economy, biodiversity conservation and local communities. It is imperative that thorny issues, such as forest tenure, be resolved before any such agreements are implemented. Additionally, concrete policy needs to be developed in order to identify how such schemes would be monitored and how benefits would be shared. It is critical that local communities have a voice in such discussions or otherwise the consequences could be devastating for people’s livelihoods as well as the conservation of the forest. Given the weak links government institutions have with the local level it is unclear as to how that will happen. However, with their established links with communities, actors in civil society may have an important role to play in linking communities with decision makers. Furthermore, they could play a coordinating role as part of governance arrangements in implementing agreements such as REDD.

## **Outputs: Planned Research Publications**

When data analysis is complete the results will be published as two journal articles.

Working titles:

Brown, H.C.Peach., Nkem J. Ndi, Sonwa, D. and Bele, Y. Institutional dynamics and climate change adaptation in the Congo Basin forests of Cameroon.

Brown, H.C.Peach., Nkem J. Ndi, Sonwa, D. and Bele, Y. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD): Implications for governance in Cameroon.

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