Context and rationale

Cameroon has adopted a vision (Cameroon vision 2035) with the goal of becoming "an emerging country by 2035" and a Strategy Document for Growth and Employment (DSCE), which aims to reduce poverty. The public authorities work on five pillars, including rural development (DSCE §185) and governance (DSCE §354). To achieve this goal, the government is working to renew the production system and invest in the mining sector (DSCE §201) and to increase foreign direct investment, particularly in the agricultural sector. As part of the implementation of this strategy, the government is granting mining permits. In just 40% of the national territory that was explored in 2011, 176 research permits and 5 operating permits are in use (source EITI 2011). These permits are granted without any competitive process, let alone the participation of local elected representatives and local communities, leading to a sort of “over-the-counter” procedure. For example, exploration permits appear to be converted into operating licenses without competition, posing problems for both transparency and participation that could ultimately affect the quality of resource management. Unfortunately, all of these practices are included within the current legal framework, which emphasizes the need to amend the framework to allow for the transparency and participation of other interest groups in accordance with the ideal of a fair and democratic society.

Regarding land concessions to agro-industries, despite the lack of information and clarity about the conditions of allocation, our research revealed that in the year 2013, between 1.6 and 2 million hectares were solicited for the establishment of agro-industrial farms (compilation FES, CED, ACDIC 2012). This involves numerous issues, such as the lack of consultation with third parties (local communities and local elected representatives), inaccessibility to contract clauses, conflicts between agro-industries and local communities, ignoring the rights and livelihoods of communities; all greatly undermining the achievement of MDG 1 "Reducing Extreme Hunger and Poverty" by Cameroon. Moreover, the allocation of these concessions to the detriment of local producers also hinders the development of family farming and that of a class of local entrepreneurs.

In the current context of heavy pressure on land, the legislation seems to be poorly respected and inadequate. It deserves to be revised to take account of the stakes of decentralization and the will of the government to interest young people in agriculture.

Our advocacy aims to change the legal framework for transparency and participation in the land allocation and mining process in Cameroon.

Objectives

Overall Objectives:
Contribute to improved governance in the allocation and management of land concessions for mining and agro-industrial purposes in Cameroon;

Contribute to the improvement of living conditions of the populations bordering the mining and agroindustrial sites;
Contribute to the protection of the rights of communities bordering mining and agroindustrial projects in Cameroon;

Specific objective: To improve the legal framework for the transparency and effective participation of the various stakeholders in the management of natural resources in Cameroon

Main activities

- Organization of an information and awareness campaign on the project;
- Conducting an audit on transparency and participation in the management of natural resources in project areas;
- Organization of workshops to present and validate the results of the audit;
- Conducting an audit on transparency and participation in the management of natural resources in project areas;
- Capacity-building sessions for communities alongside mining and agroindustrial projects;
- Workshops to develop mechanisms for the effective participation of locals and elected representatives in the development and monitoring of mining and agro-industrial contracts;
- Advocacy campaign to improve transparency and participation

Target groups

- Government: It is at the heart of all negotiations with companies and responsible for the legal framework; therefore it should be involved in any action to improve the governance of the land allocation system and mining permits.
- Local and indigenous peoples: They are generally unfamiliar with mining and land contracts, their rights, and the remedies available to them in case of abuse. They are also marked by a fear of administrative authority, which limits their ability to mobilize for the claim of their rights and for possible interactions with the State in the negotiation of contracts.
- The CTDs: Their handicap is both legislative and technical. From a legislative point of view, the law does not give them any responsibility for land management and negotiation with agroindustries and mining companies. This makes them quasi-private actors in land management, and the municipality is a public entity. Therefore, in the event of conflicts between a project of the Communal Development Plan and a national project, preference is given to the national project. From a technical point of view, the municipality lacks skilled personnel to enter into discussions on land and mining issues.
- Local sectors: Their attitude is halfway between defending the interests of the State and their own interests. This posture puts them in a delicate relationship with the local populations and poses enormous problems of governance.

The final beneficiaries

- The State: More governance in this sector will enable the state to preserve social peace, ensure the development of local communities and achieve its growth objectives. But in order to do so, it will have to remove the contradictions of the legal framework from the objectives of local development and ensure the means of monitoring contracts.
- Investors: They can invest their capital in a peaceful environment; their greatest constraint is the consideration of the social aspect of the investment and the respect of the legislation and their specifications.
- CSOs: They will have reinforced their capacities to work in synergy, but will have to face their capacities to accept the changes envisaged by the State.
- Local populations: They will be able to exercise their civic commitment around land and mining issues related to the development of their locality. To do so, they must strengthen their capacity to participate in dialogue with the State and to claim their rights.

**Expected results**

- An audit document on the legal framework for transparency and participation is produced;
- Stakeholders are informed of the recommendations resulting from the audit;
- Riverside populations of mining and agroindustrial sites are sensitized and contribute to the formulation of relevant proposals on the legal framework in this area;
- Proposals to improve the legal framework for transparency and stakeholder participation in the management of mineral and land resources are formulated and presented to the government;
- The capacities of the riparian populations are strengthened and they participate in the discussions on the allocation of land and mining concessions and the monitoring of contracts.

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