

Statement of the Forests and Communities Platform and representatives of indigenous communities on the REDD Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) of Cameroon

13 September 2012, Yaoundé

As part of its REDD+ preparation, Cameroon submitted on 6 August 2012 the draft of its REDD Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) managed by the World Bank. The R-PP will be reviewed for approval at the Participants Committee of the FCPF from 21 to 23 October 2012 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.

Following the recommendation of the national validation workshop held in Ebolowa, Cameroon in June 2012, members of Cameroonian civil society met as part of the Forests and Communities Platform (*Plateforme Forêts et Communautés*) from 11 to 13 September 2012, to analyse the strengths and areas for improvement of the R-PP.

Approximately forty representatives of Cameroonian civil society working on issues related to human rights, gender, youth, sustainable management of forests and natural resources and environmental protection as well as representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities participated in this work.

The analysis focused on four themes, namely:

1. Consultation and stakeholder participation in REDD+ in Cameroon
2. The legal and governance framework in REDD+ process
3. The causes of deforestation and forest degradation and the social and environmental impacts
4. Strategic options and pilot REDD+ projects

We, the members of the Forests and Communities Platform, participating in this workshop, welcome the openness and willingness of the government to involve the different stakeholders, including civil society and local and indigenous communities in the development of the R-PP. This clear willingness of the Government is reflected in the R-PP through the allocation of a significant percentage of the total budget to consultation and participation of stakeholders and the prominence given to social aspects of REDD+. Nevertheless, we examined the R-PP in order to bring together our contributions.

THEME 1: CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE REDD PROCESS IN CAMEROON (Component 1b and 1c)

Strengths:

- The RPP mentions the key stakeholders in the stakeholder mapping, but local and indigenous communities are treated together with the 'civil society' group which might result in their voices not being heard.
- The R-PP mentions the implementation of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for indigenous peoples and local communities. This is a crucial element as regards the consideration and respect for communities' wishes.

Areas for improvement and recommendations:

- Demonstrate in the R-PP how previous experiences of consultation and stakeholder engagement will be used to maximise successes and minimise failures (p 16).
- Recognise indigenous peoples, local communities, women and youth as distinct stakeholders in the stakeholder mapping and not as part of the 'civil society' group (p 19). This distinction would help to ensure that their rights to be fully informed and consulted are respected.
- Provide more information on the content and implementation strategy for steps to obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples (p. 26).

THEME 2: LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON REDD+ (Component 1a + 2c)

Strengths:

- Institutions such as the REDD+ Steering Committee (*Comité de pilotage REDD+*), the National Coordination, the Technical Secretariat, Regional Coordinations and Departmental Committees have been created and are gradually being put in place. These institutions provide civil society and indigenous peoples' representatives with the possibility of participating in decision-making processes.
- The R-PP mentions the establishment of conflict management mechanisms at national, regional and departmental level.
- The R-PP proposes an analysis of existing revenue sharing mechanisms (Annual Forest Royalties (AFRs), mining royalties and benefit-sharing related to the *Prunus Africana* tree) for the development of a REDD benefit-sharing system. This is a good starting point.
- The R-PP recognises indigenous and local communities as recipients of benefits from REDD+.
- The document refers to the equalisation system (*système de péréquation*). This is a positive initiative as it will allow the REDD+ process to empower actors who hold and/or manage forest areas not yet covered by REDD+ initiatives and therefore minimize leakage of emissions to those areas.
- The R-PP proposes to carry out studies to determine the ownership of, and rights to, forest carbon.

Areas for improvement:

- The weak representation of civil society (only one representative) and indigenous peoples (only one representative) and the absence of representatives of local forest-dependent communities in the Steering Committee limit the participation of these groups in decision-making.
- The system of making decisions by 2/3 vote will not allow stakeholders other than the State to influence decisions. This is despite the safeguards included in the Cancun Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requiring the full and effective participation (including decision-making) of key stakeholders notably indigenous peoples and local communities.
- The proposed study on the development of a benefit-sharing system is to be based on the experiences of the Annual Forest Royalties (AFRs) benefit-sharing system, even though this system has not resulted in significant socio-economic changes in forest communities. Furthermore, the proposed study does not include other relevant experiences such as benefit-sharing in the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) project implemented in southern Cameroon and wildlife royalties.
- In regards to the proposed study to clarify the ownership of forest carbon, unfortunately current Cameroonian land legislation does not guarantee the right of communities to land. Due to this, the study may come to conclusions that limit community access to compensation or remuneration from REDD+.
- The R-PP contains insufficient information about the implementation of the equalisation system (*système de péréquation*) for REDD+.
- The inclusion of the private sector (for example agro-industrial, mining and timber companies and industrialists) as beneficiaries of REDD+ payments (p. 66) constitutes a potential threat to forest ecosystems and the climate.
- The decentralisation of the proposed conflict management mechanisms (to national, regional and departmental levels) does not reach the level of the commune and, therefore, may prove removed from the local reality and hence at times inappropriate.

Recommendations:

- The composition of the National REDD+ Steering Committee should be revised so that it includes:
 - five (5) representatives of indigenous communities, including two (2) Mbororo pastoralists and three (3) hunter-gatherers (Pygmies),
 - two (2) representatives of civil society and
 - three (3) representatives of local communities (including *at least* one (1) woman) from different ecological zones of the country (p 6, Annex 1a).
- Adopt consensus decision-making as the decision-making system in the various national REDD+ institutions. This method, used successfully in the FLEGT-VPA process, helped to guarantee the full and effective participation of stakeholders (p. 6, Annex 1a)
- Departmental technical committees should be decentralized to reach the communal level (p 10).

- Increase the breadth of experiences which will be taken into account in the proposed study on benefit-sharing of REDD+ to include the experiences of the Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) project and the old system of benefit-sharing of wildlife royalties (*redevances fauniques*) in Cameroon (p 65).
- The land rights of indigenous peoples and local communities should be recognised as a precondition to the proposed study on the clarification of carbon rights.
- Give concrete information in the R-PP about how the 'equalisation system' will be implemented in the context of REDD+ (p 65).
- Indigenous peoples and local communities should be recognised as the primary beneficiaries of potential benefits of REDD+, as they are in the front line of climate change and leading actors in efforts to reduce deforestation (p 66).
- Limit the role of the private sector (agro-industrial, mining and timber companies and industrialists) to financing initiatives to reduce deforestation and forest degradation so that they are not eventual beneficiaries of REDD+ profits (p 66).
- Include the possibility of a neutral arbitration if consensus is not reached in conflict management mechanisms at the local level (p. 64).

THEME 3: CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (Component 2a and 4b)

Strengths:

- The literature review of the drivers of deforestation is fairly objective.
- The document clearly outlines the steps for the development of the Social Strategic Environmental Assessment (SESA) and shows how civil society and local communities and indigenous peoples will be involved in its development.
- Fundamental questions of such as benefit-sharing, land tenure and participation are discussed.

Areas for improvement:

- The R-PP proposes capacity building on SESAs for employees of Ministries but not to civil society actors, local communities nor indigenous peoples to whom the concept is new.
- The R-PP does not clearly describe how the SESA will be implemented.
- There are no draft terms of reference for the drivers of deforestation study, but there are terms of reference included for the SESA.

Recommendations:

- Develop and include a draft terms of reference for the study on the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation (Appendix 4a)
- Clearly describe how the SESA will be implemented (p 74).
- Include provision in the R-PP for capacity building on SESA to other stakeholders, such as civil society actors, local communities and indigenous peoples, and not only employees of Ministries (p 74).

THEME 4: STRATEGY OPTIONS AND PILOTS (Component 2b)

Strengths:

- The R-PP takes into account all sectors in which investments are necessary or essential to reduce the loss of forest cover.
- Cross-cutting strategy options (*options stratégiques transversales*) identified such as governance, land tenure and land use are indispensable to the success of REDD+ in Cameroon.
- It is commendable that the R-PP states that a participatory approach will be used to identify pilot projects.

Areas for improvement:

- The R-PP does not give sufficient explanation about who is responsible for the implementation of strategy options related to sectoral investments (*options d'investissement sectorielles*)
- These strategy options partly duplicate activities in existing sectoral programs such as the Programme for Improving Agricultural Competitiveness in Cameroon (PACA) and are, therefore, may not be additional.
- Some strategic options, such as those related to land tenure, do not fully resolve the problem identified in the analysis.
- The R-PP lacks an implementation plan related to the fundamental, cross-cutting strategy options identified in the document.

Recommendations:

- Clarify responsibilities for each strategy options related to sectoral investments (for example, agriculture, livestock) and the coherence between the strategic options and other sectoral policies and programs such as the FLEGT (p 46-48).
- Describe in the R-PP how REDD components fit with current legislative review processes related to forest governance, land tenure and land use planning (p 53-54).
- The first two activities proposed¹ in the strategic land option should be replaced by the following sentence: "The customary rights of established indigenous communities to their lands shall be recognised". Such an action will have significant positive impacts on the reduction of deforestation and thus ensure efficiency in the REDD+ process (p 52).

¹ "Facilitating the granting of land titles to the most vulnerable groups and in particular indigenous peoples and women. Simplification of procedures to these households to acquire land titles, more flexible procedures (reducing taxes, reducing the cost of obtaining land titles, etc.) could be developed for the benefit of these groups, most predominantly indigenous peoples, women and the youth to encourage investment in agriculture" (unofficial translation from French)

Signed:

- Action pour un Développement Equitable Intégré et durable (ADEID)
- Appui pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Développement (APED)
- Association des Baka de l'Est Cameroun (ASBAK)
- Association Féminine pour le Développement la Conservation de la Biodiversité et la Défense des Droits Humains (AFDECDH)
- Association pour la Traduction, l'Alphabétisation et le Développement Holistique de l'Etre Humain (ASTRADHE)
- Association des Kulawe Baka Sanguia (BUMAA KPODE)
- Cameroon Environmental Watch (CEW)
- Centre d'Action pour le Développement Durable des Autochtones Pygmées (CADDAP)
- Centre d'Appui à la Justice et d'Animation au Développement (CAJAD)
- Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour le Développement (CERAD)
- Centre pour le Développement Local Alternatif (CEDLA)
- Centre pour l'Education, la Formation et l'Appui Aux Initiatives de Développement au Cameroun (CEFAID)
- Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CED)
- Centre Régional d'Appui et de Développement des Initiatives Féminines (CRADIF)
- Community Initiative For Sustainable Development (COMINSUD)
- Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER)
- Green Development Advocates (GDA)
- Greener Pastures (GP)
- Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement-Cameroun (JVE-Cameroun)
- Observatoire des Cultures Baka& Bantou pour l'Education Environnementale et le Développement Communautaire (OCBB)
- Association de défense des droits des peuples autochtones forestiers (OKANI)
- Organisation pour la Protection de l'Environnement la Recherche et l'Appui au Développement Durable en Afrique (PERAD)
- Organisation Nationale des Exploitants de Produits non ligneux et du Développement du Cameroun (ONEPCAM)
- Réseau Action Concertée Pygmées (RACOPY)
- Représentants Peuples Autochtones Bagyéli
- Recherche des ONG/Association de Campo Ma'an et Environs (ROCAME)
- Rural Development Center (RUDEC)
- Service d'Appui aux Initiatives Locales de Développement (SAILD)