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**Cameroon and its 21st Century Challenges towards Achieving Sustainable Development:
Appraisals and Proposals**

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Abstract

Purpose: This study presents an appraisal of some of the dynamics which Cameroon continues to face in the 21st Century in its quest to achieve sustainable. Using various indicia, the study identifies and proffers explanation why the country continues to face surmountable challenges in its pursuit towards achieving sustainable development. To attain this objective, a broad review of published literature was employed using various journal articles, textbooks, internet sources, etc.

Methodology: The study adopts a qualitative research methodology in the interpretation of data. These data are both primary and secondary derived from laws, text books, journal articles, reports, working papers and other internet sources. This study adopts an analytical approach in the interpretation of the available data.

Findings: The study observes that irrespective of existence of deterrent penal laws, policy formulations from international organization and support from foreign donor institutions, the country is not yet on the path towards sustainably sound environmental practices. Cameroon is engulf in a number of challenges both internal and external, which has accounted for continuous impoverishment of its population, social progress and economic advancement of the country generally. The Study employs the post-colonial and dependency theories of development to justify some of the key findings. The internal challenges revealed in the study ranges from the continuous prevalence of poverty and hunger, corruption and misappropriation, lack of judicial independence, the prevalence of conflicts, environmental degradation and poor enforcement measures. Similarly, this study also found the underlying external challenges to include the Structural Adjustment Programmes, the influence of Foreign Financial Institutions, and neo-colonialism.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: This study therefore concludes that strengthening enforcement measures, effective implementation of poverty alleviation policies, fight against corruption and misappropriation, and citizen participation can positive contribute to sustainable development in the Cameroon.

Keywords: *Cameroon, Challenges, Sustainable, Development*

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INTRODUCTION

Cameroon like the rest of the world is pursuing important values and policy, tilted towards achieving economic growth and the social welfare and progress of its citizens. In so doing, the country has signed and ratified treaties,¹ adopted legislations,² plans of actions and policy instruments,³ in order to attain this objective. Beginning from the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (1972),⁴ to the Rio de Janeiro Conference on the Environment and Development (1992),⁵ Cameroon has been at the forefront of environmental issues across the globe. Nevertheless, Cameroon is amongst the least developed countries of the world ridden with poverty and other environmental problems, which operates as roadblocks towards achieving sustainable development. According to the Brundtland Report (1987),⁶ sustainable development is defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need’. There is no doubt that since the emergence of the concept of sustainable development, several definitions have been advanced encompassing economic, social, political and ecological dimensions. The Brundtland Commission’s definition remains the most authoritative definition, although a number of scholars have visited it with various criticisms. This definition has particularly been criticized for being an open concept and vague in its application.⁷

Similarly, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development also defines sustainable development as the development path along which the maximization of human well-being for

¹ See, the International Convention on the Intervention in the High Sea in Case of Accident causing or likely to cause Hydrocarbon Pollution, Brussels-Belgium, 29 November 1969, ratified on the 14 May 1984; Convention on Persistent Organic Pollution, Stockholm, 22 May 2001, ratified on the 19 May 2009.; Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan-Ivory Coast, 23 March 1981, ratified on the 5 August 1984.; Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, New York, 21 May 1997, ratified on the 09 October 2009; Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), 02 November 1973, ratified on the 18 September 2009.

² Some of these legislations include, Law No. 77/15 of the 6 December 1977 to regulate explosive substances and detonators in Cameroon; Law No. 89/27 of the 29 December 1989 on Toxic and Hazardous Waste; Law No. 94/01 of the 20 January 1994 on Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife Regulations; Law No. 95/08 of the 30 January 1995 on Radiation Protection; Law No. 96/12 of 05 August 1996 Relating to Environmental Management; Law No. 98/005 of the 14 April 1998 to lay down the Regulations Governing Water Resources; Law No.98/015 of the 14 of April 1998 Relating to Establishments Classified as Dangerous, Unhealthy or Obnoxious; Law No.99/013 of the 22 December 1999 to Institute the Petroleum Code; Law No. 2000/017 of the 19 of December 2000 to Regulate Veterinary Health Inspection; Law No. 2003/003 of the 21 April 2003 Relating to Phytosanitary Protection, etc.

³ Cameroon’s vision 2035

⁴ United Nations (1972). Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972, A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1

⁵ United Nations (1992). Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I), 12 August 1992

⁶ Brundtland Report, (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. United Nations, New York viewed 10 September 2011. Available at http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our_Common_Future-Brundtland_Report_1987.pdf. accessed on 15/02/2020

⁷M. Cayley, ‘The Brundtland Report: A Short Critique’, Available at https://www.academia.edu/7757839/the_brundtland_report_a_short_critique , Last Access 2nd May 2022

today's generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation'.⁸ These definitions suggest that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and present generations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the welfare and well-being of the people. Sustainable Development is motivated by the negative externalities that are responsible for natural resource depletion and degradation; it requires screening public goods that are essential for economic development, and it also stresses the importance of retaining the flexibility of the environment to respond to shock.⁹

While the concept is nearly universally accepted, there is no officially agreed definition of sustainable development. One can identify generally some of the accepted characteristics, but still the concept is a fluid one and provides considerable latitude in its implementation.¹⁰ Sustainable development can also be understood in the objective underlying concept as derived from the New Delhi Declaration of the principles of International Law relating to Sustainable Development which reverberates:

The objective of sustainable development involves a comprehensive and integrated approach to economic, social and political processes, which aims at the sustainable use of natural resources of the Earth and the protection of the environment on which nature and human life as well as social and economic development depends and which seeks to realize the right of all human beings to an adequate living standard on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the benefits resulting therefrom, with due regards to the needs and interest of the future generations."¹¹

Nevertheless, all these definitions express similar issues which are aimed at integrating economic development with the protection of natural resources and nature itself in order to preserve it for the future generations so that they may be able to meet their own needs.¹² Sustainable development therefore proceed on the basis that poverty and underdevelopment often leads to rapid deterioration of the environment that may, in turn, considerably obstruct future development.

The challenges faced by Cameroon today in achieving sustainable development is neither perceived as a divine curse nor arising from the natural occurrence of things. These challenges or problems are manmade or rather can be attributed to government laxity or administrative tolerance. This can be explained by both internal and external undercurrents. Certainly, these challenges may be overcome and the country gets into the path towards achieving sustainable development, if proper strategies, plan of actions and policies are adopted and implemented by the Government.

⁸ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, (2001). Sustainable Development: Critical Issues, (OECD),

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ See Kates W. .R., T. M. Parris & A. Leiserowitz, (2005). 'What is Sustainable Development? Goals, Indicators, Values and Practice', *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 8-21.

¹¹ ILA, (2002). New Delhi Declaration of the Principles of International Law Relating to Sustainable Development, Annex to Resolution 3/2002, Preamble Para. 4

¹² D. Luff, (1996). 'An Overview of International Law of Sustainable Development and a Confrontation between WTO Rules and Sustainable Development', *Belgian Review of International Law* pp.91-144:93

This paper therefore set out to examine some of these challenges faced by Cameroon towards achieving sustainable development.

This paper is guided by the use of some key theories, which motivates the arguments advanced in the work. These theories are the human needs, the dependency theory and the post-colonial theory. Whilst the human need theory supports the notion of sustainable development as it is founded on the concept of needs, it is important to note that the dependency theory on the other hand offers explanation for the continued impoverishment of colonised ‘Third World’ countries on grounds that underdevelopment is not an internally generated condition of global capitalism itself. This contention reinforces the argument of the ‘world system theory’ in that it explains underdevelopment as consequent on the global structure of domination, rather than an early stage in a process of development. Thus, it is significant in explaining the internal and external challenges faced by Cameroon to achieving sustainable development. Likewise, the Post-colonial theory is essential in expressing the developmental pattern of most African states and Cameroon in particular.

Problem Statement

In Cameroon like in most Sub-Saharan Countries, the prevalence of poverty and natural resource degradation have attracted national and international attention. This has led to the creation of numerous institutions and the enactment of laws to curb these threats. Cameroon has enacted a number of environmental laws and adopted policies both nationally and internationally in the area of sustainable use and management of resources. This has been with the intention to conserve its natural resources whilst benefitting the local population. In spite of the applicable laws in force, institutional measures put in place and the standards enshrined under international environmental law duly ratified by the country, Cameroon continues to face surmountable challenges to attain sustainable development. The proliferation of hunger and poverty have force local communities to depend on their environment for survival. This has certainly led to the extinction of various biodiversity coupled with illegal exploitation especially in the forestry sector such as illegal logging, deforestation, poaching, etc., are some examples of complex ecological challenges that ask for sustainable development and societal transformations in Cameroon. The practical application and enforcement of these laws aimed at circumscribing these violations are yet to be achieved within the context of sustainable development.

Practical Measures Adopted By Cameroon to Achieving Sustainable Development

In his assessment of the development of African society from the 1800s Freund argues that, “the imperial conquest of Africa was undertaken to tap African resources in order to help resolve the economic problems of Europe”.¹³ The development policies adopted by the colonial administration in the territory have revealed that they were not to accord decent living conditions for the

¹³ Freund, B. (1998). *The making of contemporary Africa: The development of African society since 1800*. (2nd Ed.) London: MacMillan Press, p. 97; Lekane G. M. & Asuelime L.L.E., (2016). ‘One Country, Three Colonial Legacies: The Politics of Colonialism, Capitalism and Development in the Pre- and Post-Colonial Cameroon’, *Journal for Contemporary History* 41(2):134-153:136

Cameroonian people living in the territory.¹⁴ Coffee farming in the Western highlands for instance serves as an illustration of this policy as farmers were obliged to register their farms and to follow the regulations set by the colonial administrator. Many farmers who did not comply with these prescriptions were threatened with the destruction of their farms.¹⁵ It has been argued that these policies were a means to create a local bourgeoisie mainly constituted of chiefs that were already part of the colonial administrative system.¹⁶ These colonial policies shaped Cameroon's socio-economic and political development in line with the interests of the colonial powers. This contributed to the rise of nationalist movements in the 1950's and the struggle for independence ensued, and the territory finally got its independence in 1960.¹⁷ Around this period, most African countries especially in the Sub-Saharan Region also achieved their independence from the colonizers.¹⁸ Achieving independence and maintaining a strong economy was not an easy task for Cameroon and other Sub-Saharan Countries. Cameroon adopted legislative, administrative as well as judicial measures to attain its economic objectives as well as received foreign aids from international partners like the World Bank, IMF, foreign countries based on their bilateral relationships.

It is imperative to note however that during the period immediately after independence, Cameroon adopted certain measures and approaches towards enhancing its economic development. Cameroon as a country within the Sub-Saharan region, adopted the principle of regional balance as a state policy in the distribution of scarce resources. Cameroon since 1966, adopted a regional approach to planning with a view to ensuring a balance distribution of investment resources and the fruits of economic progress. The country's experience in regional planning began with the second 'five year economic and social development plan' (July 1966-June 1971),¹⁹ which laid the groundwork for regional development by emphasizing the need for strategic investments in various regions. The goal was to foster economic growth, improve infrastructure, and enhance the quality of life for citizens across the country. Cameroon's regional planning involves the decentralization of decision-making and resource allocation. The country is divided into 10 regions, each with its own administrative structure,²⁰ and more recently with the creation of Regional councils, they play

¹⁴Njoh J. A., (1997). 'Colonial Spatial Development Policies, Economic Instability, and Urban Public Transportation in Cameroon', *Cities*, vol. 14, pp 133-143

¹⁵Eckert, A., (2003). "Comparing coffee production in Cameroon and Tanganyika, c.1900 to 1960s: Land, labor, and politics". In: *WG Clarence-Smith and S Topik (eds), The global coffee economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p.304

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷The French Administered Territory Achieved its Independence on the 1st of January 1960 from France and the British Southern Cameroons present day North West and South West Regions achieve their independence on the 1st of October 1961 from the British.

¹⁸Gareth, A. (2010). 'African Economic Development and Colonial Legacies', *International Development Policy/Revue Internationale de politique de developpement* [online], online since 11 March 2010, connection on the 13 November 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/poldev/78>

¹⁹Ndongko, W. A., (1974). 'Regional Economic Planning in Cameroon' *Intereconomics*, Vol. 09, Issue 5, pp.154-157:154

²⁰Articles 55 – 61 of the Constitution of Cameroon

a crucial role in formulating development policies and implementing projects.²¹ Another important aspect in the regional planning approach is promoting equitable development which is the primary objective of the State to achieve regional balance by ensuring that no region is overdue. In this regards, investments are directed toward critical sectors such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, and agriculture.

Despite the well-intentioned planning, Cameroon faces several challenges in implementing its regional strategy such as weak project planning. Some projects suffer from inadequate planning, leading to delays and cost overruns.²² In same vein, capacity constraints in terms of limited institutional capacity at the regional level hampers effective execution. Political dynamics can influence project prioritization and resource allocation.

Some contemporary examples of specific projects and initiatives achieved under this approach are the Lom Pangar Dam located in the East Region, the Kribi port, situated in the South Region, and the construction of the Ring Road (Nkambe-Bamenda-Bafoussam-Douala) which aims to connect various regions, thus enhances transportation, trade, and accessibility, contributing to regional integration. Similarly, the Lom Pangar Dam aims to regulate water flow in the Sanaga River and improves irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, and flood control. In this light, by improving water availability, it supports agricultural development and livelihoods. The Kribi deep seaport on the other hand, serves as a channel to boosts international trade. It facilitates export-import activities, improvements in economic growth, and enhances regional connectivity.

Even though Cameroon's growth performance has strengthened in recent years, it has relied largely on public investment and this has started to strain fiscal accounts, and to increase debt levels.²³ The planning process was expected to give adequate attention to the spatial dimension of economic development of the nation.²⁴ Despite the allocation of public investment budget assigned to every region annually, there exist certain inequalities within and between regions in Cameroon. Cameroon's regional planning approach is a critical step toward achieving inclusive development and regional equity. However, continuous efforts are needed to address implementation challenges and ensure that projects benefit all citizens across the diverse regions of this beautiful country. With recent trends, new strategies were put in place at the global level to achieve sustainable development. These strategies are embodied in important instruments like the

²¹ See Generally, Law No 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 bill to institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities.

²²Bounga, T. & Nomba Um P. (2022). 'The Economics of Infrastructure in Cameroon: State, Challenges, and Policy Reforms', in Célestin Monga (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Economy of Cameroon*, Oxford Handbooks.

²³World Bank, (2016). "Cameroon: Creating Opportunities for Inclusive Growth and Poverty Reduction", available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/07/12/cameroon-creating-opportunities-for-inclusive-growth-and-poverty-reduction> last accessed on the 26 March 2023

²⁴ *Ibid*

Agenda 21,²⁵ to the Millennium Development Goals,²⁶ and the Sustainable Development Goals,²⁷ through which sustainable development could be achieved. Government efforts could be seen through several measures including the eradication of poverty, citizenship participation in governance, integration of development with environmental protection, education, gender etc. as discussed hereinafter.

Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger

The Brundtland Report (1987), the Millennium Development Goals (2000),²⁸ and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015),²⁹ holds that poverty and hunger are primary setbacks to any meaningful development, thus the necessity of ending it. According to the World Bank because the country's poverty reduction rate is lagging behind its population growth rate, the overall number of poor in Cameroon increased by 12 % to 8.1 million between 2007 and 2014, and poverty is concentrated in the country's northern regions, where 56 % of the poor live.³⁰ In resolving this fundamental issue, the country has made great strides in the fight against hunger and poverty both individually and collectively. According to a publication by the Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) Cameroonians had long ago embarked on eradicating poverty, in line with the SDG 1 target of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.³¹

The right to work in Cameroon has been upheld by the constitution and it has a direct bearing to the fight to eliminate hunger and poverty in the country. Cameroon by its constitutional provisions have guaranteed to all its citizens the right to work.³² The right to work places a corresponding duty on all governments including the state of Cameroon to respect, protect and fulfil this fundamental rights under the triple pronged theory.³³ Most analysts of the nature and causes of poverty agree that income growth is essential if poverty is to be reduced and that persistent growth failures are accompanied by an equally persistent failure to combat poverty.³⁴ In this connection,

²⁵ UN General Assembly, (1992). Agenda 21, United Nations Conference on Environment & Development Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

²⁶ UN General Assembly (2000). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [without reference to a Main Committee (A/55/L.2)]. 8th plenary meeting. 55/2. Millennium Development Goals – *The United Nations Millennium Declaration*. Available at; <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>. Last accessed on 8 June 2023

²⁷ UN General Assembly, (2015) *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1

²⁸ Millennium Development Goal 1

²⁹ SDGs 1

³⁰ The World Bank, (2023). 'The World Bank in Cameroon: Overview', available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cameroon/overview> last accessed on 10 June 2023

³¹ CRTV, (2018). 'Eradicating poverty: What is being done in Cameroon' available at <https://www.crtv.cm/2018/10/eradicating-poverty-what-is-being-done-in-cameroon/> last accessed on the 10 June 2023

³² The Preamble of the Constitution

³³ Shue H. (1980). *Basic Rights Subsistence, Affluence, And U.S. Foreign Policy*, Princeton: University Press Princeton.

³⁴ International Labour Organization (2019). 'Contribution of Employment Intensive Investment Approaches to the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals: The case of ILO Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Public

the Government of Cameroon has consistently open up opportunities for its citizens to gain employment both in the public and private sectors in the Country in view of improving on their income levels. In the public sector for instance, public exams in to major national institutions are launched almost every year with the intention of direct recruitment into the public services. As far as the private sector is concern, it has been contended that increasing wages is an effective poverty reduction tool, even for kids.³⁵ The minimum wage rate in the Cameroon labour market regulating the private sector has witnessed an increase between the years 1992-2008, prior to 1992 it was 23.514 Francs and moved to 28.216 Francs in the period 2008 and to 36.270 Francs. However, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Cameroon together with workers trade unions and employer associations held talks on Thursday June 16th 2022, to concert on the imminent increase. Employers' associations propose a 12% increase which will take the minimum wage from 36.270Francs to 40,625 France while workers trade unions say the package should be FCFA 100,000, representing a 30% increase.³⁶ Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the present wage rate in Cameroon (36.270FCFA) is very insignificant and does not reflect the present economic conditions and which cannot enable workers to take care of their basic needs.

In terms of the collective efforts, the World Food Programme (WFP) in partnership with the state has improved food security by establishing community granaries and providing improved water supply for those in risk zones.³⁷ The World Food Programme (WFP) helps Cameroon to achieve zero hunger by responding to the immediate food and nutrition needs of crisis-affected populations in Adamawa, East, Far North, North, North West and South West regions and implementing an integrated package of interventions including activities to improve the long-term resilience of communities.³⁸ The WFP has also improved the rural economy through a food-for-work program. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme of UN Habitat launched in 2008 was another step at reducing poverty by upgrading slums. Cameroon's Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has constructed many low-cost houses to serve those who cannot afford the more expensive ones.³⁹

Some NGOs have also collaborated with Government in providing jobs in rural areas to reach out to the poor. The areas of intervention of NGOs in Cameroon are generally on rural development with a strong focus on food security (agriculture, livestock and fisheries). The agricultural sector employs more than 50% of the active population who are members of grass-root and

Works as part of the Kumba-Mamfe Road Development Project, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_737296.pdf last accessed on the 18 June 2023

³⁵ E. Gould, (2014). 'Increasing Wages is an Effective for Poverty Reduction Tool, even for Kids', available at <https://www.epi.org/publication/increasing-wages-effective-poverty-reduction/> last accessed 15 June 2024

³⁶ CRTV, (2022). 'Labour and Social Security: Minimum Wage to be Increased' available at <https://www.crtv.cm/2022/06/labour-and-social-security-minimum-wage-to-be-increased/> last accessed on the 23 June 2023

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ WFP, Cameroon, available at: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/cameroon> last accessed on the 10 June 2023

³⁹ Ibid

community organizations which are involved in community natural resource, forest and biodiversity management.⁴⁰

Citizen Participation in Governance

Public participation is generally backed by transparency, access to information, and access to justice. It is considered one of the most recognized principles for achieving sustainable development, since it helps to balance the three conflicting and interwoven dimensions of sustainable development.⁴¹ The state of Cameroon has created an obligation to all its citizens in relation to the protection of the environment through the Constitution, which sets out to guarantee to every citizen the right to a healthy environment, and imposed a civic duty to protect the environment as set forth in its preamble.⁴² The Environmental Framework Law⁴³ prescribes for public participation in environmental matters in its Section 9(e), which provides:

The principle of participation according to which:– each citizen shall have access to information on the environment, including information on dangerous substances and activities;– each citizen shall have the obligation to safeguard the environment and contribute to its protection;– corporate bodies and private citizens shall, in all their activities conform to the same requirements;– decisions on the environment shall be taken after consultation with the sectors of activity or groups concerned, or after a public debate when they are of a general nature.

In Cameroon, other complementary statutes such as the forestry law and land tenure legislations equally reinforce this law, which provides for public participation. Section 8 of the forestry law provides that:

Article 8: (1) Within the context of this law, logging or customary right means the right which is recognized as being that of the local population to harvest ail forest, wildlife and fisheries products freely for their personal use, except the protected species.

(2) The Ministers in charge of forestry, wildlife and fisheries may, because of public interest, and in consultation with the populations concerned, temporarily or permanently suspend the exercise of logging rights, when necessary.⁴⁴

This provision also stresses the importance of public consultation prior to decision making in environmental issues.⁴⁵ With respect to the appropriation of lands for developmental endeavours, the land tenure laws provides for the representative of the village concern through its Chief and

⁴⁰Bogweh N. E., Abia, W. A., Ageh M. T. & Abia E.A. (2016). 'Valorisation of NGOS' Existence in Cameroon: Option for a More Engaged Civil Society', *International Journal of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Essays*. Vol.1, No.1, pp.1-17:7

⁴¹ Segger, M & A Khalfan, (2004) *Sustainable development law: Principles, practices and prospects*. Oxford: Oxford University, p.18-19

⁴² The Preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon instituted by Law No. 96/06 of the 18 January 1996

⁴³ Law No. 96/12 of 05 August 1996 Relating to Environmental Management

⁴⁴ Law No. 94/01 of 20 January 1994 to lay down Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Regulations

⁴⁵ See also Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I) Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

two notables,⁴⁶ and they form a constituent part of the Land Consultative Board (LCB).⁴⁷ Citizens' participation in environmental decision-making is often considered a condition for the democratic legitimacy of decisions,⁴⁸ as well as an important opportunity to improve the quality and effectiveness of those decisions. Yet the space for such participation is repeatedly constrained by technical risk assessment, cost-benefit analysis and the idea that the public lacks expertise and misunderstands science.⁴⁹ The implementation of citizen participation in governance is important in the democratization of social values and better planning and fulfillment of public needs. This process is equally an important tool useful to inform and educate the public with respect to Government's development programs.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) also play an important role in Cameroon in promoting citizen participation and advocacy for environmental justice.⁵⁰ In academic literature, civil society refers to an organization that operates proactively in economic, social, and cultural spheres while staying beyond the scope of family, business, and governmental entities.⁵¹ The understanding that CSOs are close to the people and master the communities much better through local knowledge, needs and aspiration. Thus, most governments and international organization in the context of empowerment and poverty eradication partner with CSOs to carry out development. Naidoo notes that "CSOs are mobile, fast and flexible which gives them significant advantages over slow and rigid bureaucracies."⁵² As such, using their relative flexibility and ability to act quickly, they have been able to shape the agenda, address priorities and mobilize public opinions. Again, with their experience in the development industry, Naidoo notes that CSOs with their grassroots experience can be invaluable partners for government agencies and businesses.⁵³ In order for Cameroon to attain its emergence by 2035, the Civil Society or Voluntary Sector is without any doubt justified as a major partner to this development.⁵⁴ The Voluntary Sector can play an important role in the development process, particularly through community participation as it did to some extent during the economic crisis in Cameroon during the 80's and 90's.⁵⁵ Cameroon is blessed with a lot of natural resources like forest, mountains and fertile soils in most areas. There are more than 50

⁴⁶Article 12, Decree No. 76/166 of 27 April 1976 laying down the Management of National Lands in Cameroon

⁴⁷ Articles 19 and 20 of Ordinance No 74-1 of 6-7-74 to establish rules governing land tenure

⁴⁸ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale UP 1971); Seyla Benhabib (ed), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton UP 1996).

⁴⁹ Armeni, C. (2016). 'Participation in Environmental Decision-making: Reflecting on Planning and Community Benefits for Major Wind Farms', *Journal of Environmental Law*. Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 415–441:415

⁵⁰ The major legal framework on the activities of civil society organization in Cameroon includes; Law No. 90/53 of 19 December 1990 concerning freedom of association; the Law No. 99/014 of 22 December 1999 governing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc.

⁵¹ Bhuiyan M.I.H., Rumi M.H., Mesbah T.B., & Rahman D. (2023). 'Examining the Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Promoting Participatory Local Governance at the Grassroots in Bangladesh' *Journal of Governance and Social Policy*. Vol. 4, Issue 2, pp.227-244:228

⁵² Naidoo, K., (1999). *Civil Society at the Millennium*. West Hartford, CT. at p.169

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Bogweh N. E., Abia, W. A., Ageh M. T. & Abia E.A. (2016). 'Valorisation of NGOS' Existence in Cameroon: Option for a More Engaged Civil Society', *International Journal of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Essays*. Vol.1, No.1, pp.1-17:3

⁵⁵ Ibid

CSO's in the highlands of the Cameroon.⁵⁶ These organizations are mostly interested in resource use management for the marginalized communities. More than half of the communities with forest have asked for a part to be managed by the community.

It is commendable to note that achieving sustainable development requires the participation of all the stakeholders, especially the synergy between the State and NGOs which is not always an easy alliance. This partnership has been enforced thanks to support provided by international bodies like the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, International Labour Organisation and the *Centre de développement Sous-Régional pour l' Afrique centrale* (CDSR-AC). In addition, the desire of people to take care of themselves has enabled NGOs to get in partnership with the State and other development agencies to contribute to the effort of sustainable development in the Cameroon.

Integration of Development with Environmental Protection

The integration of development with environmental protection emerged as a central issues in international law following the Rio Conference on the Environment and Development (1992). One of the conundrum, which arose, was the need to reconcile the developmental needs of the developing countries and the issue of environmental protection a quest pursued by the developing countries. To strike a balance therefore there was the need for integrating these two notions. The Rio Declaration in this light enjoined states and governments to engage in sound environmental practice in order to achieve sustainable development. According to Principle 4,

In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.⁵⁷

In order to achieve this idea of integration there was an urgent need to adopt instruments geared at Environmental Impact Assessments. Environmental assessment has been defined as “the systematic identification and evaluation of the potential impacts of proposed projects, plans, programs, policies, or legislative actions upon the physical-chemical, biological, cultural and socio-economic components of the environment”.⁵⁸ In fact, Principle 17 of the Rio Declaration enacts:

Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.

Thus the prerequisite to conduct such impact assessment before pursuing any project, plan or program. In line with the prescription in the Rio Declaration under principle 17, Cameroon's framework law on environmental management, Law No 96/12 of 05 August 1996 ordains in Article 17(1) that:

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.10

⁵⁷United Nations (1992) Rio Declaration, A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I) Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

⁵⁸ Parker, S. P., & Corbit, R. A., (1993). *McGraw - Hill Encyclopedia of Environmental Science & Engineering*. McGraw – Hill, , p. 208

The promoter or owner of any development, labour, equipment or project which may endanger the environment owing to its dimension, nature or the impact of its activities on the natural environment shall carry out an impact assessment, pursuant to the prescription of the specifications. This assessment shall determine the direct or indirect incidence of the said project on the ecological balance of the zone where the plant is located or any other region, the physical environment and quality of life of populations and the impact on the environment in general.

This law was accompanied by Decree No 2005/0577/PM dated 23 February 2005 on the Procedure for Conducting EIA.⁵⁹ This is indeed, a mile stone in integrating developmental matters and efforts towards environmental protection. It is in this connection that the High Court of Ndiain holden at Mundemba in the case of *The Struggle to Economise Future Environment (SEFE) v. S.G. Sustainable Oils Cameroon Ltd & Anor*,⁶⁰ restrained the Defendants from carrying on with their project of establishing a vast oil plantation in the forest area of the Ndiain Division. The plaintiffs in the suit under reference brought an action before the court praying the court to restrain the respondents from exploiting the forest resources of the area in their vast oil project without complying with the requirements of the law preliminary to such exercises and most particularly without carrying out an environmental impact assessment of the project. This has remain a locus classicus on the compulsoriness of EIA in Cameroon with respect to certain categories of projects.

However, the existence of these laws presupposes compliance and enforcement whether by the local communities, NGOs, and other registered environmental associations.

Advancing Education

The momentum generated by donors and international organisation in Cameroon has been accompanied by reforms in the fields of education and health. The Constitution of Cameroon guarantees the child the right to compulsory primary school education,⁶¹ and since 2000, primary education is free.⁶² The Government of Cameroon has decided to develop a comprehensive education sector 5 strategy supported by the Dakar framework for action in 2000,⁶³ and the MGD. The gloomy balance sheet as per the Strategic Poverty Reduction Paper concerning the achievement of MDGs stems from the difficulties encountered in implementation of the strategy, as well as from the high implementation costs of related actions.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ This was complimented by orders of the Ministry in charge of the environment, namely: Order No 0069/MINEP of 8 March 2005 to set out various categories of operations subject to the realization of environmental impact assessment; Order No 0001/MINEP of 3 February 2007 defining the content of Terms of Reference (ToRs) for EIA; and Order No 0002/MINEP of 3 February 2007 specifying elements of ToRs for EIA for production, plantations and community forests.

⁶⁰ Suit No. HCN/03/OS/2011 reported in (2012) 1 CCLR, Part 16, at p.65-85

⁶¹ Law No. 96/06 of the 18th of January 1996 to institute the Constitution

⁶² UNESCO, World Data on Education (7th Edition, 2010), IBE/2010/CP/WDE/CM

⁶³ The World Education Forum (26-28 April 2000). The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments.

⁶⁴ Cameroon (2010) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, IMF Country (Report No. 10/257)

Cameroon did not meet any of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the exception of the MDG on primary school enrollment.⁶⁵ In this wake, the Competence-Based Approach (CBA) project set up by the World Bank in 2001 was adopted by Cameroon in 2003 by using the Rapport d'Etat du Système Educatif National (RESEN) of 2003, by which the donors are committed to support the Ministry of Basic Education in the various actions under the CBA. In the same year the government set itself the objective of reaching a primary education rate of 100% in 2008.⁶⁶

Gender Equality

The 5th Sustainable Development Goal expound on the idea of gender equality and the empowering of all women and girls. Indeed, it is contended that almost globally, women have been considered as the weaker sex and in some cultures especially in Cameroon; they have suffered from previous discrimination. Gender equality has become universally accepted as a fundamental principle that needs to be understood and practiced by all human beings in order to enable the human family achieve its intents in every aspect of life.⁶⁷ The 1996 Constitution of Cameroon guarantees equal rights and freedoms as outline in the preamble, without discrimination as to sex, colour or race.

The legislative motivation to elaborate on the series of rights in the preamble of the constitution was not only to live by the standards set forth in international instruments but also because of the prevalence of discriminatory practices in the Country. However, before the era of a new constitution, women's right to property had posed lots of controversy in the area of ownership. Because of the effects of the huge pressure on land and shortfalls in yields in most parts of Africa and Cameroon, there are differences in the levels of, and relative inequalities in land ownership, access, and control by sex between women and men on the continent.⁶⁸ In Cameroon for instance women had been considered as property and had no right to the ownership of property especially in contest with a man. In *Achu v. Achu*, Inglis, J., posited that:

Customary law does not countenance the sharing of property, especially landed property, between husband and wife on divorce. The wife is still regarded as part of her husband's property...⁶⁹

⁶⁵ The World Bank, (2016). Cameroon: Creating opportunities for inclusive growth and poverty reduction, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/07/12/cameroon-creating-opportunities-for-inclusive-growth-and-poverty-reduction>, last accessed on the 7 May 2023

⁶⁶ Kamdem C.B. & Nobessi Sob L. G. (2020) 'An assessment of poverty reduction programs in Cameroon: An analysis based on the structure of household consumption', *Revised New proposal Submitted to African Economic Research Consortium*

⁶⁷ Alemnge F.L. (2019). 'Curriculum Reform in Cameroon: An Analysis of the New Primary School Curriculum', *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development-IJTSRD*, Vol. 3 Issue no.6. pp. 902-913:911

⁶⁸ Pemunta, N.V. (2017). 'When 'property cannot own property': women's lack of property rights in Cameroon', *African Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.67-85:68

⁶⁹ *Achu v. achu*, Appeal N° BCA/62/86 (unreported)

This position of the law and judicial attitudes of our courts have fundamentally and significantly evolved. The landmark case of *Zamcho Florence Lum v. Chibikom Peter Fru*,⁷⁰ decided by the Supreme Court, lends credence to the fact that women's right to inheritance is protected in Cameroon. The Supreme Court of Cameroon, in overturning the Court of Appeal's decision, held that the customary principle denying a female the right to inherit her father's property or to be declared next of kin is contrary to natural justice, equity, and good conscience.⁷¹

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CAMEROON TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Shortly after independence, Cameroon like other Sub-Saharan countries started experiencing a situation of economic hardships especially in the 1980's. The difficulties confronted by Cameroon in the pursuit to achieving its sustainable development objectives can be explained by the interplay of both internal and external dynamics. The internal challenges involves aspects such as the continuous prevalence of poverty, corruption and misappropriation, incidence of conflicts, lack of judicial independence, poor enforcement mechanisms, etc. meanwhile the external challenges identified and treated in this study are neo-colonialism, the role of foreign financial institutions and the activities of multinationals in the country. These challenges shall be critically appraised.

A. Internal Challenges to Achieving Sustainable Development

The challenges faced by Cameroon to achieving sustainable development can to an extent be said that the country is at the origin of its own problems. This is essentially because of the existence of factual circumstances which occur on a daily basis and which tend to undermine the progressive endeavors of the country to achieving sustainable development. As compared to most economically advanced countries, Cameroon and most of Africa are confronted with certain societal problems which are not prevalent in those countries. Some of which are the real cause of hunger and poverty, low quality of health facilities, low standards of living which continues to widen the gap between the rich and the poor.

It has been argued that there are institutional peculiarities and twists that are often difficult to eliminate and they influence the effectiveness of national and international environmental policies. On the other hand, international policies sustainable development has not been achieved because of lack of sanctions, institutions and other mechanisms. At national institutional agents, the governments and corporations are responsible for environmental problems other than individuals in the forward-looking responsibility approach.⁷² Some of the problems identified and discussed in this study include, poverty, bribery and corruption, poor enforcement mechanisms, conflicts, misappropriation and embezzlement of state funds and lack of judicial independence and access to justice.

⁷⁰ *Zamcho Florence Lum vs. Chibikom Peter Fru & others*. Supreme court judgement No. 14/L of 14 February 1993

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Fahlquist, J.N.(2009) "Moral responsibility for environmental problems-individual or institutional?", *Journal of Agricultural Environment Ethics*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 109-124.

1. Continuous Prevalence of Poverty in the Cameroonian Society

Despite the wide spread adoption of and progress towards sustainable development goals, Africa and Cameroon continues to lag behind most of the world when it comes to socio-economic development. The recent report by the Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa reveals that there is minimal progress and, in some instances, there is complete stagnation. Africa harbors more than half of the global poor (those who earn under \$1.90 per day).⁷³ Poverty may be described as the inability to meet ones needs. The overriding sustainable development challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa and Cameroon in particular is poverty eradication. In fact, the African Ministerial Statement to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD-2002) identifies poverty eradication as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.⁷⁴ Africa is indeed the only region in the world where poverty has increased both in absolute and relative terms.⁷⁵

According to the Report on Sustainable Development in Africa, highlights the fact that apart from the continent being of the poorest in the world, Africa remains the least developed, the most technologically backward, the most indebted, the most food-insecure and the most marginalized.⁷⁶ This unfortunate situation is further compounded by the prevalence of other setbacks such as malnutrition, disease, environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, poor and inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and weak institutional capacities which continue to pose serious development challenges for Africa.⁷⁷

The Cameroon's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2010), discloses that despite the government's strategies put in place, by 2010 the income poverty rate, which dropped drastically by 13.1 points compared to the 1996 figures, still as high as about 40.2 per cent of the population.⁷⁸ Poverty levels have stagnated around 40%, and widespread regional disparities exist; with rural areas carrying the bulk of the country's poor. According to the World Bank, poverty levels have hardly decreased between 2001 and 2014, from 40.2 to 37.5%, with striking and increasing regional disparities: the rural regions of the Far North and the North have poverty levels of 72% and are home to 55.8% of the poor, whereas in urban areas poverty is at 4.8% (3.2% of the poor).⁷⁹ Yet the country has strong potential to develop and build on its vast potential, including important natural resources to

⁷³ Belay Begashaw, (2019). Africa and the Sustainable development Goals: A long way to go, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/07/29/africa-and-the-sustainable-development-goals-a-long-way-to-go/>

⁷⁴ African Union (2001). African Ministerial Statement to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, adopted at the African Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Nairobi from the 15 to 18 October 2001

⁷⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶ United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, (2011) 'Sustainable Development Report on Africa: Managing Land-Based Resources for Sustainable Development', Addis Ababa, available at, <https://hdl.handle.net/10855/14964>, last accessed 22/02/2023 p.1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

⁷⁸ IMF, (2010) 'Cameroon: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper', (IMF Country Report No. 10/257) p.29

⁷⁹ The World Bank, Cameroon: Creating opportunities for inclusive growth and poverty reduction, July 12, 2016, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/07/12/cameroon-creating-opportunities-for-inclusive-growth-and-poverty-reduction>, last accessed on the 7 May 2023

ensure inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.⁸⁰ Poverty exposes the environment, nature and other protected species to the risk of extinction as very poor especially in rural areas are bent on their own survival and cannot afford to protect these species at the expense of their own survivals. The Forest and its resources serve as an important linchpin to the livelihood and survival of the people around the forest areas. Without an alternative source of income or livelihood in general, the forest stands the danger of destruction by human activities.

Corruption and Misappropriation

Corruption is a multifaceted and a multijurisdictional. The concept depends on the context of the person or institution using it, which legal and institutional frameworks can regulate. Corruption is an intolerable phenomenon everywhere, yet it exists in almost every community and in varying degrees. Moralists explain the concept as ‘an immoral and unethical phenomenon that contains a set of moral aberrations from moral standards of society, causing loss of respect and confidence in duly constituted authority.’⁸¹ Corruption has been described as an abuse of entrusted power for private gains.⁸² Corruption erodes trusts, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequalities, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis

Over the past decade and a half, the efforts to fight corruption has grown exponentially.⁸³ The corruption level in Cameroon is widespread and manifest in divest forms, with the most common being bribery, tribalism, abuse of public offices, misappropriation and embezzlement of state or public property among others.⁸⁴ In 1998-1999 the level of corruption in the country became the subject of consideration as the country was classified as the worst successive country in terms of corruption in the world as per the findings and publications of Transparency International.⁸⁵ Top ranking government officials including a former Prime Minister and at least two Secretary Generals of the Presidency of the Republic, Directors and Managers of public corporations, government delegates have been jailed on corruption related charges in Cameroon. Cameroon is confronted with a high level of embezzlement, mismanagement and misappropriation of state funds like most developing countries. Even though they are considered and treated in like manner or similar to acts of corruption including the manner of combating them,⁸⁶ in the strict sense of the word they are

⁸⁰ United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, (2011) ‘Sustainable Development Report on Africa: Managing Land-Based Resources for Sustainable Development’, Addis Ababa, available at, <https://hdl.handle.net/10855/14964>, last accessed 22/02/2023 p.1.

⁸¹ D. J., Gould, D.J. (1991). ‘Administrative Corruption: Incidence, Causes, and Remedial Strategies. In Farazmand (ed) *Handbook of Comparative Development and Public Administration* pp.667-480

⁸² Transparency International, What is Corruption? Available at <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption#:~:text=We%20define%20corruption%20as%20the%20abuse%20of%20entrusted,inequality%2C%20poverty%2C%20social%20division%20and%20the%20environmental%20crisis>. Last acced on 7 May 2023

⁸³ H. N., Kwei, ‘Institutional Approach to Fight Corruption: The Case of the National Anticorruption Commission of Cameroon’, *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, (2020) Vol.8, No.2, pp.141-152:141

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ E.E. Bechem, (2018) ‘Corruption in Cameroon: Public Perception on the Role and Effectiveness of the Different Anti-Corruption Agencies’, *Review of Public Administration and Management*. Vol.6, Issue 1, pp.1-6:1

⁸⁶ A.A., Agbor, (2017). ‘Prosecuting the Offence of Misappropriation of Public Funds: An Insight into Cameroon’s Special Criminal Court’, *PER/Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*. Vol. 20, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/1727-3781/2017/v20n0a770>

quite distinct from corruption. From a purely criminal law perspective, corruption is a distinct specific offence from misappropriation of state funds.

The state of Cameroon has over the past few decades intensify its ambition to narrow down and change this disdainful impression and image by combating corruption in all its forms. These efforts have been seen in the enactment of laws that seeks to fasten some administrative cracks and loopholes, reform the public service, introduce new accountability standards and hold perpetrators accountable. States efforts to combat corruption generally are seen in the courts and the legal departments attached to these courts that are vested with the duty to identify and prosecute corruption matters and other related cases. To ensure the implementation of its policies, the State of Cameroon established the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC and by its French acronym as CONAC).⁸⁷ This commission is under the authority of the President of the Republic with the mandate to monitoring and evaluating the effective implementation of governmental anti-corruption plan; gathering, centralizing and analyzing denunciations and information forwarded to it in respect of corruption practices, deeds and facts and similar offences, among other things.⁸⁸

It is clear that the fight against corruption is essential for the promotion of the eradication of poverty and human development.⁸⁹ The adverse impact of corruption and misappropriation of state funds is undeniable as it greatly adds in slowing down socio-economic development. These unethical and greedy tendencies have negatively contributed to underdevelopment and poverty across the country in several ways. Resources meant for projects in particular communities have been syphoned by greedy and unscrupulous government officials for their own personal gains and selfish interest thereby causing hardship and poverty to thousands of Cameroonians. Emphasized must be made to the fact that the negative impact of corruption has resulted in widening the gap between the rich and the poor in Cameroon. In fact, corruption impacts on the country's ability to eradicate poverty by limit the resources of the state in the hands of some few government officials.

The Effects of Internal Conflicts

Since independence, few African countries have been spared of violence and armed conflict.⁹⁰ Sustainable development thrives best in an environment of good governance, peace and security,⁹¹ but armed conflict remains an obstacle to development in several parts of the African continent and in recent years Cameroon. Sub-Saharan Africa is extremely weak and volatile in the globalizing world in which pervasive and persistent violence has confounded efforts to improve

⁸⁷ Decree No. 2006/088 of the 11 March 2006 relating to the setting up, organization and functioning of the National Anti-corruption Commission.

⁸⁸ Article 1(2) and 2(2) of Decree No. 2006/088 of the 11 March 2006 relating to the setting up, organization and functioning of the National Anti-corruption Commission

⁸⁹ UNDP, (2010). A Guide to UNDP: Democratic Governance, p.65

⁹⁰ Touré, K. (2017): Impact of Conflict in Africa. FRM Education Supplement 17

⁹¹United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, (2011-01) 'Sustainable Development Report on Africa: Managing Land-Based Resources for Sustainable Development', Addis Ababa, available at, <https://hdl.handle.net/10855/14964>, last accessed 22/02/2023 p.1,

its economic capacity and performance.⁹² Armed conflicts, ethno-linguistic disputes, religious radicalism and many other forms of conflicts have made the Horn of Africa one of the greatest conflict zones in the world.⁹³ While economic and social injustice are the causes of most of the global crisis as identified by many, failure of the political class to deal with the basic issues of life should carry the greatest share of the blame.⁹⁴

The maintenance of an environment of peace and security is therefore one of Cameroon's foremost development imperatives. Cameroon is a country enjoying a state of relative peace within the Sub-Saharan region and this has earned for the country the privilege to host the headquarters of many international organizations.⁹⁵ Indeed, Cameroon was one amongst many Sub-Saharan African countries, which did not subscribed to political turbulence as in other parts of the continent where civilians take up arms against the regular forces or other faction of the population based on ideological differences.

This reality was negated with the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North Region of Cameroon and more recently, the conflict in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon.⁹⁶ This has certainly diverted government's attention in the provision of adequate social amenities as the state has resorted in the importation of arms to resolve this tragic situation. One of the most prominent social consequences of the political strife in the North West and the South West Regions of Cameroon is a near break down in the social structure that has been the basis of the society for over 60 years.⁹⁷ The two regions that once were preferred destinations for many personalities from within and out of the national borders is now almost completely deserted as same was characterized by daily tension and the fear of the unknown. Higher-level radicalism exist in these regions as the youth and other segment of the population engage in more or less guerrilla warfare as the crisis continue. No form of economic venture can survive in the face of such conditions.⁹⁸

Apart from its material and human cost, conflicts generally impede production, damage infrastructures, prevent the reliable delivery of social services and amenities and disrupt effective

⁹² Marshall, M. (2006). Conflict Trends in Africa, 1946-2004: A Macro-Comparative Perspective. Report prepared for the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP)

⁹³ Ngangnchi F.H., Wujung V. A. & Pangmeshi A. (2019). 'Analysis of the Socio-Economic Consequences of the Crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon on the Economy of the Two Regions (2016-2018)', *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, United Kingdom*. Vol. VII, Issue 2, pp.371-388:373

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

⁹⁵ Examples include the Bank of Central African States (BEAC); Permanent Secretariat of the Organization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA); the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC), etc.

⁹⁶ Researcher's Observations

⁹⁷ Ngangnchi F.H., Wujung V. A. & Pangmeshi A. (2019). 'Analysis of the Socio-Economic Consequences of the Crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon on the Economy of the Two Regions (2016-2018)', *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management, United Kingdom*. Vol. VII, Issue 2, pp.371-388:380

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

government control in the society. The overall effect of falling output, dwindling income, deteriorating security conditions, distant governance, poor or no social services and no education on the general welfare of the population is huge. Meeting basic needs is now more of a luxury than necessity in the two affected regions of the country. By Prime Ministerial Decree of 2 September 2019, the North West, South West and Far North Regions were designated as economic disaster zones following the prevalence of armed conflicts in these regions.⁹⁹ The resultant effect was that potential investors will benefit from a three year tax exemption if the invest in any of these three regions. This scenario has without more deprive the state of taxes that it would have used to promote development in other sectors.

Since 2017, the North-West and South- West (NWSW) regions of Cameroon have been caught up in armed conflict between State Security Forces and Non-State Armed Groups. The conflict has triggered a serious humanitarian crisis, with over 580,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹⁰⁰ The deteriorating security situation caused by escalating hostilities between the two sides has continued to affect the food security of households, especially the displaced populations and farming households who are already extremely vulnerable due to the disruption of their livelihood activities since the conflict began five years ago. The effects of conflict and COVID-19 have led to increase in the projected food insecurity situation from 2021 to 2022. Over 980,000 people are severely food insecure between June and August 2022 (*Cadre Harmonisé*, March 2022), compared to 955,000 people during the same period in 2021.¹⁰¹ With the recent price increases as a result of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the number of people needing food assistance is expected to increase

It is contended that armed conflicts and social unrest negatively impacts on the country's ability to eradicate poverty, to stimulate economic growth and also comply with the other requirements and targets of achieving sustainable development goals. There is therefore no doubt that in such an environment, there is bound to be the proliferation of hunger and poverty which runs counter to the objectives of the international community as set forth in the sustainable development goals.

Lack of Judicial Independence

From a legal perspective, Cameroon is a country at a crisis crossroad faced with many problems including the independence of its judiciary, which imperils its efforts towards achieving sustainable development. Cameroon's justice system has been the object of serious academic and practical disparagements as to whether the independence of its judiciary is actually a reality or a myth.¹⁰² It is contended however that the problem in the country's judiciary ranges from a

⁹⁹ Decree No. 2019/3179/PM of the 02 September 2019 to Grant the Status of Economic Disaster Areas to the far-North, North-West and South-West Regions.

¹⁰⁰ WFP, (2022). World Food Programme Cameroon North West - South West Crisis Response, (Situation Report, July 2022)

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Enonchong, N, (2003). 'Human Rights Violations by the Executive: Complicity of the Judiciary in Cameroon?', *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 265-274; Enonchong L. E., (2022). *The Constitution and Governance in Cameroon* (1st ed.) Routledge. ; Eposi L S (2012). 'Judicial Independence and Accountability in Cameroon: Balancing a Tenuous Relationship', *African Journal of Legal Studies*, vol. 5, pp313-337. 24; K Kamdem K. (2019).

fundamental breakdown in the rule of law, ineffectiveness in the judiciary, and chronic delays in the administration of justice which when put together results in loss of confidence in the courts.¹⁰³ The local courts have an indispensable role to play in the implementation of sustainable development standards, ensure the conservation of biological diversity and to ensure the equal and proper distribution of natural resources at the national and local levels.

In order to achieve the expectant outcome, the rule of law must be strictly respected which as a matter of principle includes judicial independence. In principle there is separation of power in Cameroon between the executive arm of government, the legislative and the judicial arm of Government.¹⁰⁴ This entails that none of these arms should interfere or influence the outcomes in so far as decision making is concern with the other arms. In fact Article 37(2) of the Constitution guarantees the independence of the judiciary but ironically urges the Head of State who is the head of the executive arm to guarantee same. Members of the judiciary must be free in keeping with the above provision from external pressure and decide according to the law and their conscience.¹⁰⁵ Thus, instructions or perceived instructions from the Government should not affect the judgment of Courts. Legal philosophers have taken the view however that there is an interrelationship between judicial independence and development. Accordingly, judicial independence does not have any effect on economic growth de jure, but it does de facto, because it influences the growth per capita positively.¹⁰⁶ More so, studies have revealed that the application of the rule of law de facto influences the national per capita income. This is essentially because it is evident that countries with more effective and high observance of the rule of law have increased in their national per capita incomes that are different from countries with less respect for the rule of law.¹⁰⁷ This invariably suggests that there is an interconnection between the rule of law and development and therefore the rule of law remains a fundamental tool towards achieving sustainable development.

Besides, the statute of the magistracy empowers the President of the Republic and the Minister of Justice, all executives, chair and co-chair the Higher Judicial Council that appoints magistrates of the Bench and of the Legal Department.¹⁰⁸ The dependence of the judiciary to the executive is clearly formalized to the level that the judicial power is closed to a line ministry and an anteroom

The Political Independence of the Judiciary in Cameroon: Fact or Fiction?', *Africa Review* , Vol. 11, No 1, pp. 46-62.

¹⁰³ Ekome E.(2009). 'The Effectiveness of the Rule of Law and the Judiciary as Fundamental Causes of Cameroon's Crises', in C.M. Lambi, *Cameroon: A Country at Crises Crossroads, An Anthropology in the Social Sciences*, NAB Ventures: Bamenda-Cameroon, at pp.319-356:319

¹⁰⁴ See Generally, Law No.96/06 of the 18th of January 1996 to amend and supplement the Constitution of 2nd June 1972.

¹⁰⁵ Article 37(2) of the Constitution of Cameroon (2008)

¹⁰⁶ Feld, L. P. & V. Stefan, (2003). 'Economic Growth and Judicial Independence-Cross Country Evidence Using New Set of Indicators', (Working Paper no.906) Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute (CESifo) Munich.

¹⁰⁷ Kaufmann D (2010). 'Rule of Law Matters: Unorthodoxy in Brief'. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20100121_governance_kaufmann.pdf last accessed 15 June 2024

¹⁰⁸ Nyingchia & Leno, (2021). 'Appraisal the Independence of the Judiciary in Cameroon in the Fight against Corruption', *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*. Vol. 12, Issue No. 1, pp.182-196:186

of the executive power. This can be buttressed by the role played by the ministry of justice in the functioning of courts which sends the signal that the judicial power is a mere branch of the ministry of justice.¹⁰⁹ If you want a Cameroonian judge to lose sleep, have him called by a Parliamentarian, a Minister, a Director General or any other person holding a high office or related to same. Careerism has taken precedence over the oath of judges and it is not uncommon to see judges come to inquire about the position of the prosecution in certain sensitive matters before delivering their judgments.¹¹⁰

In a system where there is uncertainty in the course of justice, no meaningful development can be achieved as investors will be scared to bring their investments in such an environment. It has been contended that one would expect that rational politicians had long since introduced judicial independence. However, simply promising an independent judiciary is not sufficient to induce additional investment: if potential investors do not believe that the judiciary really is impartial, they will not change their investment behavior.¹¹¹ Among the many functions of government, the reduction of uncertainty is of paramount importance.

The lack of judicial independence deters both national and foreign investors from investing in a jurisdiction where the system of justice is porous and there is no respect for the rule of law. The lack of independence of the judiciary may be for reasons such as corruption or political interference and might create conditions for monetary reparation. In those cases, the investor might ask for compensation due to the grievances caused by the outcome of domestic courts.¹¹² The argument linking denial of justice to this hypothesis as a foreigner could argue that exposure to a system of justice that lack of independence has been tantamount to not having access to justice at all. By the same vein, in the context of international investment protection an investor may be entitled to compensation for indirect expropriations, some of which might be considered realized when the property is taken through judgments that are the product of courts that lack independence.¹¹³ One example is the case of *The Splendeur Hotel and Resorts Plc v. Azire Cooperative Credit Union Ltd*,¹¹⁴ wherein the High Court of Fako Division proceeded to expropriate the property of the American based company notwithstanding appeals to both the Court of Appeal, South West Region and before the OHADA Common Court of Justice and Arbitration. The Appellants contention was that there was serious interference by some government officials to have their hotel misappropriated without the Court adhering to the rule of law.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 194

¹¹¹ Feld, L. P. & V. Stefan, (2003). 'Economic Growth and Judicial Independence-Cross Country Evidence Using New Set of Indicators', (Working Paper no.906) Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute (CESifo) Munich.

¹¹² See Omar E. G. (2012), Lack of Judicial Independence and Its Impact on Transnational and International Litigation, *Law and Business Review of the Americas*. Vol. 18, Iss. 29, pp 29-54:38

¹¹³ *Ibid*

¹¹⁴ Suit No. CASWR/13./2021. (Unreported)

Environmental Degradation and Poor Enforcement Mechanisms

African countries are lagging behind in taking steps to protect their environment due to weak institutional framework.¹¹⁵ This position is derived from the series of oil spillage from explorations of national and multinational companies, flaring of gas and other forms of toxic gaseous discharges that are persistent in a number of African countries, as well as other illegal activities especially in the forestry sector. It is therefore not surprising that there is a rising trend in the incidences of environmental challenges recorded in many Africa countries. Predictions from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) reveal that the rising environmental changes in Africa will result to 50 per cent reduction in rain-fed agricultural output by 2020.¹¹⁶

In Cameroon, compliance entirely depends upon the laws and structures in charge of enforcing the law in question. Environmental compliance or compliance generally means respecting and conforming to environmental laws, regulations, international norm or standards for a sound and proper environmental management. As a rule, everyone is bound to comply with environmental rules and regulations in force.¹¹⁷ Any derogation to these standards or norms may result in serious sanctions, which might be criminal prosecution, heavy fines, and administrative sanctions as provided by various legislations in force.¹¹⁸ The existence of laws does not however suggest that they are automatically enforceable. Cameroon has passed series of laws, decrees, orders and circulars, which are sectorial in nature, governing several aspects of the environment and natural resource management all in a bid to achieve sustainable development.

Nevertheless, the country is still struggling to find its path towards a sound environmental practice and sustainability. This is essentially because despite the existence of these laws, the institutions and authorities on whom this very salient task has been entrusted to do not manifest the will or real intention to pursue them. According to Emmanuel Ekome, some of the major evils that characterized forest exploitation in Cameroon are illegal logging, over-capacity of processing facilities and smuggling or illegal exportation of logs, which are due to poor application, and enforcement of laws.¹¹⁹

The insufficiency in the enforcement of existing laws in various sectors in the economy is because of government laxity, patronage and corruption at various levels. In the forestry sector for example, the problem of illegal logging and smuggling of logs have been made possible by dint of Section 71 of the Forestry Regulations which allows for 30% of logs exploited to be exported while 70% must be processed locally, but in practice that is not the case.¹²⁰ Illegal exportation is a crucial

¹¹⁵ Osabuohien E.S. & Efobi U. R., (2013). "Africa's money in Africa", *South African Journal of Economics*, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 292-306

¹¹⁶ E. Osabuohien E.S., Efobi U. R & Gitau C. (2015). "Environment challenges in Africa: further dimensions to the trade, MNCs and energy debate", *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal*. Vol. 26 Issue 1 pp. 118-137

¹¹⁷ The preamble of the Constitution provides that the protection of the environment shall be the duty of every citizen.

¹¹⁸ Such as the 1996 Environmental Framework Law, the Penal Code, the Forestry regulations of 1994, etc.

¹¹⁹ Ekome, E' (2009). 'The Unsustainable Exploitation of Cameroon's Tropical Forest For Timber in C.M. Lambi, Cameroon: *A Country at Crises Crossroads, An Anthropology in the Social Sciences*. NAB Ventures: Bamenda-Cameroon. at pp.237-260:240

¹²⁰ Ibid.

problem, which requires stringent measures to be taken by the state. This is because illegal forest activities have caused significant environmental damage, and contributes in impoverishing rural communities that depends on the forest.¹²¹ It has been documented that in 1998 Cameroon government declared imports of logs to Portugal was 57.038 cubic meters, but Portugal's declared imports from Cameroon was 91.115 cubic meters, almost twice as much.¹²² This does not only deprive the government from its incomes but equally deprives the rural communities of their benefits, which would have regularly accrued in their favour. According to Weber,¹²³ between 1990 and 2010, Cameroon lost an average of 2200 km² (0.90%) of forests per year, around 44,000 km² (18.1%) of its forest cover. A study by Chatham House observed a total of 89 forest concessions in Cameroon and which covered an estimated area of 63,000 km² or about one-third of the country's area of dense forest.¹²⁴ Recent studies have revealed that, this high level of illegality in Cameroon's forests is the result of many years of poor governance, endemic corruption, weak institutions, unclear and inappropriate laws and policies.¹²⁵ It has been contended that more research in the domain shows that Cameroon has had a larger percentage of its forest logged than any other country on the African continent. As a consequence, a substantial quantity of forest resources and some areas have been logged three or four times, thus seriously resulting in forest degradation rather than the permanent loss of forest cover.¹²⁶

Furthermore, in the sphere of waste management in Cameroon, solid waste especially plastics litters major cities and towns in the country. It has been opined that towns and cities in Cameroon exhibit the burdens of waste management which characterize so many African cities. Several factors including inadequate financial resources, low levels of enforcement of regulations and poor governance often lead to poor solid waste management services.¹²⁷ Results indicate that solid waste management services are rudimentary; essentially collect and dump. Current regulations do not adequately address waste handling or disposal. There are inefficiencies in the implementation of waste management policy due to the devolved responsibilities between several governmental agencies and the local councils.¹²⁸ In line with the regulation of October 24th, 2012 on the

¹²¹ Cerutti P.O. & Tacconi L. (2006). "Forests, Illegality, and Livelihoods in Cameroon", Center for International Forest Research Jl, CIFOR, Situ Gede, Sindang Barang, Indonesia (Working Paper No.35.), p.18

¹²² Forest Monitor, (2001), 'Sold Down the River. The Need to Control Transnational Forestry Corporations: A European Case Study', p.10

¹²³ Weber, N.(2012). 'Reflections on Theories in Forest Policy: Testing, Combining or Building?' *Forest Policy and Economics*. Vol. 16, pp. 102-108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2011.02.003>

¹²⁴ Beckline, M., Manan, A., Dominic, N., Mukete, N. and Hu, Y. (2022) Patterns and Challenges of Forest Resources Conservation in Cameroon. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9: e8683. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.110868>

¹²⁵ Ibid; Mukete, B., Sun, Y., Etongo, D., Sajjad, S., Ngoe, M. and Tamungang, R. (2018). Cameroon Must Focus on SDGs in Its Economic Development Plans. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, vol. 60, pp. 25-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00139157.2018.1419008>; Lang, C. (2015) Parallel Worlds: Illegal Logging and REDD in Cameroon. REDD Monitor. Available at <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2015/01/27/parallel-worlds-illegal-logging-and-reddin-cameroon/> last accessed on the 27 March 2024

¹²⁶ Beckline, M., Manan, A., Dominic, N., Mukete, N. and Hu, Y. (2022). Patterns and Challenges of Forest Resources Conservation in Cameroon. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9: e8683. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.110868>

¹²⁷ Veronica Ebot Manga, Osric Tening Forton, (2008). 'Waste management in Cameroon: A new policy perspective?' *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*. Volume 52, Issue 4, Pages 592-600

¹²⁸ *Ibid*

management of non-biodegradable plastic packaging in Cameroon, producers of this type of packaging in Cameroon must set up systems for the collection, recycling or final disposal of plastic waste.¹²⁹ Yet, the prevalence of improper waste disposal in plastics continues to proliferate.

Rules are meant to be respected and government officials must sacrifice their own personal gains in public projects and pursue the laid down or established policy of the state. Generally, corruption seems to cut across almost every other problem faced by the country in its pursuits to achieving sustainable development. Without substantiating on the impact of environmental degradation and poor enforcement mechanisms to the indicia's of sustainable development, the subtitle has not achieved its purpose.

The External Challenges to Achieving Sustainable Development in Cameroon

One may totally misconstrue the predicament faced by Cameroon and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa if attention is only given to the internal challenges to achieving sustainable development. This is because there are equally strong and convincing factual arguments to the effect external factors play a crucial role to explain the present state of underdevelopment in Cameroon. This study however takes into consideration certain external factors, which can further justify the present state of underdevelopment in Cameroon. These include the continuous Western influence on the country (Neo-colonialism), the Role of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the activities of Multinational Corporation in Africa and Cameroon in particular.

Neo-colonialism

Most African leaders have used neo-colonialism as a powerful tool over the years to divert the attention of their people from focusing on the internal problems faced by their countries and as an excuse of their own failures.¹³⁰ Many concepts in law are the subject of a variety of definitions without any unifying or general definition of universal acceptance. This is equally the case with the notion of neo-colonialism, which have been central to academic discourse especially in the 50's and 60's. For purposes of this study, some definitions are useful. According to Guy Martin, neo-colonialism is a system that results out of an alliance of the former colonial power with the ruling elite of an ex-colony with the aim of defending the economic interests, generally to the disadvantage of the African population.¹³¹ An earlier official definition of the concept was that given by 'All-African People's Conference' in the 1961 Resolution on Neo-colonialism, which defined it as 'the survival of colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries, which become victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military, or technical means'.¹³²

¹²⁹ Article 3 of Joint Order No. 004 / MINEPDED / MINCOMMERCE of 24 October 2012 Regulating the Manufacture, Import and Marketing of Non-Biodegradable Packaging.

¹³⁰ Ardent P. (1965). 'Le Neo-colonialisme: theme, mythe et realite', *Revue Francaise de science politique*. Vol. 5, pp.837-855

¹³¹ Guy M. (1984). 'African-European Economic Relations under the Lome Convention: Commodities and the Scheme of Stabilization of Exports Earnings', *African Studies Review*. Vol. 27, Issue No.3, pp.41-66

¹³² Guy M. (1985). 'The Historical, Economic and Political Bases of France's African Policy', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol. 23, Iss. No. 2, pp.189-208:191

Neo-colonial tendencies generally are borne out of the past relationships that the former colonies of Africa had with their respective colonial masters. In fact, it has been contended that in the 1960's, when majority of African countries achieved independence, the continent's future seemed prosperous in the long term.¹³³ This was certainly because of the rich natural resource endowments, favourable geographical and natural conditions and a growing population which are the essentials of every developmental endeavor, now placed in the hands of the African themselves. Nevertheless, despite all efforts, 60years later the continent's situation is not significantly better and the Western development aid failed to achieve positive result on a large scale.¹³⁴ There is a growing sentiment against the neo-colonial framework that has left millions of people across the African continent in poverty. This is because after the so-called independence of African countries, their former colonial masters continue to have a firm grip over their resources or perhaps because of the structure of the world system. Thus, the expression post-colonialism cannot and should not be consider as the end of colonial tendencies in Africa. It can be properly used to describe the period after the European administration in Africa and other places where colonization prevailed.

Over 60years after independence, Cameroon like other Sub-Saharan countries has come of age. Consequently, Cameroon must respond appropriately to liberate itself from the shackles of colonial exploitative economic domination of the lost decades. In the words of Prof. Lambi:

While protracted warfare, ethnic conflicts, environmental hazards and diseases of epidemic proportion remain economic draw-backs to any meaningful development in some parts of Africa, it seems that the root cause of Cameroonian problems can be traced back to colonialism and neo-colonial institutions and our present consumerism patterns which have been fashioned after the West.¹³⁵

The findings of Forest Monitor (2001) showed that the Congo Basin region generally is still subject to a system of neo-colonialism, perpetuated by former colonial powers, foreign capital and a few powerful elites at the national level.¹³⁶ This explains why despite the enormous potential offered by forests in the Congo Basin, over the past 60 years their wood has been harvested and exported in its raw form to countries outside Africa, while African countries have imported finished wood products.¹³⁷ The misused of economic opportunities are indeed multitudinous. The Congo Basin operates on the fringes of the global wood subsector, accounting for 1 percent of global sawn-wood production, 6 percent of tropical sawn-wood production, 5 percent of tropical logs, 7 percent of tropical veneers, 1 percent of tropical plywood and little to no secondary or tertiary wood processing.

¹³³Haag D (2011). 'Mechanisms of Neo-Colonialism: Current French and British Influence in Cameroon and Ghana', Institut Catala International per la Pau, Barcelona (ICIP Working Paper No.2011/6). p.3

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵C.M. Lambi, C. M. (2009) *Cameroon: A Country at Crises Crossroads, An Anthropology in the Social Sciences*, NAB Ventures: Bamenda-Cameroon. at p.6

¹³⁶ Forest Monitor (2001), 'Sold Down the River: The Need to Control Transnational Corporation-A European Case Study', John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Cambridge, UK.

¹³⁷ Atyi R. E. (2021), 'State of the Congo Basin Forests in 2021: Overall conclusions', available at https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/SOF-2021-14E.pdf last accessed 15 June 2024

France and Cameroon are first trading partners with a commercial exchange of about 860 million Euros in 2009. The trading balance was however negative for Cameroon as the countries import from France stood at 597 million Euros while only 263 million Euros was of Cameroonian exports to France.¹³⁸ This explains many monopolistic practices, which were facilitated by the ancient bilateral agreements, which are still ongoing.¹³⁹ These colonial pacts, which can be traced in history, were certainly not made in the best interest of the colonial people. A classic example of French influence in Cameroon can be seen in the transport sector, which is largely in the hands of the Groupe Bolloré, which is a French company. This French company has largely monopolized the Cameroonian transport system, controlling the Cameroonian railway (CAMRAIL), the Transport per truck, the majority of the Port in Douala, as well as shipping to Europe.¹⁴⁰ The transport sector in every economy constitutes an important determinant of its development. The French still exerts a lot of control over Cameroon in terms of its monetary policy. The Convention established between France and the African countries of the CFA zone, including Cameroon, give far-reaching competencies to France as far as decision-making is concern. Indeed, almost no decisions concerning the Franc Zone can be taken without the consent and prior approval of France. In all cases, the CFA Franc offers France's guarantee of convertibility, fixed parties (then with the French Franc, today with the Euro), free transferability and the centralization of foreign exchange reserves. In return, the issuance and printing of money are done in France, and the countries using the CFA are bound to deposit 50% of their foreign exchange reserves at the French public Treasury.¹⁴¹ Giving the wide differences between France and the economies of the countries using the CFA, the attachment of the region's currency to a strong currency like the French Franc and now the euro is unnatural and has direct implications on the economic development of the CFA countries. On the country, France enjoys multiple advantages from this arrangement as they maintain a firm grip on their former colonies. As such they enjoy trade surplus, their foreign reserves are stored in French banks which can be used for international financial markets, can freely repatriate their profits back home without fear of foreign fluctuations, etc.¹⁴²

In the light of the foregoing, the question which emerges is how sovereign can a nation be without monetary sovereignty? The answer is simple and certainly in the fact that there exist only partial sovereignty in these countries. This is all the more seen in the military ties shared between France and her former territories. France's defense and military cooperation agreement is the clearest sign of its sovereign boosting policy. The purpose of French diplomatic-military action in Cameroon such as the training of army and gendarmerie officers, technical assistances, capacity-building in the field of defense, etc., would certainly be to guarantee France's access to Cameroon's raw

¹³⁸ Haag D, (2011). 'Mechanisms of Neo-Colonialism: Current French and British Influence in Cameroon and Ghana', Institut Catala International per la Pau, Barcelona (ICIP Working Paper No.2011/6), p.22

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ Survie, (2009). *France-Afrique: Diplomatie, Business et Dictatures*, Paris: Survie,

¹⁴¹ Yaser Louati, 'CFA Franc: The 'Colonial Currency' Keeping 14 African Nations on a Leash', TRT World, (6 December 2022), available at <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/cfa-franc-the-colonial-currency-keeping-14-african-nations-on-a-leash-63270> last accessed on the 12 March 2023;

¹⁴² Ibid

materials.¹⁴³ Africa, especially francophone Africa continued to fall into unprecedented decay above all because of ‘French cooperation’.¹⁴⁴ To preserve its dream of greatness, France ended up supporting dictatorships and one-party system and blocked any attempt by African states to take ownership of their own development.¹⁴⁵ The French influence used to work based on a tight network of formal and informal institutions, which enabled an indirect control over local elites and bureaucracy.¹⁴⁶ France has had an overbearing influence on the political, economic, military and other technical control over Cameroon and it is continuing. The effect on the development of the country is undeniable and adverse.

It has been contended that neocolonialism through multinational corporations may lead to infrastructural development in the countries where they operate. It can lead to the constructions of roads, ports and other communication networks in developing countries.¹⁴⁷ Others may see it as a mechanism through which technology can be transferred to developing countries, that it can stimulate economic growth and open access to the global market, etc. This study however maintains that the benefits are fringe and cannot address the economic problems of most African States. Literature perceives neocolonialism as the last stage of imperialism and it is unheard of that it has some significance.¹⁴⁸ From a pure intellectual observation, neocolonialism is beneficial only to the imperialist state.

The Influence of International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

International cooperation has offered both financial and technical supports to maintaining an environmentally sound policies in Cameroon like in other developing countries. Their influence in Cameroon has help to reshape the state policies on environmental and forestry matters. It has been reported that international funding agencies like the British Department of International Development (DFID), the Netherlands Development Agency (SNV), and other locally-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have developed capacity building projects to facilitate the effective implementation of community forest projects in Cameroon.¹⁴⁹ They note that the efforts of these international donor agencies have been impressive, particularly in Lomié (Southeast Cameroon), where there is a strong network of local NGOs (like CAFT – Trinational Agroforestry Cooperative) that are guiding and training villagers in community forest management.¹⁵⁰ This is

¹⁴³ Kamga L.K. (2011). ‘President Sarkozy and Franco-Cameroonian Relations’, *Dynamiques Internationales.*, Issue No. 4, pp. 1-17:4

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁶ Haag D. (2011). ‘Mechanisms of Neo-Colonialism: Current French and British Influence in Cameroon and Ghana’, Institut Catala International per la Pau, Barcelona (ICIP Working Paper No.2011/6), p.22

¹⁴⁷ Halperin, S. (2007). "neocolonialism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/neocolonialism>. Accessed 14 July 2024.

¹⁴⁸ Afisi, O.T. ‘Neocolonialism’, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available at <https://iep.utm.edu/neocolon/> last accessed 14 June 2024

¹⁴⁹ Mbile P, Ndzomo–Abanda G, Essomba H, Misouma A (2008). A forest policy context and case study analysis to support alternative tenure and enterprise options for trees and forest resources management in Cameroon. *Rights and Resources Initiative*, Washington DC.

¹⁵⁰ Alemagi, D. (2011). Sustainable development in Cameroon’s forestry sector: progress, challenges, and strategies for improvement ‘, *African Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*. Vol. 5(2), pp. 65-72

indeed a positive contribution towards enhancing forest management and sustainable development within the forestry sector in Cameroon.

However, the influence of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in Sub-Saharan Africa and Cameroon in particular has contributed significantly in the present state of underdevelopment of the African continent. The World Bank and the IMF were designed with specific purpose in mind, essentially to assist in the reconstruction of Europe in post-World War II. Later on, it became the channel for international community's development efforts to foster development in the world including the developing world.¹⁵¹ This aspect of the study analyses some International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and relate some of their policies to Africa in order to show how they have influenced development in this part of the world.

The African continent was faced with a formidable challenge in the 1980s in its objective of improving the living standards and quality of life of its population. It has been posited that the economic situation in which post-independent African and other developing countries found themselves in the early 1980's, forced them, yet into another dependent relationship with western countries and international financial institutions, notably those of the Bretton Woods.¹⁵² Since the early 1980s, a number of Sub-Saharan African countries undertook adjustment programs aimed at reducing economic distortions and financial imbalances, in the face of mounting domestic and external pressures.¹⁵³ To assist African development, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) provided conditional lending.¹⁵⁴ These lending's were conditional in that governments receiving debt reliefs were obliged to adjust their economic policies. It has been submitted that academic literature general holds that the SAPs were ineffective in their objectives to achieve developmental goals as their aims were fundamentally political.¹⁵⁵

The Structural Adjustment Programmes were all about measures to restore equilibrium in external trade (especially exchange rate adjustment; the elimination of distortions in the domestic price structure; putting government finances into better order, both by cutting public expenditure (for instance, reducing the number of state employees, reducing subsidies, and privatization) and by raising government's income (tax reforms).¹⁵⁶ The impact of the structural adjustment programmes on Africa has been the subject of very serious debates. The World Bank took the view that the structural adjustment programmes worked both in agriculture and industry to those countries that

¹⁵¹Sone P. M. (2018). "Impact of Foreign Financial Aid on the Respect of Human Rights and Development in Cameroon", *African Journal of Social Science*. Vol. 9, No.2, pp131-154:134

¹⁵²Fonjong L. N. (2009). 'Revisiting the Impact of the structural adjustment measures in developing countries: A Panoramic Appraisal of Selected Countries in the 1990s, in C.M. Lambi, Cameroon: *A Country at Crises Crossroads, An Anthropology in the Social Sciences*, NAB Ventures: Bamenda-Cameroon, at pp.151-170: 151

¹⁵³Nsouli S. M. (1989) Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Policy Issues and Challenges for the 1990s', available at [https://www.africaportal.org/documents/8566/Structural Adjustment In Africa.pdf](https://www.africaportal.org/documents/8566/Structural_Adjustment_In_Africa.pdf), last accessed on the 18 March 2023

¹⁵⁴Thompson A. (2010). *An Introduction to African politics*, (3rd Edn), New York: Taylor & Francis. p. 197

¹⁵⁵L., Fraser L. (2015). 'Did Structural Adjustment Programs Assist African development?', *E-International Relations* available at <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/01/13/did-structural-adjustment-programmes-assist-african-development/> last accessed on the 19 March 2023

¹⁵⁶Mohs R. M., (1988). 'Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Intereconomics* (1988), Vol. 23, Iss. 1, pp-25-28:25

adhered to its prescriptions.¹⁵⁷ However, many empirical findings have shown that with some exceptions (like Ghana and Uganda), the structural adjustment programmes have typically had a negligible effect on the growth of Africa.¹⁵⁸ The conditionality implemented under the SAPs in African countries were expected to ultimately reduce poverty by fostering economic growth and by shifting relative prices in favour of agriculture and rural areas where most of the poor live.¹⁵⁹ The SAP scheme failed to the extent that it did not promote growth and no improvement in poverty can be expected from growth effects.¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, it has been noted that the neoliberal approach, on which SAPs were purely founded, while theoretically sound, was fraught with pitfalls and setbacks to effectively address the challenges to economic development in Africa. The failure of SAPs as originally designed, to effectively address development challenges in Africa have effectively resulted in rethinking the approach. Yet, it has not been completely abandoned.¹⁶¹ Contending under a strongly worded caption, structural adjustment as an inadvertent enemy of human development in Africa, the authors submitted that the structural adjustment programmes has become impoverished in absolute and real terms, and rather needs some form of economic miracle. Indeed, they concluded that the SAPs and its stabilization policies have not delivered their promises. Due to the policy failure, Africa is unable to point to any significant growth rate or satisfactory index of generational wellbeing in the past two decades.¹⁶²

Some key findings of a study also reveal that Sub-Saharan Africa has been integrated into the world economy through improvement in export and inflow of FDIs resulting from the introduction and implementation of the World Bank/IMF adjustment policy. However, there is lack of needs assessment on the part of the World Bank/IMF before their programmed prescriptions for Africa, as most programs do not meet the needs of the people they intend to benefit.¹⁶³ Besides, most adjustment programmes have not been able to ‘adjust’ the economies the programmes were intended to reshape.¹⁶⁴ These have rather worsened the plights of the people as compared to the pre-policy era.

The upshot of the policy frameworks, bundled outside Africa and imposed on these nations under structural adjustment programmes is that it has counteracted and ultimately undermined the quest for addressing the developmental challenges of Africa and Cameroon in particular. This is

¹⁵⁷ World Bank,(1994). ‘Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead’, Oxford University Press, New York.

¹⁵⁸ Mosley, P.,Harrigan J., and Toye, J.,(1995) *Aid and Power: The World Bank and Policy Based Lending* (2nd ed., Routledge: London; W, Easterly W. (2000) *The Effects of IMF and World Bank Programs on Poverty*. Mimeographed, The World Bank: Washington D.C.

¹⁵⁹ Heidhues F. & Obare G. (2011). “Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programmes and their Effects in Africa”, *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture* vol.50 Issue No.1, pp. 55-64:59

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, at 61

¹⁶² Geo-Jaja M.A. & Mangum G. (2001). ‘Structural Adjustment as an inadvertent Enemy of Human Development in Africa’, *Journal of Black Studies* Vol.32, Iss. No. 1, pp.30-49:30

¹⁶³ Oppong, N. T. (2014) ‘Failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy design or Policy Implementation?’, *Journal of Empirical Economics*. Vol. 3, No. 5, pp.321-331:328

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

essentially because elements of the hostile global order such as industrial rejuvenation to boost production were not covered by the programmes, instead most of the adjustment programmes at best, have to no effect on the target areas that policy seeks to improve; and at worse wipe away the gains that had already been made. Thus, if at all the structural adjustment programmes are said to have made some positive moves on the development of Africa, it could only be the World Bank and the IMF. The structural adjustment programmes have been described to failed in the whole of Africa as the process have been perceived to be ‘all pain, with no gains’.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, it has been identified that one area of failure of the structural adjustment plans have been in the area of poverty alleviation. This is because there are more poor people in Africa prior to 1985 due to the decline in the annual growth rate of the GDP.¹⁶⁶

It has been submitted that in response to criticism from African countries, the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa, many Non-Governmental Organizations and scholars, SAPs started to integrate the lessons learned and shifted towards a more flexible and gradual approach to budget cuts, with greater tolerance to short-term deficits during stabilization.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, there has been increasing recognition of the role governments should play in providing the necessary support for education, health care, research and extension, most notably in agriculture, rural credit and institutional development. It has also been realized that scarce public funds need to be focused more on the needs of the poor so as to increase their access to these vital services.¹⁶⁸ Thus, as the 1990s approached, there were increasing calls for “adjustment with a human face”, which implied paying more attention to the social dimension of development and the role of the state in this process. This broader view of development was reinforced by a series of UN conferences throughout the 1990s that dealt with such issues as gender equality, human rights, population, social development and protecting the environment. An initiative of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in the early 2000s called “A 2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment” was instrumental in focusing research and development policy attention on a broad approach to the three critical issues of securing future world food needs, reducing hunger and poverty, and environment.

The Role of Multinational Corporations

Multinational corporations are generally those whose presence is in more than one national territory. Sub-Saharan Africa enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth beginning from the early 1970’s due to the increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This increase in investment was mainly witnessed in the increased range of Multinational Corporations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though some multinational corporations seem to be playing an important role in the development of the country, most of these companies have been criticized because of their high

¹⁶⁵Hope K. R & Kayira, G (1997). ‘The Economic Crisis in Africa: An Analytical Perspective on its Origin and Nature’, in Hope, K. (ed) *Structural Adjustment, Reconstruction and Development in Africa*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Gower House. pp.1-10

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

¹⁶⁷ Heidhues F. & Obare G. (2011) “Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programmes and their Effects in Africa”, *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture*. Vol. 50 Issue No. 1, pp. 55-64:61

¹⁶⁸ Adam, C.S., Bevan D. V. & Chambas G. (2001): ‘Exchange Rate Regimes and Revenue Performance in Sub-Saharan Africa’ *Journal of Development Economics* Vol.64 Issue. 1. p.173-213.

rate of capital outflow to their home based countries (Capital flight). The proponents of this view believe that Multinational companies are instrument for their home base economy and not the economy in which they are located. Many multinationals have been operating in Cameroon for ages, and have gained, over the years, monopoly power for particular lines of business activities.¹⁶⁹

In Cameroon, there are countless cases of advantageous treatment of foreign companies having multinational characters especially from French origins. This can be seen from several governmental concessions, tax exonerations, the non-suing of these entities when they breach regulations and other legal infractions. Some of the flagrante cases involve the illegal exploitation of wood.¹⁷⁰ Almost 1/3 of the total logging area in the country is currently being exploited by French companies like Thanry, Bollore, Coron, and Rougier, which according to the World Bank and the British Department of International Development act wholly or partly illegal and without being sued.¹⁷¹ According to a report published by the United States Department of State in 2019, logging companies especially of foreign origins continues to destroy indigenous forestland without compensation especially to the Baka, Bakola and Bagyeli residing primarily in the forest areas of the South and East Regions of the Country.¹⁷²

Some glaring examples of infractions without legal measures to curb these activities include the illegal take-over or dispossession of land for sugarcane plantation through the expropriation of the local population by French multinational SOMDIAA and the expropriation and human rights violations registered on the BOLLORE SOCAPALM plantations.¹⁷³ The expansion/intensification of the plantations has continued since its privatization,¹⁷⁴ at the cost of the adjacent ecosystems on which the local populations depend. In January 2018, GRAIN announced, ‘We will not be silenced by Bollore’s SLAPP lawsuits’. On the 25th of January 2018, a lawsuit was opened against three newspapers (Mediapart, L’Obs and Le Point) and two NGOs (Sherpa and ReAct), who were accused of defamation by the Luxembourgian holding SCOFIN and its Cameroon subsidiary SOCAPALM, for articles reporting on the mobilization of villagers and farmers in West Africa who live near farms managed by these two companies.¹⁷⁵ This was certainly a move to use the

¹⁶⁹ Mbodiam B. R. (2019) ‘Cameroon: The Opportunity Land for Multinationals’, Business in Cameroon’ available at <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.businessincameroon.com/pdf/BC77.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwilxKNkdv9AhWYjaQKHfrCCM4QFnoECAoQAAQ&usg=AOvVaw3tpOnCNwC2BLfDWopM3sM8> last accessed 14 March 2023

¹⁷⁰ Haag D. (2011). ‘Mechanisms of Neo-Colonialism: Current French and British Influence in Cameroon and Ghana’, Institut Catala International per la Pau, Barcelona (ICIP Working Paper No.2011/6). p.22

¹⁷¹ World Research Institute (WRI) (2000). An Overview of Logging in Cameroon. A Global Forest Watch Cameroon Report, p.66

¹⁷² US Department of States, (2019). ‘ Cameroon: Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2019’, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, at p.34

¹⁷³ Environmental Justice Atlas, (2018) ‘SOCAPALM conflicts, Cameroon’, (<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/socapalm-conflict>) last accessed on 12 March 2023

¹⁷⁴ In 2000, the Plantations were privatized and today they belong to the Luxembourgian holding SOCFIN which is linked to the Bollore group. The Bollore group is one of the key players of ‘Francafrique’.

¹⁷⁵ Environmental Justice Atlas, (2018) ‘SOCAPALM conflicts, Cameroon’, (<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/socapalm-conflict>) last accessed on 12 March 2023

judiciary to suppress public sentiments and agitations on the impacts of the activities of these companies on the local population.

The operations of these multinational companies are conducted using bribes and other corrupt practices especially in the award and execution of contracts. A recent case at hand is the UK Multinational Glencore Energy UK Ltd which pleaded guilty on charges related to bribes for oil contracts worth over \$25 million in countries across Africa including Cameroon. The company was ordered to pay \$313.7 million after the court found that the company paid \$29 million in bribes to state-owned companies across Africa in order to gain preferential access to the continent's oil reserves.¹⁷⁶ The company which is one of the world's largest natural resource companies, pleaded guilty to five counts of bribery and two counts of failure to prevent bribery as part of a conspiracy to secure access to oil in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and South Sudan.¹⁷⁷

Generally speaking, the activities of multinationals in the Sub-Saharan Africa Region is almost often done in total disregard with the participation of the local population and with non-compliance with internationally recognized and laid down environmental standards. One instance in this connection can be explained by the fact that on the 17th September 2009, SG Sustainable Oils Cameroon PLC (SGSOC) signed a contract with the Cameroonian government to develop a large industrial oil palm plantation and refinery.¹⁷⁸ Following tensions arising between the company and the local population who felt that the plantation will have an adverse effect on their livelihood decided to seize the court through a local NGO based in Mundemba. This was observed in the case of *The Struggle to Economise Future Environment (SEFE) v. S.G. Sustainable Oils Cameroon Ltd & Anor.*¹⁷⁹ The plaintiffs brought an action before the Mundemba High Court praying the court to restrain the respondents from exploiting the forest resources of the area in their vast oil project without complying with the requirements of the law preliminary to such exercises and most particularly without carrying out an environmental impact assessment of the project. After hearing the matter on the merit, the Court proceeded to institute an injunction order until a number of issues were determined.

Little wonder why multinationals mindful of their huge expertise and acquaintances with environment rules will comply with it in their home countries but disrespect same over seas, especially in Africa. This weakness is explained partly by the government laxity or sheer nonchalance on the part of some government departments to ensure and enforced compliance to environmental norms. Weak governance remains a major problem especially in the protection of the rights of the local population and the observance of their right to participation in matters affecting their environment and livelihoods.

¹⁷⁶ Pope H. (2022). 'Glencore Orderd to Pay £280M for Bribery Scandal Across Africa', Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), available at <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/16987-glencore-ordered-to-pay-280m-for-bribery-scandal-across-africa> last accessed on 14 March 2023

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁸ SGSOC is 100% owned by the American company Herakles Farms, an affiliate of Herakles Capital, an Africa-focused investment telecommunication, energy, infrastructure, mining and agro-industrial sectors.

¹⁷⁹ Suit No. HCN/03/OS/2011 reported in (2012) 1 CCLR, Part 16, at p.65-85

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The challenges faced by Cameroon to achieving sustainable development are profound. Sustainable development remains an overriding objective at both the level of the international community as well as the national level. The challenges confronted by Cameroon to achieving sustainable development cannot be treated in isolation from each other. The goals of the international community as laid down in the Sustainable Development Goals (2015) must be pursued with a drive different from the impetus employed in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. This must be done with a view of meeting the said targets by 2030 which is the envisaged period for the realization of the said goals alongside national strategies. The state must therefore move from playing a mere monitoring role to one of strict action and implementation of standards set out in the legal, institutional and policy frameworks. Going forward the country has to adopt a comprehensive approach in addressing these challenges. This could be by stimulating the private sector and improving the business environment. In addition, the government sector must step up its gears and a better sensitization for the workforce, effective programmes on good citizenship, morally upright society and a hardworking population is need to disentangle the country from certain dishonest tendencies which continue to drag the economy into the sludge.

The external challenges have to be carefully approached both within the national institutional setups as well as in foreign jurisdictions. Whilst some of the challenges treated in this study have been experienced in other countries and these countries have adopted stringent measures to curb them, the problem still subsists in Cameroon and other parts of Africa even today. The external problems can in the interest of the welfare and livelihood of the Cameroonian people, be resolved in the nearest future. Cameroon is a sovereign country and exercises supremacy of action within its territory and on this basis can pursue its own developmental objectives without external interference. It is also important to state that weak governance cuts across all these issues and which constitutes a vital development challenge for Cameroon.

Recommendations

The foregoing section has identified and discussed the major challenges to sustainable development in Cameroon both from an internal and external perspective. Acknowledging these predicaments, this aspect of the study advances some important recommendations for policy makers to consider as they attempt to achieve sustainable development in the country.

The government must enhance institutional performance by tackling corrupt practices in the management of state resources and promoting accountability, transparency, and democracy in the management of the national cake. This to be done with particular emphasis to the rural communities where poverty is alarming. The state actors (administrative officials) must put a human face in the management of state resources and inculcate discipline when managing state funds/resources.

The findings of this study also point to a pressing need for the government to be more proactive in making sure that the social and environmental obligations of multinational companies are fulfilled

for the benefit of the communities in which they are located and to comply with the regulations in force. This could be achieved by encouraging the importance of checks and balances in the enforcement of responsible corporate practices and to involve a grassroots participation in matters of general concern which ultimately affects them.

In order to exploit economic opportunities, the government should provide support to business operations that are engaged in the production of locally fabricated products especially in the forestry sector. In order to achieve this, the government should completely ban the exportation of unprocessed timber and give subsidies to value-added wood products. This support could be in the form of financial incentives, training and education with regards to the sustainability of value-added wood products. The state could equally allow the foreign companies to establish within the country and this will go a long way to ameliorating rural poverty and enhance community development in those places where the companies are localized.

This paper also presses the need for greater local initiative, the provision of basic infrastructure and for the government to promote fundamental and strategic research in local universities, especially research geared towards developing improved socio-economic and environmental management practices in Cameroon. In order to overcome conflict and instability, to improve governance, accountability and the reliability and fairness of the administration and the legal system.

There is the urgent need for Cameroon over 60 years after achieving independence to take charge of their own future in designing economic and development policies. It is preposterous for a country rich and endowed with diverse natural resources to continue to depend on external support in order to attain sustainability. The price have been to compromise the sovereignty of the country to Foreign Financial Institution, Multinationals and former colonial master, which this study holds to be too high to pay.

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