



HARMONISATION OF INDEPENDENT MONITORING APPROACHES IN CAMEROON: Steps and Early Results



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Key words:

client, supplier, system, management system, standardised independent monitoring system, process, sub-process, interested party

Definition of concepts

Client: organisation that receives a product and, in the SNOIE, corresponds to all the parties that benefit from system products like: competent administration, donors, private sector, etc.

Supplier: organisation that procures a product and, in the SNOIE, corresponds to parties that provide the system with information like: communities, CSOs, donors, private sector, etc.

System: set of interdependent as well as interacting elements; it refers to a chain of activity that makes up OIE activities

Management System: system that makes it possible to prepare a policy and objectives as well as to achieve these objectives. It refers to defining an implementation strategy for OIE activities capable of resulting in the implementation of the law

Standardised external independent monitoring system: group of civil society organisations that carry out external independent monitoring activities in accordance with a series of requirements based on the ISO 9001:2008 quality standard. These external independent monitoring activities entail collecting and processing factual data on possibly illegal activities and forwarding them to the competent authorities to improve on the effectiveness of control operations and ensure the transparent as well as sustainable management of national heritage resources.

Process: set of interdependent or interacting activities that transform inputs into outputs. In the SNOIE, it refers to steering activities, carrying out and supporting OIE activities.

Sub-process: subset of interdependent or interacting activities that transform inputs into outputs. It refers to monitoring, verification, communication & lobbying, management, analysis and evaluation, funding and skills.

Interested Party: person or group of persons who have an interest in whether an organisation functions or succeeds. In the SNOIE, it refers to CSOs considered as direct interested parties and the competent authority, donors, the private sector and communities considered as indirect interested parties.

Organisation: set of institutions and persons with responsibilities, powers and relations. It refers to a company, a firm, a freelancer, an association, or parties or a combination of these respective entities.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Acronyms	4
Introduction	5
Materials and Methods	6
Results	11
Discussion	15
Bibliography.....	17

FODER is working towards a more just society, one without marginalization or discrimination, which uses natural resources for sustainable development.

Acronyms

AJESH	.....	AJEMALIBU Self Help
CAFER	.....	Support Centre for Women and Rural Inhabitants
CED	.....	Centre for Environment and Development
CEDLA	.....	Centre for Alternative Local Development
CEW	.....	Cameroon Environmental Watch
CNS	.....	National Monitoring Committee
FCTV	.....	Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante
FDX	.....	Full Duplex transmission
NF	.....	French Standard
FODER	.....	Forest and Rural Development
GPS	.....	Global Positioning System
ISO	.....	International Standard Organisation
MINFOF	.....	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
OE-FLEGT2	.....	Project for the Creation of an External and Standardised Independent Monitoring System
OIE	.....	External Independent Observation
PAPEL	.....	Support Programme for Livestock Production and the Biodiversity Preservation in Protected Areas in Cameroon
SAILD	.....	Support Service for Local Development Initiatives

Introduction

The State of Cameroon signed and initialled a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union in May and October 2010 respectively. This agreement is part of the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) process, which is aimed at improving forestry governance and the country's competitiveness on international markets. Ratified by the government of Cameroon in August 2011, the agreement officially came into effect on 16 December 2011.

It provides for the creation of a Legality Assurance System (LAS) that will make it possible to guarantee the legality of timber or timber products from Cameroon. As part of the VPA, the credibility of the LAS is hinged on the effectiveness of the traceability system, independent auditing, and the Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM), which regularly produces considerable information for forestry control and compliance with legality. Independent monitoring has been applied in the forestry management sector since the 1990s. During this period, the objectives of Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) were to investigate procedures for the award of logging permits, monitor activities carried out in tropical countries by major international European multinationals as well as expose the illegal practices and corruption affecting international trade in tropical timber. At the end of the 90s, these objectives turned into the improvement of credibility in the forestry sector, through increased transparency and the independent identification of systemic flaws in forestry governance². The maiden mission for formal independent monitoring was conducted in 1999 by Global Witness in Cambodia. IFM progressively extended,

stretching from Asia into Africa, and later to Latin America. First led by international organisations, it was resumed in various forms by national organisations acting on some occasions as a network (like in Liberia) or in a coordinated manner (like in Cameroon). The independent monitoring led by the civil society grew considerably as from 2010, thanks to the negotiation and signing of partnership agreements relating to the implementation of forestry regulation, governance as well as the trade in timber and timber products (FLEGT VPA) between timber-producing countries and the European Union (EU) IFM initiatives are mostly spearheaded by national or local civil society organisations (CSOs).

In fact, for over five years now, Cameroonian CSOs and local communities play an active role in independent monitoring by cooperating with local communities to conduct independent monitoring operations and denounce potentially illegal forestry activities in order to inform competent authorities and other interested parties. These operations are considered essential to ensure effective monitoring of forestry governance. They go beyond the mere monitoring of compliance with forestry regulation to monitoring other aspects of forestry governance, notably compliance with social obligations in logging concessions² and balance between the sanctions meted on various offenders. However, it has been noted that several intervention approaches are used by IFM CSOs, both with regards to information collection, management and sharing, as well as the management of the relation with the state institutions tasked with forest management. It is against this backdrop that the idea to harmonise approaches and tools, as well as create a system based on

¹ Duncan Brack and Claudine Leger, *A review of independent monitoring initiatives and lessons to learn*, September 2013

²David Young, *Independent Forest Monitoring in Africa : updated 2016 (draft)*, May 2016

the mastery of the process to collect, process and produce information on natural resource use, was born. The key question knows how to guarantee the reliability and credibility of information produced by this system? Who can the direct actors of this system be? Which tools should be used to produce the information processed by the system? Developing harmonised methodological tools and reinforcing post-exposure lobbying prove

to be indispensable to strengthen the effectiveness of the External Independent Monitoring (OIE) conducted by CSOs. The purpose of creating a Standardised External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE) is to reinforce and formalise the strategical and operational framework of the OIE to transform it into a more reliable and credible mechanism as well as contribute to transparent natural resource management.

Materials and Methods

Materials

To arrive at the development of the standardised external independent monitoring system based on the ISO standard³, the material used was the ISO 9001: 2008 standard (a) which is a certifiable standard to which was added the FD X 50 – 176 standard (b), the ISO 9004: 2004 standard (c) which are support tools for the proper use of the certifiable standard and the NF 50 – 160 standard on the guide for drafting a quality manual (d).

a. The ISO 9001 :2008 standard on quality management

This international standard spells out the requirements relating to the System for quality management when an organisation⁴ must prove its ability to regularly supply a product⁵ consistent with customer requirements as well as legal and regulatory requirements. On another hand, it is intended to increase

customer satisfaction through the effective implementation of the system, including the processes for continuous improvement of the system and ensuring compliance with customer requirements as well as applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

Given the multiplicity of approaches used in OIE activities, the creation of a organisation or system that controls these activities and which is hinged on the ISO 9001 : 2008 standard must enable the identification of interested parties and comply with customer as well as legal requirements.

b. The FD X 50 – 176 standard on process management

The process approach firstly entails giving an account of the functioning of the activities of an organisation based on the process concept, set of interdependent activities with

an end, for example develop a product or a service, prepare an offer, provide resources, etc. This results in the organisation being modelled to function like a system or a network of processes interacting. The customer⁶, whether external or internal, is at the centre of the process concept : this means, on one hand, the added value provided to customers, which guarantees the effectiveness of the process, and, on another hand, the optimisation of resources used that make it more efficient, contributing as such to the improvement of global competitiveness.

Once the organisation is “modelised” in the process network, it is possible to breakdown the general objectives established by management into special objectives for each process, defining as such the contribution of each to the global aim. The attainment of these objectives, whether general or special, is measured or checked using indicators often gathered in dashboards, which enable, notably an understanding of reality and trends, and help management make decisions based on factual data.

c. The ISO 9004 : 2009 standard on the management of the sustainable performances of a organisation – quality management approach.

This international standard provides guidelines, which enable an organisation to realise sustainable performances in a complex, demanding and constantly-evolving environment, through a quality management approach. An organisation realises sustainable performances when it can fulfil the needs and expectations of its customers as well as other interested parties, over the long term and in a

balanced manner. Sustainable performances can be realised through the effective management of the organisation, the environmental awareness of the organisation, apprenticeship and through the proper implementation of improvement and/or innovation principles.

As part of the OIE, this standard is intended to ensure the sustainable performance of the system over the short, medium and long term. The OIE system build around this standard is intended to preserve the global performance of activities carried out by the direct actors of the system that the CSOs are, so as to impact independent monitoring activities.

This international standard encourages self-evaluation as a key tool for the review of an organisation’s maturity, covering its leadership, strategy, management system, resources and processes in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for improvement and/or innovation.

d. The NF 50 – 160 standard on the guide for drafting a quality manual

It is worth recalling that a quality manual is a document that spells out the quality policy and describes an organisation’s quality system. The drafting of this document complies with some principles laid down by the ISO 9001: 2008 standard. This guide for drafting quality manuals must enable an organisation enumerate and describe all the provisions relating to its quality policy and its implementation in order to give confidence to internal and external customers⁷. As regards OIE activities, the quality manual will have to display all the measures taken beforehand by all the CSOs to satisfy the interested parties working based on the system,

³David Young, *Independent Forest Monitoring in Africa : updated 2016 (draft), May 2016*

⁴International Standard Organisation

⁵Set of institutions and persons with responsibilities, powers and relations

⁶Customer: organisation or person who receives a product or service

⁷Quality policy: document that spells out the orientations and intentions of an organisation with regards to the production of a quality product.

Methods

In continuation with the matériels used to design the SNOIE, the project team used a series of methods made up of literature review (1), consultation of interested parties (2), training (3), testing (4) and auditing of the system (5).

1. Literature Review

Since external independent monitoring is an activity that dates back to 2010, the SNOIE was designed based both on the experience of several local and⁸ and international organisations⁹ that carried out activities in various phases and types of independent monitoring operations conducted in Cameroon. Literature review, which is a highly important aspect in the design and even development of any system, made it possible to go through most documents on the matter. Proceeding from international instruments ratified by Cameroon, including national laws for OIE, it was possible to establish the legal foundations of External Independent Monitoring (OIE) and be sure about its legitimacy. In continuation with the exploration of documents, it is worth pointing out that this exercise made it possible to record most organisations (national and internationals) that have explored the issue in order to be better informed about the various interested parties¹⁰ discovered after the OIE.

2. Consultation of interested parties

Based on the documentation relating to the SNOIE¹¹, which the International ISO 9001:2008 standard is, products from this system must be able to satisfy identified targets on the condition that the said targets are included in the production process. The goal sought in

the consultation of interested parties was to comply with the 1st and 3rd principles of the Quality Management System, which deals with the “*Customer Orientation*”¹² and the “*Involvement of interested Parties*”. With



the identification of the various interested parties revealed after the literature review, it is worth pointing out that the consultation of these parties first of all made it possible to understand the needs and expectations of the interested parties of the system. It later made it possible to analyse these needs and expectations so as to direct the quality expected from each of the parties; and finally develop a targeted communication strategy towards each party depending on the expectations identified.

3. Training of CSOs

Considered as the final step in the development of the system, training the preselected organisations to the use of the procedures manual and the designed tools was seen as one of the main activities of OE-FLEGT 2 project. The aim was to build the capacities of the identified organisations in the appropriation of the documentation booklet on stan-

⁸The national organisations that have carried out External Independent Monitoring activities in Cameroon are : FODER, CED, FCTV, CEW, CAFER

⁹The international organisations that have carried out External Independent Monitoring activities in Cameroon are : REM, Global Witness

¹⁰The various interested parties discovered after OIE activities are: administrations, the private sector, technical and financial partners, media organisations, civil society organisations, etc.

¹¹Standardised System for External Independent Monitoring

¹²According to ISO 9001:2008 standard, bodies depend on their customers. Consequently, it is therefore safe to assume that they understand present and future needs, that they meet their requirements and that they strive to exceed their expectations.



standardised external independent monitoring. Other objectives to achieve by the end of this training include:

- Raising awareness about main concepts, OIE and Quality Management System (QMS);
- Raising awareness about QMS principles and explaining their relevancy
- Distinguishing between forestry control of independent monitoring and that of independent audit;
- Using operating procedures related to OIE and know how to apply them
- Efficiently using data collection tools (GPS, digital camera, meter, forms);
- Recognising between illegal / irregular cases



- Describing the steps for the documentation of illegal/irregular cases;
- Structuring an OIE report.

4. Test of the SNOIE

After the formation of CSOs, the testing the system was the next logical step applied to SNOIE methodology. The activity was to carry out the pilot testing phase of the operationalisation of the standardised external independent monitoring system through: a) selecting local and national CSOs for system testing, b) preparing and fulfilling field missions, c) preparing and fulfilling verification



missions, and d) carrying out advocacy activities targeting MINFOF, NMC and media. The targeted objectives include:

- Detecting potential inconsistencies between the quality of reports made and those awaited;
- Evaluating compliance with specified requirements (ISO Standard 9001 VERSION 2008);
- Verifying the proper compliance with the designing steps, but also clients' behaviour and expectations.

5. SNOIE Operations Audit

Modeled on the International Standard ISO 9001: 2008, the SNOIE development is expected to ultimately carry out an operation audit in order to assess its state of compliance with the chosen standard. Note that the audit is the final stage of the implementation process of quality policy. This activity had several objectives. Firstly, it was aimed at detecting

and documenting possible flaws that may undermine the credibility of OIE reports or at limiting the positive impact of the governance system. Secondly, it was intended to assess its compliance with the requirements of the ISO Standard. Thirdly, the purpose was to verify whether the system's behavior meets the expectations of its main customers.

Results

Results obtained in the SNOIE can be divided into two phases: the design and development phase of the system on one hand and the deployment phase on the other hand. After spending more than fifteen (15) months designing and developing the system whose operation mechanism is closely based on the customer-supplier-model¹³, several results can be noticed: namely the system quality policy, the quality manual, the procedures manual, which explain the normal functioning of SNOIE, people trained on standardized OIE, the OIE missions carried out by the partners, follow-up missions by the coordination of this system and the visibility developed around this system.



POLITIQUE QUALITE

Le Système Normalisé d'Observation Indépendante Externe (SNOIE) a pour ambition de s'affirmer au Cameroun et au-delà, comme une démarche pionnière dans l'arrimage de l'observation indépendante externe (OIE) aux exigences d'un système de management de la qualité, pour un impact plus perceptible dans l'amélioration de la gouvernance en vue du développement durable.

De ce fait, le système met l'accent sur un manuel des procédures décrivant les processus d'OIE dont les principaux sont : l'observation, la vérification, la communication, le lobbying et l'audit du système.

Pour atteindre cette ambition, et assurer la recherche permanente d'amélioration, ce système s'appuie sur les exigences de la norme ISO 9001 : 2008 et vise à satisfaire les attentes des principales parties prenantes (administration, partenaires techniques et financiers, secteur privé, société civile, communautés locales et autochtones, ...) à la gestion des biens publics.

Le SNOIE a pour objectifs prioritaires de :

- * Satisfaire durablement les exigences et attentes de nos parties prenantes ;
- * Améliorer l'efficacité et la performance des processus relatifs à l'OIE ;
- * Développer les compétences du personnel du SNOIE ;
- * Développer un partenariat efficace et durable avec nos fournisseurs ;

La qualité dans le SNOIE devra dépasser le stade de concept et devenir un état d'esprit, une nouvelle culture organisationnelle et managériale. Toutes les activités du système sont donc concernées par cette démarche pour laquelle nous demandons à chaque organisation concernée, l'implication effective nécessaire pour mettre en œuvre le système en appliquant sans réserve les dispositions décrites dans le manuel qualité et les procédures opérationnelles qui le complètent.

A cet égard, un Responsable Qualité (RQ) est désigné au sein de la Coordination pour assurer le bon fonctionnement du système de management mis en place de manière participative. Autant que nos moyens le permettront, nous lui fournirons les ressources nécessaires pour garantir l'efficacité, l'amélioration continue et la pérennité de notre système de management de la qualité.

Nous sommes convaincus qu'en gardant collectivement et fermement le cap, nous pourrions améliorer de manière efficiente la qualité de nos interventions au bénéfice d'une société plus juste et équitable.

Au moins une fois par an, cette politique de management sera revue et si nécessaire actualisée à l'occasion des revues de Coordination. Elle sera communiquée à toutes les personnes ou organisations impliquées par toutes les voies nécessaires et utiles.

Je m'assurerai de sa bonne compréhension, de sa mise en œuvre et de son entretien à tous les niveaux du système.

Fait à Yaoundé, le 11 Septembre 2015

Rév : 01 Septembre 2015


 Le Coordonnateur du système,

The SNOIE quality policy is a document that outlines the predispositions taken by a structure or organization to satisfy its interested parties in terms of Quality Assurance¹⁴ through products and services. It is part of the organization's general policy. It is an explicit desire of management that is synonymous with everyone's commitment. This quality policy is illustrated by the system's broad objectives, the needs and expectations of interested parties, and the company objectives in terms of quality.

The quality manual sets out the quality policy and quality system elements in accordance with this policy and the defined quality objectives, and, if applicable, the chosen reference system(s). In its development strategy, the SNOIE follows the principles and guidelines of the ISO standard to demonstrate all the provisions which the system intends to use to obtain quality products on a continuous or permanent basis.

The primary interest of the SNOIE's design and development is to reconcile the external independent observational approaches, which is an activity carried out by the civil society. The procedures manual of this standardized system put in place fulfils several objectives. Some of them are:

- Providing a formal framework for the implementation of technical operations to comply with quality management principles;
- Making staff aware of the responsibilities in the performance of respective tasks by precisely defining positions and related functions;
- Making the staff more productive through improved efficiency by optimizing information circuits (circulation of documents);



MANUEL QUALITE

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Manuel Qualité du SNOIE - version septembre 2015



MANUEL DE PROCEDURES

DU SYSTEME NORMALISE D'OBSERVATION INDEPENDANTE EXTERNE

Manuel de procédures SNOIE
 Version septembre 2015

- And finally implementing an effective internal control.

¹³Supplier: organization or person that provides a product

¹⁴ Quality Assurance: part of quality management focused on providing confidence in the fact that quality requirements will be met.

Compliance and enforcement of these procedures affect the effectiveness of the management system that for SNOIE must lead to regular monitoring to mitigate the various risks that may result from irregularities or embezzlement but mostly from negligence, errors in execution, judgment or understanding.

Besides the documentation that SNOIE has helped develop, we must also include the training of CSO representatives in standardized OIE amongst the results. It must be noted that the system is fundamentally based on CSOs, and as such they are considered direct actors involved in its operation. These CSO representatives received module-based training on conceptual approaches to quality management, control of functioning processes and tools. This training was organized in sessions both in classrooms and on the field with the main objective to familiarize the participants with the mastery of the system tools.

The signing of partnership agreements with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as (SAILD, Ajesh, CEDLA, FCTV, PAPEL), the development of OIE activities by six (6) CSOs following ISO standards, the completion of 12 follow-up missions by partner CSOs and the realization of 3 follow-up missions by the project team are part of the series of results obtained during the SNOIE test phase especially in the regions covered by the project.

As concerns the visibility of the SNOIE whose



results are provided at the national level, the results show the completion of two (2) press conferences, the publication of press articles by ten (10) news print media, the dissemination of information to a larger audience by four (4) audio-visual media on the successes of the SNOIE, two (2) radio communications and a film about SNOIE.

The interview conducted by online media and published on the site¹⁵ was the main result achieved internationally.

Six (6) months after the effective deployment of SNOIE with the commitment of three (3) organizations (CSOs) divided across three regions¹⁶ of Cameroon whose roles vary between observations and lobbying, some visible results have been recorded. Some of them include:

- the completion of (4) OIE missions by the CSOs and one (1) mission by the coordination with OIE reports produced.
- The organization of three CTE sessions¹⁷ with assessment of reports submitted by observer organizations;

¹⁵Site: <http://www.scidev.net/afrique-sub-saharienne/foresterie/actualites/q-r-norme-iso-protoger-ressources-naturelles.html>
Regions: the East, the South and the Centre

¹⁶The technical and ethical review committee is a non-permanent body that was created by FODER in order to guarantee the technical and ethical quality of OIE reports prior to their publication by FODER. The mission of the CTE is to examine and analyze the external monitoring reports and make comments as well as recommendations on the technical know-how, the relevance, objectivity and morality of the reports submitted to it.

¹⁷The CTE is composed of five (05) members or experts, respectively from a civil society organization, public administration, a forestry company or a private sector organization, a research institution and a law firm.

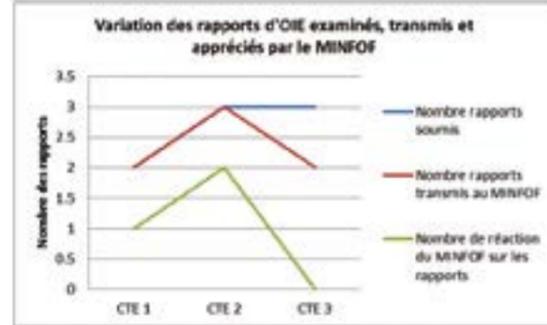
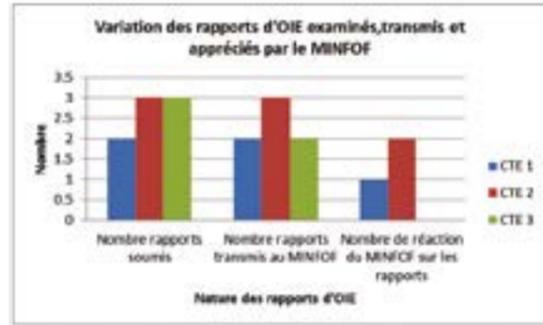
They are appointed on the basis of the complementarity between the respective profiles (logger, jurist, business manager, researcher and lawyer).

- The follow-up and reminding of the administration with five (5) follow-up letters;
- The organization of a press conference on the major reports reviewed by CTE members and submitted to the competent authority.
- The reaction from MINFOF on two occasions to inform us that the accusations were baseless and that legal proceedings have been launched operators whose names are mentioned in the report.



Since the deployment of the SNOIE, three (03) CTE meetings have already been held with a total of seven (7) reports submitted to members for review, analysis and publication notice. The table below shows the number of reports for each CTE session, sent to and reacted to by MINFOF.

	CTE 1	CTE 2	CTE 2
Number of reports submitted	02	03	03
Number of reports sent to MINFOF	02	03	02
Number of reactions from MINFOF based on reports	01	02	/



Discussion

The use of the 2008 version of the ISO 9001 standard to design this system is a reassuring symbol for the production of credible information considering the multiple requirements of this standard. Although the system is based on a recognized international standard, its operationalisation characteristics with audit phases are telling to



assess the quality of the expected product. In addition, the system's structure with the decompartmentalisation of processes and sub-processes reveals the levels of processing of the information sought by interested parties.

The standardized external independent monitoring system ensures its operation through its diverse interested parties whose expectations are huge, varied and whose influence can be direct and indirect vis-à-vis the system. The analysis from interested parties has made it possible to understand that the privileged stakeholders in the SNOIE are CSOs, and who can intervene from the local to national level. Closer collaboration with these actors in terms of developing loyalty is a significant avenue that should be considered during the implementation or deployment of the sys-

tem. In its collaboration strategy, the SNOIE considers the administration as the principal beneficiary of the final product. The quality policy, quality manual and procedures manual, which are the main system documents, serve as justification for commitments that the system wants to fulfill. The choice of CSOs in follow-up and monitoring missions shows the assessment made by the final addressee of the report published by the SNOIE.

With the number of OIE missions already undertaken to date and in view of the reaction from the competent authority regarding reports that it has received from the system, it can be observed that the tools used by the system, starting from exposure to the preparation of the report guarantee the credibility of the information sought.

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