



Collecting evidence of FLEGT-VPA impacts

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Cameroon country report



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Photo Credit: Tatiana Goetghebuer/ADE
Caption: On the road to Douala

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| ADE | Analysis for Economic Decisions (Consulting and Advisory Services) |
| CAPI-G | Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing in a Group |
| CIFOR | Center for International Forestry Research |
| CS | Civil society |
| CSO | Civil Society Organizations |
| DN | Don't know |
| EFI | European Forest Institute |
| EU | European Union |
| EUTR | European Union Timber Regulation |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FGD | Focus group discussion |
| FLEGT | Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade |
| FLEGT-AP | Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade Action Plan |
| FSC | Forest Stewardship Council |
| IP | Indigenous Peoples |
| JPIK | Independent Forest Monitoring Network |
| LCs | Local communities |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| PA | Public administration |
| PS | Private sector |
| RFA | Redevance Forestière Annuelle |
| SFM | Sustainable Forest Management |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprises |
| TLAS | Timber Legality Assurance System |
| US | United States |
| VPA | Voluntary Partnership Agreement |

1 Introduction

This initiative, financed by the FAO EU-FLEGT Programme, aimed to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence of the impacts of the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade – Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT-VPA) process to date, across a sample of three countries – Cameroon, Indonesia and Ghana. Results are intended to serve the communication needs of the European Commission (including Member States and the European Parliament), the EFI-FLEGT Facility, FAO-FLEGT and Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) countries, as well as international organizations and academia working on FLEGT.

By covering three countries in different stages of VPA implementation, this study will present findings and lessons at both a country and global level, outlining where possible the bigger picture of impacts of the VPA process. This is important as a VPA, while being a legally binding trade agreement, is contingent on thorough and lengthy reform processes in the country's forestry sector. Including three countries at different stages of implementation¹ while using the same tool (see Methodology) supports comparative analysis and insights into what stage of implementation a VPA shows the most impact. It could also be used as a baseline scenario should future assessment be repeated on the same countries.

Although impacts have already partly been analysed and documented through research studies and preliminary national impact monitoring systems, they are often scattered among various specific thematic and geographic areas. This study seeks to gather, assess and demonstrate, where possible, the impacts of FLEGT-VPAs in a comprehensive way, through engaging key experts and stakeholders involved in the VPA process, using a similar approach in all countries.

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and Analysis for Economic Decisions (ADE) research teams were in Cameroon between 29 March and 08 April to collect data.

This report will first briefly outline the methodology used², before outlining the sample of respondents and presenting results under three broad headings: Environment, Economy and Governance. Results are further categorized and presented according to grouped indicators.

This country report is an intermediary deliverable designed to feed the final synthesis report of the three countries. The report is not designed to be presented by the CIFOR/ADE team in-country, or to be distributed to a wider audience outside of the technical committee.

¹ At the time of research, Indonesia had received its FLEGT license, Ghana was close to receiving its license, while Cameroon was yet to implement the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS) system.

² A thorough methodology note was submitted to FAO (and may be available upon demand).

2 Methodology

Key takeaways

- Multifaceted stakeholder engagement to arrive at themes and sub-themes covered.
- Thorough desk review undertaken for each country to identify prevailing hypotheses.
- Questions formed around capturing VPA contribution to any perceived change.
- Mixed methodology data collection tool deployed, using quantitative and qualitative components.
- Positive respondent feedback received on the tool and format of interview.

To measure impact brought about by a VPA, a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology was developed. This was rolled out across each of the three countries, with slight contextual modifications made for each. The methodology was also designed to be replicable over time and applicable to other VPA countries as required.

The final data collection tool was developed and then deployed in Cameroon through **three main stages**: prioritising themes, reviewing the literature and interviewing key stakeholders. They are briefly described below.

2.1 Prioritising themes

In the **first** stage, we identified the four most relevant themes to cover during the study, which would also form the main sections of the questionnaire. We limited the study to four themes to allow greater depth of research as opposed to covering more themes at a shallow level. To identify these themes, two rounds of consultation took place:

2.1.1 Funder priorities

FAO/EFI identified three of the four key thematic areas for the study from a pre-provided list, based on internal interest areas.

2.1.2 Stakeholder priorities

The final thematic areas and then sub-themes within these four main themes were selected by pre-identified domestic experts from each of the three countries covered by the study and international experts (EU-FLEGT FAO/EFI), via an online survey. We selected those experts based on answers with the highest frequency. Desk review and development of indicators were guided by selected themes and sub-themes. The final four selected thematic areas are:

- sustainable forest management and forest conditions (environment)
- relation and development of the formal and informal forest sector (economic)
- jobs and employment (economic)
- law enforcement and compliance (governance).

While concentrating on these four selected themes, the study is covering most (not to say all) expected and non-expected impact dimensions of FLEGT-VPA through the many sub-themes. This was confirmed by many respondents who mentioned the survey tackled the most important issues and themes.

2.2 Desk review

The **second** stage was a thorough desk review per country. Stakeholders were consulted to ensure the most relevant literature was identified and processed (in particular, literature focusing on impacts within the four themes resulting from the VPA implementation process). This allowed us to

identify prevailing hypotheses on impacts that guided both questions to build indicators, and the data analysis because results could be substantiated against desk findings. The desk review also ensured the questionnaire could be tailored against differing country contexts and that questions were in line with the sorts of impact the VPA would be expected to bring about. This ultimately helped us to compare VPA expectations as found during the desk review against VPA progress and possible unintended effects.

The review included the following categories of documents:

- VPA annexes and documentation
- EU-FLEGT Facility and FAO EU-FLEGT reports (publicly accessible)
- Logging-off VPA updates (FERN)
- Selected academic papers based on specific literature recommendations from academic experts and CIFOR/EU country offices for each VPA country
- Impact monitoring documentation (indicator value and narratives) when made available in due time
- Evaluation of the EU-FLEGT Action Plan and annexes (TEREA, 2016).

A full list can be found in Annex I.

2.3 Interviewing key stakeholders

The **third** stage was rolling out the questionnaire, which had received multifaceted stakeholder inputs. It had to be structured around VPA impacts and tailored to the context of each participating country without losing the ability for cross-cutting analysis. A preselected sample of participants from the public administration, private, formal and informal sectors, civil society and local forest communities was invited to complete the questionnaire.

All respondents were asked to sign a consent form before beginning the interview. In line with CIFOR's Ethical Review applied to all projects, the agreement reminded respondents about the anonymous and confidential treatment of information provided in the survey. Respondent were also reminded they could stop answering at any time if they were uncomfortable with the questions. Lastly, by signing the consent form, respondents agreed to their responses being used in this assessment.

Total questionnaire time took between two and three hours, depending on levels of discussion and the number of participants. It was split into three approaches:

2.3.1 Common introductory presentation

A 15-minute introductory PowerPoint® presentation was shown to all participants. It touched upon the aim and scope of the assessment, the types of questions and answers that participants would find displayed on the tablets, as well as several slides with practical examples to illustrate the concept of "impact" and to agree on the meaning to be given to the various possible answers, e.g., from "very positive" to "very negative."

This is an important step because various participants from the same group of respondents, as well as from different groups, may have a different understanding of a "very positive" or "very negative" impact. Agreeing on the scale and on the meaning of various steps along the scale (e.g., "weak," "very weak," "strong," "very strong," etc.) provides the interviewing team and the respondents' group with a common language to be adopted while filling the questionnaire.

Such common language also allows for more meaningful cross-country comparisons, as a "very weak" impact in the case of Cameroon is very likely to resemble a "very weak" impact in the case of other countries.

2.3.2 Individual survey

The answers inputted directly into the tablet were designed to be individually completed using a Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing in a Group (CAPI-G®³) approach. These individual sections were constructed using close-ended, multiple choice or Likert scale questions (0–5, 0–3, 0–100%) to capture respondents' personal opinions, hence allowing **quantitative analysis**.

Questions were mostly designed to understand change trajectories, capturing the respondents' opinion on the current situation status within the different themes and sub-themes, their perception of the situation prior to VPA ratification (recall), and then their opinion on the feasible contribution of the

3 ADE designed this data collection approach, which has been proven efficient and reliable in previous studies.

VPA to any perceived (no-)change. Other questions were statement assessments, which either asked a respondent to select their agreement level on a statement using a scale of 1–5 or to select which statement they most agreed with.

2.3.3 Focus group discussion

The individual questionnaire was broken up by pauses at the end of each theme, during which participants could share their opinion on the previous section in more detail, providing **qualitative measures of change** and specific examples. This anecdotal evidence allowed us to better explain findings contained in this report, and questions were tailored according to the group's subject-matter expertise. Indeed, the fact that, where feasible, participants belonged to similar (professional) categories ensured they felt free to talk and share their experience/vision.

This approach was tested in Cameroon and proved effective. Data collection was bolstered by having two types of input: numerical (directly into the tablet, the results of which could be accessed daily) and qualitative with examples (detailed and anonymous notes taken during these sessions). Analysis could therefore draw on two information sources, as well as being able to direct results back to existing literature to better understand continuity/divergence.

Feedback on the interview experience was also regularly sought from participants. Verbal feedback reported from respondents indicated they enjoyed the two-pronged approach, which allowed them to think about VPA evolution from numerous angles before engaging in often lively discussion with peers. They also commented that questions were easier to complete due to icons associated with the different answers. Quantitative answers also had a high response rate (as opposed to many “don't know” answers), validating the expert pool of respondents and the relevance of the questions.

2.3.4 Sample size and selection

Through their connections and knowledge of the context, CIFOR/ADE research teams and EU-FLEGT FAO/EFI identified key experts and long-standing stakeholders in the forestry sector⁴ and invited them to participate to the survey. The objective

⁴ One respondent was sent to replace an invitee and found to not be knowledgeable on the topic. Her entry was deleted and not included in analysis.

was to reach 100 relevant respondents weighted into four categories: public administration, private sector (formal & informal small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs]), civil society organisations with local communities, and an “other category” grouping consultants, researchers, industrials and donor representatives. For each category, we made every effort to reach out to and include representatives of different associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), departments within ministries, etc., to capture as much diversity as possible. This expert sample is large enough to compute statistics, and to capture a range of different points of view regarding the preselected themes and sub-themes.

If some pre-identified respondents were not available, we made sure they were replaced by someone with similar levels of expertise. We also offered the possibility to answer the questionnaire online and to have a skype/call discussion to receive qualitative input.

Key takeaways

- 101 total individual respondents completed the questionnaire, either in Yaoundé, Douala or by online completion.
- 16 group sessions were convened at CIFOR Yaoundé, in Douala or at the Ministry of Forest (see Annex I for agenda).
- A large portion of respondents travelled to Yaoundé to participate in the study, making sure that representativity of all forest parts of Cameroon was high.

2.4 Field mission specifications

As outlined above, respondents for the study in Cameroon were selected based on their relevance to, and experience with, the forest sector in general, and the FLEGT-VPA process in particular. CIFOR, in collaboration with EU-FLEGT FAO/EFI teams, identified potential respondents from different sectors, inviting them to participate in the study through an official invitation sent from the Cameroon EC delegation. The CIFOR in-country team then followed up by inviting respondents to preselected slots (based on sector) on a specific time and date (by e-mails and phone calls). Three team members also

travelled to Douala to meet with significant members of the private sector.

The field team consisted of two experts from ADE, including the study Team Leader, and five from CIFOR (two from Nairobi and three from the Yaoundé office). As Cameroon was the pilot country, the first two days were spent together as a group testing and refining the data collection tool, further contextualising questions or easing understanding with prompts where required. Part of the team also met with the EC delegation on Tuesday 2 April to outline the purpose of the study and anticipated milestone dates.

Key lessons learned

While the target number of study respondents was met in a very short period, some key **lessons learned** were applied to the next two countries:

- More advanced warning is required, particularly for those travelling from afar. While two weeks' notice was provided, three would have been ideal.
- While invitations were sent to the most relevant respondents, it was not always clear whether they would personally attend or send a representative from their office. Close follow-up to ensure their personal attendance is required.⁵
- Related to the above, given that respondents would not always arrive at the same time, asking them to provide a thorough introduction was not always possible. However, one member of the team was dedicated to make the introductory presentation to all members who came later *before* they joined the room where the survey was conducted.
- Participants from the private sector are often busy and much less available for this type of exercise. While a few meetings are attainable, individual completion of a questionnaire could be more challenging. In Douala, the field team adapted their method by asking the questions themselves, noting individual responses if more than one respondent was present. A short version of the questionnaire has also been developed to only capture VPA contribution answers and was implemented with CEOs of big companies (who had less time to devote to this exercise).
- Interviewing wood market respondents was certainly useful in terms of focus group input. However, they had poor understanding of some terms and concepts in the questionnaire –

⁵ One respondent was not the one invited and had less (or no) knowledge on the topic so we deleted their questionnaire.

including the VPA itself (along with SVL, PAF, FSC, OLB). Still, this does not invalidate their answers because their lack of knowledge is arguably a finding in itself. It shows that those buying and selling wood do not know of a measure put in place to regulate their daily work. This finding should be considered leading to clearer definitions where possible and a more thorough introduction. However, members of the team did take time to explain each concept to respondents (also note that a “don’t know” response is always possible).

Cameroon VPA and forest context in brief

Preparatory discussions about the FLEGT Action Plan and notably VPAs commenced in Cameroon around 2004. A forest law and its implementing decree were adopted in 1994 and 1995, respectively. However, at the beginning of the 2000s, several inconsistencies, conflicting regulations and tout-court illegal acts remained. Official VPA negotiations with the EU started in 2007, before signing the VPA on 6 October 2010 and ratifying it on 9 August 2011. The first three-year preparatory phase was designed to lead the way to issuing the first FLEGT licence, with implementation of a Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS). At the time of research, no licence had been issued. Rather, the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF) had only completed one official step towards the future issuance of FLEGT licences. Specifically, it had adopted a decree which, when fulfilled by logging companies, would grant them a “certificate of legality.” This certificate would then pave the way for companies to obtain FLEGT licences when available to be issued.⁶

Cameroon has about 25 million inhabitants, a population expected to almost double by 2050. It has about 20 million ha of dense forests, divided into Permanent and non-Permanent Forest Domains (PFD and nPFD). The PFD is mandated by law to remain forested; it belongs to the state. The PFD also contains about 800,000 ha of so-called Council Forests. These can also be harvested once the MINFOF has approved a forest management plan guaranteeing their sustainable use.

Of relevance for the FLEGT process in Cameroon and for the results of this assessment, the MINFOF can grant several other logging titles and authorizations in the nPFD. As the name suggests, however, such titles are not of a sustainable nature and do not

⁶ Arrêté 0004/MINFOF of 7 February 2013.

Table 1. Forest area, population, industrial logging concessions

| Country | Industrial concessions | | | Forest area ('000 ha) | | Population ('000) | |
|----------|------------------------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------|
| | Area (ha) | Number | Average area (ha) | Dense forests | Other forests | Pop. 2018 | Pop. 2050 |
| Cameroun | 6,281,212 | 105 | 59,821 | 19,091 | 7,764 | 24,678 | 49,817 |

need approved forest management plans. The most common titles are called Sales of Standing Volume (or *Ventes de Coupe*, VC) and Timber Exploitation Permits (or *Permis d'Exploitation de Bois d'Œuvre*, PEBO).

VC and PEBO have one salient difference. With VC, a maximum of 2,500 ha to be harvested over a maximum of three years is generally granted to industrial companies and their production can be exported. With PEBO, a maximum of 500 cubic

metres to be harvested over a maximum of one year is generally granted to small-scale or individual enterprises and their production should be sold on the domestic market.

So-called Community Forests (max 5,000 ha) must be granted in the nPFD. However, they are mandated by law to obtain a simplified version of a forest management plan. This guarantees sustainability of harvesting operations over the long term.

3 Results

3.1 Respondent breakdown

Key takeaways

- High relevance of the expert pool identified and interviewed for the study (on average, 17 years of experience in the forestry sector across respondents); and knowledge of sectors covered in the survey (e.g., civil society, local and Indigenous communities, private sector, etc.) was high among respondents.
- Balanced sample across respondents' categories: artisanal (32%), civil society (29%) and public administration (10%).
- High respondent levels of involvement in FLEGT-VPA related activities (84%), with most having been involved in law enforcement and VPA development aspects.
- 18% female representation.

To allow mean comparison test across group, respondents' associated sectors have been reduced to four:⁷

- **Public Administration (1_PA):** 9.80%
- **Private Sector – Artisanal (2_PS_art):** 32.35%
- **Civil Society, Local Communities or Indigenous People and Traditional Authorities (3_CS_LC_IP):** 29.41%
- **Others (Private Sector – Industrial⁸, Other, Consultant, Research, Financial Partners) (4_Other):** 28.42%

⁷ The number of responses (N) used for the different analyses is outlined in each figure. Sometimes this number does not correspond to the total number of respondents, since not all respondents replied every time to all the questions.

⁸ Included in Others group given the smaller sample size and to ensure results from the Artisanal group remained accurate.

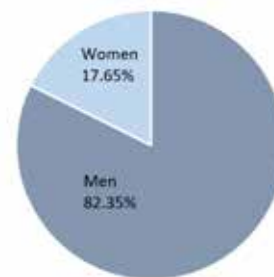


Figure 1. Gender breakdown of respondents (N=100)

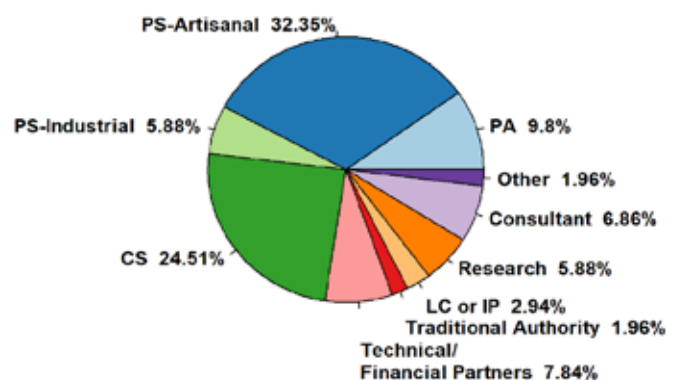


Figure 2. Respondents per their associated sector (N=100)

On average, respondents had 17 years of experience in the forestry sector (the minimum was 13 and the maximum 44). Within respondent groups, those from Traditional Authorities had the most experience, and respondents were generally most knowledgeable about the artisanal private sector. This highlights the relevance of the expert pool identified and interviewed for the study.

Table 2 presents the top three principal motivating factors for Cameroon to engage in the VPA process identified by both the VPA process and the TERE evaluation (2016). They asked the same question and produced largely consistent results, if in a slightly different order of importance.

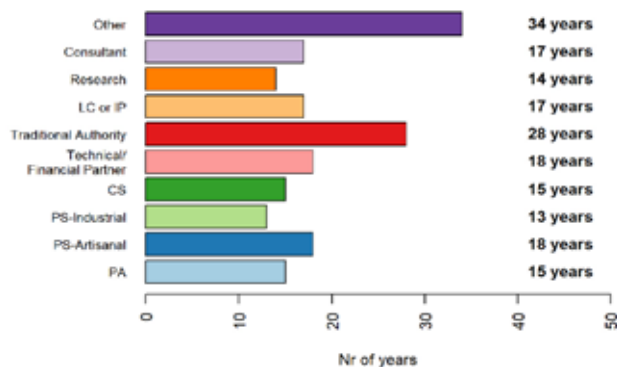


Figure 3. Average number of years of experience per sector (N=100)

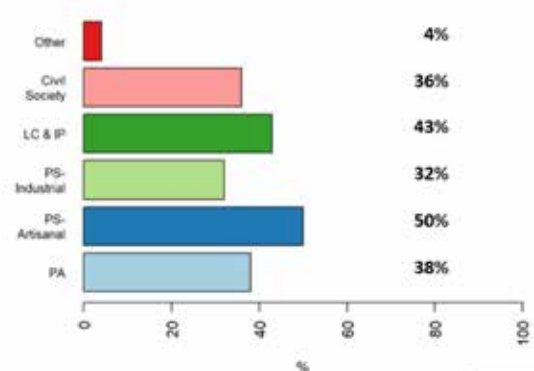


Figure 4. Respondent knowledge of sectors (N=100)

Table 2. TERE evaluation vs. VPA impact study

| TEREA evaluation (2016) | VPA impact study ^a |
|--|---|
| To improve access to the European market | 1. To reduce illegal logging and trade (57%) |
| To improve forest governance | 2. To improve access to the European market (32%) |
| To combat illegal logging and trade for sustainable management | 3. To improve forest management (32%) |

Note: a Multiple choice question with a maximum of three responses per respondent.

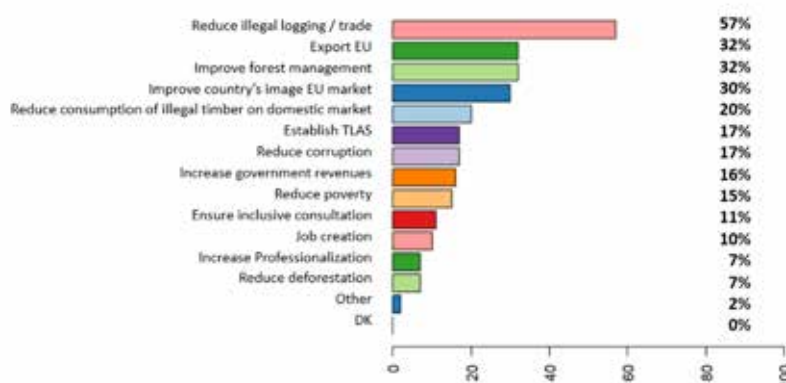


Figure 5. Top motivating factors leading Cameroon to engage in the VPA process (N=100)

Almost half of respondents noted they were/had been involved in the law enforcement side of the VPA process. The four most answered options all involve VPA development aspects (e.g., TLAS, capacity building, etc.). About 16% answered they were not actively involved in any aspects of FLEGT-VPA. Their answers have been considered relevant for the remainder of the survey because “not actively involved” does not mean “not knowledgeable.” For

example, respondents may not have been directly engaged with drafting and implementing TLAS- or transparency-related activities. However, their knowledge of the FLEGT-VPA process and the forest sector more broadly make them relevant respondents to assess the changes and impacts of those activities.

The analysis presented below from section 3.2 takes the following format: presentation of quantitative

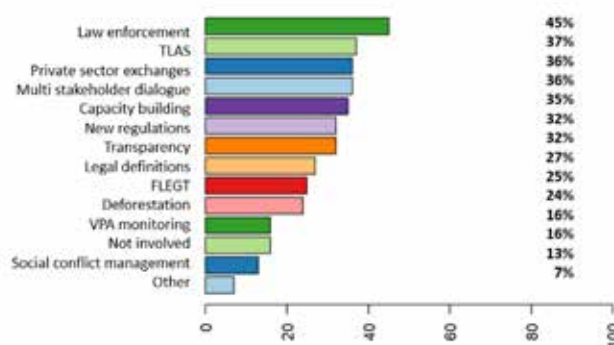


Figure 6. Aspects of FLEGT-VPA respondents are/were most involved in (multiple choice possible) (N=100)

survey data starting with VPA contribution/impact; outline of any statistically different⁹ views between respondent groups and any evolution in indicator from before and after VPA ratification in 2011; setting findings against literature in the desk review; and complementing findings with anecdotal evidence provided during the focus group discussions (FGDs).

3.2 The environment

3.2.1 Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS)

Most respondents thought that illegal logging (in volume) had decreased in PFDs and nPFDs, respectively, since VPA ratification. There are differences between groups: Public Administration was more positive regarding the decrease in illegal logging in the PFD compared to Artisanal Private Sector. Meanwhile, half of respondents in Others (which include the industrial private sector) estimated that **illegal logging strongly increased in the nPFD**, compared to most respondents in the three other groups who thought it had decreased. During FGD, it was pointed out that making observations about illegal logging in the PFD (i.e., into industrial concessions) was more difficult. It relies more on documentation that is not always relevant or available as opposed to physically tracking smaller timber quantities in the nPFD.

In line with these estimates, the **VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to the decrease of illegal wood in the PFD, while having no effect in the nPFD**. In the nPFD, respondents from Others thought the

⁹ Where respondent group answers are within <0.1 of one another, e.g., where answers from the public administration differ more than 10% on any topic from those of – say – the private sector.

Key takeaways

- The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to the decrease of illegal logging in the PFD, while having no effect in the nPFD, where illegalities seem to have increased.
- The VPA was not considered to have had any effect in reducing deforestation in Cameroon.
- Within Cameroon's domestic market, 61% of traded timber was still considered illegal; Illegal wood was still considered to make up 41% of timber on Cameroon's export market; and just over half of total timber production was said to have been exploited with a legally obtained permit.
- About half (51%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that obtaining the FLEGT licence had already introduced new formal and informal taxes on operators.
- We observed progress in civil society capacity: the VPA moderately contributed to providing civil society with a greater role in controlling legality and helped identify irregularities; their role and level of consultation is now considered moderate.
- The VPA was not considered to have helped local communities and Indigenous populations gain more recognition for their property rights. Nor was the VPA considered to have contributed to the status of women, youth and marginalized groups in questions related to forest management and logging. However, consideration of the opinions of these three groups increased slightly since before VPA ratification.
- The VPA was not considered to have had any effect on tax redistribution and by reflection on local well-being: 64% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that tax revenues from the timber sector helped improve the well-being of local communities and Indigenous populations.

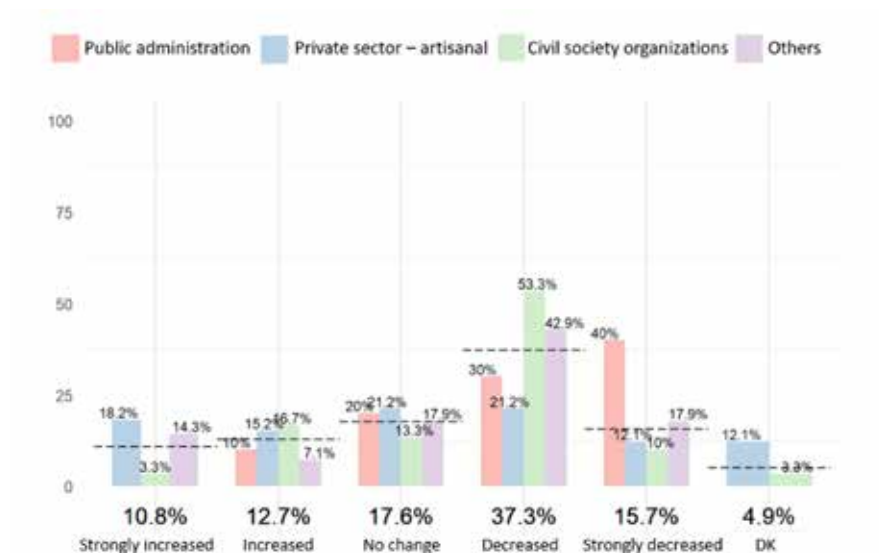


Figure 7. Illegal logging in Permanent Forest Domains (PFD) (N=100)

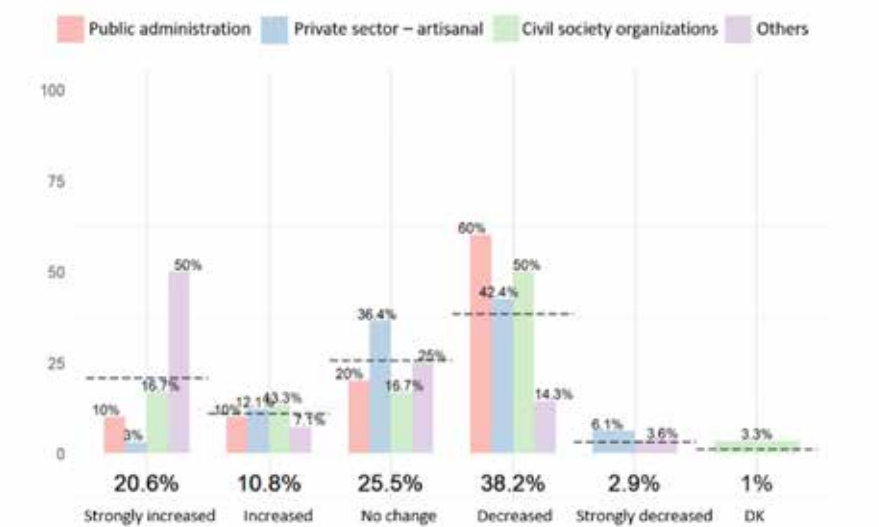


Figure 8. Illegal logging in non-Permanent Forest Domains (nPDF) (N=100)



Figure 9. VPA contribution to decrease in illegal logging in the nPDF (N=100)



Figure 10. VPA contribution to decrease in illegal logging in the PFD (N=100)

VPA had contributed slightly to the increase in illegal logging, while Artisanal Private Sector thought it had contributed slightly to the decrease in illegal logging, and Civil Society considering it to have had no impact.

This is consistent with Carodenuto and Cerutti (2014) and Hoare (2014) who suggest the perceived rates of illegal logging have fallen considerably in the past decade, notably in the PFD, due in part to the

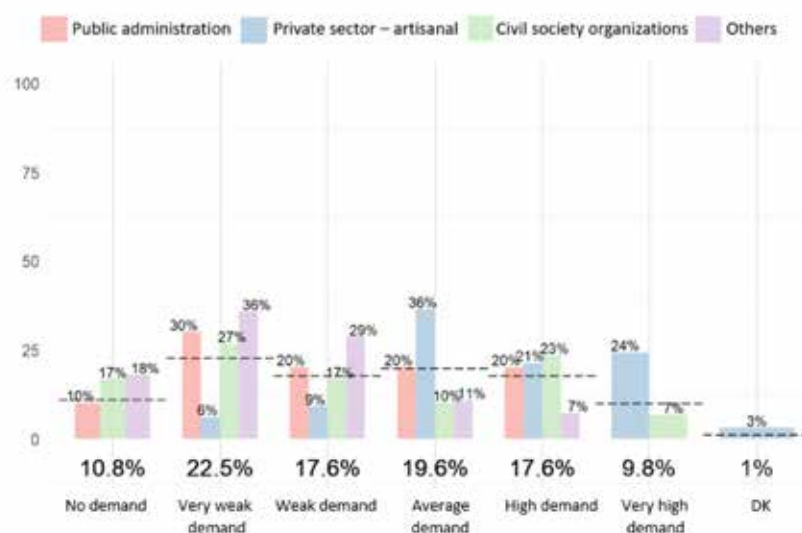


Figure 11. Demand for legal wood on the domestic market (N=100)



Figure 12. VPA contribution to increasing the amount of timber being exploited with a legally obtained permit (N=92)



Figure 13. VPA contribution to reducing illegal timber on Cameroon's domestic market (N=96)

international response to illegal logging. However, it is inconsistent with FERN (Nov 2017), who outlined that illegal logging was on the rise in Cameroon. During discussion, it was pointed out that the number of community forests had decreased between 2015 and 2019 from around 50 to 40.

The VPA was considered to have contributed to a slight increase in timber exploited with a legally obtained permit. Just over half of total timber was said to have been exploited with a legally obtained permit, compared to just under half before the VPA. Artisanal Private Sector respondents considered the amount of wood exploited with a legally obtained permit was lower (38%) than the other groups, while Public Administration considered it higher (79%) than the other groups. These continuing difficulties in obtaining a permit are consistent with the leaked 2015 FLEGT Independent Auditor report, which highlighted numerous problems with the documentation associated with various logging titles.

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to a reduction in the volume of illegal timber on Cameroon's domestic market. Whereas before



Figure 14. VPA contribution to reducing illegal timber on Cameroon's export market (N=97)

the volume of illegal timber was said to have been 68%, it had declined to 61% at the time of research. Respondent group Others considered it at the highest level (69%) and Public Administration the lowest (57%). During discussion, lack of enforcement was cited as a key reason for such high current availability of illegal timber. While **respondents mostly thought there was a very weak demand for legal wood on the domestic market**, weak demand and high demand both received 17%. This highlights the disparity of opinions among groups. Among respondent groups, the Artisanal Private Sector thought there remained a very high demand.

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to a reduction in the volume of illegal timber on Cameroon’s export market. Illegal wood was still considered to make up 41% of the export market, a reduction from 52% before VPA ratification. At one end, Artisanal Private Sector respondents thought 47% of exported timber was still illegal, while at the other Public Administration considered 28% was illegal. The literature points to the continuing

difficulty in adopting a functioning TLAS and delivering FLEGT licences, as well as lack of progress in the verification process, as the main reasons that may explain these results (section 1.3.4).

On average, the VPA was considered to have contributed moderately to providing civil society with a greater role in controlling legality and helping to identify irregularities. However, Artisanal Private Sector respondents thought the VPA had only a slight contribution to this effect. Respondents thought that civil society’s role had changed from being weak before the VPA to relatively important. Respondent group Civil Society considered, at the time of responding, that civil society played the most important role, whereas Artisanal Private Sector and Others groups thought that civil society played a lesser role.

The chart (Figure 17) outlines that discussions and activities towards adoption and implementation of a TLAS have had the most effect on civil society’s capacity. This is in line with the EU FLEGT Evaluation (2016), which argued that civil society had become an indispensable tool for verifying legality, despite legality verification itself not being fully operational (EFI 2018).

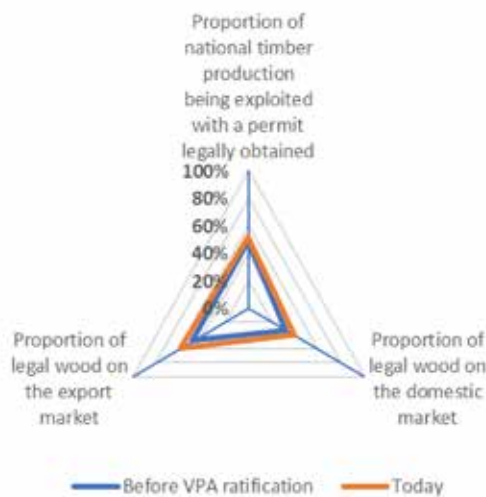


Figure 15. Collation of legal wood findings (N=100)



Figure 16. VPA contribution to providing civil society with a greater role in controlling legality and identifying irregularities (N=100)

3.2.2 Forest conversion and deforestation

Despite a decrease in illegal timber logging outlined in section 3.2.1, the VPA was considered to have had no effect on reducing deforestation in Cameroon; respondent group Others considered the VPA to have had the least effect. This is not surprising given the growing body of literature indicating that shifting cultivation is the major contributor to deforestation in the Congo basin. Yet, forest degradation, to which logging contributes (especially when operations

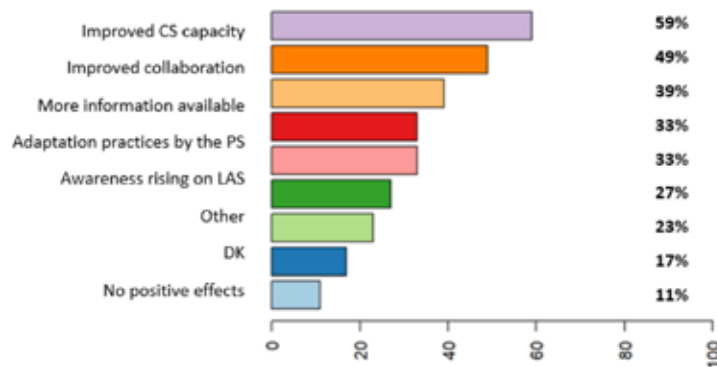


Figure 17. What effects has the TLAS process had in Cameroon (N=100)



Figure 18. VPA contribution to a reduction in deforestation in Cameroon (N=100)

remain unchecked), still represents a concern. The literature outlines that forest degradation negatively impacts biodiversity and forest communities' livelihood (AFDB 2017).

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to better implementation of forest management plans in Cameroon. At the time of being asked, respondents thought that forest management plans were moderately implemented, improving since VPA ratification. There were significant differences between groups, with Artisanal Private Sector estimating the level of implementation of forest management plans to have been weaker than Civil Society and Others did. The Artisanal Private Sector group also thought that evolution in the level of implementation of forest management plans since VPA ratification was lower than Civil Society did. This is consistent with some literature. TERE (2016) suggests that forest conversion to agro-industrial plantations was increasing, although forest management plans were not always fully implemented in forest concessions.

Some reservations were expressed during discussion. One respondent spoke of a new company that took over from a previous one's concession. The previous company had a forest management plan issued by the MINFOF, but the department did not check regularly whether the new company was abiding by conditions of the plan. There was said to be no fact-finding into the condition of the newly granted forest. This could potentially lead to further degradation of the forest if the new company was not mandated to adopt a modified management plan based on existing conditions of the forest.

3.2.3 Social conflict and livelihood (local communities and Indigenous Populations)

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to an increase in consultation of local communities



Figure 19. VPA contribution to better implementation of forest management plans in Cameroon (N=95)



Figure 20. VPA contribution to an increase in consultation of local communities and Indigenous Peoples (N=99)

and Indigenous Peoples. Before the VPA, consultation was considered to have been weak; it increased to moderate after the VPA. Respondent group answers varied, however: Public Administration and Civil Society attributed the highest levels of VPA contribution, while the Artisanal Private Sector considered there to have been no VPA effect. Moreover, the Artisanal Private Sector considered the level of consultation of local communities and Indigenous Peoples to be weaker than the three other groups and its evolution since VPA ratification to be lower than Civil Society did.

The literature points to the importance of the inclusion of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Tegenge et al. (2016) considers such inclusion essential for achieving effective and sustainable VPA implementation. Indeed, increasing and growing participation of civil society organizations, private sector and communities on forest governance is seen as the major impact of the Cameroon VPA process (TEREA 2016). In 2014, however, EFI indicated the move from negotiation to implementation led to some lost momentum in stakeholder engagement: no formal meeting to discuss VPA implementation took place until after VPA initialization.

Similarly, the VPA was also considered to have contributed slightly to more consideration of the



Figure 21a. VPA contribution to more consideration of the opinions of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in decision making (N=99)



Figure 21b. VPA contribution to more consideration of the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples (N=95)

opinions of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in decision making in the timber sector. Consideration of the opinions of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in decision making increased from “very weak” before the VPA to “weak” after it. Artisanal Private Sector respondents thought the VPA had no effect on the positive change, and also gave overall lower scores than did Civil Society.

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to an increase in the consideration of the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Again, Artisanal Private Sector was the only group that thought the VPA had no effect on the positive change. However, the VPA was considered to have had no effect in contributing to more recognition of the property rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Nor was it considered to have had any effect in contributing to the status of women, youth and marginalized groups in questions related to forest management and logging. On status, Civil Society considered the VPA to have had a slight positive impact.

The VPA was considered to have had no effect in increasing the amount of legal tax earmarked for redistribution to local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Before VPA ratification and at the time of responding, it was considered that only a small part of the *Redevance Forestière Annuelle* (RFA) expected to be redistributed from Councils to local communities

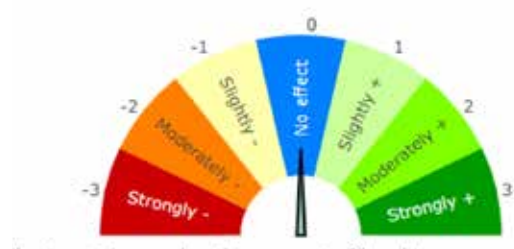


Figure 22. VPA contributing to increasing the amount of legal tax earmarked for redistribution (N=93)

and Indigenous Peoples had effectively reached the intended recipients. Of all groups, Artisanal Private Sector thought the VPA had the least effect on redistribution. These results corroborate much of the literature. They indicate the biggest failure with the RFA redistribution system is that most recipient Councils siphon off amounts received instead of using them for their intended purposes, i.e., local development projects.

Indeed, during discussion and in line with recent changes in the legal framework, the RFA share was said to have increased for municipalities. However, how and whether it reached local communities were difficult to check.

Discussions on the redistribution of the RFA (i.e., the only forest-related revenue legally mandated to be partly redistributed) led to further comments on the general topics of redistribution, forest taxation

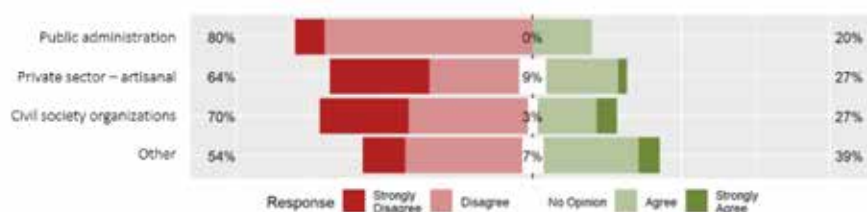


Figure 23. Statement on whether timber sector tax revenues have contributed to increased LC & IPs' well-being, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

and illegal logging. The main argument linking these topics, as outlined by one respondent, is about communities' incentives to act against illegal logging. As the argument goes, an operator may cut forest portions illegally and the community will denounce it. In these cases, the wood would possibly be seized through sanction. This wood can then be resold at auction and possibly bought by the very operator who cut it down illegally in the first place. The communities receive no revenue because taxes on illegal timber are not returned to the populations. The question thus remains: what incentive is left for the community to work against illegal logging?

Very much linked to the result above, 64% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that tax revenues from the timber sector contributed to improved well-being of local communities and Indigenous Peoples, in a more important way than before VPA ratification. This finding is consistent with the literature, which argues that redistribution mechanisms have not been effective in reducing poverty (Cerutti *et al.* 2016).

3.2.4 Certification and permits

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to an increase in the number of hectares exploited with a private certification system delivered by a third-party, independent institution (e.g. *Origine*



Figure 24. VPA contribution to an increase in the number of hectares exploited with a private certification system (N=92)

Légale du Bois, or OLB). Conversely, half (51%) of

Key takeaways

- 41% of respondents considered SME numbers to have increased since 2011 and 40% thought the number of jobs (formal and informal) in the forestry sector had increased slightly since VPA ratification.
- The VPA is considered to have had no effect in squeezing some SMEs out of business, nor to contributing to further disruption in the timber sector.
- SMEs have better publicly available information about the requirements and verification of legality, and the information was found to strongly meet their needs; their opinions were being considered more frequently.
- The private forest sector and workers in the forest sector were better organized and had better expertise than before VPA ratification. The curricula of training institutions now better integrated subjects related to legality and sustainable management of forests.
- The VPA was considered to have had no effect on helping improve access to the export market for SMEs. SMEs still paid 45% of their operating costs as informal taxes, and the legal harvesting of timber remained hampered by restrictive technical and financial terms.
- This high level of informal taxation coincides with the perception that a strong amount of taxes (the term was left open) was being levied from the forestry sector.

respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the process of obtaining a certificate of legality – as mandated by the MINFOF for companies preparing to obtain the future FLEGT licences – had introduced

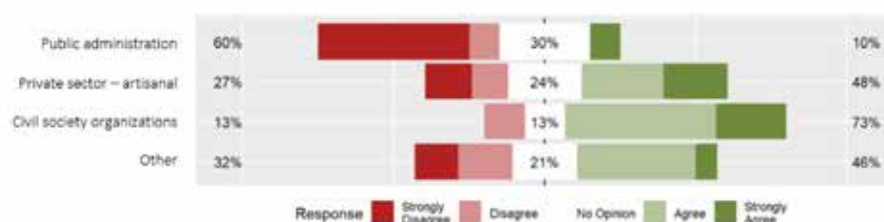


Figure 25. Statement on whether the process of obtaining a legal certification (FLEGT) introduced new formal and informal taxes, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

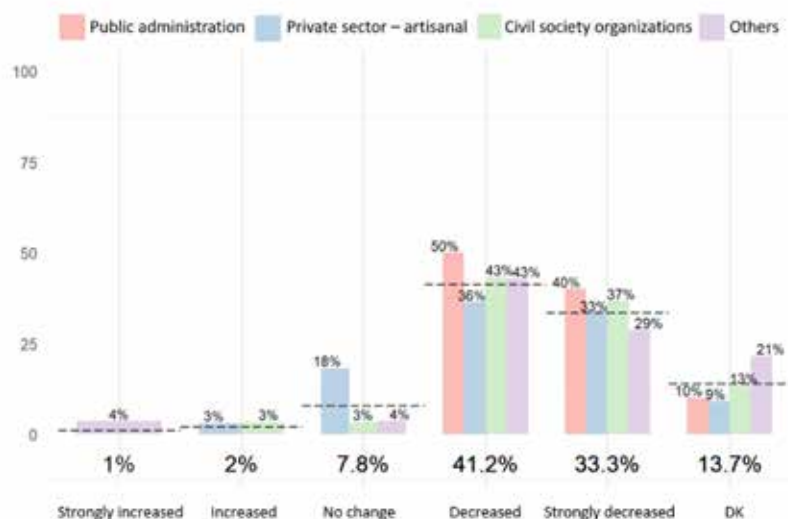


Figure 26. Evolution of the number of SMEs (N=100)

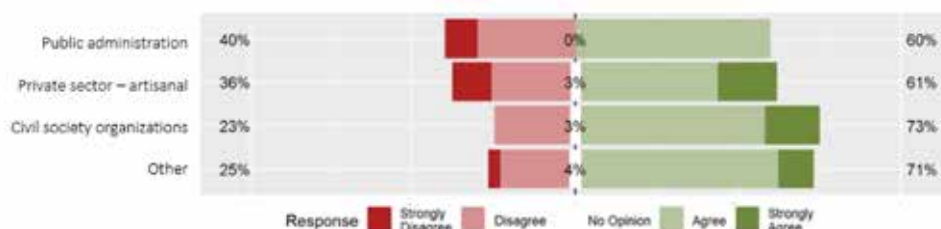


Figure 27. Statement on whether the private sector is better organized, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

new formal and informal taxes. As expected, respondents from Public Administration **strongly disagreed** that obtaining a certificate of legality from MINFOF did not introduce new formal and informal taxes.

3.3 The economy

3.3.1 Forest sector dynamics

A large majority of respondents considered the number of SMEs had increased since VPA ratification. To date, the VPA was considered to have had **no effect on squeezing some SMEs out of business.** This finding is not inconsistent with the literature (section 2.1.1), suggesting the VPA may lead to a decrease in the number of SMEs because of complex procedures and substantial costs associated with legality requirements. This is because while the number of SMEs may have increased since 2011, a fully functional TLAS requiring registration and tracking of their operations is still missing. This finding, and the fact that SMEs concentrate most of their activities in the

nPFD, may also be related to the perceived increase of illegal logging in the latter, as reported above, especially from respondent group Others.

The VPA did not contribute to more disruption in the timber sector, and about 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the private forest sector in Cameroon was better organized than before VPA ratification.¹⁰ These two separated results are presented together because they may be related. The first result may seem inconsistent with the literature, suggesting the VPA may marginalize smallholders while causing further expansion and power concentration of the already dominant large industrial companies (section 2.1.4). However, the second result may be one natural response developing alongside the threat of (perceived or actual) disruption. In both cases, the respondents might have considered there was no effect because of the slow progress in VPA implementation and low levels of law enforcement.

¹⁰ 60% of respondents also agree or strongly agree that workers in the forestry sector were better organized since VPA ratification.



Figure 28. Consideration of the opinions of LC & IP, SMEs and CS in decision making in the timber sector in Cameroon (N=98)

The aggregate effect (showing in the two results combined) may be that members of the private sector have already started responding to expected changes. Consequently, they have improved their preparations for conditions that will become reality once FLEGT licences can be delivered. This seems to confirm the hypothesis of Carodenuto and Cerutti (2014) who suggested that VPA implementation would lead to better organization of the market (section 2.1.2).

The VPA was also considered to have contributed slightly to better consideration of the opinion of SMEs and also to slightly better recognition of SME associations in the forestry sector. At the time of answering, however, respondents thought the opinion of SMEs was weakly considered when decisions were made concerning the forestry sector; they considered it was very weakly taken into account before VPA ratification. This result seems to confirm the hypothesis of Carodenuto and Cerutti (2014) who

suggested that VPA implementation could strengthen local actor networks and their political power (section 2.1.2). Artisanal Private Sector respondents considered the evolution in the consideration of SMEs' opinion since VPA ratification to be lower than Civil Society and Others did.

3.3.2 SMEs' organization and market

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to making information more readily available that enabled SMEs to conduct their activities legally. Moreover, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that information made public about the requirements and verification of legality met the needs of SMEs. This seems to be consistent with the literature (section 2.2.2). FAO (2017) found much effort has been made to improve access to forest-related information. This is the case even though information is sometimes incomplete, and many actors still relied on informal channels for access to information (EFI 2018). Further, during discussion, it was said that many actors did not know where the documents/manuals were, or that some documents were not made available for some actors.

Likewise, the VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to improving the technical capacity of SMEs to conduct their activities legally. However, a substantial share of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that for SMEs, restrictive technical and financial terms hampered the legal harvesting of timber. This confirms research in the literature that suggests mainly that SMEs do not have the technical and financial capacities to comply with legal requirements.

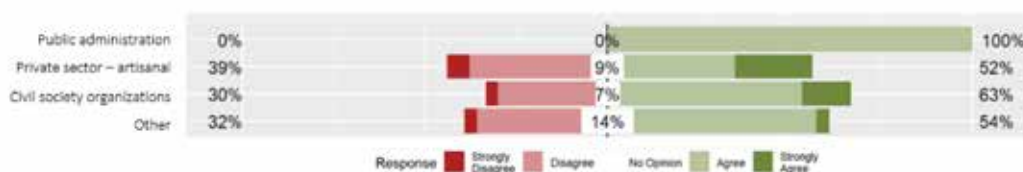


Figure 29. Statement on whether the relevance of information received by SMEs and smallholders to support them to comply with legality requirements (N=100)

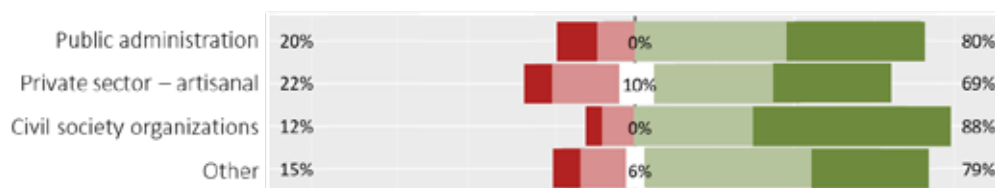


Figure 30. Statement on whether the processing of legal timber is technically and financially too constraining for SMEs (N=100)

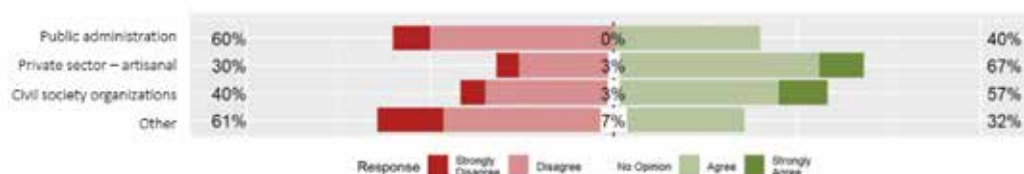


Figure 31. Statement on whether SMEs provide better quality wood than before the start of the VPA process (N=100)

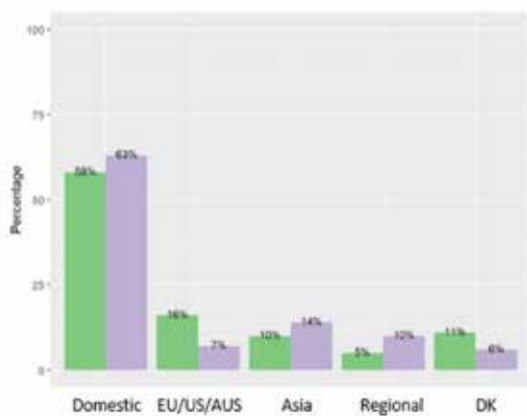


Figure 32. Primary markets for SMEs (N=100)

About 51% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SMEs in the forestry sector in Cameroon provided better quality wood than before VPA ratification, with Artisanal Private Sector agreeing more than Others.

Most respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that SMEs in the forestry sector had reduced their impact on the environment since VPA ratification. Group Others disagreed the most.

It is difficult to disentangle various concurrent effects. However, the results above and discussions with respondents seem to speak to a narrative indicating that SMEs would like a functioning VPA to increase access to exports. This is especially true for SMEs using logging titles and authorizations that allow for exportation, such as Community Forests. However, this is not yet the case, and the VPA was considered to have had no effect on helping to improve access to the export market for SMEs.

This confirms the hypothesis in the literature that SMEs would be unlikely to invest in their own labour and capital in reaching out to new markets until TLAS, an improved legal framework for SMEs, and the ability for SMEs to engage in them are in place (section 2.1.3). In fact, when asked about the primary markets for SMEs before and after VPA ratification, respondents indicated that domestic

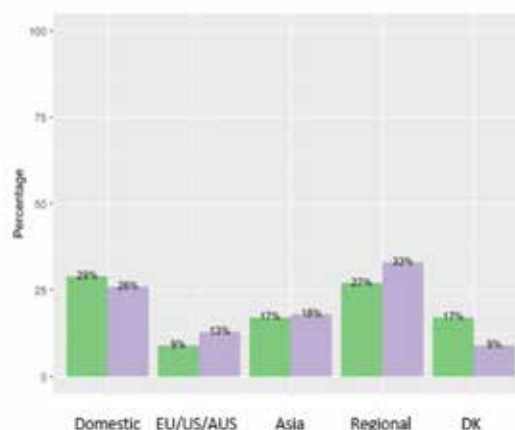


Figure 33. Secondary markets for SMEs (N=100)

and regional markets and the Asian market had increased.¹¹ Coherent official statistics do not exist on the subject. However, these perceptions may reflect, as highlighted during discussions, that the VPA has complicated exports to the EU for SMEs. In this way, it has diverted exports to 'less difficult' markets, notably China.

3.3.3 Taxes and redistribution

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to a more efficient collection of taxes by the state in the forestry sector. While respondents thought a moderate amount of taxes was levied in the forestry sector before VPA ratification, they considered that a strong amount of taxes was levied at the time of responding. Of respondent groups, Public Administration and Civil Society thought that more taxes were being collected, although Civil Society respondents considered there to have been no VPA effect. There was limited information in the literature related to the efficiency of tax collection in the forest sector (section 2.2.5).

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to the reduction in costs faced by SMEs paid as

¹¹ Domestic market from 57% to 62%, the regional market from 5% to 10% and the Asian market from 10% to 14%.

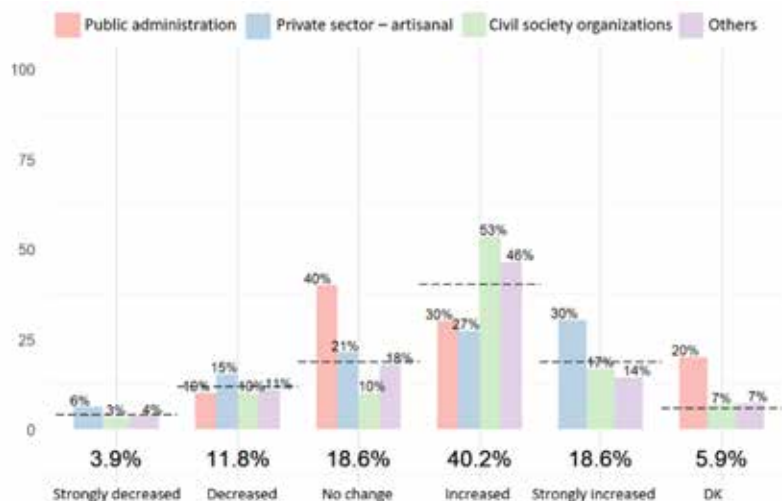


Figure 34. Job opportunities in the forest sector (N=100)

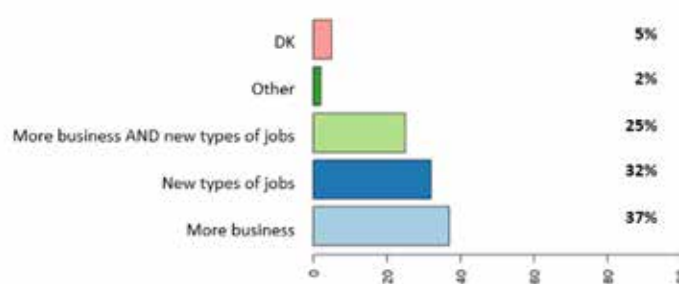


Figure 35. Key reasons for increase in jobs (N=100)

informal taxes. At the time of the survey, respondents still thought that almost half (45%) of the costs faced by SMEs were paid as informal taxes. They estimated this share to have been very slightly more (46%) before VPA ratification. This confirms what was found by Forest Trends in 2008. Although published before ratification, Forest Trends research had estimated that informal taxes levied by corrupt law enforcement officials represented 30–50% of total expenses for sellers. This also showed little improvement since VPA ratification.

3.3.4 The labour market in the forest sector

In addition to the results shown above with focus on SMEs, **the VPA was considered to have had a slight increase in jobs on the labour market overall.** In all, 40% of respondents thought the number of jobs (formal and informal) in the forest sector had increased slightly since VPA ratification. More businesses and new types of jobs were considered to be the main reasons for the increase in the number of jobs in the forestry sector. Further, **the VPA was considered to have slightly contributed to improving working conditions in the forestry sector.** Almost half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that workers

in the forestry sector had access to more **secure jobs** than before VPA ratification.

There were few data on job creation in the literature. However, this result is consistent with others, notably those indicating an increase of SME operations in the nPFD and a diversification of jobs in the industrial sector.

During discussion, some respondents noted there were more jobs, which had been created by a growing demand for wood rather than the VPA. Others said SMEs that had accelerated their illegal activities were driving informal employment because they would be unable to operate once the VPA became operational. Still other respondents pointed to the closure or reduced activity of many industrial companies (with a concurrent reduced number of FSC certificates), which contributed to generating more informal jobs.

Most (44%) respondents thought that forestry sector employment opportunities developed for **local communities and Indigenous Peoples had increased slightly since VPA ratification.** Further, half of respondents thought that forestry sector employment opportunities developed for **women, youth and the marginalized had not changed since VPA ratification.**

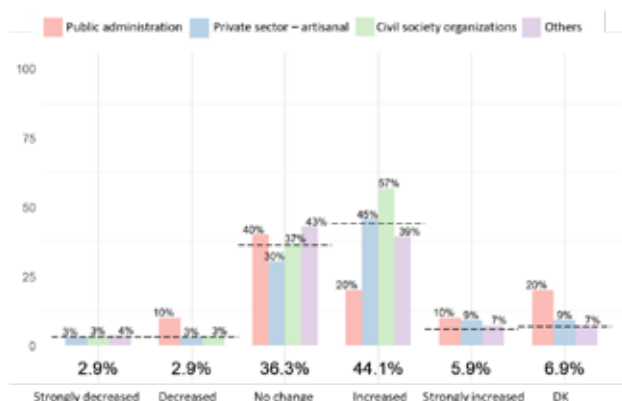


Figure 36. Job opportunities for local communities and Indigenous Peoples (N=100)



Figure 37. Job opportunities for women, youth and marginalized groups (N=100)

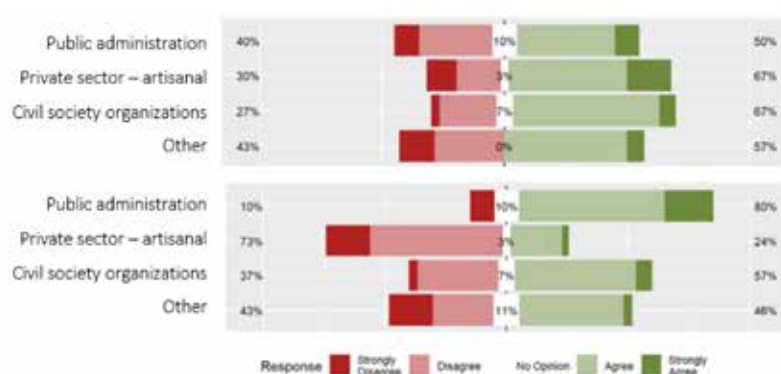


Figure 38. Statements on whether the forestry sector works are better organised and have access to more secure jobs, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

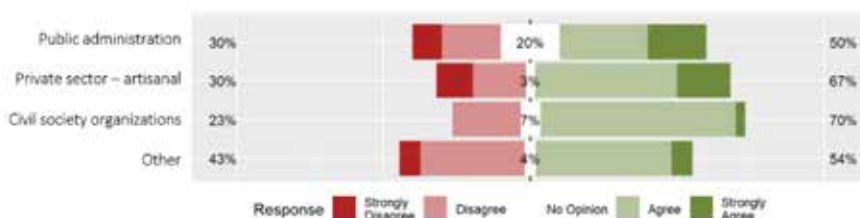


Figure 39. Statement on whether the forest sector workers have more expertise, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

According to the main hypothesis in the literature, VPA implementation may threaten the jobs of local communities and Indigenous Peoples because of their difficulties in meeting the costs of verifying legality (section 3.1). Once again, the low level of law enforcement and of VPA progress in Cameroon may explain why this hypothesis is not verified with the collected data.

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that workers in the forestry sector had better expertise than before VPA ratification. They also agreed or strongly agreed that the curricula of training

institutions now better integrated subjects related to the legality and the sustainable management of forests than before VPA ratification.

These results seem to be in line with the literature as VPA implementation is expected to lead to improved competency and professionalism (section 3.2).

During discussion, it was noted that some teachers had been trained (National School of Ebolowa), and that two new Master's programmes in forest governance were opening at the University of Tschang.

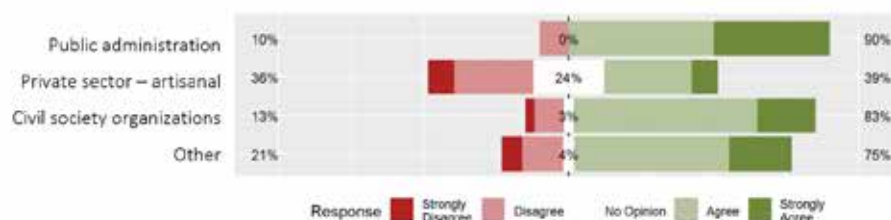


Figure 40. Statement on whether the curricula of training institutions better integrates subjects related to legality and sustainable forest management (SFM), since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

3.4 Governance

Key takeaways

- The VPA had contributed moderately to better considering the views of civil society when making decisions related to the forestry sector.
- 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that civil society in Cameroon was better organized than before VPA ratification.
- 62% of respondents strongly agreed that the work of independent observation contributed more to the reduced acts of corruption in the forestry sector than before VPA ratification.
- Since VPA ratification, the level of autonomy of civil society in its role as an independent observer in the forestry sector and the level of independent observation were considered to have increased, and information made public was considered to be more relevant.
- The VPA had contributed slightly to more enforcement of sanctions as outlined in the law and to helping slightly to make sanctions more credible.
- While not directly relatable to the VPA, an increase in enforcement of sanctions and transparency since VPA ratification from “weak” to “moderate” was observed.
- The VPA process was closely linked to giving a positive image of Cameroon and to helping the country be considered as a more reliable business partner.
- 43% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that bureaucracy related to the VPA process had created new opportunities for corruption, and 78% thought that an overall high level of corruption was the key reason why laws and regulations were poorly or not at all enforced in the forestry sector.

3.4.1 Forest management and governance

Overall, respondents thought awareness had increased across all sectors of society about the consequences of poor forest management in the forestry sector as compared to the period before VPA ratification. There was less agreement among respondents about such an increase of awareness in the Artisanal Private Sector and Indigenous or local communities’ groups.

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to better coherence of the legal and regulatory framework of the forestry sector in Cameroon.

Moreover, the VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to helping make the government more accountable for its actions in the forestry sector. The Artisanal Private Sector considered the VPA had contributed moderately to helping make the government more accountable.

Respondents considered the VPA had contributed moderately to better consideration of the views of civil society when making decisions related to the forestry sector. The consideration of those views increased from weak to moderate after VPA ratification. Public Administration respondents thought that civil society’s opinion was considered more than the Artisanal Private Sector did.

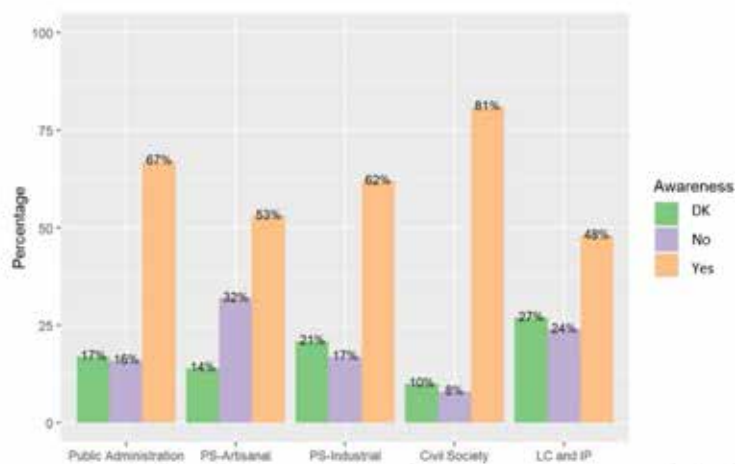


Figure 41. Awareness across groups about the consequences of poor forest management in the forestry sector (N=100)

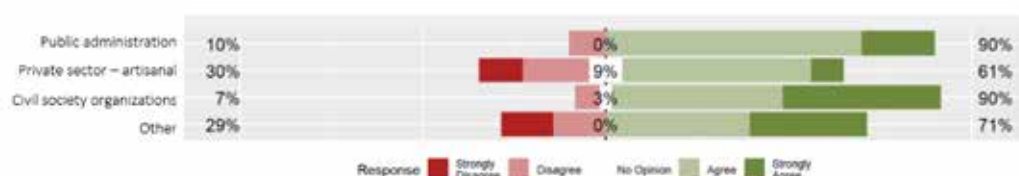


Figure 42. Statement on whether the Civil Society is better organized than before the start of the VPA process (N=100)

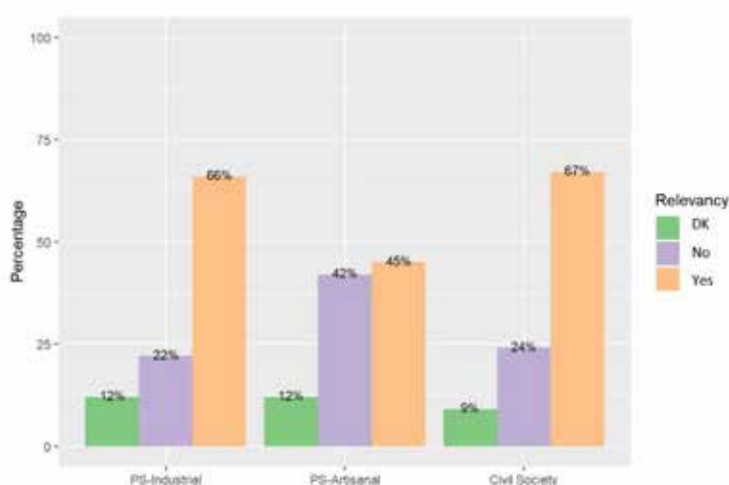


Figure 43. Relevancy of the available information for different sectors (N=100)

Further, **three-quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that civil society in Cameroon was better organized than before VPA ratification**, with Civil Society respondents agreeing more than Artisanal Private Sector. This confirms what is suggested in the literature (section 4.1.2). According to TERE (2016), increasing and growing participation of civil society organizations is seen as a major impact of the Cameroon VPA process, even though many examples show they are side-lined by

authorities (ECFP 2008). One respondent stressed the need for transparency at the NGO level, given they could take advantage of funding opportunities without necessarily being the voice of the people they reportedly represented.

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to helping improve transparency in the forestry sector in Cameroon. The increase in transparency went from a weak to moderate level after VPA

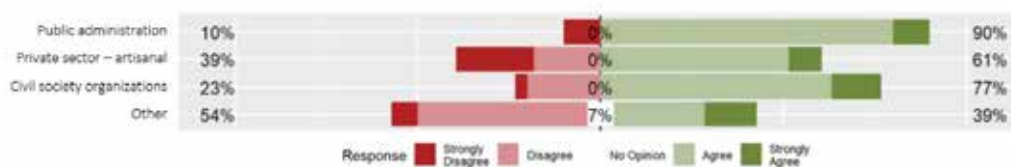


Figure 44. Statement on whether independent observation contributes more to reduce corruption than before the start of the VPA process (N=100)

ratification. The level of transparency at time of responding was considered to be higher by Public Administration than by Artisanal Private Sector and Civil Society respondents. **Moreover, respondents thought the information made public was more relevant than before VPA ratification and sufficient for use by Civil Society and by the Artisanal Private Sector.** This is consistent with the literature. EFI reports suggest some progress offset by weak implementation of transparency provisions in Cameroon's Forest laws (1994; 1996); the range of information available in the public domain is also limited. Linked to the above point around access to information, one respondent in the discussion indicated that, to date, transparency was good but that actors did not know how to use information when it became available.

3.4.2 Effective law enforcement

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to a greater degree of autonomy of civil society in its role as an independent observer in the forestry sector. Before the VPA, the level of autonomy was considered weak. However, since ratification, and when asked, it was considered to have been moderate. Civil Society respondents considered the level of autonomy of civil society in its role as an independent observer in the forestry sector and its evolution to be higher than Artisanal Private Sector respondents did.

Moreover, the VPA was considered to have slightly contributed to more effective independent observation (carried out by civil society) of the forestry sector. Civil Society respondents considered the VPA to have had the largest contribution. At the time of responding, the level of independent observation was considered to have been moderate, while before VPA ratification it was weak. This confirms findings in the literature that suggest independent forest monitoring exists, but that it is not formally recognised by the government. Furthermore, the literature suggests this monitoring is sometimes inadequate due to unavailable

documentation and difficulty in the correct application of legal texts.

Further, most (62%) respondents still agreed or strongly agreed that the work of independent observation contributed more to the reduction of acts of corruption in the forestry sector than before VPA ratification.

3.4.3 Sanctions

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to more enforcement of sanctions as outlined in the law. Before VPA ratification, it was considered to have been weak. However, at the time of responding and since ratification, it was considered to have been moderate.

Moreover, the VPA was considered to have **contributed slightly to helping make sanctions more credible.** This confirms what is suggested in the literature, where the role of MINFOF in audits, sanctions, fines, suspended licences and warnings had increased after the creation of the Standardised External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE). If sanctioned, the guilty operator could be suspended, have their seized products auctioned, or be forced to repay several million francs to the state (EFI). This must be placed against the ongoing high levels of wood perceived to be illegal on the domestic market, however (see section 3.2.1). As outlined by one participant during discussion, the gain of illegal forestry practices could often be far superior to the value of any sanction. Moreover, this sanction could be negotiated; the process of arriving at the final figure could be opaque; and the incentive of stopping illegal activities could be low.

3.4.4 Potential causes for ineffectiveness of law enforcement

Most (78%) respondents thought that an overall high level of corruption was the key reason why laws and regulations were poorly or not at all enforced in the



Figure 45. Causes of non-compliance of laws and regulations (N=100)

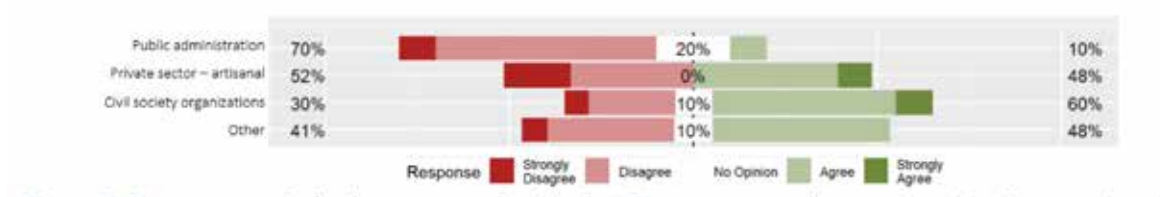


Figure 46. Statement on whether bureaucracy related to the VPA process created new opportunities for corruption, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

forestry sector. The next most frequently cited reasons were **conflicts of interests blocking law enforcement** and **insufficient level of sanctions**. This is consistent with the literature. Indeed, globalized corrupt practices, poor governance and lack of political will are considered as causes of ineffective law enforcement (TEREA 2016; Cerutti 2016). Almost half of respondents also considered that lack of co-ordination between government agencies was a main cause for lack of enforcement of laws and regulation (previously mentioned in the EFI reports).

During discussion, the example of the UN's Rapid Response Initiative, with a 100-day taskforce, was brought up. This initiative offered financial incentives to police and forest officers to denounce and sanction forestry fraud. This worked very well, but agents were again asking for 'envelopes' after the programme ended. The effect of this kind of measure was outlined to be unsustainable, requiring a more permanent solution imposed from the top.

The VPA was considered to have contributed slightly to improving political will to fight corruption in the forestry sector. No change was believed to have been experienced before and after VPA ratification, a moderate political will being outlined by respondents in both cases. Of the four groups, Public Administration considered there to be the strongest political will.

Opinions on the creation of new opportunities for corruption of bureaucracy related to the VPA process were diverse. Almost half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that bureaucracy related to the VPA process created new opportunities for corruption, 44% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, with Public Administration doing so the most. Carodenuto and Cerutti (2014) suggested that additional controls and papers related to VPA requirements lead to burdensome procedures. This, in turn, might bring more opportunities to collect bribes. This theory seems to be partially confirmed, although a functioning TLAS is still not in place and thus the hypothesis cannot be proved yet.

Responses on progress in reducing the level of corruption in the forestry sector were also divergent. Just over half (51%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the level of corruption in the forestry sector decreased more than in other sectors since VPA ratification. On this question, respondent groups Artisanal Private Sector and Others disagreed the most. As one respondent cautioned during discussion, respect for legality in the VPA process could lead to additional expenses related to informal payments. This participant suggested the VPA had unintentionally led to increased corruption related to the rapid acquisition of documents, hence contributing to an ecosystem conducive to corruption.

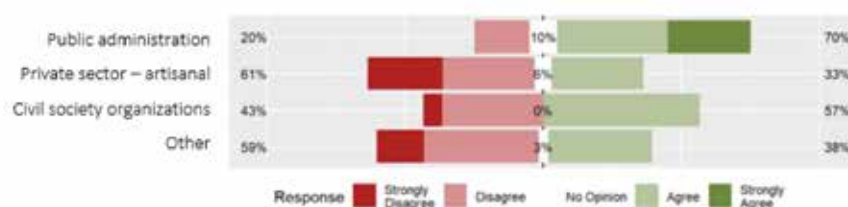


Figure 47. Statement on whether the level of corruption in the forestry sector decreased more than in other sectors, since the start of the VPA process (N=100)

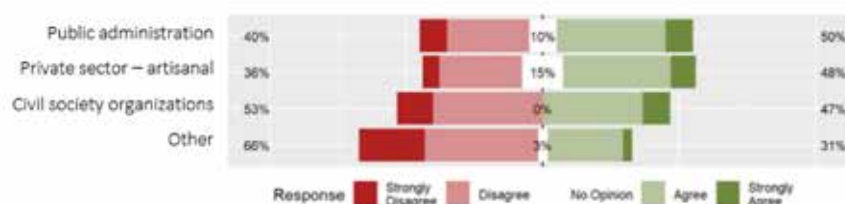


Figure 48. Statement on whether political will exists to prioritize the development of the forestry sector as much as the development of other sectors (N=100)

Responses on political will to give importance to forest sector development compared to other sectors to contribute to country development were divergent as well. Half of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and almost another half agreed or strongly agreed. Indeed, one respondent outlined the Mining Code reform process had borrowed the VPA participatory approach to explain the nature of a large decision-making process to its stakeholders.

During the study, questions duplicated those asked by the FERN study of 2016. This earlier study had adapted a methodology from guidelines established in the FAO-PROFOR Framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance (2011). In so doing, it sought to validate and/or understand differences in answers three years after the study took place. The questions addressed accountability, government co-ordination, participation, capacity, transparency and legal framework/justice using a scale of 0 (extremely poor, non-existent) to 5 (very good) based against a corresponding statement that respondents thought best matched the situation in Cameroon. FERN compared results from a baseline score assigned by combining respondents' input against available corroborating data to another created for the situation in 2016.

As outlined in Table 3 and Figure 49, when results are compared, they are largely consistent. We observed a decrease in **accountability**; the answer of “channels



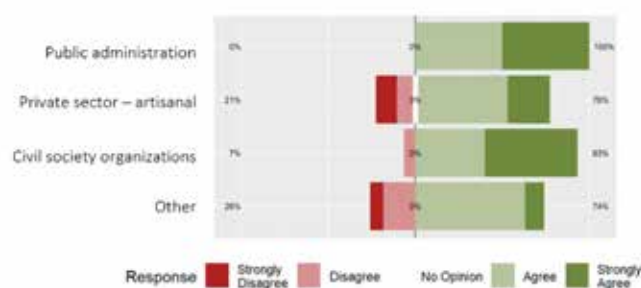
Figure 49. FERN indicators comparison, Cameroon (N=98)

for reporting infractions and corruption exist, and are being used, but results are not timely and follow-up action is rare/non-existent” was provided during this study. We also observed a slight decrease in **Government Coordination**, although the answer of “Information sharing does happen and there is some coordination between national and forest policies, but in practice different agencies regularly work in silos” still applied.

We also observed increases since 2016 in **Participation** where the answer “they collaborate with government bodies” was now seen as the most relevant, and also very slightly relevant in **Capacity**.

Table 3. Summary of FERN and study scores

| Indicator | FERN 2016 score | Impact Study score |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| Accountability | 3.8 | 3.1 |
| Government coordination | 3 | 2.7 |
| Participation: Local community participation, civil society participation | 3 | 3.54 |
| Capacity: Civil society capacity, local community capacity, government capacity | 3 | 3.2 |
| Transparency | 3 | 2.9 |
| Legal framework/justice | 3 | 3 |

**Figure 50. Statement on whether being involved in a VPA gives a positive image of the country (N=100)**

3.5 Final answers

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being involved in a VPA process gave a positive image of Cameroon and helped it to be considered as a reliable business partner; Public Administration and Civil Society groups agreed the most. This is

consistent with the literature, which outlines that other advantages of forest certification for companies in the private sector include access to markets and improved brand image (AFBD 2017). Most respondents thought the VPA process in Cameroon **had inspired** other processes.

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Annex II. Field mission agenda

March 29 – 08 April 2019

Day 1: Friday 29 March

Arrival of CIFOR and ADE facilitator teams in Yaoundé.

Day 2: Saturday 30 March

Meet to trial the data collection tools (individual and FGD), testing skip patterns, prompts, logic of content and time that it takes. This will involve CIFOR Cameroon office staff wherever possible to ensure correct terminology.

Finalisation of logistics, ensuring open communication with travelling participants, sufficient refreshments, stationary, tablets, etc.

Day 3: Monday 01 April

| | |
|----|--|
| AM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| AM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | Debrief by facilitators, preparation for second session of day |
| PM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| PM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | End of day debrief, data quality checks, data downloaded from server |

Day 4: Tuesday 02 April

| | |
|----|--|
| AM | Meeting between relevant EC delegation, FAO, CIFOR and ADE personnel |
| AM | Meeting at MINFOF |
| AM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| AM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | Debrief by facilitators, preparation for second session of day |
| PM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| PM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | End of day debrief, data quality checks, data downloaded from server |

Day 5: Wednesday 03 April

| | |
|----|--|
| AM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| AM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | Debrief by facilitators, preparation for second session of day |
| PM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| PM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | End of day debrief, data quality checks, data downloaded from server |

Day 6: Thursday 04 April

| | Yaoundé | Douala |
|----|--|--|
| AM | Selected facilitators travel to Douala | |
| AM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant | |
| AM | Interviews undertaken by participants | |
| PM | Debrief by facilitators, preparation for second session of day | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| PM | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | Interviews undertaken by participants | |
| PM | End of day debrief, data quality checks, data downloaded from server | End of day debrief, data quality checks, data downloaded from server |

Day 7: Friday 05 April

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| AM | Travel to wood market | Participants arrive, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| AM | Interviews undertaken by timber SMEs participants | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | Half of team travels to wood market, other half conducts interviews at CIFOR | Meetings with industrial private sector |

Day 8: Saturday 06 April

| | |
|----|---|
| AM | Team travels back to Yaoundé |
| AM | Participants arrive in Yaoundé, introduction to the study, consent forms read and signed, tablet provided to each participant |
| AM | Interviews undertaken by participants |
| PM | Debrief by facilitators, agenda decided for rest of day |
| PM | Notes editing and clarification of outstanding statements on focus group sessions |

Day 9: Monday 08 April

| |
|--------------|
| Teams travel |
|--------------|

This Cameroon report is part of a series of seven country level studies (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Indonesia and Republic of Congo) which intend to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence of the impacts of the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade – Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT-VPA) process to date. This initiative was financed by the European Union and results are placed within the global European Union-FLEGT (EU-FLEGT) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) indicator database. The analysis is structured along five key thematic areas (with indicators clustered into governance and institutional effectiveness, illegal logging, forest conditions, economic development, and livelihoods and poverty). The methodology used is designed to be replicable over time as well as applicable to other countries. Each country assessment provides a baseline for future studies in the same country, that would help to measure progress (or regress) between two points in time. More countries can also be added over time to increase the overall sample and help to derive lessons based on more evidence. By covering seven countries that are in different stages of the VPA process – from negotiation to implementation to issuance of FLEGT licences – findings allow for global lessons to be learned across different geographies and time. These lessons and global findings are presented in a separate synthesis report, which combines results to outline a bigger picture of VPA process impacts where possible.

In total, 102 respondents were interviewed in Cameroon, which started its negotiation phase in November 2007 and started implementation of the VPA in December 2011. The work leading to this report has been funded by the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme.

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Study funded by

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Financed by the European Union and led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), GML is a five-year project implemented across Sub-Saharan Africa that aims to address key knowledge, technical and policy gaps related to the global impacts of the FLEGT Action Plan, as well as forest and land governance, trade in informal and legal timber products, deforestation-related commodity-based agribusiness, woodfuel and ultimately sustainable forest and land-use management and improvement of livelihoods.

Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

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