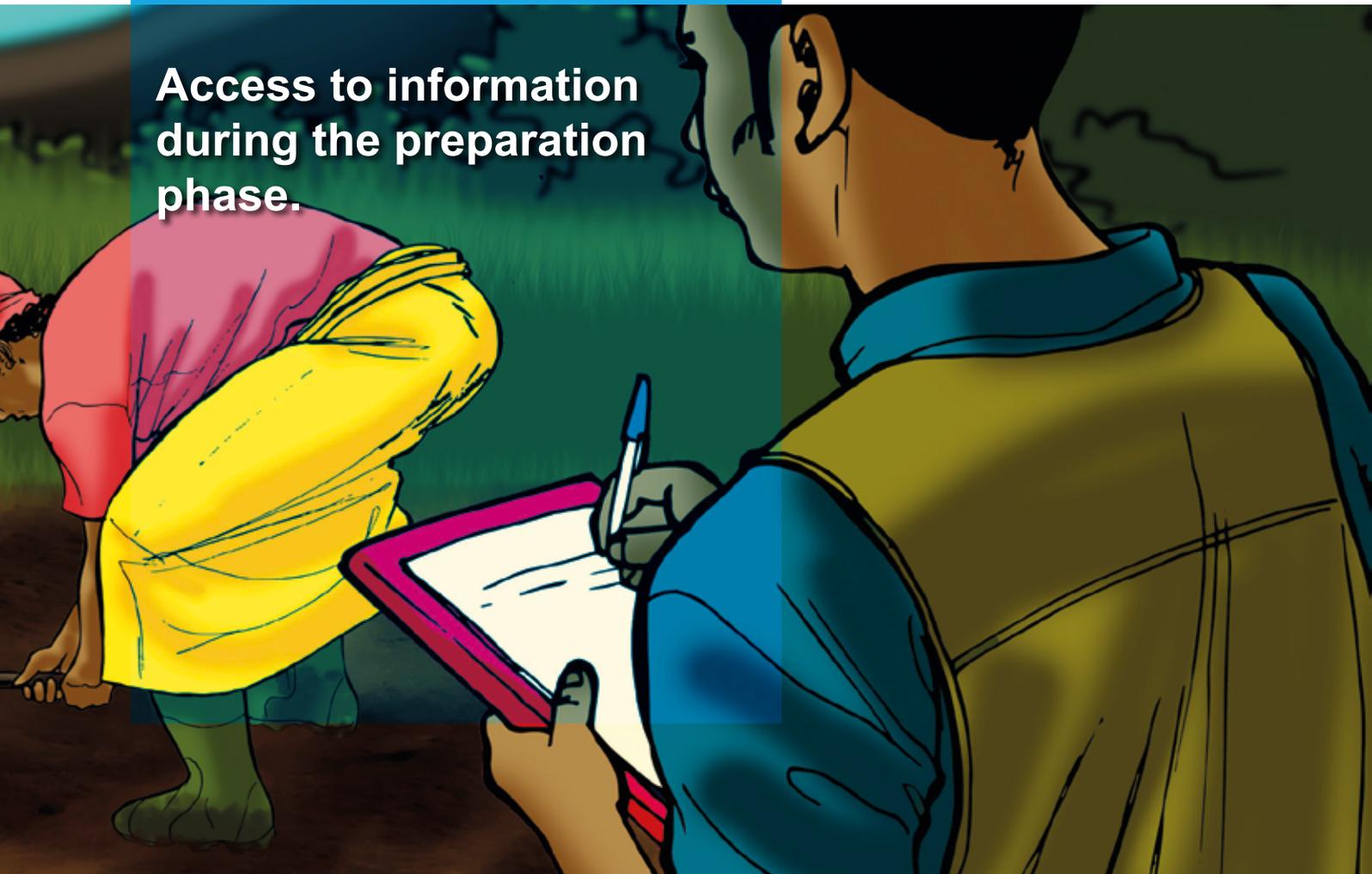




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2018 EVALUATION REPORT ON TRANSPARENCY IN REDD+ IN CAMEROON

**Access to information
during the preparation
phase.**



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CED	Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement
COMIFAC	Central Africa Forest Commission
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
EU	European Union
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FODER	Forêts et Développement Rural
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GIZ	German Technical Cooperation
IPPF	Indigenous Peoples Participation Framework
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MINEPDED	Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development
MINFOF	Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
NPDP	National Participatory Development Programme
NS	National strategy
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
RPF	Resettlement Policy Framework
R-PP	Readiness Preparation Proposal
STREDD+	REDD+ Technical Secretariat
TAP	Technical Advisory Panel
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

SUMMARY

Cameroon is devoted in REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks). The implementation of this mechanism for mitigating climate change at the national level in tropical forest countries is carried out in 3 phases. A first phase called the preparation phase, a second one which is the investment phase and a third one which is the results-based payment phase. The first phase, which was officially completed by Cameroon on 07 June 2018, ended with the validation of a REDD+ national strategy formulated through a process involving all national stakeholders. The quality of participation during this phase depended not only on the quality of access to information, but also on how this was included in the final instrument of the REDD+ national strategy.

The aim of the study, subject matter of this report, was to assess transparency during the preparation phase of the national strategy. It clearly appeared that the REDD+ preparation phase was initiated to find REDD+ implementation options, including for transparency, and more specifically, access to information by stakeholders. Beyond this, it was also necessary to ensure that everyone had access to information during this phase. So, the communication strategy, and its operational plan, was the communication tool designed and used between 2016 and 2018.

The result of the process evaluation shows that, during the REDD+ preparation phase in Cameroon, achieving transparency relied mainly on the communication tool. This is why the implementation of the operational plan for communication was mainly geared towards the Web and social networks as-

pects, as these provide the permanent structure useful for a physical and critical assessment of the access to information in the REDD+. Yet, it should be noted that there was no collaboration with existing online media, or with available Tweeter, Instagram and WhatsApp pages. Only the Facebook page and the Website were created. The Website was not operational at the time data were collected for this study; and the Facebook page was not regularly updated with activities linked to REDD+ in Cameroon.

The publication of information was still very low at this REDD+ phase in Cameroon, and was most often limited to mailing lists. Some studies were carried out as part of the process for identifying the best REDD+ options. They generated considerable volume of information for stakeholders for their involvement in the REDD+. Also, several documents related to the national process are available, allowing to understand the dynamics which led to the national strategy. However, this information and other documents are not available on a permanent platform, openly and publicly accessible. This study suggests some solutions to the issues of the access to information in the REDD+. These include the creation of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat Website; the publication, on this Website and that of MINEPDED, of a proposed list of information and other documents linked to the preparation phase; the joint drafting of a list of information to be made publicly available for the investment and results-based payment phases; the need to codify the right to access information as acknowledged in the REDD+ national strategy instrument.

I INTRODUCTION

Cameroon is committed in the process for reducing emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) as an instrument for fighting against climate change within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). REDD+ is a mechanism with a three-phase implementation. The first phase called “preparation phase” is a national process during which the country proposes a project document, the “Readiness Preparation Proposal” (R-PP), whose implementation leads to the development of a REDD+ national strategy document approved by Cameroon in June 2018. The second one is called “investment phase”, during which the REDD+ projects are implemented. The third and last one, close to the second one, is the “performance-based payments” phase. During this last phase, emissions reduction activities/projects receive financial compensations after an evaluation of the output of the efforts taken to reduce emissions or enhance carbon stocks, taking into consideration a pre-set emission or absorption basic scenario.

The REDD+ good governance is essential to its success, considering not only the number of development sectors involved and the reforms of the regulatory framework suggested by it, but also the numerous stakeholders to consider in the establishment of a strategic framework, as well as the implementation of REDD+ projects and initiatives at national and local levels.

The process includes a set of social, environmental and governance standards. Transparency is among these. The idea



was to focus on the way transparency was included and implemented in the REDD+ preparation phase in Cameroon. Therefore, addressing the issue of transparency at the current level of REDD+ development in Cameroon raises three questions: how was transparency included in the formulation process of the REDD+ national strategy? How is transparency considered in the REDD+ national strategy document? What are the implications for transparency in the REDD+ in Cameroon?.

The approach chosen to assess the place given to the principle of transparency in the REDD+ preparation phase in Cameroon can be presented as follows: :

1. Analysis of transparency options in the elaboration process of the national strategy.

These options are found in the R-PP document. They are summarised as such: “the participatory process will help...ensure transparency in the decision-making process” (R-PP, page 22), and one should “make information available to key stakeholders so that they participate in the design of the REDD+ strategy in Cameroon (R-PP, Annex 1C). In this regard, a permanent framework for the dissemination of information was planned, which involved a strategy including a communication plan approved in June 2016. Several channels were envisaged. For the traditional media aspect, the channels were radio, television and newspaper. For the Web and social networks, a Website dedicated to REDD+ activities was meant to be created, there should be collaboration with existing online media, and the creation of Facebook, Tweeter, Instagram pages as well as a WhatsApp group. Finally, the non-media aspect focused on posting in urban areas and highways.

Without negating the possible importance of their implementation, the study did not focus on traditional media and non-media aspects, for it is difficult to trace them

over time. The option chosen here was to focus on the way the Web and social network approaches were used for communicating about the REDD+ in Cameroon. These approaches are sustainable over time and access to information can be assessed given that information published there can still be traced over time. The method used was, through online visits, to bring answers to the questions whether these planned information tools were actually put in place, and what was the level of publication at the time of the study.

A third approach was to visit the Websites of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), that of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat (STREDD) and that of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). The aim was to assess the existence, availability and accessibility of information related to the preparation phase

2. Comparing various options on transparency in the R-PP and REDD+ National Strategy.

The aim was to assess the possible progress in the quest for the best possible transparency options for REDD+ mechanism in Cameroon during the drafting process of the REDD+ National Strategy on the one hand, and to analyse their content so as to make recommendations for their effective implementation on the other hand.

3. Multi-stakeholders methodological Workshop

This is a workshop held in Kribi from 03 to 04 July 2018, which brought together all categories of REDD+ process stakeholders. It aimed at sharing the methodology and preliminary results of the transparency evaluation in the forest-environment sector in Cameroon, on

the one hand, and allowing stakeholders to think about how to complete the study and contribute to transparency in the forest-environment sector on the other hand. The outcome of the workshop was a proposal and the validation of an action plan for transparency in the REDD+ process in Cameroon.

III RESULTS OF THE STUDY

1. Communication as a tool for transparency in the REDD+ preparation phase.

The analysis of the R-PP terms and conditions shows that communication is the tool used for transparency in the REDD+. The R-PP states, with regards to communication tools, that these “will be disseminated and made available to all stakeholders through the various communication channels for a transparent REDD+ process” (p.27).

Actually, the operational plan of activities for the National Strategy of communication on the REDD+ in Cameroon built on the MINEPDED existing structures, including the Communication Unit, the Sub-Direction of Awareness, Information and Documentation, and its regional services.

2. Implementation of the Web and social network approaches to the communication strategy

a. Creation of a Website dedicated to REDD+ activities

A Website dedicated to REDD+ in Cameroon is effectively created on <http://www.reddcameroun.cm>. That Website co-exists with another link which can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.reddcameroun.cm/public/home.php?action=actualite>. However, even though they are accessible, none of both sites was operational during the period of study. No information is released and no notice is given informing that they are under construction or might have some specific troubles in their functioning at the time of study.

b. Collaboration with existing online media

The collaboration with existing online media is difficult to track. Nothing is said concerning the means to access other Websites than those dedicated to the REDD+ in Cameroon. No link is available to access the Forest Carbon Partnership

Facility (FCPF) Website (<https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/cameroon>) which contains all reference documents on the progress of the REDD+ process in Cameroon, neither on the MINEPDED Website, nor on that of MINFOF, not even on the created Website of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat for Cameroon. Such is also the case for the page dedicated to Cameroon on the UNFCCC website, and that of other REDD+ related conventions.

c. [Creation of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram pages as well as a WhatsApp account.](#)

A Facebook page labelled “Secrétariat technique REDD+ Cameroun” is available online with the link https://www.facebook.com/secretariattechniqueredd.cameroun.9?ref=br_rs (https://www.facebook.com/secretariattechniqueredd.cameroun.9?ref=br_rs). The page is effectively accessible online and operational. However, at the moment data were collected, from 08 May to 08 June, the last information published on that page dated back to 19 March 2018, that is, 3 months earlier, and was about the beginning of stakeholders’ consultations on the national strategy. Nothing else is said about this after that date. In the same line, before March 2018, the last information released on Facebook was back on the 15th of November 2017 after the Minister of Environment participated in the COP 23.

The Tweeter, Intagram and WhatsApp accounts are not available to all.

3. [The publication of information linked to the national process](#)

DA good number of documents were produced during the REDD+ preparation phase in Cameroon (see Annex 1). About

a dozen studies were carried out for the reference scenarii and the strategic options of the National Strategy, in addition to various plans, strategies and conventions. The final versions of these studies are neither assembled/centralised, nor available and openly accessible to REDD+ stakeholders in the country at the time of the study. The various stakeholders do not know how to really access these documents as there are no related specific procedures, at a moment when the mandate of the Support Programme to REDD+ technical Secretariat may end at any time.

The national process related documents are published on the FCPF Website. However, this publication is not part of the national strategy for communication on REDD+. It is rather included in the FCPF communication strategy.

The table of Annex 1 shows a non-exhaustive list of work containing information generated during the REDD+ preparation phase. Their availability and open access for the public is also assessed. The table shows that all documents published at the REDD+ preparation phase are all available. Yet, they are not accessible because they are not published and stakeholders cannot freely access information as needed. To access most of the documents, one must contact either the consultant who wrote them, or the organisation who initiated the study. Globally, there is no strategy to disseminate them to stakeholders, or to keep them as a guarantee for the access to information.

Beyond this work, in Annex 2, the study proposes a list of information generated during the course of the preparation phase, which is not systematically published, but which should have been.

4. Transparency in the REDD+ national strategy instrument

The REDD+ National Strategy approved in June 2018 addresses the options of transparency for the REDD+ investment and performance phases in Cameroon. It tackles transparency as a right for the stakeholders and a requirement for effectiveness in REDD+, based on four aspects:

- **The management of REDD+ funds**, to ensure transparency
- **The management of the REDD+ national register**, to ensure that correct results are drawn from REDD+ activities
- **The nature, and ownership on REDD+ assets**, to ensure the credibility of performance-based payments.
- **The prior information of local communities and indigenous people** before the implementation of any REDD+ project likely to have an impact on their livelihoods and their environment.

The national strategy mechanisms for transparency in the REDD+ are :

- **The access to information through the publication of information**
- **The access to information as a specific right for stakeholders** during the implementation of the REDD+

It is provided that the performance of the right to access information will be evaluated on three aspects :

- **The availability of information:** This means that the information does exist, that it is accessible to those interested for the governance of the REDD+ at the time it is requested, and that there are equal access requirements for all those requesting it, irrespective of their status and origins.
- **The quality of the information:** This means that the information received or communicated should be reliable, that is, from the right source, and describe in its essence the reality it is intended to. It also means that it can really be used by those requesting for it to achieve the objectives aimed at.
- **The optimisation of the right to access information.** It is built on the establishment of grievance redress mechanisms: The aim here is to ensure that access to information is managed so as to produce the maximum results expected, providing those who want to access information warranties that it can be used in the terms and conditions set forth by possible laws and conventions agreed among the process stakeholders.

Cameroon is searching for options to ensure the REDD+ good governance. Setting terms and conditions for the stakeholders' participation and the process transparency is part of this dynamics. In Cameroon, the preparation phase, especially on how to formulate the process and mechanism, is characterized by the low implementation of some aspects of the national communication strategy over the two years following its approval in June 2016. Such is the case for the Web approach to the communication strategy, yet essential. At the end of the preparation phase, documents and information generated during this phase are not always made public and the Website of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat is not operational. Therefore, the visibility and tracking levels are low as regards REDD+ actions during the preparation phase in Cameroon.

On the contrary, there was a significant change in the search for transparency options regarding the REDD+ implementation and performance phases, as shown in the REDD+ National Strategy instrument. The initial option emphasized on communicating on the REDD+. This means free and voluntary information dissemination through a specific channel, especially by the person detaining the information. Now beyond that first option, the National Strategy includes the idea of accessing information as a right for stakeholders in addition to some mechanisms for the effective exercise of this right as part of the REDD+ implementation in Cameroon. However, given that the Strategy only provides for a framework for

exercising this right, a set of actions should be taken immediately to ensure REDD+ transparency, which will lead to its success in Cameroon.

From the foregoing, a set of recommendations can be made:

- **The need to update the Website of the REDD+ technical Secretariat:**

The Website of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat, like that of the VPA-FLEGT, if regularly maintained, is a stable and permanent platform from which the REDD+ stakeholders can access a set of information related to REDD+. It therefore reduces logistics for accessing information. Yet, this does not elude the importance of the safeguards information system in the REDD+.

- **The need to publish information and documents generated during the REDD+ preparation phase in Cameroon**

The REDD+ is a mainly new process, its preparation phase was the opportunity to carry out many studies which generated a set of knowledge necessary for many stakeholder categories. This knowledge focused on the forest sector, its relationships with other development sectors, and the options for mitigating risks related to low coordination over the processes and actions. The generated information should be freely and permanently made publicly available to stakeholders so that they may effectively

contribute to participation and decision-making. Annex 2 to this study proposes a draft list of documents to be published during the REDD+ preparation phase in Cameroon, subject to the formulation of a more complete and agreed list. None of the information is specifically made available as regards the REDD+ transparency.

- **The need to design and publish an information list of the REDD+ preparation phase**

Given that numerous documents and information are generated through the REDD+ process, it is necessary for the parties, at the end of this phase, to agree on a list of documents and information which should be published, as well as the procedures to get them. In the absence of such a list, it will be difficult to access information generated during this phase of the process once the mandate of the Support Programme to the REDD+ Technical Secretariat will be completed.

- **The need to build on the existing publication network and channels**

To be effective and efficient, it is necessary to build, as much as possible, on what exists. A lot of official information on REDD+ in Cameroon are systematically published on the FCPF Website and sometimes also on those of the UNFCCC and some conventions. It is useful to include links

to access those sites on the MINEPDED, MINFOF and REDD+ Technical Secretariat Websites so as to redirect visitors when they need information.

- **The need to formalise the right to access information provided for in the REDD+ National Strategy**

The right to access information is now acknowledged for the REDD+ stakeholders in Cameroon. Principles, criteria and indicators for their follow-up are elaborated. Quality elements are still awaited for the evaluation, in the absence of a regulatory framework designed for the implementation of this option. Beyond the approach to the REDD+ National Strategy, the regulatory framework should also be set. Stakeholders should jointly think about appropriate options for this.

- **The need to formulate principles, criteria and indicators for the REDD+ governance**

The formulation of principles, criteria and indicators of the governance in the REDD+ can be found as a necessity at the time when the country has initiated the investment and results-based payment phases. Monitoring participation and governance appears to be the requirements for achieving the REDD+ standards in the country.

V. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 : Non-exhaustive list of the studies carried out during the REDD+ preparation phase.

	Available	Open access
Detailed study on the factors of deforestation and degradation over the national territory, approved in August 2017	YES	NO
Based on consultations, the diagnostic study of the institutional framework helped suggest a framework which will guide the implementation of the REDD+ national strategy	YES	NO
Establishment of REDD+ decentralised management bodies (Regional committees and Local Operational Units); N.B: the organic instruments for their establishment is underway	YES	NO
Study on strategic option proposals related to the deforestation and degradation factors over the national territory, (approved in August 2017)	YES	NO
Study on the benefit-sharing mechanism, service grievance mechanism, institutional framework and REDD+ funds management tools, approved in December 2017	YES	NO
Strategic environmental and social evaluation on strategic options, approved in December 2017	YES	NO
Report on the development of management frameworks (ESMF,	YES	NO
Identification of effective and socially fair REDD+ policies on the promotion of ecosystems, approved in May 2016 (COMIFAC financed by the Germany International Initiative on the Climate)	YES	NO
National concept for the elaboration of the reference level, approved in August 2017	YES	NO
A definition of forest to be used for the REDD+ process in Cameroon is proposed	YES	NO
Action plan for the national surveillance system of the forest carbon, (approved in 2014)	YES	NO

Production of forest maps, 2000-2005	YES	NO
Data analysis of the national forest list (2005) for the evaluation of the carbon stocks and the proposition of a concept for a new national forest list including REDD+, in March 2018	YES	NO
Identification of effective and socially fair REDD+ policies on the promotion of ecosystems, approved in May 2016 (COMIFAC financed by the International Climate Initiative of Germany)	YES	NO
Study on the identification of non-carbon benefits, approved in June 2017	YES	NO
Documentary on REDD+ (FODER/EU)	YES	NO
Guidelines on the access to information in the REDD+ (FODER/MINEPDED/EU)	YES	NO
Strategy for gender-mainstreaming in the REDD+ (IUCN)	YES	NO
Strategy for mainstreaming indigenous people in the REDD+ (IUCN)	YES	NO
Guidelines on the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) (CED, WWF, GIZ)	YES	NO
Development and implementation of REDD+ pilot projects (NPDP)	YES	NO
Strategy to involve and engage the private sector in the REDD+process (Telcar cocoa CRELICAM, etc.)	YES	NO
Draft1 of the National Strategy, developed in March 2016	YES	NO
Draft 2 of the NS, December 2017	YES	NO
Final version of the National Strategy, approved in June 2018	YES	NO

ANNEX 2 : Potential information list (Categories and Sub-categories) to be posted on the REDD+ preparation phase

1. Information on finance
 - a. Public finance
 - b. Private finance
 - c. Technical and financial partners
 - d. Readiness Preparation grants
 - e. R-PP formulation grants
2. Information on contracts as part of REDD+
 - a. Conventions with REDD+ technical and financial partners
 - b. List of consultants involved in the process
 - c. List of contracts awarded, executed, being executed, and with suspended execution
3. Legal information
 - a. Sector reforms linked to the REDD+ implementation
 - b. Instruments specifically drafted for the REDD+
4. Information on the REDD+ institutional framework
 - a. Institutional set up
 - b. Stakeholders
 - c. Procedures
5. Reports
 - a. REDD+ strategic study reports
 - b. Sector study reports
 - c. Study reports of technical partners
 - d. Reports on the consultations by stakeholders
6. Documents on the national process
 - a. National strategy
 - i. Drafts
 - ii. Final version
 - iii. TAP comments
 - iv. Cameroon responses to the TAP
 - b. Consultation plans
 - c. Communication strategy and plan
 - d. World Bank/FCPF reports on the process progress
 - e. Letters of intent
 - f. R-PIN
 - i. Draft
 - ii. Final version
 - iii. TAP comments
 - iv. Cameroon responses to the TAP
 - g. R-PP
 - i. Draft
 - ii. Final version
 - iii. TAP comments
 - iv. Cameroon responses to the TAP
 - h. ER-PIN
 - i. Draft
 - ii. Final version
 - iii. TAP comments
 - iv. Cameroon responses to the TAP



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