



# A comparative assessment of community forest models in Cameroon and British Columbia, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, a comparative review of the community forest models prevailing in two countries is made: the province of British Columbia in Canada and Cameroon in Central Africa. A series of assessment criteria emanating from community forest attributes in both jurisdictions were identified and employed as a basis for assessing and comparing the performance of both models. Results of this study revealed that fundamental similarities and differences exist in the two models and none of the models is superior to the other. However, it is argued that when both models are evaluated against specific criteria, one model often exhibits some sort of dominance vis-à-vis the other. To conclude, the paper prescribes a series of recommendations for improving the efficiency and quality of the community forest model in both jurisdictions.

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## Introduction

The sustainability of the post-colonial forest concession model is an oft-debated issue in Canada and also in developing countries like Cameroon. It can be argued that this model has failed to adequately provide the requisite socio-economic, cultural, and ecological conditions necessary for sustainable societal development. There is now a shift towards the community forest model as a viable alternative. Proponents of community-based forestry suggest that this form of tenure is better able to reconcile the objectives of social justice, equity, development, empowerment, and ecological sustainability (Gauld, 2000).

There is a growing body of literature in favor of the community forest model. Luckert (1999) contends that the objectives of communities advance the objectives of sustainable forest management better than large, industrial forestry firms. Further, he notes that “local communities are the segment of society most impacted by forestry operations and should have a more control over forest management”. Duinker et al. (1991) suggest that community forests can result in more meaningful community education, awareness, and satisfaction, as well as increased public involvement in resources decision-making. A well managed community forest – like any well managed forest – should help to alleviate the ecological degradation of forest lands and improve

the socio-economic conditions of the communities within which they exist (Grewal et al., 1990; Sun, 1992; Gunatilake et al., 1993; Mallik and Rahman, 1994). For example, Furness (2008) states that cultural sites of the Cowichan tribe in the Canadian province of British Columbia (BC) have been protected due to the implementation of the community forest model. The creation of community forest operations in the Littoral province of Cameroon has been successful in addressing and curbing illegal logging (Ndjebet, 2008). These examples point to the community forest model as a viable and sustainable alternative to large-scale concession-based industrial forest operations. In this paper, a comparative evaluation of the community forest model that prevails in Cameroon and BC is made. Specifically, emphasis is placed on the legal, procedural, administrative, and other fundamental measures for maintaining and improving community forests in both jurisdictions.

## Background and objectives

### Defining community forestry

Having received considerable attention in past decades, the community forest model is increasingly being implemented in different parts of the world (see Duinker et al., 1994; Duinker and Pulkki, 1998; Nagendra, 2002; Salam et al., 2006; Charnley and Poe, 2007; Mbile et al., 2008). White and Martin (2002) report that more than sixty nations have implemented institutional reforms directed at promoting community-based forest management. Most of these reforms have occurred in the developing world, though several

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examples can be found in developed countries, including Japan, Italy, the United States, and Canada (see Merlo, 1995; McKean, 1996; Baker and Kusel, 2003; Teitelbaum et al., 2006; Ambus, 2008).

Many definitions of community forestry exist. Community forestry can be described as efforts aimed at affording greater control to communities over forests in their neighborhood so that they can benefit from the use of forest resources therein (Lynch and Talbot, 1995; Poffenberger, 1996; Doornbos et al., 2000; Gibson et al., 2000; McCarthy, 2006). Duinker et al. (1994) describe a community forest as “a tree-dominated ecosystem managed by the community and providing local income and other values and benefits for the community”. Common to all definitions of community forestry is the explicit provision of socio-economic, ecological, and cultural benefits to communities by integrating them in the management of forested lands.

In Cameroon, the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF, 2009) defines a community forest as “a forest forming part of the non-permanent forest, which is covered by a management agreement between a village community and the Forestry Administration. Management of such forests is the responsibility of the village community concerned, with the help or technical assistance of the Forestry Administration”. In BC, the Ministry of Forests and Range (2008a) describes a community forest as “any forestry operation managed by a local government, community group, or First Nation for the benefit of the entire community”.

#### *Evolution of community forestry in Cameroon and British Columbia*

The prevalence of concession-based forestry in Cameroon and BC shares a common origin in colonization by western European nations and the subsequent public tenures of forests. Simply put, concession-based forestry describes efforts to give forest rights to large-scale industrial firms (Karsenty, 2007). The sustainability of this model is debatable in contemporary international development, as it tends to confer forest exploitation to larger-scale logging companies, oftentimes at the expense of the local communities where the forests are located. Many have argued that this centralized state-controlled forest management model has failed on several accounts, even according to its own standards, with common issues being consistent miscalculations of sustained yields, an imbalance of corporate power, systemic ecological degradation, and forest dependent communities being subjected to boom-and-bust economic cycles (Gauld, 2000; Hayter, 2003; Hayter et al., 2003; McCarthy, 2006).

Cameroon began to introduce successive laws governing forestry and land issues just over a decade following independence in 1960. As Mbile et al. (2008) suggests, this was done in a bid to strengthen the government’s power over the nation’s land and forest resources amidst the uncertainty of the post-colonial era. These centralised state forest management laws usurped property rights of forest communities. Forest concessions were mostly granted to large multinational logging companies whose principal objective was geared towards profit-making via export-oriented products. Until 2002, Cameroon’s forest (estimated at 22.8 million hectares) was completely under state ownership and control (White and Martin, 2002).

Cameroon’s forest policy was amended in 1994. Prior to this forestry policy reform, the development and expansion of the large-scale post-colonial forest concession model as a means of addressing socio-economic, ecological and cultural sustainability was a key priority for the government of Cameroon. To attract the required level of foreign investment, favorable taxes and investment initiatives were crafted and implemented. However, in the early-1990s, the efficacy and sustainability of this forest concession

model became a point of contention (World Bank, 1991) as unemployment in forested communities surged, ecological degradation of forest ecosystems increased, and infrastructure/service delivery (like good roads, electricity, schools, and clean water) were fundamentally absent. The concession model which was a fundamental underpinning of the country’s economy had failed to produce the development objectives of donors, governments, and civil society. As a result, attention turned to community forestry as a new approach that would provide sustainable economic benefits and also be inclusive and understanding of the needs of local peoples.

With mounting pressure from the World Bank and civil society, coupled with the ongoing need to demarcate large-scale forest concessions to foreign-owned logging companies, the government of Cameroon deemed it necessary to reform the prevailing forest tenure structure. Community forest licenses were officially enacted in 1994 as part of the provisions of the new forestry law. This law and the new forestry policy of 1995 aimed to “Increase the participation of local populations in sustainable forest management so as to contribute in increasing their standards of living thereby seeking to secure enormous benefits for forest communities as well as encouraging them to better protect and conserve forest cover within the national territory” (MINFOF, 2009).

Forestry in the province of BC is also dominated by a concession-based system. In this model, the provincial Ministry of Forests and Range is the only authority that can enter into negotiations regarding the allocation of forest concessions to interested parties. McCarthy (2006) states that concessions were granted almost exclusively to timber corporations with leases ranging between 25 and 99 years. This forest management model dominated the BC forestry landscape although the community forest concept was invoked in the mid-1940s in the Sloan Commission Report (Sloan, 1945, 1956; Allan and Frank, 1994; Harshaw, 2000; McCarthy, 2006).

In the mid-1970s through the late-1980s, there was considerable opposition to this forest management model by various groups, including social and environmental associations, forest workers, environmentalists, Aboriginal communities, and civil society. In response, the provincial government, based on recommendations of the Pearse Commission (1976), began to informally grant community forest tenures to a number of forest communities (Haley and Luckert, 1998; M’Gonigle, 1998; Wilson, 1998; Howlett, 2001; McCarthy, 2006). This, coupled with increased scrutiny from stakeholders and forestry jobs in decline, led to the promulgation of community forest licenses in 1998. The underpinning of the community forest licence law was the Jobs and Timber Accord (JTA) of 1997 (Harshaw, 2000; McCarthy, 2006). The JTA was an agreement between the government and industry to increase jobs, equity, social justice, ecological and cultural sustainability within forestry. Glen Clark, then BC premier, stated that “public forest lands belong to the people of British Columbia, and they have a right to expect more jobs and other social benefits from every tree cut on public lands” (Harshaw, 2000; BC Ministry of Forests, n.d.).

#### *Study objectives*

Several studies have been undertaken with the aim of assessing and comparing the community forest model in different jurisdictions. Allan and Frank (1994) contrasted two community forests in BC on tenure and ecological criteria, and found that both models were similar in terms of local control and overall management structure. Duinker and Pulkki (1998) employed site visits, interviews, and content analysis methodologies to comparatively analyze a community forest in Italy with three others in Canada. They concluded that finding common criteria for success in different sites is difficult, as each community was successful for different

reasons. Mallik and Rahman (1994) compared opportunities and challenges for community forestry in developed and developing countries. They concluded that community forestry in developing countries was generally small, labour-intensive, and geared towards meeting the basic needs of the community people while in developed countries, the communities operated on a larger scale, with more capital and more of a market orientation. Davis (2008), comparing a case studies in Mexico and BC, explored the way in which local context, forest policies, and political history have constrained the potential of communities to manage their land base in innovative and ecologically sensitive ways. Key findings revolved around the degree to which patterns of ownership and past harvesting are intrinsic to the sound management of forests in both countries. McCarthy (2006) stated that, while structural similarities exist between community forestry in BC and the United States, the trajectories of the community forestry models in these two jurisdictions have evolved differently.

While, the aforementioned comparative studies are instructive, this particular study seeks to fill a gap by assessing how specific jurisdictions have evolved from the post-colonial forest concession model to one that is inclusive of the notion of community forests. Cameroon and BC represent two such jurisdictions that have evolved along similar trajectories (from a colonization point of view). This study will compare these two models. By identifying similarities and differences, the paper seeks to outline weaknesses and strengths that can inform the community forest model in both jurisdictions and other post-colonial forested countries elsewhere.

## Methods

In this study, a qualitative research approach was used and data was obtained from both secondary and primary sources. A review and analysis of data from secondary sources including relevant governmental reports, non-governmental organization (NGO) and aid agency reports, and community forest legislation is presented. Additional information from peer reviewed literature supported this synthesis where relevant.

This synthesis was supplemented by data from primary sources gathered using unstructured interviews, generally in the form of personal communications or conversations with respondents (Corbin and Morse, 2003). Unstructured interviews with 21 individuals from Cameroon and BC were conducted in March and June 2008, as well as in March 2009. All respondents were involved in community forests from the two case study areas, including managers, representatives from civil society, state officials, and researchers. The interviews were conducted during field visits, workshops, and by phone/email and the topics revolved around sustainable community forest management and its challenges in their respective jurisdictions. Examples of some major questions asked during these interviews included (i) In your assessment, what is the average duration necessary to procure a community forest license in your jurisdiction? (ii) What is the level of coordination between the relevant administrative authorities for community forests operations in your jurisdiction? (iii) The only community forest in BC that is certified possesses what type of forest certification scheme? (iv) Do you know of any benefits accrued as a result of community forest certification in BC? (v) How is stumpage applied to timber removed from community forests in BC?

Assessment criteria, seen in Table 1, were formulated to enable a comparison between the community forest models in both jurisdictions and to evaluate their overall effectiveness. They were based largely on common legislative requirements for the formation and operation of community forests in Cameroon and BC and enable comparative evaluation based on four fundamental themes:

**Table 1**

Criteria for the assessment of community forest models in Cameroon and BC.

<b>1. Legislation governing community forests</b>
1.1. Legislative provisions
1.2. Size
1.3. Tenure duration and status
1.4. Timber processing
1.5. Legal entity
1.6. Land entitlement and exploitation of non-timber forest products
<b>2. Procedures for forming community forests</b>
2.1. Public consultation
2.2. Requirements of the management plan
2.3. Submission of application and average time to procure a license
2.4. Review of the application
2.5. Decision-making and authority concerned
<b>3. Administration and oversight of community forests</b>
3.1. Competent authority
3.2. Coordination level with other relevant bodies
<b>4. Other measures for maintaining and improving community forest operations</b>
4.1. Forest certification
4.2. Reporting
4.3. Monitoring and enforcement
4.4. Expertise and training in the management of community forests
4.5. Implementation of efficient equipment and machinery
4.6. Legalized logging
4.7. Customer relationships and distribution channels for forest products
4.8. Reforestation

(i) legislation governing community forests; (ii) procedures for forming community forests; (iii) administrative regulation of community forests; and (iv) other measures for maintaining and improving community forest operations.

## Results and discussions

Table 2 summarizes the results of the literature review and unstructured interviews. In the discussion that follows, each major theme is explored. Specifically, an assessment of both models against the formulated criteria is made in this section of the paper.

### *Legislation governing community forests*

In Cameroon, there are two principal laws that regulate community forestry, while in BC, four legal statutes govern community forestry. The Forests Statutes Amendment Act 1998 (Bill 34), the Community Tenures Regulation of 2004, the Forest and Range Practices Act of 2002, and the Forest Practices and Planning Regulation 2004 govern community forests in B.C. Bill 34 regulates the manner in which community forests licenses are issued, their beneficiaries, terms, and replacement. Requirements for applying for a community forest license are published by the BC Ministry of Forests and Range. The Forest and Range Practices Act outlines how all licenses in BC, including community forests, are required to operate. Additional clarity to this act is provided by the Forest Practices and Planning Regulation. In Cameroon, the legal decrees are less comprehensive: Forestry Law NO. 94/01 of 1994 contains general provisions for the management of community forests and its decree of implementation. A manual that describes the procedures for the management of community forests was published by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1998 (revised in 2009 by MINFOF) and contains details on the application and procedures of the 1994 law.

The size of a community forest is vital in ensuring that sustainable forest management is attained as it determines the resource-base of any given community forest. In Cameroon, legislation restricts the size of a community forest to a maximum of

**Table 2**  
Comparative assessment of the community forest model in Cameroon and BC<sup>a</sup>.

Assessment criteria	Cameroon	BC
<b>1. Legislation governing community forests:</b>		
1.1. Legislative provisions	Two general legal statutes regulate community forest in the country	Four specific laws govern community forests in BC
1.2. Size	Maximum statutory limit is 5000 ha	No minimum or maximum size specified
1.3. Tenure duration	Two year probationary license is first issued and can be extended to a long-term agreement with a minimum duration of 25 years	Five year probationary license is first issued that can be extended to a long-term agreement ranging between 25 and 99 years
1.4. Timber processing	Rights to timber in 1/25 (one-twenty-fifth) of the surface area occupied by the forest each year over the tenure duration No stumpage and provisions for waste assessment is required	Rights to timber exploitation with annual allowable cut ranging between 1000 and 63,000 m <sup>3</sup> /year Stumpage and waste assessment within the community forest is mandatory
1.5. Legal entity	Associations, co-operatives, common initiative groups, and economic interest groups	Eligibility must include a First Nations band, a society, an association, a corporation, and a partnership
1.6. Land entitlement and exploitation of NTFPs	Holder can exploit NTFPs, but do not have any entitlement to the land	Holder can exploit NTFPs, but do not have any entitlement to the land
<b>2. Procedures for forming community forests:</b>		
2.1. Public consultation	Minimal public consultation	Thorough public consultation
2.2. Requirements of the Management plan	General requirements	Specific requirements
2.3. Submission of application and average time to procure a license	Submission is done in two stages Average time to procure a license is approximately 18 months	Submission is a one-step process Average time to procure a license is between 18 and 24 months
2.4. Review of application	Done using guidelines for preparing and evaluating the application dossier and management plan	Review is conducted based on set requirements and a checklist for the evaluation of the management plan and application
2.5. Decision-making and authority concerned	MINFOF is the decision-making authority	Final decision rests with the Minister of Forests and Range
<b>3. Administration and oversight of community forests:</b>		
3.1. Competent authority	MINFOF and forest delegates at local level	Ministry of Forests and Range and forest authorities at the regional level
3.2. Level of cooperation among relevant administrative bodies	Limited cooperation between MINFOF and relevant ministries	Weak coordination between Ministry of Forests and Range and Ministry of Environment
<b>4. Other measures for maintaining and improving community forest operations:</b>		
4.1. Forest certification	No certified community forests	One certified community forest
4.2. Reporting	Annual reporting is mandatory	Request to submit a performance report is at the discretion of the regional or district manager
4.3. Monitoring and enforcement	Monitoring by MINFOF	Ministry of Forests and Range is responsible for monitoring and follow-up
4.4. Expertise and training in the management of community forests	Limited personnel with training in forestry	Highly qualified technical experts in forestry
4.5. Implementation of efficient equipment and machinery	Processing and extraction of timber from community forests is crude and labor-intensive	Timber extractions and processing is more highly mechanized
4.6. Legalized logging	Illegal logging is practiced on a larger scale	Illegal logging exists only on a small scale
4.7. Customer relationships and distribution channels for forest products	Generally poor relations between communities and customers regarding the sale of forest products Channels for forest products are not secure	Good relations between communities and customers Price security for forest products
4.8. Reforestation	A major provision in the legislation	Prescribed in legal framework

<sup>a</sup> All Information was obtained from British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range (2008b,c) and Mbile et al. (2008). Interviews with authorities from MINFOF and BC Ministry of Forests and Range.

5000 ha, whereas industrial concessions are allocated 200,000 ha on average (Mbile et al., 2008). In contrast, community forests in B.C. face no size restrictions. As of April 2008, approximately 650,000 ha were being managed as community forests in the province (BC Ministry of Forests and Range, 2008a) under 28 different licenses. Cameroon's Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF,

2008) reports that 621,245.4 ha are managed as community forests, under 135 separate licenses.

The duration of a probationary community forest license is two years in Cameroon and when all conditions in this license are met, it can be extended to a permanent license that is valid for at least twenty-five years (MINFOF, 2009). Similarly, in BC, a five

**Table 3**

Sawlog stumpage rate (\$/m<sup>3</sup>) for each species of coniferous timber and zone harvested under a community forest license.

Species	Forest zone	
	Northern coast	Southern coast
Balsam	3.66	4.27
Hemlock	4.01	3.98
Cedar	5.54	8.48
Cypress	5.58	5.35
Fir	0.25	4.55
Spruce	3.40	2.95
Other	4.86	5.63

Source: BC Ministry of Forests and Range (2009).

year probationary period accompanies every license and can be extended to a period not exceeding five years. After the probationary period is passed successfully, the license can be extended to a long-term agreement ranging between 25 and 99 years that is renewed every ten years (BC Ministry of Forests and Range, 2008b; BCCFA, 2008). By receiving an extended license, the community is afforded a degree of assurance. This extended time frame is vital because it permits communities to develop long-term forest management plans and falls within the requisite average time frame (approximately 80 years) of one commercial timber rotation (Mitchell-Banks, 1998; Harshaw, 2000).

In both jurisdictions, communities have rights to timber exploitation. In BC, the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) ranges between 1000 and 63,000 m<sup>3</sup> per year. The AAC is proposed by the proponent and is determined by the Ministry of Forests and Range as the sustainable harvest level for the area of the community forest (Interview with a forester from the BC Ministry of Forests and Range). In Cameroon, communities have the right to exploit timber in 1/25 (one-twenty-fifth) of the surface area occupied by the forest each year over a twenty-five years period for which the permit is valid (Mbile et al., 2008).

Holders in both regions are required to pay financial charges (such as exportation fees for unprocessed forest products) for timber exploitation from community forests. However, only the BC regulation provides for stumpage on timber removed from community forests which depends on the tree species and the forest zone (Table 3).

Furthermore, the polluter-pays principle (PPP), which requires polluters to bear the cost of pollution, is prescribed in the BC regulatory framework and obligates holders to conduct a waste assessment of their logging residue. Results are reported to the Ministry of Forests and Range who then issues a bill charging the holder to pay for this waste. This obligation is absent in Cameroon.

In both jurisdictions, the prerequisite entity needed in order to apply for and receive a license is clearly defined. This ensures that applicants for a community forest license are positioned to engage in the management of the forest in a manner that is consistent with the relevant regulations and laws. In Cameroon, the MINFOF mandates that the requisite managerial legal entity must include one of the following: (i) associations; (ii) co-operatives; (iii) common initiative groups; and (iv) economic interest groups (MINFOF, 2009). In BC, the Ministry of Forests and Range considers the following entities eligible for a license: (i) "a First Nations band as defined in the Indian Act; (ii) a society incorporated under the society act; (iii) an association incorporated under the cooperative association act; (iv) a corporation incorporated or registered under the BC company; and (v) a partnership registered under the partnership act" (BC Ministry of Forests and Range 2008c).

In both BC and Cameroon, the law does not grant permanent land ownership to community forest license holders. It does, however, grant them the right to harvest and manage non-timber forest

products (NTFPs) in the forest. However, Ambus (2008) argues that, in BC, holder's rights to NTFPs within community forests are not exclusive since aboriginal rights are constitutionally protected. For example, this author further argues that, "if communities in BC want to manage a community forest for other values like water or recreation, they must obtain the appropriate tenures or permit from other government agencies". The situation is similar in Cameroon where the rules surrounding traditional user rights within the context of community forests management may be discriminatory, unjust, and poorly implemented (Mbile et al., 2008). In a personal communication with the head of civil society in Lomié (situated in the East Region Cameroon), it was reported that forest guards have been known to confiscate bush meat from villagers obtained from their community forests in this region of the country.

#### *Procedure for forming community forests*

Public participation – particularly the participation of resource-dependent communities – is globally recognized as an imperative of sustainable development (UNCSD, 1992; WCFS, 1999; Ambus, 2008). The European Commission (2003), as argued in Hartley and Wood (2005), advocates public participation on the premise that it increases the accountability and transparency of the decision-making process. In both jurisdictions, public meetings are legally held with a wide cross-section of the community present in order to formulate and discuss the fundamental objectives of the proposed community forest. Evidence of public participation is more robust and extensive in the BC regulatory procedure, where apart from letters of support from a broad range of community members and stakeholders, oral and written evidence must be submitted by the applicant as minimum proof of public participation. However, all interviewees in both jurisdictions agreed that because of diverse interests, a lack of consensus is often a major hurdle encountered during public participation. During the BC Community Forest Conference and Annual General Meeting 2008, a small protest against community forestry in the province was observed with lack of representation being one of the grievances. Hanna (2000), as quoted in Bullock and Hanna (2008), provides a supporting thesis to the issue of exclusion, positing that "what might be regarded as legitimate community empowerment does not necessarily ensure community control and may lead to co-option of certain views or interest overriding others".

The guidelines for preparing a management plan for proposed community forests in B.C. are more elaborate than those prevailing in Cameroon. Requirements for the application of a probationary community forest license are detailed in a report published by the BC Ministry of Forests and Range (2008c). Section 10 has five wide-ranging, specific and highly structured subsections relating to the requirements of a management plan (from guiding principle, goals and management, to official endorsements). In contrast, the guidelines for the establishment of a management plan in Cameroon are less comprehensive especially in terms of the goals and overall management of the forest. In B.C., community forest applicants must meet the following requirements in order to be considered for review: "A management plan and other essential information like a letter of introduction, table of contents, executive summary, district documentation, program objectives, legal entity, statement of guiding principle, overview of the proposed forest area, evidence of public participation, administrative authority, structure of the proposed forest, and a business plan" (BC Ministry of Forests and Range, 2008c). The procedure for submission is different in Cameroon, with MINFOF (2009) requiring applicants to initially submit a stamped application endorsed by the legal entity official laying out the objectives ascribed to the proposed forest. Addition-

ally, the application must detail among others, the location of the forest, the name of the association applying for a license, a provisional management agreement form for the forest, and a summary of findings from public consultation. According to the procedure, this application must be approved before a management plan is submitted to the next stage for review and final approval of the permanent license. An interviewee from Cameroon (leader of forest community) indicated that:

“...it takes about 18 months [on average] to obtain a community forest license in the country [Cameroon] and the procedure for getting this license is very time consuming. At times, we have to travel to the capital [Yaoundé] several times before the process is completed so we think our government needs to do something about this”.

Similarly, an authority from the BC Ministry of Forests and Range stated that: “In this province [BC], I would say it takes approximately 18–24 months to obtain a community forest license”. Based on this extensive timeline, it could be argued that bureaucratic red-tape, rigidity, and delay are systemic hurdles that seem to be plaguing the community forest model in both jurisdictions.

During the review stage, the quality of the application for a community forest license is verified before a decision is made. The legal frameworks of both regions contain provisions to ensure that objectivity is met at this stage. In Cameroon, this framework contains guidelines for evaluating the application and management plan. In B.C., the review is based on a set of requirements and an evaluation checklist for evaluating the management plan and the entire application. These guidelines and the evaluation checklist contain criteria that must be met as a fundamental prerequisite for the application to be endorsed.

There is no significant distinction between the jurisdictions in making the final decision. In B.C., the final decision rests solely with the Minister of Forests and Range. In Cameroon, authority rests with the Minister of Forests and Fauna regarding endorsement of both the probationary and final community forest license application (MINFOF, 2009). The regulatory procedures in both locations provide comments and points for review if any particular application is rejected.

#### *Administration and oversight of community forests*

Each of the case study areas has a specific administrative authority responsible for managing community forests operations. In Cameroon, the MINFOF is the competent authority through its Department of Forestry. Local forestry authorities at divisional and provincial levels provide preliminary assessments of applications. In B.C., the Ministry of Forests and Range, through its Resource Tenure and Engineering Branch, manages community forest applications and related administrative matters. Like in Cameroon, relevant authorities at the regional level also provide an initial assessment of community forest applications.

Some coordination between the administrative authorities responsible for community forests and the government managers of other resources (such as wildlife and water) exist in both jurisdictions. However, some interviewees reported that the level of interagency coordination was poor. As one authority in BC put it:

“...community forest management by this ministry [Ministry of Forests and Range] is deeply circumscribed and conducted from a forest perspective with little coordination, for example, between this ministry and the Ministry of Environment”.

Personal communications with a government official from the MINFOF revealed the following:

“concerning [inter-ministerial] coordination...the level or degree of cooperation or coordination between the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization for example and MINFOF seems to be solid or stronger than that between MINFOF and other relevant ministries that might have a say in community forest management in the country”.

#### *Other measures for maintaining and improving community forests operations*

There is great interest around the world today in the concept of certification of forest management systems and wood products (Duinker and Pulkki, 1998). The Pinchot Institution for Conservation (2006) defines forest certification as a market-based, non-regulatory forest conservation tool designed to recognize and promote environmentally responsible forestry and sustainability of forest resources. While no community forest is certified in Cameroon, only one community forest is certified in BC according to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). As one manager from a community-based forestry organization in BC puts it:

“regarding... forest certification...my members believe that at this point there is currently no market benefit of certification although getting involved in the process could improve some aspects of field activities, record keeping and reporting”.

The two models differ greatly regarding monitoring and evaluation systems, an important component of sustainable forestry. In Cameroon, annual reporting is mandatory while in B.C., the regional or district manager may at any time require the agreement holder to carry out audits and submit reports on the performance of their community forests (BC Ministry of Forests and Range, 2008c). This provision implies that performance reports are only submitted at the discretion of the regional or district manager, which could create an unpredictable and difficult managerial obligation for communities.

Monitoring is widely advocated to ensure legal compliance and as Alemagi et al. (2006) suggest, in the absence of adequate monitoring system, enforcement of laws governing environmental management is difficult. In Cameroon, the local communities and MINFOF share monitoring responsibility, although the latter has the authority to conduct preliminary prosecution and enforcement of decisions or fines. Similarly, in B.C., the Ministry of Forests and Range is responsible for monitoring and enforcement.

In both B.C. and Cameroon, there is expertise in community forest management in universities and colleges. However, interviewees from Cameroon believed that additional expertise needs to develop locally in order to help build capacity for the effective and efficient management of community forests. Indeed, only one university is currently offering forestry at a degree level in the country. These problems are not shared by B.C.

Unlike BC, in Cameroon, the processing and extraction of timber from community forests is crude, rudimentary, labour-intensive, and done with inappropriate tools and equipment. Etoungou (2003) reports that mechanized extraction of timber from community forests in the country is uncommon, as communities are not able to afford the necessary equipment, nor do they have sufficient access to capital. Instead, head-loading of sawn timber is the most common practice, a form of timber exploitation extremely dangerous due to the numerous health problems (head, neck, and back injury) associated with it (Mbile and Ndzomo-Abanda, 2006; Mbile et al., 2008).

Illegal logging occurs in community forests operating in both jurisdictions, although it is a more acute problem in Cameroon. Mir and Fraser (2003) define illegal logging as “any felling and extraction of logs from forests that is not in conformity with an approved

**Table 4**  
Timber production and revenue situation of six community forests in 2007 (reproduced from Mbile et al. (2008)).

Community forest entity	Production volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Local price (m <sup>3</sup> ) in USD	Lost price in USD
COBANKO	239	60	14340
COVINKO I	101	32	3232
APAN	23	APU	Not yet paid
ADPD	60	APU	Not yet paid
AFHAN	43	APU	Not yet paid
INFOYO	44	APU	Not yet paid

APU = agree price unknown.

management plan, or officially licensed or permitted in any other way". Mbile et al. (2008) remark that illegal logging from community forests in Cameroon is endemic. Small-scale logging in an unauthorized area of a community forest was also observed during a field trip to a community forest operated by the Cowichan tribe in B.C and during personal communication with the manager of this forest, it was revealed that this logging was conducted illegally.

In Cameroon, the relationship between communities and customers is weak, as many additional buyers and sellers gain the majority of the economic rents for any particular product (Mbile et al., 2008). Table 4 gives specific examples of this inequity. Timber from four community forest enterprises is detailed, showing low prices paid to communities, an inconsistency in price given to communities that are geographically proximate (COBANKO and COVINKO I) and producing similar goods, and in some cases no payment being made to the communities at all.

Reforestation is an ecosystem management technique that can be used to reduce increased atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, and also increase soil quality and forest conservation (Schroeder, 1992; Lal, 2004; Nabuurs et al., 2007; Zheng et al., 2008). As a result, the policy frameworks in both jurisdictions mandates reforestation as a management option for community forests. However, given that there is a limit on the times of the community forest licenses in both jurisdictions, there may not be a strong incentive to participate in reforestation efforts if the community does not benefit from this work.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The intent of this paper was to make a comparative evaluation of the legal, administrative, procedural, and other fundamental measures for maintaining and improving the community forest model in Cameroon and BC. When both models are evaluated against specific criteria, one model often exhibited some sort of dominance vis-à-vis the other. The B.C. model is more developed than the Cameroonian in terms of its legislative provisions, waste assessment, public consultation and requirements of the management plan. This can be partly attributed to a series of legislative enactments formulated and implemented after the integration of the community forest model into the legislative framework. After establishing the community forest as a viable model for forest management, the government continued to develop the necessary administrative and procedural tools necessary to encourage the growth and success of community forestry.

Community forestry in B.C. is characterized by a large surface area, abundant expertise and training in the management of forests, progress in adopting certification schemes, the procurement of efficient equipment and machinery, and healthy customer relationships and distribution channel for forest products. These observations are in line with typical goals of community forestry in the developed world. As Mallik and Rahman (1994) explain, community forests in developed countries are usually large, capital intensive and market oriented.

With respect to reporting, community forestry in Cameroon has made more progress with regards to its predictable reporting system. The clearly mandated annual reports provide communities with much needed certainty in the compliance process. This strength shown by Cameroon may be a product of the additional experience and time the country has spent in developing the community forest model. This notion was reinforced in an interview with a forester at the BC Ministry of Forests and Range during a personal communication:

"The community forest concept is very important but it still relatively new in this province and I have to say more learning and experience is still being acquired for overall quality improvement".

Arguably, the two systems have achieved progress in developing a community forest model that is consistent with prevailing local circumstances. The first lesson that can be drawn from this study is that these systems, both products of a post-colonial era, have established the legal, administrative and procedural framework for community forest management. Additionally, each has instituted a monitoring and enforcement system to ensure legislative compliance. Despite these accomplishments, another fundamental lesson that emerges from the study relates to the challenges of community forest in both jurisdictions. These challenges vary from one jurisdiction to the other and it is worth noting that each of these jurisdictions can learn from the other. Action is needed however to tackle fundamental weaknesses and challenges in order to improve the efficiency, performance and quality of these two systems. These include, among others:

- broadening the legislative framework governing community forestry in Cameroon. It is my recommendation that the current framework is too general and needs more legislative enactments to address areas with deficiencies and loopholes;
- increasing the maximum statutory limit or size for community forests in Cameroon and integrating provisions with regards to the polluter pay principle for waste assessment into the legislative framework regulating community forestry in the country;
- promoting the use of efficient equipment and machinery within community forests in the Cameroon;
- providing training in forestry especially social or community forestry at the university level in Cameroon. Capacity building is regarded as an effective and efficient means of augmenting the standard of community forest operations;
- establishing a universal fixed price for forest products, (especially timber) particularly those emanating from community forests in order to guarantee price security for these products in Cameroon;
- decentralizing the decision-making authority for approval of a community forest license in BC and Cameroon;
- specifying the exact period for system auditing and reporting in BC. A situation where discretionary powers are given to regional or district managers is ill-conceived;
- promoting complete public participation, community forest certification and reinforcing system monitoring by the communities

and authorities concerned to curb illegal logging in both jurisdictions;

- increasing and reinforcing protection of traditional user rights for NTFPs in community-managed forests prevailing in both regions;
- strengthening inter-ministerial cooperation between the departments in control of community forest management and other relevant authorities in both areas;
- consulting regularly with stakeholders and reviewing the legislative framework to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. This, I argue, is central to eradicating the current bureaucratic delays that seems to be affecting both models.

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