The Political Ecology of Decentralized Forest Management in Cameroon: Case Study of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest

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Abstract

Decentralized forest management promotes the transfer of forest management responsibilities, resources and decision-making power from the central government to other members of the state. These include regional and local tiers of government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs). While decentralization theory has been in the development literature since the 1950s, it gained prominence in the biodiversity conservation community after the Rio Summit of 1992.

This study is executed within a political ecology framework. Thus it is attentive to relationships within and between proximate and remote actors concerned with the management of a natural resource. The study is situated within the human geography meta-framework, making it attentive to the historicized relationship between space, place and people. Human geography's qualitative ontological and epistemological foundations make it suitable for understanding contemporary social phenomena. The study pays attention to the spatial and temporal processes that mediate nature-society relationships, noting that nature and society are not independent but are co-productions of the human imaginary.

Advocates of decentralized forestry argue that its participatory ethos assures higher levels of accountability, transparency and equity compared with initiatives managed by the central state at the local level. This study, based on its findings, argues that forestry programmes, managed by local people for local people, do not have intrinsic qualities that assure higher quality outcomes compared with centrally administered programmes. The study shows that the local sphere is embedded in the national and the global, thus actors at higher spatial scales also dictate the tune at the local sphere. The study argues that efficiency and equity are socially determined and are not scalar variables as presented by decentralization theory.

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List of Abbreviations

AEP	African Environments Programme Oxford University
BB	Bimbia-Bonadikombo
BBCF	Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest
BBNRMC	Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council
BDC	Beekeeping, Development and Conservation
BLCC	Bakweri Land Claims Committee
CAMCOF	Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation
CBC	Community-Based Conservation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resources Management
CBO	Community-Based Organizations
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CENDEP	Centre for Nursery Development and Eru Propagation
CFDP	Community Forest Development Project
CFN	Community Forestry Network
CFU	Community Forest Unit
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIDA-IYIP	Canadian International Development Agency International Youth Internship Program
CIFOR	Centre for International Forestry Research
CIG	Common Initiative Group
DFID	Department for International Development
DO	Divisional Officer
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECF	Ekuri Community Forest
EIG	Economic Interest Group
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FESP	Forest Environment Sector Programme
FGF	Forest Governance Facility
FMO	Forest Management Officer
FOREP	Forests, Resources and People
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoC	Government of Cameroon
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
HVCF	High Value Conservation Forest
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development Project

ICRAF	The World Agroforestry Centre
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFS	International Foundation for Science
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPDP	Indigenous People Development Plan
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LBG	Limbe Botanic Garden
LTC	Limbe Traditional Council
LUC	Limbe Urban Council
LWC	Limbe Wildlife Centre
MCBCC	Mount Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Centre
MCP	Mount Cameroon Project
MINADER	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture
MINATD	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization
MINEF	Ministry of Environment and Forest
MINEP	Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature
MINFOF	Ministry of Forest and Wildlife
MINPAT	Ministry of Planning and Regional Development
MINTOUR	Ministry of Tourism
MRI	Mountain Research Initiative
NEF	National Employment Fund.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NWP	North West Province
OC	Operations Committee
ODA	Overseas Development Agency
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OUCE	Oxford University Centre for the Environment
PAID-WA	Pan-African Institute for Development West Africa
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSMNR-SW	Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the South West Province
QUANGO	Quasi-NGO
RBG	Royal Botanic Garden
RCDC	Regional Centre for Conservation and Development
RIGC	Projet de Renforcement des Initiatives pour la Gestion Communautaire des Ressources Forestières et Fauniques
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDO	Senior Divisional Officer
SED	School of Environment and Development University of Manchester

SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SPSS	Statiscal Package for the Social Sciences
SPWFE	Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire
SSA	sub-Saharan African
TCF	Tinto Community Forest
TFAP	Tropical Forest Action Plan
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VARCIG	Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group
VLFCC	Victoria Lands and Forest Conservation Committee
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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Chapter 1

Disrobing utopia: Investigating decentralized forestry in Cameroon

1. Introduction

This study on '*the political ecology of decentralized forest management in Cameroon*' investigates social transformations in Cameroon through a forest resource lens. It seeks to understand social transformation brought about by the adoption of a decentralized forest management policy by the government of Cameroon in 1994. It proceeds through a case study of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council. This institution manages the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest created in 2002 and located in the Mt. Cameroon region – a biodiversity hotspot. Community forestry is the key novelty of Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy and the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council is the foremost local forest management institution in the Mt. Cameroon region.

Advocates of decentralization argue that community-based natural resources management induces local participation, promotes deliberative democracy and exhibit higher levels of accountability, transparency and equity compared with programmes managed by the central state at the local level. This study, based on its findings, argues that forestry programmes, managed by local people for local people, do not have intrinsic qualities that assure higher quality outcomes in terms of the above criteria, compared with centrally administered programmes. The study shows that the local sphere is not socially homogeneous, local actors can and often do have different objectives. The study also shows that the local sphere is embedded in the national and the global, thus elites at higher spatial scales also happen to dictate the tune at the local sphere. The study argues that efficiency and equity are socially determined and are not scalar variables as presented by decentralization theory.

1.2 Framing the study

The study is executed within a political ecology framework. Thus it is attentive to relationships within and between proximate and remote actors concerned with the management of a natural resource. The study is situated within the human geography meta-framework, making it attentive to the historicized relationship between space, place and people. Human geography's qualitative ontological and epistemological foundations make it suitable for understanding contemporary social phenomena. The study pays attention to the spatial and temporal processes that mediate nature-society relationships, noting that nature and society are not independent but are co-productions of the human imaginary.

Decentralization is a social organisational model for managing nature in which the central state is not the sole decision-maker. In this model, the state, private sector and civil society have defined rights, roles, responsibilities and resources, pooled together to manage nature. Decentralization has been in the politics and economics' literature since the end of the Second World War. The discourse gained global prominence in the 1980s when it was co-opted by global institutions including the World Bank. The Bank introduced the discourse into Cameroon forestry landscape in the 1990s and it has created space for the private sector and civil society as frontline actors in forest management alongside the Cameroon government.

Thus this study seeks answers to the following major research questions. Who are the actors behind the adoption of decentralized forestry in Cameroon? How is the Cameroon government responding to devolution of its forest power? How are local people responding to newly devolved forest power? Has decentralized forestry improved local livelihoods and local forest governance? Is decentralized forestry contributing to equitable social transformations in Cameroon?

Decentralized forestry in Cameroon has not only created spaces for logging firms, forest conservationists and local forestry groups, but also made Cameroon a preferential site for global forest research institutions. In 2001, the World Resources Institute (WRI) initiated a study of decentralized forestry in Cameroon. While the findings of this study bear similarities to the results from the WRI study, there is a critical difference. The WRI study did not focus on the impact of spatio-temporal processes across scales on the adoption of decentralized forestry in Cameroon. This study employs spatio-temporal insights from human geography to the investigation of decentralized forestry and social transfromations in Cameroon.

1.3 Cameroon: A brief introduction

Cameroon located in Central Africa is the western boundary of the Congo basin forests. It covers a surface area of 475,000 km^2 and lies between latitudes 2° and 13° N, and longitudes 8° 30´and 16° 10´ E (Figure 1.1 below). It has a humid tropical climate in the south with average rainfall of 4,000mm, while a drier climate dominates as one progresses further north with average rainfall of about 400mm. The western part of the country is rugged due to the Cameroon Mountains range. Mount Cameroon (4100m), the highest peak, is located in Buea along the coast in the south-western part of the country. Debundscha on the sea-ward side of Mt. Cameroon is the second wettest place in the world with annual rainfall of 9,000mm per year.

Cameroon's forest is mainly in the southern part of the country covering five of its ten provinces – South West, Littoral, Centre, South and East Provinces. Transitional forests and wet savanna vegetation dominate the North West, West and Adamawa Provinces in the country's mid-regions, while sudano-sahelian savannas dominate the drier North and Far North Provinces (Figure 1.2 below).



Figure 1.1: Political map of Cameroon

Source: UN Cartographic Section
(http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm)

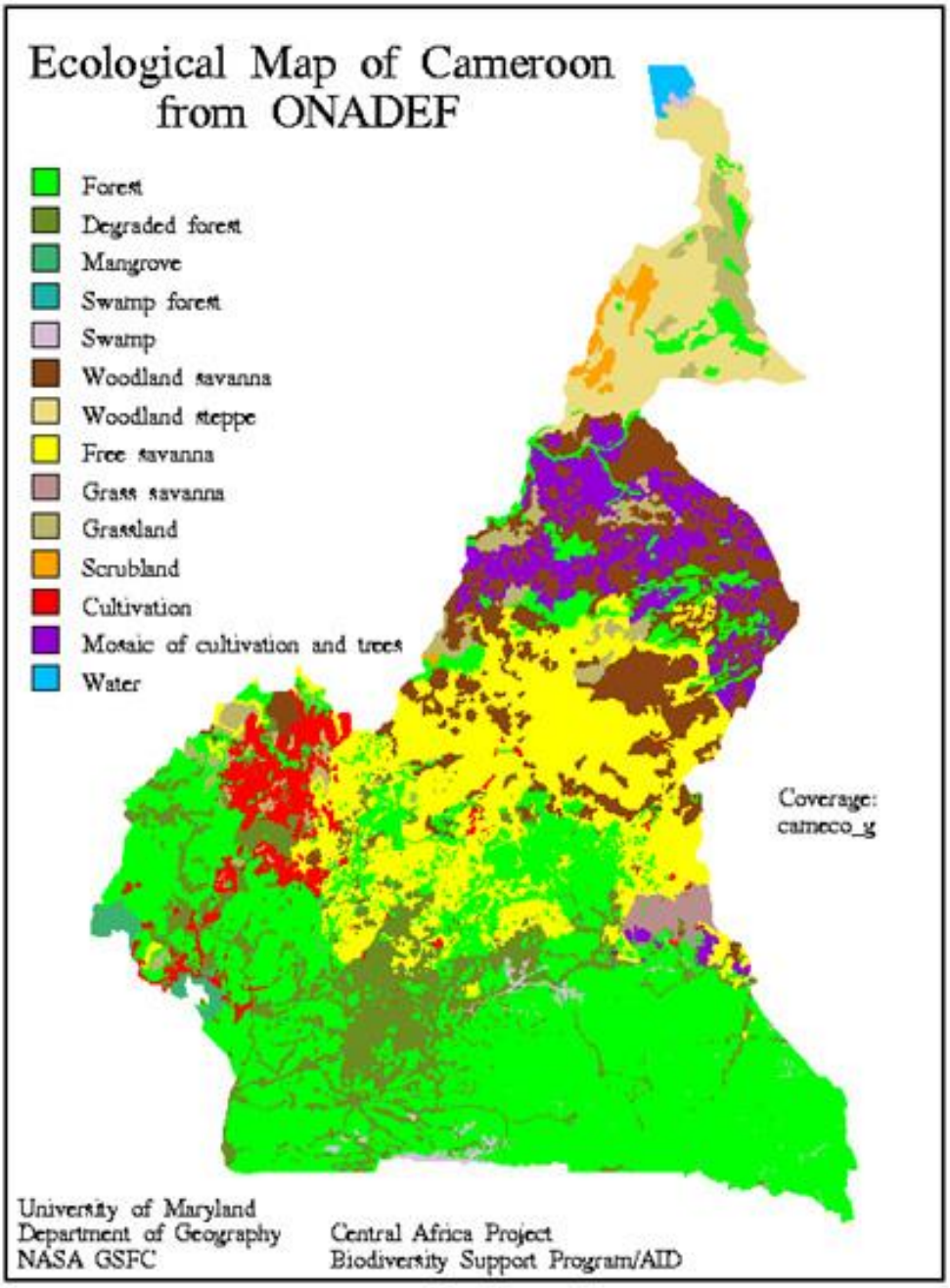


Figure 1.2: Ecological map of Cameroon

Source: University of California Berkeley online vegetation maps (http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/vegmaps.html)
*ONADEF: Office National de Développement des Forêts

Cameroon's biodiversity richness is second in Africa to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It has 156 endemic species of vascular plants, 848 species of birds and 409 species of mammals (including half of higher primates in Africa) (World Bank, 2006). Cameroon is at the forefront of forestry reforms in Central Africa (World Bank, 2006; Karsenty, 2007). The forest sector accounted for 28

percent of export revenue for the government from 1990 – 2000, making it second to petroleum. During the same period forest accounted for 9 percent of GDP and directly employed 12,000 people, making it the largest non-public sector employer. Despite low wages in the sector, it is the main source of cash income for the forest dependent poor, a major source of food and primary source of domestic energy for the poor.

The history of logging in Cameroon for the past century shows that it is a major source of political patronage for the government (Colchester, 1994; Karsenty, 2007). Thus there was a huge rise in logging from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, coinciding with the decade of severe economic crises suffered by the country. The crisis was precipitated by a drastic fall in revenue from Cameroon's commodity exports. It was also a period of political instability triggered by the government's inability to meet its financial obligations to its citizens and by the global clamour for democracy (Mbaku and Takougang, 2004). During this time the government awarded generous logging licenses to its clients to maintain their loyalty in the face of severe political challenges to its legitimacy (Forest Monitor, 2001).

To resolve its economic and political troubles, the government approached the IMF and the World Bank in 1989 for assistance. The World Bank responded with a structural adjustment programme for Cameroon. Conditions attached to this economic rescue package included a comprehensive reform of Cameroon's forest sector.

2. The genesis of this study

This study investigates social transfromations which commenced at a turbulent period in Cameroon's economic and political history. My interest in studying social change through a forest resource lens is rooted in my academic and professional experience. In 1999, on completion of undergraduate studies in Environmental

Science, I was accepted as an intern at the Department for International Development (DFID) funded Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe Cameroon, an integrated conservation and development project (ICDP). The project also received funding from the World Bank through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to carry out social and ecological surveys on Mt. Cameroon a biodiversity hotspot[1].

When I joined the MCP Limbe, I was interested in taxonomy but the World Bank's involvement stirred up a long-held interest I had in understanding the Bank's involvement in Africa. My interests in the World Bank's involvement in Africa dates back to 1989. The year witnessed protest by University students in Nigeria against the World Bank's structural adjustment programme (West Africa, 1989a; 1989b). I was a University student in Nigeria at the time and joined in the protest without fully understanding the issues. My observation was that the Bank's programme had led to job losses for civil servants, currency devaluation, inflation and hardship for everyone. I was shocked at the level of violence that the government unleashed on students through the police and the army sent to stop the students' protest.

The World Bank therefore became associated with structural adjustment, 'riots' and 'violent state repressions' in my mind. When I encountered the World Bank a decade later while working with the MCP Limbe, I was motivated to seek to understand the reasons for and the impact of their involvement in Cameroon. Thus this study is first a personal journey towards understanding why the World Bank's structural adjustment programme in Africa provokes the sort of violence between the state and its citizens that I witnessed two decades ago in Nigeria.

[1] The forests in the Mt. Cameroon region is part of the Guinean Forests of West Africa classified by Conservation International (CI) as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots (see CI, 2009)

3. The outline of the thesis

This thesis shows how social transformations due to decentralized forestry in Cameroon deviates from the utopian pathway predicted by decentralization theory. To answer its major research questions on page 2, the thesis is divided into three parts. The first part, Chapters 1, 2 and 3, show the motivations and theoretical framework that defines the study. The second part, Chapters 4 to 7 provides answers to the major research questions. The last part includes Chapter 8, which relates the locale specific findings of the study to the national and global context, and Chapter 9, which concludes the study with a critique of decentralization theory.

Following Chapter 1 which provides' the motivations for this study and the major research questions, Chapter 2 is a critical and political ecological review of decentralized forest management. It starts with a review of political ecology, arguing that its attention to spatial history of resource use, power, and global-local articulations makes it an appropriate framework for studying contemporary environmental issues. It continues with a critical review of the rise of decentralized forestry as a global discourse; arguing that the discourse's appeal to the political right and the political left is at the heart of contradictions associated with decentralization programmes. The chapter then reviews the literature on decentralized forestry in Cameroon; this shows that the government is unwilling to share substantive power with local groups. The chapter concludes by reiterating the major research questions and introducing related sub-questions arising from the literature review.

Chapter 3 is a reflexive account of the methodology and research journey that has produced this dissertation. It starts with an account of how and why I chose the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest as field research site. It goes on to show that my planned fieldwork for this study was altered by unforeseen events in the field. It

reveals the challenges I faced and how I negotiated access, developed trust, and addressed the various demands of research participants. The chapter draws attention to the broad knowledge base required for, and the significant investment of time, needed to execute multiple methods research. It reflects on positionality, power and ethics of researcher in relation with research participants. The chapter highlights the emotional challenges I experienced on leaving the field, and initiatives taken to 'give' research results 'back' to research participants at the local level.

Chapter 4 is the first of four chapters presenting the findings from this study. It exposes the global, national and local actors and processes, behind the adoption and implementation of Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy in the Mt. Cameroon region. It shows the multiple layers, from the local to the global, of embedding of a seemingly local forestry initiative – the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. It also shows that agents of the state based in national and global scale institutions have successfully penetrated the local forestry sphere in Cameroon. It argues that decentralized forestry has extended the reach of the state to marginal forest groups but has not improved state responsiveness to local needs.

Chapter 5 shows the demography of households in the settlements around the community forest and profiles the stakeholders in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council. The chapter reveals the key tension to implementing Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy in the Mt. Cameroon region. It shows that the dominant non-indigenous population are also the dominant forest users, while the minority indigenous Bakweri dominate decision-making in the management council but are unable to motivate rule compliance. The chapter argues that historic tensions between the non-indigenes and indigenes, has been kindled by a decentralized forestry policy, which privileges indigeneity over citizenship rights.

Chapter 6 assesses revenue generation and benefit sharing by the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council. The chapter first presents a detailed analysis of the revenues and expenditures of the institution from when it became operational in 2001 to 2006 when I left the field. It then assesses benefit sharing between the institution and its stakeholders, showing that some benefits have gone towards personnel remuneration but there has been no significant contribution to local social development initiatives. The chapter argues that the establishment of the community forest is not meeting the poverty-alleviating expectations of its stakeholders. It argues further that the management body has instead successfully achieved the formalisation of a rent extracting system from forest users without substantial representation in decision-making or livelihood enhancement.

Chapter 7 assesses the performance of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council, using transparency, accountability and equity as key criteria. It shows that the executive president answers to no one; the staff are exposed to life-threatening risks while on patrol; the benefit-sharing and sanction mechanisms of the council are weak. It also shows that the indigenes are disappointed with the paltry benefits from the community forest, while the forest users' free-ride when they can get away with it. It concludes that the establishment of the community forests is not achieving the governance objectives in decentralization theory.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings of this study. It argues that donor impact on the lives of people in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo area has been a game of 'musical chairs'. While donors have been dictating policy tunes, the Cameroon government has been the perfidious piper. Local people have been drawn to the game by the 'win-win' rhetoric of the minstrels of the donor community including NGOs, conservation consultants, and pro-government elites. However, the patrimonial political tradition of

the wider Cameroonian state has meant that local people are still being served crumbs from the forestry largesse, while timber companies and global conservation NGOs have the choicest portions. The utopia of social development promised by donor inspired decentralized forestry policy, is arrested by the dystopia of local struggles over forest resources exacerbated by donor inspired privatization policies.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by showing the different ways by which global, national and local structures, processes and agents have institutionalized decentralized forestry in Cameroon. It shows that while the transformations brought about by decentralized forestry manifest and are experienced differently in the local and national sphere, the key considerations in decentralization theory – institutional efficiency and equity, are not spatially differentiated. The chapter argues that undesirable inefficient inequitable institutional variables such as patrimonialism and corruption are observable across scales, thus decentralization theory has a blind spot. Decentralization theory inherently posits that 'local' is beautiful, the findings from this study show that 'local' is simply 'a chip off the old block'.

It is tempting to exclaim that the findings of this study lend credence to the saying that '*the more things change, the more they remain the same',* given that Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy has not yielded a level playing field for all actors. However the thesis does not subscribe to this position, it instead takes the position that '*you can never step into the same river twice'*. Thus the transformations captured in this study while not of apocalyptic proportions are irreversible.

Chapter 2

Decentralized forest management: A critical political-ecological review

1. Introduction

Decentralized forest management promotes the transfer of forest management responsibilities, resources and decision-making power from the central government to other members of the state. These include regional and local tiers of government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs). While decentralization theory has been in the development literature since the 1950s[1], it gained prominence in the biodiversity conservation community after the Rio Summit of 1992. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the major outcome from Rio, articulated a strategy for the management of biological resources (including forest) that assigned roles to marginalized groups – local communities, indigenous people, forest dependent poor people, youths and women. While Rio was not the starting point for calls in support of inclusive forest management regimes, it was the starting point of a global call for action as the CBD was endorsed by world leaders, bilateral, multilateral and key private donor organisations.

This chapter engages in a critical political-ecological review of the literature and theories that underpin decentralized forest management. Section 2 starts off with a review of the development of political ecology as an academic discipline, borne out of the experiences of practitioner academics from diverse fields including ecology, geography and sociology. The section argues that political ecology's attention to spatial history, power, and global-local articulations makes it an appropriate lens for studying normative solutions to contemporary environmental problems. Section 3 follows with a critical

[1] See Alfonso (1997)

review on the origins of decentralized forest management as a global discourse. It argues that the political appeal of the decentralization for 'good governance' discourse to both the political left and right has given it hegemonic legitimacy in development circles. It also argues that the contested interpretation of this discourse is at the heart of the conflict that ensues from decentralization programmes in developing countries.

Section 4 reviews the institutionalisation of decentralized forestry in Cameroon. The section concludes that the unwillingness of the government to share substantive political and economic power with the local populace has led to a 'corrupt decentralization' programme. Section 5, the conclusion, provides a summary of arguments in the preceding sections, introduces the research questions and the case study of this dissertation. It argues that the literature on decentralization shows that it principally serves the interest of actors in the western world with a market-based neo-liberal agenda, and their supporting cast in global institutions such as the World Bank. This is legitimized in the eyes of civil society by an instrumental measured support for civil society empowerment programmes such as community forestry.

2. Political ecology: A lens for understanding 'dystopian' spaces

Political ecology with its epistemological foundations in critical political economy and cultural ecology views ecological phenomena as contingent on environmental, historical and socio-political processes (Wolf, 1972; Robbins, 2004). While this perspective is not limited to political ecology (Latour, 1987; Clarke, 2000; Whatmore, 2002; Beinart and Hughes, 2007), it distinguishes itself by its critical attentiveness to the relationship between proximate and remote actors shaping the

ecological landscape (Peet and Watts, 2004). Given its profoundly critical socio-politico-historical gaze over nature, political ecology has proved to be an extremely dynamic approach for understanding nature-society relations (Rocheleau et al., 1996; Bryant and Bailey, 1997; Paulson et al., 2003; Zimmerer and Bassett, 2003; Robbins, 2004; Paulson and Gezon, 2005). So dynamic that it has defied all scholarly attempts at theorization – the attempt by scholars to map out its ontological, epistemological and spatial boundaries with certitude. Commenting on political ecology's ever-expanding trans-disciplinary horizons Watts (2000) opines that it has 'almost dissolved itself'.

Despite Watts (2000) proclamations, Page (2003) identifies 'five main senses in which the term 'political ecology' has been commonly used'. The first and oldest is ascribed to the school of thought that used ecology as a lens for comprehending political practices, the maxim 'survival of the fittest' and other social Darwinist ideas falls into this category. The second 'sense' is the semantic use of the term as a label for individuals involved in the political spectrum of environmental advocacy – *political* ecologist, while the third 'sense' refers to a school of thought that employed Marxist political theory to expose and critique the politics inherent in the avowed apolitical prescriptions for a better world promoted by political ecologist in the 1970s (see Enzenberger, 1974). Page credits this school of thought for opening the doors to more nuanced Marxist critique of nature-society relations such as Watts (1983), which showed that food availability and famine in Northern Nigeria was not contingent on local ecology but on the insidious negative impact of capitalism on nature-society relations (see also Bryant, 1997; Robbins, 2004).

The fourth ‘sense’ in which the term political ecology is used goes back to Wolf (1972) in his call for ecological anthropologists to be attentive to ‘inter-group relations in wider structural fields’. While this is a critical approach to studying nature-society, Page (2003) distinguishes it from the ‘third sense’, in its lack of interest in Marxist political theory, as its adherents prefer ‘the discourses of welfare and institutional economics or liberal political science’. He argues that some adherents refuse substantively to engage with ecology due to a conviction that politics is the primary driver of ecological change. Page (2003) maintains that the fifth and last sense in which the term political ecology is used refers to a school of thought in cultural ecology that is attentive to the influence of scale and biophysical processes on local ecological phenomena. This school of thought displays a mastery of ecological processes and captures the trans-boundary characteristic and scalar dynamism of local ecological phenomena (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987).

Page’s (2003) analysis would suggest that political ecology has its deepest roots from the social sciences. Unsurprisingly this has created a discipline that is weighted more towards the ‘political’ than the ‘ecological’ – and this constitutes a major critique of the discipline (Vayda and Walters, 1999; Walker, 2005). Thus Neumann (2005) has argued in favour of a political ecology that seriously engages with contemporary dynamic equilibrium concepts in ecology such as ‘complexity’ and ‘uncertainty’. Given the post-structuralists critique of ecological knowledge as socially constructed (Demeritt, 2002; Robbins, 2004), a school of thought in political ecology would continue to view deep engagement with ecology as marginally useful for understanding humanized nature, urbanisation, socio-environmental change, power over and access to ecological landscapes, and the socialization of ecological landscapes across time and space.

A critique of political ecology by Vayda and Walters (1999) is that it privileges community over state and market in the belief that local equals sustainable. They propose a grounded theory approach, which they call 'event ecology', arguing that its strength is that it does not privilege an *a priori* research agenda but seek to understand ecological events holistically – giving equal attention to social and biophysical processes in their spatial and historical richness. While Vayda and Walters (1999) present their approach as novel, it is not because Watts and Peet (1996, p.262) had already warned against an idealist political ecology rooted to the 'notion that ideas exist first and reality, even nature, is their materialization – and its failure to recognize that not everything is socially produced'. Walker (2005) also shows that there are contemporary political ecology studies that do give equal attention to social and biophysical processes.

Lastly political ecology has not engaged with feminist theory in the way it has done with Marxist, positivist and institutional theory. Paulson et al. (2005) note that in early political ecology there is an absence of gender concerns, but political ecology has moved from a narrow androcentrism to an 'analysis of dynamics among multiple, overlapping dimensions of identity' (ibid, p.26). Biersack (2006, p.23) states that 'a *gendered* political ecology provides an indispensable antidote… to the androcentrism of earlier ecologies'. Rocheleau (1995) asserts that 'a feminist political ecology includes a strong but not exclusive focus on gender and seeks to deal with difference of all kinds' from a feminist perspective. Thomas-Slayter et al. (1996, p.289), assert that 'feminist political ecology rejects dualistic constructs of gender and environment in favor of multiplicity and diversity, and emphasizes the complexity and interconnectedness of ecological, economic, and cultural dimensions of environmental change'.

While political ecology is not a coherent theory, what has it contributed to academic scholarship that has made it a popular approach to the study of environmental change in the social sciences? First is the convincing argument it has made that environmental change is inseparably tied to political life and all it entails – narratives, discourses, consensus, contestations, domination, subjugation, resistance, exploitation and liberation. Secondly, its critical outlook made it attractive to Marxists and neo-Marxists seeking a home after the 'impasse in development theory' and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its critical face and concern for social justice also makes it alluring to researchers seeking for alternatives to development not tied to the grand narratives. Its poststructuralist discursive style endears it to social scientists that study environmental change but are not comfortable with the 'positivist' methods of ecological science. Its poststructuralist perspective also opens it up to fruitful collaboration with other research traditions concerned with identity, power and social justice, such as feminism.

Political ecology's attention to spatial history, power, and global-local articulations makes it relevant in studying prescribed solutions to contemporary environmental change, as these solutions are framed and legitimised by hegemonic global discourses (Adger et al., 2001). Insights from political ecology are thus employed in the critical review of the concept and rhetoric of decentralized forest management in section 3 below. Section 3 shows that decentralized forestry has evolved from a discourse championed by a small band of conservationists concerned with the fate of people affected by protected areas, to a mainstream discourse embraced by global development institutions, governments, academics, and conservation NGOs. The section also identifies key actors advocating for decentralized forestry and their incentives for doing so.

3. Decentralized forests management: Utopia or more of the same?

Decentralized forest management is an umbrella term for forest management strategies that make room for local people in forest policy decision-making and implementation (Ribot, 2002). This is in contrast to centralized forestry, which placed all decision-making powers over forest resources in the hands of central governments and failed to recognize the rights of forest dependent people on local forest resources. Decentralized forestry has its origins both in the community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) discourse from the biodiversity conservation community, and in decentralization theory from political science (Bankauskaite and Saltman, 2007; Tacconi, 2007; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2008). This double heritage implies that decentralized forestry is both an approach to conserving the world forest resources and a political strategy for the organisation of social life (Alfonso, 1997; Kaufman, 1997). This section critically reviews the origins of decentralized forestry and goes on to argue that contemporary decentralization initiatives have been hampered by the prevailing political culture.

3.1 Origins of decentralized forestry: Community-based natural resource management

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), also referred to as community based conservation (CBC) has its roots in anti-fortress conservation discourse (Brandon and Wells, 1992; Allen and Edwards, 1995; Hulme and Murphree, 2001; Brockington, 2002). Fortress conservation is a euphemism for the school of thought, which posits that biodiversity conservation is best achieved through the appropriation of land as national parks free from human occupation. This extreme view can be traced back to the 19th century American conservationists Samuel Bowles (Brockington et al., 2008).

At the time, industrialisation and urbanization had led to biological decimation of the Eastern American landscape and much of Western Europe. This produced a movement within American elite circles, which was then exported to Europe, for an unspoilt landscape where 'man' could be one with 'wild nature' again.

While Samuel Bowles articulated the most extreme views at the time that native-Americans (indigenous people) had no place in preserved landscapes, the American movement had other champions such as George Catlin, George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and the big-game hunter – President Theodore Rooselvelt (1901-09), with less extreme views on human presence in protected landscapes (Spence, 2000; LOC, 2009). The first landscape set aside in America for conservation in 1864, Yosemite Valley Grant, initially had human presence but was emptied of people by 1905 when its status was changed into a national park by President Roosevelt. The contemporary idea of protected areas without people is traced back to the 1872 establishment of the Yellowstone National Park in America's mid-west region (Brockington et al., 2008).

This elite longing for unspoilt nature coincided with the colonial project by the European powers of the day in Africa. Stories of African forests teeming with wildlife made its way to Europe and America through colonial officers, missionaries and adventurers (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Adams and McShane, 1992; Jepson and Whittaker, 2002; Adams, 2003; 2004). These narratives of Africa aligned with a prevalent mercantilist interpretation of the Judeo-Christian belief of 'mans dominion over nature', had the effect of conjuring images of wild African forests opened to human European conquests. The African forest became an irresistible draw for both the fortune hunter and trophy hunter (Mackenzie, 1987; Colchester, 1994; Adams, 2004).

By the end of the 19th century, there was concern amongst elite trophy hunters that poorly conceived colonial forestry regulations in Africa were decimating its wildlife; this directly led to the formation in 1903 of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (SPWFE) in England (Prendergast and Adams, 2003). The SPWFE was made up of highly influential personalities including Edward North Buxton (founder), Lord Milner, Frederick Selous, and President Roosevelt. It worked with British colonial governments in East and Southern Africa to regulate the hunting of wildlife. Its activities paved the way for the establishment of protected areas in Africa along the Yellowstone 'fortress conservation' model of protected areas without people. This model of conservation does not just impose 'wilderness' in once human-dominated landscapes but is accompanied by incalculable socio-economic costs (Brockington et al., 2008).

The first protected area along the Yellowstone model in Africa was the King Albert National Park (now Virunga National Park) established in 1925 through the efforts of King Albert of Belgium (Adams, 2004). While the establishment of protected areas in Africa has colonial roots, the practice has been continued by all of postcolonial sub-Saharan African (SSA) states. The reasons for this include financial gains to the state in terms of tourist incomes, strengthening of post-colonial state control over land-use, reduced cost of maintaining security at national borders when the park(s) are located in border regions, and access to donor funds linked to the establishment of protected areas (Levine, 2002; Igoe, 2003). These African parks are in human-dominated landscapes and their creation has had negative social impact on the people living next to them (Science, 1997; Redford and Richter, 1999; Western, 2000; Brockington, 2002).

In the case of the Amboseli National Park in Kenya, Western (1994) describes how the Masai went on an indiscriminate killing of wildlife in the park, in protest against the loss of livelihoods they suffered due to the creation of the park. This type of people-park conflict was a common feature in places with protected areas, and gave rise to loud calls for the participation of local people in park management (Brandon and Wells, 1992; Murphree, 1994; Poffenberger and McGean, 1996; Kothari et al., 1998; Adams and Hulme, 2001a; Hughes and Flintan, 2001). Advocates of participatory management hope it would provide benefit to local people from parks in their region, reduce hostility and increase cooperation in park protection. Brooks et al. (2006) argue that protected areas with community involvement are more effective at delivering biodiversity conservation compared with those having poor community relations.

The voices of these advocates led to the design of integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), which became the main vehicle for biodiversity conservation and social development in the 1990s (Gezon, 1997). However, ICDPs have been criticized on two fronts; firstly, fortress conservationists hold that it detracts from the urgent task of saving species in peril and that local people can't be conservationist due to their utilitarian views of wildlife. These critics maintain that ICDPs fail to achieve either biodiversity or development objectives (Oates, 1995; 1999; Gartlan, 1998; Spinage, 1998; 1999a; 1999b; 2002). Secondly, sustainable use advocates hold that ICDPs pay lip service to participation, that local people should not just be consulted when project managers feel like it, but should be equal partners in all aspects of project design and park management so that their needs are considered no less equal to those of other stakeholders (Brechin et al., 2002, Wilshusen et al., 2002).

While ICDPs were implemented mainly in protected area landscapes, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) raised a concern that protected areas in isolation from the surrounding human-dominated landscapes would become unviable ecological islands (IUCN, 1992). This opened up space for conceiving conservation strategies outside protected areas (Brandon and Wells, 1992; Western and Wright, 1994; Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Adams and Hulme, 2001a; Adams, 2001; IUCN, 2003). The argument for conservation outside protected areas was also strengthened by the recognition that 90 percent the earth's landscape is outside protected areas (Primack, 2000). Developing effective conservation strategies in these human-dominated landscapes is considered as possibly the biggest challenge, facing conservationists in the twenty-first century (IUCN, 1980; IUCN, 1991; Redford and Stearman, 1993; FAO, 1999; Berkes et al., 2002).

In human-dominated landscapes, engagement with local resource users is simply unavoidable. This led conservationists to look beyond their profession to fields that dealt with understanding the organization of social life including anthropology, cultural ecology, economics, geography, history, political science, and sociology (Cannon et al., 1996; Jacobson, 2005). This partly explains the position of informed observers that conservation strategies in human-dominated landscapes such as community-based natural resources management lack a distinct theoretical core (Western and Wright, 1994; Kellert et al., 2000; Adams and Hulme, 2001a; 2001b). Thus conservation activities in human-dominated landscapes involve a multitude of actors who do not always share the same ontological and epistemological persuasions (Hughes, 2006).

However, it is these plethora of actors including conservationists with protectionists and communitarian persuasions; academics with postmodern leanings; development practitioners; donor institutions; right and left wing politicians; international and local NGOs; and governments in developing countries eager to attract donor funds; that have made the concept of community based natural resources management a global hegemonic discourse (Attwell and Cotterill, 2000; Adams, 2001). Despite this mishmash, Adams and Hulme (2001a) state that community conservation involves 'principles and practices that argue that conservation goals should be pursued by strategies that emphasize the role of local residents in decision-making about natural resources'. Western and Wright (1994), also state that community conservation is 'natural resources or biodiversity protection by, for, and with the local community'.

Advocates of the concept maintain that it is a socio-ecological process that empowers local people while delivering biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation (Holmes and Scoones, 2001; Mayers et al., 2002; Ribot, 2002; Wily, 2002; Moseley, 2003). Advocates assert that granting local communities *de jure* decision-making powers over natural resources is a prerequisite for its effective management (FAO, 1999; Ribot, 2002; Wily, 2002). Moseley (2003) goes on to assert that community based conservation is "highly participatory at the local level… It is a form of deliberative or strong democracy in which participants use extensive discussion and experimentation to develop creative solutions to the problems that they identify." This political angle to CBNRM is developed further by a school of thought that maintain that it is a key entry point towards wider donor led governance reforms in developing countries (Holmes and Scoones, 2001; Brown et al., 2002; DFID, 2002; Mayers et al., 2002).

The governance argument is based on the premise that 'participation' is a deliberative democratic exercise that builds civic values of accountability, transparency and equity. This overtly political argument suited the neo-liberal project of western governments in the 1990s and they fully embraced community based conservation as the resource management model of choice for developing countries (Alfonso, 1997). Consequently support for community based conservation received global approval with the inclusion of Article 10d in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) crafted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 (UN, 1993). Article 10d commits governments and other signatories to the CBD to 'support local populations to develop and implement remedial action in degraded areas where biological diversity has been reduced'.

The Rio summit heightened political interest in natural resource management, which, in turn, revived interest in the concepts of 'community' and 'participation' among natural resource managers and researchers (Kaufman, 1997; Swaminathan, 2000; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Biesbrouck, 2002). Given the consensus at Rio that the cost of conserving biological resources in developing countries would be financed mainly through bilateral and multilateral aid (article 20 and 21 of the CBD), western governments and multilateral organisations including the World Bank made participatory natural resources management a condition for aid (see Seymour and Dubash, 2000).

Bilateral and multilateral aid organisations guided by the foreign policies of western governments strongly advocated for 'participation' in the 1990s as a panacea to what was considered corrupt and inept governance in developing countries. The political argument was that 'participation' is a deliberative democratic process and thus results in greater accountability compared with representative democracy (Dryzek, 2000; Fishkin

and Laslett, 2003). Dunn (1992) maintains that deliberative democracy was the preferred model in ancient Greece at the onset of democratic governance. The rise of the representative model is traced to political theorists such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and John Stuart Mill. Young (2000) notes that the appeal of the deliberative model for western government was not only because they felt it is right for developing countries, but was also a response to the loss of faith in representative democracy by the citizenry in the west as evidenced by low voter turn-out during periodic elections.

Critics of deliberative democracy argue that it has high transaction costs (Grogan and Gusmano, 2001; Lupia, 2004; Posner, 2004). These also argue that the most articulate and uninhibited individuals would easily capture the deliberative process and scuttle robust participation by all. Posner (2004) goes even further to argue that the deliberative model has the potential of fanning social tensions, which could consequently lead to a state of anarchy. Ostrom's (1998) design principles for building effective local participatory natural resource management institutions, addresses some of the concern about local participatory resource management processes. Ostrom's (1998) principles showed in Table 2.1 below, aim at instituting accountability, transparency and equity in local participatory resource management initiatives. It also aims at opening up space for deliberations and the effective use of sanctions to deter free riders.

Table 2.1: Design Principles for effective local natural resource management

No.	Principle	Description
1	Clearly Defined Boundaries	Individuals or households with rights to withdraw resource units from the common-pool resource and the boundaries of the common-pool resource itself are clearly defined
2	Congruence	A The distribution of benefits from appropriation rules is roughly proportionate to the costs imposed by provision rules
		B Appropriation rules restricting time, place, technology, and/or quantity of resource units are related to local conditions
3	Collective-Choice Arrangements	Most individuals affected by operational rules can participate in modifying operational rules
4	Monitoring	Monitors, who actively audit common-pool resource conditions and appropriator behaviour, are accountable to the appropriators and/or are the appropriators themselves
5	Graduated Sanctions	Appropriators who violate operational rules are likely to receive graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offense) from other appropriators, from officials accountable to these appropriators, or from both
6	Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms	Appropriators and their officials have rapid access to low-cost, local arenas to resolve conflict among appropriators or between appropriators and officials
7	Minimal Recognition of Rights to Organize	The rights of appropriators to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities
For common-pool resources that are part of larger systems:		
8	Nested enterprises	Appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises

Source: Ostrom (1998)

While Ostrom's (1998) principles are functionally useful, they do not address the presence of local power asymmetries which lead to elite capture of local initiatives (Cleaver and Franks, 2005; Brockington, 2008). Cleaver and Franks (2005) in their critique of institutional design theories, show that these principles are mechanistic, failing to recognize that people and institutions are embedded in socially complex spaces. In a similar exercise to Ostrom (1990), Adams and Hulme (2001b) provide conditions for effective local forest resource management shown in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2: Conditions for effective local forest resource management

No.	Context	Likely to succeed	Unlikely to succeed
1	Forest resource harvest	Beneficial over the long term	Short term benefits
2	Market for forest product	Available over the long term	Unavailable over the long term
3	Abundance of forest resource	High	Low
4	Donor investment	Long-term	Short-term
5	Devolution of power to local community	Genuine and respected by state actors	Token and disregarded by state actors
6	Non-monetary values of nature	Present within local community	Absent

Source: Adapted from Adams and Hulme (2001b)

Adams and Hulme (2001b) identify market forces (conditions 1-3), power relations (conditions 4-5) and lastly ecocentrism as important factors for effective resource management. While their perspective is much broader than Ostrom (1990), it is problematic to imagine a harmonious relationship between market-oriented stakeholders and ecocentric stakeholders. A power tussle would arguably develop in institutions having both sets of stakeholders with at least three possible outcomes:

i. The market-oriented stakeholders win and rule the roost;

ii. The ecocentrists win;

iii. A precarious peace maintained by a higher level institution.

The first outcome would deplete the resource, leaving the institution the bill of renewing the resource; the second outcome keeps the resource but limits livelihood options, and the third outcome needs an impartial arbiter – a very scarce commodity.

No set of design principles are silver bullets. Critiques of participatory processes have shown that institutional design principles have not prevented ineffective participation in scenarios involving large groups, high heterogeneity, patriarchy, inequitable individual cognitive and resource endowments (Vira, 1997; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Grogan and Gusmano, 2001; Lupia, 2004). In addition, there is the difficulty of respecting resource boundaries in fluid societies with multiple social networks such as those involving nomadic pastoralists (Brockington, 2002). Other difficulties include unequal access to information, suppression of critical voice by local leaders, psychological cost of enforcing sanctions against kith and kin.

Post-modernist critiques have also questioned the appropriateness of transposing western concepts of social reality such as nature, participation, democracy and development into non-western societies. It is argued that these concepts have been used by western governments to legitimize their dominant power relations from the colonial era to date (Escobar, 1995; Fairhead and Leach, 1995; Williams, 1998; Lanz 2000; Hariman, 2005). As the 1990s came to a close, participatory natural resource management projects came under the scrutiny of academics and donors wanting to know how well they were performing (Wyckoff-Baird *et al*., 2000).

The findings were that some of these projects had not lived up to expectations; protected area advocates rehashed the argument that local people cannot sustainably manage biological resources, advocates of 'participation' sought for explanations within the governance framework undergirding these projects (FAO, 1998[2]; Ribot, 1999). It was at this time that 'decentralization' began receiving close attention from natural resource

[2] FAO in 1998 published a special themed issue of their forestry journal '*Unasylva*' containing proceedings from the FAO 1997 workshop on 'Pluralism and Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development', this expert workshop was a precursor to the much larger 'Technical Consultation on Decentralization'

management scholars. Two events during this period contributed in popularizing 'decentralization' to a broader audience in natural resource management, the 1996 World Bank publication on 'Decentralization and Biodiversity Conservation'[3], and the Rome 1997 FAO/UNCDF/IFAD/GTZ/SDC/World Bank workshop on 'Technical Consultation on Decentralization'[4]. The workshop brought together over a hundred policy-makers, practitioners and academics (including political theorist) from across the globe.

In 2002, the World Resources Institute (WRI) based in Washington D.C. organized the 'Bellagio Conference on Decentralization and the Environment' in Bellagio, Italy. The conference brought together researchers from Africa, Asia and South America. The principal publication from this conference '*Democratic Decentralization of Natural Resources*' has strongly impacted contemporary thinking about decentralized natural resource management. The conference was facilitated by Jesse Ribot, the pre-eminent scholar on decentralized natural resource management (Ribot, 2002). Since Bellagio, Ribot and his associates have published extensively and presented their results to practitioners and policy makers in national and global institutions. Thus WRI has played a major role in popularizing decentralization of natural resource management.

The next section turns its attention to a critical review of the concept of decentralized natural resource management. The section proceeds by first providing definitions of decentralization before moving on to considering its political and governance ramifications for natural resources management. The section shows that decentralization has contested political interpretations and it is therefore failing to redress inequitable power relations in natural resource management.

[3] The publication is online at http://go.worldbank.org/EH0T7GBD41
[4] Workshop proceedings are available at http://193.43.36.103/sd/RODirect/ROfo0003.htm; definitions of all the abbreviations are in the abbreviations page

3.2 Making decentralized forestry work: The political battleground

Decentralization is popularly defined in natural resource management literature as the 'transfer of powers from the central government to lower level actors and institutions' and the 'transfer of control over resources from the state to local communities' (Tacconi, 2007). Ribot (2002, p.4) defines decentralization as 'any act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy'. He goes further to identify three types of decentralization – democratic decentralization, administrative decentralisation, and privatization. Box 2.1 provides an explanation of Ribot's typology.

Box 2.1: Types of decentralization

Privatization – transfer of power to non-state actors such as corporate firms, NGOs, community based organisations (CBOs), and unelected individuals (chiefs) for the provision of goods and services; undemocratic and exclusive

Administrative decentralization (deconcentration) – transfer of resources and responsibilities to regional auxiliaries of government appointed from the centre and accountable primarily to the central government; weak form of decentralization

Political or democratic decentralization (devolution) – transfer of resources and responsibilities to regional auxiliaries of government elected by regional constituency and primarily accountable to regional electorate; strong form of decentralization

Source: Ribot (2002)

Ribot (2004) emphasises that devolution, the transfer of resources and responsibilities to regional auxiliaries of government elected by regional constituency and primarily accountable to regional electorate, is required for effective local stewardship of natural resources. He notes that this transfers democratic decision-making powers to local actors, promotes accountability and strengthens citizenship rights. He contrast this with

the transfer of powers to traditional leaders, NGOs, private firms, and appointed civil administrators, groups that are structurally unaccountable to the local populace. Ribot (2004) asserts that governments have opted for weak decentralization as this allows them to ease the burden on central administration without ceding political power and the economic benefits it confers, to civil society. Ribot's observation is in line with Lutz and Caldecott (1996) assertion that decentralisation is a contested political process.

Perusing the political economy and political science literature reveals that decentralisation has three theoretical foundations (Rondinelli and Nellis, 1986; Schuurman, 1997; Manor, 1999; Helmsing, 2002; Rodriguez-Pose and Gill, 2003):

i. Economic theory with its focus on efficiency
ii. Right-wing political theory with a focus on reducing the role of the state
iii. Left-wing political theory with a focus on participation and democracy

Silver (2003), shows that the first wave of decentralization in developing countries was in the 1970s at the request of donors, concerned with economic efficiency. This led to programmes on improving the capacity of the state for efficient service delivery. The next wave, which was still donor-led, commenced in the 1980s and focused on reducing the role of the state by transferring public service delivery to the private sector.

The second wave accompanied structural adjustment programmes prescribed by donors for developing countries experiencing financial crises. It was argued that to reduce the financial burden of the state and improve the delivery of social services to the citizenry, government should hand over public services to the private entrepreneur. The advocates of privatization argued that the profit-motive would ensure that entrepreneurs provide efficient services or risk losing their business to the competition. The

privatization solution was championed by right-wing political leaders in Washington DC and London, who ignored observations that crony capitalism, monopoly, oligopoly, and cartels show that inefficiency and profit-making can co-exist (Mitchell, 1999; Korten, 2001; Chang, 2002; Shorrock, 2002). Unsurprisingly, privatization failed to improve service delivery for the poor in developing countries (Mitchell, 1999; Daley, 2006).

The third wave of the 1990s was donor-led decentralization for good governance. The focus was on improving responsiveness of government to the needs of the citizenry. This was to be achieved through left-wing populist political rhetoric of participation and empowerment of local people. The argument is that bringing government closer to local people increases its responsiveness to local needs and reduces the transaction cost of demanding accountability from government. Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall (2008) assert that decentralization attacks 'the concept of power wielded at a distance, which neo-liberals consider unfeeling and unresponsive in terms of the market, while those on the left consider it unfeeling and unresponsive in regard to citizens'. They argue that the appeal of 'decentralization for good governance' to both the political left and right has led to its hegemonic status in development circles.

The appeal of decentralization to advocates of both privatization and community empowerment is at the heart of resultant tensions from decentralization (Craig and Mayo, 1995; Handler, 1996)[5]. Efforts to roll back the state through transfer of service delivery functions to the private sector and to empower local people to manage resources have inevitably led to social conflict. This is because of the huge economic benefits accruing to the private sector while local people still remain poor (Vermeulen et al., 2003;

[5] The literature on decentralization including the highly cited Crook and Manor (1998) do not adequately explore the resultant effect of the co-optation of decentralization by the political left and right

Swyngedouw, 2005). Contemporary decentralization discourse is trying to please two political and ideological masters, an impossible task (Andersson, 2004; Batterbury and Fernando, 2006; Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008).

In recognition of the inherent difficulty of pleasing all parties in natural resource management, Anderson *et al*. (2007) in a seminal article published in 1998[6] in *Unasylva* and re-published in 2007 state that:

> 'Conflicts are inevitable and cannot be (permanently) resolved. At best they can be temporarily managed. While specific disputes may be resolved, many natural resource management and rural development situations are characterized by a complex interaction among social, political, cultural, economic and scientific aspects that defies either quick or enduring resolution'.

Suzuki (2005, p.40), in a study on decentralization and conflict in natural resource management using case studies from Cambodia and Philippines, asserts that 'conflictual outcomes are not inherently negative, and that such conflict may be harnessed to redress existing power imbalances within structures internal and external to communities'. She argues, however, that the source of this conflict is the insufficient and sometimes insincere efforts of government to decentralize.

This mirrors Ribot's (2004, p.2) observation that 'governments simply proclaim that they are decentralizing and enact a theatrical image of reform for their donor audiences'. Adamolekun (1991) argues that 'political decentralization has a potentially negative consequence which often reduces its attraction for policy-makers. Although the emphasis on local political participation is expected to promote a sense of belonging to

[6] See Anderson J., Clément J. and Crowder L.V., (1998) Accommodating Conflicting Interests in Forestry - Concepts Emerging from Pluralism, *Unasylva* 194 (49): 3 – 10

the state, it could simply promote a sense of belonging to the ethnic group at the expense of the nation-state'. Thus the ground war over decentralization is related to the legitimacy of government to make decisions for its citizens in the face of contestations from sub-national polities and interest groups (Gerring et al., 2005; McClaughry, 2008). Related to this is the question how equitable is benefit-sharing from territorial husbandry?

On a global scale, interests groups in the form of multinational corporations and their owners, call the shots with strong backing from the World Bank and other bilateral/multilateral donors (Wade, 2001; Stiglitz, 2002; Mehrotra and Delamonica, 2005; Hall, 2007; Stiglitz, 2008)[7]. At the national scale the cards are stacked in favour of government functionaries and their business associates and at the local level, local elites rule the roost (Platteau, 2004; Daley, 2006; Larson and Ribot, 2007). Veron et al. (2006) have aptly termed contemporary skewed decentralization initiatives as 'corrupt decentralization'. They argue that this inevitably produces 'decentralized corruption' where practices such as unaccountable use of financial resources by elites in governments get transferred to the local level through the actions of local elites.

Veron et al. (2006) observation about 'decentralized corruption' questions the covert assumption in the decentralization literature that resources transferred to the local level as part of decentralization initiatives will be judiciously managed. The last part of this section takes a closer look at the dynamics resource transfer and local corruption.

[7] Stiglitz (2008) argues cogently in this commentary that privatization due to the rule of neo-liberal free market economics while profiting a few has been a disastrous policy prescription for the global economy, see http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/stiglitz101

3.3 Decentralization, resource transfer and local corruption

Ribot (2004; 2005; 2006) argues governments often transfer responsibilities to local institutions without transferring resources. He asserts that this keeps them tied to the state and makes them unaccountable to their local stakeholders. McGee at al., (2003) note that resources are not just needed for institutional activities but are also needed to support the cost of participation of stakeholders. McGee et al., (2003, p. 54) assert that advocates of decentralization have not paid adequate attention to 'how mechanisms and processes of citizen participation are themselves to be resourced, or any recognition of the cost-benefit calculations that citizens will make in deciding whether to engage in local governance processes or not'. They argue that decentralization programmes require resource transfer not just for local activities but also to build capacity to participate.

Larson et al., (2007) studied forest decentralization in South America using the sustainable livelihood analytical framework. They argue that decentralization requires an increase in local people's natural capital and call for changes in land tenure to allow collective ownership rather than management rights. They maintain that local people may not also benefit from forest resources due to the cost of complying with state regulations; their low human and social capital weakens their access and influence on decision-makers (see also Ribot and Peluso, 2003). In addition, low savings and poor credit means local groups lack financial capital, while living on marginal lands leaves them low on physical capital. They argue that decentralization requires resources to improve the five bases of capital for local groups or else it would be too expensive for them to afford. However, they observe that without government commitment to equity, decentralization may not work just by devolving power and resources to local groups.

Brockington (2008) shows that resource transfer to the local level, does not guarantee equitable benefit sharing. He examines the impact of corruption on decentralized forestry in Tanzania by comparing the operations of village level government with village forestry committees. He shows that old corrupt practices apparent in village government did not disappear but found their way into newly created village forestry committees. Brockington (2008) is instructive because Tanzania has one of the longest running decentralization processes in Africa, from Ujamaa after independence in 1961 to contemporary neo-liberalization (Maro and Mlay, 1979; Ergas, 1980; Mukandala, 1998; Mniwasa and Shauri, 2001; Kelsall, 2002; Crook, 2003; Ibhawoh and Dibua, 2003). Lessons from Tanzania are that apparent ideological consensus (Ujamaa) is no guarantor of policy success and that corruption does not disappear because new models of resource control have come into effect.

In summary the literature reviewed herein argue for the corresponding transfer of resources to the local level alongside the transfer of responsibilities. The literature further argues for the provision of resources to build the capacity of local institutions to comprehend, embrace and beneficially engage with decentralization programmes. However, the literature also points out that wider social issues such as equity and corruption can derail decentralization programmes. The chapter now turns its attention closer to home with a critical review of the institutionalization of a decentralized forestry policy in Cameroon. Community forestry is the key novelty in this policy, thus the review is focused on the institutionalization of community forestry in Cameroon.

4. Decentralized forestry in Cameroon: Crafting utopia in smoke-filled rooms

In 1994, the Cameroon government enacted a new forestry, wildlife and fisheries law no. 94-01 of 20 January, which decentralized the forestry sector (Bigombe, 2003; Etoungou, 2003; Oyono, 2004a). The new law replaced the 1983 forest policy, which concentrated power in the forestry sector with the government (Egbe, 1997; Ekoko, 2000). The government's interest in the forestry sector greatly increased in the late 1980s because of the collapse of the international commodity market in cocoa, coffee, cotton, and petroleum. This severely reduced government export revenue, so it turned to timber exportation to boost revenues (Eba'a Atyi, 1998). A 100 percent increase in the volume of exported timber occurred from 1989-1996, making export revenues from timber second only to crude oil (Eba'a Atyi, 1998). The government's interest in timber was also influenced by its acute need for financial resources to maintain its neo-patrimonial networks across the country (Gabriel, 1999; Forest Monitor, 2001).

Logging permits were routinely awarded to key government allies who in turn sold these to private logging firms (Glastra, 1999; Forest Monitor, 2001). The clandestine nature of these business deals enabled the logging firms routinely to over exploit their concession while paying as little in taxes as they could get away with. By the time the government sought assistance from the IMF/World Bank in 1988 for its economic woes[8], and the first aid package was agreed, the forest sector was riddled with corruption (Forest Monitor, 2001). Given the agrarian base of the country, civil servants and private sector employees who lost their jobs due to the economic downturn simply returned back to subsistence farming as a coping mechanism (Sunderlin and Pokam, 2002). Increased

[8] The government's economic troubles was not only because of the crash in international commodity prices, but also because its western partners principally France were no more willing to bail it out through bilateral aid due to the wind of neo-liberalism in the west (Gabriel, 1999)

farming and logging activities accelerated the rate of forest loss in Cameroon; increased logging without improvements in socio-economic conditions in logging areas also led to violent confrontation between local actors and logging firms (Bigombe, 2003). The neo-liberal political discourse across the globe at the time also fuelled national demands for political reforms from a one-party authoritarian to a multi-party democratic state.

The state forcefully opposed this democratic push but could not restrain it (Brunner and Ekoko, 2000). The political opposition also questioned government's stewardship of revenues from exploitation of natural resources including timber. This was the socio-economic and political context under which Cameroon accepted the IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programme, which specifically tied aid to forestry reforms (Brunner and Ekoko, 2000; World Bank, 2000). The Bretton Woods institutions therefore played a key role in the enactment of the 1994 forest policy, which makes provision for:

i. Protection of Cameroon's biodiversity in line with her commitment to the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) (Part 2, 4 and 5)
ii. Transfer of tenure rights to municipal authorities in the form of council forest not exceeding 50,000 hectares (Part 3, Chapter 1, Section 2)
iii. Transfer of managerial rights to local communities in the form of community forest not exceeding 5000 hectares (Part 3, Chapter 2)
iv. Mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in the timber sector (Part 3, Chapters 3 – 6)
v. Fiscal decentralisation of timber royalties between the central government, municipal authorities, and village communities (Part 3, Chapter 4, section 68)

The novel provisions of the law are (ii), (iii) and (v) above, which creates space for local people in forest resource management. The provision for the sharing of timber royalties between the state, municipal authority hosting the timber concession and villages around the concession specified that this was to be in 5:4:1 ratio respectively. This policy is currently operational but informed observers note that royalties paid to the municipal authorities and villages are poorly managed (Oyono et al., 2006; Lakim, 2008). The policy on council forest (ii) is not fully elaborated so local municipalities are not clear on how to obtain council forest just yet (Oyono et al., 2007). The novel provision that is more comprehensively elaborated and implemented by the government, with substantial funding from foreign donors is that on community forest, (iii) above, (Brown and Shreckenberg, 2001). The section below critically reviews the institutionalisation of community forestry in Cameroon, showing its policy shortcomings.

4.1 Institutionalising community forestry

The list of definitions in the Prime Ministers decree on how to implement the new law (MINEF, 1998a), omits defining 'community', the key concept that makes the new law different from the old. Article 3(11) of the decree defined a community forest as:

> '…part of the non-permanent forest, which is covered by a management agreement between a village community and the Forestry Administration. Management of such forest is the responsibility of the village community concerned, with the help or technical assistance of the Forestry Administration.'

Article 3(16) states that a management agreement is:

> ‘a contract by virtue of which the service in charge of forestry allots to a community, a portion of national forest, which the community manages, preserves and exploits in its own interest. The management agreement is accompanied by a simple management plan which determines the activities to be carried out’.

The Prime Minister’s decree in equating community forest with ‘village community’ in article 3(11) created space for ethnocentric interpretations of ‘community’.

Article 3(11) and 3(16) of the Prime Ministers decree makes it clear that the state was not transferring ownership over the forest but managerial rights overseen by the forestry department. The decree states that the management rights are granted for 25 years, and the management contract is to be reviewed every five-years. If the forestry department is not satisfied with management, it has the right to terminate the contract. The implication is that full decision-making rights still reside with the central authorities.

Article 28(3) states that local groups applying for a community forest ‘must have the status of a corporate body, in the form of an entity provided for by the laws in force’. This ruled out traditional structures from applying for community forests, as these do not have statutory recognition in Cameroon. It rather opened up the community forestry process to elite capture, as these were more conversant with the bureaucratic process required for setting up the type of legal entity required by government.

By limiting community forest to the non-permanent forest estate (degraded forest areas that could be assigned to other land use options), government ensured that the state held on to the more economically viable forest areas (Hoare, 2006).

In 1998, the forestry department published the manual for obtaining community forest (MINEF, 1998b), which sets out the required procedures for local groups as shown in Table 2.3 on next page. There is consensus that the community forestry process is technically and financially beyond the means of local groups (Mandondo, 2003; Adeleke, 2006). It is estimated that the process cost between £1,500-2,500 with donor political support or between £4,000-16,000 without donor support (Adeleke, 2006).

The government citing lack of technical and financial resources to operationalize the new policy, entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements with donors for implementation. These include the IMF/World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the European Union (EU); the US Agency for International Development (USAID); the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); the Department for International Department (DFID); the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ); and Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). These continue to exert significant influence in on-going governance reforms in Cameroon (Rogersom et al., 2006) with the IMF/World Bank being the main driver of reforms (GoC, 2006).

Observers maintain that the new forest policy is the product of relentless donor pressure on the government (Egbe, 1997; Ekoko, 2000; Brunner and Ekoko, 2000). While the government openly accepted donor forest policy prescriptions, it ensured that the regulatory decrees of the 1994 forest law re-established executive control over the sector. Kelsall (2002) uses the metaphors of 'shop windows' and 'smoke-filled rooms' to describe this dual contradictory state response to donor pressures. 'Shop windows' refers to public response that gives the right signals to donors, and 'smoke-filled rooms' to the politically expedient decisions made in donor-excluded spaces.

Table 2.3: Steps required for obtaining a community forest in Cameroon

Steps	Activity	Objective
1.	Sensitisation meetings	To generate awareness about community forest
2.	Setting up corporate body (association, co-operatives, common initiative groups)	To comply with community forest law which recognizes only legal entities
3.	Inventory and demarcation of the forest boundaries	To obtain knowledge of the resource and design social fence around resource
4.	Consultation meeting involving all appropriate stakeholders	To entertain objections and obtain broad local consensus on the process
5.	Appoint a forest management officer (FMO)	To manage forest and liaise with forestry department
6.	Submitting an application for a community forest to the forestry department	To secure reservation of forest area against other interested person
7.	Formulation of simple management plan with annual and 5-year plans on a 25-year management cycle	Elaborates management scheme and benefit sharing mechanism
8.	Approval from the forestry department	Commence management activity

Egbe (1997) argues that the institutionalisation of community forestry in Cameroon was carried out without total commitment from the government and the forestry department. Egbe (1997) asserts that the government created the high cost barrier for community forest in order to continue excluding local actors from meaningful participation in resource control, despite her policy commitment to decentralising the forest sector. Djeumo (2001) argues, however, that the shortcomings of Cameroon's forest policy and difficulties in the attribution of community forest are due more to its novelty than insincerity on the part of government.

There is consensus that given these structural barriers to the obtainment of community forest by interested local groups, there is need for long-term donor support (Penelon, 1997; Vabi et al., 2000; Brown and Schreckenberg, 2001). While the IMF/World Bank succeeded in bringing about policy changes, DFID bore the cost of setting up the community forest unit (CFU) at the forestry department and develop the manual of procedures. This was done through the Community Forest Development

Project (CFDP) executed from 1995 – 2002. The project built up state capacity and raised the awareness of civil society on community forestry. In 2002, the CFDP developed a revised manual simplifying the community forest application process, but this was not approved by the government. In 2006, WWF and the national Community Forestry Network (CFN) started a civil society-government consultation to approve the revised manual (Lingondo et al., 2006) but the government is still to publish the revised manual. The high transaction cost of obtaining community forests has solidified the role of local and international NGOs as the mid-wives of the process[9]. Figure 2.1 shows the relationship between actors in the community forestry process in Cameroon:

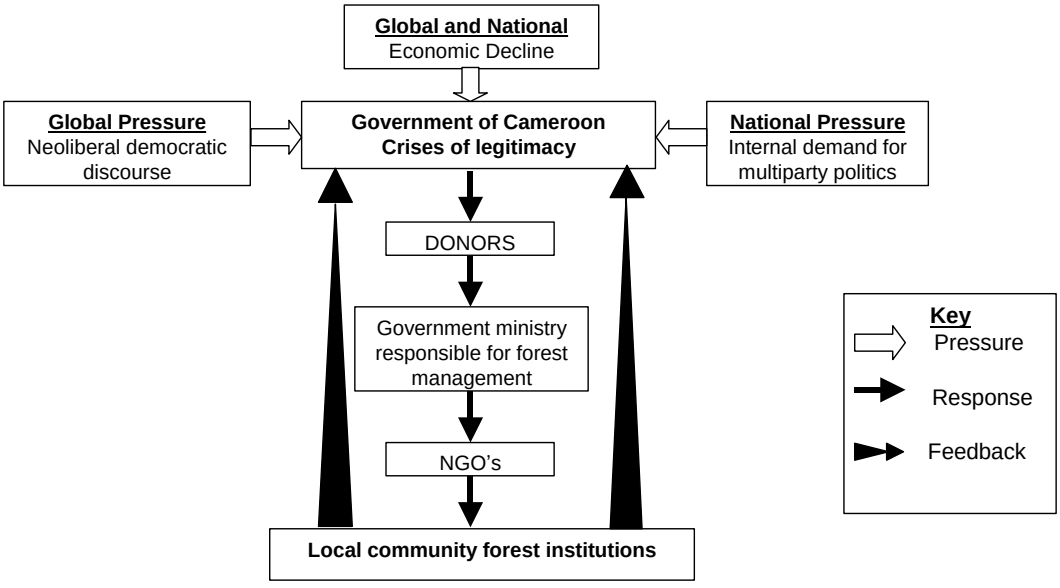


Figure 2.1: Drivers and response to the community forestry process in Cameroon

[9] Schroeder (1999) using the case of Gambia argues that the key beneficiaries of this procedural, contractual and technocratic approach to community forestry are donor organizations who have now inserted themselves 'into the finest details of policy implementation' and I may add local community life

While Figure 2.1 is a diagrammatic presentation of the institutionalisation of community forestry in Cameroon, it introduces the element of feedback to the community forestry process from below. The use of dark arrows with large base at the local level and tapered apex at the national level to represent feedback symbolises that local outcomes are not clearly transparent to actors higher up the process as some of the feedback signal gets lost as it travels back up the institutional ladder. It is on this premise that the field study for this dissertation strongly focused on local level institutions rather than those higher up the hierarchy of actors. In concluding section 4 the big question is what does it say about the institutionalisation of decentralized forestry in Cameroon?

4.2 Smoke-filled rooms and corrupt decentralization

Cameroon's 1994 forest law that ushered in decentralized forest management in the country seemed to have been crafted in 'smoke-filled rooms' (Kelsall, 2002). This is because the provisions in the law seemed to herald a new dawn for the empowerment and inclusion of local people in forest management. However, the community forestry policy elaborates a procedure for obtaining community forests with very high transaction costs. The policy marginalizes local people by allowing community forest only in the non-permanent forest estate, which consists of degraded forestlands, while allowing private firms to continue logging in prime timber rich forest. Private logging firms therefore still enjoy the largest share of benefits from Cameroon's forest. While the law goes further to decentralize royalties from timber exploitation in a ratio 5:4:1 to central government, local council and local villages, the fact that leaders of local councils are clients of the central government, make them unresponsive to local demands (Oyono et al., 2006).

The end result from this flawed decentralized forestry programme has been that resource rich and politically influential local and international NGOs are now the midwives implementing the forestry policy. These are not accountable to local people but to government who gives them the license to operate and to their western donors including bilateral and multilateral institutions. Shivji (2007) has argued succinctly that these NGOs, by uncritically accepting funds from these sources, are unwittingly promoting the neo-liberal political and economic agenda of the donor institutions. While the forestry reforms created limited space for local people, it also has led to increased room for the private sector (logging companies and conservation NGOs).

Tieguhong and Betti (2008) state that the proportion of Cameroon's protected areas increased from 9 percent in 1995 to 17 percent in 2007, and that government revenue from timber increased from £11million in 1999 to £39million in 2003, an increase of 255 percent[10]. The revenue increase is due to an increase in logging and a vigorous drive to ensure that logging firms pay their tax; 80 percent of this revenue is obtained from just 20 multinational firms (Amariei, 2005; Fomete and Cerutti, 2008). The financial power of these firms gives them plenty of access to policy-makers. In contrast, the low financial returns from community forests make them less of a priority to policy makers. Vabi *et al* (2002) show that income from timber-rich community forests in the Centre, South and East Provinces of Cameroon is about US$32 per adult per year. This drops to about US$6 in timber-scarce community forests in the Littoral and South West Provinces, and drops further to US$5.6 in timber poor but non-timber forest products (NTFPs) rich community forests in the North West Province.

[10] Conversion done using exchange rate at the time of fieldwork which was £1 = 1000 francs CFA

The unwillingness of the government of Cameroon to share substantive political and economic power with the local populace is thus at the root of Cameroon's corrupt forest decentralization policy. The deep historical and financially rewarding government private sector relationship is not ready to make room for a third partner.

5. Conclusion: Imposing utopia in 'dystopian' spaces

Utopias are idyllic imagined worlds while dystopias are their opposite. While utopian thought features in the world's entire major religions, it is utopian thought of the Judaeo-Christian tradition that has had a dominant influence in the conception of nature and society in western imagination. This, in turn, had profound impact on how western minds perceived nature and society in many far-off places they visited during the enlightenment of the 18th century and subsequent centuries that have followed. The thrust has been to cast western society as the ideal and to see all other variants as deficient needing fixing; western society is cast as utopia and other places as dystopia. Philips (2002) notes that dystopian discourses about Sierra Leone as the 'white man's graveyard', 'heart of darkness', 'a country so uncivilized', and a view of West African society and landscape as 'absolute pandemonium', were used to justify colonialism. The colonial project sought to impose utopia in supposedly 'dystopian' spaces.

Baeten (2002) argues that all grand narrative are built around visions of utopia, noting that for environmentalist that vision is 'saving the planet from environmental disaster', just as social justice and equality was the utopian vision for critical social science scholars in the 20th century. He recognizes, however, that what one group of persons consider as utopia could very well be considered as dystopia by another group

(Harvey, 2000). This utopian-dystopian dialectic is observed in sections 3 and 4 above; in section 3 the World Bank employs a dystopian discourse about governance in Cameroon to justify imposing decentralization with privatization as a utopian ideal.

In section 4, the Cameroon government responds by crafting policies that went some way to decentralize forest management without transferring substantive political and economic powers to local groups. The government's action shows that it does not accept the World Bank's discourse; its own sense of utopia is best served by maintaining the country's political and economic status quo, change is dystopia. The trouble with utopian visions, however, is aptly captured by Harvey (2000, p. 159) who states that:

> 'Any project to revitalize utopianism needs to consider how and with what consequences it has worked as both a constructive and destructive force for change in our historical geography'.

This is because society is both structural and emergent, so there cannot be a paradigm of social organisation that would satisfy everyone. There will be dissent from persons whose utopia is the supposed dystopia that the utopian visionary wishes to alter.

The complexity of human society has defeated all conceptual attempts to define a consensual utopian blueprint that cut across all spatial and temporal scale (see Ball, 2003). It is therefore naïve to expect that the discourse of decentralization will evoke the same passion and command the same response in every place. The discourse's hegemony rather than reflecting universal affection is more a reflection of global power-knowledge asymmetries (Foucault, 1980). The discourse's popularity in Cameroon is strongly tied to its propagation by development agencies answerable to governments of Europe, the USA, the United Nations and the World Bank. This shows the power these countries and global

institutions wield over Cameroon and other developing countries. Conversely, the 'corrupt decentralization' response of the government of Cameroon reflects its agency and is one amongst the plethora of strategies through which the weak subvert absolute domination by the powerful (Scott, 1990).

This domination-subversion dialectic also reflects the structure-agency dialectic of structuration theory articulated by Giddens (1984), which posits that independent human action is still plausible within socially constrained spaces. Structuration theory understands society as a time-space phenomena in which members are constantly designing and subverting social rules of engagement. This view develops arguments put forth by Vico, the 18th century Italian philosopher, that human action is contingent, spatialized and temporal (Pompa, 1971). Thus utopian projects would contend with disruptive forces related to human agency, spatial differentiation and historic specificities (Harvey, 2000). These are the ontological explanations for the response of the Cameroon government to the World Bank's utopian forest decentralization programme.

This leads to the question whose utopian vision of decentralization are donors striving to fulfil? Section 3 showed that decentralization is promoted by two broad groups of actors influencing donor decision-making. These are actors who subscribe to market-based governance ethos and actors who subscribe to a people based ethos. While the former vigorously promote reducing government with private profit-making corporations minding the gap, the latter promote greater involvement of the citizenry in decision-making. However, the informed consensus is that decision-making amongst donors is dominated by market advocates (Bello, 1998). While not totally ignoring voices speaking for the people, donor institutions pay limited attention to these voices.

Donor institutions instrumentally co-opt civil-society concerns into privatization programmes to dampen disruptive public resistance to contemporary enclosure of public property[11]. Shivji (2007), assert that the failure of African NGOs to understand this logic means they are unwittingly working to fulfil market-based neo-liberal agenda. This agenda has been described by Bourdieu (1998) as a 'utopia of endless exploitation'. In essence, contemporary decentralized forestry is serving the interest of actors in the western world with a market-based neo-liberal agenda, and their supporting cast in global institutions such as the World Bank (George, 1999; McCarthy, 2003; Hughes, 2006). This is legitimized in the eyes of civil society by an instrumental measured support for civil society empowerment programmes such as community forestry in Cameroon.

Given the half-hearted commitment of the government of Cameroon to community forestry and the instrumental mindset of the World Bank towards such programmes, this dissertation aims to explore the following questions:

i. Who are the actors behind the adoption of decentralized forestry in Cameroon?
    a. How did this coalition of actors come about?
    b. Why the interest in the forestry sector?
    c. How did these actors translate their vision to ground realities?

ii. How is the Cameroon government responding to devolution of its forest power?
    a. Why did the government accept to decentralize the forestry sector?
    b. How has the government overcome inevitable resistance to change?
    c. Has the government become more responsive to its citizens?

[11] See Neeson (1993) provides an account of disruptive public resistance during the enclosure of the commons in Britain in the 18th century; see Peet and Watts (2004) for contemporary disruptive and violent responses to the enclosure of the commons through government privatization programmes

iii. How are local people responding to newly devolved forest power?

   a. Who has local decision-making rights over the forest in the study region?

   b. How are their decisions influencing forest use in the region?

   c. How are the decision-makers addressing inevitable resistance to change?

iv. Has decentralized forestry improved local livelihoods and local forest governance?

   a. Who has forest use rights in the case study region?

   b. What are the principal forest livelihoods in the study region?

   c. Has decentralization enhanced local forest livelihoods?

   d. Has decentralization improved forest governance in the study region?

v. Is decentralized forestry contributing to equitable social transformations in Cameroon?

   a. Who has benefited from the decentralized forestry policy?

   b. What accounts for the difference in benefits accruing to different set of actors?

   c. Does benefit-sharing conform to the rhetoric of decentralization theory?

   d. What accounts for the difference between rhetoric and reality?

These questions are explored via a case study of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council, the local institution managing the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. The study seeks for answers through a detailed examination of the establishment, operations, stakeholders and forest users linked to this local forest management institution. The next chapter provides a detailed methodology on how this study has unfolded from conception to defining the research questions, from case study selection to field research, from data analysis to write-up.

Chapter 3

Doing research in marginal and contested spaces

1. Introduction

This chapter present a reflexive account of the research methodology that has produced this dissertation. In this chapter I present the research methods that have produced the results and analysis contained in Chapters 4 – 8 of this dissertation. This chapter is divided into 6 sections; section 2 presents a detailed explanation on selection of case study. Section 3 goes on to explain the research methods used in the field and shows that this dissertation was influenced by unforeseen events in the field. Section 4 is a narrative of the constraints and opportunities that influenced my activities during the critical phase of field work. The section details the challenges I experienced negotiating access, developing trust, and addressing the demands of research participants. Section 5 discusses data analysis and the writing-up of dissertation. The chapter concludes with section 6 on positionality, power relations and ethics, which argues that the impact of research is not neutral on research participants (and researcher), and then highlights initiatives taken to 'give' research results 'back' to research participants especially those at the local level.

2. Selection of case study

This study was carried out using the case study research method deemed useful for investigating contemporary phenomenon where the context is not readily observable (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2003). Case study research assures validity, reliability and objectivity of results through triangulation – the use of multiple sources of evidence (Jick, 1979; Lincoln and Guba, 1999). Case study research (especially single case research) is criticized as inappropriate for theorisation and generalisations.

Critics also maintain that deep engagement in the case under study puts researcher at risk of bias in research execution. The first criticism is addressed by situating a case study within a broad field of research such as political ecology, so that the study can be compared with previous studies, while the second is addressed through a reflexive attention to positionality and ethics of research on the part of researcher (Merriam et al., 2001; St. Louis and Barton, 2002; Booth et al., 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2004).

While preparing for fieldwork, I initially selected the Ekuri community forest (ECF) in Cross River State Nigeria and Tinto community forest (TCF) in South West Province of Cameroon as my case studies. The ECF and TCF are located in the Cross-Sanaga-Bioko coastal forests ecoregion of Nigeria and Cameroon[1]. The choice of case studies was informed by a 9-month consultancy study of biodiversity conservation activities in the ecoregion that I carried out just before commencing doctoral studies (Nuesiri, 2003). I left for fieldwork in July 2004, convinced that my familiarity with the case studies made them the best options for this dissertation. I first travelled to Cross River State Nigeria where I met with the manager of the ECF and the director of the State forestry service. They informed me that community forestry activities had stalled from when funding ceased from the Department for International Development (DFID) and it departed Cross River State[2].

I was discouraged and left for Cameroon at the end of July. In Cameroon I met with the manager of the TCF and visited the South West Provincial office of the forestry department. I learnt that the TCF process had also stalled after Living Earth, the NGO behind its formation, ceased its activities (Purdon, 2004). Shortly after arriving Cameroon, my mother took ill and passed away, her burial took my attention

[1] See forest profile at <http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/at/at0107_full.html> accessed 17 September 2008

[2] See <http://www.odi.org.uk/tropics/projects/3216.htm> accessed 17 September 2008; DFID funding for the CRSFC was from 1996 – 2001 and was worth £2million

away from field research for a month. On resuming research assignment, I decided to select a new case study based on new knowledge I had acquired about functional community forests institutions. I selected the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forests because it was functional, readily accessible and because its creation was initiated by the Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe, an institution I had worked for from 1999-2001. I was not part of the MCP Limbe team that worked to create the BBCF but I was very familiar with the team members.

While still tweaking my research methods to suit my new case study, in September 2004 I attended the Central Africa regional conference on impact of decentralised forest management. The conference took place in Yaounde Cameroon and was organised by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). The conference presented results of a 3-year multiple country study on decentralised forest management carried out by WRI and CIFOR (Ribot, 2002; 2004; Oyono 2004a; 2004b; 2005). I discovered that their Cameroon country study and my study had very similar interests though I was not aware of their study when I designed mine. However, I proceeded to comprehensively review their literature to identify its strengths and gaps. I did this in October and November 2004[3] and found that their study was guided by an instrumentalist[4] focus on institutional efficiency (Adamolekun, 1991).

The WRI/CIFOR Cameroon study focused on how outcomes of the country's forest decentralization policy deviated from expectations without questioning the legitimacy of the policy. The study did not probe the historical linkages between the

[3] I reviewed all the project working papers published in 2003 and 2004, and made available on WRI website - <http://www.wri.org/publications/governance> accessed 17 September 2008; I also reviewed related articles that appeared in a 2004 special edition of the *European Journal of Development Research* 16(1), and later published in a 2006 special edition of *Africa Development* 31(2)

[4] Instrumentalists seek to explain deviance without questioning the legitimacy of legislated rule (Griffiths, 2003)

interest of global forestry actors, national forest policies and local outcomes. This observation led me to alter my theoretical framework from institutional theory to political ecology. Despite my limited understanding of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest process at the time, I was certain that a political ecology framework would lead to a more nuanced understanding of observed outcomes compared with the institutional theory approach of the WRI/CIFOR study.

I was aware that the creation of BBCF was considered one of the most contentious in Cameroon (Monono, 2001; RCDC, 2002a; Tekwe et al, 2002); I was also aware that the BBCF was located in a region with a long history of global-local relationships (Allen, 1848; Burton, 1863[5]; Ardener, 1937; Austen, 1983; Ardener, 1996). I was therefore convinced that the BBCF was an exceptional case for understanding historical and contemporary 'conjunctions' and 'disjunctions' in global-local relationships (Appadurai, 1990; Watts, 1991; Essama-Nsah and Gockowski, 2000; Buscher and Dietz, 2005; Argenti and Roschenthaler, 2006). The global-local political economy in which Bimbia-Bonadikombo is historically embedded makes it an even more appropriate case study for this dissertation compared with my former comparative case study of Ekuri and Tinto. The next section details the research methods employed during fieldwork.

[5] It is worth mentioning that the 2 volumes of Sir Richard Francis Burton titled *Abeokuta and the Cameroon Mountains* (1863) is the most comprehensive 19th century text of Bimbia and the Mt. Cameroon region, herein he contradictorily described the people of the region as 'timid', 'feeble', 'wild' and 'treacherous' (vol 2., p. 63). Burton's exceptional skills as an explorer are attested to by works such as *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Meccah* (1855-6), and *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* (1883). Burton explored this region while he was Consul at Fernando Po Island, renamed Bioko in Equatorial Guinea. At this time British interest was how to establish a colony in malarial Lagos Nigeria so as to better control trade in the Oil Rivers (now Niger-Delta). One of the objective's of Burton's trip to the Mt. Cameroon region was to assess its suitability for medical facilities for colonial officers who fall ill in Lagos so they don't have to be evacuated to faraway Britain. He gave the region pass marks, however his wishes did not materialize as the Germans edged out Britain by a whisker in the race to appropriate the territory as a colony.

3. Navigating the knowledgescape

I returned to Oxford in December 2004 without executing my initial field work in a substantive way. I returned to the field in June 2005 with a new research design and was in the field till October 2006. The research methods I used during this period are explained below; they are selected from an array of social science research methods because I was convinced they are suitable for answering the principal question '*how is decentralized forestry influencing social transformation in Cameroon*' (Burgess, 1990; Hoggart et al., 2002; Brockington and Sullivan, 2003; Overton and Diermen, 2003). The main difference between the methods below and that which I proposed in Nuesiri (2004) to use in Ekuri and Tinto is that I paid greater attention to historical material than in my later field research design.

3.1 Document review

I arrived in Cameroon in June 2005 and spent a higher proportion of my time between the months of July to December obtaining and reviewing unpublished documents related to and about my case study. These included the Cameroon Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the second national household survey reports[6]. I also had unrestricted access to the Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG) library and the Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF) library located in the LBG. Gaining access to documents held by the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council (henceforth BBNRMC) was difficult at the start, but once trust developed, I was allowed unrestricted access to their documents. I visited the forestry department library in Yaounde and found it very useful in gaining access to unpublished official forestry department documents.

[6] The national household surveys are executed by the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance (MINEFI), the reports are online at: http://www.statistics-cameroon.org/

Given my interests in historical material I visited the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) archives in Limbe to learn about the land use history of the CDC in the Mt. Cameroon region. I also visited the West Cameroon Archives in Buea to learn about the history of the English speaking (Anglophone) part of Cameroon. I should also mention that having ready access to Shirley Ardener in Oxford, arguably the foremost anthropologist on the Bakweri, was also of considerable benefit.

3.2 Semi-structured and unstructured interviews

Research participants interviewed in the course of this study were selected by snow-balling, a purposive sampling technique based on researcher's judgement and interviewee recommendations (Overton and van Diermen, 2003). Given that this sampling technique is criticised as unrepresentative, to corroborate data I interviewed persons from all stakeholder groups involved in creation, exploitation and management of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. I used semi-structured and unstructured interviews as these enabled a more natural two-way interaction between researcher and research participants (Burgess, 1990; Burgess and Bryman, 1999; Finch, 1999; Paget, 1999). All research participants were briefed about the purpose of the interview and were free to decline. I sought consent before recording the interviews and asked for permission to use the interviews on condition of anonymity, thus when quoting interviewees pseudonyms are used.

I carried out a total of 119 field interviews in Cameroon (Appendix 1); some participants were interviewed more than once. In the UK, I carried out unstructured interviews from 2004 to 2008 with Shirley Ardener at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University; she is the foremost expert on Bakweri culture. I also carried out unstructured interviews during the same period with Martin Cheek at the Royal

Botanic Gardens (RBG) Kew London; he is the foremost Mt. Cameroon forest specialists in UK. Other encounters of note include unstructured interviews with Michael Vabi, the principal Cameroonian expert that facilitated the institutionalization of community forestry in the country; Rene Oyono, the leader of the Cameroonian team that was part of the WRI/CIFOR decentralized forestry research project; and Jesse Ribot, the principal researcher of the WRI/CIFOR research project. I encountered these individuals at the Yaounde conference of September 2004. Two unstructured interviews with Francis Nyamnjoh,[7] the foremost Anglophone Cameroon sociologist, while he was visiting England in 2004 and 2006, greatly improved my understanding of Anglophone ethnic rivalry in Cameroon.

The majority of the interviews I conducted were between the months of December 2005 – January 2006 and from April to October 2006. The first set of interviews was brief, mainly with members of government and concerned with understanding broader forestry and livelihood issues in Cameroon. The interviews were conducted solely by me in English and in the offices of individuals interviewed. The interviews were not recorded as I instead took down notes; I found it difficult to concentrate on the interview while taking down notes (Hannabuss, 1996). The second set of interviews was with local actors including village chiefs, members of the BBNRMC, forest users and local level forestry officials. To avoid the difficulty I earlier experienced, I purchased a digital Dictaphone and recorded these interviews. The interviews were conducted by me in English; the exception being interviews with forests users which were in pidgin-English, a simplified street English spoken in Cameroon, and infused with local slangs so needs a trained ear.

[7] Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) is the seminal work on identity in Anglophone Cameroon

I could not gain access to members of staff at the Department for International Development (DFID); I emailed DFID seeking audience with personnel at the Cameroon desk but the reply I received from DFID was that I should consult their online publications for more information on the Mt. Cameroon Project. I also contacted the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the key DFID partner in Cameroon during the implementation of the Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe, I was able to have one face-to-face meeting with their leading Cameroon expert in early 2008, after more than a year of persistently knocking on their door.

3.3 Household surveys

The household surveys were carried out with the assistance of the field workers of the BBNRMC. These included the forest manager, the agricultural extension officer and eight members of the operations team[8]. This exercise was carried out with the assistance of these field assistants patrol officers of the BBNRMC given their expert knowledge of these settlements. The surveys were in two phases; phase one was in June-July 2006 and it was a rapid exercise to obtain the population, ethnicity and occupation of household heads in the settlements around the community forest (Appendix 2)[9]. Households were numbered from a reference point taken as the first household on the right from the main access route into the settlement. All households in the 10 of the 11 settlements visited were surveyed except for those households where the occupants were not available. The survey had a 90 percent response rate because the settlements are relatively small and the field officers are well-known to the inhabitants.

[8] There were 10 survey research assistants and they worked in groups of twos; I had to bear their transport cost and daily patrol stipends for each day they worked for me (about £3/person/day)
[9] The questionnaire did not ask for the gender of household head as English speaking Cameroonians usually bear anglicized gender specific names, so gender can be inferred from first names

The second phase was the extended questionnaire household survey aimed at understanding the degree of forest dependence of the Bimbia settlement and it was carried out in August 2006 (Appendix 3). Bimbia was purposefully chosen because their elites dominate the decision-making organ of the BBNRMC (all the executive committee members and 14 of 26 management board members). The extended Bimbia survey was carried out to understand the degree and type of dependence of Bimbians on the forest. The extended questionnaire focused on forest resource use (domestic and commercial), income (forest based and non-forest based) forest governance norms (past and present) and local associational life (genealogies, kinships and social networks). I did not produce a demographic map of the settlements due to time constraints. I also did not adhere to the plan to execute a wide ranging in-depth household survey across all the settlements as I did not have the time or financial resources to do so.

3.4 Direct observation

I made 12 visits to the community forest and 11 visits to the adjacent settlements. The forest visits were for the purpose of observing and documenting forest quality, exploitation and land use. These visits were made between the months of December 2005 and June 2006, and were carried out with the assistance of the field workers of the BBNRMC given their expert knowledge of the terrain. The visits revealed that the southern area of the forest is in much healthier state compared with the northern portion (Appendix 4). During forest walks I was able to have unstructured interviews with forest users met along the way on forest use and land use changes, the plates below show some of the forest users encountered.



Plate 3.1: Forest edge with plantations and Mt. Cameroon in foreground



Plate 3.2: Farmer clearing forest to open new farm



Plate 3.3: Boy going to join parent in farm after school



Plate 3.4: Charcoal production



Plate 3.5: Oil palm processing



Plate 3.6: Mother and daughter in forest farm

The settlement visits show that there are eleven settlements around the community forest; three are indigenous and permanent, while the other eight are farmer camps, plantation camps and edge of city neighbourhoods. The traditional leaders in the area exercise *de facto* authority over settlements located on their respective traditional lands[10]. The traditional leaders live in Limbe except the chief of Bonadikombo, who lives in his palace in the settlement; Bonadikombo is sub urban in character, an edge of Limbe settlement being just 10minutes drive from Limbe. I did not witness any cultural festival in the eleven settlements I visited, except for the 'Mbando'[11] which took place in Limbe city in May 2006 (Tabetando, 2007). This brought Bakweri traditional leaders, elites, Diaspora and politicians together and was celebrated with public rallies, cultural displays and a boat race competition between different clans. The 2006 event was the first time the festival was celebrated with pomp and pageantry and it was popularly understood that the Bakweri were using the festival as an opportunity to ascertain their traditional rights over Limbe.

3.5 Participant observation

I participated in planning meetings of the BBNRMC on average three times a week from January to September 2006. I acted as an advisor to the executive committee and worked closely with the president, secretary and treasurer. I had several discussions with them about community forestry and socio-political events in Cameroon. I participated as a resource person in five forestry workshops (see Table

[10] This is exercised through the periodic collection of rents from forest users in these settlements

[11] Mbando is said to be the Bakweri ancestral spirit of peace and justice, thus the popular discourse was that the 2006 'Mbando' festival sought to draw attention to the Bakweri struggle for justice over their traditional lands expropriated by the Germans in the colonial era for plantation agriculture and now under the control of the state-owned Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC); there was talk that the festival was at the behest of Bakweris in the Diaspora seeking for attention back home. I couldn't confirm this from my Bakweri research participants, but minutes from a 2004 meeting of Bakweris in the USA posted on their website seem to suggest this is the case – see <http://www.fakoamerica.org/2004/11/fa_board_holds_.html> accessed 17 September 2008

3.1 on page 20), these enabled me to interact with other actors involved in community forestry around Mt. Cameroon and other regions[12]. I was mindful of Rock's (1999) warning not to go 'native', a situation where researcher is deeply immersed in activities of research participants and critical observation becomes impossible. I endeavoured to be the 'total participant' who though immersed in local activities, maintains a critical eye over activities (Gans, 1999). Knowledge obtained through participant observation was vital to triangulate interviews I carried out with research participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1999; Brockington and Sullivan, 2003). The plates below show some activities in which I was involved as a participant.



Plate 3.7: Meeting between BBNRMC and charcoal producers

[12] The most remarkable experience I had in this respect was a field visit to Baba (II) community forest in Bamenda, North West Province (NWP). The visit was part of scheduled activities for participants at the national training workshop on 'Leadership and Collaborative Management of Forest Environments in Cameroon', which held in Bamenda from 10-15 April 2006. It came as a shock to participants that in a notably patriarchal society like the NWP, the forest manager for Baba (II) was a woman heading a field team dominated by middle-aged married men



Plate 3.8: Forest manager of Baba (II) community forest



Plate 3.9: CAMCOF* workshop on long-term funding for Cameroon Highlands

* CAMCOF – Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation

4. Constraining structures, agency and emergent opportunities in the field

My first field trip from June-November 2004 did not yield expected results because of the loss of my mother, re-designing of research plans, and delay in obtaining research permit.. I was much disoriented, so decided to return to Oxford to get my bearings right and prepare for a second trip. Before leaving Cameroon, I prepared a funding proposal to the International Foundation for Science (IFS) to cover the cost of my planned second trip. IFS require that grant applicants should be affiliated with an institution in their home country. In compliance, I applied and was accepted as a research fellow at the Pan-African Institute for Development – West Africa (PAID-WA) in Buea Cameroon. This also meant I no longer needed an individual research permit. The fellowship was granted on condition that I offer voluntary services to PAID-WA from January-December 2005 (Appendix 5).

I returned to Oxford in early December 2004 to continue working on my reformulated research interest and to prepare for fieldwork phase 2. This mainly involved literature review on political ecology. Informed by the literature my research shifted from an emphasis on the state of the forest under community management to an examination of global-local processes influencing community forest management committee. I also spent part of my time on fundraising. In addition to the IFS, I applied to the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), St. Antony's College Oxford research grants and the Oxford African Studies Centre research grants. By the time I was leaving the UK in June 2005, I had secured funding to the sum of £1000 (one thousand pounds) from the Oxford African Studies Centre and was still waiting for a response from the IFS expected by September-December 2005.

The grant I received was enough for my flight and I felt prepared to return to the field. On arriving Cameroon in June 2005, I immediately established contact with the forest management officer of the BBNRMC based in Limbe and with the director of PAID-WA based in Buea. These two institutions are located about one hour's drive from one another and I initially found it difficult honouring my fellowship commitment to PAID-WA while pursuing my research agenda with the BBNRMC. I quickly learnt that PAID-WA had depended on donor funding throughout its almost fifty year history but secure donor funding had ceased since the mid-1990s and the institute was experiencing a financial crises. This had led to severe staff and pedagogic material shortages. I spent July-December 2005 at the institute in keeping with my fellowship commitment.

During this time I facilitated two workshops on the Cameroon Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for PAID-WA staffs and local NGOs. The workshop enabled me to understand the goals, achievements and shortcomings of the PRSP. In December, I was informed by the International Foundation for Science (IFS) that my application was unsuccessful. While I was offered the option of renewing my fellowship with PAID-WA, I declined so as to concentrate on my research. However, I continued providing professional counsel to the institute and they allowed me to maintain the status of a fellow throughout my stay in Cameroon. This was extremely helpful as it meant I did not have to obtain an individual research permit[13]. While working with PAID-WA Buea, I was also spending time with the BBNRMC Limbe – I would spend three days in Buea and three days in Limbe.

[13] While the majority of NGOs and government agencies were at ease working with me on presentation of my Oxford University student ID card, some especially from the government sector would insist on seeing a research permit, in which case I presented my fellowship agreement with PAID-WA or asked them to call up the director of the institute for confirmation.

Despite the fact that I was familiar with some of the members of the BBNRMC and the forest management officer (FMO) from when I worked with the Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe, it took about six months before they were at ease with giving me access to their documentary resources (Appendix 6). I arrived when they had just appointed a new forest management officer and they were still observing his ability to effectively do the job[14]. Thus my first six months of engaging with them was spent attending countless informal meetings with the executive board president, board secretary and FMO. They wanted to know in concrete terms what would be the benefit of my research to the BBNRMC. They highlighted the financial difficulties the BBNRMC was facing in meeting its administrative cost, wage bill, material and technical needs of its field team. There was an unspoken expectation that as an 'insider' from MCP Limbe, I would empathise with them and as a 'western outsider' (Oxford University student) I should have the resources to bail them out.

I was seen as Aesop's golden goose who could lay golden eggs. I was in a tricky situation where I could not tell them outright that I couldn't do anything about their situation and I couldn't promise financial support either. I resolved to work with them to develop funding proposals that addressed some of the needs they had identified. I also convinced them of the need to have an institutional review workshop bringing together some of the former MCP staffs who facilitated the obtainment of the community forest. They accepted my ideas on condition that I will help obtain funds for the review workshop. This was a challenge I felt I could not turn down if I have to win the confidence of the management council and their staffs.

[14] The first forest management officer left the job in August 2004 and went to the USA without informing the community forest management council of his plans. This caused a management crisis, which led to the appointment of the second management officer in January 2005. My arrival with a research proposal focused on management issues raised much concern.

By December 2005, we had developed a funding proposal with the objective of strengthening women community forest resource user groups and identified potential funding sources. In December, we also convened the one-day institutional review workshop that brought together actors who had worked to create the community forest and those with close working relationship with the management council (Nuesiri and Balinga, 2005). These initiatives helped to warm the hearts of the BBNRMC members to my research. I was frequently called upon to proffer counsel when they had other difficulties to resolve. Once trust had been established I proceeded to execute forest walks, settlement visits, review of council documents, interviews of selected actors and household survey. These were done between January to September 2006 and monthly reports were submitted to my supervisors.

The major constraint I faced was financial, principally because my status as an Oxford student created a situation where research participants from staffs of government services to those in village settlements continually made financial demands from me. As much as I tried to make it clear that I am a poor student not a funding agency, I had to accede to some of these demands to maintain a convivial atmosphere. I returned to Oxford in November to commence data analysis and writing up of dissertation. Table 3.1 below provides a summary of activities carried out during fieldwork and data obtained.

Table 3.1: Methods used and data obtained from the field

Method	Data collected	Description
Documents review	All administrative document records held in BBNRMC central computer database	Database contains about 500 entries including financial records and administrative correspondence from 2002 to September 2006
	Created a database with records of all incoming and outgoing correspondence held in hardcopy format by BBNRMC	Database contains slightly more than 1000 entries dating from formation of BBNRMC in 1998 to September 2006
	Photocopies of BBNRMC financial receipts	This consist of about 500 pages of BBNRMC financial receipts from 2002 to September 2006
	Photocopies of unpublished reports and other related documents from the following libraries • Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG) • Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF) Limbe • Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF) documentation centre Yaounde	This consist of about 100 documents related to community forestry, poverty alleviation and good governance in Cameroon
	Obtained database of administrative profile of all the key local NGOs in the Mt. Cameroon region	Database contains entries of the 30 key local NGOs in the Mt. Cameroon area and their conservation interest
Direct observation	Carried out 12 forest walk in the community forest to visually asses forest quality and land use	This was carried out in January 2006 in the dry season and again in April/May 2006 in the rainy season when farm clearance and planting had just started
	Visited all 11 settlements located about one hour's walk from community forest to visually assess settlement types and livelihoods	8 of 11 settlements were predominantly agricultural, the other 3 have a mixture of farming and fishing
	Sat in at planning meetings of the BBNRMC operational committee responsible for forest patrol and monitoring of forest users	Brief planning meetings are held every morning before patrol; when not executing other task sat in at least once a week from January to September 2006
	Sat in at ad-hoc BBNRMC executive committee meeting	BBNRMC needed expert advice about certification for community forest promoted by FSC Cameroon so invited me to an ad-hoc executive committee meeting as an advisor
Participant observation	Went on forest patrols and monitoring with BBNRMC operations committee	Patrols are usually based on informant tips about suspected illegal activity in the community forest
	Held several unstructured interviews with BBNRMC staff, board members and executive committee members in social settings away from the office	Had many hours of unstructured interviews notably with the executive committee president and secretary, in the BBNRMC office, at their homes and in bars (in the case of the executive secretary)

	Participated as a key resource person in 5 workshops related to poverty, and community forestry at various scales; these were the i. PAID-WA workshop on Cameroon PRSP and poverty alleviation (Dec-05) ii. BBNRMC institutional review workshop (Dec-05) iii. CAMCOF* workshop on funding for CBOs (Feb-06) iv. LEONET[#] workshop on reviewing community forestry manual (Sep-06) and v. SWECSON[§] workshop on decentralized forest management in the South West Province (Oct-06)	i. PAID-WA's workshop enabled me to interact with managers of local NGOs ii. BBNRMC workshop brought together actors who helped create the BB community forest for the first time since its creation in 2002 iii. CAMCOF enabled me to interact with staff of major donor organizations in Cameroon including DFID, UNDP and the World Bank iv. LEONET workshop was a forum for local actors to criticise the community forestry law[15] v. SWECSON workshop attended by mayors and parliamentarians enabled me interact with policy makers at provincial and national scales
Interviews	Carried out 119 interviews with actors involved with community forestry at various scales, 63 interviews were recorded with a digital dictaphone while 56 were not recorded interviews.	Interviews are broken down as follows: • 41were with primary stakeholders having direct relationship with the community forest • 38 were with actors in other civil society organisations with relationship to the BBNRMC • 24 were with actors in the government sector, and • 6 were with actors in international NGOs
Household survey	Executed rapid demographic survey database with information from 1500 households in 10 of 11 settlements around the community forest; due to financial constraints I was unable to survey the Bonadikombo settlement, however I obtained the report of a demographic survey in this settlement executed in 2003 by an international development agency	The settlements are • Bimbia, Mabeta, Mbonjo, Motowoh, Mawoh and Mabeta New Layout in the southern portion of the community forest; • Livanda, Moliwe, Ombe and Bamukong in the northern portion of the community forest; See appendix 2 for questionnaire
	Executed 25 household survey in Bimbia settlement, this is a 50% survey of the settlement	See appendix 3 for questionnaire

*CAMCOF – Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation
[#]LEONET – Limbe Environmental Organisations Network
[§]SWECSON – South West Province Civil Society Organisations Network

[15] The 1-day LEONET workshop brought together local NGO's around Limbe with an interest in community forestry including representatives from the BBNRMC and the yet to be approved Etinde community forest located on the main massif of Mt. Cameroon. The workshop was convened at the request of the WWF who were carrying out a national civil society consultation on the community forestry policy. WWF sent us a draft of the new yet to be approved manual and asked us to compare the current and the new draft manuals, and make recommendations for further improvements. This workshop was extremely useful in helping me to have a comprehensive understanding of the community forestry policy manual and the debates around the adoption of the new draft manual, see Lingondo et al, (2006) for the workshop report

5. Representing the knowledgescape

While section 4 above focused on how I survived the field, this section focuses on navigated my post-fieldwork activities, mainly data analysis and writing up. I started analysing my data while in the field. I was aided in this by the monthly reports I was providing my supervisors. By the time I returned to Oxford, observations made during forest walk was written up, summaries of interviews were also written-up, and part of the information from rapid household survey had been entered into Excel. I was assisted in this last activity by the BBNRMC forest manager who helped identify problematic entries and offered informed solutions. The main challenge faced when entering data into the spreadsheets were legibility of survey assistants handwriting, and filling in missing data. A major analytical challenge when the rapid household survey data was entered into the Excel spreadsheet was determining the Province of origin of the different ethnic groups encountered in the settlements.

The questionnaire used for the survey had a column for ethnicity but not for Province as I assumed I would be able to match ethnic groups with Province of origin. Part of the problem was that respondents sometimes identified themselves by their language groups. While Cameroon has just ten Provinces, it has more than 250 language groups (Biloa, 2004). I solved this challenge by seeking help from colleagues, friends and the Cameroonists researchers in the UK. I also found the catalogue of ethnic groups in Cameroon by World Missions (2008) very useful. The rapid household survey data was collected from ten of eleven settlements around the community forest. I visited all the settlements to ascertain the reliability of data collected by survey assistants by carrying out random household checks. I was not satisfied with the quality of data collected in one of the ten settlements and my survey assistants had to go back and re-do the exercise.

Apart from this single settlement, the survey exercise was executed satisfactorily. This was because the survey assistants were the field workers of the BBNRMC with mastery of the landscape and settlement patterns. I also made sure I designed and tested the questionnaire with the help of the survey assistants.

Comprehensive data analysis commenced in earnest when I returned back to Oxford in October 2006. Given the length of time spent and methods used in the field, I became a victim of Crowley's (1994) third pitfall – I was 'overwhelmed with a mass of unorganized data'. The first task I undertook was to sort the literature and documents I had brought back with me from the field. I then continued with analysing the data from rapid household survey after transferring it from MS Excel to SPSS software. I performed descriptive statistical analysis such as population means of the settlements, normality and simple correlations (Salkind, 2004). I was not proficient in the use of SPSS so I was learning by doing and spent six months on this exercise, three months longer than I anticipated.

The composite maps in the thesis were put together with technical support from the Oxford University Bodleian Library Map Room. Producing the base maps that were polished-up at the Map Room required Geographic Information System (GIS) skills on my part, which I acquired through learning by doing. I had planned to transcribe all the recorded interviews but realized this would be time-consuming, so I followed the counsel of Halcomb and Davidson (2006) and selectively transcribe sections of interviews relevant to specific themes. This reduced the workload but I still needed to listen to the interviews over and over again, paying attention to 'aspects of emotional context' (Poland, 1995), such as pauses, laughter, tone of voice and sighs, in order to reliably transcribe the words and objectively abstract the discourse(s) of the interviewees (Lofland and Lofland, 1999).

Analysing the BBNRMC financial data was hugely challenging. This is because I had patiently to trawl through an incomplete set of financial data in poorly formatted Excel spreadsheets produced by the BBNRMC administrative assistant. I had to painstakingly clean the data set because it showed numerous double entry and arithmetic errors. I also had to crosscheck entries in the data set with hardcopies of available BBNRMC receipts that I had photocopied and brought back with me from the field. The financial data set is in such a poor condition because the administrative assistant responsible for book-keeping was not trained for the task and BBNRMC finances have never been audited. The writing up process has been enriched by my participation in a number of academic seminars and conferences in the UK and beyond. The most notable are listed below.

i. The ESRC/NERC funded African Environments Programme (AEP) Workshop on 'Environmental Governance' which held at the Oxford University Centre for the Environment (OUCE) on the 25 January 2007
ii. Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) workshop on 'A Global Change Research Network in African Mountains' which held at University of Kampala, Uganda on the 23-25 July 2007
iii. Participatory Geographies Working Group Postgraduate Forum on 'Giving Back: Ideas for Mutually Beneficial Research' (PYGYWG3) at the 2007 RGS-IBG annual conference in London from 29-31 August
iv. The African Environments Programme (AEP) workshop on 'Sustainable Livelihoods Framework' which held at the OUCE on the 24 January 2008
v. SERG Reading Group 2007/2008 weekly seminars at the School of Environment and Development (SED) University of Manchester

The next section reflects on positionality, power and ethics underpinning this study.

6. 'The man from Oxford': Positionality, power relations and ethics

The rigorousness of the multidisciplinary approach used in this study made it impossible to complete the study within the standard 3 years. Jick (1979) notes that 'time cost' is a significant factor in mixed methods research (Bryman, 2007). However, there seems to be an institutional ignorance about this 'time cost' in mixed methods research. This view is based on the following observations. Firstly, scholarships for international doctoral candidates are strictly for 3 years irrespective of discipline and research interests. Secondly, the time cost of mixed method research was not discussed in the research methods seminars during my first year of studies. The seminars simply reiterated that doctoral candidates were expected to be done in 3 years. Thirdly I have had to renew my student visa yearly, the process is financially costly, time consuming and disorienting. All of the above have partly contributed to the lengthy duration of this study and exacerbated the stress I have endured.

While I am convinced of the appropriateness of field methods chosen for this study, like Devereux and Hoddinot (1992, p. 10) I found that 'fieldwork is always full of surprises'. Given that I was a long-term resident of Limbe, I was surprised at how much I did not know about Limbe and the Bimbia-Bonadikombo landscape. I was also surprised by the negative response of some research participants. I received a lukewarm reception at the Community Forestry Unit (CFU) at the forestry department in Yaounde. The local forestry officials in Limbe were disinterested in my work; I was also shocked that DFID did not show interest in my study given that it funded the institutionalization of community forestry in Cameroon and the creation of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. I was amused that the BBNRMC executives, board members and personnel were at first cold towards me despite the fact that some of them had known me while I was with MCP Limbe.

When their attitudes thawed, they were friendly and helpful, especially the field team with whom I spent a great deal of time. The team is made up of mainly young men seeking for ways out of poverty; I became a close friend, surrogate brother and father to some who became comfortable enough to confide in me matters of a very personal nature. This was the group I missed most when I left the field. The forest user groups notably the charcoal producers and timber exploiters were friendly and accessible, seeing in me an opportunity to air their grievances without fear. The charcoal and timber exploiters were mainly married men and women, while the fuelwood exploiters were young men as the task of splitting wood with an axe is very arduous. The fuelwood users were very evasive and I found it impossible to create a relationship with them. The farmers were too numerous and dispersed to create a meaningful relationship with a representative number while I was in the field.

The farmer groups I did meet were accessible and at ease with the field workers, this was because a number of field workers were either farmers or had family relations who were farmers. The traditional leaders were welcoming and eager to discuss about Bakweri land struggles (BLCC, 2006). The response of research participants to me was influenced by their perception of me as an 'insider' in some situations and as an 'outsider' in other situations. I was acutely aware of occasions and spaces in which I was viewed as an insider because I am Cameroonian, resident of Limbe, had worked with MCP Limbe, ethnic origin, gender, age and educational attainment. I was also conscious of when I was viewed as an outsider due to these same factors mentioned above. Thus my relationships and experiences were influenced by my positionality (especially my ethnicity) and mediated by asymmetries of power between me and research participants (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003).

Given that majority of the community forest users are from the North West Province, the long history of ethnic and political rivalry with the South West Province – my Province of origin, I was mindful of how I responded to questions about my identity. While I was honest that I am from the South West, I often emphasized that I am not Bakweri to increase my acceptability with non-indigenes; with the Bakweri I emphasized the fact that I was born in Limbe and do have extended family relations, close friends and colleagues from Bimbia. Ethnicity was definitely the most important identity-category I had to negotiate in the field. Gender was less problematic as the South West and Bakweri's in particular are gender aware – Bakweri women have held leadership roles at national and local scales. My age (being in the thirties) and education helped with access at the local scale but not at national scale.

My academic experience aroused much curiosity at the local level; I was often asked what it is like to have attended both Cambridge as a master's student and Oxford as a doctoral candidate. Thus I was sometimes referred to as 'the man from Oxford' and experienced a high degree of deference to my wishes. I was conscious not to abuse my privileges; I kept before me the counsel of Adams and Megaw (1997) that 'research is not neutral either to those researched or to those around whom it is done. It needs to be conceived, planned and carried out reflexively, and with self-criticism'. When the time came for me to leave the field, I had mixed emotions. I wished I could have done more to support the BBNRMC resolve it's human, financial and managerial challenges. I wished I had the financial resources to have made significant financial investments in the lives of the young men doing the forest patrols for the BBNRMC. I also felt a tinge of sadness leaving the warm coterie of family and friends to return to the cold and sometimes lonely English winter.

This experience was different from my first field visit where I desired to return to Oxford to isolate myself from my grieving family after the loss of my mother. At that point in time I didn't want my feelings of loss to derail my studies. My experience parallels the observation by Kindon and Cupples (2003) that leaving the field could generate 'feelings of guilt, alienation, sadness and ambivalence' existing alongside feelings of 'relief, satisfaction and a sense of achievement'. Kindon and Cupples (2003) writing almost 25 years after Kloos (1969) made similar observations that researchers do become 'troubled by role conflicts in the field'. They posit, however, that there are no prescriptive solutions to this state of mind. The best to hope for is that researcher's ethics and sense of fairness would ensure that he/she leaves the field in a way that minimally disrupts the lives of research participants while not compromising his/her objectivity during writing-up.

Shanley and Laird (2002) have also argued for 'giving back' of research results to research participants. I have allowed these insights to guide this study so that it would be of mutual benefit to me and the research participants. This is partly evidenced in my involvement in organizing the 'Giving back in research' session, (PYGYWG3), at the 2007 annual RGS-IBG international conference in London.

I have been back to Cameroon on three occasions (July 2007, June 2008 and May 2009) for brief private visits and have made a point of duty to update the BBNRMC and other stakeholders I come across on the results from my data analysis. I am in email contact with some of the research participants who are conversant and comfortable with this medium of communication. Giving back is time consuming but I find it rewarding when I receive feedback from research participants to the effect back my work has broaden their knowledge base and enhanced their productivity either on a professional or personal basis. On my July 2007 return visit, members of

the ‘Give Air’ farmers group were very pleased to inform me that my counsel helped them to receive material and financial support for their farming activities from a foreign donor. On my June 2008 trip, I gave drafts of Chapters 4 – 7 to the forest manager of the BBNRMC for comments (Appendix 7). On my May 2009 trip, I discussed my conclusions with board members of the BBNRMC, the forest manager and the agricultural extension officer.

I will close this chapter by reiterating that in executing this research, I have kept before me the counsel of Adams and Megaw (1997) that ‘research is not neutral either to those researched or to those around whom it is done. It needs to be conceived, planned and carried out reflexively, and with self-criticism’. I have done my utmost to abide by this counsel through the design, execution, and writing-up of this study.

Chapter 4

Enclosing the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to unravel the socio-political determinants that influenced the obtainment of management rights over the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest (henceforth BBCF) by the BBNRMC. Community forestry, though a novel development phenomenon in Cameroon, is embedded in a political economy that historically privileges central state rather than local control over natural resources. Thus global and national pressures for local groups to be given control over community forest are contested by the state and by powerful local actors. These socio-political dynamics are investigated in this chapter through a study of the establishment of the BBCF. The chapter is organized as follows; section 2 provides an account of the socio-ecological context and processes that influenced the creation of the BBCF. Section 3 shows how the BBCF management team, the BBNRMC, was created, highlighting the contestations amongst the various actors at the local level. Section 4 describes the activities that were carried out to enclose the BBCF from its surrounding landscape, and section 5 concludes the chapter with a discussion of the key processes that led to the establishment of the BBCF.

2. Context and processes influencing the creation of the BBCF

The BBCF is located in the Mt. Cameroon forest region a biodiversity hotspot (Myers *et al*., 1999; Olson *et al*., 2000; WWF, 2003). It lies within the landscape commonly referred to as the Mabeta-Moliwe forest area and its situated east of the main massif of Mt. Cameroon. The Mabeta-Moliwe forest lies south of the busy highway linking the cities of Limbe, Mutengene, Tiko and Douala (Figures 4.1 and

4.2 below). It is under high human use pressure from inhabitants of these cities and adjacent settlements (RCDC, 2002a). Given its fertile volcanic soil, a greater portion of the landscape is under plantation agriculture from the German colonial era to date (ERM, 1998). The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), a government parastatal, presently manages these plantations. The Mabeta-Moliwe forest area is completely hemmed in by CDC agricultural plantations. The BBCF occupies an area of 3700 hectares (37km^2) in the Mabeta-Moliwe forest. It stretches from the Bimbia Atlantic coastline in the south, to the Moliwe Hills occupied by CDC plantations in the north. Its western boundary is adjacent to the outer limits of the city of Limbe and the eastern boundary borders the Mabeta fishing settlement.

The BBCF is in Limbe sub-division, Fako division of the South West Province of Cameroon. The indigenous population of this area are the Bakweri, a highly educated and vocal minority ethnic group who have historically occupied high profile political positions within the Cameroon government from independence to date. Until very recently, the two immediate past Prime Ministers of Cameroon, were both of Bakweri extraction. This is attributed to their early contacts with Christian missionaries who built the first school in Cameroon in Bimbia, and also to the fertile volcanic soil around Mt. Cameroon (Ardener and Warmington, 1960; Vernon-Jackson, 1967; Ardener, 1996). The CDC plantations, the largest commercial agricultural venture in Cameroon, which occupy the best lands in Fako division, have their origins in plantations established during the German era in the country's colonial history (Ardener and Warmington, 1960; BLCC, 2006).

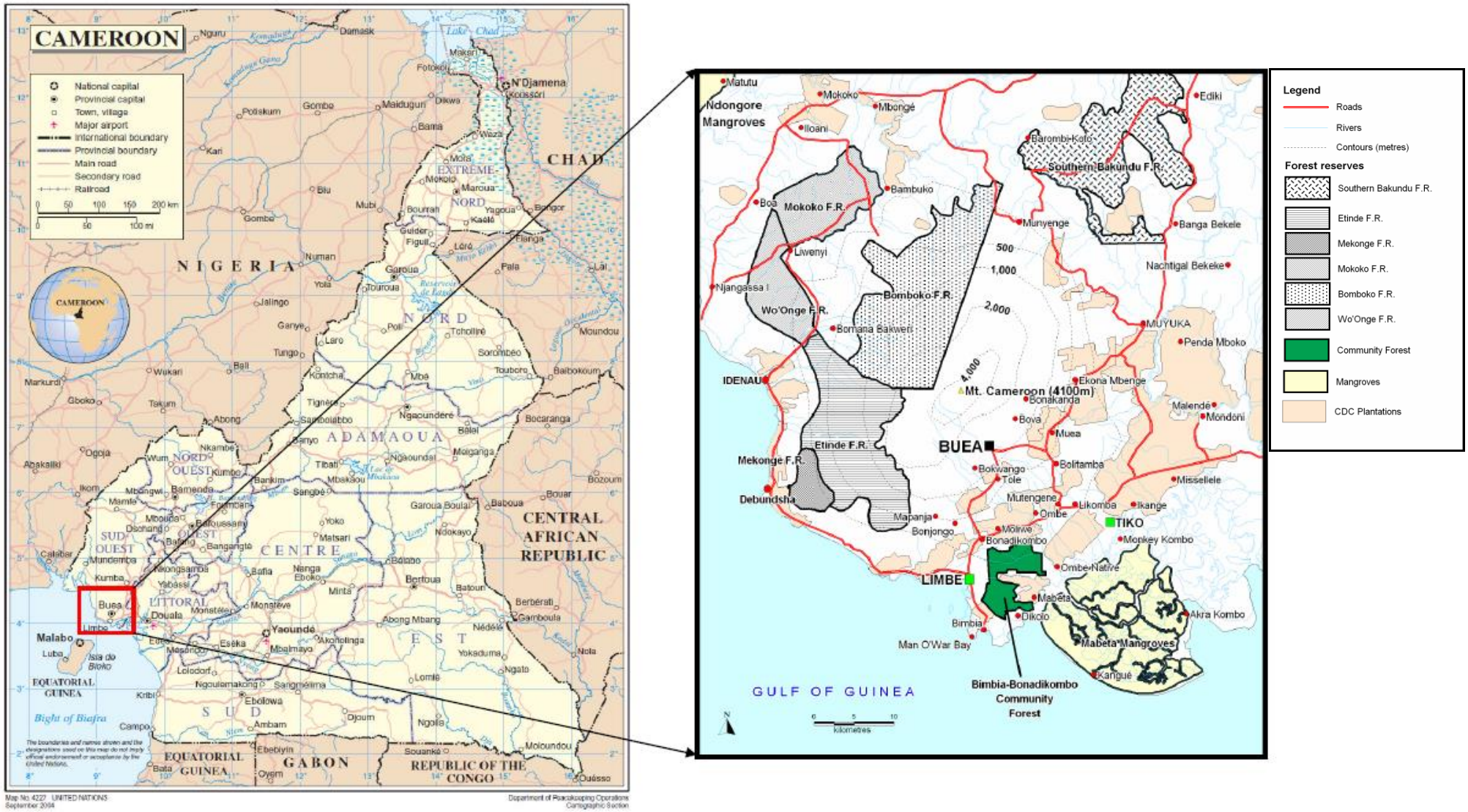


Figure 4.1: Location of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

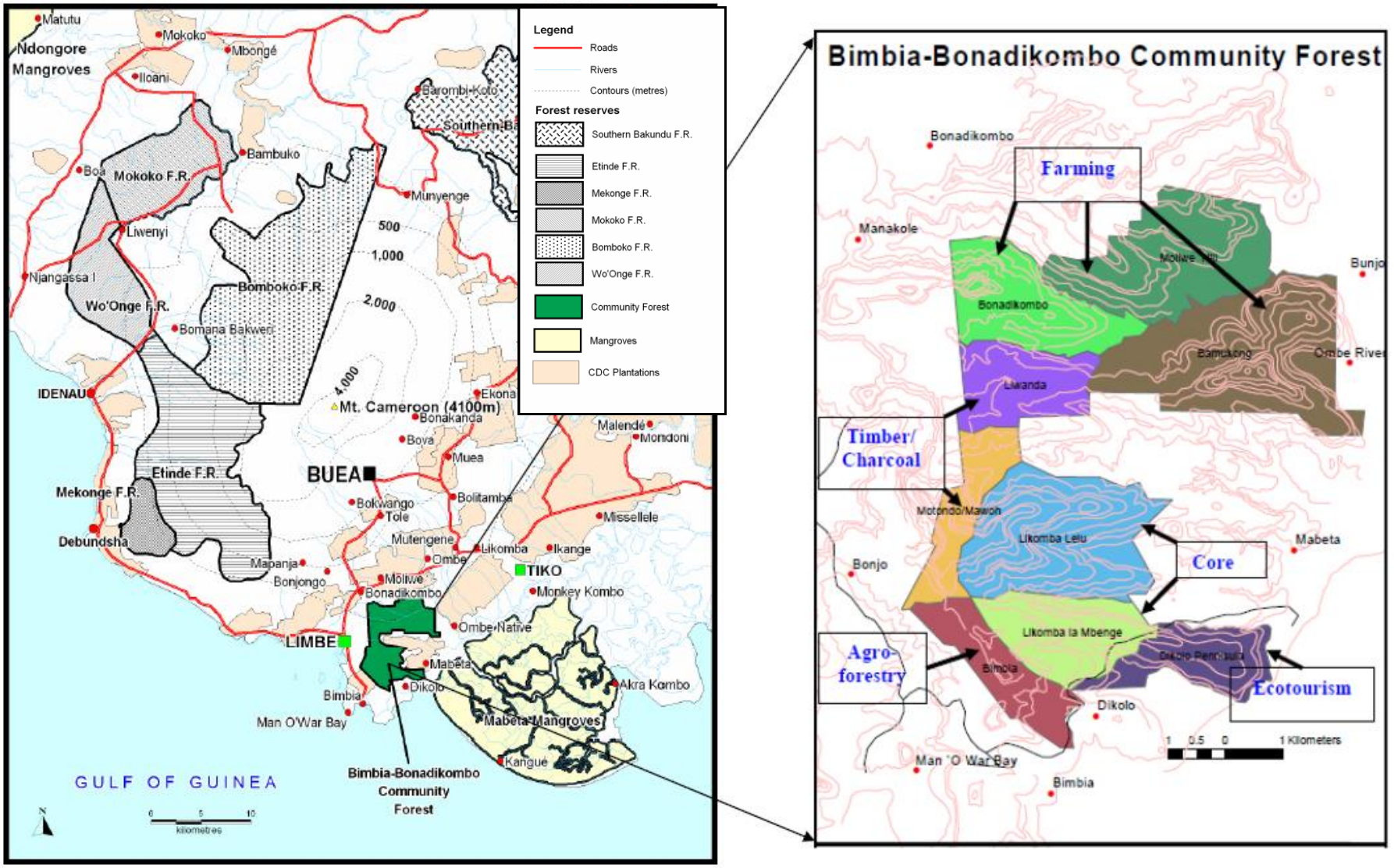


Figure 4.2: Land-use in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

2.1 Demographic character of settlements around the BBCF

The plantations led to the development of urban centres such as Limbe and of a colonial elite class under Bakweri leadership (Ngoh, 1996). It also brought an influx of migrant workers, giving Fako division a high ethnic heterogeneity and a population structure where the ratio of non-indigenes to indigenes is 17:1 (Watts, 1994; Schimdt-Soltau, 2003). While some users of the BBCF come from settlements such as Tiko, about 3hours walk away, the higher numbers of users encountered during forest walks were from 11 settlements within an hour's walk from the BBCF. These settlements, some of which are part of the Limbe municipality, are as follows:

i. the southern Bimbia settlements – Bonagombe, Bonabile and Dikolo indigenous villages, and the non-indigenes quarters known as Chopfarm
ii. the western Limbe settlements – Mbonjo, Motowoh, Mawoh, Mabeta New-Layout, and Livanda (also referred to as Towe quarters)
iii. the northern Bonadikombo and Moliwe settlements
iv. the eastern Ombe Indigenous, Bamukong and Mabeta settlements

The BBCF sits on forestlands that the Bakweri consider the cultural property of the Bimbia, Bonadikombo and Livanda clans. It is commonly held that the Mbonjo, Motowoh, Mawoh, Mabeta New-Layout, Bamukong and Mabeta settlements are on Bimbia traditional lands (interview with Arnaud, 10/06/06), while Moliwe and Ombe Indigenous are on Bonadikombo traditional lands (interview with Hughes, 14/09/06).

The people from Bimbia, speak a distinct variant of the Bakweri dialect known as 'Isu', so they are sometimes referred to as the Isubu (Ardener, 1996). The Bimbians therefore maintain that they have a separate migratory history from other Bakweris (Tande, 2006). They assert that they migrated westwards to Bimbia from the Douala coast, and are thus of a different ethnic stock from other Bakweri clans. However,

Ardener (1996), the key anthropological text on the Bakweri, assert that the Isubu as with other coastal Bakweris migrated southwards to their present abode from the hinterlands on the leeward side of Mt. Cameroon, and then intermarried with the Douala, so their relationship with the Douala is matrilineal not patrilineal.

Austen (1999) traces the matrilineal relationship to Quan Ewonde, the founder of Bonabile, one of three Bimbia villages. Quan Ewonde was part of Douala ruling families but fled to Bimbia in the late 18th century, due to violent leadership struggles in Douala. Unsurprisingly, Quan Ewonde's son, Bile a' Kwane, through his unrivalled political astuteness in his dealings with representatives of the British government was designated King William I of Bimbia (Ardener, 1996; Elango, 1989; Tande, 2006). King William I influence was built on the fact that he was the principal local actor mediating the trans-Atlantic slave trade through Bimbia port. The measure of his influence is indicated by the fact that inn 1844, King William I and his chiefs were awarded 'goods to the value of 1200 dollars' by the Queen of Great Britain for signing onto the treaty abolishing the slave trade (HCPP, 1847, p.53).

In 1845, Joseph Merrick, a missionary, opened a the first school in Cameroon at Bimbia (Vernon-Jackson, 1967); in 1858 King William I controversially sold the land on which Limbe was founded to the Baptist missionary Alfred Saker for £2000 and the construction of a new house (Ardener, 1937; 1968) . In 1870, Woermann, a German firm opened a factory in Bimbia and in 1882, King William II who succeeded his father King William I, was assassinated by Bakweri's in the hinterland challenging his rule and Bimbia's dominance of coastal trade. In 1884 Germany annexed Cameroon as a colonial territory and in 1885 Woermann established its first agricultural plantation in Bimbia (Ardener, 1996). These plantations are part of the CDC plantations around the BBCF (Bederman, 1968; ERM, 1998).

The non-indigenous population is a mix of Cameroonians of other ethnic extraction, most notably from the sister English speaking North West Province. There is a sizeable population of Nigerians and smaller populations of Beninese and Ghanaians. The people from the North West first came to the region during the German colonial era as plantation labourers, and are presently involved in subsistence and small-scale commercial farming. The Nigerian presence can be traced to the British colonial era when they worked as administrators in British West Cameroon and their merchants dominated the business sector (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The more recent arrivals are the Ghanaians and Beninese involved in artisanal fishing in the coastal waters and creeks.

The occupational structure of the population from the eleven settlements adjacent to the BBCF shows two broad trends, farmers dominate the three village settlements of Bimbia, Ombe Indigenous and Bamukong[1], while the other eight peri-urban settlements[2] close to Limbe city have mixed populations of farmers, public, private and informal sector employees (Table 4.1 below).

[1] These settlements are considered as villages because the populace are predominantly involved in farming and fishing, they have no commercial centre and are not fully electrified; they also do not have hospitals, secondary schools, and permanent access roads

[2] These are the Mbonjo, Motowoh, Mawoh, Mabeta New-Layout, Livanda, Moliwe, Mabeta and Bonadikombo settlements; these are peri-urban because they have small scale enterprises, are fully electrified, have hospitals, secondary schools and permanent access roads

Table 4.1: Demographics of settlements adjacent to the BBCF

Settlement	Population		Occupation of head of household												*Total HH per settlement*
	Total	*Bakweri*	*CDC staff*	*Self-employed*[3]	*Farmer*	*Fishing*	*Govt.**	*House-wife*	*Private sector*	*Retired*	*Student*	*Job seeker*	*Hired labour*	*NR*	
Bimbia	256	105	4	6	34	18	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**64**
Mbonjo	1160	63	0	41	25	92	7	0	24	6	2	2		11	**210**
Motowoh	1203	14	1	71	72	19	7	7	10	7	4	3	0	7	**208**
Mawoh	850	57	0	24	116	1	4	2	2	3	0	1	0	0	**153**
Mabeta NL	504	27	1	24	57	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	**87**
Livanda	2132	91	0	25	275	2	3	1	3	1	0	0	0	6	**316**
Moliwe	789	79	39	23	82	0	4	0	7	0	2	0	0	7	**164**
Ombe	240	0	0	3	36	0	0	0	5	1	0	1	1	3	**50**
Bamukong	251	4	0	0	58	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	**65**
Mabeta	993	36	46	55	37	72	6	3	2	2	0	1	0	3	**227**
Total	**8378**	**476**[4]	**91**	**272**	**792**	**206**	**37**	**14**	**54**	**20**	**8**	**8**	**5**	**37**	**1544**

Source: Field survey (*note that table omits Bonadikombo as it was not surveyed; NR = No Response*)

*Govt. – Government

[3] Self-employed includes small and medium scale entrepreneurs, food-sellers, taxi-drivers, and technicians

[4] Note the overwhelming difference between the total population and the Bakweri population (ratio of non-indigenes to indigenes is 17:1)

Notable demographic features of these settlements are that majority of households, 51 percent, identified themselves as fulltime farmers, 18 percent as self-employed, 13 percent as fisher-folks, and 12 percent as involved in fulltime employment with government and the private sector. However, it is common practice for self-employed persons and those in full-time employment to be involved in farming on a part-time basis especially on weekends. Page (2002) show that 91 percent of civil servants in the nearby city of Buea are involved in food farming as a coping strategy since the onset of Cameroon's economic crises[5]. Farming is therefore the overwhelming occupation of households around the BBCF. Thus the creation of the BBCF was in a socio-ecological context of land use pressure from agriculture.

2.2 Institutionalisation of decentralized forestry in the Mt. Cameroon region

The BBCF is an outcome of the Cameroon government decentralized forest management policy. The creation of the BBCF was financed and facilitated by the Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe, an integrated conservation and development project (ICDP). MCP Limbe was an 8-year initiative (1994 – 2002) funded jointly by the British government through the Department for International Development (DFID), the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the Government of Cameroon (GoC). The project had a sister component, the MCP Buea, funded by the GoC and the German government through the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) (Forbes and Besong, 2002). MCP Limbe was supervised by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MINEF), while MCP Buea was supervised by the Ministry of Planning and Regional Development (MINPAT). However, both projects had a joint steering committee that provided strategic direction.

[5] Page (2002) also argues that the government tacitly encourages the populace to take up food crop farming as a strategy for mitigating civil strife from widespread social discontent

MCP Limbe stated that its purpose was 'increased capacity of resource users and other stakeholders to implement a participatory strategy for sustainable use and conservation of forest resources in the Mount Cameroon region' (DFID and MINEF, 2000, p.5). The project was designed as a pilot initiative to implement the novel ideas in the 1994 decentralized forestry policy such as community forestry. The project was managed on a day-to-day basis by British forestry professionals assisted by their Cameroonian counterparts seconded from the forestry and agriculture ministries. The project headquarters was based at the Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG), which had just been rehabilitated after three decades of neglect by the GoC (Womersley, 1982). The garden rehabilitation was also a British government funded project, the Limbe Botanic Garden and Rainforest Genetic Conservation Project, which ran from 1988 – 1994. This project was managed by the then Overseas Development Agency (ODA) with technical support from the Kew Gardens UK (Watts, 1994).

The ODA managed project was the culmination of a decade long political lobbying effort by the parliamentarian for Fako division, the retired Honourable Mrs. Gwendoline Burnley (Balinga and Mbenkum, 1981). She is therefore credited for laying the political foundation for contemporary biodiversity conservation initiatives in the Mt. Cameroon region (interview with Patrick, 06/09/06). The ODA project was not only interested in renovating the LBG but was also interested in surveying and protecting the forest in the Mt. Cameroon region. Given the proximity of the Mabeta-Moliwe forest to the LBG and its high visibility from the Limbe-Douala highway, it was selected as one of the ODA project team's site of botanical interest.

Botanical inventories initiated in the Mabeta-Moliwe forest area led by scientists from the Royal Botanic Garden (RBG) Kew, England, reported that the forest had 67 species of special scientific value (rare, strictly endemic or new) (Cheek et al., 1996). Their results also unsurprisingly showed that the forest was facing a high human use pressure area with a high human use pressure. Project staffs were left bemused by the observation that each time they cut a transect for forest inventory purposes, it quickly became tracks for persons opening up new forest farms (interview with Olivier, 21/09/06). The ODA project team were nevertheless pleased that the forest still held plant species of high conservation value given that this was a highly disturbed forest from the colonial era to the present. The scientists therefore recommended that this forest area be protected arguing that it was the 'best surviving example of forest between Douala and Mt. Cameroon' (Cheek at al., 1996, p. 114).

High human pressure on the Mabeta-Moliwe forest made it impossible for the ODA project team to proceed towards gazetting the forest as a protected area for fear of the social conflict this would generate. There was also a clear signal from the indigenes that given the large amount of Bakweri lands forcefully appropriated by the German colonial entrepreneurs for plantation agriculture, they were not eager to have a protected forest on their land (Watts, 1994). Given local resistance to the idea of a protected area, the ODA project team concluded that they needed to adopt a participatory strategy if they were to proceed with their conservation objective (Watts, 1994). The decentralized forestry policy of 1994 created the space the ODA needed for new manoeuvrings in the Mt. Cameroon region. Thus the conservation value of the Mabeta-Moliwe forest and local resistance to gazetting it as a protected area, led to its inclusion in 1994, as a site for pilot trial of the government's decentralized forestry policy, by the ODA's newly inaugurated MCP Limbe (Olivier, 21/09/06).

2.3 The Mount Cameroon Project Limbe

The constraints faced by the ODA project team in attempting to create a protected area on Mabeta-Moliwe and the new forest policy informed the design of the MCP Limbe. The project moved away from a 'fines and fences' paradigm to conservation with development paradigm. While the project officially started in 1994, field activities began in 1996 with socio-economic surveys in the project region (RCDC, 2002a). This was initially carried out through extended stays in settlements by the project field teams (also referred to as area teams). While they found this exercise useful, the Mabeta-Moliwe team discovered that settlements in the area were very heterogeneous and that some of the forest users did not live in any of the settlements. The team also realised that unlike the other project zones (West Coast, Upper Villages and Mokoko), extended stays alone would not provide all the socio-economic information required about the Mabeta-Moliwa area (RCDC, 2002a).

The Mabeta-Moliwe team thus carried out a stakeholder analysis, which provided information on the different groups with interest over land use in the area. These included key forest user groups – charcoal producers, fuelwood and timber exploiters, subsistence and commercial farmers, and institutional stakeholders such as the CDC, government agencies regulating land use, traditional and elite groups (RCDC, 2002a). The Mabeta-Moliwe team, guided by common property institutional theory (Ostrom, 1990), focused on working with key forest user groups to build simple forest resource management institutions (Acworth et. al., 2002). Sensitisation meetings were initiated with forest users to build rapport and explain the project's goal. Sensitisation meetings were also held with institutional stakeholders in recognition of the multiple *de jure* and *de facto* rights over the forest area.

These meetings helped expose the intensity of contestation over land use in the Mabeta-Moliwe area (Tekwe and Percy, 2001). Overlaid on these contestations, was the highly sensitive nature of land issues amongst the Bakweris. This is as a result of the appropriation of land in the Mt. Cameroon region by colonial and state authorities for plantation agriculture (ERM, 1998; Lanz, 2000). The Bakweris are aggrieved that they have not been compensated for lost land; the 'Bakweri land question' as this subject is referred to, intensified during this time with the government's 1996 decision to privatise the CDC plantations (Tande, 1999; MCP, 2001). It is no surprise then that the indigenes initially distrusted the MCP Limbe, suspecting that this was another scheme to appropriate even more lands. The project team also had to contend with poor level of interest from farmers – the largest forest users, and from local timber exploiters who preferred to maintain the clandestine nature of their activities (interview with Steven, 28/09/06; interview with Charles, 10/10/06).

By 1998 the Mabeta-Moliwe team had secured cooperation from the forest users and was facilitating the formation of forest user management institutions through capacity building workshops. The most responsive forest users were the charcoal producers, followed by subsistence farmers who formed small groups in their settlements but were unable to form a farmers union (interview with Jacques, 12/10/06). The fuelwood and timber exploiters also forest user institutions but lacked commitment to the process (interview with Martin, 11/10/06). At this point the MCP Limbe decided to scale-up project intervention from designing single resource management institutions to designing complex multi-resources management institution on a land use scale. The high anthropogenic pressure on the Mabeta-Moliwe forest and high heterogeneity of the users, posed a huge challenge to project effort to design a viable forest management institution for the area.

2.4 Bakweri elite response to the changing forest policy climate

While plans were being made for the MCP Limbe, a group of Bakweri elites linked to the Limbe Traditional Council (LTC) came together in 1993 to form the Victoria Lands and Forest Conservation Committee (VLFCC) (interview with Narcisse, 08/10/06). A second group of exclusively Bimbia elites also came together to form the Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group (VARCIG) (interview with Stephanie, 10/06/06). These groups strongly influenced the establishment of the community forest. The VLFCC focused on addressing what they perceived as illegitimate exploitation of the Mabeta-Moliwe forest by non-indigenes. Members of the VLFCC maintain that their group was formed independently of any external influence (Narcisse, 08/10/06). However, their involvement with the LTC did expose them to both local and expatriate staff of the ODA project and its forest conservation discourse. The group derived their legitimacy from the LTC.

The paramount chief of Limbe was the VLFCC honorary chairperson, his personal adviser was its leader and the secretary of the LTC was also the secretary of the VLFCC. The group's stated objectives were to halt the loss of forest on the hills around Limbe and to halt forest exploitation by non-indigenes without permits from the LTC. However, the group also worked to extract rents from the non-indigenous forest users (interview with Jackson, 28/09/06). By 1994 the VLFCC had a field team made up of Bakweri unemployed young men who commenced seizures of forest products from non-indigenous forest users (Jackson, 28/09/06). They also threatened farmers with crop destruction and eviction if they didn't pay a permit fee. Charcoal producers were the easiest target as their production system made it impossible for them to hide their goods (interview with Franklin, 02/10/06).

Interviews with charcoal producers reveal that they felt powerless to challenge the VLFCC for the following reasons (interview with Sandra, 27/09/06; interview with Stephan, 27/09/06; Jackson, 28/09/06): Firstly, they had no formal permit to exploit trees for charcoal production in the forest, even if they did have permit the forestry service was in transition and was absent on the ground;

i. Secondly, they are from the Northwest Province, the centre of political opposition in Cameroon and as such feared they would not get a fair hearing if they took their grievance to the divisional administrators;
ii. Lastly, they held a perception that the Bakweri's had *de facto* rights of ownership over the land and were entitled to rents.

Seized forest products were returned back to their 'owners' on payment of a fine, unclaimed item were auctioned and a forest user fee system was instituted.

Financial proceeds from VLFCC activities were shared amongst the members including the paramount chief of Limbe (interview with Francis, 20/09/06). The Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group (VARCIG) was interested chiefly in re-asserting the authority of Bimbia indigenes over their cultural land (Stephanie, 10/06/06). VARCIG activities focused on halting the use of land in Bimbia by non-indigenes without the consent of the indigenes. Thus they carried out destruction of farms in Bimbia owned by non-indigenes without land permit from any of the three traditional councils in Bimbia. Thus the VLFCC and VARCIG were instruments used by Bakweri elites to assert cultural rights over the Mabeta-Moliwe forest area, and in the case of the VLFCC to obtain rents from non-indigenous forest users. These associations became dormant with the formation of the BBNRMC, but they had effectively laid out a template for the functioning of the BBNRMC.

3. Creating the community forest management team

The project decision by 1998 to adopt a multi-resources management approach was based on the following reasons (Acworth et al., 2002; Tekwe et al., 2002):

i. Project staff had acquired adequate skills to facilitate a multi-resources approach;
ii. Project had established working relationship with all stakeholders;
iii. Project needed to work in tandem with the national forest agency which had commenced work on a national land use plan;
iv. There was top-down pressure from the state and donors on pilot conservation projects to test the recently approved community forest obtainment manual.

When the Mabeta-Moliwe project team proposed creating a broad-based multi-resources management institution to oversee the various stakeholder groups, there was strong opposition from the Bakweris (Tekwe and Percy, 2001; RCDC, 2002a).

The indigenes were not willing to be part of a body that would give voice to non-indigenous forest users. In an attempt to address their concerns, the project team organised sensitisation meetings for the indigenes to which were invited traditional leaders, VLFCC, VARCIG and other selected notables. In these meetings the indigenes held the position that non-indigenes were 'strangers' who could use the land but should not have voice in decision-making (Narcisse, 08/10/06). The argument by the project team, that these 'strangers' were already deciding the fate of the land through their activities failed to convince the indigenes. To help the indigenes appreciate the urgency of a multi-resources management institution, the project team organised a participatory mapping exercise for the southern part of the Mabeta-Moliwe forest. The indigenes who took part in the exercise were amazed at the extent to which the forest had been encroached (Narcisse, 08/10/06).

The indigenes became receptive to the idea of a land use plan for the forest after the participatory mapping exercise, and were willing to enter into a dialogue with non-indigenes about this (Steven, 28/09/06; Narcisse, 08/10/06). The initial snobbish attitude of the indigenes towards the non-indigenes has a long history behind it. In brief, English-speaking Cameroon occupies two of Cameroon's 10 provinces, the South West and North West. In the colonial era the South West, particularly the Bakweri were the socio-political pacesetters, but in recent years the more populous North West have surged to the fore and this is resented by many in the South West (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997; Orock, 2005; Arrey, 2006). Furthermore, the large North West presence in Limbe makes it a hot bed for opposition politics. In 1997, an opposition candidate won the Limbe parliamentary seat to the ire of Bakweri elites who are overwhelmingly pro-government (Jua, 2001).

Despite the recalcitrance of some indigenes, the participatory mapping exercise generated sufficient interest for the first joint stakeholder forum in 1998, to agree on a land use plan for the Mabeta-Moliwe forest. The forum deliberated and agreed on a provisional land use plan for the forest area. The plan demarcated the forest into 3 zones – a core zone where all use is prohibited, transition zone for agroforestry and an exploitation zone opened to farmers and timber exploiters. Farmers in the core zone where given two years to relocate or face forced eviction and a no farming policy was agreed for water catchments and slopes. The forum also agreed that each farm should not be larger than 1 hectare and prohibited cash crop farming. Other aspects of the land use plan were that all farmers would register and pay rents to the new institution being created to manage the forest, forest users should form institutionalised user groups and establishment of boundary markers to distinguish the different land use zones (RCDC, 2002a).

The 1998 forum created the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council (BBNRMC) as the umbrella institution to implement the land use plan. The choice of name calmed the land tenure fears of the Bakweris and strengthened their ethnocentric discourse on forest user rights. Non-indigenes are the main users of the forest but the indigenes objected to having them in the BBNRMC. A compromise was reached and they were allowed a 25% representation in the BBNRMC. Other stakeholders in the council were representatives from VLFCC, VARCIG, traditional chiefs, and CDC. The council also had representatives from government agencies including the Limbe Urban Council (LUC) – the municipal authority, the forestry and agriculture ministries. At this joint stakeholder forum, the MCP project team presented the community based forest management options in the new 1994 forest law that were available to the BBNRMC.

There was a consensus in favour of the community forestry option. This was influenced by a conviction by indigenes and non-indigenes that the communal forest option under municipal management by the LUC would erode their *de-facto* rights to the forest, as the LUC is a government institution. In addition the non-indigenes feared that the LUC as an auxiliary of the state, not sympathetic to their political leanings, would arbitrarily stop them from exploiting the forest (Narcisse, 08/10/06). Thus from March 1998, project efforts were focused on the obtainment of a community forest status for the Mabeta-Moliwe forest. A month after its creation, the BBNRMC elected an executive committee made up solely of Bakweri elites and sub-committees responsible for ecotourism, agroforestry, joint forest control, finance and fund raising, and education and sensitization. At the end of the year, the project team convened a workshop for the BBNRMC in which the community forestry process was fully elaborated and discussed.

4. Enclosing and gazetting the community forest

The BBNRMC commenced sensitisation activities in January 1999, through convening meetings in the various settlements around Limbe and radio programmes. The management council's joint forest control sub-committee, made up of local state forestry officers and council members, also commenced forest patrols with a focus on reducing illegal logging which had spiralled out of control. Local timber exploiters fearing that they would be out of business when the community forest comes into operation were acting in desperation (Charles, 10/10/06). Joint timber patrol, one of the novel ideas being tested by the Mt. Cameroon project, was aimed at increasing state-society engagement so as to build trust between forestry officers and local actors. Seized timber from joint patrol was auctioned and 25 percent of the proceeds went to the BBNRMC (Acworth et al., 2002; RCDC, 2002a).

In May 1999, an institutional review convened by the project team, assessed the first year of operation of the forest management council, and concluded that it had not been effective in reaching all its local stakeholders groups (RCDC, 2002a). It noted that the council members being elderly persons, retired and active civil servants, lacked the strength and commitment to convene regular meetings with local groups. The council and project team decided to restructure the council through a capacity building workshop scheduled for the end of year. The workshop was convened in November, but could not reach a decision on a new management structure. In December, a second joint stakeholders' forum was convened, and it adopted a new structure for the management council. The forum agreed that the BBNRMC be composed of a board, an executive committee and a full time operations committee (OC) replacing the various part time sub-committees (RCDC, 2002a).

The board of the BBNRMC maintained its composition of 70 percent indigenes and 30 percent non-indigenes and government representatives. The executive committee is 100 percent indigenous, while the operations committee leadership was made up solely of indigenes. It was decided that the Bakweri clans (Bimbia, Livanda and Bonadikombo) around the envisaged community forest would each nominate five persons to join the operations committee. Non-indigenes were allowed to join the operations committee but at the discretion of the leadership. Those who served in the operations team of the VLFCC dominated the operations committee (Franklin, 02/10/06). The committee continued sensitising local stakeholders on progress made with regards to the community forestry process and were often called upon by the project team as additional field hands when executing activities such as agricultural extension or land use mapping.

A major concern repeatedly raised during this sensitization phase, was the land tenure issues. First it became evident through MCP Limbe commissioned research, that suitable forestland for the community forest was in CDC leasehold (ERM, 1998). Secondly, the chiefs and elites were concerned about the fate of lands outside of CDC leaseholds that they considered as indigenous lands. The BBNRMC cleverly avoided hurting indigenous sensibilities over land, by requesting from the CDC the release of some its land for the envisaged community forest. Their request was readily granted and presently 90 percent of the community forest is on former CDC leasehold (Acworth et al., 2002; Tekwe et al., 2002). The chiefs were also made aware that lands forming part of the community forest did not become the property of the management council, were the community forest to be declassified, indigenous lands would return to indigenous hands (Arnaud, 10/06/06; Hughes, 14/09/06).

4.1 Statutory institutional recognition

In fulfilment of the legal requirement for groups applying for a community forest, the BBNRMC deliberated and adopted the status of 'association'. This is one of four options provided in the community forestry manual, these are association; co-operative; common initiative group (CIG); and economic interest group (EIG).

The CIG is the simplest legal status available to local groups. Registration requirements are a membership of a minimum of five persons, articles of association and by-laws. It's tax-exempt, can receive grants/ bequest, and is required to submit annual reports to the civil society registry at the agriculture ministry (MINAGRI, 1992). Consequently its accountability mechanisms are weak; so the CIG option was considered unsuitable for a complex institution like the BBNRMC.

The BBNRMC also rejected the co-operative and the EIG options as being too market oriented, required relatively sophisticated financial systems and in the case of the EIG, it's required to pay tax (OHADA, 1997). The association option was considered appropriate firstly because the BBNRMC structure already reflected the statutory requirement for an association (MINAT, 1990). Secondly, associations are strictly non-profit, thus the BBNRMC felt this serves as a disincentive for financial self-interest. Thirdly, associations are registered with the Senior Divisional Officer, the divisional administrator appointed by and answerable to the Cameroon President. Senior Divisional Officers have statutory administrative powers, thus groups under his supervisory watch are able to readily access the security services under his authority such as the police and the civil prosecutor. The advantages and disadvantages of the various options are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Legal status options for community forestry groups in Cameroon

Legal entity	Advantage	Disadvantage
Association	- Easy to form and manage - Exempt from taxes - Receives subsidies, donations and bequests if it is recognized as a public utility by the President of the Republic	- Cannot receive subsidies, donations and bequests as an ordinary association - Cannot distribute benefits to its members
Co-operative	- Exempt from taxes - The benefits are shared according to individual transactions - Receives subsidies, donations and bequests	- Weighty and complex management structure
Common Initiative Group	- Easy to form and manage - May be transformed into a cooperative - Can distribute benefits amongst its members - Receives subsidies, donations and bequests	- No legal provisions regarding management structure
Economic Interest Group	- Easy to form and manage - Can distribute benefits amongst its members	- The main aim is the improved economic activity of its members - Not tax exempt

Source: Djeumo (2001)

The newly restructured BBNRMC stepped into year 2000 with renewed zeal. By March of that year, the operations committee (OC) and the Mt. Cameroon project team commenced boundary demarcation for the proposed community forest. In May 2000, the new council held its first meeting and on the agenda was an audit of the OC financial records. This was in response to allegations of financial mismanagement brought against the OC president by some members of his team. The president was exonerated but the seed of distrust in the minds of OC members who brought the charge remained (interview with Antoine, 08/08/06). In July, the divisional administrator signed an order for the forceful eviction of farmers from the designated core zones. The eviction order was executed by the operations committee in October and consisted mainly of the destruction of crops in a small number of farms, with no resistance encountered (interview with Maurice, 30/08/06).

In August, a consultation meeting with all stakeholders was organised as required by the community forestry policy. Participants were presented with a tentative map of the community forest, its internal divisions and management objectives. These were deliberated upon and a decision was reached to submit an application for the reservation of a community forest in the Mabeta-Moliwe forest area, with the local office of forestry department. The community forest was named the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest in recognition of Bakweri land rights and to differentiate it from the broader Mabeta-Moliwe forest landscape (Olivier, 21/09/06). The application is required by the community forest law to include the details of an elected forest management officer. An election was conducted during the meeting to select the forest management officer from two candidates who applied for the position. These were the operations committee president and the deputy president (Antoine, 08/08/06; Narcisse, 08/10/06).

The deputy president won to the disappointment of the operations committee president. The election drama shows cleavages amongst the Bakweris in the BBNRMC; the loser maintains that he lost because he is not from the Bakweri clans directly concerned with the community forest. He maintained that his 7 years service, first as head of the VLFCC, then OC president, made him more qualified than his opponent who had only worked for 2 years. He is convinced that his deputy won the election because he was from a prominent Bimbia family. Others maintain that the younger and better-educated deputy won the election because of his youth and academic background in rural development. It is also maintained that alleged financial mismanagement of OC funds worked against the party who lost. It is clear however that the victor had the full support of the Bimbia elites who made certain of victory (Narcisse, 08/10/06; interview with Stephanie, 10/06/06).

A notable exception was the paramount chief of Limbe, an indigene of Bimbia and uncle to the elected forest manager. He supported the candidate who lost out, because this individual had been his personal adviser for over two decades (Francis, 20/09/06). However the paramount chief could not muster the same level of support as the wealthier and better politically influential elite group that was against his candidate. However, the party that lost was offered and he grudgingly accepted the role of assistant forest management officer. The forest management officer according to the community forestry policy is responsible for day-to-day management of the community forest. Thus the forest officer supervises the operations committee, and reports to the executive committee, who are answerable to the board. The board is held to account by the state through the service in charge of forestry and the divisional administrator (MINAT, 1990; MINEF, 1998b).

The operations committee exhibited a greater interest in revenue generation though seizures of timber from joint patrols and harassment of other forest users such as the charcoal producers. This created a situation where they had a poor relationship with the user groups who frequently complained about their attitude. The project team addressed the situation by organising in September 2000, a management capacity building workshop for the operations committee, the forest management officer and other selected participants from user groups. The workshop focused on clarifying the rights and responsibility of each stakeholder, revenue generation and benefit sharing, and the need for constructive relationships between stakeholders (Tekwe and Percy, 2001). Interviews with forest users indicate that the workshop had little immediate impact on the attitude of the operations committee (Jackson, 28/09/06; interview with Gaspard, 10/10/06; Blaise, 02/10/06).

In October, the management council held a second meeting to deliberate on revenue generation for administration and social development initiatives. The Mt. Cameroon project that was financially supporting the community forestry process had informed the council that they had to be self-supporting before project exit in 2002. The board decided to pursue an ecotourism nature trail for bird watching in the core zone and a bee-keeping project. These were to augment revenue generated by the operations committee such as seizures and issuance permits to forest users. The council applied for funding for these initiatives from the Mt. Cameroon project community support fund. The fund aimed at encouraging projects that secured livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. The BBNRMC applications were successful and the initiatives were funded in 2001. Presently the ecotourism project is still running but the bee-keeping project had collapsed due to poor management (interview with Mbah, 28/08/06; interview with Bernard, 17/06/06).

4.2 Crossing the finish line

In December 2000, the BBNRMC received a reservation letter from the forestry department acknowledging their request for a community forest and asking them to submit a simple management plan. Given that all the technical and socio-economic information required for the management plan were readily available from past research activities, the plan was written and submitted to the forestry department in January 2001. The plan following the specified format in the community forestry manual provides a socio-economic profile of the settlements around and biological description of the community forest. It also shows the internal divisions of the community forest and management plan for each of the nine compartments.

The document includes an annual plan for the first five years and four strategic five-year plans, making it a template for the 25-year tenure of the community forest. The simple management plan sets out to achieve the following (BBNRMC, 2001):

i. Protecting the core zones and reforesting degraded areas;
ii. Promoting agro-forestry in the farming zones;
iii. Promoting eco-friendly income generating activities especially ecotourism;
iv. Halting commercial scale timber exploitation;
v. Sustainable exploitation by users such as the charcoal producers;
vi. Social development initiatives in the beneficiary settlements.

The plan went through an iterative process with the local forestry department before it was forwarded to the central forestry department in Yaounde for approval.

In March 2002, a year after the first draft of the management plan was submitted to the forestry department, the forest management council received a letter from Yaounde approving the management plan. This meant they had received the approval of the forestry ministry to manage the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. The last statutory act, the signing of the management agreement between the forest management council represented by the forest management officer and the state represented by the divisional administrator took place on 18th May 2002. The obtainment of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest took two years from application to approval; this is comparatively fast compared with other cases in the region. Three other community forest applications (Bakingili, Etinde and Mokoko areas) submitted by the Mt. Cameroon project Limbe before it ended in 2002, are still to be approved (interview with Emmanuel, 05/04/06).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The narrative in section 4 provides a detailed account of the obtainment process of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. A conceptual reading of the narrative informed by the theoretical and contextual discourse of sections 2 and 3 respectively reveals that the obtainment of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest was influenced by key socio-political determinants discussed below.

i. *Global biodiversity conservation discourse*

A key objective of the ODA Limbe Botanic Garden and Rainforest Genetic Conservation Project was the creation of a protected area in the Mabeta-Moliwe forest. This was informed by recommendations from a mission to the region by experts from Kew Gardens (Cheek, 1994; Watts, 1994; Cheek and Cable, 1997). The mission was responding to a Cameroon government request to Britain to fund the rehabilitation of the Limbe Botanic Garden (Womersley, 1982). Its recommendation reinforced the FAO led Tropical Forest Action Plan (TFAP), which called for a protected area status for the Mt. Cameroon region (FAO, 1985). It is noteworthy that the key advocate of the much celebrated biodiversity hotspot concept was part of an international think-tank in support of the TFAP (see WRI, 1985; Myers, 1988; 1990; Winterbottom, 1990). Thus at the initiation of the MCP Limbe the Mabeta-Moliwe forest was a privileged target landscape.

ii. *Paradigm shift in biodiversity conservation approaches*

The design of the Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe in the early 1990s coincided with the Rio 1992 summit celebrating the global paradigm shift from fortress conservation to community based approaches. Thus the project donors, DFID and the

World Bank, were eagerly championing participatory approaches to development interventions across the globe. The socio-political difficulties of the Cameroon government at the time made the government very compliant to donor prescriptions including community forestry (Ekoko, 2000). These factors and the socio-economic reality in Mabeta-Moliwe forest area killed the idea of gazetting it as a protected area. However, they led to pressures to test community forestry, the project donors' *enfant chéri*, in this area. Project staffs often commented that the success of community forestry in Bimbia-Bonadikombo was seen as key to successful institutionalisation of community forestry on Mt. Cameroon (interview with Philemon, 02/12/05).

iii. *Elite interest*

The most challenging set of actors the Mt. Cameroon project encountered were the indigenous Bakweri elites. The affluence and influence of this group meant they were able to engage and challenge project discourse compared with all other local actors (interview with Danielle, 01/09/06). The creation of elite forest related institutions, the VLFCC and VARCIG, in response to the changing forest policy, is testament of their capacity. The elites and the traditional councils articulated an ethnocentric discourse in order to obtain rents from non-indigenous forest users. The project's inclusive citizenship discourse was neither fully embraced by the indigenes nor the non-indigenes (Monono, 2001). Given the project's claims to political neutrality, it could not substantively challenge the position of the indigenous elites. Increased indigenous elite interest in rents from forest resources was driven by immediate economic difficulties and long-term fear of political domination by the more numerous non-indigenous populations (Monono, 2001; Arrey, 2006).

iv. *Land tenure*

Land tenure issues increased the difficulty of the MCP Limbe's mission. Cameroon Land Ordinance No. 74-1 of July 6, 1974 maintains that the State is the guardian of all lands (Arnold, 1991; Egbe, 1997; Njoh, 2003). However, traditional authorities continue to exercise *de facto* land rights. In the Mt. Cameroon region, the Bakweris are in a legal battle against the government to reclaim the lands hosting the CDC agricultural plantations (BLCC, 2006). In the Mabeta-Moliwe area, the non-indigenes with livelihood dependence on the forest cannot obtain *de jure* or *de facto* rights over land. This precarious position makes them unwilling to fully support the community forest institution (interview with Blaise, 02/10/06). Common property institutions face a conundrum where users don't have decision-making power, and decision makers aren't willing to fully engage with users.

v. *Fuzzy enabling policy and institutional environment*

The land tenure and common property resource management impasse, is related to the fuzzy enabling policy and institutional context for community forestry in Cameroon. The policy neither engages with nor defines 'community'. Common understanding of community in Cameroon is a group bounded either by ethnicity or religion, and this has undermined citizenship rights. Thus, not defining community is not only a significant policy failure, but also a missed opportunity to address issues of citizenship. Is this policy failure an oversight or by design? The political history of post-independent Cameroon (Jua, 2001), would suggests that this is an attempt by government to avoid engaging with the discourse of citizenship. Until more fundamental concepts like citizenship are clarified, attempts at good governance in Cameroon are wild goose chase rather than valid enterprise.

vi. *Donor prerogatives*

Donor support for community forestry in Cameroon is based on the premise that it is a suitable entry point for governance reforms. It is argued that good governance in the forest sector which allows for voice, transparency and accountability, will catalyse good governance in other sectors of national life. While the rhetoric is logical and outcomes plausible, the mechanism for donor initiatives, in this instance the MCP Limbe, may not always deliver fundamental changes. This is because the project logical framework approach with its focus on outputs rather than process, and the short duration of projects (usually 3 – 5 years) is an incentive for project managers to short circuit slow and tedious processes in favour of quick and tangible outputs. The MCP Limbe could not afford lengthy deliberations on resource use and citizenship with actors, as this would have affected time-bound deliverables in the project log-frame. While the project lasted for eight years (1994 – 2002), effective engagement with local actors lasted just 4 years (1998 – 2002).

MCP Limbe at its exit in 2002 set up institutions to provide continued support for community-based initiatives like the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest (Forbes and Besong, 2002; Blackmore and Fominyam, 2002). This included:

i. A community focused funding mechanism, the Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF) initially funded by DFID
ii. A proactive conservation role for the Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG) re-designed to be a parastatal known as the Mt. Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Centre (MCBCC)
iii. Provision of financial and material incentives for the setting up of non-governmental organizations by former project staffs, such as the Regional

Centre for Conservation and Development (RCDC) Limbe, to provide technical services to community-based organisations

However, these institutions have failed to take off since the exit of the MCP (interview with Martial, 11/09/06; interview with Sonia, 08/09/06).

This chapter has sought to reveal the socio-political determinants of the obtainment of managerial rights over the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest by the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council (BBNRMC). In so doing it has revealed the multiple actors from local to global that have had significant influence on the community forestry obtainment process. This shows the multiple layers of embedding of seemingly local based initiatives. This suggests that agents of the state based in national and global scale institutions are successfully engaging the local sphere in Cameroon. Thus the problematic for scholarly investigation at this juncture is not the reach of the post-colonial states such as Cameroon but the response of the state to the demands of its citizens both at the metropolis and at the margins.

Chapter 5

Actors shaping the Bimbia-Bonadikombo landscape

1. Introduction

This chapter shows the complexity of actors and networks with interest on how BBCF is managed. The chapter provides a demographic and occupational profile of households in the settlements around the BBCF. It also provides a profile of the different actors from civil society and government agencies with a stake in the management of the BBCF. The chapter is based on analysis of demographic data, direct observation during forest walks and semi-structured interviews. The analysis reveals that citizenship right is a major tension influencing the implementation of Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy in the Mt. Cameroon region. The non-indigenes in the region are not only the major population group but are also the major forest users in the BBCF. However, the indigenes dominate the BBNRMC and decision-making over the BBCF because Cameroon's community forestry policy, which calls for inclusive local community forest management institutions, privileges the rights of the *de facto* forest owners, the indigenes, above all others.

The chapter is organized as follows; section 2 presents a demographic profile of households in the settlements around the BBCF. Section 3 computes the potential impact of these households on forest loss in the BBCF, while section 4 discusses the membership structure of the BBNRMC, showing that the executive committee, the principal decision-making organ is completely dominated by indigenous elites. Section 5 provides a detailed profile of the stakeholders in the BBNRMC and shows the contested relationships between actors. Section 6 concludes the chapter with arguments that indigeneity has been privileged over citizenship rights.

2. Demographic profile of households in settlements around the BBCF

As shown in the previous chapter, there are eleven settlements within an hour's walk or less from the BBCF. A demographic profile of ten of the settlements was obtained through a rapid household survey. Time and financial constraints meant that Bonadikombo the largest settlement was not surveyed. Results from the household survey are presented in tables below.

Table 5.1 shows that Livanda, Mabeta New-Layout, Mawoh, Mbonjo, and Motowoh, constitute 69.83 percent of the population living around the BBCF. Livanda, originally a Bakweri village (Ardener, 1996), has the highest number of indigenes in surveyed settlements, but it is dominated by non-indigenes. Mabeta (11.85%) and Moliwe (9.42%) both started out as camps for plantation workers; Mabeta is now a fishing post, while Moliwe remains a plantation camp. The least populated are Bimbia, Bamukong and Ombe Native; Bimbia was a slave port and principal settlement in the region during the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Ardener, 1996). Abolition of the slave trade and establishment of Limbe city in the mid-19th century by Baptist missionaries reduced Bimbia's power. Bamukong and Ombe Native started out as farmer bush camps before becoming permanent settlements.

Table 5.1 also shows that the largest population groups residing by the community forest are from the North West Province (45.9%), the South West Province (27.6%) and Nigerians (12.7%). These three groups make up 86 percent of the local population. The total Bakweri population constitutes just 5.7 percent of the local populace; thus the ratio of non-indigenes to indigenes is 17:1, this agrees with Kofele-Kale (1981, p.111), who observed that: '...today there are an estimated 17 immigrants to every native-born person in Fako Division'. The data presented in Table 5.1 is summarised in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Size and place of origin of population groups around the BBCF

Settlement	Population		Group size																	
	Size	**%**	**BA**	**BI**	**CE**	**ES**	**LT**	**NO**	**NW**	**W**	**OSW**	**TSW**	**S**	**U**	**TCMR**	**BE**	**EG**	**GB**	**GH**	**NG**
Bamukong	251	3.00	4	0	0	0	0	0	168	0	58	62	0	0	230	0	0	0	0	21
Bimbia	256	3.06	6	99	0	0	5	0	100	12	31	136	0	0	253	0	0	0	0	3
Livanda	2132	25.45	91	0	18	0	1	0	1450	337	194	285	28	0	2119	0	0	0	0	13
Mabeta	993	11.85	36	0	2	0	7	0	236	13	172	208	0	0	479	0	0	4	6	504
MabetaNL	504	6.02	27	0	0	0	2	0	281	38	144	171	0	0	492	0	0	0	0	12
Mawoh	850	10.15	57	0	7	0	5	0	475	70	228	285	0	2	842	0	0	0	0	6
Mbonjo	1160	13.85	63	0	3	0	54	7	251	22	193	255	7	11	604	153	0	0	34	358
Moliwe	789	9.42	79	0	4	5	13	0	390	1	198	277	12	1	702	0	0	0	0	86
Motowo	1203	14.36	14	0	39	0	91	3	309	92	584	598	0	0	1136	0	4	0	6	57
Ombe Native	240	2.86	0	0	9	0	0	0	186	10	35	35	0	0	240	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**8378**	**100**	**377**	**99**	**82**	**5**	**178**	**10**	**3846**	**595**	**1837**	**2312**	**47**	**14**	**7097**	**153**	**4**	**4**	**46**	**1060**
%			**4.5**	**1.2**	**0.98**	**0.06**	**2.1**	**0.12**	**45.9**	**7.1**	**21.93**	**27.6**	**0.6**	**0.17**	**84.71**	**1.83**	**0.05**	**0.05**	**0.55**	**12.7**

Key: BA – Bakweri, BI – Bimbia, CE – Centre Province, ES – East Province, LT – Littoral Province, NO – North Province, NW – North West Province, W – West Province, OSW – Other South West Province (excluding Bakweri and Bimbians, TSW – Total South West Province (BA + BI + OSW), S – South Province, U – Unidentified, TCMR – Total Cameroonians, BE – Benin, EG – Equatorial Guinea, GB – Gambia, GH – Ghana, NG – Nigeria

Table 5.2: Origins of population groups around the BBCF

Settlement	Bakweri	Other South West	North West	Other Cameroon	Nigeria	Other Foreign	Total
Bamukong	4	58	168	0	21	0	251
Bimbia	105	31	100	17	3	0	256
Livanda	91	194	1450	384	13	0	2132
Mabeta	36	172	236	35	504	10	993
Mabeta NL	27	144	281	40	12	0	504
Mawoh	57	228	475	84	6	0	850
Mbonjo	63	193	251	108	358	187	1160
Moliwe	79	198	390	36	86	0	789
Motowo	14	584	309	229	57	10	1203
Ombe	0	35	186	19	0	0	240
Total	**476**	**1837**	**3846**	**952**	**1060**	**207**	**8378**

Figure 5.1

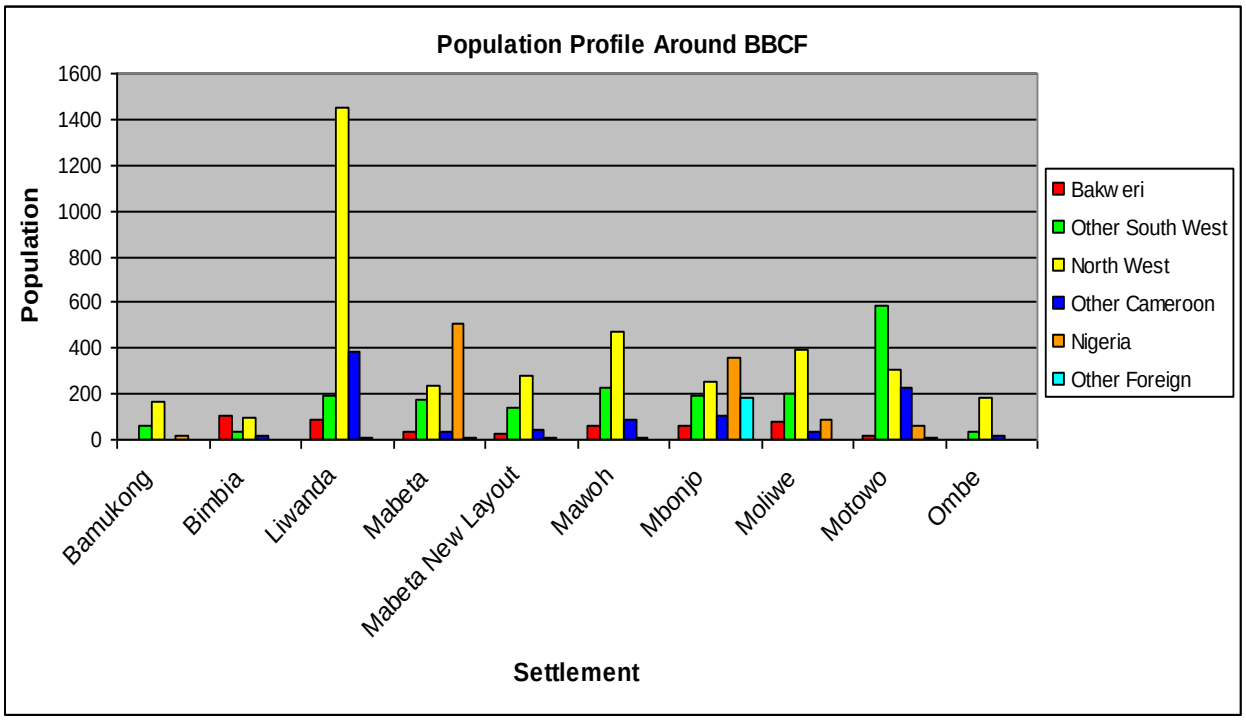


Figure 5.1 show clearly that people from the North West Province dominate the population around the BBCF. It is interesting to note however that Nigerians dominate Mabeta and Mbonjo, settlements that are the main fishing post in the area. Groups from the South West dominate Motowo, and as we will see when looking at the occupational profile of the settlements, it is the most diversified.

Table 5.3 below shows occupational profile of the household heads in the settlements surveyed. The varied responses that were recorded from the 1535 household heads have been grouped into the following eight occupational categories:

i. Small Business (SB)
ii. Natural Resources (NR)
iii. Public Sector (PS)
iv. Services (SV)
v. Technical (TECH)
vi. Unwaged (UW)
vii. Welfare (WEL)
viii. No Response (NR)

Table 5.3: Occupational profile of household around the BBCF

	Small Business		Natural Resources		Public Sector		Services		Technical		Unwaged		Welfare		No Response		Total					
Settlement	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	**Sum**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**M**	**%**
Bamukong	0	0	5	51	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	62	4.04	5	0.33	57	3.71
Bimbia	1	1	16	37	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	64	4.17	19	1.24	45	2.93
Livanda	0	0	115	170	0	3	0	12	1	5	1	1	0	2	0	1	311	20.26	117	7.62	194	12.64
Mabeta	25	12	17	142	0	1	1	6	1	6	4	2	1	8	1	1	228	14.85	50	3.26	178	11.60
MabetaNL	5	13	14	44	0	2	0	4	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	88	5.73	21	1.37	67	4.36
Mawoh	4	4	28	89	0	3	0	5	0	11	2	5	0	1	0	0	152	9.90	34	2.21	118	7.69
Mbonjo	5	7	32	107	0	4	1	19	1	15	2	7	4	2	1	3	210	13.68	46	3.00	164	10.68
Moliwe	0	0	35	89	0	0	1	15	0	7	0	0	6	9	0	0	162	10.55	42	2.74	120	7.82
Motowo*	15	6	36	60	0	7	2	23	1	28	7	15	4	4	0	0	208	13.55	65	4.23	143	9.32
Ombe	1	0	13	22	0	0	0	8	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	50	3.26	14	0.91	36	2.35
Sub-total	**56**	**43**	**311**	**811**	**0**	**20**	**5**	**103**	**4**	**79**	**18**	**33**	**17**	**28**	**2**	**5**	**1535**	**100.00**	**413**	**26.91**	**1122**	**73.09**
Total	**99**		**1122**		**20**		**108**		**83**		**51**		**45**		**7**		**1535**	**100**	**413**	**26.91**	**1122**	**73.09**
%	**6.45**		**73.09**		**1.30**		**7.04**		**5.41**		**3.32**		**2.93**		**0.46**		**100**	**100**	**26.91**		**73.09**	

F = Female headed household

M = Male headed household

*Motowo, which is dominated population-wise by groups from the South West Province, shows the highest level of livelihood diversification

Table 5.3 shows that there are a total of 1535 households in the settlements surveyed. Given their total population size of 8378 persons, the average household size is 5.5 individuals. The World Bank (2007) development indicators note that household size in Cameroon ranged from 4 – 7 persons with a national average of five individuals per household. Thus result obtained by this study falls within the range presented by the World Bank's study carried out in Cameroon in 2001. Table 5.3 also shows that the dominant occupational category is 'natural resources' (73.09%) followed in the distance by 'services' (7.04%) and 'small business' (6.45%). The 'public sector' occupational category accounts for just 1.3 percent of households. Table 5.3 therefore shows overwhelmingly that the populace in the settlements surveyed secure their livelihood from the primary sector.

Table 5.3 further shows that female-headed households account for 26.91 percent of the total households in surveyed settlements. The survey did not differentiate between *de jure* and *de facto* female, because the survey was focused on understanding the gender make-up of forest users and not on household welfare for which such data is absolutely necessary. Female households are predominantly involved with 'natural resources' exploitation compared with other occupational types in a ratio 3:1 and are concentrated in Livanda. female-headed households are evenly represented in the 'natural resource' sector compared with male-headed household in a ratio 3:8, but over represented in the 'small business' category where they dominate males in a ratio 4:3 with most of them concentrated in Mabeta and Motowo. Female households are also over represented in the 'unwaged' and 'welfare' categories where the respective ratios between female and male are 1:2 and 2:3. Female households are not represented in the 'public sector' category where they are completely absent.

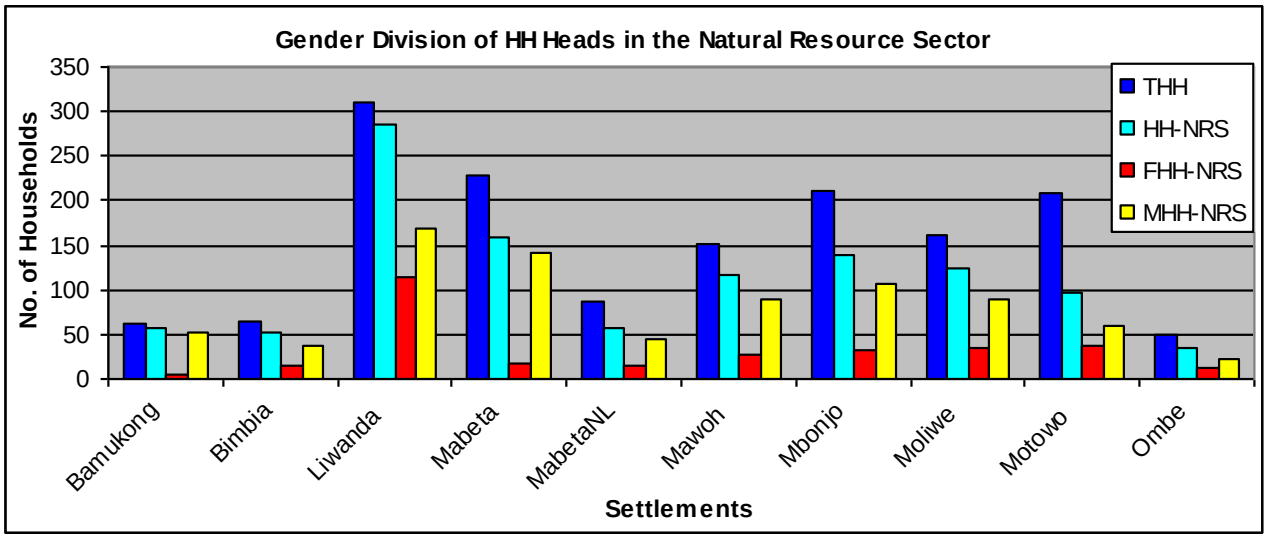
Given the focus of this study, the discussion of the household survey now turns to a detailed consideration of the relationship amongst households involved in 'natural resource' exploitation. Table 5.3 showed that 73.09 percent of households derive their livelihoods from farming, fishing, and forest exploitation. Table 5.4 below shows how this is distributed in the various settlements.

Table 5.4: Gender distribution of households in natural resource exploitation

Settlement	Total HH	Natural Resource Exploitation					
		HH	%	F	%	M	%
Bamukong	62	56	3.65	5	0.33	51	3.32
Bimbia	64	53	3.45	16	1.04	37	2.41
Livanda	311	285	18.57	115	7.49	170	11.07
Mabeta	228	159	10.36	17	1.11	142	9.25
MabetaNL	88	58	3.78	14	0.91	44	2.87
Mawoh	152	117	7.62	28	1.82	89	5.80
Mbonjo	210	139	9.06	32	2.08	107	6.97
Moliwe	162	124	8.08	35	2.28	89	5.80
Motowo	208	96	6.25	36	2.35	60	3.91
Ombe	50	35	2.28	13	0.85	22	1.43
Total	**1535**	**1122**	**73.09**	**311**	**20.26**	**811**	**52.83**

Table 5.4 shows that the gender distribution of the 73.09 percent of households involved in natural resource exploitation consist of 20.26 percent female and 52.83 percent male. Given that total female households is 26.91 percent, the ratio involved in natural resource exploitation is 75.3 percent; similarly total male households is 73.09 percent, thus the ratio in natural resource exploitation is 72.3 percent. The slightly higher ratio for females compared to males in natural resource exploitation reflect the higher occupational diversity amongst males as shown earlier in Table 5.3. The relationship in Table 5.4 is shown in Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2



THH – Total HH in settlement; HH-NRS – Total HH in natural resource exploitation; FHH-NRS – Female HH in natural resource exploitation; MHH-NRS – Male HH in natural resource exploitation

In Figure 5.4, Livanda stands out prominently as the settlement with the largest primary sector based economy, followed by Mabeta though this fishing settlement is not having significant numbers of female households in natural resource exploitation. Mbonjo, the other fishing post in the survey, shows a similar trend with Mabeta. Motowo dominated by persons from the South West Province has a high number of households but relatively low involvement in natural resource exploitation compared with Livanda, Mabeta, and Mbonjo – settlements dominated by persons from the North West and Nigeria. This implies that settlements with high migrant population show strong primary sector based economy. Table 5.5 below presents a disaggregated profile of households in the natural resources sector.

Table 5.5: Disaggregated occupational profile of households in the natural resource sector

Group Identity	BBCF Staff	CDC Worker		Farmer		Fishing		Fish Smoking		Fuel Wood		Live-stock	Logging	Other**	Total	%
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	M		
Bakweri	2	1	9	8	23	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**49**	**4.37**
Bimbia*	0	0	0	4	6	0	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	**19**	**1.69**
Centre Province	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	**7**	**0.62**
East Province	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**	**0.09**
Littoral Province	0	0	0	5	8	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**15**	**1.34**
North West Province	0	5	43	155	302	1	2	9	0	4	1	0	9	1	**532**	**47.42**
West Province	0	0	3	17	45	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	**71**	**6.33**
South Province	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**4**	**0.36**
South West Province***	0	1	13	59	108	3	16	7	0	0	2	2	6	3	**220**	**19.61**
Beninese	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	**38**	**3.39**
Equatorial Guinea	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**	**0.09**
Gambia	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**	**0.09**
Ghana	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**10**	**0.89**
Nigeria	0	1	13	7	24	1	88	11	6	0	1	0	0	0	**152**	**13.55**
NR	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**2**	**0.18**
Sub-total	**2**	**8**	**83**	**259**	**523**	**5**	**167**	**35**	**6**	**4**	**4**	**2**	**20**	**4**	**1122**	**100**
%	**0.18**	**0.71**	**7.40**	**23.08**	**46.61**	**0.45**	**14.88**	**3.12**	**0.53**	**0.36**	**0.36**	**0.18**	**1.78**	**0.36**	**100**	**100**
Total	**2**	**91**		**782**		**172**		**41**		**8**		**2**	**20**	**4**	**1122**	**100**
%	**0.18**	**8.11**		**69.7**		**15.33**		**3.65**		**0.71**		**0.18**	**1.78**	**0.36**	**100**	**100**

*Bimbia is disaggregated from the larger Bakweri group in this table; as will be shown later this is because they are the dominant indigenous actor group

**Other includes 1 Bee farmer from North West, 1 Carver, 1 Gardener and 1 WWF from South West

*** South West Province excluding Bakweri and Bimbia (denoted as OSW in tables 5.1 and 5.3)

Table 5.5 shows that the major household groups in the natural resources sector are those headed by persons from the North West Province (47.42%), South West Province (19.61%) excluding the Bakweris, Nigeria (13.55%) and West Province (6.33%). The four groups form the bulk of non-indigenous households in the natural resources sector in a ratio 8:3:2:1 respectively; Cameroonians are dominant in farming while Nigerians are dominant in fishing. The indigenous households (Bakweri and Bimbia) constitute just 6.06 percent of total households in the natural resources sector, making up just 1 in 16 households in the sector. This again shows the overwhelming dominance of non-indigenes. Other observations from Table 5.5 are that Bakweri households (excluding Bimbians) are mainly farmers, the Bimbians are split between farming and fishing, West Province households are farmers, and Beninese households are fisher-folks.

Table 5.5 shows that 69.7 percent of households in natural resources sector are farmers; this is split into 23.08 percent female and 46.61 percent male. Given that 73.09 percent of all households are involved in natural resource exploitation, the ratio involved in farming is 50.94 percent consisting of 16.87 percent female and 34.07 percent male. This implies that every 1 in 6 households in the settlements surveyed is a female headed farming household, while every 2 in 6 are male headed farming households. Farming is thus the main occupation of both female and male households in the settlements around the BBCF. It is notable that hunting and charcoal production do not feature in Table 5.5, this is because no household carry out these activities as their primary livelihood strategy. Table 5.5 further shows that 15.33 percent of all household are involved in fishing and 3.65 percent in fish drying; while fishing is shown as a male dominated activity, fish drying is female dominated.

The relationship in Table 5.5 above is graphically presented in Figures 5.3 and 5.4. The pie chart shows that the indigenes constitute 1/16 of households in the natural resource sector, same with West Province and 'Other' (other foreign plus other Cameroon); household from the North West Province make up about half the pie.

Figure 5.3

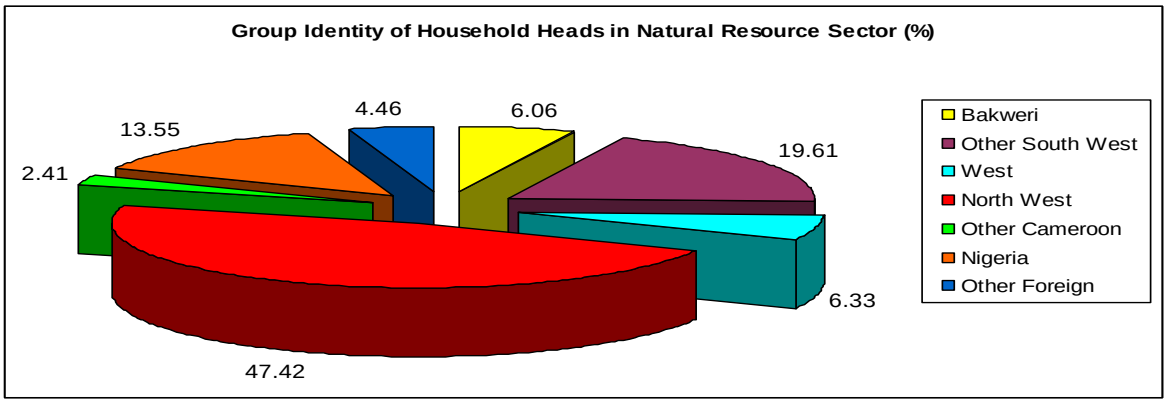


Figure 5.4

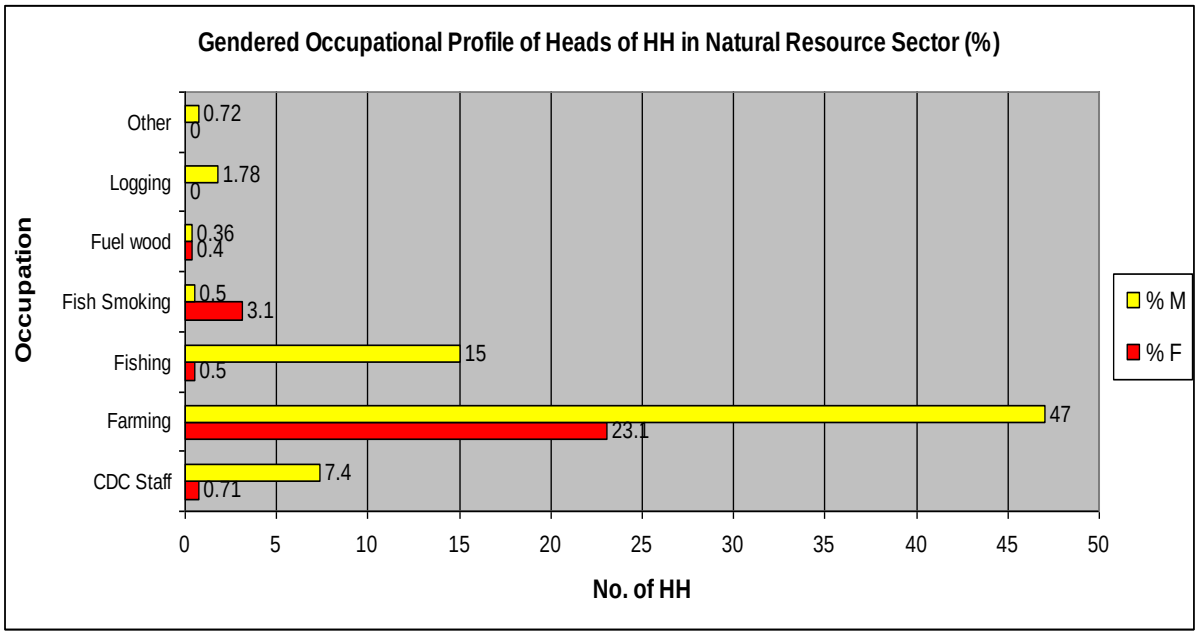


Figure 5.4 shows that the ratio of male to female household in farming is 2:1; males dominate fishing, females dominate fish-smoking; there's equal involvement of males and females in fuelwood sector, but absence of females in logging sector.

3. Potential impact of households on forest loss in the BBCF

The chapter has so far presented details of the household and occupational profile of the population in the surveyed settlements around the BBCF. This section computes the potential impact of the households in these settlements on forest loss in the BBCF. The results obtained are indications of the different degree of threat the settlements surveyed pose to forest loss in the BBCF. This study did not attempt to compute the actual extent of forest loss in the BBCF as the major focus of this study is on social change linked with the creation of the BBCF and not ecological change. However, the results obtained from the analysis below are triangulated with observations made during forest walk in the BBCF.

Tables 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8 below show the potential impact of households in each settlement on forest loss in the BBCF. This is based on a subjective scoring of the impact of occupations on forest loss, weighted by the household size. Table 5.6 shows the potential impact score from 1 – 5 assigned to all the occupation types documented from the settlements surveyed. The scores are assigned as follows; 1= occupation with very weak relationship to forest loss, 2= weak, 3= moderate, 4= strong, and 5= very strong relationship to forest loss. Table 5.7 shows how the potential impact score was used to obtain a weighted potential impact score for households in each settlement. The table is an extract from Livanda settlement dataset. Table 5.8 shows the weighted potential impact score for all households in the settlements, and the comparative potential impact of each settlement on forest loss.

Table 5.6: Potential impact of occupations around the BBCF on forest loss

Occupation of HH head	Potential Impact Score (PIS)	Comment
BBCF Staff, Farmer, Fish Smoking, Fuel Wood Exploiter, Timber Exploiter, WWF Staff	5	Strong direct links to forest loss
Canoeist, Carpenter, Craftsman, Fishing	4	Strong indirect links to forest loss
Baker, Bee Farmer, Blacksmith, Boat Repairer, Builder, CDC Worker, Driver, Gardener, Herbalist, Housewife, Labourer, Livestock Farmer, Porter, Palm Wine Tapping, Small Business, State Security, Unemployed	3	Partial dependence on forest but not always implicated in forest loss
Butcher, Civil Servant, Motorcycle Rider, Retiree, Surveyor, Truck Pusher	2	Occasionally dependence on forest but not linked with forest loss
Banker, Barber, Care Worker, Electrician, Factory Worker, Hairdresser, Hawker, Health Worker, Hotel Worker, Mechanic, Nurse, Painter, Pastor, Photographer, Plumber, Printer, Sailor, Security Guard, Secretary, Shoe Mender, Seamstress, Student, Tailor, Technician, Teacher, Welder	1	Occupations with tenuous links to forest loss

Table 5.7: Weighted potential impact of households around the BBCF

ID	Gender	HH Size	Occupation	Sector*	PIS	Ethnicity	Province	WPIS**
LIW001	M	7	Farmer	NRes	5	Balondo	Southwest	35
LIW002	M	5	Nurse	Welf	1	Ngie	Northwest	5
LIW003	F	8	Farmer	NRes	5	Njie	Northwest	40
LIW009	F	5	Farmer	NRes	5	Mbe	Nigeria	25
LIW010	F	12	Farmer	NRes	5	Mengong	South	60
LIW011	F	6	Farmer	NRes	5	Banyang	Southwest	30
LIW012	F	5	Housewife	Unwgd	3	Bamendakwe	Northwest	15
LIW031	F	2	Farmer	NRes	5	Bakweri	Bakweri	10
LIW046	M	1	Civil Servant	PStr	2	Bangwa	Southwest	2
LIW048	M	8	Driver	Svcs	3	Awing	Northwest	24
LIW049	M	11	Farmer	NRes	5	Webum	Northwest	55
LIW051	M	7	Driver	Svcs	3	Menka	Northwest	21
LIW052	M	6	Carpenter	Tech	4	Ngie	Northwest	24
LIW056	M	9	Logging	NRes	5	Bamileke	West	45
LIW073	M	7	Security	Svcs	1	Ngali	Centre	7
LIW138	F	1	Farmer	NRes	5	Bassa	Littoral	5
Sum HH Pop		**100**	**Sum PIS**		**62**	**Sum WPIS**		**403**
Average		**6.25**	**Average*** **		**3.88**	**Average**** **		**4.03**

*NRES – Natural Resources, Welf – Welfare, Unwgd – Unwaged, PStr – Public Sector, Svcs – Services, Tech – Technical

**WPIS = Household size (HH Size) x PIS

***Average PIS = Sum PIS/N (where N = 16 in this sample, is number of households in dataset)

**** Average WPIS = Sum WPIS/Sum HH Size

The difference in the averages for the PIS (3.88) and WPIS (4.03) in Table 5.7 shows that WPIS is sensitive to household size. The PIS is weighted because households with similar PIS but different size would have different impact on forest loss, with larger households having greater impact. Table 5.8 shows the WPIS for all households in the settlements surveyed. The table introduces the comparative potential impact, which is the product of a settlement's WPIS and its population size expressed as a ratio of the total population of surveyed settlements.

The comparative potential impact compares the magnitudes of the potential impact on forest loss of each settlement. This is clearly observed when the standard score is computed for each settlement. Standard scores (Z) are statistically computed values that show magnitude of difference between values in a variable in terms of their standard deviation. Thus a standard score Z = 1 implies that a value in a variable distribution is one standard deviation above the mean of the distribution, likewise Z = -1 means the value is one standard deviation below the mean.

Table 5.8: Potential impact of forest loss of settlements around the BBCF

Settlement	No. of HH	Pop	Averages			Pop R*	CPI**	Z-CPI
			HH Size	PIS	WPIS			
Bamukong	62	251	4.05	4.76	4.81	0.03	0.14	-0.8
Bimbia	64	256	4.00	4.27	4.4	0.03	0.13	-0.8
Livanda	311	2132	6.86	4.81	4.81	0.25	1.22	2.5
Mabeta	228	993	4.36	3.56	3.67	0.12	0.43	0.1
MabetaNL	88	504	5.73	4.18	4.21	0.06	0.25	-0.5
Mawoh	152	850	5.59	4.39	4.36	0.10	0.44	0.1
Mbonjo	210	1160	5.52	3.66	3.61	0.14	0.50	0.3
Moliwe	162	789	4.87	3.75	3.79	0.09	0.36	-0.2
Motowo	208	1203	5.78	3.38	3.24	0.14	0.47	0.2
Ombe	50	240	4.80	4.16	4.2	0.03	0.12	-0.9

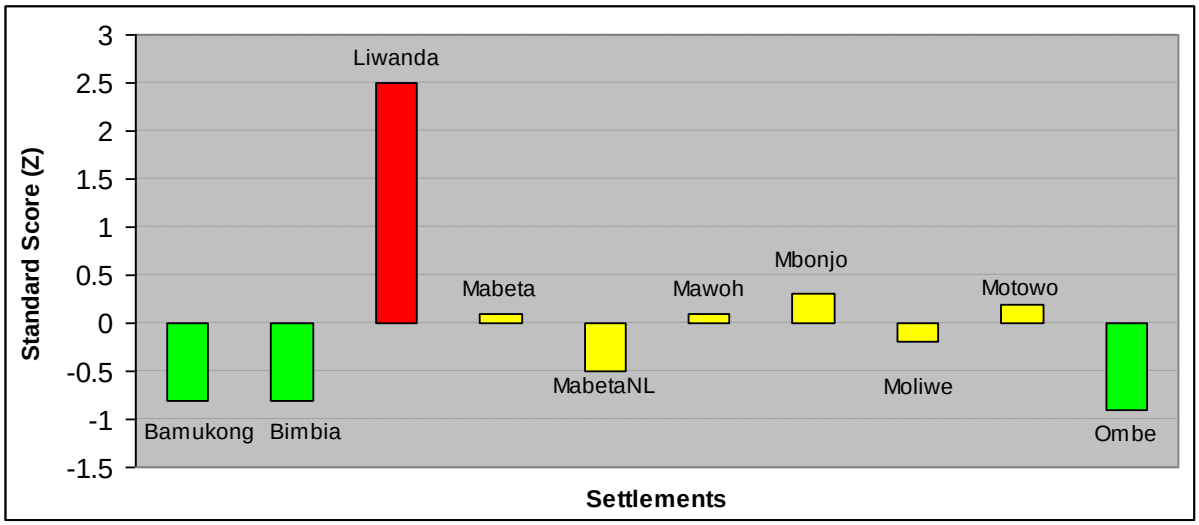
*Population Ratio (Pop R) = Pop of settlement/total population of all settlements (=8378)

**CPI = WPIS x Pop R

Table 5.8 shows that households in Livanda have a potential impact on forest loss in the BBCF that is 2.5 standard deviations above the average impact of households in the other settlements surveyed. The standard scores for Mabeta, Mabeta New Layout, Mawoh, Mbonjo, Moliwe and Motowo show that they have a potential impact on forest loss close to the average for the distribution. While standard scores for Bamukong, Bimbia and Ombe show that they have a potential on forest loss lower than the average for the distribution. Thus the Z-CPI enables a grouping of the settlements into three potential impact categories (Figure 5.5 below):

- C 1 – Livanda with the highest potential to cause forest loss in the BBCF
- C 2 – Mabeta, Mabeta New Layout, Mawoh, Mbonjo, Moliwe and Motowo, with average potential to cause forest loss in the BBCF
- C 3 – Bamukong, Bimbia and Ombe with the lowest potential impact

Figure 5.5: Potential impact on forest loss of settlements around the BBCF



As earlier stated, the results above are pointers to settlements 'potential' rather than 'actual' impact on forest loss. Conclusive statements on the relationship between settlements and forest loss in the BBCF are beyond the bounds of this study. However, it is worth pointing out that the highest numbers of forest users encountered during forest walk was in the Livanda compartment of the BBCF.

Table 5.9 show the results of Pearson's Correlation analysis between the comparative potential impact on forest loss of each settlement, the weighted potential impact scores, population of settlement, size of the three major population groups in each settlement, and number of farmer headed households in each settlement.

Table 5.9: Correlation between forest users and potential impact on forest loss

Variables	CPI	WPIS	Pop	OSW	NW	NGA	FAHH
CPI	1	.121	.972(**)	.341	.938(**)	.095	.877(**)
WPIS	.121	1	-.105	-.651(*)	.384	-.543	.468
Pop	.972(**)	-.105	1	.509	.843(**)	.224	.765(**)
OSW	.341	-.651(*)	.509	1	.161	.073	.160
NW	.938(**)	.384	.843(**)	.161	1	-.192	.979(**)
NGA	.095	-.543	.224	.073	-.192	1	-.329
FAHH	.877(**)	.468	.765(**)	.160	.979(**)	-.329	1

OSW – Other South West, NW – North West, NGA - Nigeria

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.9 shows a very strong positive relationship between forest loss of surveyed settlements with population size, migrant population from the North West Province and number of farmer headed households in a settlement. The table also shows a significant negative relationship between the weighted potential impacts on forest loss of surveyed settlements and the migrant population from other parts of the South West Province. The table further reveals that there is a very strong positive relationship between the number of farmer headed households in each settlement and

the migrant population from the North West Province. There is no significant relationship between the Nigerian population and other variables. While the results in Table 5.9 do not indicate a cause-effect relationship, it does suggest very strongly that the farmer populations from the North West Province are the most significant forest user group linked with forest loss in the BBCF.

4. Membership structure of the BBNRMC

Cameroon's community forest policy (MINEF, 1998b) specifies that the management board for a community forest should reflect its stakeholders. Table 5.10 below shows that the members of the BBNRMC are from eight stakeholder groups:

i. Indigenes (Bakweri elites and chiefs)
ii. Cameroon Development Corporation
iii. Charcoal Burners Group
iv. Timber Exploiters
v. Farmers
vi. Beekeepers
vii. Conservation NGOs
viii. Government

Table 5.10 show the indigenes have eighteen seats in the board of the BBNRMC (70% representation), non-indigenes have five seats (19% representation), and government has three seats. Despite the observable presence of Nigerians and Beninese in the area, they are not on the board. This implies that the board does not fully reflect the heterogeneity of the population exploiting the BBCF.

Table 5.10: Membership of the BBNRMC

No.	Position	Identity	Group
1.	Chairperson	Paramount Chief of Limbe	Bimbia
2.	Executive President	Retired Parliamentarian	Bimbia
3.	Deputy President	Senior Civil Servant	Bimbia
4.	Secretary	Civil Servant	Bakweri
5.	Financial Secretary	Retired Civil Servant	Bimbia
6.	Treasurer	Retired Civil Servant	Bimbia
7.	Traditional Rep	Chief of Bonagombe	Bimbia
8.	Traditional Rep	Chief of Bonabile	Bimbia
9.	Traditional Rep	Chief of Dikolo	Bimbia
10.	Traditional Rep	Chief of Livanda	Bakweri (Bojongo clan)
11.	Traditional Rep	Chief of Bonadikombo	Bakweri (Bojongo clan)
12.	Cameroon Development Corporation	Senior Management Staff	Bimbia
13.	Legal Adviser	Senior Barrister	Bimbia
14.	Adviser	Civil Servant	Bakweri
15.	Member	Agricultural Expert/Civil Servant	Bakweri
16.	Member	Business Entrepreneur	Bakweri (Bojongo clan)
17.	Member	Civil Servant	Bakweri (Bojongo clan)
18.	Member	Retired Civil Servant	Bakweri
19.	Charcoal Burners Rep	Farmer	North West
20.	Timber Exploiters Rep	Civil Servant	North West
21.	Farmers Rep	Farmer	North West
22.	Beekeepers Rep	Farmer	North West
23.	Member	Local conservation NGO	West
24.	Ministry of Forestry	Divisional Delegate	Other Cameroon
25.	Ministry of Forestry	Chief of Section	Other Cameroon
26.	Ministry of Forestry	Forestry and Wildlife Officer	Other Cameroon

Table 5.10 also shows that the Bimbia clan has ten seats in the BBNRMC, while persons from the Bojongo clan (Livanda and Bonadikombo villages) have four seats, and other Bakweri not from villages with traditional claims on land in the BBCF have four seats. Thus Bimbians with 1.2 percent of the population (Table 5.1) in the surveyed settlements around the BBCF and 38.5 percent representation in the

BBNRMC are the dominant actors with decision-making powers over the BBCF. There are three reasons for Bimbia's dominance in the BBNRMC. The first is that Bimbia's three fiercely independent villages (Bonagombe, Bonabile and Dikolo) have representatives in the BBNRMC. Secondly, the more forested southern section of the BBCF are on lands regarded as Bimbia cultural property with each of its three villages having land claims within the BBCF, see Table 5.11 below. Consequently Bimbians assert greater ownership rights over the BBCF. Thirdly, when MCP Limbe initiated the community forestry establishment process in the area, the Bimbians used the VLFCC and VARCIG, as shown in Chapter 4, to look out for their interest.

Table 5.11: Traditional claimants to land in the BBCF

Compartment	Area (ha)	Primary use	Claimants
Dikolo	250	Eco-Tourism, Research	Bimbia (Dikolo)
Likomba La-mbenge	344	Research, Beekeeping	Bimbia (Dikolo)
Likomba La-lelu	645	Research, Beekeeping	Bimbia (Dikolo)
Bimbia	252	Agro-forestry	Bimbia (Bonabile)
Motondo/Mawoh	229	Timber, Charcoal	Bimbia (Bonagombe)
Livanda	286	Timber, Charcoal	Livanda
Bamukong	774	Farming	Bimbia (Dikolo)
Moliwe Hills	565	Farming	Bonadikombo
Bonadikombo	400	Farming	Bonadikombo

*See map of the BBCF in chapter 4 for relative positions of the compartments

Table 5.11 shows that Bimbia has traditional claims to 2,494 ha or 66.6 percent of land in the BBCF (total area 3,745 ha); the Bojongo in Livanda have traditional claims on just 286 ha (7.6%) of the land, while those in Bonadikombo lays claims to 965 ha (25.8 %) of the land. Livanda and Bonadikombo's holdings in the northern portion of the BBCF are severely degraded; farm sizes here range from 1 ha to 5 ha, while in southern BBCF they ranged from 0.5 ha to 2 ha. Furthermore, Bonadikombo

with a population size of about 2800 persons is the largest settlement around the BBCF, and shares similar household and livelihood characteristics with Livanda (Schmidt-Soltau, 2003a). Thus northern BBCF faces farming pressures from the inhabitants of Livanda, Bonadikombo and from farmers I encountered who came from the far off cities of Mutengene and Tiko (see locations in Figure 4.1 and 4.2). This also accounts for the location of the non-consumptive forest use areas in the southern BBCF. While southern BBCF is richer than the northern section, it is still a degraded forest with no significant amount of wildlife.

5. Profile and relationship amongst stakeholders in the BBNRMC

Table 5.10 above showed that the members of the BBNRMC are from eight stakeholder groups – indigenes, CDC, charcoal producers, timber exploiters, farmers, beekeepers, local conservation NGOs and government. This section provides a detailed profile of these stakeholders and shows the relationship between them.

5.*1 Indigenes*

There are eighteen indigenes in the BBNRMC, ten are from Bimbia, two from Bonadikombo and Livanda, and four from other Bakweri clans with no land claims in the BBCF. Twelve of the eighteen indigenes are elites and six are traditional leaders (four from Bimbia, one each from Bonadikombo and Livanda). As noted in the previous section, Bimbia is the dominant group in the BBNRMC. The reasons for this include historical endowment, their traditional claims to two-thirds of BBCF land, and their strong bargaining position via the VLFCC and VARCIG during the creation of the BBCF. While VARCIG was a Bimbia focused institution, the VLFCC was an institution for all Bakweris in the Limbe area.

Bimbia's premier position in the VLFCC was because its chairperson, the immediate past paramount Chief of Limbe (now deceased) was from Bimbia. The prominence of Bimbia is directly linked to the immersion of the people of the Cameroon coast into global capital flows. In 1472 the Portuguese explorer Fernando Po established initial contact between Europeans and the Cameroon coast, after which the Portuguese commenced the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By 1800 Bimbia was an important slave port (Ardener, 1996). It first attracted colonial interest when the famous English explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton visited Mt. Cameroon in 1863 and recommended the region as a health centre for officers of the British Imperial government (Burton, 1863). Bimbia was by then a vibrant settlement living in tension with other Bakweris opposed to its power (Ardener, 1956; 1996; Tande, 2001).

Abolition of slavery, colonial expansion into the hinterlands, and fierce opposition from rival chiefdoms stripped Bimbia of its power by the early 20th century (Elango, 1989; Ardener, 1996). However, descendants of King William I of Bimbia have been the paramount chiefs of Limbe from when it became a colony in 1886 to date. Prominent Bimbians in recent times include the first Bakweri parliamentarian in Cameroon's national house of assembly set up in 1972, the immediate past executive administrator of the Limbe Urban Council and the general manager of CDC. Thus the present political capital of the Bimbians gives them a more audible voice compared with other stakeholders in the BBNRMC (interview with Yannick, 12/06/06). MCP Limbe also unwittingly strengthened Bimbia's influence with a preference for using Camp Saker, a residential tourist facility in Bonagombe village Bimbia, as a field base and for community workshops. All these factors made it next to impossible for the MCP Limbe to prevent a Bimbia bias in the composition of the BBNRMC.

5.2 Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC)

The CDC, the largest agro-industrial enterprise in Central Africa, has a lease on about 102,000 hectares of land for commercial plantations around Mt. Cameroon (ERM, 1998). It was incorporated as a government parastatal on January 1st 1947 by the British administrators of West Cameroon from plantations seized from German entrepreneurs at the end of the Second World War (CDC, 1948; Bederman, 1968; Mbile, 1997). CDC has plantations of oil palm, rubber and banana; its tea plantations were privatized in 2002. It is a major stakeholder in the BBNRMC not just because it released 90 percent of the land in the BBCF, but also because it's the most significant driver of land-use change on Mt. Cameroon (Ardener et. al., 1960; ERM, 1998). The BBCF is surrounded by CDC plantations – the Mabeta and Bimbia Estates in the east and south respectively established by the West Africa Plantation Company Berlin before the First World War; the Moliwe Estate in the north established by the Moliwe Plantation Company Berlin before the First World War.

The plantation economy brought an influx of migrants into Mt. Cameroon region. Bederman (1968) notes that by 1927 there were 10,542 plantation workers in the area but only 732 were indigenes. Field workers are provided housing in camps located on the estates, but low wages leads them to food crop farming for domestic use and for sale in local markets. The plantation economy brought agricultural know-how that has allowed small holder cash crop plantations to flourish in the region. The CDC has also contributed immensely to socio-economic development around Mt. Cameroon with the construction of roads, housing estates, schools, sport grounds and health facilities used by both staff and the local populace (CDC, 1997). The CDC has occasionally provided financial support to the BBNRMC when it's generated revenues has been insufficient to cover its running cost .

5.3 Charcoal Burners Group

The Charcoal Burners Group consists of charcoal producers who obtain their product from the BBCF. They are the only organized charcoal producer group in the Mt. Cameroon region. The other rival but unorganized charcoal group in the region is the Batoke group located in the Mekonge Forest Reserve area (see maps in chapter 4). The Batoke group consists of persons from the BBCF area who were not willing to abide by the new rules of forest access. The BBCF group was formed in 1995 in response to threats from the VLFCC but became formally organized in 1997 due to capacity building efforts of the Mt. Cameroon Project (interview with Jackson, 28/09/06). Despite the arduous task of charcoal production, the group with a membership of twenty persons has eight female members; seventeen members are from the North West Province with fifteen belonging to the same ethnic group (interview with Stephan, 27/09/06). While the group is still to obtain legal recognition from the state, they have well defined statutes guiding their operations. Legal registration with the state is delayed because the group alleges that they have been the victim of fraud from a dismissed member and a solicitor based in Limbe.

The sanctioned member is alleged to have collected about £300 (£8 per member) from the group to obtain their registration certificate but failed to do so (Stephan, 27/09/06)). It is worth noting that registration expenses for groups seeking the status of common initiative groups do not usually exceed £50. Prior to charcoal production in the BBCF, charcoal in Limbe was coming from Mabeta area and was of poor quality as it was obtained from the left over of wood used for fish-smoking. The Mabeta charcoal grains were relatively small and it burnt poorly; the main consumers at the time were road side food merchants who used it to grill fish and chicken in their food stalls. Thus the BBCF group is the pioneer charcoal burners in the area with

some of their members moving on to form the Batoke group because they felt the controls on the BBCF group by the group leaders, the VLFCC and now the BBNRMC is too restricting (interview with Chick, 28/09/06; Stephan, 27/09/06). The group's organizational capacity was enhanced through participation in institutional workshops organized by the Mt. Cameroon project (RCDC, 2002b).

The BBCF group has an ethnic bias with more than 50 percent of the members coming from the Fumte ethnic group from the North West Province, thus entry into trade by non-Fumte persons is relatively difficult (Stephan, 27/09/06). While the group does not decide who is able to engage in charcoal burning in the BBCF, there is a mutual agreement between the group and the BBNRMC that all who apply for charcoal exploitation permit will be encouraged to join the group. To ensure that new exploiters do join the group, it is agreed that those who refuse to do so would not have their exploitation permit renewed (interview with Nelly, 08/09/06). In turn the group ensures that its members respect the exploitation quota fixed by the BBNRMC and desist from illegal exploitation. The preferred tree used for charcoal production is Azobe (*Lophira alata*), a hardwood in high demand internationally. Charcoal from this tree specie is said to burn much better than other species in the BBCF. The group sells its charcoal principally in Limbe main market which is operational two days a week (Tuesdays and Fridays). The group is divided into two sub-groups for marketing purposes, with each sub-group selling their produce on one market day per week. This is to ensure that each charcoal burner keeps to the exploitation quota fixed by the BBNRMC. The quota for each group member is four units per week, with each unit being a used 100 kg rice polythene sack (photographs below).



Plate 5.1: Hired labour bringing charcoal bags to Charcoal Park



Plate 5.2: Charcoal section in Limbe main market

Each bag sells for about £5 – 7 while a bucket sell for between about £1 – 1.50, and each bag can yield between 5-6 buckets depending on the marketing expertise of the charcoal trader in ensuring that the bucket is not too highly stacked with charcoal (Stephan, 27/09/06). The best prices are obtained between May – June just after the corn harvest, as corn farmers use the charcoal to dry the corn grains to make them keep longer in storage. The charcoal burners also sell to buyers who come to purchase from their homes, though the BBNRMC has asked them to stop this practice as it makes it difficult to monitor the charcoal trade. The practice persists because it is very difficult for the BBNRMC to police home sales and also because all the charcoal burners are involved in it so no one reports on the other. An exploitation permit is valid for four months from date of issue, just enough time to exploit one tree. If the tree is completely used up before the third month, this is seen as an indication of over-exploitation, the exploiter would have to wait for at least one month before being granted a new permit; if the tree is not fully used up by the end of the fourth month, the exploiter still has to renew the exploitation permit. Table 5.12 below shows the profit margin from charcoal production (Appendix 8).

Table 5.12: Income from charcoal exploitation in the BBCF

Item	Unit Cost (francs cfa)*	Cost	Revenue
Inspection fee	10,000	10,000	
Permit	25,000	25,000	
Fuel for chainsaw	2,500/round x 6**	15,000	
Engine oil for chainsaw	1,000/round x 6	6,000	
Felling of tree	5,000	5,000	
Cutting of strips	500/strip x 125	62,500	
Splitting of strips	250/strip x 125	31,250	
Digging of combustion pit	2,500	2,500	
Fuel for combustion	5,000	5,000	
Transport from pit to charcoal park	1,500/bag x 50	75,000	
Transport from charcoal park to market	250/bag x 50	12,500	
Market tax for every 6 bags	200 x 7	1,400	
Total expenditure		**251,150**	
Average expenditure/bag	**251,150/50**	**5,023**	
Average total revenue per tree	**6,000/bag x 50**		**300,000**
Average total income per tree	**300,000 – 251,150**		**48,850**
Average income per month (3 month rotation)	**48,850/3**		**16,300**
Average income per month (4 month rotation)	**48,850/4**		**12,200**
Average income per bag in high season	**9,000 – 5,023**		**4,000**
Average income per month in high season	**4,000 x 16 bags**		**64,000**

*Exchange rate: 1,000 francs cfa ≃ £1
Average length of log = 25 meters (including branches)
Average height of strip = 20 cm = 0.20 meters
Average number of strips from 1 log = 125
**Strips of log from a round of chainsaw operation = 16 – 20
Number of rounds of chainsaw operation to completely convert log to strips = 6
Number of strips to produce a bag of charcoal = 2 – 2.5
Average number of bags of charcoal from 1 log = 50 bags

While the profit margin outside the high season is low, it is significant for the charcoal burners because it is a regular source of cash income. Profit margins increase when family members, more often children, assist in transporting the product from pit to market. It's also worth noting that all the charcoal producers own farms while some have spouses involved in other occupation such as taxi driving and petty business (interview with Sandra, 27/09/06). The importance of this income stream is seen by the very high motivation within the charcoal group for self-regulation and compliance with BBNRMC requirements. This also partly explains why the Fumte who are the

main ethnic block in the group place very high entry cost for anyone wishing to become involved in charcoal burning in the BBCF. The group meets once every month and its leadership is elected on a yearly basis. Its principal sanction mechanism is to report defaulters to the BBNRMC who may either confiscate the defaulter's products or refuse to renew defaulter's exploitation permit. The president and/or vice-president represent the group in the BBNRMC board.

5.4 Timber Exploiters

The BBCF area has experienced commercial logging from the colonial era to as recently as the late 1980s (interview with Sandrine, 31/08/06). Logging skid trails and abandoned logs in the Bonadikombo and Moliwe compartments in the northern portion of the BBCF observed during forest walks are evidence of commercial logging in the recent past. Presently commercial timber exploitation is not allowed in the Mt. Cameroon region as there are no forest concessions in this area in Cameroon's current land use plan (MINEF and GFW, 2005). However, the forestry law allows for individual logging permits to be issued to persons who show evidence that the timber is for personal use (MINEF, 1998a). This provision in the law is exploited by persons who apply for individual logging permits but sell the timber in local markets (interview with Martin, 11/10/06). This type of commercial exploitation is not allowed. MCP Limbe worked hard to organize local timber exploiters into a defined user group but their efforts were unsuccessful, the illegal nature of the activity made local exploiters unwilling to form such a user group.

The BBNRMC by the community forestry policy (MINEF, 1998b) is also able to grant individual logging permits. This is the basis upon which charcoal burners, fuelwood and timber exploiters are granted logging permits for a fee. In 2004, the

community forest manager asked the timber exploiters to form a group, promising that he would grant the group members exclusive logging rights to the BBCF (Martin, 11/10/06). Given that trees of exploitable size in the BBCF were becoming more difficult to access, this was an attractive proposition to the exploiters (Martin, 11/10/06). Under the leadership of the most elderly and more established exploiter, a user-group was created and was asked to pay a group registration fee to the BBNRMC. Documents held by the group leader shows that this fee was paid to the forest manager; shortly after this payment was made, the forest manager emigrated abroad without granting the group logging rights. In addition the BBNRMC account books show no record of the payment to the forest manager.

This incident upset the timber exploiters and increased their recalcitrance towards forming a defined user-group. However, continued incidence of logging in the BBCF without permit, and sometimes violent clashes between the BBNRMC patrol team and such loggers, has kept the issue of a creating a timber exploiters group high on the agenda of the BBNRMC. The sitting timber exploiters' representative on the BBNRMC board is a civil servant *cum* part-time farmer *cum* part-time logger (interview with Blaise, 02/10/06). He was selected to be on the board on the basis of his amiable relationship with other exploiters, and members of the board, observed during the formative stages of the BBNRMC. However, the most elderly exploiter referred to above is usually invited to BBNRMC board meetings. Table 5.13 shows species exploited from the BBCF and profit margins.

Table 5.13: Trees most commonly logged in the BBCF

Scientific name	Local name	Minimum tree size (m3)	Plank size (inch)	No. of pieces	Inspection and permit fee (cfa)*	Chainsaw hire + fuel	Chainsaw operator fee	Porters fee from site to vehicle	Transport to market	Cost price	Selling price	Profit margin
Afzelia africana	Doussie**	20	3x8	120	45,000	111,000	96,000	240,000	25,000	517,000	850,000	333,000
Nauclea diderrichii	Opepe	15	1x12	50	45,000	65,000	50,000	75,000	25,000	260,000	250,000	-10,000
Terminalia Superba	Akom	12	1x12	70	35,000	50,000	35,000	35,000	15,000	170,000	154,000	-16,000
Piptandenistrum Africana	Small leaf	20	2x4	400	4,0000	135,000	120,000	100,000	25,000	420,000	440,000	20,000
Pignantus Angolensis	Carraboard	9	3/4 boards	100	30,000	35,000	20,000	20,000	13,000	118,000	100,000	-18,000
Staudstia Kamerunensis	Bobi	17	2x4	200	40,000	85,000	70,000	122,500	25,000	342,500	450,000	107,500
Alstonia boonei	Milk Stick	13	1x12	70	30,000	57,000	42,000	35,000	15,000	179,000	140,000	-39,000

*All costs are in cfa francs; exchange rate: 1000 francs cfa ~ £1~ US$2 (www.xe.com, accessed 10 June 2007)

** This specie is in high demand in the international market so it commands a good price locally

Table 5.13 shows that the profit margin per tree when the total production cost is computed is negative for four of the seven most popularly demanded timber species. Doussie and Bobi, the most profitable species are now very rare in the BBCF and there is a complete ban by BBNRMC on Doussie exploitation. However, some local exploiters in the BBCF are able to maintain their operations because they own their chainsaws (interview with Charles, 10/10/06), and this gives them a better bargaining power when hiring the chainsaw operator. In some cases, their children also assist in head porting the planks from forest site to vehicle loading site, especially for species such as Milk Stick and Carraboard which are relatively lightweight. Others choose to exploit more than the number of trees permitted arguing that this is only the way they can make a profit (Charles, 10/10/06). The depletion of the more profitable species has brought a reduction in the number of local exploiters in the BBCF (interview with Gaspard, 10/10/06). This is also due to the fact that the available stocks are either in rugged terrain or in the core zones of the BBCF. Regular monitoring of the core zones and their proximity to Bimbia villages makes it extremely difficult for exploiters to carry out un-permitted activities therein.

While indigenes do exploit timber for private use, all the commercial timber exploiters encountered during fieldwork were non-indigenes mainly from the North West Province. Members of the BBNRMC patrol team have been involved in violent incidents with defaulting exploiters who refuse to allow seizure of their chainsaws or timber (interview with Henry, 14/06/06). This has sometimes led to physical injuries being sustained by members of the patrol team. Thus whenever the patrol has to accost a defaulting exploiter, they put a request to the Divisional Officer for police (or gendarmes) escorts. There are occasional occurrences of members of the army exploiting timber in the BBCF without obtaining required permit from the BBNRMC.

There are also a sub-set of exploiters including a well known local army officer who often log without permits, preferring to pay the sanction of £50 if and when caught. Below are some pictures of timber exploitation in the BBCF.



Plate 5.3: Doussie at vehicle loading point



Plate 5.4: Head porting timber to vehicle loading point



Plate 5.5 Loading a mini-van with timber from the BBCF



Plate 5.6: Abandoned log

5.5 Farmers

Farmers are the dominant lands users in the community forest. The wide dispersion of these farmers with respect to where they live (some live in settlements three hours walk from the BBCF) made it impossible for the Mt. Cameroon Project to create a single formal farmer group (RCDC, 2002a). It was observed during forest

walks that there were food crop farms (plantains, cocoyams and maize) and small holder plantations (cocoa, coffee and oil palms) located close to the settlements, but further away in the more rugged areas there were only food crop farms. This pattern is explained by the fact that farms closer to settlements have older land use histories compared with farmers further away. Farms closer to the settlements show a history of existence prior to the economic crises of the 1980s while those further away were established by those who took to farming as a result of the economic crises. Farmers encountered during forest walks were from the North West Province; this observation is based on self identification and other common markers of group ethnic identity such as accent, working tools and salutation.

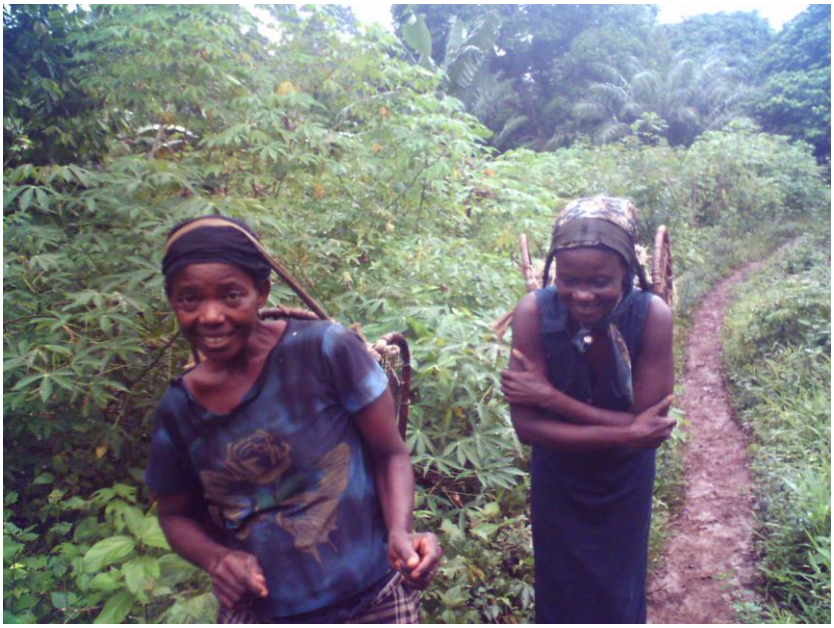


Plate 5.7: The woman behind is in a greeting posture from the NWP



Plate 5.8: The man on the far right is processing oil palm from his plantation, with help from his sister and a hired-hand seated on the ground



Plate 5.9: This woman and her mother (behind) walk for 2-3 hours to get to their farm; their basket (inset) is from the NWP

The indigenes have farms in areas that are much closer to the settlements and on gentle terrains. Farms located in the most difficult areas such as the Bamukong compartment, are usually owned by non-indigenes, especially first-generation migrants (interview with Narcisse, 08/10/06). It takes about 3-hours trekking to get to Bamukong from other settlements; local farmers refer to the area as 'France' (interview with Dominic, 05/09/06), implying that farmers in this location have migrated 'abroad'. While there is no single farmer group in the BBCF, there are small groups in the settlements. The most well-known is the women group 'Unity Sisters' which won the 2006 prize for food processing at the Limbe agricultural fair (interview with Maurice, 30/08/06). Unity Sisters was created in 2003 as an NGO with thirteen members, twelve from the North West Province and one Bakweri (interview with Michelle, 12/10/06). Unity Sisters was created in response to a campaign by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) encouraging farmers to create associations so as to benefit from government support.

Unity Sisters have a group farm that they visit weekly and their individual farms. A third of the group members including the Bakweri are not active though they do turn up when MINADER officials are visiting. The group plants only food crops (US-12/10/06). While there is a regulation that every farmer in the BBCF has to register with the BBNRMC at a cost of £2 per year, the Unity Sisters as with other farmers in the BBCF fail to comply with this regulation. The president of the Unity Sisters group stated that farmers do not comply with this regulation because of economic difficulty (US-12/10/06). When put to her that farmers (including members of her group) pay land rents of up to £10 a year to landlords in areas outside the BBCF, she commented that the inability of the BBNRMC to sanction farmers who fail to pay is a major reason why there is little compliance.



Plate 5.10: Eru vegetable propagator built for Unity Sisters Group by CENDEP (a local NGO)

During forest walks, it was observed that farms had fetish objects installed in visible locations. The farmers claim the fetish helps to protect their farms from thieves (interview with Jacques, 12/10/06) However, the fetish also inhibits the BBCF patrol team from destroying farms or seizing crops from farms as sanction, from fear of being harmed by the fetish (Yannick, 12/06/06). Produce from the BBCF end up in nearby local markets in Limbe, Mutengene, Mabeta and Tiko. These markets entertain not only local consumers but traders from other cities including Douala the economic capital of Cameroon just one hour away. These traders are often middlemen who buy food crops from Cameroon and export them to nearby countries including Equatorial

Guinea, Gabon and Nigeria. Thus farmers in this area are assured of a market for their produce. A local farmer interviewed maintained that even if he were offered a job so as to quit farming, he would not quit because his returns from farming far outstrips what he was earning before he lost his low waged job (Jacques, 12/10/06).

3.6 Beekeepers

At the onset of the Mt. Cameroon Project, the project viewed beekeeping as biodiversity friendly and a suitable entry point for project staff into local settlements (interview with Mbah, 28/08/06). The project hired a fulltime beekeeping expert whose job it was to raise awareness on beekeeping and build local capacity. Given that beekeeping as a livelihood activity, was more popular in the North West Province compared with the South West where honey hunting was still the norm, the beekeeping expert employed was brought from the North West Province (Mbah, 28/08/06). By the time the project ended in 2002, beekeeping had become an extremely popular activity and honey marketing and consumption in the Mt. Cameroon region had increased dramatically (Nuesiri and Fombad, 2006a; Niba and Ingram 2007). Mt. Cameroon Project successfully introduced the Kenya Top Bar (KTB) hives to beekeeping enthusiasts in the region. Given the biodiversity friendly nature of beekeeping, the BBNRMC, at its inception in 2001, selected it as one of its flagship revenue generating activity (interview with Sandrine, 31/08/06).

The BBNRMC applied for financial support from the Mt. Cameroon Project to construct and install 150 KTB hives in the community forest (Mbah, 28/08/06). Each hive was expected to produce between 7 – 15 litres of honey per harvest and a fully colonized hive is harvested twice a year in May-June and November-December (interview with Bernard, 17/06/06). Thus the BBNRMC estimated that when fully

colonized with a production of about 10 litres per hive per harvesting season, they will be able to harvest about 3000 litres of honey per year. The minimum price for a litre of unpackaged honey is about £1, thus they projected a revenue stream of about £3000 per year from their beekeeping project. The contract to construct and install the hives was won by Beekeeping, Development and Conservation (BDC), a new NGO set up by the MCP Limbe beekeeping expert. BDC was one of two major NGOs the project staffs set up as part of the project's exit strategy. The rationale behind the NGOs was that they would continue providing biodiversity conservation services to community-based groups such as the BBNRMC. BDC constructed 150 hives, installed them in the BBCF and trained two field staffs of the BBNRMC to manage the hives. Barely four years after installation poor maintenance has led to complete destruction of all the hives by insects and rain.



Plate 5.11: Kenya Top Bar hive destroyed by rain

The BBNRMC blames BDC, their technical partner, who they accuse of having neglected hive maintenance, while BDC maintains that the contract was to build, install and train BBNRMC's personnel to maintain the hives (interview with Mbah, 28/08/06). Despite the failure of the BBNRMC beekeeping project, there are many successful small-scale beekeepers in the area having between one to ten hives. It is in recognition of the role beekeeping can play in forest conservation that a beekeepers' representative sits on the board. As with charcoal burning, the beekeepers are principally farmers who embark on beekeeping to augment their income.

3.7 Conservation NGOs

A major objective of the MCP Limbe's exit strategy was to build up the capacity of local NGOs to provide conservation services to community conservation groups like the BBNRMC (Forbes and Besong, 2002). A beneficiary of the project's efforts is the Centre for Nursery Development and Eru Propagation (CENDEP), whose founder represents local NGOs in the BBNRMC. This individual lost his job in the late 1980s and became a full time farmer (interview with Junior, 18/09/06). He formed CENDEP in 1999, in response to training received from a project workshop on Eru (*Gnetum africanum*) domestication. Eru is a forest vine whose leaves are in high demand as vegetables in Cameroon and Nigeria. It is estimated that about 100 tons is exported to Nigeria weekly through seaports in the Limbe area (TVE, 2006). Increasing demand for eru raised concerns about its viability in the wild and the need for domestication (Ndam et. al., 2001). CENDEP actively promotes eru domestication through training farmers in the BBCF and groups in other parts of Cameroon (Both ENDS, 2004). CENDEP has good working relationship with BBNRMC.

The MCP Limbe also encouraged its staff to create local NGOs as part of its exit strategy (interview with Sonia, 08/09/06). The staffs of MCP Limbe with material and financial incentives from the project eventually established two main NGOs. These are Regional Centre for Development and Conservation (RCDC) and the beekeeping body BDC mentioned above. RCDC has been in existence since 2001 and has been successful in acquiring funding from local and international organizations for micro-conservation projects in the region (RCDC, 2002b; 2003; 2005). However, RCDC has not executed any project in the BBCF or provided any significant technical support to the BBNRMC. It has experienced severe internal conflict over financial and personnel management that has severely limited its effectiveness (interview with Danielle, 01/09/06; Sonia, 08/09/06).

BDC has also been in existence from 2001 and as stated previously, was founded by the beekeeping expert of the MCP Limbe (Mbah, 28/08/06). BDC's key achievement is not its training activities but its innovative approach to honey marketing. It established marketing partnerships with local retailers and provides them with sales support materials such as advertising boards (Plate 5.12 below). BDC does not rely on external funding but on its revenues. Its office and production centre are in rented premises inside the Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG). It has six staff on its payroll and has developed its own processing and packaging process adapted to its needs (Nuesiri and Fombad, 2006a; 2006b). While BDC is registered with the state as a common initiative group (CIG), it is managed more as a sole business initiative than as a collectively owned NGO (Mbah, 28/08/06). BDC's effectiveness has been constrained by a lack of financial accountability. BDC was the technical partner to the BBNRMC in the failed beekeeping project referred to above, and this has soured the once cordial working relationship between both organizations.



Plate 5.12: BDC Honey sales point in Limbe

Other institutions that have supported the BBNRMC are the local NGO, Forests, Resources and People (FOREP), and the forestry department run Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG) and Limbe Wildlife Centre (LWC). The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have provided financial and material support to the BBNRMC. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have Limbe based programme offices but do not have a working relationship with the BBNRMC. Camosun College International Canada periodically sends interns who spend between three to six months providing technical support to BBNRMC's agro-forestry and ecotourism programmes. The Canadian International Development Agency International Youth Internship Program (CIDA-IYIP) funds the interns. When leaving, the interns usually donate technical equipments to the BBNRMC (interview with Franck, 28/08/06).

It's also worth mentioning that as part of the MCP Limbe exit strategy, it set up a Quasi-NGO (QUANGO), the Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF). This was envisioned as a trust fund for community conservation in the region and its membership included government representatives, indigenous elites, conservation experts, and representatives from DFID and other donors (CAMCOF, 2004). The absence of Cameroonian legislation on trust funds meant a special Presidential Decree No. 2003/062 of 03 April 2003 was required to legalize it. CAMCOF went operational in May 2004 with 2-year funding from DFID to cover its operational cost and execute a small grants scheme for local community conservation groups such as the BBNRMC (Lingondo, 2005). Despite the appointment of an expatriate director and its influential board members, CAMCOF closed in May 2006 when DFID funding ended. CAMCOF failed to secure further donor funding and also failed to fund any significant community group in the region.

The Cameroon government and DFID, the major stakeholders in CAMCOF, have not provided any public explanation as to why it closed, but interviews with informed observers reveal that managerial ineptitude crippled the organization (interview with Thomas, 06/09/06; interview with Eric, 06/09/06). Local community conservation groups including the BBNRMC were deeply disappointed at the demise of CAMCOF (interview with Fidelis, 15/09/06). The BBNRMC had a lukewarm relationship with CAMCOF, because it sought for a privileged status, which did not materialize (interview with Danielle, 01/09/06). BBNRMC's desire for privileged status was based on the premise that they are the only recognized community forest in the region and that CAMCOF was set up to support initiatives 'birthed' by MCP Limbe. However CAMCOF's mandate was to support community conservation across the Cameroon Highlands not just those set up by the MCP Limbe.

5.8 Government

The community forestry policy places the BBNRMC under the supervisory authority of the forestry department – the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF) (MINEF, 1998b). Thus the forestry department is represented in the BBNRMC board. The policy requires that the BBNRMC provide bi-annual reports to the local forestry department and an annual report to the Provincial office. These reports enable the forestry department to monitor compliance between BBNRMC activity and its approved management plan. On receiving the reports, the forestry department is required to provide the BBNRMC with feedback. The BBNRMC has regularly forwarded its bi-annual and annual reports to the forestry department, but the department has not always provided feedback in return. Despite the lukewarm relationship between the BBNRMC and the local forestry department, both parties do always settle differences amicably. The most common dispute often has to do with local timber exploitation in the area (interview with Alain, 18/10/06).

Occasionally the BBNRMC field team confiscates timber from exploiters encountered transporting their good to the market, on grounds that the timber must have originated from the community forest without a permit. Conflict with the forestry department arises when the BBNRMC team refuses to release the timber even when the exploiter is in possession of a permit from forestry, accusing the exploiter of having obtained the timber from within the BBCF. There are also instances where the forestry department's officials have accosted exploiters in possession of a permit issued by the BBNRMC, accusing them of having obtained their timber from an area outside the BBCF. Under these circumstances, the conflict is resolved by the setting up of a joint team by both parties to visit the site of exploitation and verify if it's in or outside the BBCF. If the party in possession of confiscated timber is proved right, the

timber is sold to the highest bidder in an auction process opened also to the sanctioned exploiter. In some instances the exploiter is asked to pay a fine set slightly above the permit fee for the tree specie.

If the party in possession of confiscated timber is proved wrong, the timber is released to the exploiter and a profuse apology is offered to the other party. Apart from such timber related disputes, the local forestry department does not participate in any other field activities of the BBNRMC. Thus they do not proactively monitor the activities carried out in the BBNRMC. In situations where the BBNRMC field team meets with stubborn defaulters in the BBCF, the forestry policy requires that such persons are reported to the local forestry department for prosecution. In practice the local forestry department does not give high priority to legal prosecution of forest defaulters. The BBNRMC had to drop a case against a timber exploiter who injured a member of their patrol team because they couldn't get forestry to prosecute this individual (Henry, 14/06/06). Despite the lukewarm attitude of the local forestry department, its annual report for 2004 stated that (DDEF, 2004, p.16):

> 'This Community Forest which has existed for four years, leaves much to be desired as far as implementation of the simple management plan is concerned… the Administration is beginning to question the raison d'etre of this Community Forest'.

This negative perception of the BBNRMC barely two years after its establishment remains within the local forestry department (interview with Pascal, 18/10/06).

Other government ministries with a working relationship with the BBNRMC are the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER). MINATD is responsible for administrative governance in Cameroon, thus all Provincial and divisional administrators are under this department. As an association, the BBNRMC

is under the administrative oversight of the Divisional Officer (DO) in Limbe, and is required to submit a copy of its annual report to the DO. The BBNRMC enjoys a cordial working relationship with the DO; indicative of this is the fact that the BBNRMC's office is located in the DO's office block in Limbe. The DO is always invited to board meetings and endeavors to send a representative to the meetings. The close relationship is explained by the political influence of the executive president of the BBNRMC who is a retired parliamentarian and a high-ranking member of the ruling party. The cordial relationship with the DO enables the BBNRMC to easily request and obtain police or gendarme escorts when embarking on sensitive timber patrols, because the public security service answers to the DO.

The Agriculture department (MINADER) has field extension officers in Bimbia and Bonadikombo settlements who work with local farmers. They help to keep local farmers informed of government farmer support schemes and how these farmers can benefit from such schemes. The Limbe section head of MINADER, a Bakweri and former staff of the BBCF design and establishment team at MCP Limbe is regularly invited to board meetings but rarely attends (interview with Rodrick, 14/09/06). His lack of enthusiasm for the work of the BBNRMC is indicative of the absence of a long-term commitment from former project staffs to groups that they worked with. Lastly the Limbe Urban Council (LUC), the local municipal authority had a project worth about £10,000 with the BBNRMC from 2001 – 2003. This was for the BBNRMC to plant trees along the major streets of Limbe and to reforest degraded hillsides around the city (interview with Guy, 13/09/06). The project was part of government relief for the city after the devastating floods and landslides of June 2001 in which 24 people died (Ayanji, 2004; Ayonghe et al., 2004).

The tree-panting project ended in 2004 after the first phase worth £5000 had been executed, because the LUC was not satisfied with the work done (interview with Guy, 13/09/06). Despite appeals from the BBNRMC to the then administrator of the LUC, a Bimbian and vice-president of the BBNRMC, he refused to continue the tree-planting project. While this former LUC administrator is also vice-president of the BBNRMC, he rarely attended BBNRMC board meetings (interview with Carine, 16/06/06). This indicates the low priority he accorded to issues related to the BBCF despite his position as vice-president. The next section of this chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings presented in the sections above.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Cameroon's land ordinance of 1974 makes the government the custodian of all lands. However, the decentralized forestry policy of 1994 gives the management rights over the BBCF to the BBNRMC. The policy stipulates that the constitution and structure of the BBNRMC should reflect the stakeholder groups concerned with the BBCF. However, the analysis herein shows that this is not the case with the BBCF. The population and occupational profile of households in the settlements around the BBCF shows clearly that the indigenes are in the minority, while migrants from the North West Province are the overwhelmingly dominant population group. The North Westerners are also the dominant forest user group and are principally involved in farming in the BBCF. However, institutional decision-making power over the BBCF is in the hands of the indigenous Bakweri, despite their very small population size. Amongst this indigenous stakeholder group, the Bimbians, the smallest actor group in terms of population size, are the dominant decision-makers.

Bimbian dominance is directly linked to their traditional claims to two-thirds of land in the BBCF, their greater affluence and socio-political influence compared with other Bakweri clans in the BBCF region. Despite Bimbia's land claims, it was the CDC, the biggest landowner on Mt. Cameroon, who legally provided most of the land in the BBCF. The CDC released to the BBNRMC forestland from their leasehold in the BBCF area that was not yet under cultivation. The CDC continues to support the work of the BBNRMC due to the influence of the Bimbia indigene at the helm of affairs at the corporation; this might cease when this individual moves on. While the government remains the *de jure* custodian of land constituting the BBCF, the government representatives in the BBNRMC are not proactive.

The most committed forest user group in the BBNRMC is the charcoal producers. They derive significant cash income from the BBCF, so are concerned about being seen as a good forest citizen so they don't loose their license to operate. Farmers are the biggest users of the BBCF but the BBNRMC is not able to monitor and control their activities because it does not have an effective working relationship with them. The farmers receive more support from government agricultural extension officers than the BBNRMC agro-forestry programme. The farmers therefore do not pay their user fees as they have no incentive to work towards achieving the objectives of the BBNRMC. The timber exploiters are the most dangerous stakeholders; there have been violent confrontation between the BBNRMC field patrol team and timber exploiters. Local commercial exploitation in the BBCF is illegal but practiced under a caveat in the forestry policy allowing for individual logging rights.

The clandestine nature of logging in the BBCF has made it difficult to control timber exploiters. In addition they are not confident that the BBNRMC can guarantee them exploitation rights in the BBCF if they were to put in the material and financial

effort required to have a functional timber user's management group. The scarcity of high value timber trees in the BBCF due to past logging means the profits from timber exploitation are marginal and this discourages investment in institution building.

While the MCP Limbe held high hopes that local NGOs will be able to provide technical support to the BBNRMC, as and when needed, this has not fully materialized. Local NGOs are themselves struggling to survive so do not have much spare capacity to freely support the BBNRMC. CAMCOF, the trust fund set up by MCP Limbe at its exit with the support of DFID is considered a spectacular failure. Given the financial and material resources that were available to CAMCOF, its collapse is arguably a bad omen for long-term survival of less resourced organizations such as the BBNRMC. International NGOs in the region have their radar focused on establishment of national parks, so the challenge faced by the BBNRMC is not a priority to these organizations. Thus while there is available conservation and development expertise in the Mt. Cameroon region that would be of immense benefit to the BBNRMC, the organization is considered to be of low priority.

In conclusion, the results obtained from the analysis carried out in this chapter reveals the key tension to implementation of Cameroon's decentralized forest policy in the Mt. Cameroon region. The dominant non-indigenous population groups who are also the dominant forest users are not the traditional landowners. Historical prejudices and contemporary socio-political contestation between the North Westerners, the dominant population and forest user group, and the Bakweri, the minority population group but *de facto* land owners, made it impossible for MCP Limbe to make these two stakeholders work effectively together. This has not been helped by the community forestry policy, which calls for inclusive community forest management institutions but privileges the rights of the *de facto* forest owners above all others.

The BBCF rather than foster greater social equity has revealed the contestations of citizenship at the local sphere in Cameroon. The government's *de jure* ownership of all land is contested by the *de facto* traditional ownership claims of the indigenous Bakweris, whose claims are in turn contested by the nominal citizenship rights of the non-indigenes in the BBCF area. Nominal citizenship rights are basic rights of the members of a state by virtue of nationality and as defined by the Constitution (Hommersand, 1997). Paragraph 9 of the preamble in Cameroon's Constitution (GoC, 1996) states that 'every person shall have the right to settle in any place and to move about freely, subject to the statutory provisions concerning public law and order, security and tranquility'. The right to livelihood is subsumed under 'the right to settle in any place', thus as long as there is no state law against human use of the BBCF, indigenes cannot exclude other Cameroonians from using it.

However, the Constitution states in paragraph 7 of its preamble that 'the State shall ensure the protection of minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with the law'. This implies that there is Constitutional backing for the community forest policy which privileges the rights of the traditional claimants of the BBCF, the Bakweris, above all others. Thus the contestation between indigenes and non-indigenes over the BBCF is rooted not only in local competition over resource use and cultural prejudices but also in the contradictions in the structural foundations of the state. Further evidence of this contradiction is provided by Article 1(2) of the Cameroon Constitution, which states that 'the Republic of Cameroon shall be a decentralized unitary State'. This shows the ambiguous nature of citizenship in Cameroon; lack of secure citizenship rights means nominal local group differences become sources of conflict exacerbated by decentralization.

Chapter 6

Community forestry: Alleviating poverty or impoverishing the poor?

1. Introduction

Decentralized forestry is said to be ineffective without the transfer of resources to accompany the transfer of responsibilities to the local level. This chapter assesses the adequacy of resources available to the BBNRMC, and then examines if it is contributing to poverty alleviation and social development in the BBCF area. The chapter shows that the establishment of the BBCF is not meeting the livelihood expectations of its stakeholders. The chapter is organized as follows; section 2 assesses the resources available to the BBNRMC, while section 3 presents a detailed assessment of its finances from when records became available to when fieldwork ended. Section 4 examines benefit sharing amongst the BBNRMC stakeholders. Section 5 concludes the chapter by summarizing the discussion from preceding sections, and arguing that what the BBNRMC has successfully achieved is the formalisation of a rent extracting system from forest users without substantial representation in decision-making.

2. Resource availability to the BBNRMC

This section critically assesses the resources available to the BBNRMC for effective execution of its task as the management institution responsible for the BBCF. The section is in two parts – the first part focuses on resources available to the BBNRMC during its formative years from 1998 to 2002 and the second part focuses on resource availability during BBNRMC's operational phase from 2002 to 2006. The assessment ends at 2006 because this was when field work was terminated.

2.1 Resources available to the BBNRMC during its formative years (1998 – 2002)

As shown in Chapter Four, MCP Limbe facilitated the formation of the BBNRMC, from 1998 when its stakeholders accepted the idea of obtaining a community forest to 2002 when the BBNRMC obtained management rights over the BBCF from the Cameroon government (RCDC, 2000a). During this period, MCP Limbe was responsible for raising awareness, socio-ecological surveys, mapping and demarcation of the BBCF, consultative meetings amongst all stakeholders, capacity building, conflict resolution, and liaising with the forestry department. In order to fulfil these tasks, MCP Limbe had a very well resourced project team referred to as the Bimbia-Bonadikombo (BB) area team (RCDC, 2002a). The BB team consisted of persons with expertise in forestry, agriculture, and the social sciences; the team leader had a masters' degree in forestry from Britain, and was re-assigned from the forestry department to MCP Limbe.

The BB team permanently had at its disposal a four-wheel drive vehicle, camping equipments, ecological survey equipments, and two desktop computers with advanced word processing and professional software. The BB team received support from the projects three expatriate technical advisers (forestry, wildlife and livelihoods), environmental education unit, agricultural extension and bee-keeping units (DFID, 2000). Team members received regular capacity building through participation in local and international training initiatives. MCP Limbe had a regular stream of local and expatriate consultants hired by DFID to build up staff capacity; the project also ensured that staff had access to current conservation thinking through subscription to international journals including *Conservation Biology* and *Development in Practice* (DFID, 2000). In the eight years that the project lasted DFID spent about £11 million pounds (Hansard, 2002).

The BBNRMC was formed in 1998 with a 26-member working group chaired by the Paramount Chief of Limbe and the Senior Divisional Officer for Limbe (RCDC, 2002a; 2002b). As shown in Chapter Five, the working group consisted of indigenous elites and chiefs, representatives of forest user groups (mainly non-indigenes), representatives of the CDC and the government. The working group created a field patrol team known as the operations committee (OC) under the leadership of retired indigenous civil servants. The OC active members were indigenous youths with levels of educational attainment from illiterate to GCE 'A' Levels certificate. Members of the working group and the OC resided in and around Limbe so all meetings were held in Limbe, often in the Divisional Officer's conference room.[1] The BBNRMC during this period didn't have a secure source of income or working equipments; its expenditures were borne by the MCP Limbe and from out-of-pocket expenses of its members.[2]

The BBNRMC's source of income at this time was fines on forest users whose goods have been seized by the operations committee on charges of illegal exploitation. This practice was started by the Victoria Land and Forest Conservation Committee to extract rents from non-indigenous forest users. It was a regular source of conflict between forest users and the operations committee, as 'illegal exploitation' was arbitrarily defined (interview with Chick, 28/09/06). To end this arbitrary activity, MCP Limbe developed an initiative referred to as 'Joint Patrol'. The idea was that the local forestry department and the operations committee would execute joint forest patrols to apprehend forest users without exploitation permit from the BBNRMC, in the area to be gazetted as the

[1] The Senior Divisional Officer during the formative years of the BBNRMC is praised highly for his supportive role (Chapter 4), which ensured that the BBNRMC had relatively easy access to the forces of law and order (police and gendarmes); this individual was transferred out of Limbe in 2004

[2] The MCP Limbe won the hearts of many through generosity, it always provided refreshments at meetings and would reimburse participants' transport cost, thus MCP Limbe meetings were very well attended.

community forest. This was seen as a 'win-win' idea because it allowed the operations committee to better understand the forestry law, and provided the local forestry department additional personnel to execute its duties.

Both parties agreed that 25 percent of the auction fee from seizures would be paid to the BBNRMC. MCP Limbe was the 'broker' between both parties, promoting the initiative as a scheme in line with its mandate from government to pilot new initiatives in participatory forestry (MCP, 2000; RCDC, 2002b). Despite MCP Limbe's support, by 2000 the initiative was facing serious difficulties due to allegations of breach of trust by both parties against one another, and by 2002, the initiative had collapsed. The operations committee returned back to the practice of arbitrary seizures of forest products. Income generated during this period was used to cater for the operations committee field cost and remunerations, and largely went undocumented. Thus there are no financial records in the BBNRMC office of income generated during this phase of its existence.

This state of unaccountability created tensions within the operations committee, and led to allegations of financial impropriety against their president to the BBNRMC working group (RCDC, 2002a; 2002b). However the allegations could not be proven so was dropped. During this period there were also allegations of financial impropriety linked with the BB team to the effect that the team sometimes inflated the number of days spent on fieldwork in order to claim higher field remuneration than they were due (interviews with Sharon, 25/04/06; Philip, 25/04/06). MCP Limbe field stipend ranged from £10 - £50 per day[3] depending on staff status. These are significant sums of money when compared to the £2.50 per day paid to hired farm labourers in the high season. However, these allegations against the BB team remain unproven.

[3] Average exchange rate £1 = 1000 francs CFA = US$2 (www.xe.com, accessed 30 June 2007)

2.2 Resources available to the BBNRMC during its operational phase (2002 – 2006)

In 2002, when the government transferred management rights over the BBCF to the BBNRMC, the institution was just about to lose its major patron, the MCP Limbe which ended in 2002. While the BBNRMC gained natural and physical resources when it was transferred management rights over the BBCF, it also lost the significant human, social and financial resources that the MCP Limbe brought on the table during its formative years. This section, sub-divided into three parts, shows how the BBNRMC has gone about accumulating the resources required to meets its objectives.

2.2.1 Resource accumulation

In May 2002, when the BBNRMC was granted management of the BBCF, it requested for free office space from the Senior Divisional Officer in Limbe. Its request was granted and the institution obtained office space in the Limbe Divisional Officer's office premises. The MCP Limbe donated two desktop computers and a refurbished motorcycle to the BBNRMC. Based on results of ecological survey in the BBCF, the BBNRMC agreed that it would generate funds through (BBNRMC, 2000; 2001):

i. Exploitation permits issued to forest users
ii. Annual farmer registration fees
iii. Bee-farming
iv. Ecotourism
v. Penalties from sanctioned defaulters
vi. Development of successful project proposals
vii. Gifts and bequests from institutions and individuals of goodwill

The BBNRMC designed permit forms and fixed permit fees for different categories of forest users as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 6.1: Forest user fees instituted by the BBNRMC

Activity		User fees (£)				
		Farmers	**Charcoal**	**Timber**	**Fuelwood**	**Ecotourist**
Annual registration with the BBNRMC		2	0	0	0	0
Tree felling permit*	Low value specie	0	30	25	25	0
	High value specie	0	30	50	50	0
Inspection and compliance verification**		10	10	10	10	0
Guided tour		0	0	0	0	8

* The tree felling permit fee differs for timber species with low market value such as Caraboard (*Pignanthus angolensis*) and those with high market value such as Doussie (*Afzelia africana*); the fee remains the same for BBCF charcoal producers because they use only Azobe (*Lophira alata*)

** Inspection and compliance verification is carried out to ensure that the tree to be exploited has a diameter at breast height (DBH) that is not below the minimum exploitable diameter (MED) of 50cm

In support of non-consumptive use of the forest, the MCP Limbe provided a grant to the BBNRMC for the construction of 100 beehives (RCDC, 2000a), with capacity of delivering between 1000-2000 litres of honey per year and a market value of about £1000 – £2000 (interviews with Bernard, 17/06/06; Mbah, 28/08/06).[4] In support of revenue generation from projects, the Limbe Urban Council (LUC), the municipal authority, listed BBNRMC as one of the executors of its tree-planting programme.[5] The programme's objectives included street beautification and reforestation of degraded hillsides around the city. The programme commenced in 2002 was worth about £31,250 to the BBNRMC.[6]

[4] The beekeeping project failed as the BBNRMC was not able to maintain the beehives after installation

[5] The other executor was the Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG); the programme was supported by the UNDP in response to the 2001 devastating floods in Limbe which killed 23 people, destroyed 78 houses and left 3000 people homeless, total damage was estimated at about $3million, while about $1.5 million was earmarked for mitigation measures (see Ayanji, 2004; Ayonghe 2004)

[6] The programme was suspended in 2004 by the LUC due to dissatisfaction with the performance of the executors (see BBNRMC 2004a; interviews with Rodrick, 14/09/06; and Guy, 13/09/06)

Given that the timber inventory carried out by MCP Limbe in the community forest showed that commercial logging was not a sustainable option for the area, the BBNRMC could not adopt this option as means of generating revenue (Tchouto, 1999). Thus all logging in the community forest is done on the basis of community user rights, which under section 6.1.8 of the community forest manual allows for timber exploitation strictly for personal use (MINEF, 1998b). It is on this basis that the BBNRMC is able to grant singletree permits to forest users. However, small-scale loggers use the singletree permit to exploit timber from the community forest for sale in the local market. While this is illegal, it is a common and widespread practice in the forestry sector, so it has obtained *de-facto* acceptance with the forestry department.

However, income from one tree barely meets the cost of exploitation, especially for low value timber species, which requires an exploiter has to fell two or more trees in one operation in order to make a profit (Chapter 5). This poses an intractable quandary for charcoal producers, timber and fuelwood exploiters who are profit-driven, as they are not abiding to the quota stated on their single-tree permits. This partly accounts for the intransigence of timber and fuelwood exploiters to form resource management groups, and their reluctance fully to abide by the permit system. Consequently some exploiters prefer to face sanctions when caught without a permit, than to pay for a permit upfront (interview with Gaspard, 10/10/06). A dangerous side to this is that some illegal timber exploiters resort to violent behaviour when apprehended (Appendix 9).

Enforcing payment of the annual farmer registration fees of £2 has proved difficult. While MCP Limbe farm surveys indicate that there are as many as 2000 farmers in the community forest area (Enyong, 1999; Monono, 1999), these live in dispersed

settlements so are difficult to track down. Thus the lone agriculture extension officer in the BBNRMC has found it impossible to enforce payment of the farmers' annual dues. Revenue from ecotourism has been very low despite the publicity efforts of the ecotourism officer through brochures and leaflets distributed regularly to hotels in Limbe. Additional support for the ecotourism programme has come from Camosun College International, Canada, who sends two interns per year (since November 2004) to assist the BBNRMC in agroforestry and ecotourism development.[7]

Despite poor financial rewards from ecotourism, the BBNRMC supports it vigorously as a forest friendly activity that also highlights the cultural heritage of the indigenes of the area (interview with Bertrand, 14/06/06). While the main massif of Mt. Cameroon receives a regular stream of ecotourists due to its forest wildlife and temperate climate,[8] I did not encounter any wildlife of note during forest walks in the BBCF. The community forest can thus be aptly described as an 'empty forest' (Redford, 1992).

In addition to these sources of funds identified above, the BBNRMC has received periodic financial support from the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), and from the National Employment Fund. Other sources of funds have included researcher fees, bench fees from Canadian interns, and interest free loans from the board president. The institution has also received periodic technical support from the local forestry

[7] Camosun College International signed an agreement with the BBNRMC in 2004 that allows it to send two interns funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to work with the BBNRMC; the interns are in Cameroon for a period of 6 months and assist in the BBNRMC's agroforestry and ecotourism activities; the first set of interns were sent in 2004 and more have followed since then (see http://camosun.ca/international/development/interns/); the first set of interns published their experience in '*The Villager*' of Winter/Spring 2005 (see http://www.village900.ca/villager/Villager_Winter_2005_1.pdf); another intern, Anne-Marie Legare, also published her experience in '*The Villager*' of Summer 2007, here she describes the feeling of being in an empty forest on a visit to the community forest (see http://www.village900.ca/villager/summer07_web.pdf)

[8] Ecotourism on Mt. Cameroon is run by the Mt. Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation (Mt. CEO), which receives significant material, technical and financial support from the German Government through the German Development Agency (DED), see http://www.mount-cameroon.org/

department, agriculture department, Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG) and a plethora of local NGOs. Beyond its local region, technical support has been received from the Cameroon office of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) on certifying the community forest core zones as high value conservation forest (HVCF), and from the Cameroon office of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) on agricultural extension.

2.2.2 Financial responsibilities

In 2003, the BBNRMC employed three fulltime staff to assist the forest manager. These were the administrative assistant for office management and bookkeeping, and two officers in charge of agricultural extension and ecotourism respectively. These were in addition to the thirty OC volunteers for field patrols. On the advice of the National Employment Fund[9], a state agency for job creation, the BBNRMC fixed the monthly salaries of the forest manager at £200, administrative assistant £125, forest officers £70 each, given a total monthly wage bill of £465. Volunteers did not receive a salary but were entitled to a stipend £2.50 each for participating in forest patrols, and £5 each from auction sale of products seized from illegal exploiters during patrols.

The wage bill would subsequently prove to be a heavy burden on the BBNRMC. The decision to provide waged employment by the BBNRMC draws attention to the issue of personal versus community benefits from the establishment of the community forest. The community forest policy makes it clear that community forests are expected to benefit the stakeholder communities. In section 4.2.1 it states that the constitution of the

[9] Despite BBNRMC status as a community institution, the National Employment Fund advised it to place its staff salaries fully compliant with Cameroon's labour code (Law No. 92-007 of 14th August 1992), on the understanding that it will assist the BBNRMC with 50% of salaries for 12 months; the forest manager and administrative assistant were placed on salaries scales for first degree holders and the forest officers were on salary scales for GCE 'A' Level certificate holders (BBNRMC 2003a; 2003b)

management body 'must specify' the benefit sharing mechanism for the community forest (MINEF, 1998b). While the MCP Limbe was aware of this policy prescription (DFID, 2000), the constitution that it facilitated for the BBNRMC is silent on community benefit sharing (BBNRMC, 2000)[10].

In addition to wages, other financial responsibilities that the BBNRMC has assumed in its operational phase include:

i. Expenditure related to office consumables and communication;
ii. Purchase and repair of materials and equipments;
iii. Construction and maintenance of tree nurseries;
iv. Cost associated with hosting of board meetings (transport honorarium for local chiefs, light refreshments, radio announcement);
v. Contributions to key social events involving hired personnel and board members such as birth and death ceremonies;
vi. Contributions towards social development projects;

While the BBNRMC has been able to meet up with some of its responsibilities related to items (i) – (v) above, it has not made any significant contribution towards social development projects, item (vi) above, in its target communities. Consequently some chiefs have raised questions regarding benefits for the indigenous villages from the operations of the BBNRMC (interviews with Arnaud, 10/06/06; and Hughes, 14/09/06). There have also threatened to excise their traditional forest territory from the community forest if the benefit-sharing issue is not comprehensively addressed.

[10] It should be mentioned that there is a critique of 'benefit-sharing' in the broader biodiversity conservation literature as a metaphor popularised by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), that has allowed 'market logic' to colonise new arenas for owners of capital, see Peterson (2001), McCarthy and Prudham (2004), Brosius et al. (2005), Burrows (2005), Richerzhagen and Holm-Mueller (2005)

2.2.3 Staff capacity and turnover

In 2002, the BBNRMC had a total of four full time employees and thirty OC volunteers as mentioned earlier. In August 2004, there was a sudden unannounced departure of the forest manager to the United States. The BBNRMC board members, personnel, and forest users were left in a state of shock and are not able to fully explain why the forest manager left the job without giving notice of his intentions. The most popular conjecture is that he had abused BBNRMC funds and was not willing to face an accounts audit before departure (interview with Franklin, 02/10/06). While this is an unsubstantiated allegation, it is noteworthy that during the tenure of this individual there are no records of revenue generated by the BBNRMC from issuance of forest exploitation permits and financial penalties imposed on illegal exploiters.

On his departure the board president immediately assumed day-to-day management of the BBNRMC and instituted a daily income and expenditures account. A new forest manager was appointed in January 2005 through a formal competitive process. This individual introduced a basic double-entry bookkeeping system that enhanced BBNRMC's financial accountability. While the board president maintained a 'hands-off' approach during the tenure of the first forest manager, she was very much 'hands-on' during the tenure of the second forest manager. This led to an uneasy working relationship between the forest manager and the board president, and consequently the manager resigned from the job in March 2006. In June 2006, the board appointed the ecotourism officer as the third and current forest manager.

While the first and second forest managers had higher educational qualifications, the current manager has high school qualifications coupled with his experience as ecotourism officer. The present administrative assistant is the third lady to hold the job, after the first and second left for further studies in 2004 and 2006 respectively. The administrative assistants all have first-degrees though not related to office management or bookkeeping. They have been the only female personnel in the institution and have a close working relationship with the board president. The agricultural extension officer has remained the same, while the OC shrunk from thirty persons in 2002 to fifteen in 2004 and to the present ten individuals by 2005. The structure of the board has remained the same from 2002 to date, even though certain positions such as that of the Paramount Chief of Limbe remains vacant since the government is yet to appoint another individual to this position after the death of the immediate past office holder.

In over eight years, from 1998 to 2006, the BBNRMC has developed from an idea inspired by the MCP Limbe to a functional forest management institution. While the institutions tasks are comprehensively spelt out in the community forestry policy and its simple management plan, it's struggling to generate sufficient resources to execute its tasks. Capital accumulation by the BBNRMC, in terms of its natural, physical, financial, human and social assets, have simply not kept pace with its administrative, operational, and logistical needs. Given the ubiquitous role of finances in an institutions attempt to fulfil its objectives, section 3 below presents a detailed analysis of BBNRMC revenues and expenditures. Following the money provides an insight into institutional priorities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

3. Financial transactions of the BBNRMC

While Section 2 above have dwelt on the resources (broadly-defined) available to the BBNRMC before and after obtaining the community forests in 2002, this section presents results from detailed analyses of the financial transactions of the BBNRMC. The section focuses on transactions from when records became available from 2001 to 2006 when this researcher carried out fieldwork in the area. The section shows in chronological order, monetary inflows from BBNRMC revenue streams, and outflows to cater for operational and administrative expenditures. As would be expected of records from a newly created institution resulting from a new locally untested government policy, the BBNRMC financial records have gaps from when record keeping commenced, but the records get progressively richer with each passing year.

3.1 Funds generated from 2001 – 2006

BBNRMC financial records from 2001 to 2006 show that it generated its funds mainly from the following sources:

i. Forest exploitation permit fees
ii. Forest exploitation penalty fees
iii. Financial gifts, mainly from the CDC
iv. Staff remuneration grants from the National Employment Fund (NEF)
v. Project grants, mainly from Limbe Urban Council (LUC)
vi. Interest free loans

While items (i) and (ii) are the main sources of forest revenues, there are no records of forest revenues generated from 2001 to August 2004 (BBNRMC, 2004b).

In addition the 2004 forest revenue record lacks details, it shows revenues generated from permits and penalties without differentiating the revenue streams if it be from timber, charcoal or fuelwood exploitation. It is also very thin, as entries were made only for the last quarter of 2004 (BBNRMC 2004c; 2004d). The financial records for 2005 and 2006 were richer in details and were included in the annual reports submitted to the forestry department (see BBNRMC 2005; 2006)[11]. While the 2006 annual report shows financial records for the year, the data used for the analysis presented in this section omit transactions for the last quarter of 2006. This is because I chose to use the monthly transactions reports and was unable to obtain these for October-December 2006, due to virus attack on the computer where it was stored. Table 6.2 below shows total monthly revenue generated by the BBNRMC in 2004; there is no entry for October as the record was lost when the office computers broke down. The table shows a 200 percent difference between revenue from illegal and legal exploitation.

Table 6.2: BBNRMC Forest Revenue in 2004

Month	Permit (francs cfa)	Penalty (francs cfa)
September	30,000	433,000
November	113,000	289,000
December	194,000	363,000
Total	**337,000**	**1,085,000**

The huge difference between legal and illegal exploitation is partly because forest users at the time had not adopted the practice of coming to the BBNRMC office to obtain exploitation permit. This is linked to the management style of the forest manager prior to

[11] Prior to the 2005 report, BBNRMC annual reports from 2002 – 2004 shows only their operational achievements for the previous year and plans for the forthcoming year; this reporting period was during the tenure of the first forest manager, who left the job unannounced in August 2004 and emigrated to the West; the practice of including a detailed financial report in the annual report was instituted by the second forest manager employed in January 2005 and has continued under the tenure of the third and current forest manager employed since July 2006

September 2004. He often issued exploitation permits verbally, at any time of the day and in any place (office, forest, club, home) (BBNRMC, 2004c; 2004e; interviews with Maurice, 30/08/06; Franklin, 02/10/06; Franck, 28/08/06). Consequently forest users were not obliged to come to the office for user permits (see permit in Appendix 10).

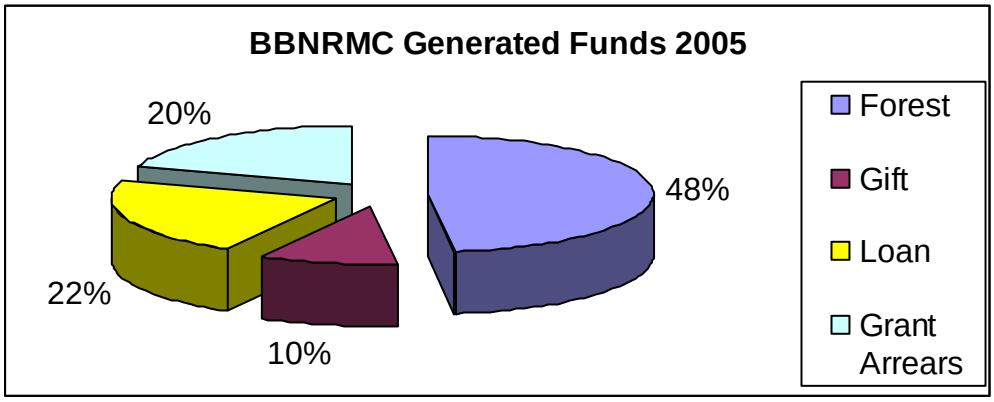
This chaotic style ended when the board president assumed day-to-day management; she ensured that all financial transactions were carried out in the office, and that the administrative assistant kept daily transactions record (BBNRMC, 2004e). While in the former regime, there was no distinction between legal and illegal exploiters other than the word of the forest manager, and sanctions was at the prerogative of the manager, in the new regime, exploiters had to obtain a formal permit, produce this permit during forest patrol or face subsequent sanctions. Table 6.2 show that there was a very poor response from forest users at the start of the new regime but this improved as the months went by. Table 6.3 shows funds generated by the BBNRMC in 2005.

Table 6.3: BBNRMC funds generated in 2005

Month	Forestry	Gift	Loan	Project Grant Arrears	Total
January	756,100	0	0	0	756,100
February	697,000	0	352,000	0	1,049,000
March	718,750	0	342,000	0	1,060,750
April	874,000	0	547,000	3,000,000	4,421,000
May	770,500	0	1,017,000	0	1,787,500
June	259,000	0	0	0	259,000
July	721,500	0	0	0	721,500
August	498,000	500,000	0	0	998,000
September	490,000	0	462,000	0	952,000
October	434,000	0	542,000	0	976,000
November	508,000	1,000,000	0	0	1,508,000
December	487,400	0	0	0	487,400
Total	**7,214,250**	**1,500,000**	**3,262,000**	**3,000,000**	**14,976,250**

Table 6.3 shows that in 2005, the BBNRMC had a forestry income of about £7200, received monetary gifts of £1500, loans to the sum of about £3300, and project grant arrears of £3000, thus generating a total of about £15000.[12] The monetary gift was from the agro-industrial parastatal, the CDC, and the loans were from the executive board president. The project grant arrears were from the Limbe Urban Council, and it is money due the BBNRMC as an executor of the Limbe city tree planting programme of 2002 – 2004[13]. Figure 6.1 below shows the proportion from of each funding stream compared with the total generated funds for 2005 as shown in Table 6.3 above. It shows that about half of BBNRMC's funds were from forestry, about a third came from pro-governmental institutions and the rest was interest free credit from the board president.

Figure 6.1: Ratio of funds from various sources available to the BBNRMC in 2005



[12] Exchange rate at the time of fieldwork was roughly 1000 francs CFA = £1 sterling and this is the rate I have used all through this chapter; present exchange rate is 800 francs CFA = £1

[13] This programme was terminated in 2004 by the LUC due to dissatisfaction with execution, since then the BBNRMC maintains that the LUC received full financing from government and in the absence of any other institution executing the project, the LUC should release the full sum of money (£31,250) budgeted for the BBNRMC; as at December 2006, they had received sum of £17000 (see BBNRMC, 2004f; 2005; 2006)

It is worth noting that the gift and grant arrears did not result from a government or institutional policy requiring the CDC and Limbe Urban Council to support the BBNRMC. CDC's gift was authorised by its general manager, a Bimbian, philanthropist, and political activist for the ruling party; he is highly regarded by BBNRMC for his support and non-interference (interviews with Stephanie, 10/06/06; Narcisse, 08/10/06; Sandrine, 31/08/06)[14]. In comparison, the head of the Limbe Urban Council, also a Bimbian and BBNRMC vice-president, is not so highly regarded; he is absent at board meetings, would not send a representative as his CDC peer often does, and needs numerous reminders before he releases funds 'owed' the BBNRMC (interviews with Bertrand, 14/06/06; Sandrine, 31/08/06). Table 6.4 gives a breakdown of BBNRMC forest revenue according to its various income streams in 2005.

Table 6.4: BBNRMC Forest Revenue in 2005

Income Stream	Amount	
	Permit	**Penalty**
Fuelwood	172,000	405,000
Charcoal	937,500	146,000
Timber	2,005,500	2,126,250
Seized Chainsaw	0	859,000
Ecotourism	437,000	0
Other	126,000	0
Total	**3,678,000**	**3,536,250**

Revenue from penalties was mainly from the auctioning of seized timber and fuelwood, and also from fines imposed on owners of chainsaws seized from illegal exploiters. Charcoal producers were the exploiters least likely to engage in illegal exploitation. Figure 6.2 below shows the ratio of the various income streams in 2005.

[14] In 2000, the CDC donated £2000 towards the cost of designing a management plan for the community forest (Manga-Williams, 2003)

Figure 6.2: Ratio of BBNRMC revenue from forest exploitation in 2005

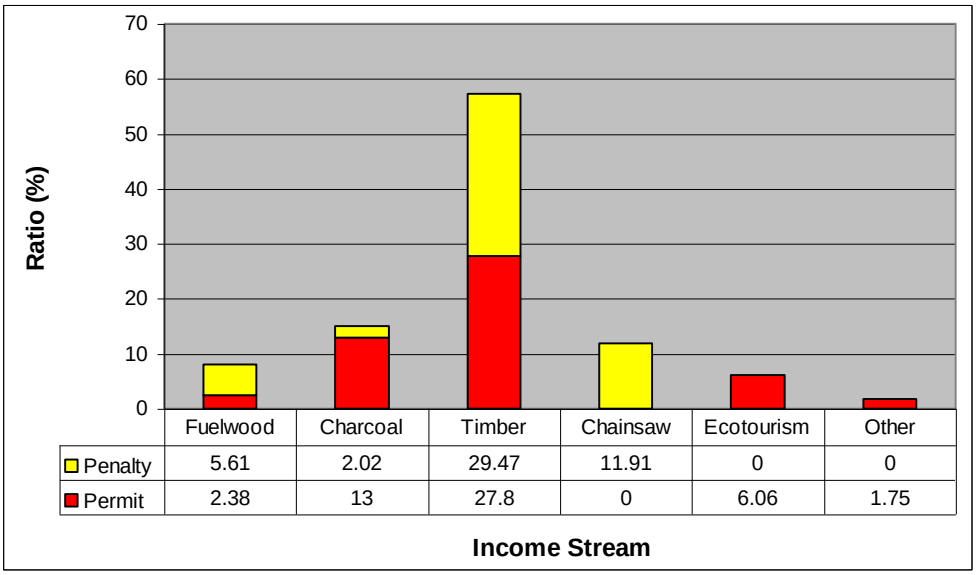


Figure 6.2 further indicates that the bulk of forestry revenue was from logging of trees for timber, charcoal, and fuelwood. Ecotourism brought in just 6 percent of revenues in 2005, while farmer registration accounted for just 1.75 percent of revenue. Thus non-consumptive use of the forest brought in a total of 8 percent of forest revenue in 2005, the bulk of revenue coming from consumptive use. This is in sharp contrasts with the desire of the BBNRMC that the bulk of its revenue should come from non-consumptive sources. Table 6.5 below shows total funds generated by BBNRMC from January to September 2006. While the BBNRMC 2006 annual report presented a financial summary from January to November 2006, the table omits October and November as it wasn't possible to obtain the monthly transactions record due to viral attack on BBNRMC's computers.

Table 6.5: BBNRMC funds generated in 2006

Month	Forestry	Gift	Loan	Total
January	623,000	0	0	1,523,000
February	270,000	0	0	270,000
March	470,000	0	200,000	1,570,000
April	361,000	0	0	361,000
May	395,000	368,420	0	763,420
June	479,000	0	0	479,000
July	337,300	0	120,000	457,300
August	789,650	0	0	789,650
September	680,500	0	0	680,500
Total	**4,405,450**	**368,420**	**320,000**	**5,093,870**

Table 6.5 shows that in the first three quarters of 2006, the BBNRMC generated total revenue of £5,000. This is less than the previous year as Table 6.3 shows that over a similar period in 2005, BBNRMC generated funds totalling £12,000, with an income of about £5,780 from forest exploitation. Figure 6.3 below shows the ratio of each of the funding streams compared with the total funds for 2006. It shows that about all the funds generated came from forest exploitation, with minor contributions from a financial gift from Camosun College Canada, and interest free loan from the board president.

Figure 6.3: Ratio of funds from various sources available to the BBNRMC in 2006

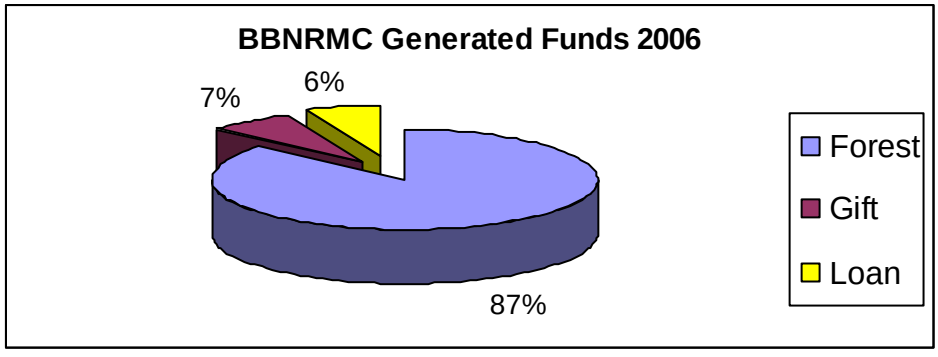
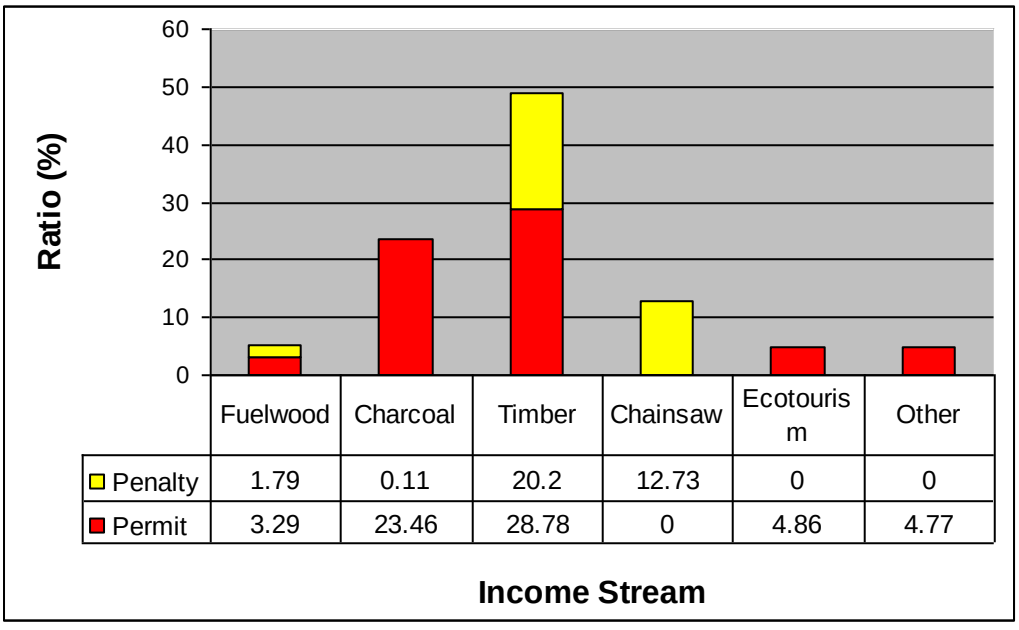


Table 6.6 gives a breakdown of BBNRMC forest revenue according to its various forest income streams in 2006, while Figure 6.4 shows the ratio of permit to penalty revenues from these forest income streams.

Table 6.6: BBNRMC forest revenue in 2006

Income Stream	Amount	
	Permit	**Penalty**
Fuelwood	145,000	79,000
Charcoal	1,033,500	5,000
Timber	1,268,000	889,950
Chainsaw	0	561,000
Ecotourism	214,000	0
Other	210,000	0
Total	**2,870,500**	**1,534,950**

Figure 6.4: Ratio of BBNRMC revenues from forest exploitation in 2006



As we saw with Figure 6.2, Figure 6.4 also shows that the bulk of forest revenue is from logging of trees for charcoal, fuelwood and timber. Figure 6.4 shows that the ratio of timber penalty revenue dropped from 29.5 percent in 2005 to 20 percent, ratio of fuelwood penalty revenue dropped from 5.61 percent to 1.79 percent, and charcoal from 2 percent to less than 1 percent. However ratio of revenue from chainsaw seizures increased slightly from a 2005 value of 11.91 percent to 12.73 percent in 2006, though its absolute value did fall from £859 to £561. Ratio of income from charcoal permits increased from a 2005 value of 13 percent to 23.5 percent, fuelwood increased slightly from 2.38 percent to 3.29 percent, timber remained the same at about 28 percent, while ecotourism dropped from 6 percent to about 5 percent in 2006. Figure 6.4 indicates once more that ecotourism revenue lags far behind revenue from consumptive sources. Given the 'empty forest' state of the community forest, this result is not unexpected.

In addition to the BBNRMC monthly financial transactions record, its bank records also provide information on funds received, especially the period between 2001 and 2004 where there are no accounting records. Table 6.7 below shows financial deposits into BBNRMC bank account for the period 2001-2006 and their sources.

Table 6.7: BBNRMC bank deposits from 2001-2006

	Financial Deposit and Depositors							
Year	**MCP**	**LUC**	**BBNRMC**	**NEF**	**CDC**	**CCC**	**BP**	**Total**
2001	1,945,000	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	**3,945,000**
2002	0	3,000,000	106,000	0	0	0	171,500	**3,277,500**
2003	0	8,000,000	405,000	900,000	0	0	0	**9,305,000**
2004	0	0	200,000	600,000	1,000,000	0	0	**1,800,000**
2005	0	3,000,000	0	0	0	0	10,000	**3,010,000**
2006	0	1,000,000	0	0	1,000,000	250,000	0	**2,250,000**
Total	**1,945,000**	**17,000,000**	**711,000**	**1,500,000**	**2,000,000**	**250,000**	**181,500**	**23,587,500**

MCP – Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe; LUC – Limbe Urban Council; NEF – National Employment Fund; CDC – Cameroon Development Corporation; CCC – Camosun College Canada; BP – Board President

Table 6.7 shows that there have been eight depositors to the BBNRMC bank account during the period 2001-2006, two of which can be considered as internal depositors (BBNRMC and the board president), and the other six as external depositors. Table 6.7 shows that the BBNRMC did have funds outside of forest income for the period 2001-2004. Table 6.7 shows that the largest external depositor is the Limbe Urban Council. The external deposits were made for the following purposes:

- Mount Cameroon Project Limbe – grant for BBNRMC beekeeping project
- Limbe Urban Council – grant due BBNRMC for tree planting programme
- National Employment Fund – grant towards meeting staff salaries
- Cameroon Development Corporation – unconditional financial gift
- Camosun College Canada – bench fees for interns

Table 6.8 below shows withdrawals from BBNRMC bank account over this same period including the personnel or executive board member who made the withdrawal.

Table 6.8: Withdrawals from BBNRMC bank account from 2001-2006

	Signatory				
Year	**Forest Management Officer**	**Board Treasurer**	**Administrative Assistant**	**Board President**	**Total**
2001	320,000	0	0	0	**320,000**
2002	3,527,000	0	0	0	**3,527,000**
2003	14,708,950	0	0	0	**14,708,950**
2004	0	900,000	0	0	**900,000**
2005	0	575,000	644,000	8,580,000	**9,799,000**
2006	0	0	1,800,000	0	**1,800,000**
Total	**18,555,950**	**1,475,000**	**2,444,000**	**8,580,000**	**31,054,950**

Table 6.8 shows that the highest total amount withdrawn was by the forest management officer from 2001 to 2003; this period coincides with the tenure of the first forest manager who left the job unannounced in 2004. Expenditure vouchers indicate that

the withdrawals were for operations, logistics and staff remunerations. The next large withdrawal was by the board president in 2005, financial records show that some of this went towards repaying her loans to the BBNRMC. Withdrawals by the board treasurer and administrative secretary were for operations, logistics and staff remuneration. Table 6.8 interestingly shows that the first forest manager was responsible for all withdrawals for BBNRMC activities during his tenure, but after his departure this function has been shared between the board secretary and the administrative assistant. Figure 6.5 on next page compares bank deposits and withdrawals from 2001-2006.

Figure 6.5: Deposit and withdrawals from BBNRMC bank account from 2001-2006

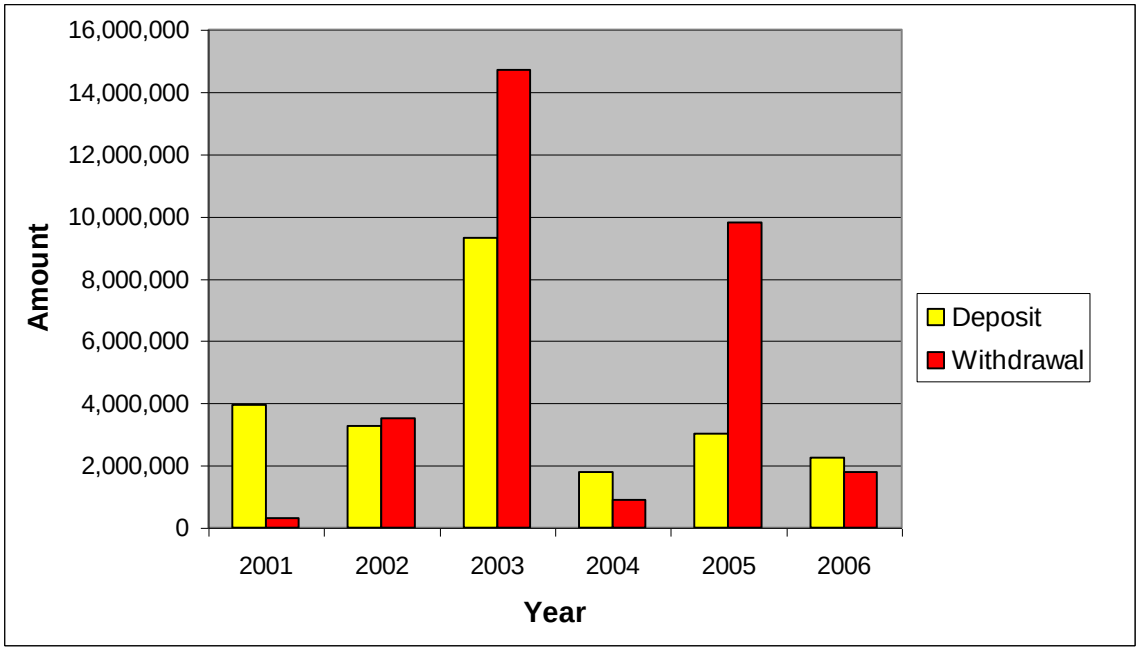


Figure 6.5 shows that peak deposit and peak withdrawal was in 2003, while minimum deposit was in 2004 and minimum withdrawal was in 2001. The minimum withdrawal recorded in 2001 is explained by the fact that at this time the BBNRMC was not fully functional. The minimum deposit in 2004 coincides with the suspension of the

Limbe Urban Council (LUC) tree-planting programme. The observation that total withdrawal from 2001 to 2006 of about £31000 exceeds total deposit of about £23500 is explained by the fact that not all sources of deposits have been properly recorded.

3.2 Expenditures incurred from 2001 – 2006

BBNRMC expenditure data were relatively easier to obtain compared with revenue data, because every time money was needed for an activity, an expenditure voucher had to be submitted to the forest manager for authorisation. Vouchers from the forest manager needed authorisation from the board president, who tacitly gave a 'blank cheque' to the first forest manager to use funds as he saw fit as long as he kept her informed of progress (interviews with Franklin, 02/10/06; Sandrine, 31/08/06). Thus from 2001 to 2004, the forest manager had near absolute control of BBNRMC finances with very little oversight by the board. Table 6.9 below shows annual expenditures of the BBNRMC from 2001 to 2006, grouped into three major categories – remunerations, logistics and consumables. The expenditure categories used correspond roughly to the broad categories adopted in 2005 by the BBNRMC in its financial records and relate to:

- Remunerations – salaries including advances, patrol allowances, loans granted to staffs, entertainment including condolences, and repaid debts
- Logistics – transportation, nursery construction, purchase of equipments, maintenance and repairs
- Consumables – office stationeries, printing and photocopying, bills including telephone and internet

Table 6.9: BBNRMC expenditures from 2001-2006

Year	Remunerations	Logistics	Consumables	Total
2001	0	5,336,000	532,000	5,868,000
2002	2,646,200	420,000	1,124,400	4,190,600
2003	9,850,450	3,034,650	2,256,000	15,141,100
2004	2,672,650	118,770	184,980	2,976,400
2005	10,266,820	3,749,925	1,052,600	15,069,345
2006	5,411,200	1,704,750	809,875	7,925,825
Total	30,847,320	14,364,095	5,959,855	51,171,270

Table 6.9 shows that remunerations have consistently been the BBNRMC's largest expenditure category. Spending on logistics was highest in 2001 with large reductions in 2002 and 2004. Consumables show a hundred percent annual increase from 2001-2003, a huge drop in 2004 and relative stability in 2004-2005. The remuneration peaks of 2003 and 2005 coincides respectively with the year of largest bank deposits (Table 6.5) and largest revenue generated from forestry activities (Table 6.2). Noticeably absent from the BBNRMC records is expenditure on social projects. Figure 6.6 below shows the ratio of these expenditures from 2001-2006, indicating that remuneration is by far the major expenditure undertaken by the BBNRMC over this period.

Figure 6.6: BBNRMC ratio of expenditures from 2001-2006

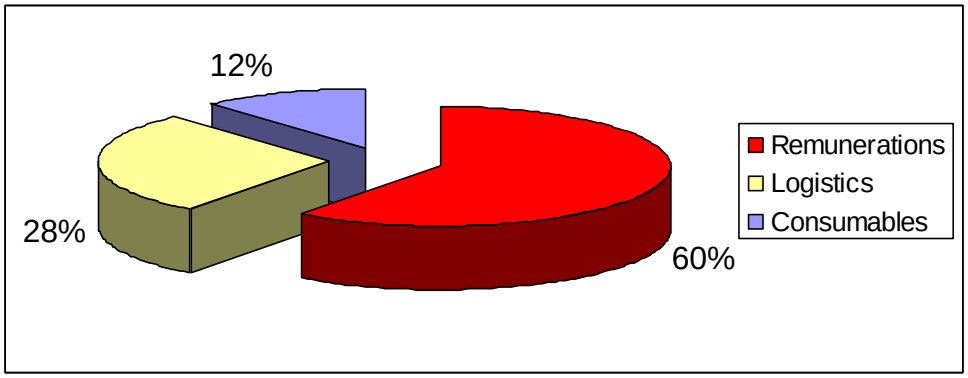
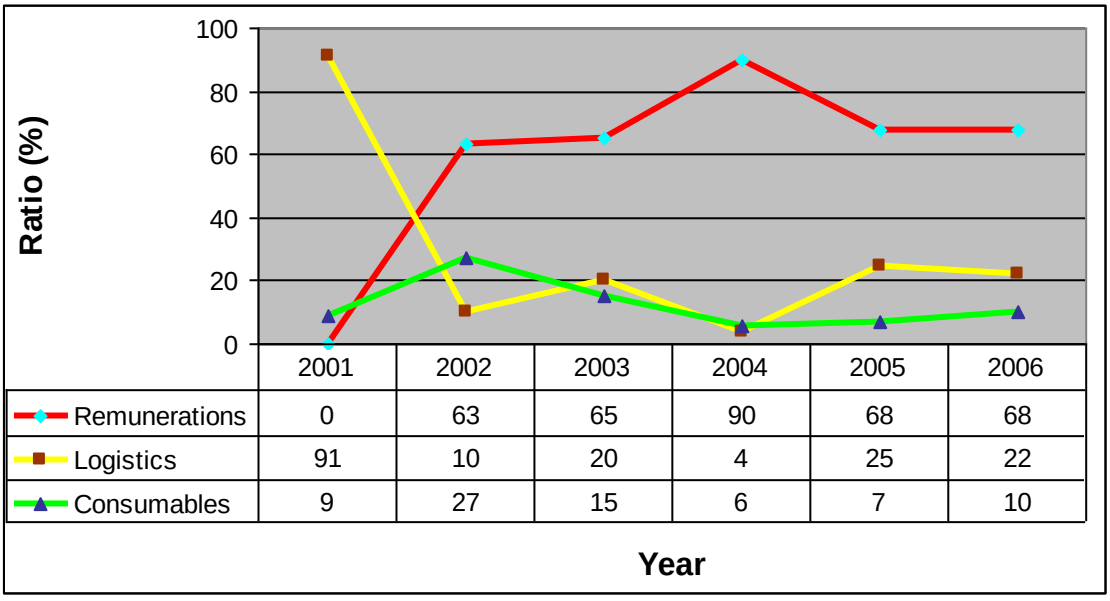


Figure 6.7 below is BBNRMC expenditure trend from 2001-2006. It shows that in 2001, 91 percent of expenditures were 'logistic' cost to build up the institutions physical assets, this declined sharply in 2002 and again in 2004 to its lowest value of 4 percent. Consumables peaked in 2002 at 27 percent of annual expenditure, declined sharply in 2004 and have remained relatively low. Remunerations have stayed at about two-thirds of annual expenditures except for 2001 where it was 0 percent because the BBNRMC was not fully operational and 2004 where it rose to 90 percent of annual expenditure. The high value for 2004 is because this was a lean year for the BBNRMC in terms of forest income and financial support from benefactors (Tables 6.2 and 6.5), so spending on remunerations was prioritised over spending on logistics and consumables.

Figure 6.7: BBNRMC expenditure trend from 2001-2006



	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Remunerations	0	63	65	90	68	68
Logistics	91	10	20	4	25	22
Consumables	9	27	15	6	7	10

Given that remuneration is BBNRMC's major expenditure and is made up four sub-categories (salaries, operations, entertainment, and repaid debts), Table 6.10 below shows the relative magnitudes of these sub-categories from 2002-2006.

Table 6.10: BBNRMC remunerations from 2002-2006

Year	Remunerations				Total
	Salaries	Operations	Entertainment	Repaid Debts	
2002	300,000	2,130,200	216,000	0	2,646,200
2003	5,965,000	3,615,450	270,000	0	9,850,450
2004	1,755,000	175,000	85,500	0	2,015,500
2005	6,174,000	1,074,600	580,720	2,437,500	10,266,820
2006	3,947,500	616,850	187,600	0	4,751,950
Total	18,141,500	7,612,100	1,339,820	2,437,500	29,530,920

Table 6.10 shows that salaries constitute the largest expenditure category for the BBNRMC[15]. The total annual salary due staff of the BBNRMC from 2002-2004 was £5,700, this rose to £6,900 in 2005 after a salary review to improve the conditions of service. Excluding 2002 because the full complement of staff was not appointed till the end of the year, BBNRMC total salary bill from 2003 to third quarter of 2006 should be £23,475. The table shows however that the total salary paid out was about £18,000, this is £5,475 short; on inclusion of the salary grant of £1500 from the National Employment Fund (Table 6.5), the shortfall increases to £6,975. This indicates that the BBNRMC has not been able to meet up with all of its salary commitments.

The table also shows that total expenditure on operations stood at about £7,600, which comes to about 40 percent of the total salary bill for the same period. This amount sums up the total field allowance (of about £2 per day) paid out to operations committee members on active forest patrol. Using a minimum of three persons per patrol team (team leader and two assistants), which translates to £6 of daily allowance, £7,600 works out to

[15] In 2005, the monthly wage bill for the BBNRMC increased from £465 to £575, after a salary review that led to a decision to place the eight unwaged operations committee (OC) volunteers on a monthly stipend of £10, while the OC president and his deputy were to receive £15 each (interview with Sylvain, 05/06/06)

be allowances paid for a maximum of 1,267 days of field patrols[16]. The actual number of days contained in the period covered by this analysis, from 2002 to third quarter of 2006, is 1,734 days. This shows that forest patrols were executed every 1.5 days, which translates to once every two days. The entertainment bill is relatively low, and it consists of expenditure on refreshments during board meetings, transport reimbursements to selected participants such as chiefs during board meetings and other events.

The entertainment bill also includes donations to birth and death ceremonies involving board members, staff and operations committee volunteers; it peaked in 2005 partly because the then forest manager was very responsive to requests from beneficiaries and also because of the relative availability of funds during the year (Table 3). Table 6.10 shows that BBNRMC repaid its debts to the sum of £2,400 and this took place in 2005. This amount is however lower than the total debt incurred for the year, which was about £3,200 (Table 6.3), thus the BBNRMC went into 2006 with a debt burden of about £800. This had increased by the sum of £320 by the third quarter of 2006 as shown in Table 6.4, thus BBNRMC financial records show that by October 2006 the institution was indebted to its board president to the tune of £1,120. Figure 6.8 below shows remunerations trend of the BBNRMC from 2002-2006.

[16] During my stay with the BBNRMC I observed that the patrol teams are usually 4-5 person strong, though there were patrols by 2 person teams, this was rare and not encouraged given occasional violent confrontations with illegal forest users

Figure 6.8: BBNRMC remunerations trends from 2002-2006

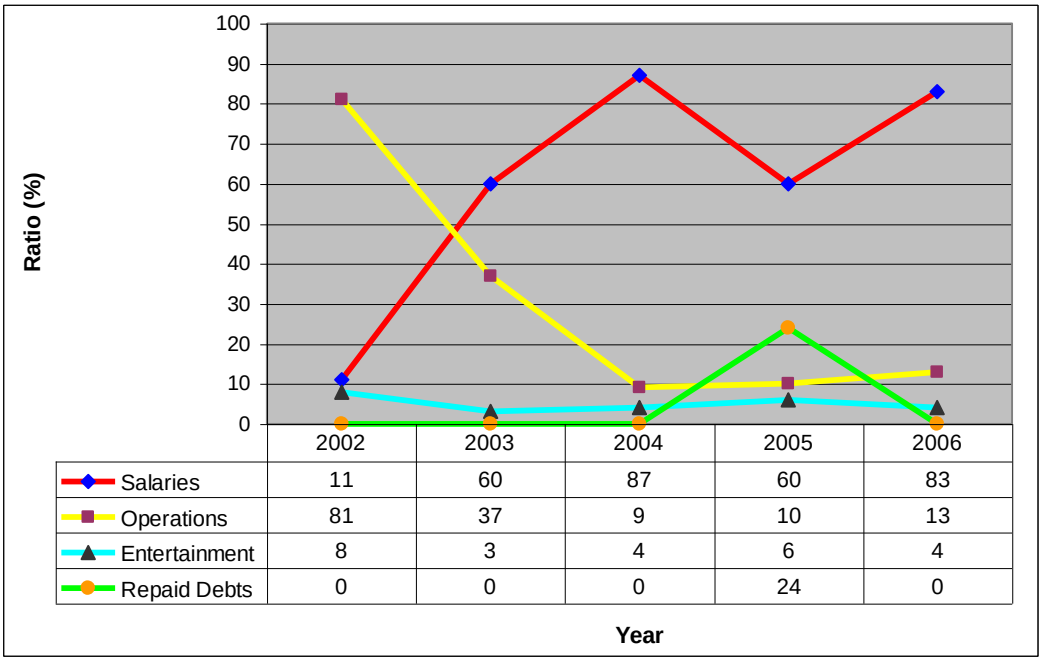


Figure 6.8 shows that at the commencement of activities in 2002, the highest proportion of remunerations (81%) went to operations. While Table 6.10 shows that in monetary terms operations increased from £2100 in 2001 to £3,600 (its peak value) in 2003, its proportion decreased from 81 percent to 37 percent. It further dropped to 10 percent in 2004 and has remained low in monetary terms and proportion of total remuneration. This reflects the fact that the operations committee started out with about thirty volunteers in 2002, but dwindled in size to about ten in 2004. While operations share of remunerations has reduced, salaries increased from 11 percent in 2002 to a high of 87 percent in 2004, down 60 percent in 2005 and up 83 percent in 2006. Given that 2004 and 2006 are relatively lean years in terms of funds generated by the BBNRMC, the salaries trend indicates that during such periods' staff salaries takes up almost all of BBNRMC funds. Figure 6.8 also shows that entertainment's share of remunerations has remained consistently low, and that debt servicing has been a one-off event.

4. Benefit-sharing in the BBNRMC

Section 3 shows that the greater share of income derived from the BBCF goes towards remuneration for BBNRMC personnel. There is no indication in BBNRMC financial records that any of this income has been used to support social projects in the settlements around the BBCF. This raises the question of whether the BBNRMC is having a positive impact on poverty alleviation in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo area. Chapter 4 shows that the populace in this area had unrestricted access to the forest until the mid-1990s when the VLFCC and VARCIG were created by indigenes to limit the forest access of non-indigenes and to obtain rents from users. Chapter 5 shows that non-indigenes constitute the majority of forest users and are involved mainly in farming, logging, fuelwood and charcoal production. These livelihood strategies which predate the formation of the BBNRMC are still in place, implying that the creation of the BBNRMC has not increased the livelihood options available in the area.

While there was an attempt at beekeeping on a substantial scale, this initiative failed. Ecotourism is not generating substantial regular income to be a viable alternative livelihood option. BBNRMC's most successful task is the institution of regular forest patrols in the BBCF. Effectiveness of this policing operation is indicated by the permit-penalty revenue trends observed from analyses of the BBNRMC financial records, and shown in Table 6.11 and Figure 6.9 below.

Table 6.11: BBNRMC revenue from forest exploitation

Forest Revenue	2004		2005		2006	
	Amount	**Ratio (%)**	**Amount**	**Ratio (%)**	**Amount**	**Ratio (%)**
Permit	337,000	23.70	3,678,000	50.98	2,870,500	65.16
Penalty	1,085,000	76.30	3,536,250	49.02	1,534,950	34.84
Total	**1,422,000**	**100.00**	**7,214,250**	**100.00**	**4,405,450**	**100.00**

Figure 6.9: Trend of BBNRMC revenue from permits and penalty

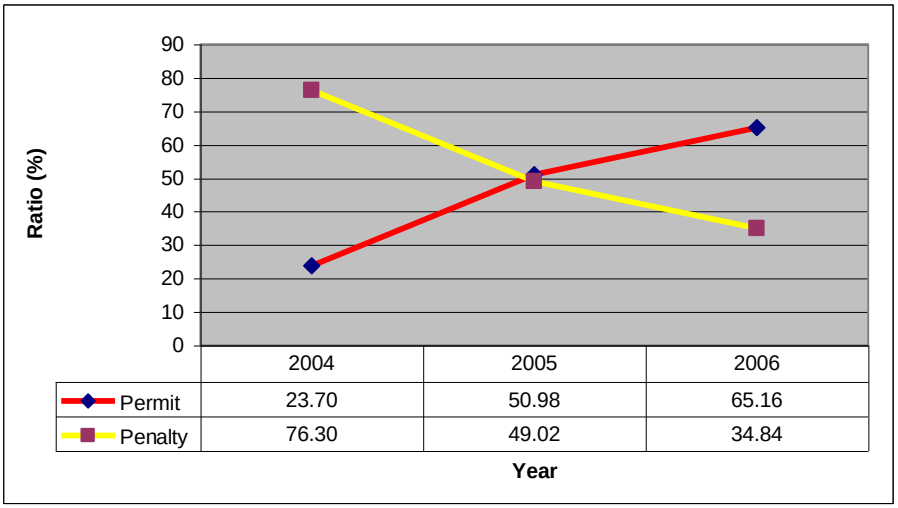


Table 6.11 and Figure 6.9 show that as the ratio of revenue from permits increased from 2004 to 2006 the ratio of revenue from penalties declined in tandem. While Table 6.11 and Figure 6.9 do not show causality for this observed trend, BBNRMC reports reveal that with the sudden departure of the first forest manager in August 2004, there was an illegal exploitation rush by forest users (BBNRMC, 2004b; 2004e). The board president responded forcefully[17] to this exploitation rush and it was eventually brought under control with the appointment of a new forest manager in 2005. Table 6.11 also shows that forest revenue in 2006 was lower than revenue in 2005, but in 2006 there was a higher revenue ratio from permits as compared to 2005.

[17] She frequently called on the police and gendarmes to assist the operations committee during patrols as there were frequent violent encounters with illegal exploiters (see BBNRMC 2004e; 2004g)

The revenue drop in 2006 is the result of a fall in the activity of timber exploiters in the community forest. Exploiters interviewed maintain that their reduced activity in the community forest is as a result of the scarcity of exploitable trees, and the patrol efforts of the operations committee that has made illegal exploitation less profitable (interviews with Charles, 10/10/06; Nathan, 10/10/06)[18]. Thus resource scarcity and management efforts are changing the behaviour of timber exploiters, thereby reducing logging pressure in the community forest.[19] Ecological benefits from this change, is however tempered by the ecological impact of farming in the community forest.

During fieldwork I attended a meeting between the forest manager and the executive committee of the charcoal producers' group. The agenda was to inform the group of BBNRMC's decision to reduce permits for Azobe (*Lophira alata*), the preferred tree specie for charcoal production, from four trees per exploiter per year to two trees. This was due to the easily observed scarcity of Azobe in the community forest. Despite the pleas of the charcoal producers on the livelihood impact of this decision, ecological considerations were placed above livelihood needs. [20]

If the interest of BBNRMC's two biggest stakeholders, timber exploiters and charcoal producers, in terms of forest revenues are not being served, if the BBNRMC is not making any significant contribution to social development in the forest area, then who

[18] Chapter 4 showed that its difficult for timber exploiters to break even from logging one tree at a time in the community forest, but the BBNRMC is only allowed to issue 'single tree exploitation permits'; however it has become difficult for these exploiters to get away with logging more than a single tree per permit as the patrol teams have acquired more and more expertise in tracking down illegal exploitation; thus even where the exploiter evades acquiring a permit from the office, the exploiter ends up negotiating with the patrol team when caught, so there is no way to avoid paying the 'exploitation rent'

[19] Management activity in this regard also includes sanctioning of personnel judged to be conniving with illegal timber exploiters; during field research I witnessed the suspension of the leader of the operations committee for a period of 4 months for accepting behind the scenes payment from an illegal exploiter

[20] In a 20 minute international telephone conversation I had at 7:00pm on the 14/04/08 with the BBNRMC forest manager, I was informed that concern for the rate of forest loss, has caused the BBNRMC board to indefinitely suspend the issuance of tree felling permit; the board wants to concentrate on ecotourism and generation of revenue from farmer registration

are the beneficiaries from the establishment of the BBNRMC? A response to this question has to address the three key objectives of the adoption of community forestry in Cameroon. These are economic – to contribute to poverty alleviation, ecological – to contribute to biodiversity conservation and equity – to contribute to good governance.

On the economic dimension, the establishment of the BBNRMC has chiefly benefited its hired staff and operations committee volunteers. It can be argued that the BBNRMC has given users of the community forest a legal license to operate, which has in turn reduced the transaction cost associated with past unclear rules of access. However, the BBNRMC has imposed its own transaction cost on users, which includes exercising authority to suspend the activities of forest users for ecologic reasons. Thus there is no net economic gain to forest users from the establishment of the BBNRMC. Likewise there is no evidence of significant support to social development projects in the community forest area from the BBNRMC since its establishment. [21]

On the ecological dimension, forest walks I made in the BBCF show that there is continued farm expansion. Therefore the BBNRMC cannot claim to have stopped forest loss in the BBCF, but can rightly claim to prevent forest loss in the core zone. This is due to consistent forest patrol in the core zone and the regular destruction of farms found in this zone. The area is protected not just by the efforts of the patrol teams but also by the vigilance of the inhabitants of the Bimbia villages closest to the core.[22] This proactive

[21] The BBNRMC 2005 annual report states that the institution paid for a trip sand in support of the construction of a pit toilet for the Government Primary School in Bimbia, provided 285 boards of timber towards the building of 3 class rooms at the Government Primary School in Mabeta and an additional 66 boards for constructing benches were donated to the Deeper Life Church in Livanda; these are the only social projects on record to have received BBNRMC support from 2001 – 2006 (BBNRMC, 2005)

[22] In mid-2006, I was witness to an operation carried out by the forest manager and some youths from Bimbia to apprehend a timber exploiter in the core zone. This exploiter had been issued a tree-permit, but decided to encroach into the core and worked chiefly at night to evade detection. When this was reported to the forest manager by some Bimbia youths, he decided to organize a secret raiding party with these youths,

concern for the forest of the core zone and the prioritisation of ecological sustainability over livelihood needs implies that the BBNRMC is unwittingly but actively serving the interest of the biodiversity conservation community.

The equity dimension, which relates to the governance of the BBNRMC along the lines of transparency, accountability, and fairness, is much more complex to assess from the analyses undertaken in this chapter. However, a measure of transparency is the ease of accessibility to institutional reports (Kaufmann and Bellver, 2005); on this measure the BBNRMC has a mixed performance. It's reporting was very poor from 2001 to late 2004, but has shown marked improvement since then. In addition, its reports are available and accessible to stakeholders and other interested parties such as academic researchers. However the reports show numerous bookkeeping deficiencies and would greatly benefit from a professional financial audit. A more detailed appraisal of equity in the governance of the BBNRMC is carried out in the next chapter.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined institutional resources available to the BBNRMC in the execution of its responsibilities as manager of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. The BBNRMC was established in response to the adoption of decentralized forest management policy by the government of Cameroon in 1994. The literature on decentralization argues that newly created local institutions such as the BBNRMC have a much better chance of achieving their objectives when devolution of responsibilities is

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sensing that the exploiter might be working in cooperation with some members of the operations committee, and would be tipped off, if a regular raiding activity were organised. The exploiter was successfully apprehended, the timber produced was seized and auctioned and he was given an indefinite suspension from further exploitation in the community forest.

also accompanied by devolution of resources. In this regard the BBNRMC went from being an idea on the drawing board in 1998 to a full-fledged institution in 2002 with significant support from the well-resourced Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe. It is fair to say that without this foundation there might have been no BBNRMC.

The patrimonial nature of the Cameroonian state and the fragmentation of its constituents groups along ethnic lines meant that without a powerful patron like the MCP Limbe, the BBNRMC would not have come into existence. The transaction cost of making all its stakeholders work together would have been too high for any of the stakeholders to afford. Apart from the MCP Limbe, other major actors whose resources supported the BBNRMC in its formative phase were the Limbe Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) and the CDC. The active support of the SDO gave the BBNRMC access to the police and gendarmes, signalling to all forest users that it had full government support. It is worth mentioning that given the political influence of Bimbians in Cameroon's ruling party, it would have been surprising had the SDO behaved otherwise.

As shown in Chapters 4 and 5, the BBCF occupies lands that were formerly under CDC leasehold. The unproblematic release of these lands to the BBNRMC by this parastatal enterprise further shows the degree of support the BBNRMC enjoyed from government institutions. Support from the forestry and agriculture departments came with the MCP Limbe, as employees of the project were drawn mainly from the two departments. The organizational capacity of local indigenous elites was also a valuable resource, as their affluence and influence was used to secure government support. This was however a double-edged sword as these elites used their resources to also

successfully contest MCP Limbe initiatives that they disagreed with, such as equal representation between indigenes and non-indigenes in the BBNRMC board.

The non-indigenes, who participated in the many workshops and capacity building initiatives of the MCP Limbe contributed notable time away from their livelihood activities. Their acquiescence in paying the economic rents for forest use demanded by the indigenes prior to and during the formation of the BBNRMC, acted as a resource that strengthened the ethnocentric position of the indigenes. The abundance of resources available to the BBNRMC in its formative phase ensured the relatively quick positive response it received to its application for a community forest. As stated in Chapter 4, of the four community forests initiatives that MCP Limbe supported, only the BBNRMC received a positive response before the project ended in 2002, and as at 2006, the other three community forests were still to be approved.

Since becoming fully operational in 2002, the BBNRMC has continued to enjoy wide support despite the exit of the MCP Limbe. It has been able to generate financial resources from forest users, the Limbe Urban Council, the National Employment Fund, the CDC, and to a smaller extent Camosun College International Canada. It has also been able to generate technical and material support from local NGOs, and local representatives of International organizations including FSC Cameroon and ICRAF. However, questions have been raised by some of its stakeholders about benefit sharing since the establishment of the BBNRMC. Financial analyses show that the greater share of BBNRMC's revenue has gone towards personnel remuneration (a weak form of poverty alleviation), and no contribution has been made to social development.

The commitment of the BBNRMC towards forest policing, especially the core zone, as indicated by the financial resources that have gone towards remuneration of its patrol team (the operations committee) shows that it prioritises ecological concerns over livelihood needs of its stakeholders. Regular destruction of farms in the core zone so as to maintain its non-use status strengthens the observation that the BBNRMC privileges ecological sustainability of the community forest over livelihood needs of users. The absence of forest revenue records from 2002 to late 2004 and the improper departure of the forest manager in late 2004, indicate managerial ineptitude during this period. Since then there have been greater oversight of the BBNRMC board, especially the board president, over day-to-day activities of its staff and volunteers.

Given the resources that have been made available to the BBNRMC, and the various setbacks it has faced since 1998 in executing its task, the question that needs to be asked is what does the analysis herein point to, as the BBNRMC's achievements in all these years? I conclude that the BBNRMC has successfully achieved the formalisation of a rent extracting system from users without substantial representation of these users in decision-making. The BBNRMC is unwittingly acting as forest exploitation police, increasing the transaction costs of forest users in the BBCF without substantially enhancing the livelihoods options available to these forest users.

Chapter 7

Autocracy and corruption in Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest area

1. Introduction

This chapter assesses governance of the BBCF using transparency, accountability and equity as key criteria (Hyden and Court, 2002). It also evaluates rule compliance amongst users of the BBCF by examining BBNRMC sanctions and benefit-sharing mechanisms (Ostrom, 1990; Bowles and Gintis, 2002). The chapter shows that governance is not better simply because it is brought closer to the people; local is not intrinsically 'good'. It argues that governance of the BBCF cannot be separated from broader governance processes at the global and national scale.

The chapter is divided into six sections. Section 2 proceeds with a critical review of the community forest manual, with a focus on the provisions in the manual for the transparent, accountable and equitable governance of community forests. Section 3 critically assesses the internal rules and regulations (Constitution and by-laws) of the BBNRMC if they are transparent, accountable and equiatble. Section 4 analyses the governance performance of the BBNRMC; it shows the challenges it faces in governing the BBCF in compliance with the manual and its own Constitution. Section 5 evaluates rule compliance in the BBNRMC's by focusing on its sanctions and benefit sharing (carrot and stick) mechanisms. Section 6 concludes the chapter with a summary discussion of its major findings.

2. Critical appraisal of the community forestry manual

Cameroon's community forest manual in six chapters and eleven annexes, contains statutory provisions for obtaining and managing a community forest (MINEF, 1998b). The subjects dealt with in the manual are shown in Box 7.1 below.

Box 7.1: Provisions of the Cameroon community forestry manual

Chapter 1: General provisions concerning community forests
Chapter 2: The required legal entity
Chapter 3: Preparation and submission of the application dossier
Chapter 4: Preparation and submission of the management plan and management agreement
Chapter 5: Implementation of the management plan and agreement
Chapter 6: Commercial exploitation of a community forest
Annexes 1 – 2: Model community forest management agreement and model forest reservation form
Annexes 3 – 6: Community forest survey requirements and model survey recording form
Annex 7: Five-year action programme template
Annex 8: Annual plan of operations template
Annexes 9 – 10: Annual and bi-annual reporting templates
Annex 11: Legal entities (explanatory notes)
Annex 12: Model minutes of the consultation meeting (prior to creation of community forest)

Chapters 1 to 4 of the manual contain statutory provisions related to the establishment of a community forest, while Chapters 5 and 6 relate to the management of a community forest. Given that Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation have dealt with the requirements for establishing a community forest, this section critically examines the statutory provisions related to managing a community forest. The major shortcomings of the manual with respect to establishing a community forest include limiting the maximum size to 5000 ha, failure to define community, and a forest survey requirement above the capacity of ordinary forests users (Penelon, 1997; Vabi et al., 2000; Brown and Shreckenberg, 2001; Djeumo, 2001; Egbe, 2001; Oyono, 2004). There is presently an on-going convoluted review process for a second edition of the manual (Adeleke 2006; Lingondo, 2006).

The manual's provisions for the management of community forests covers the following areas – monitoring of management practice to ensure compliance with simple management plan approved by the forestry department; review of management plan and management agreement; resolution of disputes and sanction mechanisms; commercial exploitation of community forest products; and benefit sharing.

2.1 Monitoring of management practice

Section 5.1 of the manual requires the community forest manager to send an annual plan of operations for the forthcoming year, and an annual report of activities for the preceding year to the local forestry department. The annual plan of operations is submitted one month before the end of the current operational year, and the forestry department is required to forward an acknowledgement receipt to the forest manager. The plan is submitted along with the management plan and management agreement for the community forest; if it is not approved, the forestry department is required to inform the forest manager in writing, clearly providing reasons for disapproval. If there is no correspondence from the forestry department within 45 days of submission, the community forest management shall consider the annual plan of operations approved by default.

The annual report of activities must be submitted within two months after the end of preceding operational year. Both the annual plan of operations and annual report of activities are done using forms or following the format provided by the forestry department. The local forestry department is then required to submit bi-annual reports of progress and challenges faced by community forests in their constituency, to the Provincial Delegate who also submits bi-annual Provincial reports to the Community Forestry Unit (CFU) at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). Section 5.4 of the manual mandates the local forestry department to execute regular monitoring of activities in the community forest to ensure compliance with the management plan. Where there are breaches of the management plan, Section 5.4.3 requires that the community forest management and local forestry department make the effort to work out a solution by negotiation.

If this fails, the dispute can be referred to higher levels in the forestry department with the final say being that of the Minister in charge of forest department. In the event where the breach is a violation of the Constitution of the forest management body, Section 5.4.2.1 states that this should be dealt with by the legislation governing the functioning of legal entities. Section 5.4.1 states that breaches of the management plan or management agreement could lead to legal prosecution of offender(s), financial sanctions, suspension and or annulment of management agreement, suspension and or withdrawal of licence of commercial exploiter, and compounding of exploited products.

The provisions in the manual concerning monitoring of management practice with its emphasis on reporting, puts the cost of monitoring on the community forest management body. The provisions lay emphasis on bottom-up accountability but not on top-down accountability. The manual fails to mandate that the forestry department provides regular feedback to the community forests management body in response to the regular reports from the community forest groups. The manual states that the forestry department will carry out forest monitoring to ascertain if community forests groups are abiding by their simple management plan. However, this exercise is presented as an instrument of sanction rather than as an instrument for capacity building of groups long disenfranchised from forest management.

A situation where the manual gives the final word in a dispute between the forestry department and local groups to the Minister of forestry raises questions about fairness of the forestry department's community forest monitoring process.

2.2 Review of management plan and management agreement

As earlier explained in Chapter 4 of the dissertation, Cameroon's community forestry policy does not grant ownership rights over the forest to the body managing the community forest. It grants management rights over the community forest for a period of 25 years renewable to the management body representing the stakeholder groups. The condition under which this right is exercised is set out in the management agreement valid for 25 years, signed between the government and the management body. At the signing, the government is represented by the civil administrator of the municipality hosting the community forest, while the forest manager represents the management body; for the BBCF, the signatories were the first forest manager and the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) for Fako Division.

The management agreement has a provision that the management plan for the community forest be reviewed after every five years. Section 5.2 of the community forest manual, requires that a revised management plan for the next five years, be submitted at least four months before the end of the current five-year management cycle. The revised management plan is required to show the changes that have taken place in the community forest and the management body within the current five-year cycle. If the revised management plan is rejected, Section 5.2.3 requires that the forestry department provides a detailed explanation for the rejection. Section 5.2.6 states that, if there is no reply from the forestry department after three months, the management body should consider its revised management plan approved.

Section 5.3 of the manual says to renew the management agreement the management body has to apply for renewal five months to the end of the contractual 25 years. A progress report has to be attached to the application for renewal. The report must show changes to the community forest and its management team in the

last 25 years. If the application is rejected, Section 5.3.6 says the forestry department must inform the management body in writing detailing the reasons for rejection. Rejection of the revised five-year management plan and refusal to renew the management agreement can only be on the grounds of a serious violation of the community forest legislation. According to Section 5.4.2, serious violations include uncontrolled logging, farming in non-use zones, and repetitive violations of the management plan and or management agreement. Section 5.3.7 states that if there is no reply to the request to renew the management agreement four months after submission, the local group should consider the management agreement approved.

The above provisions concerning renewal of the management plan and the management agreement show that power lies with the forestry department. If the forestry department responds in the negative, local groups have no statutory provision to challenge their decision other than to appeal to the Minister for forestry. Thus the manual is serving as a command and control instrument.

2.3 Commercial exploitation of community forest products and benefit sharing

The community forest manual has more detailed provisions for commercial exploitation of timber compared to other forest products. This is not surprising given that timber is by far the major forest product in Cameroon. The manual in Section 6.1 authorises three types of commercial timber exploitation contracts:

i. ‘Sale of standing volume’ for industrial scale logging
ii. ‘Exploitation permit’ for small scale artisanal logging
iii. Individual felling authorizations

Section 6.1.6 says income from contracts for commercial exploitation should benefit the entire community. Section 6.6.1 also states that the benefit sharing mechanism

should be specified in the management body's articles of association. The manual in Section 6.1.7 says copies of all exploitation contracts have to be submitted to the forestry department at least one month before it comes into force.

Section 6.2 provides guidelines for exploitation through 'sale of standing volume' or 'vente de coupe' its more commonly used French referent. This is a contract between the community forest management and an individual or a firm with a logging licence. The manual allows the community forest management to lease up to 2500 ha of forest to the timber exploiter, who then has a maximum of three years to log the 'vente de coupe'. The exploiter is permitted to use industrial scale equipments. The exploiter is also required to pay an exploitation fee to the community forest management body, to make a contribution to social development projects in the forest area, and to pay the forestry fees and tax due the government.

Section 6.3 provides guidelines for commercial logging by 'exploitation permit'. This also involves a contract between the community forest management body and an individual or a firm with a logging licence. However, the permit limits the exploiter to 500 cubic metres of timber per permit, this works out to about 100-150 mature timber trees (trees with diameter at breast height of about 50-100cm). Given the small volumes involved, the exploiter is not allowed to use industrial equipments but can use artisanal scale equipments such as the popular Lucas Portable Sawmill (Lucas Mill). The exploiter pays a fee to the community forest management body, makes a contribution to social development projects in the forest area, but is exempted from paying forestry fees and tax to the government.

Section 6.4 provides guidelines for timber exploitation through 'individual felling authorization'. This type of permit allows any individual without logging licence to exploit timber in the community forest for commercial purposes. This

permit however limits the exploiter to tree(s) with a total volume not exceeding 30 cubic metres; this works out to about 6-10 mature timber tree per authorization. The exploiter pays a fee to the community forest management body and is exempted from all other charges. This type of exploitation is different from customary logging rights, as customary rights allows individuals to cut down timber trees for personal use without being charged an exploitation fee. The commercial exploiter is allowed to sell the product in the market place, while the customary user is not allowed to do so; an individual with customary rights who wish to commercially exploit the forest can do so, as long as the legal requirements above are satisfied.

Section 6.2.1 and 6.3.1 respectively, stipulates that before industrial and or artisanal exploitation, an exploitation inventory needs to be carried out, and a logging plan included in the community forest management plan. This condition does not apply for individual felling authorization. The manual in Section 6.5 says it is illegal to exploit protected plants and wildlife; the section also stipulates that subsistence and commercial exploitation of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) must comply with the community forest management plan. Section 6.6.2 says that contracts for commercial exploitation of NTFPs have to be reported to forestry department two weeks before it comes into force. Section 6.6.4 says hunting is allowed in the community forest, while Section 6.6.5 states that hunting should comply with the simple management plan.

As with benefit sharing from logging, Section 6.6.6 says benefit sharing from hunting should be specified in the management body's articles of association. Section 6.7 also states that the community also has pre-emptive exploitation rights over non-biological resources (it mentions sand, gravel and stone but not petroleum) found in their community forests but does not elaborate on this.

While the manual as explained above (in section 2.1) has detailed provisions on resolution of disputes between the community forest managers and the forestry department, it has just a single provision for the resolution of disputes between commercial loggers and the forest management body. The manual in Section 6.1.2 states that contractual disputes between the loggers and the forest management body are subject to resolution in the law court. It further states that the forestry department can suspend or annul the exploitation contract if it judges that the timber exploiter is not respecting the community forest management plan. The manual therefore gives the forestry department the right to supersede decisions made by the community forest management with out due consultation.

The provisions in the manual for commercial exploitation of community forest extend formal market logic into the local sphere with its introduction of formal contracts between commercial forest user and community forest managers. This is reinforced by the provision that disputes between both parties should be resolved in the law courts. The formal nature of these provisions homogenizes the framework guiding the relationship between commercial forest user and community forest groups across the country. This ignores the context specific traditional structures and rules that guide social life in the local sphere in Cameroon. The establishment of this new institutional architecture to exist alongside local structures centred on chiefs is a recipe for conflict or the capture of the new institutions by old hands.

In summary the manual empowers the forestry department to demand accountability and transparency from community forests groups without a reciprocal gesture in the opposite direction. The manual also ensures that power resides with the forestry department in a command and control management monitoring system. The manual empowers community forest groups in Cameroon within governmental

structures that severely constrain autonomy. On this basis, the manual is not equitable. The manual has provisions for new institutions for community forestry in the local sphere, but shows no recognition of the conflict this could generate with established local leadership. This affects the local legitimacy of the new institutions. As a management guide, the sections that follow will examine how the manual has been put to use (or not) by the BBNRMC. First I examine the Constitution of the BBNRMC before going on to examine management practice.

3. BBNRMC Constitutional provisions for governing the BBCF

'*It* [the BBNRMC] *is not moving according to the Constitution…*'

[Steven, 28/09/06]

The Constitution of the BBNRMC (hereafter referred to as the Constitution), in its preamble states that the purpose of the institution is to conserve the biodiversity of the community forest, enhance livelihoods of forest users and forge partnerships between all stakeholders. Article 4 of the Constitution presents the BBNRMC institutional structure as consisting of:

1. The general assembly
2. The management council sub-divided into
    a. the management board made up of
        i. all chiefs of the forest area
        ii. 8 influential elites of the area
        iii. 4 representatives of user groups
        iv. 4 big landlords
        v. the president and secretary of the operations committee
        vi. technical advisers from government and civil society

b. the operations committee made up of

   i. 2 representatives from each of the 5 villages

   ii. 2 representatives of the Victoria Land and Forest Conservation Committee (VLFCC)

   iii. 2 representatives of the Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group (VARCIG)

   iv. 2 active management council members

   v. 3 representatives of users

As explained earlier in Chapter 4, the VLFCC and VARCIG controlled access to the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest before the creation of the BBNRMC. As shown in Chapter 5, the BBNRMC board membership is highly skewed in favour of the indigenes and it's thus inequitable as non-indigenes are the major forest users.

Article 4a of the Constitution, states that '*the general assembly is the collection of all users of the forests, and the village communities surrounding the forest area*'. Article 5a states that '*the general assembly is the supreme organ of BBNRMC*' and continues in 5b that it '*shall meet once a year…*' to review work executed during the year by the forest management team and the operations plan for the forthcoming year. The first meeting of the general assembly was on 30th March 1998, at the behest of the MCP Limbe, bringing together all stakeholders of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest to discuss its future survival. Subsequent meetings were held on 16th December 1999 and 17th August 2000 to plan for the establishment of the BBCF. The last meeting was on 18th May 2002 on the signing of the management agreement between the government and the BBNRMC, transferring management rights over the BBCF to the BBNRMC. Since then in violation of the Constitution, there has not been another general assembly meeting [Carine, 28/10/07].

Article 4c (iii) says the management board shall meet in ordinary sessions thrice a year and in extra-ordinary sessions at the instance of 2/3 of its members or as convened by its chairperson. Article 5c says the management council shall meet regularly once a month and in extra-ordinary sessions on the proposal of all its executives. In practice the management board of the BBNRMC meets only when convened by the board president. This again violates the provision of the Constitution.

Article 4c (v) states that the function of the management board is to '*oversee, make policy, guide and direct, institute discipline, lobby and raise funds*' for the BBNRMC. Article 5d says that the board reports to and is answerable to the general assembly. The Constitution in these provisions fails to acknowledge that in executing their task, the management board should also be guided by provisions in the community forestry manual. In the absence of a general assembly meeting since the creation of the BBCF in 2002, the BBNRMC has not been downwardly accountable to all users and inhabitants of the forest area as stipulated in the Constitution.

Article 4d (iv) states that the operations committee is charged with implementing the board decisions on a daily basis. Article 6 says the operations committee answers to the board and goes on to say that the stakeholder groups they represent elect them during the annual general assembly. The failure to host a general assembly meeting since 2002 means the operations committee membership since 2003 has not followed the rules laid down in the Constitution.

Article 7 states that '*executive positions for the board and operations committee shall be in conformity with the conventional requirements for associations'*. Cameroon's Law of Associations of 1990 (Law No. 90/053), on functioning of associations states in Section 9 that '*associations shall be administered freely in compliance with their Constitution and the laws in force'*. This implies that

executive positions in the BBNRMC should be guided by its Constitution and provisions in the community forest manual. Article 7 reveals ignorance on the part of the designers of the BBNRMC Constitution about Cameroon's law of associations.

Thus the Constitution does not elaborate on the roles and responsibilities of the executives of the BBNRMC, this is instead provided for in Article 6 of the '*By-Laws and Regulations of the BBNRMC*', a separate document appended to the Constitution. The executive positions provided for in the by-laws are:

i. the chairperson (commonly referred to as board president)
ii. the vice-chairperson
iii. the secretary
iv. financial secretary
v. treasurer
vi. public relations officer (this position has never been occupied)

Article 6.1 of the by-laws says the chairperson (henceforth referred to as board president) represents the BBNRMC in all functions, is responsible for organisation, general management, execution of decisions and resolutions of the general assembly.

The president is also required to convene and preside over meetings, prepares and presents annual reports to the general assembly, and delegates activities to other board members. This gives the president so much authority that it voids the participatory ethos of community forestry. Article 8 of the by-laws, state that any member of the BBNRMC except institutional members can be elected into executive positions. Article 9 says elections into the executive council shall take place during annual general assembly meetings. However, neither the Constitution nor the by-laws specifies the tenure of BBNRMC executive council members.

The current board president and the other four executives have held their post since 2002. The failure to host a general assembly meeting since 2002 means there has not been any competitive elections to replace the incumbent executive officers since 2003. The common understanding in the BBNRMC was that the next general assembly meeting would be in 2007. The meeting would be scheduled during the review of the management plan, as part of the application for an extension of community forest activities for the second five-year cycle. On a visit to the BBNRMC in 2009, I learnt that the review of the management plan was carried out in 2008 by the management council but there was no general assembly meeting.

The BBNRMC Constitution and by-laws do not specify the role of the forest management officer (FMO). The community forest manual states in Section 4.1.1 that it's the FMO that signs the community forest management agreement, and in Sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.5 that the FMO is responsible for the annual plan of operations and annual report. The manual gives the FMO the pre-eminent role in community forest management, while the BBNRMC Constitution gives the pre-eminent role to the president. A member of the local forestry department said in this regard that:

> *'We told* [the president] *we don't know you, we know only the manager…the texts are clear…manager is between the administration and community… even if you decide something we want to see the signature of the manager…'*
>
> [Alain, 18/10/06]

On accountability, the Constitution clearly maintains that the general assembly consisting of BBCF stakeholders is the highest decision-making body of the BBNRMC and the management council is answerable to the general assembly. However, there has not been any general assembly meeting since 2002, and neither the forestry department nor the Divisional Officer (DO) for Limbe (municipal

administrator) statutorily mandated to monitor the BBNRMC have not called on the institution to account for this failing[1]. On transparency, Article 10 of the BBNRMC Constitution specifies that '*the general assembly shall appoint auditors who shall carry out an annual audit to ensure transparency of all financial transactions*'. Unsurprisingly, the BBNRMC accounts have never been professionally audited as the general assembly has never met to appoint auditors. Limited audit is performed by the board treasurer but this lacks professional rigour as explained by the bookkeeper:

> *'There is always a financial report* [at the board meeting]… *they* [the board members] *spoke about finances; that it's not well presented… I am suppose to prepare it, me,* [and] *the financial secretary… I don't have any format…but when I do it,* [the financial secretary] *is suppose to come and check,* [the financial secretary] *checks sometimes… nobody has proposed to me how I am suppose to prepare it, I know that I am not a financial expert…'*
>
> [Carine, 31/08/06]

On sanctions, Article 11 states that '*the flagrant disregard of the provisions of this Constitution shall be subject to disciplinary sanctions by the management council*'. While this gives disciplinary powers to management, it fails to elaborate on types of violations and appropriate sanctions, making it opaque and inadequate for the consistent application of sanctions. On benefit sharing, while the community forestry manual states that this should be elaborated in the Constitution of the community forest management body, the BBNRMC Constitution fails to do so. This calls into question the transparency, accountability and equity of BBNRMC's efforts to fulfil its objective of enhancing the livelihood of forest users in the BBCF.

[1] The BBNRMC has the legal status of an 'association', in Cameroon these type of institutions according to the 1990 law of associations are upwardly accountable to the DO

In summary, the Constitution of the BBNRMC lacks robust mechanisms for the transparent, accountable and equitable management of the BBCF. While the Constitution recognizes the need for downwardly accountable, transparent and equitable management of the BBCF, a critical mechanism for this to happen, the annual general assembly meeting has failed to become a regular feature of the BBNRMC operational schedule. Government watchdogs over the BBNRMC, the forestry department and the DO's office, have failed to question the institution as to why there has been no general assembly meeting. Thus the government is implicated in the failure of the BBNRMC to establish best practice in managing the BBCF. The next section examines the operational performance of the BBNRMC.

4. Governance performance of the BBNRMC management team

As stated earlier, the Constitution of the BBNRMC states that the purpose of the institution is to conserve the biodiversity of the community forest, enhance livelihoods of forest users and forge partnerships between all stakeholders. The objectives of the institution as stated in the '*Simple Management Plan for Bimbia-Bonadikombo Community Forest for the Period 2002 – 2007*' (BBNRMC, 2001) are:

i. Maintain biodiversity and generate income through the non-consumptive use of the forest for financial sustainability of the BBNRMC and for re-investment into forest management activities
ii. Conserve biodiversity and carry out research while providing sustainable livelihoods at subsistence level
iii. Enrich the forest with useful species while providing fuel energy to the community and contributing towards upgrading livelihoods

iv. Reforestation to attain targeted basal areas to maintain soil and water for sustainable production of forest products

v. Raise incomes through sustainable timber exploitation support livelihoods and enrich highly degraded areas

The simple management plan divides the community forest into nine compartments as shown in the Figure 7.1 below, with specific objectives and priority uses defined for each compartment as shown in Table 7.1 below.

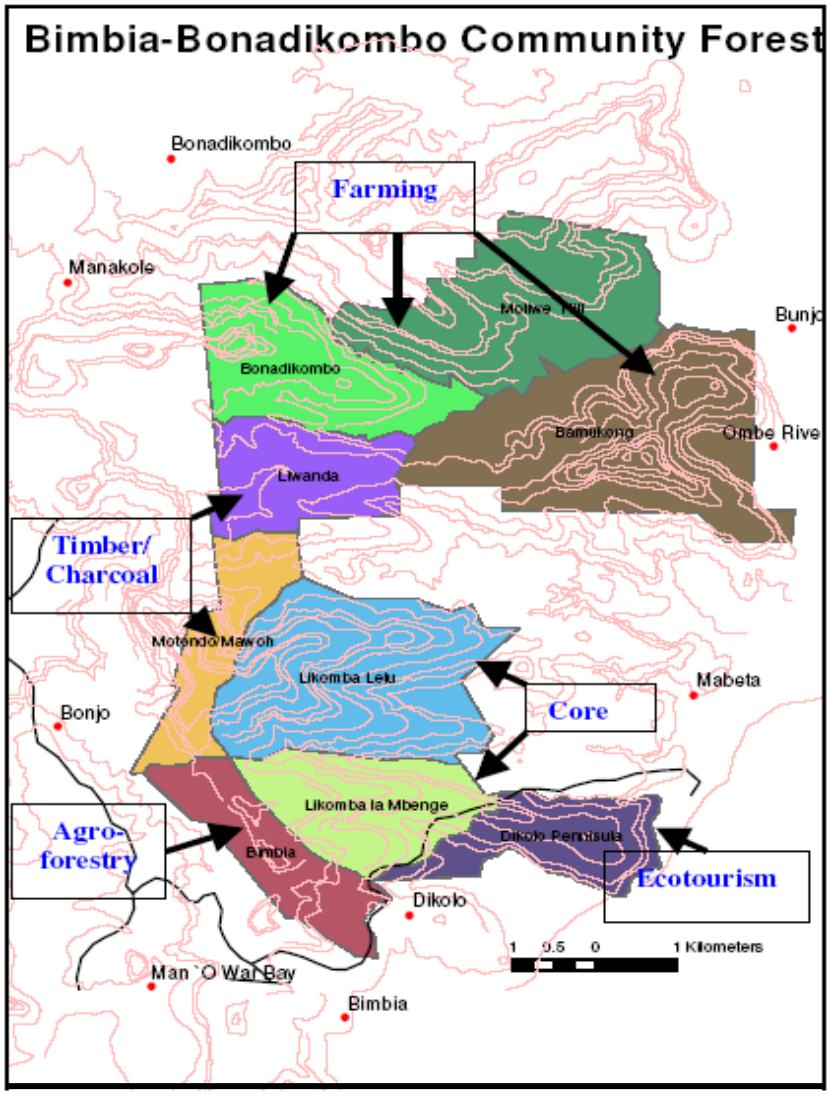


Figure 7.1: Land use in Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

Table7.1: Management plan for the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

Compartment	Area (ha)	Purpose	Primary Use
Dikolo	250	Maintain biodiversity	Eco-Tourism, Research
Likomba La-mbenge	344	Maintain biodiversity	Research, Beekeeping
Likomba La-lelu	645	Maintain biodiversity	Research, Beekeeping
Bimbia	252	Reforestation	Agro-forestry
Motondo/Mawoh	229	Reforestation	Timber, Charcoal
Livanda	286	Reforestation	Timber, Charcoal
Bamukong	774	Livelihood	Farming
Moliwe Hills	565	Livelihood	Farming
Bonadikombo	400	Livelihood	Farming

Given the non-convening of a general assembly meeting since the commencement of BBNRMC management activities in 2002, the BBNRMC board is the *de-facto* supreme organ of the institution. However, the daily task of ensuring that forest users comply with the BBCF management plan is primarily the responsibility of the forest management officer (FMO). The FMO (also referred to as forest manager) is employed by the BBNRMC to implement board decisions and act as the focal person between the board and the forestry department. The FMO works with three other officers also employed on a fulltime basis by the BBNRMC, these are the administrative assistant, the eco-tourism officer and the agric-extension officer. These fulltime employees of the BBNRMC are supported by the operations committee (the OC) – a team of volunteers that serve as a patrol force for the BBNRMC.

The forest manager earns about £200 per month, the administrative assistant earns about £125 per month, and both the eco-tourism and the agric-extension officers earn about £75 per month. The operations committee members receive a stipend of about £10 per month and a daily allowance of about £2 when on field assignments. At

the commencement of management activities in 2002, there were thirty operations committee members but this had reduced to ten individuals in 2006.

The local management team responsible for the governance of the BBCF can therefore be divided into three sub-units; these are the management board, the forest management officers, and the operations committee. The governance performance of each of these sub-units is critically analysed below.

4.1 Governance performance of the BBNRMC board

As stated earlier the BBNRMC board is the *de-facto* supreme organ of the institution. Table 7.2 below compares the actual composition of the board with the Constitutional requirement; again it shows that the board is dominated by indigenes.

Table 7.2: Composition of the BBNRMC board at inception in 2002

Constitutional requirement	**Number of individuals**	**Board members**	**Comment**
Chiefs of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest area	6	6	Paramount chief of Limbe; chiefs from the 3 Bimbia villages of Bonagombe, Bonabile and Dikolo; chiefs of Livanda and Bonadikombo
Influential indigenous elites	8	12	50% increase in indigenous elite representation indicates degree of elite interest and elite capture
Representatives of user groups	4	4	The representatives are from the beekeepers, charcoal burners, timber exploiters and farmers stakeholder groups; they are the only non-indigenes who are permanent members of the board
Big landlords	4	0	The big landlords are persons who own farms larger than 5 ha; they participated in the setting up of the BBNRMC but have not shown an interest in joining the board; they usually have state and or traditional lands certificates so do not feel threatened by the BBNRMC
Institutional members	Unspecified	4	These are the Fako Divisional Delegate of Forestry, the Fako Divisional Chief of Forestry Section, the Limbe Chief of Forestry Post, and the NGO representative
Total	**Unspecified**	**26**	

The notable points from Table 7.2 are the increase in indigenous elite members from eight to twelve persons, and the disinterestedness of the 'big landlords' from joining the board. The deep elite interest is due to the passion that issues of land rights' generates amongst the Bakweri (BLCC, 2006). The 'big landlords' with secure land titles are not persuaded there is benefit in joining the board. The five executive positions in the board are all occupied by influential indigenous elites. A profile of the BBNRMC executive officers is provided in Table 7.3 below.

While the Constitution states that the board should meet three times a year, in practice board meetings are irregular and hold only when convened by the executive president. This individual wields a lot of authority over the board and consequently over the BBNRMC. This is not just because she is amongst the most affluent and influential Bakweri elite but also because of her demonstrated commitment to the creation and operations of the BBNRMC. Narcisse (08/10/06) recalls that:

> *'The day we set up the BBNRMC, she* [the president] *was in the hall… and she was not selected… so she went to see the paramount chief and persuaded him… that is how she came on board…she was elected* [president in 2002]*…the idea which the MCP boys had was that the* [vice-president] *should become the chairperson, so he would now use* [public resources] *for the BBCF, but the* [president] *contested and won… she was a conservationist before there were conservationist…'*

Table 7.3: Profile of BBNRMC executive board

Position	Gender	Profile	Comment
President	Female	▪ Septuagenarian, retired civil servant and political activist for the ruling party ▪ Parliamentary representative for Limbe for over two decades (late 1960s-late 1980s); gained national and international honours campaigning for the environment and women's rights ▪ Past President 'Friends of the Limbe Botanic Garden' (FOG) – prominent environmental group ▪ Educated in Cameroon, Nigeria, England and the Netherlands; was a student activist ▪ Born into prominent Bakweri family	Was instrumental in the design and implementation of the Mt. Cameroon Project (MCP) Limbe
Vice-President	Male	▪ Middle-aged, retired civil administrator, and member of the ruling party ▪ Wealthy business entrepreneur ▪ Pastor in a prominent Pentecostal church ▪ Educated in Cameroon and the USA	Became active in environmental affairs after his appointment as a civil administrator; rarely participates in BBNRMC activities
Secretary	Male	▪ Middle-aged, senior civil servant and active member of the Limbe Traditional Council ▪ Founding member of the Victoria Land and Forest Conservation Committee (VLFCC) ▪ Born into prominent Bakweri family; father was amongst the first Cameroonians to study at the London School of Economics (LSE)	Became involved in environmental affairs when he took up farming to augment his income after salary cuts in the early 1990s; worked tirelessly for the VLFCC and for the formation of the BBNRMC
Financial Secretary	Female	▪ Septuagenarian, retired senior civil servant ▪ Gained national prominence as a campaigner for health and women's rights ▪ Founding member of the Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group (VARCIG) ▪ Member 'Friends of the Limbe Botanic Garden' (FOG) ▪ Educated in Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and England ▪ Born into prominent Bakweri family	Became active in environmental affairs after retiring from the civil service in the mid-1990s; deeply worried about the fate of Bakweri culture in the face of the ever increasing migrant population
Treasurer	Male	▪ Elderly, retired senior civil servant and member of ruling party ▪ Counsellor in the municipal administration ▪ Member of Vikings – top elite social club ▪ Member 'Friends of the Limbe Botanic Garden' (FOG) ▪ Educated in Cameroon and France	His government job brought him in regular contact with timber exploiters; he became active in environmental affairs after retiring from the civil service in the mid-1990s

The downside to the president's commitment to the BBNRMC is that she is determined to be the pre-eminent voice in the board and in liaising with the forestry department. As stated earlier this is not in line with provisions in the community forest manual which states that the FMO is the sole individual recognised by the forestry department as responsible for managing a community forest. This has created irreconcilable differences between the president, successive FMOs for the BBCF and the local forestry department. Steven (28/09/06) maintains that her commitment to the BBNRMC is because it provides her an avenue to continue to exercise power over people after retiring from her long held position of parliamentarian:

> *'…the day when they were handing over the forest to us, I am sorry to say that, but the* [president] *likes power too much because she has been used to power… they called the FMO, he was suppose to go and receive the agreement… but the president went there because she wanted to receive it before giving it to the FMO… don't try to fight against her because you will not succeed because she has all aspects of life very strong…'*

While the other BBNRMC executive members are influential in their own right, it is widely acknowledged that they have not shown the same degree of commitment towards the BBNRMC as the executive president. As shown in Chapter 6 she is the only board member who has used her personal funds to bail out the BBNRMC during its frequent financial crises. Sylvain (05/06/06) argues that her financial commitment to the BBNRMC is what gives her unrivalled authority:

> *'* [the president] *is the main force, she is the backbone… it is also important to note that* [she] *makes a lot of financial contributions, and you know the person who gives in money has also a say, and a vital one of course, because there*

are lots of times when mostly the operations committee go for about 10 days in a month without their stipend and its [she] *who goes to the bank and remove this money from her pocket… the organisation owes her back this money or has to give her, pay her back this money but she sacrifices for that moment…'*

The executive president of the BBNRMC board is therefore the principal decision-maker in the institution. While her social standing has contributed to her pre-eminent position in the board, it is her financial contributions towards the operations of the institution that has distinguished her from other members of the board. While her position as president of the BBNRMC keeps her active in socio-political life at the local sphere after retiring from parliament, she maintains that her committed involvement with the BBNRMC results from her work ethics and altruistic spirit:

'They come when we have meetings…you know in this country when you are on a board you expect to get an allowance and every time they come for a meeting they expect to get an allowance, but I don't have the money to pay allowances, all I can mange to do is to buy them a drink… if [administrative assistant] *can find something in the* [petty cash] *we buy sandwiches, sometimes we can make chicken…everybody who had hoped that the experiment will be successful, that the forest will produce, they will become rich, but we have not been able to satisfy that dream, so many people have lost interest, they don't come, if you had attended our last meeting* [board meeting of August 2006], *you would have seen that the support has dwindled considerably, its just that I am not one to turn my back… I got a commitment for 5 years and I am hoping that it will end next year, maybe the next president will do better…'*

[BBNRMC board president, 31/08/06]

What the foregoing discussion reveals is that the BBNRMC board is neither guided by the provisions in the community forest manual nor by the BBNRMC Constitution. The board has been captured by the executive president who is accountable to no one at the local sphere. In this scenario transparency is not institutionally assured but depends on the goodwill of the board president. In this scenario, the board is not only equity-deficient in terms of stakeholder representation but also equity-deficient in terms of membership participation in decision-making.

4.2 Governance performance of the forest management officers

The BBNRMC has had three FMOs from 2002 to date; the first forest manager was on the job from May 2002 to August 2004; the second forest manager was appointed in January 2005 and resigned in April 2006; the third and current forest manager was appointed in August 2006. The first forest manager joined the BBNRMC in 1999, just after obtaining a Diploma in Development Studies. He was co-opted into the operations committee during the formative years of the BBNRMC because of his academic training and his heritage as a member of the Bimbia royal family. Narcisse (08/10/06) recalls his first meeting with this individual:

> *'The paramount chief of Limbe… and I were invited to a workshop at Pan African Institute where we met* [the first forest manager]… [He] *had the vocabulary and the understanding of the facilitators in MCP…I was very amazed to discover that we had one of our own, who without having been involved in the process had already studied those concepts…* [he] *also was a relative of the paramount chief, so I told him "chief I think this gentleman, this young boy should become our forest management officer",* [chief] *agreed…'*

This individual was persuaded to join the BBNRMC as a member of the OC but on the understanding that at the right time he would be made the FMO. Meanwhile, the leader of the OCs at the time was a well-known local community leader and close confidant of the paramount chief of Limbe, and he was also nursing ambitions of becoming the first FMO. When the election for the FMO was held in 2002, the local community leader lost out. The election revealed the cleavages amongst the Bakweri's who were involved with the establishment of the BBCF. While the community leader was a member of the VLFCC and was known for his passionate defence of the right of indigenes to the collection of rents from non-indigenes using the forest, he was considered unsuitable for the job of FMO on three counts. Narcisse (08/10/06) explains:

> '[The] *election was a bit problematic, because although the paramount chief had agreed long ago that we should make* [the appointee] *the FMO…* [he] *now wrote a letter recanting…and wanted* [the community leader]*…many of us were opposed to* [the community leader] *because we did not look on him as a man of integrity…and of course you know his educational background…when the paramount chief tried to renege…*[another influential chief] *wrote him a very strong letter, he said* [the community leader] *was a man from Bomaka in Buea,* [the appointee] *was the chief's own son* [nephew]*…'*

The community leader was considered unsuitable because he was said to be corrupt, unschooled and not from a Bakweri clan with land claims in the BBCF. When these points were put to the community leader as reasons why he lost the election, he dismissed the allusions to corruption and education, he states that:

'[the community forest] *was the making of MCP… the idea they have now is not the idea MCP…because the forest is called Bimbia, Bimbia-Bonadikombo, so like when we talk of a forest manager, it should but a Bimbian, you see, they brought in that type of… politic or what…when MCP wanted to hand over the forest to the community…that was when this politic thing came in… these bigger ones from Bimbia…made some uprising against me…we started hearing them talk of Bakweri up and Bakweri down…they had to put one of their son…*[he] *embezzled a lot of money and now he is abroad…'*

[Community leader, 20/09/06]

The community leader could not attack the point that he was unschooled and therefore unsuitable for the job because the FMO that was appointed was academically more qualified for the job. However, he pointedly accuses the Bimbians of resurrecting historical grievances between coastal dwelling Bakweri's (Bakweri down) and their kindred in the hinterland (Bakweri up). In the colonial era, a prominent Bimbia chief was assassinated by Bakweri's in the hinterland that were unhappy at Bimbia's political and economic dominance at the time (Ardener, 1996). If the Bimbians were accusing him of corruption, well, their cherished son was not only corrupt but he embezzled so much money he had to run away. Antoine (08/08/06) throws more light on this discourse of corruption:

' [The community leader] *wanted to be the first forest manager, the OC's did not like his method…before* [the chosen] *was appointed all of the OC had agreed he should be the forest manager…*[the community leader] *asked the paramount chief to write to us that* [the community leader] *is the preferred choice…we refused…the problem with* [the community leader] *was that he negotiated illegally with an exploiter to fell Dousie* [valuable export

timber]*…yes he is from Buea but he was one of the brave fighters for the community forest… it is his illegal acts that made us turn against him…later when we started working fully with* [the chosen], *we were about 30, we were very happy…after a while he formed a clique and started favouring some people over others… some of us persevered because we were chosen by our village to represent their interest…after a while some of the OC's became angry and started absconding one by one…'*

Corruption was a recurring theme in all the discourses related to the first FMO. Despite his educational qualifications for the job, his familial ties to the BBCF and the goodwill he enjoyed amongst the elites in the BBNRMC board, Franklin (02/10/06) remembers him as a Mafioso type character:

'Before [the president] *knew…it was too late for her to understand that the manager was smart…there was a day he invited us in his house that we should come and eat…we ate, came back to watch films…there was an Ebony magazine…I was about to pass, I said this is Ebony magazine, the latest one of course, current, I opened, I saw visa to US, I close the page quickly…the next day…when we went for a patrol I told my guys that as you people are here the FMO is leaving us…*[his informant] *went and told him, two days time he called for me inside the office, serious warning* [to me] *"look you better go and tell these guys you were lying", I went and told them I was just kidding, just 3 weeks* [after]...[he] *went and told* [the president] *he is going to Yaounde for seminar…he left just like that…*[she] *was shocked…he was very good in dialoguing…but he played some mafia…'*

As shown in Chapter 6, financial transactions during the first FMO's tenure were not properly documented; his tenure was not accountable, transparent or equitable. The second FMO was not elected but appointed after a job advert was posted and interviews of short listed candidates were conducted by the BBNRMC executives. The individual was appointed in January 2005. He was from Bimbia, had a first degree in Environmental Management and about 5 years experience working in wildlife conservation. Despite his higher academic qualifications and experience compared with the first FMO, the executive president kept a close watch on him. This individual felt the close supervision of the executive president was demeaning to his sense of professionalism and he resigned from the job in April 2006. However, he is remembered very fondly by both staff and users of the BBCF:

> '[The first FMO] *was not somehow trying to see if we can do something for BB…like this trial plot that which the* [second FMO] *suggested*…[the second FMO] *liked open book management…he never touched cash, if you come to the office you want to take a permit…he will say "meet the* [cashier]*…when you pay show me your receipt"…when the cashier is not around…any person who comes and pays any money…he reconcile with the cashier…if he has any shortage…he will say that the cashier should cut it from* [his salary]*…he likes things to be in order… he encouraged* [us] *that if there is workshop…if I am going today with this* [person], *next day it has to be another…so that everybody learns…if he sends* [us] *to go and do this work…he goes there to find out what is done…*[the first FMO] *never went to the forest, his own forest was that he hires a taxi and we just move round the parks and check…'*
>
> [Maurice, 30/08/06]

'I enjoy the government of the [second FMO], *if they had allowed him another to reign for another 5 years, we will have a good time,* [he] *told us that if your mother died at night, you must look for money…so a charcoal burner should have at least one bag in the house as security…his advice made me learn so much…*[he] *told the operations committee to stop coming to our homes to harass us as it was the case during the reign of the* [first FMO]*… that's why the day he told me in the office that he is resigning I was not happy…'*

[Chick, 28/09/06]

However, the executive board members did not share the same sense of loss when the second FMO resigned as the staff and forest users. The executives were uncomfortable with his sense of independence; they felt he had to cross-check everything he did with them before proceeding. Stephanie (10/06/06) defended the executives' standpoint arguing that the second FMO was too ambitious:

'I must be the honest, the other young man [second FMO] *was a little bit too ambitious, you came in to something you met people doing, we took you and put you there, you have to be answerable, he acts now as if he is god almighty, he just takes decisions and expect us to clap our hands…and when he was called to order, he wouldn't, a little bit of disrespect…he thought he knew it all…let us get it straight, the first manager came and set the pace isn't it, the second manager came at a time when everything had been straightened, so he found it easier to work…and the boys had worked for some time, by then they had a little bit of experience…we will have another manager very soon and now we will have a manager among the boys who are there now…'*

While the first FMO was elected by the board and the second was appointed after being interviewed by the executive board members, the third and current FMO was appointed by executive fiat. Shortly after the resignation of the second FMO in April 2006, the executive president had to travel overseas. To manage the BBCF in her absence, she created a committee consisting of the administrative assistant, the eco-tourism officer, the agric-extension officer and the leader of the OCs. The committee was headed by the eco-tourism officer and was answerable first to her and then the board. When she returned from her travels in August 2006, she informed the board of her decision to appoint the eco-tourism officer as the third FMO.

While some of the board members such as Stephanie quoted above had advance notice of the plans of the executive president, others including some executive members where in complete ignorance. The executive president without braod consultations simply announced the appointment during the board meeting of 19 August 2006. Carine (31/08/06) recalls the moment:

> '[The president] *said we don't have a manager, I am not quoting her words anyway, and* [the new appointee] *has been acting as manager and she thinks* [he] *has been doing well, because* [he] *gave the* [forest manager's] *report, and if there is no objection she will like to say she is appointing* [him] *as the new manager, and she asked if there were any objections, everybody was okay with it… so* [she] *ask the chief of* [forestry] *post to install our new manager…'*

This appointment by fiat did not go down well with everyone who attended the board meeting but persons who felt unhappy thought it wiser to keep quiet than to disagree with the executive president. Justin (28/09/06) had objections to the appointment but chose to express them to the appointee instead of the president:

'I didn't see any discussion… it got me by surprise when [the president] *pointed it out there that day, so after that I asked* [her] *how did you come to that decision…she said it was something that just came automatically…I don't want to be a forest manager, but I don't think it was proper the way it was done…then another day I came to that office…I was saying in front of* [the appointee]…*how is that its you that is appointed forest manager…because* [the extension officer] *is always in the forest, you are of tourism…I am having doubts…I don't see an objective to your appointment…'*

The third FMO is also from Bimbia, possesses the GCE Advance level certificate and has been working as the eco-tourism officer for the BBNRMC since December 2002. Before entering the job market, he had completed the first year at University studying law but he had to drop out because of financial difficulties. He was encouraged in March 2001 to apply to work for the BBNRMC by the first FMO, who was his classmate at secondary school. On his appointment as ecotourism officer, he was neither provided a contract nor a term of reference. He had no prior job training and has simply learnt along the way. He states that:

'I didn't know [the BBCF] *until I was asked to apply…there was an interview…I am not the only one who had written for that particular post… before I was employed…I was doing translation, communication… this kind of gave me the background…to involve or engage in tourism…I preferred the Bimbia work because of the salary…I was told I was going to familiarize myself with the whole forest…to have a knowledge of trees through identification…we will go to the field and* [the OC's] *will help me with the identification of trees…the job involve me also engaging in other activities like*

forest monitoring…and attend workshops…we are having the possibility to attend workshops to learn about environmental conservation issues…'

[BBNRMC Eco-tourism officer, 14/06/06]

The job description provided by the eco-tourism officer shows that Justin quoted above is incorrect when he states that the eco-tourism officer does not know much about the forest and therefore he is not suitable for the position of FMO. Justin's comments instead reveal that he has little knowledge of the activities carried out by the eco-tourism officer. The fact that the manner of his appointment violates the participatory ethos of community forestry is not a reflection of his suitability or not for the job. Members of the OC who have worked closely with this individual have confidence that he can satisfactorily get the job done. Gaston (30/08/06) asserts that the OC are extremely happy with his appointment:

'The young guy [who] *was just appointed as forest manager is a nice guy, is a submissive dynamic guy, quite good in understanding, he has been working in BB for years…he has been contributing a lot…the* [president] *brought up the proposal because she is the one working with the guy, the other executive members…they are out there, they are not in the office…she is the one seeing the guy how he handles the files and the activities…she* [said] *"I was out...* [the appointee] *was in charge of my table…what I have seen, his performances on my coming back, I think he is fit…to be the forest manager"…the OC are extremely happy because…* [the guy] *use to go to the field too with them often…so when the former FMO left…the OC discussed* [about the guy] *and even the chairperson was aware and confirmed the idea…'*

While the current FMO has a lower academic qualification compared with his predecessors, he knew more about the BBCF at the time of his appointment compared with his predecessors. He was the team leader of the research assistants who worked with me on the household survey and forest walks. I was the third doctoral student he had worked with during his time as eco-tourism officer. He had also worked closely with three sets of interns from Camosun College Canada who came to support the BBNRMC eco-tourism programme. In the process of executing his duties he had acquired admirable computing, writing, presentation and research skills. He was undoubtedly the most skilled in-house candidate for the job of FMO.

The governance performance of the forest management officers have been coloured by their personalities and ambition than by their academic training or ethnic affiliation. The first appointee left the job unceremoniously and emigrated to the USA, the second resigned from the BBNRMC as he felt the working environment wasn't professional enough. He present works for the Wildlife Conservation Society. The third and current appointee has been in the job for the past three years, making him the longest serving forest manager; he has also been with the BBNRMC for seven years, making him the longest serving staff of the institution. This individual derives an observable satisfaction working for the BBNRMC than his predecessors. It could be argued then that his predecessors were over-qualified for the job. A lesson here is that governance is partly dependent on individual character traits.

4.3 Governance performance of the operations committee

While the capacity and commitment of the forest manager are key determinants of the effectiveness of the BBNRMC, the forest manager would be unable to function without the operations committee. The task of the OC includes:

i. Forest monitoring surveillance

ii. Tree planting

iii. Water catchments maintenance and stream rehabilitation

iv. Provision of agroforestry support to farmers

v. Tour guides for ecotourists

vi. Apprehending defaulters and compounding illegal products

The pictures below show some of the activities that the OC performs for the BBNRMC. Plate 7.1 showing confiscated hunting guns in the BBNRMC office is a testament to the dangers confronting the OC as they execute their task.



Plate 7.1: Confiscated hunting guns



Plate 7.2: Confiscated chainsaws



Plate 7.3: Tree planting



Plate 7.4: Stream rehabilitation



Plate 7.5: Eco-tourism

Given the rugged terrain of the BBCF and the sometimes-violent nature of forest patrols carried out by the OC, it is made up of young men in their late 20s and early 30s. A typical day for the OC might unfold as shown in Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4: Regular work schedule for the BBNRMC's operations committee

Time	Activity	Observation
8:00 – 8:30	Arrive at the office	They are almost always 30 – 45 minutes late, except during periods when management enforces sanctions on lateness such as exclusion from patrol team; punctuality is also maintained when there is an extra-ordinary task at hand such as apprehending a defaulter after receiving prior tip-off from informants
8:30 – 9:00	Daily management meeting	This is used to go over work schedule for the day drawn up by the forest manager in line with previously agreed monthly work plan; its also used to discuss strategy where there is a difficult to apprehend defaulter; its occasionally used to resolve disputes amongst the OC's and to inform them of management decisions (sanctions, minutes from meetings, etc.)
9:00 – 9:30	Administrative duties	Once task is agreed and patrol team selected, patrol forms have to be filled, patrol allowance collected and signed for; its also used to write-up and submit previous patrol report by the team leader; patrol equipments are also collected and signed for depending on assigned task; patrol equipments include rain boots, raincoats, machetes, shovels, compass, GPS, camera, torchlight
9:30 – 10:00	Depart for assigned task	The OC is usually sub-divided into 3 patrol teams and sometimes only 1 team of 4 OC's go on patrol; when there is an assignment with some degree of danger such as compounding timber from illegal exploiter all the OC's are involved with support from 1 or 2 police officers for additional support
16:00 – 16:30	Return from assigned task	Where assigned tasks had to do with nursery development, stream rehabilitation, nature trail maintenance or any other technical activity, the team would normally return to the office at the close of working day to return equipments and make their reports; if it's a non-technical task such as forest surveillance, the team might not return as they would sometimes return very late in the day and occasionally have to sleep in far off settlements; occasionally after collecting patrol allowance, some or all of the patrol team will conspire not to execute their duty but would return and file a fictitious report
16:30 – 17:00	Administrative duties	This may include return of collected equipments, preparation of patrol report or attendance of extra-ordinary meeting

In 2002, the OC had thirty members representing the villages and user stakeholder groups making up the BBNRMC as stipulated in the group's Constitution. In 2006, the membership had reduced to ten persons; six were part of the initial group of thirty, the other four had joined within the last two years; three of the recent four were not representing any village or stakeholder groups. Amongst the team of ten, seven were indigenes; amongst the seven, five were part of the group of the thirty; one of the three non-indigenes was also a part of the group of thirty from 2002. The reasons for loss of OC members include unrealistic expectations of benefits from the

BBCF, dissatisfaction with management, and meagre financial remuneration. Henry (14/06/06) a long-serving OC had much to say about this:

> *'My life was about fishing…[BB] called me around 2001…they told me that as the community forest was starting, any Bakweri boy that comes to work for it, will have a good salary…but from then till now* [2006], *we are still poorly paid…in 2001, our operation was that, when we go to the forest and do seizure, we bring it to the office…then we were paid long day 2500 francs now its reduced to 1800…we were about 35…there was money to pay everybody because there was lot of work, when we went to the forest at times we came back with 5 seized machines…now there is not much money because timber exploiters complain that timber is scarce…some of the operators have left because they felt we were harassing them too much… after the first manager left, the second manager has put a stop to the excessive harassment…'*

As Henry's comments show, the initial group of OC volunteers were promised huge pay days by the first FMO. Given the first FMO's focus on extracting as much rent as possible from forest users through coercive means, the financial rewards from the job for the OCs seemed quite satisfying. However, by 2003, timber exploiters who bore the brunt of the OCs harassment had started moving out of the BBCF. The pot of money started shrinking and the first FMO started distributing his largesse to a clique of favoured OCs. This started the exodus of OCs from the BBNRMC. Henry (14/06/06) recalls his own experience:

> *'We were 35 OC…all came believing there will be a salary but they have worked for a number of years and nothing has changed* [no salary], *so they have gone…[A] to fishing, [B] to farming…I also stopped in 2003…but after*

6 months the manager came and took me back…I like the work though the pay is extremely small, I am hoping it will still improve…I earn 10000 francs…I preferred the work to fishing because they promised us it will pay more, also my grandparents did not like fishing because of the risk in the sea…'

While the BBNRMC extracted rents from users through the issuance of permits, seizures of goods and equipments of forest users, especially timber exploiters, seemed to pay more. As shown in Chapter 5, a timber exploiter would normally pay about US $60 to fell a tree, but when a chainsaw is seized, the owner has to pay US$100 to have it released. Auctioning of planks seized from an illegal timber exploiter could bring in from US$150 to US$300 depending on the specie. The OCs paid informers to update them on the activities of timber exploiters. Henry (14/06/06) explains how this worked and talks about the risk they face:

'In the places where we work we have informants…to work with us and help us because without them we cannot track illegal exploiters…we may be in office, something is going on and we are not aware but an informant will come and hint us… sometime we pay the informant 2000 or 3000 [francs]*…when we go out at night to seize timber… at times the whole village will come out to stop us… we struggle with them alone because when we call the gendarmes at night they don't come…when they overpower us, we leave the timber to them…in Liwanda we met [an illegal exploiter]…we told him we know him so we will know how to negotiate favourably with him…boys [in the area] had joined…and blocked our taxi…they hit me on the head with a stone… as I was running down with blood, the people overpowered us…the illegal exploiter said we can do nothing to him and till date nothing has happened to him…'*

The experience narrated above shows that the attitude of the OCs provoked strong negative and violent reactions in the settlements around the BBCF. As shown in Chapter 5, these are settlements where the majority of the people depended on the BBCF for their livelihood. Thus they viewed the OCs as public enemies. This type of violent struggle between the OCs and timber exploiters was a regular occurrence during the tenure of the first FMO partly due to the excesses of the FMO and the OCs. In addition the lack of interest from the forestry department and the police to prosecute individuals like the illegal exploiter Henry refers to doesn't help:

> *'this incident happened last 3 months…when we reported to the manager…the exploiter was detained by the police who asked him to pay back to the office the cost of treating me, but the issue died without a proper solution…it was reported to the forestry administration but they too did not take further action…our biggest support has come from the Divisional Officer…last time when we went again to Ombe…we saw a truck with lots of timber…when we went to seize the timber, the boys came out…we phoned the president and the Divisional Officer…they came…we left with the timber we had seized…we have never had a serious problem and received assistance from the forestry administration…so the* [second FMO] *has decided that anything we are doing, we will not care about them…in 2001 they brought someone, an army officer, to come and train us in self-defence, but it seems the arrangement was not concrete, so the training didn't happen…now we are more cautious, if we go on patrol and we meet violence, we try to calm things down…'*

The forestry department's solution to the poor working relationship between the OCs and the forest users was to organise for an army officer to come and teach them how to fight. The second FMO however, had the good sense to work on changing the relationship dynamics between the OC and forest users. Is Henry's experience representative of that of all the OCs? Dominic (05/09/06) a non-indigene and a more recent addition to the OC, mentions ethnic discrimination from the indigenes in the OC as part of the challenge he faces on the job:

> *'all of them call us that we are foreigners…myself and the other* [new OC]*…they say we are not Bakweri and we are not sent by any chief…they call both of us corrupted members…the event that angered me was that one day we went to the forest and we saw an illegal exploiter, the other OCs had received private payment from that exploiter, I told them we should seize the machine and take it back to the office, they told the exploiter that I am a foreigner… that I also did not have an identification as a BB worker…that if he wants to beat me, he should beat me…no board member has given me any trouble, it's the other OCs sent by the chiefs who keep troubling me, we have reported the OCs to the office but no action has been taken…we are all Cameroonians… we should not hate ourselves, but they hate us from Bamenda* [North West Province]*...we are working because there is no job, that's why any how they do we have to persevere so we don't become thieves…'*

Dominic joined the OC in 2005, his education ended at the primary level; he joined the OC as a means of escape from backbreaking farm work. He was shocked at the depth of ethnic prejudice in the OC. This prejudice partly accounts for the poor relationship between the OC and forest users during the tenure of the first FMO.

Dominic draws attention to corruption within the OC. He was new in the team and had just seen team members accept private payment instead of seizing the chainsaw of an illegal exploiter, so he brought out the statute book. His team members got angry and used the ethnic card to induce the illegal exploiter to get physical with Dominic. However, Dominic (05/09/06) has wizened up and is now part of the game:

> *'To stop all this bad practice like bribery in the forest, the solution is to increase our salary, because receiving 10000 francs* [£10; US$20] *at month end is small…you will do what with that money…they should increase our salary and all the games we play in the forest will stop…yesterday we had to go patrol, money had been signed… on the way my colleagues said lets not go…lets share the money…I refused but they insisted so I went along, I need money too…if I find another job that can pay more I will leave…'*

I brought up the issue of 'bribery in the forest' with a long serving OC and also with the executive president. I was interested in learning if they knew what was going on or not. Franklin (02/10/06) had this to say on the subject:

> *'if they increase this their stipend, then we think this forest will be silent for some time and will regenerate…the thing is just that this OC members they are not handled well, the people really going to the field day to day activities, they are not handled well…at times they just like to go on a patrol, they meet a user, real illegal exploiter, they negotiate with him, yes…'*

The executive president was also aware of the corruption amongst the OC and was seemingly clueless as to what could be done to halt it.

> *'I have almost depleted my meagre savings trying to see that this people who work don't starve, and its become more and more difficult… because they don't get regular salaries and the output from the forest has dwindled because their own loyalty too has been called into question, they go into the forest and negotiate and put the money in their pockets…so I lost interest…'*
>
> [BBNRMC executive president, 31/08/06]

How does the OC perform on measures of accountability, transparency and equity? They performed poorly. They take directives from the FMO but as a group with persons having agency they decide on how best to execute directives received from the FMO. Having joined the BBNRMC with expectation of significant financial benefits, the meagre remuneration they receive has made them opt for corrupt practices to augment their income. They have also refused to consider the non-indigenes in their mist as team members with equal rights.

In summary, this section has showed that the BBNRMC is neither governed by the provisions in the community forestry manual nor by that in its Constitution. This shouldn't come as a surprise given the novelty of community forestry and lack of experience in the local sphere in Cameroon on the organisation of social life by rules laid out in coded text. Local organisational life has long remained the preserves of chiefs, shamans, missionaries, patriarchs and matriarchs. These govern not by legal text but by oral discourses which ground their authority in corporeal structures. The ontology that guided the production of the community forestry manual and the BBNRMC Constitution is far removed from the ontology that governs local life.

5. Benefit sharing, sanctions and rule compliance in the BBNRMC

Appropriate sanction and benefit sharing mechanisms promote self-regulation, essential for effective institutional performance (Ostrom, 1990; Bowles and Gintis, 2002). Examination of the sanctions and benefit sharing mechanism in the BBNRMC contributes to an understanding of its governance performance. The community forestry manual sets the forestry department as the supreme judge over violations by local groups and forest users of the provisions in the manual. The manual however recognizes a role for the management body responsible for the community forest and for the law courts in meting out appropriate sanctions for violations of the manual; violations of the simple management plan for the community forest; violations of the Constitution of the management body; and violations of contractual obligations between the management body and commercial forest users.

The community forest manual empowers the forestry department to withhold a community forest management body's license to operate if they are judged to have violated provisions in the manual. This could be done by refusing to renew the five-year license when the local group applies to renew the simple management plan or refusal to renew the twenty-five year management agreement. The manual also empowers the forestry department to unilaterally terminate the contract of a commercial exploiter if the entity's activities are considered as a serious violation of the simple management plan. A serious violation could be uncontrolled logging, carrying out activities in the biodiversity conservation zone, or repeated violations of other provisions in the manual such as hunting of protected species.

The forestry department can therefore threaten to withdraw a community forest management body's license to operate, or to withdraw a commercial users' license to operate, as an incentive to regulate behaviour. To use the sanction stick

effectively, the forestry department need to have a monitoring programme and working relationship with the community forest management body. As noted earlier in the previous sections, the forestry department does not constructively engage with the BBNRMC. There has not been a general assembly meeting since 2002 and the forestry department has not enquired about this. When the OC encounter violent resistance from forest users, the forestry department does not step in to resolve such conflict, rather they have attempted to provide military training for the OC.

The Constitution of the BBNRMC as stated earlier recognizes the need for sanctions but does not elaborate a sanction mechanism for the institution. Thus the sanctions that the institution applies to forest offenders are arbitrarily defined. When the OC encounter a forest user with a chainsaw in the forest, they ask for his exploitation permit gotten from the office for US$60. If he hasn't got one the chainsaw is seized and brought to the office; to recover the chainsaw the owner has to pay US$100. There is no consideration if the chainsaw owner was simply passing through the forest, had just finish felling down a tree or a number of trees. There is no BBNRMC document that explains how they arrived at the sum of US$100. None of the OC or the FMO could explain how they arrived at that amount either.

The arbitrariness of sanctions in the BBNRMC also extends to staff that are considered to have violated house rules. A member of the OC suspended for attending a workshop as the representative of the BBNRMC without the consent of the FMO, could not say for certain how long the suspension was to last:

> *'The problem with BB is that…you don't know how they operate…I don't know, I don't even know how the thing* [length of suspension] *is, I don't know whether its one month, two months, three months…'*
>
> [Franck, 28/08/06]

The failure of the sanction mechanism is most evident in the way the BBNRMC deals with farmers in the BBCF. As stated earlier in Chapter 5, there is a farmer annual registration fee of US$4, the farmers in the BBCF in the main do not pay this fee, they free ride without fear of sanction. The farmers can not be sanctioned because the BBNRMC has no knowledge of how many farmers are in the BBCF. While the OC are able to destroy farms found in the biodiversity conservation zone of the BBCF, they do not destroy farms outside this core zone. The reason they give is that they are afraid of the negative consequences they may suffer if they destroy crops in farms protected by amulets farmers install in their farms against thieves.

The reason given does not hold up because they actively destroy farms in the core zones without considering if these farms have amulets in them or not. Thus it is the absence of clear directives on how to sanction non-registered farmers that is the issue that needs to be addressed. This is also closely tied to the issue of sharing of benefits derived by the BBNRMC from managing the BBCF amongst its stakeholders. As the financial analysis in Chapter 6 shows financial benefits that have accrued to the BBNRMC from the BBCF have been inadequate to meet its operational cost. In this climate the BBNRMC have not been able to contribute to social development in the settlements around the BBCF.

Other non-financial benefits the BBNRMC enjoys such as its relationship with Camosun College Canada, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) Cameroon, and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Cameroon have not translated to improved livelihoods for its forest user groups. This negatively impacts on the legitimacy of the BBNRMC to command rule compliance from stakeholders.

Successful farmer groups such as the Unity Sisters profiled in Chapter 5 maintain that they have benefited significantly from agricultural initiatives by local NGOs and the department for agriculture but not from the BBNRMC. The president of the group explained their relationship with the BBNRMC:

> *'This community forest people, from them there was a boy from Canada who came to interview us like you… through him we started an eru nursery though it failed we have started another one…since then I cannot see the beneficial thing they are doing…they always call meetings but we cannot see the benefit…its CENDEP* [NGO rep in BBNRMC] *that came to teach us how to plant eru…BB invited us to agro-forestry workshop, they told us they had trees in their nursery to give us…we are still waiting for the nitrogen-fixing trees…'*
>
> [President Unity Sisters, 12/10/06]

The lack of tangible benefits from the BBNRMC from the management of the BBCF has also been a source of internal conflict between the traditional leaders of the area and the BBNRMC. The chiefs state that they gave their consent for their lands to be included in the BBCF because they were assured of significant benefit stream for social development. A traditional leader articulates their grievances:

> *'If you ask me now…how much money as at now do you have in your* [BBNRMC] *account…I don't know…I don't know what is going on…if by the end of this year things are not put straight we better call it off…there are some mercenaries who have only come in to benefit and the indigenes who own the forest are losing…they don't have any benefit from it…'*
>
> [Traditional leader, 10/07/06]

This section has examined the relationship between the sanctions and benefit sharing mechanism of the BBNRMC and its institutional performance. Its poorly articulated sanction mechanism has a direct bearing on the free-riding attitude of the farmers, the largest group of users in the BBCF. The insufficiency of the benefits that accrue to the BBNRMC from the BBCF has reduced the legitimacy of the institution amongst its stakeholders. The BBNRMC is in a situation where the carrot and the stick are not big enough incentives to motivate self-regulating compliance.

6. Conclusion

The BBNRMC can be divided into five sub-institutional organs as shown in Figure 7.2 below. The general assembly is for 'everyone' and for 'no one in particular'. While it is the supreme organ of the institution, it has not been convened since 2002, thus it has not made any demands on the BBNRMC since then.

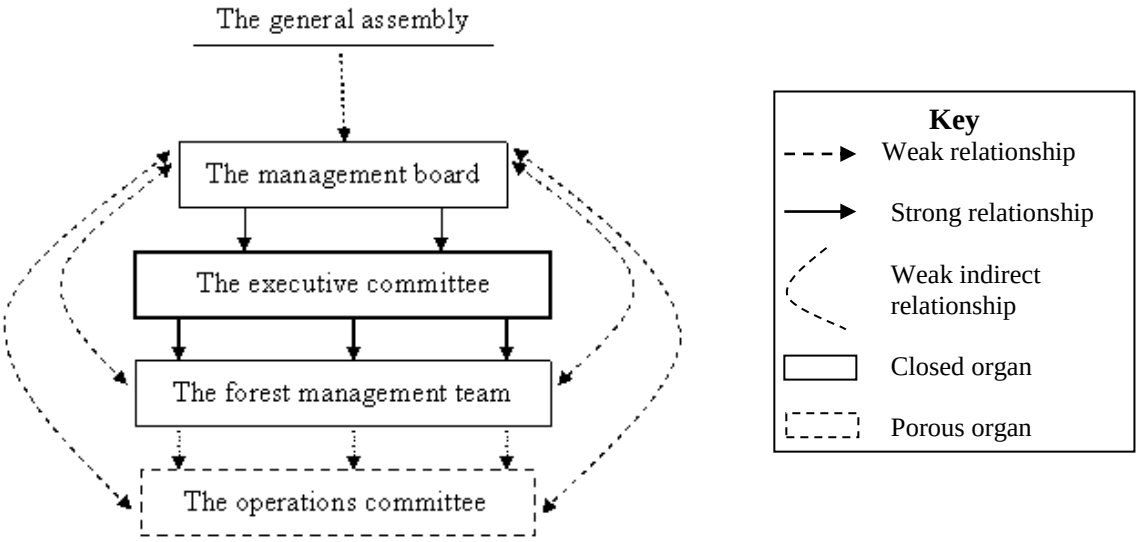


Figure 7.2: Institutional organs of the BBNRMC

The management board has representatives of all major stakeholder groups at the local sphere. These include traditional leaders interested in land tenure and land rents from forest users; indigenous elites with interest in land tenure, land rents and politics of land use; non-indigenous forest users with interest in livelihoods; and the forestry department interested in exerting state control over territory.

The executive committee consists of indigenous elites and was set up to carry out board decisions. It is instead run autocratically by its president, whose affluence and political influence makes the board unable to hold her to account. Next is the forest management team who carry out the decisions of the executive committee and consist of the FMO, administrative assistant, eco-tourism and agric-extension officers. The FMOs have been keen to further their professional ambitions. The operations committee at the bottom of the ladder are concerned about financial rewards. While these five organs make up the structure of the BBNRMC, the president of the executive committee determines the governance performance of the BBNRMC.

The chapter used transparency, accountability and equity to assess the governance performance of the BBNRMC. Transparency promote participation, accountability increases legitimacy and equity influences institutional stability.

Transparency is the release and flow of information in an institution. BBNRMC regulations are in the community forest manual, Cameroon's law of associations of 1990, the BBCF management plan and the BBNRMC Constitution. These documents have significant governance deficits and the BBNRMC members are not sufficiently conversant with their provisions. BBNRMC financial reports are incomplete and poor as the staff do not have proper financial reporting skills. Corruption amongst field staff of the BBNRMC means its activity reports are suspect.

Accountability, the questioning and sanctioning of leaders without fear of victimization, is poor in the BBNRMC. There is a fear to challenge the authority of the matriarchal figure of the executive president. The community forestry manual also shows blind spots about the accountability of the FMO to the management board and accountability of the forestry department to local community forest groups.

Equity, fairness of access to and in the distribution of resources, is low in the BBNRMC. The major forest users are marginalized in decision-making over the BBCF. The strong discourse of autochthony in the BBCF area is played out in the operations committee where non-indigenes are taunted about their ethnicity. The inequitable relationship between indigenes and non-indigenes in the Mt. Cameroon region is reproduced in the BBNRMC. Benefits that accrue to the institution goes to its staff, thus it fails to give back to its stakeholders from whom it extracts rents.

Still on equity, the community forest manual gives the forestry department absolute authority over community forest groups, recognizing the Minister in charge of forests as the highest decision-making authority on community forests. However, it subsumes the authority of traditional leaders at the local sphere to the authority of the local groups granted management rights over the community forest. In the BBNRMC this has created a tense relationship between the leaders and the traditional leaders over the question of who has authority over the land in the BBCF.

The chapter also examined the relationship between sanctions and benefit-sharing mechanisms in the BBNRMC and stakeholders rule compliance. The poorly articulated sanction mechanism encourages free-riding amongst users of the BBCF. Insufficient benefits have reduced the legitimacy of the BBNRMC amongst its stakeholders. BBNRMC's carrot (benefit-sharing) and stick (sanctions) are not quite big enough to motivate self-regulating rule compliance.

Do these findings imply that the BBNRMC is not achieving the governance objectives of community forestry advocates (Brown et al., 2002)? Governance could be evaluated as an outcome-oriented exercise, a process-oriented exercise, or more robustly as an outcome dependent on process (Hyden and Court, 2002). If one subscribes to the first position, the evidence above would suggest that the BBCF is badly governed. If one subscribes to the second position, it could be argued that the BBCF has progressed from a position of no governance to that of limited governance. Evidence from this chapter and the other preceding substantive Chapters 4 to 6 supports the third position that BBCF governance outcomes are products of decisions made at global, national and local level. Thus governance of the BBCF cannot be separated from broader governance processes at the global and national scale.

The implication here is that governance does not get better simply because it is brought closer to the people. Transparency, accountability, equity, sanctioning and benefit-sharing are not scalar variables; local is not intrinsically ‘good’. Governance is a social system where human traits such as greed and ambition, which are not scale dependent, are significant inputs; governance outcomes are not scale dependent.

Chapter 8

Decentralized forestry in an era of market expansion: Who benefits?

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of this study presented in Chapters 4 – 7. The chapter shows that Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy which created space for community forestry, is one arm of a donor-led neo-liberal policy reform in the country, the other being privatization. It argues that privatization receives greater priority from the government compared with decentralization. This is due also to the higher priority it receives from donors and its more amenable impact on the political survival of the government compared with decentralization. The chapter concludes that decentralized forestry has benefited private firms and the government more than the forest dependent poor whose interest it is also supposed to serve.

The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 2 follows the introduction and is in two parts, section 2.1 shows the national and global actors and processes that enabled the adoption of community forestry in Bimbia-Bonadikombo; section 2.2 shows the local actors and processes that impacts on community forestry practice in Bimbia-Bonadikombo. Section 3 assesses the benefits of decentralized forestry in Cameroon, showing that benefits has accrued unequally to national and global actors compared with the forest dependent poor in Cameroon. Section 4 shows the conjunctions and disjunctions [1] that are associated with the implementation of Cameroon's decentralized forestry policy at the local, national and global spheres; it argues that the local sphere is not independent of but is nested in the national and the global. Section 5 concludes the chapter by arguing that the decentralization policy has not delivered equity for the forest dependent poor.

[1] See Appadurai (1990)

2. Institutionalising community forestry in Bimbia-Bonadikombo

This section provides a summary discussion of the remote and proximate influences on the institutionalisation of community forestry in Bimbia-Bonadikombo. The section is divided into 2 parts; section 2.1 focuses on the national and global actors and processes. It shows that community forestry was a demand by the World Bank on the Cameroon government as part of a neo-liberal economic rescue package, and that the government has neither been effective in community forestry policy formulation nor implementation. Section 2.2 focuses on the local actors and processes that influence the establishment and management of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. It shows that privatization, the other key neo-liberal policy reform in Cameroon is negatively impacting local community forestry practice.

2.1 National and global influences on decentralized forestry on Mt. Cameroon

Community forestry was adopted as part of the decentralized forestry policy for Cameroon with the enactment of the 1994 forestry law (MINEF, 1998a). The major driving force behind this new forest policy was the World Bank (Ekoko, 2000). The Bank made forestry reforms one of the conditions for financial aid to the Cameroon government. Other conditions included downsizing the public sector work force, privatizing state-owned corporations and devaluing the currency by 50 percent. While the Cameroon government was concerned that the Bank's prescription would weaken its ability to maintain its patrimonial networks, it could not openly refuse to comply with the Bank (Ekoko, 2000). This is because the Cameroon government was desperate for finances to overcome the economic and political crises affecting the country in the late 1980s.

The government, however, adopted tactics to ensure that the Bank's structural adjustment programme does not erode its political power (Konings, 1996; Egbe, 1997; Ekoko, 2000). First it ensured that the 1995 decree of application that details how the 1994 forestry policy works, did not nullify the 1974 land law, which made government the custodian of all land in Cameroon. In the case of community forestry, this implies that local groups, who apply for and are granted community forest, are granted managerial rather than ownership rights. The 1994 law and its 1995 decree fail to define 'community' (Egbe, 2001); as shown in Chapter 4, this made it difficult for the MCP Limbe to create an equitable management team for the BBCF. The indigenes considered themselves as 'the community' and were not willing to allow non-indigenes to have a voice in forest management despite the fact that non-indigenes constitute 90 percent of the local population.

In addition, the Cameroon government application requirements for community forests as provided in the community forestry manual, is technically and financially beyond the means of local groups (Adeleke, 2006; MINEF, 1998b), making them dependent on the support of local and foreign NGOs. Thus local groups have lost ownership of the community forestry process to external actors including NGOs who have become indispensable midwives of the process (De Blas et al., 2009). Thus without the DFID funded MCP Limbe, the BBCF would not exist. As shown in Chapter 4, the MCP Limbe was working to set up four community forests in the Mt. Cameroon region but only the BBCF got approval before it closed in 2002. The other three community forests, having no benefactor in the last seven years, are yet to be approved by the forestry department.

A further limitation on community forest is that the maximum size cannot exceed 5,000 hectares (50km^2) situated in the non-permanent forest estate. The non-permanent forest estate is forestland that the government could set aside for other land uses such as settlements, industrial zones or plantations[2]. Thus community forests are often wildlife and timber deficient and this limits their revenues from timber exploitation and or ecotourism (Vabi et al., 2002). In the BBCF, selective logging, plantation agriculture and subsistence farming have left the forest empty of wildlife and short of commercially exploitable timber trees (Alpert, 1993; Watts, 1994; Tchouto et al., 1998). As shown in Chapter 6, this has made it difficult for the community forest to obtain sufficient revenue from timber and ecotourism to meet its operational cost and social development expectations.

Given that the state had disenfranchised the citizens from involvement in forest management till 1994, the absence of a long-term management capacity building programme for local forest groups, is a failure by policy designers'[3] to acknowledge the challenge of resource management across all spatial scales (Karsenty, 2007). While the policy requires that bi-annual and annual operational reports be submitted to the forestry department (MINEF, 1998b), it does not require the department to build the capacity of local groups based on a need analysis of their reports. The reports are used as surveillance tool by the forestry department to determine the 'wrongs' of local groups and as opportunities to sanction identified 'wrongs' in order to emphasise their authority over local groups.

The 1994 decentralized forestry policy still ensures that government remains the unrivalled decision maker over Cameroon's forest landscape. The government sets timber rich forestlands designated as production forests aside for national and

[2] The permanent forest estate consists of protected areas and production forests (timber concessions).
[3] The World Bank, Cameroon Government, and DFID (Ekoko, 2000; Djeumo, 2001)

multinational logging firms funded with foreign capital. Forests rich in wildlife, which are gazetted as protected areas are managed by the government in partnership with the WWF or Wildlife Conservation Society. While the new forest law requires logging firms and protected area management to contribute to socio-economic development in their geographic communities, local people do not have strong influence over these organisations. Thus the decentralized forestry policy has enabled local people to become visible actors in Cameroon's forest landscape but their effective voice is severely constrained (see Oyono, 2005; Karsenty, 2007).

In addition to the policy shortcomings identified above, there are also managerial shortcomings of the forestry department, which hinders effective policy implementation (Global Witness, 2005; Amariei, 2005). To be successful, decentralized forestry requires that the forestry department set up a regular and robust national forest monitoring programme (Andersson and Ostrom, 2008). The size of Cameroon's forest resource (covering about 45% of the land surface), and the difficult terrain in areas such as the Mt. Cameroon region, makes forest department oversight challenging for an understaffed service. In the case of community forestry, the Community Forestry Unit (CFU), the national supervisory body based in the forestry department, does not have local level officers.

Community forestry is handled by the local forest officer who is also charged with liaising with logging firms and NGOs managing protected areas. Given that logging firms and NGOs are better resourced than community forests groups (and the forestry department), local forest officers work more closely with these firms and NGOs than with community forest groups. Being dependent on logging firms and NGOs makes it difficult for local forest officers to exercise independent judgement in compliance monitoring exercises. Resource constraints

also makes it impossible for local forest officers to adequately monitor forest use, giving room for more illegal activities than local forest officers can cope with. Meeting the demands of loggers, protected area managers and illegal forest users, leaves the local forest officers little time for community forest groups.

Resource constraints partly explain the observation in Chapter 7 that since the BBCF was created, it has had only a single visit from the CFU. However, the handful of timber rich community forests with industrial scale commercial logging are visited frequently by local forestry officers, as these are financially well resourced (Karsenty, 2007; Koutou, 2007). Due to past logging activities in the BBCF before it became a community forest, its management plan neither allows for artisanal nor industrial scale commercial logging. Despite this restriction, loggers with individual felling permit from the BBNRMC sell timber from the BBCF at the local timber market. This is a strong violation of the community forest policy which could lead to a suspension of the BBNRMC license to operate.

The practice persists without fear of sanctions because local forestry officers receive private payments from the loggers so turn a blind eye to this infraction (interview with Charles, 10/10/06). Consequently they are not able to prosecute illegal timber exploiters in the BBCF, including the violent loggers, as this would expose their complicity. The MCP Limbe, aware of these shortcomings in design and implementation of the decentralized forestry policy, facilitated the creation of a trust fund, the Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF) in 2001 (Asanga, 2002). The institution was designed to provide long-term financial and technical support to biodiversity conservation actors in the Cameroon Mountains region involved in 'the sustainable use and management of forest resources by and for the benefit of local communities' (CAMCOF, 2004).

CAMCOF was set up with board members consisting of retired and active senior civil servants from the forestry department, and representatives from donors and NGOs in the region. The donors and NGO representatives came from DFID, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), UNDP and Birdlife. DFID, the lead donor in CAMCOF, provided capacity building for the board members and a 2-year grant for the trust to become operational in 2004. DFID also funded the design and submission of a proposal to the UNDP managed Global Environmental Facility (GEF) for funds to capitalise the Trust to the tune of US$10million. CAMCOF was plagued with management strife, so the UNDP/GEF declined to capitalise the Trust and it closed down in 2006 after the DFID grant expired.

In response to the forest policy shortcomings, community forestry was included in Cameroon's poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) submitted to the IMF in 2003 (Brown et al., 2003; GoC, 2003; Bird and Dickson, 2005). Thus US$4.5million from the IMF's Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) grant to Cameroon was used to fund the Projet de Renforcement des Initiatives pour la Gestion Communautaire des Ressources Forestières et Fauniques (RIGC) from 2005 to 2008. The project primarily provided technical support and artisanal logging equipments such as the Lucas Mill to timber rich community forests (Minsouma, 2006). The BBCF did not qualify for support.

In 2002, in recognition of the decentralized forest policy shortcomings, the government and its donors carried out a forest sector performance review (Amariei, 2005). This led to the Forest Environment Sector Programme, a ten-year development blueprint for Cameroon's forest sector (Koutou, 2007). This programme was also developed in response to the 'Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness' (OECD, 2005). The programme supposedly addresses national

ownership of forest development, alignment of government and donor interests, and harmonisation of donor activities. The programme has 5 components:

i. Regulation and environment information management (reporting)

ii. Production forests management (logging concessions)

iii. Protected area and wildlife management

iv. Community forest resources management

v. Institutional strengthening, training and research

The programme cost of US$185.3 million is broken down as shown in Table 8.1:

Table 8.1: Cost of the Cameroon's forest environment sector programme

Component	*Subcomponent*	Estimated US$ Cost
1. **Environmental Regulation and Information Management**		7.49 million
	Environmental regulations *Environmental Monitoring* *Communications and environmental awareness*	
2. **Production Forests Management**		30.68 million
	Completion of the Country Zoning plan *Forest Management Plans* *Wood product industrialization* *Control operations and sanctions* *Valorization of Non-Timber Forest Products*	
3. **Protected Area, Biodiversity and Wildlife Management**		33.15 million
	Biodiversity planning & zoning *Knowledge & information management* *Participatory protected areas & community wildlife areas management* *Design & implementation of protected area management plans* *Optimization of economic benefits of protected areas & hunting zones* *Legal and institutional reform of protected area and hunting zones management* *Sustainable financing of wildlife & protected areas* *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan update*	
4. **Community Forest Resources Management**		26.44 million
	Capacity building for community forest and natural resource management *Reforestation and forest regeneration* *Promotion of fuelwood supply*	
5. **Institutional Strengthening, Training and Research**		87.53 million
	Transition of ONADEF into ANAFOR *Strengthening the Environment Ministry* *Rehabilitating education and research in forestry & environment sector* *Capacity building and decentralization*	

Source: World Bank (2006)

Cameroon's forest environment sector programme received World Bank approval in 2006 and the government was awarded US$35 million as the Bank's contribution to a multi-donor programme fund (World Bank, 2006). The programme has also received contributions from government's of France (US$25m), Germany (US$19m), Britain (US$14.4m), Canada (US$8.5m), and the EU (US$7m) (Koutou, 2007). Total donor contribution is US$108.9 million or 60% of the programme cost. Apart from World Bank grant, all the other donor funds are pooled together and managed by the German GTZ International Services (GTZ, 2009).

As part of the conditions for World Bank funding, the government produced an 'Indigenous People Development Plan' (IPDP) to ensure that Cameroon's forest pygmies are not marginalized (Schmidt-Soltau, 2003b; World Bank, 2006). Part of the programme funds are allocated to the 'Forest Governance Facility' set up to support forestry activities through a small grants scheme (Anspach, 2006). While these initiatives would indicate that the government is responsive to the needs of marginal groups, it should be noted that these are donor led initiatives. These fail to clarify the concept of 'community' left undefined in the 1994 forestry law; these initiatives acknowledge traditional rights to forestland but fail to call for a revision of the 1974 land law that gives government ownership of all lands.

The World Bank (2006) maintains that part of the reason it supports the forest environment sector programme is because it protects the interest of forest communities. It asserts that the programme strengthens Cameroon government's commitment to benefit-sharing of timber royalties as stated in the 1994 law. This specifies that 50 percent of royalty go to the government, 40 percent to the municipality hosting the timber concession, and 10 percent to villages around the concession. While municipal leaders are theoretically chosen by periodic local

elections, in practice this is not so, as they are often imposed by the ruling party (Fombad and Fonyam, 2004). Thus municipal leaders are accountable to the ruling party and not to the electorate. This has led to misuse of the timber royalty by municipal authorities (Karsenty, 2007; Lakim, 2008).

The forest environment sector programme leaves unchanged provisions in the 1994 law that community forests should be in the non-permanent forest domain, thereby keeping the most valuable forest lands for government, private firms, and global NGOs (Koutou, 2007). The programme governance structure include monitoring of forest use by a team made up of forestry department staffs and international observer NGO, and certification requirements of foreign markets (Global Witness, 2005). This means that its accountability mechanisms are donor-driven and top down; consequently local groups remain statutorily powerless to hold the forestry department, logging firms and NGOs to account.

While the forest environment sector programme, Cameroon's current forest development and governance programme has been formulated a decade after the 1994 decentralized forestry law, it remains firmly within the socio-political paradigm that informed the 1994 law. It therefore fails to advance the nascent process of social empowerment and equity inherent in the 1994 law. The programme has no answers to the fundamental challenges of citizenship, property rights and accountability faced by local groups like the BBNRMC.

At the same period when the Cameroon government was working to institutionalise community forestry, it was also working to institutionalise a donor inspired privatization programme for Cameroon (Konings, 2003; GoC, 2003). The government privatization programme intersected with its community forest programme in the Mt. Cameroon region through its attempt to privatize the

Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in 1996. As shown in Chapter 4 and 5, the CDC, a parastatal, is the largest land owner in the Mt. Cameroon region and contributed 90 percent of the land that makes up the BBCF. As shown in Chapter 4, government's move to privatise the CDC led to a legal tussle between the Bakweri Land Claims Committee (BLCC) and the government.

The Bakweri, based on their traditional claims to the land, are worried that the CDC lands would go into private hands without financial compensation to the Bakweri (BLCC, 2006). The BLCC with strong support from Bakweris in the USA is at the forefront of the compensation campaign (Tande, 1999). Privatization plans for the CDC led to a surge of Bakweri ethnic solidarity (Konings, 2003); to contain Bakweri restiveness, the government appointed a Bakweri and General Manager of the CDC, Peter Musonge as Prime Minister, increasing the political stakes associated with CDC privatization (Konings, 2003). Thus, if the Bakweri continue protesting, their kinsman may lose the coveted position of Prime Minister, if they keep quiet, they may lose getting compensated for privatized CDC lands.

MCP Limbe's conservation programme and the CDC privatization programme were being executed in the mid-1990s at a time of intense political activity in Cameroon (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). In the Mt. Cameroon region, the non-indigenes from the North West Province (the major forest users), were seen as the main political opposition to the government. In 1997 Cameroon held parliamentary and presidential elections; elites of the ruling party in the South West Province were determined to hold on to the post of Prime Minister. Being afraid of the numerical strength of North Westerners in the Mt. Cameroon region, the home region of the then Prime Minister, these elites started a bitter campaign that North Westerners should leave the South West Province (Vubo, 2006).

This was the ‘come no go!’ campaign, which asserted that North Westerners were brought as forced labour to the CDC plantations in the Mt. Cameroon region and were no longer welcomed to stay (Jua, 2004). The campaign rekindled ethnic prejudice towards the North Westerners in the Mt. Cameroon region. The prejudice dates back to the era when the Bakweri were middlemen in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, obtaining slaves from territories now occupied by the North West Province (Warnier, 2006). The Bakweri’s early contact with Europeans and assimilation into colonial administration produced a sense of entitlement, which is now challenged by the more numerous and prosperous North Westerners (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). This was the economic and socio-political context under which the MCP Limbe was working to create the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest. It was a period of heightened sense of Bakweri ethnic insecurity.

Privatization and multi-party politics rekindled Bakweri ethnocentrism, and made it impossible to have equitable representation between indigene and non-indigenes in the management body for the BBCF. Privatization and multi-party politics led to a sense of insecurity, awareness of property rights and contestations over citizenship in the Mt. Cameroon region (Konings, 2003). This draws attention to the complex influence of donors in Cameroon (Rogerson et al., 2006; Topa, 2006). The World Bank was the main driver of the country’s decentralized forest policy and bilateral donors funded institutions implementing the policy; these populist interventions portray donors as working for the forest dependent poor. However, donors are also key drivers of deregulation, multi-party democracy and privatization, policies that have resulted in deepening poverty and conflicts over property rights to land, forest and water resources in Cameroon (Konings, 2003; Mbuagbo and Akoko, 2004).

Thus donor impact on the lives of people in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo area has been a game of 'musical chairs'; the utopia of socio-economic development promised by donor inspired decentralized forestry policy, is arrested by the dystopia of historic ethnic prejudice rekindled by donor inspired privatization and democracy policies. While the World Bank and other bilateral donors have been dictating the policy tunes, the Cameroon government has been the perfidious piper. The inhabitants of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest area were drawn into the game by the 'win-win' rhetoric of the minstrels of the donor community – NGOs, conservation consultants, and pro-government elites. Thus forest management decisions made in Washington DC, Brussels, London, Bonn and Paris, filtered through the Cameroon government, have irreversibly altered social relations and livelihoods of the people living in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest area.

2.2 Local influences on decentralized forestry on Mt. Cameroon

The indigenous elites of the Bimbia-Bonadikombo area, who returned to the land to cope with the economic crises of the late 1980s, were stunned by the extent to which non-indigenes were exploiting the forest (Monono, 2001). They were also alarmed by the economic success and political sympathies of the North Westerners, the largest block of non-indigenes sympathetic to the main opposition political party in Cameroon (Jua, 2004). The indigenes being mainly supporters of the ruling party feared that in local elections they would lose out to the non-indigenes. To contain the power of the non-indigenes and extract rents from the forest, the indigenes created the Victoria Area Rainforest Common Initiative Group and the Victoria Land and Forest Conservation Committee.

As shown in Chapter 4, these institutions were used to assert Bakweri ownership of the forest, impose control over land use and obtain rents from non-indigenous land users. Thus the indigenes viewed MCP Limbe rhetoric on equitable participation with non-indigenes over decision-making concerning the Bimbia-Bonadikombo forest as untenable (Monono, 2001). The MCP Limbe was working to implement the decentralized forestry policy with actors belonging to multiple 'political communities' differentiated strongly along ethnic lines. In this context the *apriori* apolitical nature of conservation projects handicapped the MCP Limbe from addressing the plurality of political communities in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo landscape. Thus MCP Limbe found it impossible to ensure equitable representation of forest users in the BBNRMC (Monono, 2001; RCDC, 2002).

While the users of the BBCF are mainly from the eleven settlements within an hour walking distance from it, there are forest users coming from the cities of Mutengene and Tiko, trekking for about three hours before reaching the community forest. I observed during forest walks in the BBCF that the southern zone of the forest (the Bimbia area) is in better health than the mid-zone (Livanda area) and the northern zone (Bonadikombo area). However, Azobe (*Lophira alata*) a timber species common in the mid-zone of the community forest up to the early 1990s (LBG, 1993), have become observably scarce. This is because this is the preferred tree specie for charcoal producers and fuelwood exploiters. The southern zone (the Bimbia area) is the richest forest zone because it's the furthest from the cities of Limbe, Mutuengene and Tiko. The northern zone is the most accessible as it lies just off the busy Limbe-Douala highway and the most degraded.

As shown in Chapter 5, farmers are the largest forest users in the BBCF, are predominantly from the North West Province, and are not adequately represented in the BBNRMC board. While the board have a male farmer representative, it is inadequate in a context where each of the eleven settlements around the BBCF has different farmer groups, some of which are gender based. Larger settlements like Bonadikombo and Livanda have more than one farmer group. Therefore it is disingenuous to have just one seat on the board for a farmer representative. The consequence is that the BBNRMC does not have a robust relationship with the farmer groups using the BBCF. This institutional failure means the farmers get away with ignoring the regulation from the BBNRMC that every farmer is expected to pay an annual due of US$4 before farming in the community forest.

This fee is small compared to rents of US$20 and above that farmers pay annually to use privately owned lands. MCP Limbe farmer survey estimated that there are no fewer than one thousand farmers in the BBCF (RCDC, 2002; Minang, 2007). Their poor representation in the BBNRMC is a loss of significant revenue and a loss of personnel that could help with forest monitoring. Presently, farmers have no incentive to pay the annual dues without coercion, thereby increasing the BBNRMC's management cost. While the farms in the BBCF are immobile and the crops could be destroyed as a form of sanction, the BBNRMC patrol team are reluctant to do so citing a fear of being jinxed by witchcraft of crop owners[4]. The material base for this fear is the common practice of placing amulets in observable positions in farms to scare thieves and other undesirable persons.

[4] The discourse of witchcraft and its negative effect on Cameroonian institutions has been explored by Geschiere (1997); a member of the patrol team informed me that said he proposed to management to seek the help of Bakweri shamans to destroy the farms of those not paying their dues, but this was dismissed on the basis that they are Christians and cannot be seen to condone pagan practices

In contrast, the patrol team are not hesitant to destroy farms in the non-use zone of the community forest. The patrol team justify their action on the grounds that the BBNRMC constitution is clear that there should be no farms in the non-use zones and every farmer is aware of this rule. Thus the absence of clear directives on sanctioning farmers who fail to pay their annual dues in the rulebook and from the BBNRMC leadership contributes to constraining effective action. Unlike the farmers, the charcoal producers are the most compliant forest users. This is because they are the least expensive to monitor due to their small group size (25 members), immobile earth pit charcoal production method and the length of time (3-4 months) it takes to fully convert one felled Azobe (*Lophira alata*) tree to charcoal.

The timber exploiters are also small in terms of group size but are relatively difficult to monitor compared with the charcoal producers. This is because their method of exploitation (chainsaw logging and head porting of planks) allows them to work in very difficult terrain; they sometimes work at night and the more resourceful of them can identify a tree, fell it, convert it into planks and transport it out of the forest within a week. As shown in chapter 7, the more hardboiled illegal exploiters easily resort to violence when apprehended by the BBNRMC patrol team. In a context where violent exploiters cannot be adequately sanctioned, the risk associated with monitoring them becomes unacceptably high. As shown in Chapter 6, the fuelwood group are the most recalcitrant users of the community forest when it comes to paying user permit fees compared with charcoal and timber producers. This is not surprising as they are the most mobile forest users.

A fuelwood merchant can identify a tree, fell it, split it, and transport it away from the forest in two-days. Once the wood is out of the community forest, the exploiters simply claim that it was sourced from the adjacent forest areas, which do

not form part of the community forest. The onus then lies with the BBNRMC patrol team to prove that the wood was sourced within the community forest, a difficult task if the team is not able to quickly locate a recently cut tree stump from similar tree specie in the community forest. It is much easier to accept a bribe from the fuelwood exploiter if and when this is offered than taking up the challenge of proving the provenance of the fuelwood. The discussion so far shows that management acumen, nature of the forest resource, exploitation method used by forest user group, and willingness to accept bribes by forest patrol team, conjoin to undermine the effectiveness of the community forest monitoring regime.

The temptation to accept bribes by the patrol team becomes significant in a climate where the BBNRMC does not generate sufficient revenue to assure payment of their remuneration. As shown in Chapter 6, the BBNRMC is partly financially dependent on friendly governmental institutions and loans from affluent board members. This leaves it open to capture by the actors who provide its financial support. This accounts for the pre-eminent voice of the executive president of the BBNRMC in decision-making, as she is the key financial resource person for the institution. This less than inclusive governance outcome of the BBNRMC is contrary to the inclusive institutional design logic highlights in Chapter 4, which guided the MCP Limbe when it facilitated the creation of the BBNRMC. It has been argued that the use of institutional design logic by the MCP Limbe that is alien to the local stakeholders was a recipe for failure (Monono, 2001).

MCP Limbe's participatory ethos was rejected for an ethnocentric logic that is considered fundamental for the socio-political well-being of the indigenes. This local ethnocentric logic mirrors the ethnocentric logic of late Ahmadu Ahidjo, Cameroon's first head of state, as he placed his personal and ethnic interests above

the national interest (Takougang, 2004). It also reflects the logic of the country's second and current President, Paul Biya, as he also ensures that his personal and ethnic interest come before the national interest. Given the political savvy of the Bakweri in general and the Bimbians in particular, it is not surprising that they successfully ensured Bakweri and more specifically Bimbian dominance of the BBNRMC. Indeed the creation of the Bimbia-Bondikombo community forest was not just due to MCP Limbe's resources, but also due to Bimbia's privileged status compared with other locale where the project carried out its activities.

The project worked towards the creation of four community forests in the project area, namely Bimbia-Bonadikombo, Bakingili, Etinde and Mokoko community forests. However, only Bimbia-Bonadikombo was approved, while the others are still awaiting approval seven years after the MCP Limbe ended. The strong push from politically influential Bimbia elites, and the visible location of the community forest off the Limbe-Douala highway, worked to ensure that the project and the forestry department prioritised this site over the others. The inability of the community forest to generate higher revenues that would make it a catalyst for socio-economic development has led to local dissatisfaction. This is observed in the very high indigenous elite absentee rate from BBNRMC board meetings, and strong criticisms from traditional leaders. While BBNRMC generates income from the forest, the sums involved (between US$15000 – 20000/year) are small.

Studies carried out by the DFID funded 'Community Forestry Development Programme' (CFDP) provides estimates of financial benefits from the three types of community forest in Cameroon. High-yielding timber rich community forest (type 1) would provide benefits of US$32 per person per year, low-yielding timber community forests (type 2) US$6 per person per year, and non-timber community

forests (type 3) US$5.6 per person per year (Vabi et al., 2002). Thus MCP Limbe's rhetoric on expected benefits from the BBCF simply raised false financial expectations (RCDC, 2002). Despite the community forest being an 'empty forest', MCP Limbe promoted an ecotourism strategy; despite the absence of a commercial bee-keeping tradition in the area, MCP Limbe promoted bee-keeping as a strategy for income generation. Unsurprisingly ecotourism is yielding very low revenues and bee-keeping initiatives by the BBNRMC have failed.

MCP Limbe envisaged that its community organisations would need support after the project ended. Therefore it helped create the Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF) in 2001 as a Trust for local organisations involved with biodiversity conservation. CAMCOF was poorly managed and failed to meet the requirements for capitalisation by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), so it closed down in 2006. CAMCOF's failure was a huge disappointment to the BBNRMC as it viewed CAMCOF as a benefactor in place of the MCP Limbe. While CAMCOF was closing down, the government launched the Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the South West Province (PSMNR-SW), as part of the Forest Environment Sectoral Programme (FESP). The programme is funded by the Cameroon and German governments to the sum of US$16 million for ten years (2006-2015) (Mambo and Njie, 2007).

The South West Province forest programme is working towards the creation of the Mt. Cameroon National Park. The programme has funds for small socio-economic projects in settlements in the buffer zone of the protected area. The BBCF is not in the buffer zone of the protected area so does not qualify for financial support. As mentioned earlier, other sources of funding for community forestry are the *Projet de Renforcement des Initiatives pour la Gestion Communautaire des*

Ressources Forestières et Fauniques (RIGC) and the Forest Governance Facility (FGF). As mentioned earlier the BBCF does not qualify for RIGC support. The FGF is a small grants fund for conservation activities. The BBNRMC could obtain funding from the FGF for its activities such as reforestation, agro-forestry and eco-tourism but it is yet to apply for funding from the FGF.

The BBNRMC's poor finances mean that effective management need to be driven by incentives other than monetary benefits. High absenteeism by members of the management board as noted in Chapter 7 when they realised the relative poverty of the institution would indicate these were motivated solely by financial gain. The reduced number of volunteers in the operations committee from thirty to ten persons due to poor financial rewards, also indicates the degree to which financial rewards was the key motivation for these actors. Presently, the incentive that keeps the indigenes motivated is land rights, for the remaining staff it is still financial reward, and for the representatives of forest user groups in the BBNRMC its the protection of their citizenship rights of access to the forest.

3. Decentralized forest management in Cameroon: Who benefits?

At this juncture, it is worth asking who benefits from decentralized forest management in Cameroon. Decentralization became a policy choice for the government at the behest of the World Bank; the discourse is coloured by populist ideology that celebrates greater participation of the polity in governance as a means towards greater accountability from government. While the Bank was pushing for decentralization, it was also pushing for privatization of public enterprises. While the Bank was working to empower the citizenry to have greater voice in governance, it was also working to dispossess the citizenry of direct stake in the fate of the

country's natural resources. This shows that though decentralization and privatization are on opposite ends of the political spectrum, they both serve to rollback the state by reducing the size and power of the central government.

McCarthy (2005) argues that advocates of neo-liberalization have co-opted decentralized forestry into their model because it works to roll-back the state and extends the market. Pressured by the World Bank, the Cameroon government in 1992 created the Ministry of forestry and in 1994 enacted a decentralized forestry law. Since then the government with support from bilateral donors (France, USA, Britain, Germany and Canada), and global NGOs, WWF and WCS, have transformed Cameroon's forest landscape. At the national scale, protected areas has increased from 7 percent of the territory (475,000 km^2) to 17 percent; there are 105 timber concessions covering 70,000 km^2 or 15 percent of the national territory; there are also 200 community forests covering a total land surface area of about 6000 km^2 or 1.3 percent of the national territory (Minsouma, 2006; Koutou, 2007).

Reflecting the national scale, 35 percent of the South West Province with a land surface area of 24,923 km^2 is now 'permanent forest' – a category that did not exist prior to 1994 (Batadjomo, 2006). Permanent forest as earlier explained includes timber concessions, forest reserves, and national parks. Concessions in the Province increased from two prior to 1994 to six at present; local firms log the old concessions; foreign firms log the new; the concessions cover about 3,700 km^2 or 15 percent of the Province (Batadjomo, 2006; Lien, 2007). National parks increased from one prior to 1994 to five at present, occupying about 13 percent of the Province and managed by WWF (3) and WCS (2) in partnership with the Cameroon government. The Province has 5 community forests with a total area of 190 km^2 or 0.8 percent of the Provincial territory (MINFOF, 2008).

The transformation of Cameroon's forest landscape in terms of management rights and decision-making power have favoured the government, timber companies and the global NGOs, WWF and WCS. In financial terms, the forestry law decentralized timber revenues in a ratio 5:4:1 between the government, municipal authority and villages in the timber concession zone (MINEF, 1998a). The government states that this policy has yielded US$ 68,892,360 as royalty payments to beneficiary municipalities and villages in 6 years (from 2000 – 2005), amounting to about US$12 million/year (Koutou, 2007). The municipal leaders that receive these payments have been accused of mismanagement and strong-arm tactics in silencing voices that question their decisions (Karsenty, 2007). This is done with the connivance of local forestry officers and civil administrators (Oyono, 2005).

This low level corruption is pervasive and compromises low-level resolve to enforce statutory provisions on management of forestry royalties. Thus the state is present in the local sphere in terms of personnel but absent in terms of fulfilling all of its obligations to its forest dependent citizens. However, the politically influential (usually members of the ruling party CPDM) easily gets the attention of the state. The patrimonial nature of the Cameroon state means the most politically influential are members of the president's Beti ethnic group and more specifically his Bulu clan (Takougang, 2004; Ateba-Eyene, 2008). It is therefore unsurprising that 80 percent of community forests in Cameroon, as shown in Table 8.2 below, are located in the Beti speaking provinces. Limited income from community forestry and corruption means the ordinary people in these provinces remain poor.

Table 8.2: Provincial distribution of community forests in Cameroon

No.	Provinces	Applications		Approved		Area	
		No.	%	No.	%	km^2	%
1	Extreme North	08	2	03	2	134	2
2	North	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Adamawa	02	1	0	0	0	0
4	West	02	1	02	1	70	1
5	North West	22	6	11	7	98	2
6	South West	18	5	04	2	190	3
7	Littoral	16	4	09	5	386	6
8	Centre	107	28	64	39	2,779	45
9	East	141	36	50	30	1,694	28
10	South	73	19	22	13	774	13
TOTAL		**389**	**100**	**165**	**100**	**6,125**	**100**

Source: MINFOF, 2008

In this patrimonial governance environment, effective implementation of government policy including the decentralized forestry policy is impossible as the ruling regime expend its energies on how to maintain itself in power (Takougang, 2004). Thus local agents of government including local officers of the forestry department become self-serving, and the forest dependent poor are not able to count on forest officers to protect their rights. The state's multilateral and bilateral donor partners are aware of this governance dynamic but are more focused on the institutionalisation of neo-liberal market reforms than with social equity.

4. Conjunctions and divergence of interests amongst stakeholders to the BBCF

The discussion so far shows that contests over livelihood, property rights, and citizenship at the local scale hampered decentralized forest policy implementation. While these big issues are also reflected in the discourse of national and global actors influencing management of the BBCF, the articulation by these national and global actors have different points of emphasis. The land discourse of the indigenes at the local scale contests government's tenure rights, but

the government and its global partners are silent about this contest. Donor discourse on property rights instead takes government ownership as fact and its decision on land use including privatization as legitimate. While the discourse on 'property rights' is an area of conjunction between local, national and global actors interested in the BBCF, the difference in emphasis are critical areas of divergence.

In addition, there is an absence of a local discourse on the community forest as a global commons to which global actors including the World Bank and DFID have forest rights. A related point is the absence of local discourse on preserving the forest for its intrinsic value – a fundamental standpoint that informs the forest conservation efforts of the major global conservation NGOs in Cameroon. There is also a critical divergence between the local and the national scale on the discourse of citizenship. While the conflict strained relationship between the indigenous Bakweri and migrant groups point to a contestation over citizenship rights, the government is failing in its responsibility to articulate these rights by remaining silent on defining 'community' in the community forestry policy. This coupled with government's inability to resolve contestations from local groups over land tenure reduces the government's legitimacy at the local level.

Government's legitimacy is important for the effective implementation of global and national forest management conventions at the local level (Gilley, 2006). Thus weak implementation of decentralization in the Mt. Cameroon region is not just due to local level dynamics between the indigenes and non-indigenes with a stake in the forest, but also due to the low levels of trust between the government and the citizenry. This then implies that local outcomes from global forestry conventions is due not only to geopolitical positioning of the state amongst the comity of nations, but also to the vertical relationship between state and society, and

the local scale horizontal relationship between competing groups in society. Thus local phenomenon though site specific, are affected by national and global processes through local actors vertically integrated into higher-level processes. The local also impacts on the national and the global by these same actors.

While contemporary systems of social organisation have structures (the judiciary, state security, global institutions) that work to enforce global and national edicts at the local level, there are no similar social structures with the same coercive power to enforce local edicts at national and global scales. Thus we are stuck at 'think globally, act locally', whereas equity demands that we also 'think locally, act globally'. Contemporary systems of social organisation bestows on the Cameroon government the right to bear to arms in defence of its citizens, but when the state uses this authority against its citizens, the citizens have no legitimate means of redress. Thus local organisations like the BBNRMC have no legal avenues through which to hold local agents of the state to account for their actions, which then create conditions that make it impossible to hold abusive local leaders to account if they are working in collaboration with state officials.

Given that its state resources that props up global institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the UN, these have limitations on how much they can oppose their patron states and discipline client states in the good books of their patrons. When the Cameroon government was most hard-pressed to accept the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF in the early 1990s or risk losing political power to the opposition, it was bailed out by bilateral aid received from the French government (van de Walle, 1993; Takougang, 2004). While governments of client states do exhibit agency and sometimes subvert the objectives of their patrons (Kelsall, 2002), their room for manoeuvrability is restricted by the knowledge that they could be

deposed if perceived as being uncooperative by their patron states (Brittain, 2006; Hari, 2007; Le Roy and Osouf, 2008). This model is then replicated by client states including Cameroon in its dealings with sub-national polities.

These sub-national polities then replicate this inequitable pattern in their vertical and horizontal relationships. Thus the inequitable relationship between the forestry department, indigenes and non-indigenes in the BBNRMC reflects the inequity in the global geopolitical system. This historic and structural inequity in social organisation of human society is what drives the invention of utopias from the idea of progress to Marxism to science fiction to decentralized forestry (Fox, 1985; Samuelson et al., 1986; Beauchamp, 1998; Harvey, 2000; Jacoby, 2005). Decentralized forestry can thus be viewed as one more attempt grappling with the age-old problem of power and privilege in social organisations.

5. Conclusion

Who benefits from decentralized forest management in Cameroon? The foregoing discussion shows that its private capital aligned with the ruling elites in Cameroon. While the donors who put pressure on the government to decentralize the country's forest management regime would claim to have done this for the alleviation of poverty and promotion of good governance, they more readily turn a blind eye to government's pretentious approach to decentralization. I argue that as long as the Beti decision-makers in Cameron continue to deregulate and privatize the economy for the benefit of Western capital, and private gain through bribes, bilateral and multilateral donors will continue to work with the government. Donors are no more than auxiliaries of their patron governments working to extend economic opportunities for elite actors in their home countries.

Donor poverty agenda is a performance written by patron governments, played out by ground staffs on a stage built by the beneficiary government, in front of an audience made up of the citizens of beneficiary state. The goal as with the performance of colonial officers is to reduce the resistance of the citizenry to economic exploitation by international capital. In the colonial era, officers carried 'big sticks', today donor institutions wield financial 'carrots'. The big stick is in the hands of beneficiary government who ensures the audience (their citizens) don't step out of line. While Cameroon government response to local mismanagement of forestry revenues is slow and weak, its response to opposition to privatization has been quick and firm. In addition, the government uses its privatization programme to manipulate donors and obtain resources to keep it going.

Thus privatization not decentralization defines the relationship between the Cameroon government and its donor partners, and its at the heart of the ruling party's survival strategies. Privatization has made property rights a key socio-political discourse in the local and national spheres in Cameroon; this in turn has shown that some citizens of Cameroon are more equal than others as they have greater decision making powers within their locale of authority compared to other inhabitants of that same social space. At the national level, the Beti rule the roost while in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo landscape the Bimbians are first in line. This study has also shown that the Cameroon government despite its agency is beholden to its donor partners who came to its assistance when its economy collapsed in the late 1980s. Its chief patrons are the World Bank and the IMF working in partnership with the governments of the US, France, Britain, Germany and Canada.

The financial succour these institutions and states offer the Cameroon government has enabled them to exercise significant voice over forest policy formulation and implementation. These actors have used their voice to advocate neo-liberal policy reforms especially privatization, made sweet by adding on populists policy prescriptions such as community forestry – a decentralized forestry management strategy. While these donor partners and the government have shown strong commitment to privatization, their commitment to community forestry is comparatively weak. While community forestry institutions such as the BBNRMC struggle, multinational timber companies in Cameroon have prospered. While the decentralized forest management policy fails to deliver its promise, privatization has flourished and is now government's chief policy concern.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: Forests of hope

1. Introduction

This study on the '*political ecology of decentralized forest management in Cameroon*' has investigated social transformations in Cameroon through a forest resource lens. This concluding chapter uses the findings of this study to critique decentralization theory. As shown in Chapter 2, decentralization theory posits that local institutions are more responsive to the needs of local people compared with the central state. However, this study shows that local institutions are opened to capture by interest groups just like national and global institutions. Thus decentralized forestry has not led to efficiency and equity at the local level in Cameroon because decentralization theory proposes a scalar solution to a social problem. The study examined Cameroon's community forestry policy, the key novelty in its decentralized forestry law of 1994. The study focused on actors and processes that influenced the adoption of community forestry in the Mt. Cameroon region, a biodiversity hotspot.

The study was executed through detailed analyses of the establishment of the BBCF, and its management by the BBNRMC. The BBCF was one of four community forest initiative in the Mt. Cameroon region conceived by the principally British government funded MCP Limbe during its 8-years of operations in the region. While the BBCF received government's approval in 2002, the year the MCP Limbe came to an end, it presently remains the only legally approved community forest in the region. The BBCF was created to assure the survival of the last remaining lowland forest on the south-east flank of Mt. Cameroon, while improving the livelihoods of the population living in the forest area, and as a vehicle that would contribute positively o governance reforms in the wider Cameroonian state.

2. What has changed since the decentralized forestry reforms?

The establishment of the BBCF has been made possible through forest policy reforms at the national scale, new institutional arrangements at the national and local scale, and the availability of human, material and financial resources at the global, national and local scale. However, the increasing scarcity of Azobe (*Lophira alata*) and other timber species in the BBCF indicate that these local to global transformations have not succeeded in halting forest loss in the BBCF. The inability of the BBNRMC to contribute to social development in the BBCF area or enhance the livelihoods of its stakeholders also indicates that these transformations are not making a significant contribution to the poverty alleviation in the BBCF area. Furthermore, the inequitable structural character of the BBNRMC and its subsequent inability to motivate rule compliance in the BBCF indicates it cannot contribute positively to governance reforms in the broader Cameroonian society.

While the BBNRMC case study shows that Cameroon's forest decentralization policy is not achieving the ideals of decentralization theory, it is accurate to say it has brought a lot of dynamism into the forestry sector. The major transformations that have resulted from the new forest policy are summarised below.

2.1 National forest policy

The 1994 forest law replaced the 1981 forest law at the instigation of the World Bank as part of its structural adjustment programme for Cameroon. The 1981 law in keeping with the spirit of its time centralized forest management as the sole responsibility of the forest department. The 1994 law recognises that there is a role for government, private sector, civil society and community based groups. While the 1981 law was not transparent about timber revenue generation and utilisation, the

1994 clearly articulates government's position on timber revenue and includes a benefit sharing scheme. The scheme sees 50 percent of forest royalty remain with the central state, 40 percent go to the municipal authority in the timber concession area and 10 percent shared amongst villages in the concession area. The 1994 law also allows for community forest management rights to local groups – its main novelty.

The law's financial regulations aims to maximise government's timber revenues, increase financial transparency and benefit sharing with stakeholders at the local level. The provisions of the law required new national and local institutions for their implementation. This was the platform used by bilateral development agencies to join the World Bank as partners assisting the government of Cameroon meet its forestry objectives. These include the USAID (USA), DFID (British), French Cooperation, GTZ (German), CIDA (Canadian) and SNV (Netherlands). These were acting to fulfil their governments' commitments at Rio 1992 to assist developing countries in their efforts to conserve biodiversity. Cameroon being a signatory to the Rio biodiversity convention and rich in forest that was highly threatened by human use became a privileged choice for aid. Thus the 1994 law created space for the involvement of multiple global stakeholders in Cameroon's forest sector.

2.2 New institutional architecture

Prior to the forest reforms, forestry was under Cameroon's Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI), wildlife was under Ministry of Tourism (MINTOUR) and environment was under Ministry of Planning and Regional Development (MINPAT). These were all placed under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF) created in 1992. Back in 1990 the government had passed a law allowing for the creation of civil society organisations; this led to the rise of local NGOs in the forest

sector after the enactment of the 1994 law. The local NGO's in close collaboration with donor agencies, global NGOs working in Cameroon and multiple foreign private donors, became the mid-wives for the implementation of the decentralized forest management policy. Staff of the central and provincial services of MINEF found themselves working within a complex overcrowded institutional landscape.

The challenges in this new institutional environment were heightened by shortage of staff due to non-recruitment in the civil service as a part of the structural adjustment programme. In 1998 the Community Forestry Unit was created in MINEF to supervise the community forest institutions being created. In addition, the plethora of foreign NGOs working on logging, the plight of indigenous people in the forest zone and climate change all overwhelmed MINEF. While MINEF was set up as the bureaucracy responsible for brown and green environmental issues, the department for environment was in the shadows of the forest and wildlife departments. To redress this situation the government split up MINEF in December 2004, creating the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature (MINEP). Both ministries have been in conflict with one another since their creation as their mandates sometimes overlap.

2.3 Resources to implement the new forest policy

The initial cost of producing the new forest policy was borne by the World Bank as the first draft of the 1994 law was done in Washington D.C. at the Bank's head quarters. The community forest manual published in 1998 was also made possible by DFID funding of the Community Forestry Development Programme which developed the manual in partnership with MINEF. The Community Forestry Development Programme was also responsible for establishing the Community

Forestry Unit in MINEF. At the provincial level the development agencies partnered with MINEF to execute conservation with development projects such as the MCP Limbe executed by MINEF in partnership with DFID and the World Bank/GEF. Community based organisations such as the BBNRMC have not only benefited from MCP Limbe support but a plethora of institutions in Cameroon and abroad.

The BBNRMC has received financial support from the Cameroon Development Corporation and the National Employment Fund, both of which are government institutions; it has received technical support from the World Agroforestry Centre Cameroon office, and from the Forest Stewardship Council Cameroon; it has also received human, material and financial support from Camosun College Canada. The BBNRMC has also derived financial support from the rents obtained from forest users and benefited from the human resource capacity of researchers who have worked with their staff in executing their research. However, the largest resource transfer to the forestry sector in Cameroon is the US$108.9 million worth of aid that the government's donor partners are contributing towards the implementation of the current Forest Environment Sector Programme.

2.4 Relationship amongst stakeholders in the forestry sector

Since the decentralized forestry policy came into being, institutional actors in the forestry sector (global, national and local) have risen dramatically. At present there is no database on the number of registered local NGOs in the forestry sector. When the numerous quasi-formal institutions[1] at the local level such as the charcoal producers group, the timber exploiters group and fuelwood merchant group in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest are factored in, it becomes clear that the

[1] Quasi-formal institutions in this context refers to institutions that are neither formal as in legally registered with the state, nor informal as in operating without codified text; these institutions have written constitutions and bye-laws but have not taken steps to obtain formal registration

sector has experienced an explosion in the number of institutional stakeholders. MINFOF through its departments for cooperation, non-timber forest products valorisation and community forestry, now have some capacity to engage with these multiple stakeholders, but it is inadequate. These departments do not have provincial level staffs so are poorly integrated into local level networks.

The department of forestry and department of wildlife and protected areas are the largest in MINFOF with officers at the provincial, divisional and sub-divisional administrative units. This is not surprising, considering that both departments generate the largest revenue for the government and are the oldest, tracing their beginnings to the colonial era. Thus government's relationship with the timber industry and protected area institutions is much stronger compared with its relationship with community based institutions. In the Mt. Cameroon region, a stakeholder group that has made its presence felt even though it is not formally acknowledged by other major stakeholder groups on the 'ground' is the diasporal Bakweris based in the USA. Their human and technical support to their kinsfolk on the ground over the Bakweri land question has been hugely empowering. While the decentralized forest policy has given local people voice, their voice needs significant strengthening.

2.5 New enclosures

Since the adoption of the 1994 forest policy, Cameroon's protected area network has increased from 7 percent to 17 percent of the national territory, timber concessions have grown from an estimate[2] of 3 percent as at 1996 to 15 percent of the national territory, while community forests have grown from 0 to 1.3 percent of the national territory. Thus from barely 10 percent of the national territory officially

[2] The haphazard nature of logging before the 1994 law has made it difficult to ascertain how much timber concessions there were before 1994, the figure of 3% is an estimate calculated by Eba'a Atyi (1998) from official data of timber concessions in Cameroon from 1994 to 1996

enclosed for forestry purposes prior to 1994, forestry now encloses 33 percent of the national territory. The big winners in terms of enclosures are again the timber industry and the protected area institutions. Community forest institutions have a shoe-in but the difference in their landholdings and the other major actors is a wide unbridgeable gulf. The richer foreign capital backed actors are ruling the roost.

These new enclosures such as the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest have brought new transaction costs for local forest users. Community forests users now have to abide by new access rules and in the case of the BBCF have to pay use rents; this has sometimes caused violent conflict between forest users and the gatekeepers. Local people living around protected areas and timber concessions with limited use rights take advantage of their poor policing and carry on farming, hunting and gathering activities albeit as 'illegal' users. Thus the government, multinational NGOs, research institutions, and donors are channelling significant resources to strengthen forest law enforcement across the country. Forestry officials now undergo periodic military training, forest guards now set up road and rail checkpoints to curtail illegal timber and bushmeat transportation. However, these initiatives are often hampered by corruption.

3. Why are local people still on bread crumbs not the national cake?

While local people are now visible on the forest management landscape, they are tiny dots in a landscape dominated by government, industrialists and protectionists. The government's concern for its political survival means it has felt more secure granting more power over the forest resource to industrialists and protectionists than to its citizens. These wealthy actors have the global political clout and financial muscle to conveniently create difficulty for the government if it does not play ball;

these also have the power to enrich individual members of government who enable them to achieve their objectives. In the absence of an effective democracy, the citizen's voice is loudest through mass protest. In Cameroon the armed forces shoots down protesters. The government expertly concedes to the demands of its wealthy patrons but ruthlessly responds to citizen action that questions its authority.

Thus the threat to life of the Cameroonian citizen, who dares speak truth to power, keeps the citizenry content with bread crumbs rather than agitate loudly for a share of the national cake. In the forestry sector, timber is the key commodity, but it is in the hands of foreign firms. The small size of community forests (5,000 ha maximum) makes it impossible to obtain timber on a long-term basis. Local forest use rights which allows for subsistence farming, hunting, and gathering of non-timber forest products, protects households from extreme poverty but do not provide sufficient incomes for the majority to escape poverty. The inability of local people to hold local leaders and administrators to account mean the 40 percent timber royalty payments that go to timber municipalities and 10 percent that go to the concerned villages is subject to financial abuse without fear of localised sanctions. This mocks the government's aim in the decentralized forestry policy to alleviate poverty.

Thus gross inequalities are still observable in the forestry sector in spite of the decentralized forest policy. In the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest, this manifests as a refusal by the indigenes fully to recognize the citizenship rights of the non-indigenes to the community forests. The lack of government commitment to articulate and defend inclusive citizenship rights makes it impossible for the non-indigenes using the forest to overtly challenge the indigenes. Likewise the BBNRMC is unable to challenge the forestry department or demand accountability from it. This systemic absence of downward accountability is not surprising in a political system

where the government in power does not owe its political fortune to the citizenry. The current president, Paul Biya, was handpicked by his predecessor, Ahmadu Ahidjo, with the blessings of France, the colonial patron. Thus the inequalities run so deep, it will take more than a forest sector policy reform to do away with them.

4. Where did decentralization theory miss it?

As shown in Chapter 2, decentralization theory emphasises the transfer of political and economic power from the central state to auxiliaries of government at the local level so as to improve service delivery and social justice. Decentralization theory posits that government is more efficient and equitable when citizens have decision-making power on issues that concern their well-being. The theory which developed from the political experience of the United States (see Cremer et al., 1994; Krane et al., 2004), was introduced to developing countries including Cameroon by donor institutions such as the World Bank and DFID. These promoted decentralization on the grounds that it would catalyze demand-side accountability from the citizenry of these countries on their governments and hence promote good governance.

Decentralization theory focuses on the devolution of power from the central state to local governments; the decentralization programmes promoted by these donor institutions sought for devolution of power to local governments, civil society organisations and the private sector. This was a subtle but significant shift in emphasis from decentralized government to decentralized governance, from devolving power to local auxiliaries of government to devolving power to other institutions of society with government becoming just one stakeholder rather than the key stakeholder. This created space for donors and multinational firms as stakeholders in the development programmes of nation states in the developing world.

However, while decentralization is an *ex-ante* experience for the USA, being historically written into its foundational socio-organisational structure, most clearly in its 'Bill of Rights' (Black, 1988), it is an *ex-post* experience for governments and people in developing countries. Thus donor-led programmes for the devolution of power by the government to other institutions of governance in developing countries are undermined at the national and local levels. Incumbent institutions and individuals with political and economic power at the national and local levels are unsurprisingly unwilling to devolve power to less powerful institutions and individuals. Where there is an appearance of devolution, it is often to friends and cronies at the lower levels who will protect the interest of the patrons at higher levels.

The ease with which patrons at higher scales are able to identify and devolve power to preferred clients at local scales is the key blind-spot in *ex-post* programmes of decentralization. Due to the politics of indigeneity in developing countries like Cameroon, national level decision-makers consider themselves as 'local' as their kindred who have never left the village. Thus there is an unbroken thread that links the national decision-maker to the local level and ensures that the preferences of national decision-makers hold sway in the local domain. To overcome this patron-client relationship, Ribot and Larson (2005), emphasise the need for democratic decentralization, where power is devolved to elected local officials. They argue that elected officials are accountable to local people so are the appropriate decision-makers to wield devolved power at the local level. This is contrasted with devolution of power to NGOs and the private sector, institutional actors in society that are accountable to special interest groups and not to the broader citizenry.

However, democratic decentralization presupposes that local people are able to exercise substantive citizenship rights of electing their preferred local representatives. Cameroon's experience shows that incumbent leaders at the national level use the resources of the state to maintain their stay in power against the wishes of the electorate; national level leaders then use the resources of the state to influence who get elected rightly or fraudulently as a local representative. In cosmopolitan landscapes such as the Mt. Cameroon region, the politics of indigeneity means nominal cultural differences give rise to cultural prejudice and local conflict. To have an edge in the exploitation of local resources, indigenous groups then use the discourse of indigeneity as a lever for preferential access.

The Cameroon government, aware that the politics of indigeneity fractures the citizenry and hinders the development of a unified national consciousness, nevertheless enshrined it in the Constitution. In this context electoral politics take on an ethnic character and democratic decentralization cannot be established. Donor institutions with their neo-liberal emphasis on privatization as part of the decentralization package, accentuate local competition for resources. This is because multinational firms are enclosing larger and larger share of formerly public resources, shrinking the share of common property resources available to local people. Indigenous groups then fall back to discourses of indigeneity and autochthony to assure preferential access to the shrinking resource base. Indigeneity and privatisation are therefore irreconcilable with the pro-equity stance in decentralization theory.

What the above discussion and this thesis draw attention to is that the local is embedded in the national and increasingly in the global. The local is not an insular sphere that produces individuals untainted by traits of unrestrained personal ambition, greed, and corruption. The local is not intrinsically good or noble; institutions at the

local level are not intrinsically more responsive to the needs of local people but are also opened to capture of special interest groups as national and global institutions. Thus decentralized forestry proposes a scalar solution to a social problem; it privileges institutional structure over human agency, local context and history.

5. Where do we go from here?

Cameroon's decentralized forest policy has strengthened the position of the owners of capital in the country's forest sector. The sector will completely collapse if its various foreign aid agencies, foreign timber companies and global NGOs decide to pull out of the country. The present Forest Environment Sector Programme is so closely aligned to donor interest that it is simply unworkable without foreign aid. The government has become answerable to a wider set of foreign actors than was the case before the 1994 forest law, and this has reduced some more of its political autonomy. There has been devolution of power but it has not been to the grassroots below but to the patrons above. Where do we go from here then? Is Susan George an irredeemable optimist when she enthused '*there are thousands of alternatives*'[3].

The deep systemic inequalities identified in this study at the local, national and global levels have been exhaustively analysed to be a by-product of the global capitalist system (Brockington et al., 2008). Capitalism produces winners and losers; however, capitalists are not driven solely by a desire for wealth accumulation. When the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher enthused in a 1997 speech that '*there is no alternative*'[4] to free market capitalism, she was stating forth an economic as well as a political argument. Her 1997 speech was given in context of canvassing for votes

[3] See George (2002) '*Another World is Possible'*; in George (1999) she asserts that before Thatcher poverty in Britain was 1 in 10 persons but after Thatcher it had increased to 4 in 10 persons

[4] See transcript of Thatcher's speech in the *Daily Telegraph* of 1 April 1997, this is available online at: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=108369

in the British general elections of 1st May of 1997 that the Conservatives ultimately lost and New Labour under Tony Blair came to power. Under neo-liberal market ideology, political power effectively lies in the hands of the owners of capital and entrepreneurs rather than in the hands of bureaucrats and career politicians.

Given that some seek wealth as an end and others as a means to political power; given also that some seek political power as a route to wealth and others as an end; the path to a more equitable world must engage with these set of powerful actors at the local, national and global scale. These have to be persuaded that a utopia of capitalism leads to financial crises like the 2008/2009 global recession. These have to be persuaded that power as an end in itself and in the hands of the few leads to tyranny and social collapse. Economic and political power must be tempered by an understanding that humanity is an organic whole, and that when one part suffers, it would inevitably impinge on the well-being of the other parts of the organism.

The wealthiest regions of the world, Europe and America, continue to attract economic migrants from Africa, Asia and South America, willing to risk their lives for a better quality of life. As they arrive social life in destination countries is transformed irreversibly. As economic and political difficulties in their homeland lead to socio-economic chaos, this creates unforeseen intractable problems like piracy in Somalia and oil rebellions in Nigeria that keep the world on edge (Snoddon, 2007). As the private sector pollutes the environment, we end up with complex problems like climate change. Economic and political power-holders need to wake up to the fact that it is not 'their' world to do as they please, but it is 'our' world, we are in it together, we must share wealth and power. Economic and political power-holders must move from a trickle-down economics ideology to a running-stream economics ideology.

6. The final word

Cameroon's decentralized forest policy has contributed to social transformation since forestry reforms began in 1989. The transformations have impacted on all members of the state including the government, donors, the plethora of foreign and national civil society organisations, and Cameroonian citizens abroad. The 'transformation' has not followed the path projected by the visionaries in Washington D. C.; it has instead been deflected in multiple ways by individualities, collective interest, contested ontology and historical imperatives. Thus Cameroon has failed to arrive at the equitable utopia envisioned by decentralization theory. Privatization is implicated in this debacle; making Margaret Thatcher's stance for the market as the optimal form of social organisation disagreeable.

While I do not claim that 'there are thousands of alternatives' like Susan George, on how to organise human society, I am convinced that a more equitable world is not only needful but feasible. We will get there as we continue to seek for ontologies that balance our need for both individuality and collective well being. The preservation of the forest, a contested social space, depends on humanity finding that balance. The forest is thus a space of hope not only for persons who obtain their livelihoods from it, or for its contributions to ameliorating global warming, but a space of hope for the lessons it teaches humanity about our interconnectedness.

As I stated in Chapter 1, this study has not just been about contributing to knowledge but has also been a personal journey towards understanding an event I witnessed two decades ago. Indeed, executing this study, has helped me understand why protest against the World Bank's structural adjustment programme by Nigerian students two decades ago, was met with a violent response by the state. It is all to do with individualities, collectives, ontologies and historical imperatives of the state.

Appendix 1: List of research participants interviewed in the field

No.	Date	Sector	Position	Location
1.	02/12/2005 and 06/09/2006	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Retired	Limbe
2.	02/12/2005 and 07/04/2006 and 31/08/2006	BBNRMC	Executive	Limbe
3.	02/12/2005 and 19/10/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
4.	02/12/2005	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Academic	Limbe
5.	02/12/2005 and 01/09/2006	National NGO Community Based Conservation	Programme Manager	Limbe
6.	02/12/2005	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Provincial Head of Section	Buea
7.	12/12/2005	Middle Cadre Environment Civil Servant	Provincial Section Head	Buea
8.	12/12/2005	Senior Agriculture Civil Servant	Provincial Head of Section	Buea
9.	12/12/2005	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Provincial Head of Section	Buea
10.	15/12/2005	Senior Environment Civil Servant	Donor Liaison Section	Yaounde
11.	15/12/2005	Donor Organization	Administrator	Yaounde
12.	15/12/2005	Senior Civil Servant Finance	Donor Liaison Section	Yaounde
13.	15/12/2005	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Donor Liaison Section	Yaounde
14.	16/12/2005	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	HIPC Secretariat Expert	Yaounde
15.	16/12/2005	Donor Organization	Administrator	Yaounde
16.	16/12/2005	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Programme Manager	Yaounde
17.	16/12/2005	National NGO Community Forest	Programme Manager	Yaounde
18.	06/01/2006	Local NGO Forest Enterprise	Director	Buea
19.	16/01/2006	Local NGO	Beekeeping Expert	Oku
20.	16/01/2006	Community Based Conservation	Programme Manager	Oku
21.	17/01/2006	Middle Cadre Forestry Civil Servant	Divisional Section Head	Fundong
22.	17/01/2006	Community Based Conservation	Programme Officer	Fundong
23.	17/01/2006	Local NGO Agriculture and Forestry	Director	Bamenda
24.	18/01/2006	Middle Cadre Environment Civil Servant	Provincial Section Head	Bamenda
25.	18/01/2006	Middle Cadre Livestock Civil Servant	Provincial Section Head	Bamenda

26.	18/01/2006	Middle Cadre Forestry Civil Servant	Provincial Head of Section	Bamenda
27.	18/01/2006	Local NGO	Director	Bamenda
28.	18/01/2006	Local NGO Agriculture and Forestry	Programme Officer	Bamenda
29.	18/01/2006	Local NGO Agriculture and Forestry	Director	Bamenda
30.	18/01/2006	Senior Civil Servant Regional Development	Provincial Head of Section	Bamenda
31.	19/01/2006	Local NGO	Director	Bamenda
32.	19/01/2006	Global NGO Development	Programme Officer	Bamenda
33.	05/04/2006 and 30/10/2006	Local NGO	Community Forestry Expert	Limbe
34.	05/04/2006	Local NGO Community Forest	Community Forestry Expert	Limbe
35.	12/04/2006	Middle Cadre Forestry Civil Servant	Social Forester	Bamenda
36.	12/04/2006	Donor Organization	Administrator	Bamenda
37.	12/04/2006	Local NGO Agriculture and Forestry	Director	Bamenda
38.	22/04/2006 and 20/05/2006 and 08/10/2006	BBNRMC	Executive	Limbe
39.	23/04/2006 and 14/06/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
40.	25/04/2006	Local NGO	Forest Survey	Limbe
41.	25/04/2006	Local NGO	Wildlife Survey	Limbe
42.	22/05/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
43.	03/06/2006	Traditional Leader	Chief	Limbe
44.	03/06/2006	BBNRMC	Board Member	Limbe
45.	05/06/2006	BBNRMC Operations Committee	Focus Group	Limbe
46.	05/06/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
47.	06/06/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
48.	08/06/2006	BBNRMC	Board Member	Limbe
49.	10/06/2006	Traditional Leader	Chief	Limbe
50.	10/06/2006	BBNRMC	Executive	Limbe
51.	12/06/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
52.	14/06/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
53.	16/06/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe

54.	17/06/2006	Junior Civil Servant	Beekeeping Expert	Limbe
55.	26/06/2006	Charcoal Producer	BBCF User	Limbe
56.	30/06/2006	Charcoal Producer	BBCF User	Limbe
57.	08/08/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
58.	28/08/2006	BBNRMC Operations Committee	Focus Group	Limbe
59.	28/08/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
60.	28/08/2006	National NGO	Beekeeping Expert	Limbe
61.	29/08/2006	National NGO Forestry	Programme Assistant	Limbe
62.	30/08/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
63.	30/08/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
64.	31/08/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
65.	31/08/2006	National NGO	Middle Cadre Staff	Limbe
66.	01/09/2006	National NGO Forestry	Director	Limbe
67.	05/09/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
68.	05/09/2006	National NGO Community Based Conservation	Junior Staff	Limbe
69.	06/09/2006	Senior Forestry Civil Servant	Retired	Limbe
70.	06/09/2006	National NGO	Senior Staff	Limbe
71.	08/09/2006	BBCF User Group	Focus Group	Limbe
72.	08/09/2006	Local NGO	Social Forester	Limbe
73.	10/09/2006	Senior Civil Servant	Administration	Limbe
74.	11/09/2006	Middle Cadre Forestry Civil Servant	Divisional Forestry Officer	Limbe
75.	11/09/2006	Junior Cadre Forestry Contract Personnel	Administration	Limbe
76.	12/09/2006	Local NGO	Director	Limbe
77.	12/09/2006	Community Forestry Association	President	Limbe
78.	13/09/2006	BBNRMC	Executive	Limbe
79.	14/09/2006	Middle Cadre Agriculture Civil Servant	Local Section Head	Limbe
80.	14/09/2006	Traditional Leader	Chief	Limbe
81.	15/09/2006 and 28/10/2006	Local NGO Forestry	Director	Buea
82.	18/09/2006	Logging	Social Forester	Limbe
83.	18/09/2006	National NGO	Forestry Research Staff	Limbe
84.	18/09/2006	Local NGO Agriculture and Forestry	Director	Limbe
85.	20/09/2006	Limbe Traditional Council	Community Leader	Limbe
86.	21/09/2006	Global NGO	Middle Cadre Staff	Limbe
87.	21/09/2006	National NGO Development	Director	Limbe
88.	27/09/2006	Charcoal Producer	BBCF User	Limbe

89.	27/09/2006	Charcoal Producer	BBCF User	Limbe
90.	28/09/2006	BBNRMC	Executive	Limbe
91.	28/09/2006	Charcoal Producer	BBCF User	Limbe
92.	28/09/2006	Charcoal Producer	BBCF User	Limbe
93.	02/10/2006	BBNRMC	Board Member	Limbe
94.	02/10/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
95.	10/10/2006	Logging	BBCF User	Limbe
96.	10/10/2006	BBNRMC	Staff	Limbe
97.	10/10/2006	Logging	BBCF User	Limbe
98.	11/10/2006	Logging	BBCF User	Limbe
99.	12/10/2006	Farmer Group Leader	BBCF User	Limbe
100.	12/10/2006	Farmer Group Leader	BBCF User	Limbe
101.	18/10/2006	Middle Cadre Forestry Civil Servant	Local Section Head	Limbe
102.	18/10/2006	Middle Cadre Forestry Civil Servant	Social Forester	Limbe
103.	22/10/2006	Community Forestry Association	President	Douala
104.	28/10/2006	Local NGO	Director	Buea
105.	28/10/2006	Local NGO	Director	Buea
106.	28/10/2006	Local NGO	Director	Buea
107.	28/10/2006	National NGO Governance	Focus Group	Limbe
108.	28/10/2006	Local NGO Development	Programme Officer	Buea
109.	28/10/2006	Political Leader	Administrator	Buea
110.	28/10/2006	Political Leader	Administrator	Buea
111.	28/10/2006	Senior Environment Civil Servant	Provincial Section Head	Buea
112.	28/10/2006	Researcher Forestry	Cameroon University Academic	Buea
113.	28/10/2006	Political Leader	Parliamentarian	Buea
114.	28/10/2006	Political Leader	Parliamentarian	Buea
115.	28/10/2006	Political Leader	Parliamentarian	Buea
116.	28/10/2006	Political Leader	Parliamentarian	Buea
117.	28/10/2006	Donor Organization	Programme Manager	Buea
118.	28/10/2006	Donor Organization	Administrator	Buea
119.	28/10/2006	Global NGO Development	Programme Officer	Buea

Appendix 2: Household survey questionnaire

BB Community Forest Farmer Assessment Survey

Name of Enumerator:
Date:
Time:
Language used:

Household data

Name of community:
Location:
Compound number:
Number of tenants in compound:

No.	Tenant name	S	D	Profession	Ethnicity
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					

If profession is farming, hunting, timber/firewood/chainsaw operator, fishing, please ask for brief description: _____

Additional observation: _____

BB Community Forest Farmer Assessment Survey

Name of Enumerator:
Date:
Time:
Language used:

Household data

Name of community:
Location:
Compound number:
Number of tenants in compound:

No.	Tenant name	S	D	Profession	Ethnicity
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					

If profession is farming, hunting, timber/firewood/chainsaw operator, fishing, please ask for brief description: _____

Additional observation: _____

Appendix 3: Village survey questionnaire

Bimbia Village Survey

A. Demographics

1.	Name of the village (local and traditional)	
2.	For how many years have people settled in this village?	
3.	What was the total population of the village 10 years ago?	
4.	What was the total number of households of the village 10 years ago?	
5.	What is the current population of the village?	
6.	How many households live currently in this village?	
7.	What proportion of the total current households has settled in the village over the past 10 years (in-migration)?	%
8.	What proportion of the total households 10 years ago has left the village (out-migration)?	%

B. Wages and prices

1.	What is the daily wage rate for unskilled agricultural/casual adult **male/female** labour during the **peak/slack** season in this village (Lc$/day)?		**Male**	**Female**
		Peak		
		Slack		
2.	What is the main staple food in the village?	(name)		
3.				
4.	What was the price of a kg of the staple food during the last year **before** and **after** the main agricultural harvest (in Lc$/kg)	**Before harvest**	**After harvest**	
5.	What is the sales value of one hectare of good agricultural land in the village (i.e., within 1km from the main road or settlement, not degraded, not too steep, and suitable for common crops) Lc$/hectare			

C. Infrastructure

1.	What proportion (approx.) of the households in the village has access to electricity (from public or private suppliers)?	%		
2.	What proportion (approximately) of the households in the village has access to piped tap water?	%		
3.	How many banks and other formal credit institutions are present in the village?			
4.	Are *informal* credit institutions such as savings clubs (*njangi*) and moneylenders present in the village? *(0-1)*			
5.	What is the distance from the village centre to the nearest …….. (in *minutes* by most common means of transport and in *km*)	1. district market	min	km
		2. market for major consumption goods	min	km
		3. market where agric. products are sold	min	km
		4. market where forest products are sold	min	km
		5. major road or river (useable/navigable all year)	min	km
6.	What is the most common means of transportation for transporting agric. and forest produce (cf. above question)?			

D. Forest Institutions

1. What are the three most important products (MIP) from the forest in the village in term of contribution to household use and cash income?	**Rank**	**Product**
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
2. In what type of forest do you get the MIP? (community forest, native forest or CDC forest land)		
3. Are the *customary* rules about forest enforced/respected by the members in the village? *Codes: 0=no/very little; 1=to a certain extend, 2=yes, generally they are, 3=no particular rules exist.*		
4. Are there *government* rules that regulate forest use? *Codes: 0=none/very few; 1=some but vague/unclear; 2=yes, clear rules exist*		
5. Are the *government* rules enforced/respected by the members in the village? *Codes: 0=no/very little;1=to a certain extend; 2=yes, generally they are*		
6. Do the villagers require any permission to harvest the MIP? *Codes: 0=No; 1=Yes, I have to inform the authorities; 2. Yes, written permission needed*		
7. If yes, who issues this permit? *Codes: 1=Village head; 2=FUG; 3=Forest Officer (forest department;4=other Government body; 5=other, specify*		

8. What changes do you think would be most important to increase the production from forests? *Please rank the 3 most important*		**Rank**
	1. Better access to the forest	
	2. Better protection of forest (avoid overuse)	
	3. Better skills	
	4. Better access to credit/capital	
	5. Better access to markets	
	6. Reduced risk	
	7. Better equipment/ technology, e.g. chainsaw	
	9. Other, specify	

E. Forest User Groups (FUG)

Note: The interviewer should explain what a FUG is,

1. How many forest user groups (FUG) (or similar) are there in the village?		
2. When was the group formed? (year)		
3. How was the group formed? *Codes: 1= local initiative; 2=Initiative from NGO; 3=Initiative from Forest Department or government; 4 =other, specify*		
4. How many members are there in the group?		
5. What are the main tasks of the FUG? *Select as many as appropriate: 0-1 code)*	1. Setting rules for use	
	2. Monitoring and policing	
	3. Forest tree cultivation	
	4. Harvesting forest products	
	5. Selling forest products	
	6. Other, specify:	
6. Has the FUG over the last year imposed any penalties on those breaking the rules? *(0-1)*		
7. If yes, what type of penalties? *Codes: 1=fee (cash payment); 2=labour (extra work); 3=exclusion from group; 4=other, specify:*		
8. How many times per year does the FUG have meetings?		

Important: If more than one FUG, one should fill in the above table for each groups! (see extra sheet)

F. Risk

1. Has the village faced any of the following crises over the past 12 months? *Codes: 0= No; 1= Yes, mild crisis; 2= Yes, severe crisis*	1. Flood and or excess rain	
	2. Drought	
	3. Wild fire (in forest/grasslands etc)	
	4. Widespread crop pest/disease and or animal disease	
	5. Human epidemics (disease)	
	6. Political/civil unrest	
	7. Economic crisis	
	8. Refugee or migration infusion	
	9. Other……	

G. Environmental income from forest

1. What share of the different environmental incomes comes from the forest? By 'come from the forest' we mean that the resources are harvested *within* the forests, or that the existence of the resource depends critically in the existence of forests (ecologically linked), cf. discussion on definitions in the Technical Guidelines.
Also note that forests include woodlands, cf. definitions.

	Share from the forest	Share from agric. land	Share from other areas
Firewood			
Poles and wooden building material			
Fodder for animals			
Bush meat			
Fish			

Appendix 4: Result from forest walk in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

A forest walk was carried out in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest from the 17th to 24th January 2006, under the guidance of the operations committee of the Bimbia Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council. The objective was to obtain an understanding of the health of the community forest.

Method:

The forest walk was preceded by a planning meeting at the BBNRMC office every morning before the team set off. Using a base map of the community forest, routes were selected to cover all the compartments. The daily schedule was set up as follows:

Day 1 (18 Jan) – Water tank to Mabeta

Day 2 (19 Jan) – Mawoh to Camp 3 Mabeta

Day 3 (20 Jan) – Mabeta New Layout to Mile 4

Day 4 (21 Jan) – Moliwe to Ombe Native and

Day 5 (23 Jan) – CDC Camp 2 Mabeta to Bamukong

During forest walk, land use types and forest health in each compartment was noted. Walks commenced early in the morning and lasted till sundown.

Results:

Land use types observed were CDC plantations of rubber and palms; smallholder plantations of cocoa, coffee and palms; small sized mixed food crop farms; secondary highly degraded open forest and secondary closed canopy forest. The food crop farms were mainly plantains, cassava and common vegetables. The highly degraded forests were from Livanda, Motondoh up to Bonadikombo compartments in northern section of the community forest. The closed canopy secondary forests were in the southern section of the community forest in the Bimbia land areas making up the core zone. We encountered tree stumps in areas where no exploitation permit had been issued by the management council indicating illegal exploitation. The stumps were mainly in the highly degraded areas.

Appendix 5: Memorandum of understanding with local host institution

PAN AFRICAN INSTITUTE
FOR DEVELOPMENT
West Africa - Buea
(PAID-WA)

INSTITUT PANAFRICAIN
POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT
Afrique de l'Ouest Anglophone-Buea
(PAID-WA)

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION / ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE

P.O. Box 133, Buea, Cameroon; Tel.: (237) 7279584/7279568 Fax: (237) 33222703 E-mail: info@paid-wa.org Website: www.paid-wa.org

17th September 2004

Mr. Emmanuel Nuesiri
School of Geography & Environment (SoGE),
University of Oxford,
UK.

Dear Mr. Nuesirri,

RE: USE OF PAID-WA AS RESEARCH BASE

Please refer to your request to use our Institute as a base while carrying out your Doctoral research beginning January to December 2005, and to our follow-up discussion with regard to this. I hereby convey approval for this purpose.

While here on this programme the following shall be the understanding between the institute and yourself, which will be binding.

PAID-WA shall:

- Provide you a work space on its campus in Buea
- Allow you to use the complementary card which identifies you as a research associate of PAID-WA
- Offer you accommodation facility on its campus at an agreed monthly rate.
- Provide you vehicle for research purpose, when available, at the usual official rate.
- Allow you to use its library facilities but observe its library protocol
- Can invite you to attend, as an observer or facilitator, its training and research programmes
- Provide you access to her telephone, and internet facilities at the usual official rate.

On your part you will:

- Acknowledge PAID-WA in all publication resulting from your research work
- Contribute to the academic / professional programmes of PAID-WA when called upon to do so. In doing this, your research schedule will be respected
- Collaborate with the professional staff of PAID-WA in co-authoring and or / reviewing their work for publication. Please note that in this regard, PAID-WA has the exclusive right to publish or disseminate in all languages, report arising from such materials. The rights and duties provided for in this paragraph shall

continue notwithstanding the termination of the agreement or the execution of its other provisions.

- Freely contribute to the design of research proposal being developed by PAID-WA
- Contribute to fund raising effort embarked on by PAID-WA
- Donate all research equipments and vehicle obtained from the research fund resulting from the research collaboration with PAID-WA.

If travel is required as a result of the research work initiated by PAID-WA, it will bear the cost of travel.

You will also agree that all knowledge, information not already within the public domain which you may acquire on or from PAID-WA, shall at all time and for all purpose be regarded by you as strictly confidential and held by you in confidence, and shall not be directly or indirectly disclosed by you to any person, whatsoever except with PAID-WA's written permission.

Any dispute pertaining to the execution or breach of this Agreement shall be resolved amicably between the two parties. In case of disagreement, the Minister of External Relations in Cameroon will be eligible to judge the case.

Please indicate your agreement with the foregoing by signing and returning two copies of this agreement to the Director PAID-WA

Yours Sincerely,

Rosetta Bola Thompson (Mrs.)
Director, PAID-WA

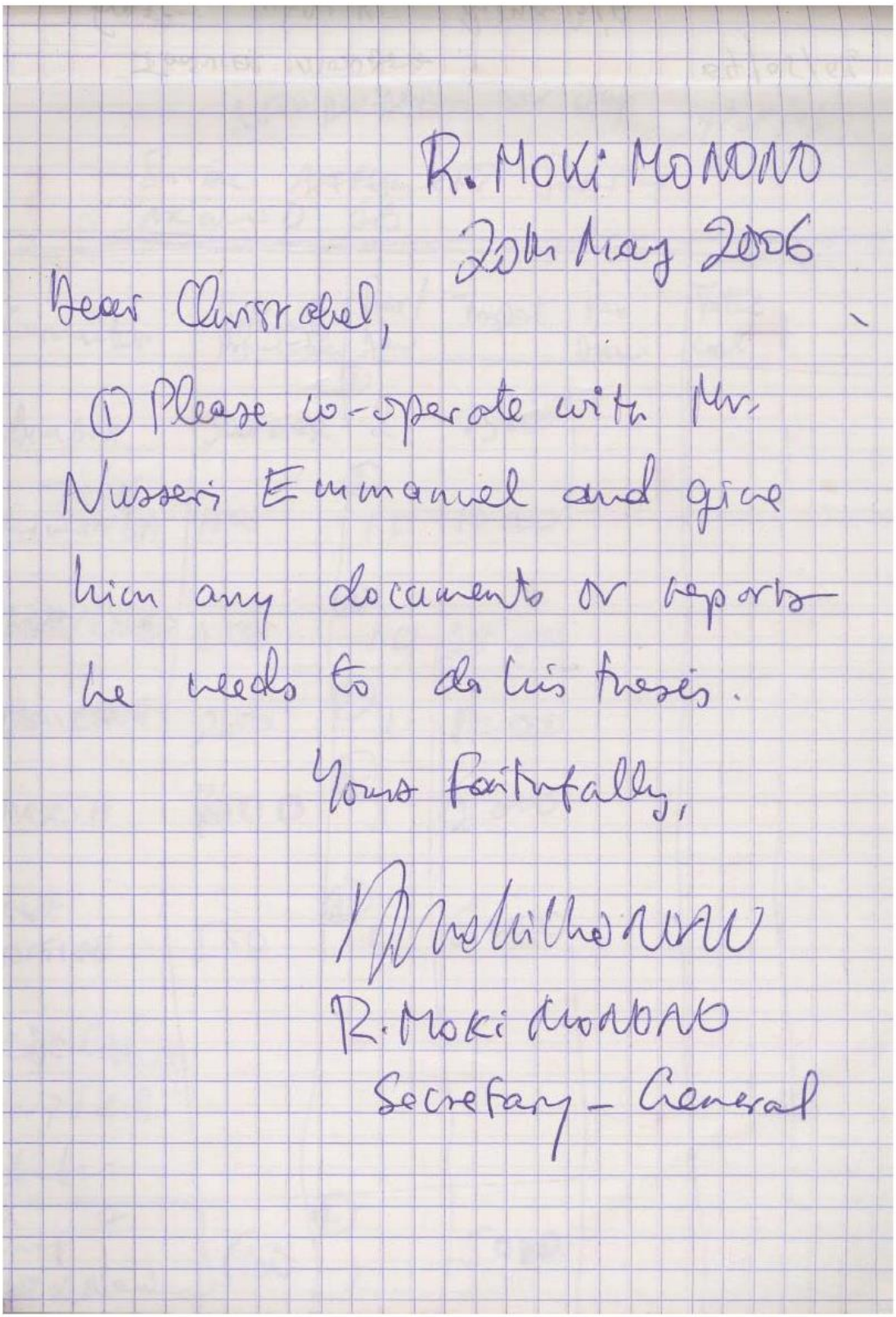
READ AND ACCEPTED

Name of Researcher: Nuesiri Emmanuel

Signature: _____

Date: 20/09/04

Appendix 6: Permit to access BBNRMC documents



R. Moki Mondo
25th May 2006

Dear Chairperson,

① Please co-operate with Mr. Nussen Emmanuel and give him any documents or reports he needs to do his thesis.

Yours faithfully,

R. Moki Mondo
Secretary - General

Appendix 7: Giving back research results to the BBNRMC

chapters 6 n 7 Monday, 11 August, 2008 4:03 PM

From: "Janvier Mondoa" <janvier.mondoa@gmail.com>
To: nuesiri@yahoo.co.uk
Message contains attachments
Chapter_6.doc (1804KB), Chapter_7.doc (1436KB)

Hello,

attached herewith r the last two chapters.

Just some few comments, the income figures you have mentioned for the periods 2001-2005 for deposit and withdrawals is somwhat incompartible. The table for deposit shows that about 23 million france was deposited while the table for withdrawal shows that about 31 million was withdrawn, i don't understand?

Also, you mentioned somewhere in the financial section that ma collected her debts from Withdrawals she made from the bank in 2005/06, she usually collected funds to either pay for remuneration or to execute project. They were not collected as payment for debts owed her.

I also think that the fact that youths in Limbe were were employed and paid during the tree planting campaign is a form of social development, don't you think?
I am going to Edea today for the workshop i mentioned to you about, so it is surely be the end of next week that, i will be through with the excel worksheets.
A bientot.

Janvier

Google Mail BETA

Emmanuel Nuesiri <nuesiri@googlemail.com>

Chat with janvier.mondoa@gmail.com

janvier.mondoa@gmail.com <janvier.mondoa@gmail.com> **Tue, Sep 16, 2008 at 12:38 PM**
To: nuesiri@googlemail.com

12:10 PM **janvier.mondoa**: hello
12:14 PM **Emmanuel**: will actually look at the data next week and do the analysis then
janvier.mondoa: ok

12:17 PM **janvier.mondoa**: ok, waiting
i am online to look for more leads
if u come across anything, do not hesitate to let me know
12:18 PM i am talking about scholarships particularly
Emmanuel: can i use the comments u made about the chapters directly in my work
12:19 PM **janvier.mondoa**: yes
12:20 PM r u there i just sent an inquiry?
Emmanuel: yes, i am here

Appendix 8

Charcoal production in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest

The charcoal producers obtain single-tree felling permit from the Bimbia-Bonadikombo Natural Resources Management Council before commencing operation. The council monitors their operation by sending an inspection team to verify if selected tree is of exploitable size. If the team is satisfied, the exploiter hires a chainsaw operator who fells the tree and cuts the log into round strips with average height of about 20 cm each. The strips are split into little pieces with an axe, loaded into a ground pit and combusted to produce charcoal. An exploitation permit is valid for 4 months, while the logs last between 3 to 5 months before it is all used up. Logs of 1.5 to 2 metres in diameter were abundant when charcoal production started in the early 1990s, but are now scarce in the community forest. The larger branches of the trees are also used but smaller branches are left to rot because they do not combust very well and produce brittle charcoal. The charcoal producers often do the splitting, combusting, bagging and transportation to market of their product themselves or with the help of family; however, some do hire local labour to carry out these tasks.

Pictures of charcoal production in Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest



Charcoal producer displaying his permit



Charcoal pit



Normal sized log (becoming rare)



Small-sized log with strips

Appendix 9: Risk to life of BBNRMC field staff

BBNRMC

Bimbia Bonadikombo Natural Resource Mnagement Council
P.O. Box 414 Limbe, Nambeke street Cameroon
Divisional officer's Building Tel 9811309

20/12/04

The D.O
Limbe Central

Dear Sir,

Subject: Complaint against aggression of BBNRMC staff

On the 18th of December, 2004 two office staff and one operations committee member of the BBNRMC including two Canadian interns went to the forest for a field trip feasibility studies on the Bimbia community forest Ecotourism programme. Upon reaching Dikolo peninsular, and Likomba la Mbenge (compartments where no activity is supposed to take place except research and Ecotourism, failure of which results to serious punishment meted on the defaulter) we came across two sites where Opepe and Cam wood had been illegally exploited.

We decided that on our way back we would take the sawn timbers to our office for we had concluded upon investigation that nobody had an authorization to exploit timbers

We had to come back to Chop farm and then get back to the exploitation sites to carry the timbers. As we were about to leave another vehicle with the number plate SW7343B driven by one Mr. Nyah was carrying the Opepe on the roof of his vehicle. He did not stop when we asked him to and we had to follow him to Mbonjo (Down beach).

When we reached down beach we politely asked him if he had a permit for the sawn timber. He said that it belonged to one soldier who had bought it from one timber exploiter and that the soldier had asked him to carry the timbers and deliver to him. We told him that we would compound the timbers and take to our office premises and if he could phone the owner to come with a permit we would return the timbers.

As I was untying the timbers the driver came with a machete to slaughter me. As he raised the it to strike I dodged and defended with my hands. I had 8 wounds on my palms from the machete. We called the board President and explained the situation to her who immediately arranged to come with the police. Before the driver ordered one of his friends to carry the timbers away from site before the police could arrive.

When the police arrived, the driver started running away. The BBNRMC team chased him but unfortunately could not get him as one of his friends who is also a driver by name Henry, drove past us and carried him away.

We went to the police to give our complaint; unfortunately there was no body at the police station to attend to us. We decided to go to the police today to lay our complaint.

Below are the names of The BBNRMC team and Canadian interns

BBNRMC:
Johnson Janvier Mondoa
Ngale Jacob Masoa
Eko Lifambe Jacob

Canadian Interns
John Antill
Craig Paulson

Appendix 10: Single tree permit form

Bimbia Bonadikombo Natural Resource Management Council

AUTHORISATION TO TRANSFORM TIMBER/CHARCOAL/FUELWOOD FOR PERSONAL USE

ORDINARY PERMIT

Permit No: ---------- Date Issued----------

I, authorizing officer (Forest Manager), Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest, do hereby authorize Mr.----------of ----------ID.No. ----------Tel No.---------- To transform into Timber/Charcoal/Fuel wood --------abandoned/standing tree(s) namely---------- ----------locally called----------located in----------forest (Compartment-------). Inspection confirmed that the area is in the community forest. His operator for the job is----------Mob. Phone No----------

Tree Specifications

	Local Name	Scientific Name	Tree Girth	Tree Height	Volume
1.					
2.					

This permit is issued under the following conditions:

1. This permit cannot be transferred or sold to another person.
2. Timber/Charcoal/Fuel wood derived from this permit is meant for personal use only and cannot be sold commercially.
3. The exploiter must cut and transport the wood before the permit expires.
4. If the above is not possible, the exploiter must report to the office immediately for the permit to be extended before the permit expires.
5. No exploiter can cut more tree(s) than he has been given.
6. No exploitation in the core forest is allowed.
7. The exploitation of Doussie, Ebony, Bobinga, and Camwood are banned except by special permits.
8. The Operation committee Members of the Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest shall follow up this operation to completion.

Permit Validity: From---------- to ----------

1. ----------
2. ----------
3. ----------

Authorizing Officer

CC: Chief of Post MINFOF
File Chrono

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Interviews

No.	Date	Code Name	Sector	Place
1.	18-Oct-06	Alain	Forestry Department Staff	Limbe
2.	08-Aug-06	Antoine	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
3.	10-Jun-06	Arnaud	Bakweri Traditional Leader	Limbe
4.	17-Jun-06	Bernard	Beekeeping Expert	Limbe
5.	14-Jun-06	Bertrand	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
6.	02-Oct-06	Blaise	Farmer	Limbe
7.	16-Jun-06	Carine	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
	31-Aug-06	Carine	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
	28-Oct-07	Carine	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
8.	10-Oct-06	Charles	Local Timber Merchant	Limbe
9.	28-Sep-06	Chick	Charcoal Producer	Limbe
10.	01-Sep-06	Danielle	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
11.	05-Sep-06	Dominic	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
12.	05-Apr-06	Emmanuel	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
13.	15-Sep-06	Fidelis	Local NGO Personnel	Buea
14.	20-Sep-06	Francis	Bakweri Traditional Leader	Limbe
15.	28-Aug-06	Franck	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
16.	02-Oct-06	Franklin	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
17.	10-Oct-06	Gaspard	Local Timber Merchant	Limbe
18.	30-Aug-06	Gaston	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
19.	13-Sep-06	Guy	BBNRMC Executive	Limbe
20.	14-Jun-06	Henry	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
21.	14-Sep-06	Hughes	Bakweri Traditional Leader	Limbe
22.	28-Sep-06	Jackson	Charcoal Producer	Limbe
23.	12-Oct-06	Jacques	Farmer	Limbe
24.	18-Sep-06	Junior	Local NGO Personnel	Limbe
25.	11-Sep-06	Martial	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
26.	11-Oct-06	Martin	Local Timber Merchant	Limbe
27.	30-Aug-06	Maurice	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
28.	28-Aug-06	Mbah	Beekeeping Expert	Limbe
29.	12-Oct-06	Michelle	Farmer	Limbe
30.	08-Oct-06	Narcisse	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
31.	08-Sep-06	Nelly	Charcoal Producers Focus Group	Limbe
32.	21-Sep-06	Olivier	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
33.	18-Oct-06	Pascal	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
34.	06-Sep-06	Patrick	Retired Forester	Limbe
35.	02-Dec-05	Philemon	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
36.	25-Apr-06	Philip	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
37.	14-Sep-06	Rodrick	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe

38.	27-Sep-06	Sandra	Charcoal Producer	Limbe
39.	31-Aug-06	Sandrine	BBNRMC Executive	Limbe
40.	25-Apr-06	Sharon	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
41.	08-Sep-06	Sonia	Former Mt. Cameroon Project Limbe Staff	Limbe
42.	27-Sep-06	Stephan	Charcoal Producer	Limbe
43.	10-Jun-06	Stephanie	BBNRMC Executive	Limbe
44.	28-Sep-06	Steven	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
45.	05-Jun-06	Sylvain	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe
46.	06-Sep-06	Thomas	National NGO Personnel	Limbe
47.	12-Jul-06	Yannick	BBNRMC Staff	Limbe