

REDD+ Proponents Want Texts On Benefits Sharing Reviewed



Stakeholders Of REDD+-VPAs-FLEGT Working Team

Stakeholders working under the banner of the REDD+ process and the VPAs-FLEGT mechanism, have expressed the need for a revision of the current texts on access to benefits sharing from the exploitation of natural resources in Cameroon.

The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest, REDD+ process are efforts aimed at conserving the forests within the framework of the Climate Change Convention. On the other hand, the European Union initiated Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, FLEGT mechanism, is geared at ensuring that only timber from legal sources enters the European markets. Some 13 areas of synergy grouped into three between the two programmes have been identified, reason why the REDD+ and VPAs-FLEGT stakeholders are working together in order to mutually benefit from each other. Meanwhile, the issue of benefits sharing came up at a REDD+/VPAs-FLEGT capacity building training workshop in Mbalmayo, Nyong and So'o Division of the Centre Region on September 18 and 19, 2014.

It was triggered following a presentation by Dr. Haman Unusa of the National Coordination of REDD+ in the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, MINEPDED. The presentation was captioned: "Access to Natural Resources

through Benefits Sharing Options in Cameroon."

On forms of benefits from natural resources exploitation, he talked of financial and non-financial benefits that could be derived from such exploitation. "Non-financial benefits take many forms including Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), improved and access to biodiversity...Sharing of non-financial benefits is an extremely site specific process of discussion and negotiation..." he stated.

Dr. Haman revisited the various texts on access to benefits sharing from exploitation of natural resources in the country such as forest, mining and land royalties, noting that the issue is rather complicated because there is no law to ensure that the provisions of the texts are implemented to the letter.

He however mentioned joint decision No 00076/MINATD/MINFI/MINFOF of 26th June, 2012 fixing the modalities on the collection and redistribution of royalties emanating from the exploitation of forest and wildlife resources. "The AFR is re-allocated to the Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance, FEICOM," he added.

Haman said, for example, that going by the text, 20 percent of Annual Forest Royalties (AFR) is allocated to local councils where the activity is taking place while 20 percent goes to FEICOM. Ten percent is meant for the riveraine population.

For revenue from communal (council) forests, 30 percent is set aside for the realisation of local infrastructure while 70 percent goes to the local council to whom the forest was attributed. In regards to community forests, 10

percent is allocated for the daily running operations and 90 percent is invested in local projects. Concerning benefits accruing from hunting zones, 40 percent is meant for the local councils in the area while 10 percent goes to the local communities.

Quoting article 137 of the Mining Code, Dr. Haman said revenue gotten from the Value Added Tax (VAT) on the exploitation of the precious metals by industrial and artisanal miners, previews that 50 percent goes into the state treasury, 25 percent to the Department of Mining and Geology, 15 percent to the local council in the area and 10 percent to the riveraine population.

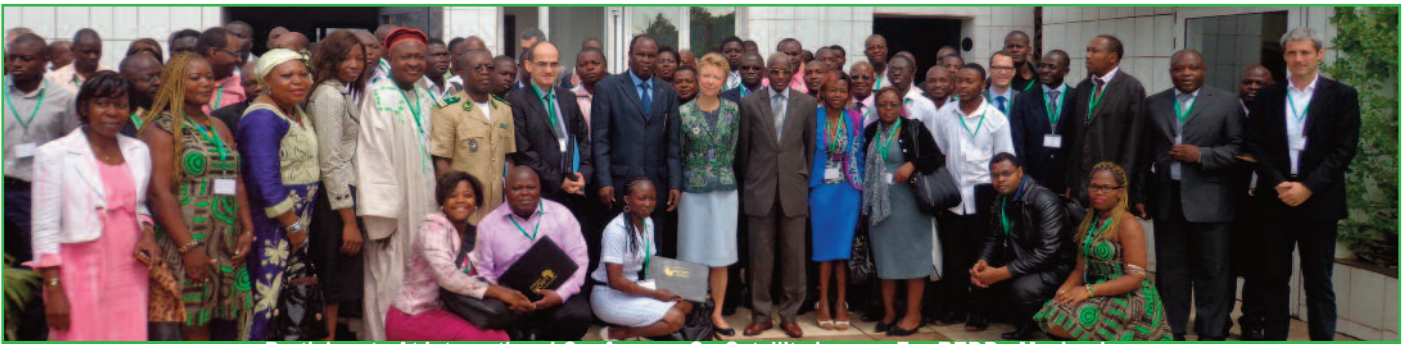
According to Haman and going by the 1974 land law and its 1976 text of application, 40 percent of revenue accruing from land taxes goes into the state treasury, 40 percent to the local councils and 20 percent to the local administration.

"These are the provisions of the texts but I don't know whether in reality it is what is being practised," Dr. Haman stated while opening the floor for debates that was moderated by Dr. Fouda Therese of the University of Dschang.

Most participants held that if the benefits were proportionately shared and its use strictly monitored, the local councils and the local population would have been better off than what is observed today. They called for a participatory revision of the texts especially the one concerning the forestry sector as prescribed by the national REDD+ strategy on access to benefits sharing.

They believe that for benefits sharing to have an impact on the lives of local councils and the population, a higher percentage should rather be allocated to these entities. It was noted that what is being paid for the exploitation of forest and hunting zones in Cameroon is very insignificant as compared to what obtains in other countries. It was also said in some countries, the state has nothing to do with revenue accruing from the REDD+ process. Other papers presented bordered on: "the valorisation of achievements of the VPAs/FLEGT; forest governance and communication; forest regulation: aspects relating to REDD+; REDD+ forest potentials in Cameroon; etc. Participants were drawn from government institutions, NGOs, civil society organisations, research institutions and development partners.

Satellite Images Worth FCFA 5.525 Billion For REDD+ Mechanism



Participants At International Conference On Satellite Images For REDD+ Mechanism

African countries of the Congo Basin including Cameroon, have received satellite images to enhance the REDD+ mechanism valued at FCFA 5.525 billion (8.5 million Euros) from the French government.

The revelation was in Yaounde on October 21 at the start of a three-day conference by the Minister of the Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, MINEPDED, Pierre Hele.

Participants at the international conference on the spatial observation by satellite of tropical forest in Central and West Africa were drawn from universities, research institutions, NGOs, Civil Society Organisations, technical services of ministries, consultancies, funding bodies, amongst others. It was placed under the theme: "From Forest Carbon, through Research to National REDD+ Strategies."

Stating that REDD+ stands for "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forests," Pierre Hele said by making available the satellite images to users, government is demonstrating its engagement within the framework of the REDD+ mechanism.

"Land observation through satellite images plays an important role in that it pricks our consciences on the fact that our industrial and agricultural activities affect our planet with negative consequences on man.

"Satellite images give a general view of landscapes but also gets into details of its transformation over time...Satellite observation data of land serves as a major tool in measuring past evolutions as well as in the follow-up of changes that affect the land," the MINEPDED boss told conference participants.

"France, through the French Development Agency funded the production and provision of the satellite images to the tune of 8.5 million Euros to countries of Central Africa in order to enable us prepare for future REDD+ mechanism," the Minister said.

The images acquired span from the

period 2010 and beyond. Archived images of the years 2000 and before were also provided.

"Spatial observation has been in use for a long time by professionals in the forest-environment sector who exploit it as a tool for planning and forest management, inventory works and forestry cartography..."

"The acquisition of new images [therefore] permits the update of information over time on the evolution of forest degradation and adaptation of environmental policy," Pierre Hele stated.

According to him, the provision of satellite images in Cameroon is a primordial source of information and its use is of added value in the putting in place of the Measure, Notification and Verification (MNV) system within the REDD+ mechanism. Hoping that results of specific activities of the research and REDD+ pilot projects would ensure technology transfer and capacity building of nationals, the

Minister said the outcome of the conference would improve public policy in the sustainable management of forests and the environment.

Speaking at the occasion, the French Ambassador to Cameroon, H.E. Christine Robichon, said the conference was holding ahead of the 21st Conference of Parties on Climate Change to be hosted by Paris towards the end of 2015. She said the tropical forest found in the Congo and Amazon Basins would be at the centre of discussions during the conference.

H.E. Robichon noted that forest degradation contributes about 10 percent of greenhouse gases emitted

into the atmosphere. "One of the challenges of the Paris conference would be the evaluation of the REDD+ mechanism. The satellite images and data on the forest constitute some of the essential tools to be used in the evaluation.

"Treated satellite data is advantageous in monitoring the forest and fostering discussions and accords on forest conservation and preservation. Providing satellite images and data is not enough but building capacities of the personnel on how best to exploit the information is what is paramount," the French

Ambassador stated while revealing that her government trained four experts on satellite imagery from the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, MINFOF, in 2014.

According to Robichon, keeping the forest intact to stem the negative effects of climate change is bequeathing a safer world for

future generations. "Efforts aimed at conserving the forest in the Congo and Amazon Basins would be assessed and encouraged at the 2015 Paris Conference," she told journalists.

Other speakers at the ceremony included the Director of the Research Institute for Development (IRD), Aude Lamendour, a representative of the National Geographic Institute France International and the Director of Forestry in MINFOF, Bruno Mfou'ou Mfou'ou.

The conference, marked by presentation of scientific papers, also witnessed the symbolic handing over of samples of the satellite images to government and diplomatic officials..



Nature Of Projects To Benefit From REDD+ Funding Outlined

The types of pilot projects legible for funding by the REDD+ mechanism in Cameroon have been highlighted. The field activities to be carried out must have one or a number of objectives that tie with the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest, REDD+ process.

This was the substance of a presentation on the "Validation System of REDD+ Pilot Projects in Cameroon," by Nguemadji Moussa Maxime, of REDD+ National Coordination. It was within the framework of a capacity building workshop for stakeholders of the REDD+ and the VPAs/FLEGT processes in Mbalmayo on September 18 and 19, 2014.

After defining key concepts such as REDD, degradation, deforestation and REDD+ which was adopted in August 2008 in Accra-Ghana during the Conference of Parties on Climate Change, Nguemadji narrowed down to the nature of pilot projects that could benefit from the REDD+ funding.

According to him, pilot projects that have objectives bordering on "reduction of deforestation; reduction of forests degradation; sustainable management of forests; increase of forestry carbon stocks and forests conservation, are likely to get REDD+ funding especially if such projects are developed in a participatory manner with the local population involved.

Nguemadji said the management of the REDD+ processes in Cameroon is assured by a Pilot Committee set up by arête No 103/CAB/PM of 13th June 2012 on the creation, organisation and functioning of the REDD+ Pilot Committee's activities signed by the Prime Minister. "Stakeholders of several categories notably the administration, the civil society, indigenous people, the private sector as well as elected local representatives are members of the committee," he stated.

On the missions of the pilot committee, it was stated that it has a technical secretariat that assures the coordination of the REDD+ processes. Nguemadji described the technical secretariat as the operational organ of REDD+ in Cameroon that guarantees the integration of REDD+ at the policy, national strategy and sectoral levels as well as other development and planning initiatives under the coordination of the pilot committee.

Going by the terms of the arête, the committee is charged with formulating policy proposals and strategies in regards to REDD+ initiatives; express opinions on the strategies of putting in place the REDD+ mechanism; elaborating criteria for the selection of projects with a view of submitting them for validation by the Ministry in charge of the Environment.

Evaluating and summing for approbation by the Ministry in charge of the Environment project ideas proposed by the promoters, validating the works and approving the action plan of the technical secretariat are some of the duties of the REDD+ Pilot Committee.

Presenting the selection criteria and validation procedures of the REDD+ pilot projects, Nguemadji revisited the Prime Ministerial arête noting that the Pilot Committee has the responsibility to study and validate the REDD+ pilot projects in the national territory.

All sorts of partners can be the promoters of the projects and as such the said pilot projects must be transmitted to the pilot committee. For such projects to be validated, the promoter must sequentially follow a series of procedures which include a Note of Identification of the Project (NIP) comprising the context, location, problematic of deforestation, presentation of strategic hypothesis option, plan for consultation of the population, funding plan and a calendar.

After this stage, the promoter then submits his NIP alongside administrative documents to the REDD+ Technical Secretariat for study. The Technical Secretariat has a maximum of 30 days to give its opinion. If the decision is favourable, MINEPDED then notifies the promoter of the authorisation to conduct a feasibility study, and the REDD+ Technical Secretariat, at its level, would designate somebody to follow-up the process and the activities.

The next move, Nguemadji explained, would be for the promoter to elaborate and submit the terms of reference for the feasibility study to the REDD+ Technical Secretariat that would give its opinion within a deadline of 15 days and notify the promoter. Outlining a number of items to feature in the terms of reference, he said the study would be validated and results restituted to the stakeholders.

The project document whose elaboration must be based on the report of the feasibility study would be transmitted to the REDD+ Technical Secretariat that would analyse and render an account to the Pilot Committee to take a decision. The Pilot Committee would validate the project based on the conformity of the project document to the legibility criteria.

The registration of the project in the REDD+ National Register by the Technical Secretariat, the implementation of the pilot project by the promoter, the transmission of quarterly technical and financial reports to the REDD+ Technical Secretariat, constitutes the next stage of the process.

Nguemadji told the participants that the views of the Pilot Committee are guided by the criteria that take into account the social, economic, environmental, political, strategic, technological and or methodological considerations.

Forestry Regulation Relating To REDD+

The ongoing review of the 1994 forestry, wildlife and fisheries law is taking into consideration aspirations of all stakeholders notably NGOs, indigenous people, associations, trade unions, etc.

Presenting highlights of the new text at the Mbalmayo capacity building workshop, Patrick Kanga, of the Department of Forestry in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, MINFOF, talked of the cooperation agreements ratified by Cameroon. He mentioned the United Nations conventions, treaty with COMIFAC, the VPAs/FLEGT, REDD+, CITES, etc as well as that with the Ministries of Finance and Land Tenure and Survey.

The new text, in a general manner, aims at achieving the forestry and wildlife policy where the integrated management, sustainable conservation of different ecosystems and the use of resources are assured. With particular focus on articles 28, 84 and 112, Kanga said due attention is

paid for creation or maintenance of forest cover when it is recognised as necessary for soil conservation, protection of water catchments, conservation of mangroves, regulation of water regime in basins as well for climatic regulation.

For conservation purposes, forest concessions to be attributed to a physical or moral person alone cannot go beyond 200 000 hectares. However, beneficiaries could regroup themselves in partnerships approved by the administration in charge of forests in order to benefit.

The review of the text, Kanga maintained, is aimed at fostering strict management and attainment of conservation objectives in some forest concessions with the end result being the optimisation of sequestration of carbon dioxide.

This is strengthened by article 112 which requires that physical or moral persons engaged in the transformation of forest products must submit to the administration in charge of the forest, annual statistical

data relating to its transformation activities in conformity with modalities outlined by the decree. "The non respect of this provision is subject to sanction as provided by article 190 of the present law," Kanga added.

Wood transformation units are also expected to valorise the waste emanating from their factories. The norms for valorisation as well as control and follow-up modalities are fixed by regulatory instruments. Reducing the rate at which wood is drawn from the forest and the consequent reduction in the destruction of forests, fosters the maintenance of carbon stock and continuity of sequestration of carbon dioxide.

Moves geared at the reduction of forest degradation through sustainable management, re-forestation, logging in strict respect of the environment and conservation activities are REDD+ forestry potentials in Cameroon. These pre-occupations fall within the framework of the REDD+ logic.

REDD+ & VPAs/FLEGT Would Mutually Benefit From Each Other – *Dr. Haman*

Dr. Haman Unusa of the National REDD+ Coordination Unit has said strong points of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest, REDD+ and the Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, FLEGT mechanism, will mutually benefit both processes.

He made the statement in an interview granted the REDD+/FLEGT Information Bulletin on the sidelines of the capacity building workshop of the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT team members on September 18 and 19, 2014 in Mbalmayo, Nyong and So'o Division of the Centre Region.

Dr. Haman also spoke on the road the REDD+ mechanism has covered so far including the validation of the country's Readiness Preparation Proposal, signing of a grant agreement with the World Bank, the setting up of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat, identification of domains of synergy between REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT processes, brainstorming on benefits sharing from exploitation of natural resources, etc. Excerpts:

REDD+/FLEGT Info: Dr. Haman thanks for accepting to talk to us. There has been a series of concertations and discussions as well as debates on the REDD+ mechanism in Cameroon. Where are we today with the process?

Dr. Haman: Thank you very much. Concerning the REDD+ process in Cameroon, we have actually advanced since the validation of our Readiness Preparation Proposal, RPP. In February 2013, we went further to sign a grant agreement with the World Bank and today, we have started implementing many of the activities especially the launching of the workshop on the elaboration of the National Strategy on REDD+ in Ebolowa.

After the launching workshop, we went on with other activities especially the putting in place of a Technical Secretariat. Recruitments are ongoing especially for the REDD+ Technical Secretariat. The Coordinator, the Chief of Programmes and the Senior Consultant are under the process of being recruited.

As far as studies are concerned, we have received non-objection from the World Bank to conduct some of the studies on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment of REDD+ projects. We have also elaborated most of the terms of references especially in the domain of deforestation and forest degradation.



Dr. Haman Unusa

The mechanisms of benefits sharing have had their terms of references elaborated also and we intend to get them approved by the World Bank. After this, we will then launch the recruitment of experts for studies to be conducted.

So, what exactly are REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT team members doing here in Mbalmayo?

For these two days of brainstorming in the workshop, we will be establishing the relationship between the Voluntary Partnership Agreements/ Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (VPAs/FLEGT) and the REDD+

mechanisms. We are trying to explore the domains of synergy of the two processes and if the domains are well identified, we will work on them and it will help enhance the collaboration between the REDD+ process and the VPAs/FLEGT mechanism as well. The bottom line of the two processes is forest conservation within the climate change framework and the mitigation of its adverse effects.

We are of the strong opinion that the VPAs/FLEGT process has some experiences that the REDD+ process can also capitalize on and benefit from and vice versa. So, this is the second workshop and we intend to organise two or three more to really go deep into these domains of synergy.

The issue of benefits sharing from the exploitation of natural resources has been very blurred in the minds of members of the public. Does it entail that resources generated from the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT processes would be shared out to the local communities?

Yes, it is intended that the REDD+ mechanism should benefit the local communities and enhance national development. This is because forest communities are dependent on the forest resources and if such resources are exploited, then it is expected that some benefits should go to these communities for their livelihood and development.

We have explored the existing benefits sharing mechanisms like royalties that accrue from the Annual Forest Revenue (AFR) as well as from the land, mining and hunting sectors and on how they are shared. We are very much interested in what benefits the local community. We think that we can also be inspired by these existing mechanisms during proposals for the REDD+ benefits sharing mechanism. To arrive at the REDD+ benefits sharing which will contribute to the elaboration of the National Strategy, we hope that it is going to be participative. It is even programmed that it should be participative. Consultations will be made in this direction and the final approach shall be approved by the stakeholders and it will then be integrated into the National Strategy of REDD+.