

Filling the Policy Gap for Coastal Resources Management: Case of Evidence-Based Mangrove Institutional Strengthening in Cameroon

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Abstract : Mangrove ecosystems in Cameroon are valuable both in services and functions as they play host to carbon sinks, fishery breeding grounds and natural coastal barriers against storms. In addition to the globally important biodiversity that they contain, they also contribute to local livelihoods. Despite these appraisals, a reduction of about 30 % over a 25 years period due to anthropogenic and natural actions has been recorded. The key drivers influencing mangrove change include population growth, climate change, economic and political trends and upstream habitat use. Reversing the trend of mangrove loss and growing vulnerability of coastal peoples requires a real commitment by the government to develop and implement robust level policies. It has been observed in Cameroon that special ecosystems like mangroves are insufficiently addressed by forestry and/or environment programs. Given these facts, the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO) in partnership with the Government of Cameroon and other development actors have put in place the project for sustainable community-based management and conservation of mangrove ecosystems in Cameroon. The aim is to address two issues notably the present weak institutional and legal framework for mangrove management, and the unrestricted and unsustainable harvesting of mangrove resources. Civil society organizations like the Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society, Cameroon Ecology and Organization for the Environment and Development have been working to reduce the deforestation and degradation trend of Cameroon mangroves and also bringing the mangrove agenda to the fore in national and international arenas. Following a desktop approach, we found out that in situ and ex situ initiatives on mangrove management and conservation exist on propagation of improved fish smoke ovens to reduce fuel wood consumption, mangrove forest regeneration, shrimps farming and mangrove protected areas management. The evidence generated from the field experiences are inputs for processes of improving the legal and institutional framework for mangrove management in Cameroon, such as the elaboration of norms for mangroves management engaged by the government.

Keywords : mangrove ecosystem, legal and institutional framework, climate change, civil society organizations

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