



Institutional Dynamics and Climate Change in the Congo Basin Forest of Cameroon, West Africa



Research Aim

The aim of this research is to examine the **perception** and **response to climate change** of the **institutions** (state, market and civil society) involved in the Congo Basin forest of Cameroon and also determine the **interactions** among institutions. It provides information on ways to increase **resilience** and **adaptive capacity** to respond to the complex challenges of climate change.

Research Rationale

Forests and Climate Change:

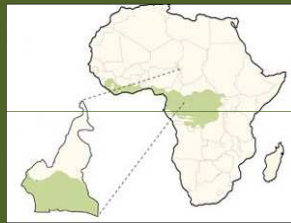
- Forests are expected to face significant pressure from climate change (IPCC 2007).
- The Congo Basin, the second largest rainforest in the world, is important for the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities and also the development of national economies (World Bank 2008).
- Tropical forests are an important sink and source of global carbon and an important part of international climate change negotiations (Bonan 2008).
- Payments for ecosystem services could contribute to multiple goals of climate change mitigation, forest conservation, economic development and poverty reduction (Streck et al 2008).
- These approaches present significant scientific and policy challenges in order to be effective, feasible and equitable for low-income communities (Streck et al 2008).
- Strengthening the institutional capacity of Congo Basin countries to adapt to the effects of climate change and its implications for forest policy is critical to reducing vulnerability in the pursuit of multiple sustainable outcomes.

Institutions, Vulnerability and Adaptation:

- Institutions of the state, market and civil society are determinants of collective security, vulnerability and environment and resource allocation (Adger 2000).
- Institutions and networks that learn and store knowledge and experience, create flexibility in problem solving and balance power among interest groups, play an important role in adaptive capacity (Tompkins & Adger, 2004).
- Institutions that fail to plan for changing environmental and policy conditions and risks, constrain adaptive capacity and increase vulnerability (Adger & Vincent, 2005).
- A significant factor influencing climate policies that are adopted is the way in which decision-makers perceive climate change (Koch et al 2007, Pielke, 1998).

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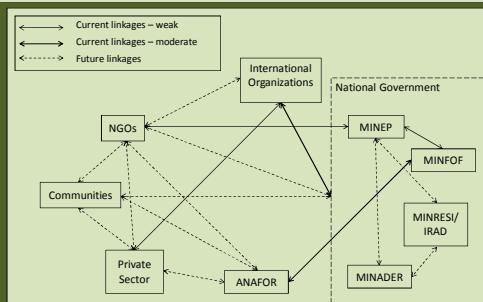
Research Findings

Perceptions of Climate Change

- Awareness of climate change is high, but many saw its implications as being in the long term.
- Some observed changes in variation in the arrival of rains which affect agricultural calendar and forestry operations.
- Many feel drier regions of country would be more affected but biodiversity of forest would also be affected.
- Many feel the poor will be disproportionately affected.
- Government and NGOs have great concern about the implications of international negotiations like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) for people of Cameroon.
- Many in government feel that international community should be ready to compensate developing countries for efforts in climate change mitigation.



Current and Future Inter-Institutional Linkages on Climate Change in Cameroon



ANAFOR: National Agency for Forest Development
 IRAD: Agricultural Research and Development Institute
 MINADER: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
 MINEP: Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection
 MINFOF: Ministry of Forests and Wildlife
 MINRES/IRAD: Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation
 NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

Methods

- Research was carried out within formal national, regional and international institutions chosen on the basis of their involvement in climate change or forest issues.
- Institutions included government ministries, a parastatal, 6 national and international forestry companies, 8 national and international NGOs, a regional organization, and 3 international organizations.
- Respondents were chosen because of their knowledge or involvement in climate change issues, or where active participation did not occur, their position exposed them to the issues in general terms.
- 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed (Patton 2002).
- Policy documents, strategies, and government statements were reviewed.
- A multi-level governance framework was used to analyze the relationships occurring among these different institutions (Keskitalo 2004).

Conclusions

- Concrete mitigation and adaptation responses are at a very early stage.
- Need to strengthen weak linkages between government departments and different levels of government and with NGOs and private industry on climate change.
- Local communities need to have a voice in discussions of international policies such as REDD, which could be facilitated by NGOs.
- Networking among institutions would facilitate learning on how to integrate a response to climate change with other national priorities of sustainable economic development, poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation.
- **Given the importance of the Congo Basin forest to the national economy and livelihoods of millions of local people, it is imperative that there be a coordinated response on climate change.**

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