

Reshaping the terrain Forest and landscape restoration in Cameroon

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Introduction

Forest Landscape Restoration is provided for in Cameroon's Forest Law of 1999. It identifies reforestation and artificial regeneration as some of the operations that must be conducted in the permanent forest estate and recognizes individual and group efforts in establishing forests. The implementation of this law is monitored by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) while the National Forestry Development Agency (ANAFOR), which was created in 2002, is mandated with implementing the law and in particular to support the development of a national private and community forest plantations program. In 2006 the government set a target of planting at least 1 million seedlings a year and to provide required funding to councils, communities and associations for this reforestation campaign.

In addition to these national reforestation targets of more than a decade ago, Cameroon pledged in 2017 to restore forests and degraded lands over an estimated surface area of 12,062,768 hectares by 2030 as part of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR 100). This covers all the country's ecosystems, belonging to both the permanent and non-permanent forest estates. Also in 2017, Cameroon launched the national chapter of the Great Green Wall for its northern regions and the national campaign of reforestation in May 2018 for about 600 millions of FCFA for more than 556100 trees to be planted all over the country (Chemete, 2018).

Actors involved in reforestation are many and diverse. MINFOF has provided grants since 2006 and material and financial support to councils, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), associations and traditional chiefdoms, to establish forest plantations and to develop urban and suburban reforestation initiatives. In addition and without being exhaustive, other state agencies and private

organizations are also involved in reforestation including: the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), ANAFOR, Network of Parliamentarians for sustainable Management of Forest Central Africa Ecosystems (REPAR), mobile telephone operators (eg MTN Group and Orange), Concessionaires of Forest Management Units (FMAs) in all regions of the country, some associations of the north, including Association for the Protection of the Environment and the Fight Against Desertification (APELD), and the Association of the Support Unit for Integrated Local Participatory Development (CADEPI).

Reforestation efforts

Cameroon's reforestation efforts are diverse with regards to actors, geography and the time period when they were conducted. The earliest efforts were before 1990 when more than 11000 hectares were planted in the dense forest zone according to ANAFOR records. Between 1990 and 2000 a further 2300 hectares were established using different types of species: such as Eucalyptus, Pinus, Teck, Gmélina, Cypres, Sapin, Filao, Pygeum, Tetrapleura T, Leuceana in the wet savannah, Neem, Acacia, Leuceana, Gome arabica, Anacardier, Acacia Sénégal, Faidherbia Albida, Citrus spp in the dry savannah and Terminalia Spp, Voacanga, Wengue, Moabi, Kossipo, Safoutier, Fromager, Mahogany, Acajou, Ndjanssang, Wild mangoes in the dense forest zone.

In 2007 ANAFOR, NGOs and individuals established 2,859 hectares of plantations bringing the total surface area to 17,133 hectares throughout the country (Edf, 2008). However, these statistics may vary depending on the sources; MINFOF stated the surface area of forest plantations in 2012 was about 2000 hectares and more than 25,000 hectares in 2015. From 2012 to 2017, reforestation activities



were carried out by nearly 1,000 stakeholders, among which were the Municipalities, Associations and Common Initiatives Group, with the objective of planting more than 4,000,000 trees over an area of 10,000 hectares. This has increased the cumulative area of forest plantations to about 30,000 hectares (MINFOF, 2018).

Different types of community based reforestation initiatives have been implemented primarily in the savannah zone, both wet and dry. These include: the rural family income improvement program – PARFRA in the west; the “Carbon Sink” City of Cameroon project in Foumban, Tonga and Mandjou; and plantations by elites for economic purposes. These initiatives have been slow to translate into significant and lasting results due to low seedling survival rates.

In the Far North region of Cameroon (i.e. dry savannah zone), Operation Green Sahel, which dates back to the 1970s and re-launched in 2008 by MINEPDED, restored 26,000 hectares using reforestation techniques. About 60 reforestation sites have been created since 2008 in the Far-North Councils.

In 2016, a reforestation inventory conducted in the dry savannah and wet savannah zone found that coverage of forest plantations were disproportionately lower than expected compared to funds invested over a 10-year period under the support of MINFOF and international donors¹. The survey also found that “individuals” are considered as having the best plantations with the highest survival rate of 38 percent. The quality and success of private and community plantations depends on available resources (plants, water resources, financial resources, technical capabilities, technical support from ANAFOR and MINFOF). However, in the dry and wet savannah areas, growing trees and their importance in people’s lives are habits that facilitate the success of plantations because the trees planted have specific contributions to livelihoods and local economies. Firewood, poles, hardwood are products targeted by private and community forest plantation initiatives in wet and dry savannah areas of Cameroon with the following respective percentages 84 percent, 77 percent, 64 percent. The place of NTFPs is estimated at 28 percent. Overall about a majority of the survey respondents indicated that they finance the reforestation operations themselves even though they receive some state support, but fail to state that they received state support to the tune of 58%.

In general, the motivation of these reforestation campaigns originated from the conversion of ONADEF into ANAFOR via Decree No. 2002/155 of 18 June 2002. Through this decree, the ANAFOR mission was converted to primarily supporting communities and individuals by supplying plant material and technical supervision services. Furthermore, this new institutional set-up obliged MINFOF to elaborate in 2006, the National Program of Reforestation (PNR) within the framework of the implementation of the Program Sectorial Forest Environment (PSFE).

1. Constraints to forest landscape restoration

- The small size of plantations estimated at 2,800 ha by the ANAFOR study, it is obvious that, reforestation (community, private and council) contributes very little to achieving the objectives of the government in terms of renewal of resources to combat desertification, restore degraded lands, preserve watersheds, transport energy and mitigate the effects of climate change to align with current events
- Lack of synergy of interventions observed between the two ministries responsible for following up the reforestation policy with isolated interventions by several private sector actors (national and international NGOs) and ANAFOR makes it impossible to truly capitalize the efforts undertaken to reforest since 2006 in Cameroon
- The limited capacity of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and the technical support agency ANAFOR to provide material resources, qualified human resources and financial resources is a major drawback for the success of plantation development.
- The regional forestry delegations responsible for monitoring the implementation of tree planting programs have little capacity to do so. As a result, the assessment made by MINFOF through its Reforestation Cell usually only occurs at the end of the year and it is therefore difficult to say with certainty whether the number of plants planned (1 million) for planting has been respected by the institutional structures responsible for doing so (municipalities, associations, non-governmental organizations, traditional chiefdoms, etc.).
- The more degraded the landscape, the higher the cost of restoration and the risk of investment:
 - for low risk, traditional investors can be solicited through pension funds and commercial banks
 - for moderate risk, impact investment funds and crowd funding (loans), as well as governments and international cooperation (technical assistance, grants) can be targeted
 - for high risk, companies can be solicited, as well as private foundations, crowd funding (grants), NGOs and public foundations

1 Agence nationale d'appui au développement forestier. 2016. *Etat des lieux des reboisements communautaires, communaux et privés en zones de savane sèche et savane humide au Cameroun*. Rapport provisoire. Projet C2D-PSFE2. 104p, Yaoundé: ANAFOR. Narcisse Mbarga is the CITES Scientific Authority Focal Point flora PFAS / CITES Flora and has been the head of mission of the said study. (personal communication from N Mbarga, 2018).



2. Status of the AFR100/Bonn Challenge Initiative²

- The status of implementation of Cameroon's AFR100 commitments include the following:
- a national assessment of the initiative was conducted in 2017 by the GOPA (Gesellschaft für Organisation, Planung und Ausbildung mbH) consulting firm
- a national consultation of technical and policy actors was carried out
- a joint letter of intent was initiated in 2016 by MINEPDED and MINFOF to better coordinate the AFR100 initiative
- maiden participation in the AFR100 Conference in Ethiopia and justifying Cameroon's commitment intent and a second second participation in the AFR100 Conference in Niamey, Niger
- a joint commitment statement MINFOF/MINEPDED with the aim of restoring 12,062,768 hectares
- a national working group was created jointly by MINFOF and MINEPDE to enable the development of a reforestation strategy. a first meeting was organized by the working group to reflection on the national AFR strategy and to develop tools and methodologies
- an assessment of Forest Landscape Restoration opportunities was carried out in the regions of: North, Far North and Adamaw

3. Strategic opportunities for FLR

- improving actions underway or in perspective such as:
 - PAN/LCD (National Action Program to Combat Desertification) : SIF (Integrated funding strategy) and CII (Integrated Investment Framework), continuation of the Green Sahel Project
 - Strategy 2020 of the forest and wildlife subsector: sustainable management + plantation/forest regeneration
 - strategy of modernizing the wood fuel value chain
 - national strategy on sustainable management of mangroves and coastal ecosystems of Cameroon
 - CDN; REDD+ (Reducing Emissions caused by Deforestation and forest Degradation) Strategy; NDA / NDT; great green wall
- Incentivizing private investment in Forest Landscape Restoration;

- strengthening FLR in the political agenda of other sectors of the rural sector: agriculture and livestock, among others

Conclusion

Despite efforts made since 2006 to reduce the problem of progressive land degradation and especially despite the substantial financial support of MINFOF to support communities, councils and the private sector in this regard, the record always seems very mixed. People who live in dense forest areas are not quick to adopt reforestation processes because they have enough forest resources available around their homes. However, the best reforestation successes have been observed in the dry and wet savannah zones. Therefore directing reforestation operations mostly to savannah zones may be an appropriate solution.

The Forest Landscape Restoration initiative (AFR 100) in the framework of the Bonn Challenge is new. Cameroon is still defining its operational strategy, particularly with the joint creation by MINFOF and MINEPDED of a national working group, a study on the existing assessment of FLR opportunities in the North, Far-North and Adamawa regions and a study on the assessment of restoration potential of forest landscapes in Cameroon. All these initiatives with the current possibility for the AFR100/Bonn Challenge National Focal Point of MINFOF and MINEPDED that are now working in close collaboration with the technical support of GIZ.

Beyond all of the above, learning from International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) rich experience in the forest landscape restoration process could help Cameroon contribute effectively to its commitment to restore more than 12 million forest and degraded lands by 2030. Moreover, as stated by AFR100 national focal points of Cameroon, we cannot wait for the formulation of the national strategy for forest landscape restoration that would take time. Interventions can already be undertaken at local level.



Tree nursery - Village of Ngon, District of Ebolowa, Cameroon

² Personal communication from A Ngomin, 2018. A Ngomin is the AFR100 Focal Point of the Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.



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