




# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

OF COMMUNITIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS



INFORMATION DOCUMENT FOR STAKEHOLDERS OF THE FOREST SECTOR



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
ACRONYMS	6
FOREWORD	7
INTRODUCTION	8
OBJECTIVE OF THE DOCUMENT	9
<b>The different rights recognized to communities by the forest legislation</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A . Communities' rights on forest resources</b>	<b>9</b>
1. Rights of use	9
2. Pre-emption right	11
3. Right to the management of a community forest and to free technical assistance	11
4. Right to benefits sharing from logging	11
<b>B .Rights related to relationships between local populations and logging companies</b>	<b>12</b>
1. Right to information	12
2. Right to participate to the development of forest management plans, laws and programmes	13
3. Right to employment	13
4. Right to benefits sharing from logging	14
<b>II . What is required to ensure the implementation of the rights provided for by the law ?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>A . Get organised to be efficient</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B . Empowering oneself for a proper monitoring of the management of revenues from logging and the respect of their rights</b>	<b>19</b>
1. The amount of revenues earmarked for communities and their management terms	19
2. The composition and functioning of resident committees and council committees as well as the role of their representatives	19
3. Types of projects which can be carried out with revenues earmarked for communities	20
4. Types of requests made to logging companies	21
COCONCLUSION	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
INDICATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY	24

## ACRONYMES

ART :	Article
CC :	Council Committee for the management of forest and wildlife revenues
CIG :	Common Initiative Groups
CNPS:	National Social Insurance Fund
COMIFAC :	Commission of Central African Forest
CPF :	Forest Peasant Committee
CSO :	Civil Society Organization
EU :	European Union
FMU :	Forest Management Unit
FODER :	Forêts et Développement Rural
MINATD :	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation
MINFI :	Ministry of Finance
MINFOF :	Ministry of Forests and Wildlife
Par. :	Paragraph
REDD+:	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, including enhancing forest carbon stocks through conservation and plantations
RFA :	Annual Forest Royalty
SMP :	Simple Management Plan
UNFCCC:	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VPA-FLEGT:	Voluntary Partnership Agreement - Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
VFMC:	Village forest management committee

## FOREWORD

Community participation in forest management, rightly considered as a key element in the conservation of tropical forests on earth, is practised for decades. In Cameroon, just like everywhere else in most countries of the Congo Basin, community participation in the management of forest resources has extended across the board since the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro. In fact, the participation of rural communities living in forest areas is one of the main objectives of forest reforms established in the wake of this summit. However, one should acknowledge that, twenty years after these reforms, the results of effective participation of the said communities are still very low.

Several communities have little or no knowledge on their rights and responsibilities in the management of forests in Cameroon. This management is inevitably related to the realities of individual and collective human rights, for it affects the life of communities living in affected forest areas. It is in this light that, FODER, through the project “Tackling deforestation through linking REDD+ and FLEGT» (LFR Project) and, based on an extensive work on data collection, has taken the initiative in this document to present a compendium of rights and responsibilities attributed to forest dwelling communities.

The promotion of communities’ rights and responsibilities is one of the important components under forest governance, notably in the information and law enforcement components. It is a prerequisite and a relevant factor for the respect of the said rights, insofar as in the Congo Basin and

especially in Cameroon, the participation and the actual consideration of the rights of forest communities in forest management are still low or not monitored by competent administrations. Therefore, it is important to empower communities for a better participation in forest management and knowledge of their rights, for them to be able to request for their enforcement.

A real guide for communities, this document underscores among others that effective forest management requires highlighting the right to information, to participation and to benefits sharing from logging, citizen monitoring right and duty, with respect to public action, and the right of denunciation, among others. This document also presents legal provisions that shall govern the communities’ rights in relation to forest management. These provisions can be a reference for communities for a better understanding of forest regulations and VPA-FLEGT. The relevant communities, apart from having a better mastery of their rights and responsibilities through the compendium incorporated in this document, shall also, in the second part of this work, know the procedures to follow to have their rights as laid down by the Law be implemented and respected by logging companies as well as State agents.

Sébastien TCHEBAYOU

## INTRODUCTION

Cameroon's forestry policy and legislation establish community participation in forest management as one of the important components of forest governance. In addition to curbing poverty in rural areas, the participation of local populations in forest management aims at promoting environmental democracy and sustainable development. The principle of the participation of local and indigenous populations in the development process and in the management of forest resources started gaining significance in the 80s, with the integration of the notion of decentralisation and recognition of local competency. In the early 90s, it progressively evolved to reach periods of greater promotion of local community participation in the management and in discussions on local public policy. This is how since the 92s<sup>1</sup>, the consideration of local community participation in the management of forest resources has progressively asserted itself and was formalized in the forest policy and the 1994 forests and wildlife Law. It is also established by all international legal instruments ratified by Cameroon<sup>2</sup> and applicable to the forest-environment sector.

Consequently, procedural and substantial rights as well as responsibilities in the management of forests are attributed to local communities. The importance of the application and respect of these rights is all the more urgent as studies show that one of the causes and environmental issues faced on this planet is the poor, and even bad governance of natural resources

exacerbated by non-sustainable uses of the said resources. To address these combined factors, the international community has established two mechanisms aimed at improving forest governance for the reduction of deforestation and forest degradation, namely the FLEGT<sup>3</sup> action plan, which was established by the European Union, and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), established within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change.

In effect, these two processes in which Cameroon is involved, focus on legality and therefore reinforce the requirement of respecting community rights as an element of legality. Yet, the respect of the rights attributed to communities passes through the knowledge of these rights by the said communities and other stakeholders. Hence, the relevance of this document which intends providing communities in priority as well as the other stakeholders of the forest sector with the necessary capacities for a better consideration of communities, through the respect of their rights; for it is true that the applicable legislation in the forest sector recognises and organizes a diversity of rights (I) and its respect requires adequate capacities and commitment from the communities (II).

<sup>1</sup>Summit of Rio  
<sup>2</sup>Case of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Partnership Agreement between Cameroon and the European Union on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade in timber and timber

products (VPA-FLEGT) and guidelines of Commission of Central African Forest (COMIFAC), etc.

<sup>3</sup>Forest law enforcement, governance and trade

## OBJECTIVE OF THE DOCUMENT

The objective of this document is to fill the gap of the knowledge of the rights and role of local communities in relation to forest management.

Specifically, this involves:

1. Extracting from the legal framework applicable to the forest sector, the rights attributed to local communities in relation to the social obligations of logging companies;
2. Shedding light on favourable measures for the involvement of local communities in forest management, including their duties;

3. Equipping local communities with tools allowing the improvement of their relationships with logging companies and their involvement in the monitoring of the implementation of VPA-FLEGT;
4. Building the capacities of local communities to enable them to participate more effectively in forest management;
5. Equip local and indigenous communities to ask for more accountability from local stakeholders, for the improvement of forest governance and thus, their livelihood thereof.

## I. THE DIFFERENT RIGHTS RECOGNIZED TO COMMUNITIES BY THE FOREST LEGISLATION

Forest legislation recognises and organises two categories of community rights, namely the rights on forest resources (A) and the rights derived from the relationships between local populations and logging companies (B).

### A. Community rights on forest resources

If the Government has the right to manage the national forest heritage, the legal framework applicable to forests recognises and devolves some rights to local populations on forest resources among which are rights of use (1), pre-emption rights (2), the right to manage forest and wildlife resources (3), the right to the 10 categories of forest information provided for in Annex 7 of VPA-FLEGT;

#### 1. Rights of use

The right of use is the right recognised to bordering communities to sustainably exploit all forest and wildlife products for personal use, except for protected species<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, exercising rights of use is restricted to personal use. The table below summarises what is authorized and what is prohibited with regard to non-timber forest products, wildlife products (animals) and products designed for needs in building timber and firewood



<sup>4</sup>Article 8 of the Forest Law of 20 January 1994

**Table: Community forest rights: What is authorized and what is prohibited**

Community forest rights	
What is authorized	What is prohibited
<b>Concerning non-timber forest products<sup>5</sup> (NTFPs) collected for personal use</b>	
Non-timber forest products collected for personal use by communities are: barks, rattans, bamboos, roots, wild fruit, various tubercles collected in the forest by communities; Forest products harvested for personal use can be sold either in camps or by displaying them along paths in very small quantities.	Large-scale marketing of these products is prohibited
<b>Concerning wildlife products</b>	
Wildlife products (animals) are made up of all animals whose hunting is authorized <sup>6</sup> (animal of category C)	The marketing of products from hunting is prohibited <sup>7</sup> ; Hunting of protected animals is prohibited (Animals of B and A categories)
Traditional hunting is in principle authorized throughout the territory	Traditional hunting is prohibited in forests dedicated for wildlife conservation, in the permanent forest domain of the State, and the property of third parties <sup>8</sup>
Traditional hunting is carried out with tools made from materials from plant origin <sup>9</sup>	Hunting methods such as: chasing, approaching and shooting using a motor vehicle; night hunting, including hunting using headlights, headlamps and all lighting tools in general; hunting using drugs, poisoned baits, anaesthetic weapons and explosives; hunting through non-traditional engines, hunting using fire <sup>10</sup> , are prohibited
<b>Concerning needs in building timber or firewood</b>	
Neighbouring populations to the forest of the national domain can, for their needs in firewood and building timber, cut a quantity of trees corresponding to these needs	The marketing of trees cut for construction needs or firewood needs is prohibited

Note: In reserved forests, that is, belonging to the State, the forest reservation act recognises to the populations the right to continue to exercise their rights of use. Specific rights of use are laid down during the drafting of forest management plans. However, some activities may be inconsistent with forest. In this case, what is authorized or not is specified in the said forest management plan.

<sup>5</sup>: CThese are products other than wood

<sup>6</sup>These are animals like Blue duikers (hare), brush-tailed (porcupines), hedgehogs, palm rats, etc.

<sup>7</sup>Article 24 paragraph 3 of the Decree of 20 July 1995 to lay down modalities for the application of wildlife regime

<sup>8</sup>Article 86 of the Forest Law of 20 January 1994

<sup>9</sup>Article 2 of the Decree of 20 July 1995 to lay down modalities for the application of wildlife regime

<sup>10</sup>Article 80 of the Forest Law of 20 January 1994



## 2. Pre-emption right

Pre-emption is the right to purchase in preference to others. The Law recognises this right to village communities in case of the sales of natural products in their forests<sup>11</sup> ; these products essentially consist of timber forest products (wood) and non-timber forest products, as well as wildlife and fishing resources (like fish) drawn from forest.

Order No. 0518/MINEF/CAB of 21 December 2001 lays down the procedures for allocating in preference to neighbouring village communities to any forest likely to become a community forest.

## 3. Right to the management of a community forest and to free technical assistance

Forests found at the periphery or near one or several communities and in which the latter carry out their activities can be attributed as community forest(s) to the nearest community(ies) which request for it.

Given that the communities are not forestry technicians, they have the right to free technical assistance from the forest

<sup>11</sup>: Art. 37 Par.4, Law of 1994

administration. This assistance should be provided by the head of forestry and hunting post.

## 4. Right to benefits sharing from logging activities

Le Forest law makes benefits sharing one of the components of the participative and sustainable management of forests. There are various mechanisms for benefits sharing organized by forest regulation. These sharing mechanisms are related to revenues from logging or wildlife resources.

The sharing of benefits from the angle of community rights on forest resources, re-



lates to the right to a fair and equitable compensation. In effect, when populations' rights of use are suspended or restricted due to the reservation of a forest, these populations benefit from a compensation that can be in the form of a financial contribution or socio-economic works (community's house, land, community projects identified by the community and approved by the administration and/or the logging company).

The right to benefits sharing is in the middle between rights recognised to communities on resources and rights related to the relationships with logging companies.

## B. Rights related to relationships between local populations and forestry companies

Community rights stemming from the presence of logging activities in their locality are numerous.

### 1. Right to information

Community access to information is a right recognized by the Framework Law No. 96/12 of 5 August 1996 on environmental management and forest law. Information access is a key element for improving forest management and community participation. In effect, under Article 9 of the Framework Law of 1996 relating to environmental management, every citizen should have access to information on environment. The same article states that decisions regarding the environment should be taken after consultation with sectors of the activity or groups concerned, or after public discussion when they have a general scope<sup>12</sup>.

Therefore, local populations have the right to be informed, before the launching of logging activities, of a forest title granted for

a site to which they are neighbour and on which they have rights of use.

In addition, they should be informed of the social and environmental impacts of logging projects which concern or affect them. Populations have the right to obtain publication of information relating among others to revenues from community and council forests, to the amounts of stumpage fees and annual forest fees paid to the benefit of the community and Municipality as well as management reports of the said revenues, simple management plans, annual operation plans, etc.

Populations can access information in two ways: either those voluntarily communicated by the administration in the public domain, or by requesting it from stakeholders who hold the information, namely the Post Head, the Divisional Delegate, the Mayor, the Municipal Counsellors, company managers, representatives of the communities within the Forest Peasant Committee (CPF) or the Resident Management Committee, the local organizations, etc. In all cases, communities have the right to various information contained in Annex VII of VPA-FLEGT<sup>13</sup> related to published information



<sup>12</sup>: When it is not specific to an individual and rather affects one or more groups of individuals

<sup>13</sup>Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Cameroon on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and derived products to the European Union

### 2. Right to participate to the development of forest management plans, laws and programmes



The Forest Law recognises the right to participate in decision-making on forests<sup>14</sup> to local populations.

Similarly, the instrument establishing Forest Peasant Committees (CPF) gives them the right and responsibility to participate in the development of forest management plans. Therefore, members of CPF are directly involved in all the steps of the drafting of management plans. They should closely collaborate during investigations to conduct the socio-economic survey. Hence, they participate in:

- ◆ Conducting the socio-economic survey;
- ◆ Delimiting the different areas for current or potential uses of forests;
- ◆ Defining protective measures of the environment, and preservation measures of forest biodiversity;
- ◆ Choosing the establishments of industrial projects (eventually) or others which could be interested in the area;
- ◆ Defining and regulating forest rights consistent with the development objectives.

Similarly, they give their reasoned opinions on management plans of the forest and can be called to carry out or organize some work regarding the delimitation of forests allocated

### 3. Right to employment

Local populations have the right to be recruited in priority in logging companies when they have required skills. Populations recruited by a forest company enjoy all rights laid down by the laws related to labour, social security as well as collective conventions of the timber sector.

The logging company should then give them a written work contract specifying the salary they will earn, the task to accomplish, the duration of the work and responsibilities thereof. The work contract is drawn in two copies and one of it is handed to the persons recruited. In addition, the company has the duty of training them so they are more performant in their work (right to professional training). The company should provide them with social security by registering them with CNPS (National Social Insurance Fund) and regularly paying social contributions taken from their salaries. They have the right to rest on weekends and to annual paid holidays. They also have the right to security, hygiene and occupational health.



<sup>14</sup> Article 8 par. 2 of the forest law and Article 5 of Decree of 23 August 1995 to lay down modalities for the application of forest law of 20 January 1994



#### 4. Right to benefits sharing from logging

ToAny operator of forest products should sign with the administration a book of specifications. These specifications include general and special conditions. Special conditions include financial charges as well as those related to setting-up industries and social works such as roads, bridges, health centres, schools, for the neighbouring populations<sup>15</sup>. The main revenues from logging which are redeployed for the benefit of councils and local communities are: Annual Forest Royalty (RFA), contribution to the achievement of social works, communal forest revenues, wood recovery permit tax, revenues from community forest logging, lease taxes on hunting areas located in forest concessions, and/or protected areas, as well as other revenues from incidental taxation (e.g. FCFA 1000/m<sup>3</sup> of timber exploited in sales for standing volume)<sup>16</sup>

##### a. Annual Forest Royalty (RFA)

Until December 2014, the RFA was shared between the State (50%), councils (40%) and neighbouring local communities (10%). However, the Finance Law of 2015 suppressed the 10% of annual forest royalty to be paid to communities<sup>17</sup>. It should be noted that this provision suppresses the proportion that was specifically intended for local communities to carry out community development projects, Order No. 076 MINATD/MINFI/MINFOF of 26 June 2012 specifies that the proportion of revenues earmarked for municipalities should be allocated by 30% maximum to the operating budget of the municipality and 70% minimum should be for investments, including projects identified in the Communal Development Plan (PCD). Therefore, it is in the interest of communities to be informed on the management of these revenues.

<sup>17</sup>: New article 243 of 2015 Finance Law provides that the product of Annual Forest Royalty is shared as follows: - State..... 50%; - Communes..... 50%

<sup>15</sup> Article 61 par. 3 of the Forest Law of 20 January 1994  
<sup>16</sup>Circular Letter No. 3/70/LC/MINEF/Cab of February 1996



##### b. Contribution to the achievement of social works

According to article 68 par. 2 of 1994 Forest Law, a part of revenues derived from the sales of forest products should be paid to neighbouring village communities of some forests of the national domain for development purposes. This contribution to the achievement of social works is paid in full to relevant municipalities which can only use them to carry out development projects identified by beneficiary communities<sup>18</sup>.

Contribution to the achievement of social works is defined in the specifications of contracts or in management plans approved by the administration in charge of Forests. However, the commitments of logging companies for the contribution to local development should be discussed and negotiated with local populations during information or consultation meetings prior to the reservation of the forest concession and the launching of logging activities. These are the commitments that are included in the specifications of the final

convention and/or the minutes of the information meeting (PVRI).

Regarding the sales of standing volume in the national domain, the contribution for the achievement of social works is FCFA 1000/m<sup>3</sup> of timber felt. The operator pays this contribution to the municipality of the area where the forest is located. The municipality should use the funds received to carry out socio-economic infrastructure for the benefit of neighbouring communities to the site of the standing volume.

##### c - Revenues from communal forests

Revenues derived from the logging of communal forests are the overall revenues derived from logging activities in the forests belonging to municipalities. These revenues are shared between municipalities and local communities as follows: 30% for the achievement of development infrastructure designed for local communities and 70% for development actions in the entire jurisdiction of the municipality.

<sup>18</sup>:Article 68 par. 3 of the Law of 20 January 1994 to lay down the regime of forests





#### **d - Wood recovery permit tax**

Wood recovery following a development project results in wood recovery permit tax by the municipality. Article 113 of Law of 15 December 2009 on local taxation states that «The salvaging of products from non-communal and non-community forests shall entail, save otherwise provided for, payment of a compensatory contribution to the council of the locality, known as tax on salvaged products. The tax on salvaged products shall be paid by the owner of the salvaged products to the tune of 2 000 francs per m3.”

This tax is shared in the Joint Order between the council and communities as follows: 30% for the achievement of development infrastructure designed for neighbouring village communities and 70% for the councils concerned by forest for development actions in the whole jurisdiction of the council, including operating cost.

#### **e - Revenues derived from logging in community forests**

The community forest belongs to the community. As a result, the revenue from products derived from this forest totally (100%) goes to the community<sup>19</sup>.

Article 7 of the Joint Order states that: Revenues from community forests are devolved at 100% to relevant communities. They are managed by the bureau of the relevant legal entity and used in accordance with the provisions of the simple management plans of these forests.

#### **f - Lease taxes on hunting areas found in forest concessions, and/or protected areas**

The lease tax is an amount of money paid every year to the State as fees for leasing an area. Persons who manage or use an area reserved for hunting pay this amount. A part of the amount is for local communities as provided for in the law. Article 8 of the Joint Order provides that: shares of the lease tax on hunting areas include: 40% for relevant municipalities and 10% for neighbouring village communities.

From the foregoing, it appears that forest regulation provides many rights for communities. It is therefore up to these communities to integrate and get the most out of them

## **II.WHAT IS REQUIRED TO ENSURE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS PROVIDED FOR BY THE LAW?**

The implementation of rights granted to local populations by the law requires a proactive attitude from the main beneficiaries - local and indigenous communities - to move from mere spectators of forest management to that of stakeholders. This attitude depends on a dual approach including the community-building necessary for an effective involvement in forest management on the one hand (A) and, sufficient capacities to demand the respect of these rights and demand for more



accountability of the other stakeholders on the other hand (B).

### **A.Get organized to be efficient**



The term «community» in its general sense can be defined as a group of persons with a common interest. It is also, as concerns local neighbouring communities, a group of residents of a town having, except for their other fellow citizens, some rights they enjoy together, that is, as one. Although

a human group, local communities are not legal entities, that is, they are not considered as subjects of law per se. As a result, not only do dishonest actors capture the rights recognised to communities but also the representativeness of these communities is a difficult issue, though a guarantee of effective participation

Since the community is not a legal entity, it is generally represented at the administrative level by traditional rulers which are at the same time custodians of cultural values and auxiliaries of the administration. The forest law establishes various structures to represent communities and to serve as a consultative framework ensuring their participation in forest management. This includes the Forest Peasant Committees, village forest management committees, information meetings also called «palaver meeting».

19: article 68 par. 3 of the Law of 20 January 1994 to lay down the regime of forests



To effectively use these frameworks, it is important for community members to agree on their priorities and interests as well as organizing themselves to choose credible persons who can properly represent them, that is, persons who:

- ◆ are motivated by the interest of the community and not their personal interest;
- ◆ speak on behalf of and in the name of the community;
- ◆ are ready to account for their actions to the community;
- ◆ able to share information;
- ◆ morally honest and have integrity;
- ◆ etc.

Community leaders and/or village chiefs should be able to establish mechanisms for communities to identify in a participatory manner their needs and interests they will submit to other actors. This can be done during meetings with youths, women and elders, etc. The decisions of these meetings must be forwarded to the representatives and harmonised so they can be presented and defended before the other community members

It is important for the representatives of communities to know how to negotiate

with other actors and to ensure that the commitments taken by those actors are properly recorded. Particularly, it means ensuring that:

- ◆ Commitments are properly recorded in the minutes of meeting;
- ◆ Promises are quantified and recorded in a specific time frame. For example «the company accepts to build such number of boreholes in the village during this number of years».

Moreover, it is important for communities to ask things that really contribute to the development of their locality. For this purpose, they should know the types of works that can be financed with the revenues from the logging activities intended for the communities.

To accomplish this, it is highly necessary for communities to have a local or community development plan beforehand to ensure that the financial benefits of logging activities will have a positive effect on local development and will contribute to reduce effectively the poverty level.

The local or community development plan will also help communities to track the management of forest incomes earmarked for them.



### ***B. Empowering oneself for a proper monitoring of the management of revenues from logging and the respect of their rights.***

Communities should know their rights related to forest management and how to exercise them in order to take advantage of them as well as request their implementation. For this purpose, the following set of information is important for communities:

#### ***1 -The amount of revenues earmarked for communities and their management terms***

This amount enables communities not only to identify and plan projects in a realistic way by taking into account available funds, but also to monitor the management of these incomes with their representatives and local elected representatives.



20: It is a voting system where the citizen chooses one candidate among many and the candidate who has more votes wins.

Portions of revenues from the forest and wildlife activity allotted to communities and managed by the localization council, are allocated at 20% maximum for the functioning of the resident committee and 80% minimum for the implementation of social and economic infrastructure of the said communities. The revenues from the community forests are also allocated at 10% maximum to the functioning of the legal entity concerned and 90% minimum to the delivery of projects listed in the Simple Management Plan (SMP).

#### ***2 -The composition and functioning of resident committees and council committees as well as the role of their representatives***

Members of Village forest management committee are chosen for a period of two (2) years renewable by consensus or on first-past-the post<sup>20</sup>, during village meetings or consultations preceding the establishment of the resident Committee, chaired by the Sub-Divisional Officer. The composition of the resident committee for revenue management as provided for by joint decision N°076 is as follows:

- ◆ **Chairperson:** Personality elected by communities concerned;
- ◆ **Vice- Chairperson:** A traditional ruler elected by his peers;
- ◆ **A Rapporteur:** A municipal councillor, elected and native of the locality;
- ◆ **The Local Tax Officer** of the localization council;

**Members:**

- ◆ One(1) representative per neighbouring village concerned;
- ◆ One (1) representative of indigenous populations;
- ◆ The local representative of the administration in charge of forests and wildlife;
- ◆ The chairpersons of legal entities (Associations, CIGs, Cooperatives...) in charge of community forest management.

These persons meet at least twice (02) a year.

The Council Committee is composed as follows:

- ◆ **Chairperson:** the Mayor of the municipality concerned.
- ◆ **Vice chairperson:** A representative elected by neighbouring village communities concerned.
- ◆ **Rapporteur:** the president of the Commission in charge of the social or infrastructure development of the Municipal Council;
- ◆ **Members:**
- ◆ The chairman of the Finance Commission of the Municipal Council concerned
- ◆ The relevant Local Tax Officer;
- ◆ One(1) representative of traditional rulers elected by his peers;

- ◆ Three(3) representatives of the concerned village communities elected by their peers, who are not members of the municipal council;
- ◆ The relevant entrepreneurs beneficiaries of logging titles or local representatives of administrations in charge of forests, wildlife and finances, participate in working sessions of the Municipal Committee in a consultative capacity, that is, they can share their opinion. Other members have voting rights i.e. they can vote.

Note: Five members out of nine are representatives of communities namely the vice chairperson, the representative of traditional rulers and the three representatives of the communities. This means that if the representatives of communities all agree, no project or decision against the interests of communities can be adopted. To this end, it is necessary that these representatives be properly chosen.

The municipal Committee shall legitimately deliberate when at least half of its members are present, and its decisions are taken by a simple majority of votes. The term of office of members of municipal committee shall be two (2) years and renewable once (1).

**3 - Types of projects which can be carried out with incomes earmarked for communities**

Projects and plans of works of neighbouring communities, which can be financed with the incomes of logging industry, include:

- ◆ Village water supply;
- ◆ Rural electrification;
- ◆ The building and/or the maintenance of roads, bridges, handicraft works or sport equipment;

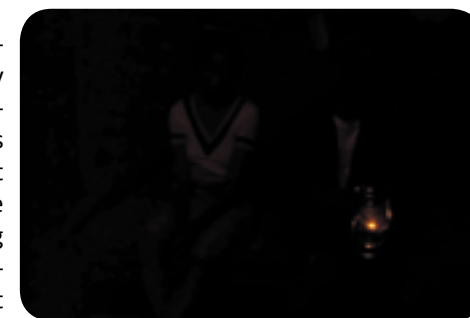
- ◆ The building, maintenance and /or the equipment of schools or health institutions;
- ◆ Drug procurement;
- ◆ Reforestation and protection of wildlife resources;
- ◆ Any other social or economic works, of community interest, decided by each community itself.

**4 - Types of requests made to logging companies**

Practically, it should be noted that the requests of the local populations to forestry companies or the donations of these companies to communities consist of foodstuffs and alcoholic drinks or projects that do not have a general interest or do not contribute to community development. The following community-based requests that have a potentially important impact on development can be submitted to loggers.



1 - Water supply



2 - Rural electrification



3 - Building and/or maintenance of roads, bridges, handicraft works or sport equipment



4 - Building, maintenance and /or equipment of schools or health institutions;





## CONCLUSION

The populations have several rights the implementation of which remains poor because they are not properly mastered by them and their level of access to information is low.

Cameroon VPA-FLEGT through Annex VII on published information intends to alleviate low transparency in the forest sector. Despite efforts made to make public forest-related information, namely through the creation of a web page dedicated to VPA-FLEGT on the website of the MINFOF, several categories of information, including those enabling communities to know and exercise their rights, are not yet published. These are development plans and specifications of contracts, among others, which include measures on the rela-

tionships between logging companies and communities.

Moreover, it is necessary to highlight that the decision taken by the government to cancel 10% of the annual forest fees allocated to communities should be deplored because councils do not always use the revenues from RFA for socio-economic infrastructure intended to neighbouring communities. In addition, the proportion of RFA earmarked for the communities contributes, not only to promote local democracy and environmental justice, but is also an incentive for the sustainable management of forest resources, and training for communities as concerns community management of public funds.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve the implementation of community rights related to forest management, the following recommendations are formulated.

### *With regard to public authorities and councils:*

- ◆ Increased efforts in communicating or advertising on the management accounts of revenues from logging activities. A communication similar to that of electoral campaign would be very pleasant and conducive for transparency, and consequently for improved governance of the forest resources;
- ◆ Greater efforts in the consultation and participation of local communities in the management of revenues generated by logging activities, this will increase their participation in revenue management;
- ◆ The development of models of specifications and minutes of information meetings (PVRI) so they contain clear, measurable commitments that can be assessed in quality, quantity and over time; It will be convenient to harmonise these models throughout the country.

### *Regarding local communities:*

- ◆ Inform, train and organize themselves for a better application and respect of their rights;
- ◆ Identify CSOs and other stakeholders which can give them the right support not motivated by interest, in the promotion of their rights and the negotiation of the «social provisions of specifications concerning forest companies», and request for their technical as well

as legal support and assistance, if required.

- ◆ Ask their representatives, local elected representatives as well as logging companies to account for the implementation of their commitments in relation to them and the consideration of their needs in their actions and projects

### *Concerning local and national civil society organisations:*

- ◆ Vary and innovate in information and training tools for communities relating to their rights and duties in forest resources management;
- ◆ Build the capacities of communities so that they can better structure themselves and make their voices heard at the local and national level through non-violent influence strategies;
- ◆ Advocate for the effective implementation of the rights of the community as well as their full participation in forest resources management

### *As concerns forestry companies:*

- ◆ Equal importance should be given to the respect of social obligations as well as technical and administrative obligations;
- ◆ Improve their relationships with communities because corporate social responsibility is a requirement for the marketplace and much more a «prestigious brand» which enhances their image and competitiveness;
- ◆ Write down their social commitments towards communities, because it is a «social mission statement», security stakes of which, for communities bordering forests, are high.

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