

DEVELOPMENT AND HARMONISATION OF LAND MAPPING METHODOLOGIES

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Country: Cameroon

Principal Organisation: Centre pour le Développement et l'Environnement (CED)

ABSTRACT

Land mapping and monitoring of its dynamics is essential for the protection of community land rights. In response to increasing land investments in Cameroon, CED partnered with government departments, the Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK),

Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), community leaders and community members to develop a harmonised and generally accepted land mapping methodology, based on different land mapping systems and techniques used by communities.

ILC COMMITMENTS



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EFFECTIVE ACTIONS AGAINST LAND GRABBING

INTERNATIONAL
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COMPETENCIES

AREAS

**COMMUNITIES, INDIGENOUS
& RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND RIGHTS
RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE
PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

SKILLS

**LAND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
LAND MONITORING, INDICATORS
AND ALTERNATIVE REPORTING
LAND POLICY AND
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE
MAPPING AND LAND REGISTRATION**

BACKGROUND

Cameroon is currently witnessing increased investments in large infrastructure, mining, agro-industries, and logging. On the other hand, community-led conservation is gaining momentum as a response to the intensification of land and natural resources exploitation.

Despite Cameroon's dual land tenure system, customary land rights are not fully recognized under state law, and registered land rights receive better protection than customary land rights. As a result, community land has been exploited by investors, with minimal or no benefit for the local community. NGOs have been supporting local community members to conduct participatory mapping of their community lands.

THE CHALLENGE

Although the law provides for participatory mapping as a means of identification and protection of community land rights, there is no set methodology for conducting a mapping exercise. Different NGOs working with local communities in designing and implementing participatory mapping projects were using different, and often conflicting methodologies. As a result, mapping on the same piece of land by different actors often produced different

and irreconcilable maps, leading to the disqualification of participatory mapping as a reliable tool for identifying community land rights and resources.

In certain cases, the National Institute for Cartography, was not able to validate some land maps and the local communities were not able to claim their land rights based on the land maps.



OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

CED worked with Rainbow Environment (a private consultancy firm), government representatives, the Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK), Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), community leaders and local and indigenous community members to develop a harmonised and generally accepted land mapping methodology. The new tool was tested, fine-tuned and finally adopted by all relevant stakeholders.

It can be used for several processes, including Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), prevention and management of land and resources conflicts, designation of effective land use planning processes and the development of natural resources management plans. It can also be used for local social dialogue, and has informed the ongoing land law reform. If successfully implemented, the methodology could also become part of the regulation on land and natural resources management in Cameroon.

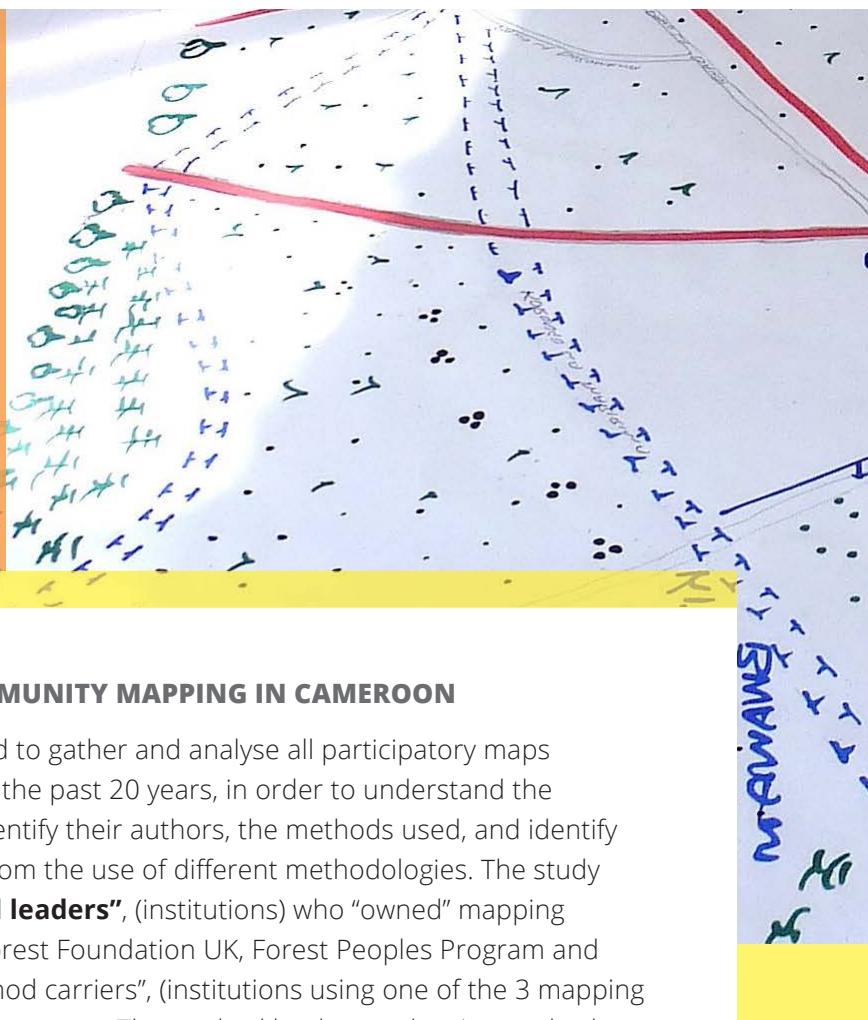
The National Institute of Cartography has been mandated to act as the depositary for all community maps prepared according to the methodology.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

The harmonisation process resulted in the legitimisation of local and indigenous communities' claims for use and ownership of their customary land. Furthermore, it highlighted the relevance of participatory mapping as a key tool for land use planning and local development. Partners such as the World Bank, Agence Française de Développement and Programme National de Développement Participatif expressed their interest in using the new methodology in their development projects.

As a result of implementation of the project, 7 participatory maps were prepared in 5 regions of Cameroon, providing communities and decision-makers with an initial overview of the extent and complexity of community land and resource claims.

THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS



1

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY MAPPING IN CAMEROON

A study was commissioned to gather and analyse all participatory maps produced in Cameroon in the past 20 years, in order to understand the strengths, weaknesses, identify their authors, the methods used, and identify disparities that resulted from the use of different methodologies. The study identified **three “method leaders”**, (institutions) who “owned” mapping methodologies: the Rainforest Foundation UK, Forest Peoples Program and CED, and around 30 “method carriers”, (institutions using one of the 3 mapping methodologies used) in Cameroon. The method leaders and active method carriers were invited to technical meetings to prepare the common community mapping protocol.

2

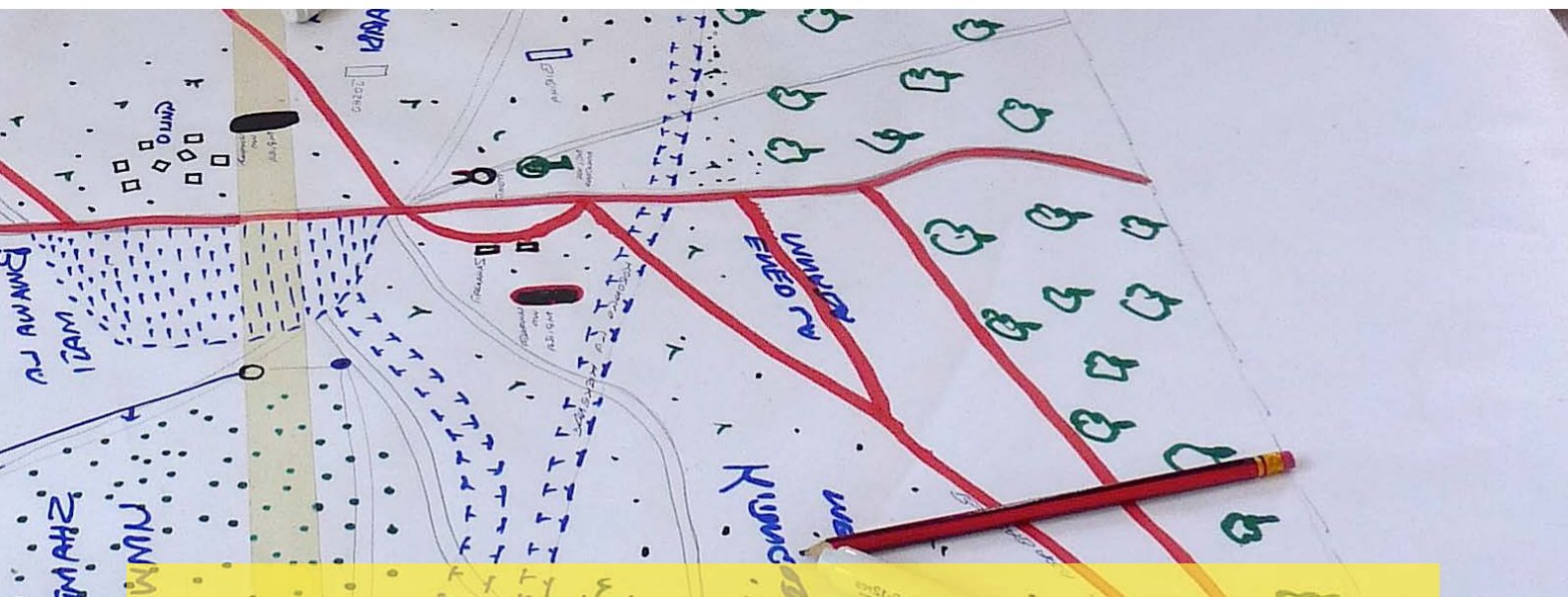
DEVELOPING A COMMON METHODOLOGY

The technical committee was coordinated by consultancy firm Rainbow Environment, considered as **a neutral and highly skilled technician**, who facilitated discussions about the development of a common community mapping protocol. Technicians assessed the similarities and differences between their methodologies, and decided on alterations that were necessary for the development of a harmonised mapping methodology.

3

STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP

A Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) comprising relevant government representatives, members of parliament, traditional leaders, indigenous peoples’ representatives, and investors was established to steer the process. They provided inputs on what needed to appear on maps and what techniques would be useful in a participatory mapping exercise. The **inputs of the SAG were used to guide the work of technicians** preparing the common community mapping protocol. The National Institute of Cartography was represented in the SAG and in the technical committee in order to ensure compliance of the protocol with mapping standards of Cameroon.



4

TESTING THE METHODOLOGY

The first draft of the methodology was **tested in pilot sites** selected for their representativeness of issues requiring participatory mapping in Cameroon. Selected sites included areas where: internally displaced populations of Mbororo grazers faced conflicts with local farmers; a mining permit was granted covering several villages, without prior consideration of the consequences; indigenous communities were facing competition on access to land and resources with refugees from Central African Republic; indigenous communities had to co-exist with a huge mining company; a permit was granted to a cement company on the customary lands of indigenous and local communities; and where the extension of agro-industrial land concession created conflicts with local and indigenous communities.

5

REVISION OF THE METHODOLOGY

Based on the results of the test, the **methodology was revised**, and the final results were discussed with the National Institute of Cartography, which provided inputs on compliance with their technical standards. The methodology was then approved by the SAG and all Government representatives. The National Institute of Cartography offered to serve as a depositary for the maps.

5



KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS FOR REPLICABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY PURPOSES

6

- 1 The **institutional design** of the project should include political bodies such as the SAG, and civil servants officially designated and mandated by their ministries; and a technical body facilitated by a neutral and skilled expert, to enhance cooperation between method leaders.
- 2 The **transparent process**, giving the lead political role to the SAG, contributed to the government's and all stakeholders' acceptance of the mapping protocol. Furthermore, the participation of the National Institute of Cartography was instrumental in building trust between the project and key government officials.
- 3 It is essential to devise a **strategy for sourcing funds** to support the project. In this case, funds were provided by the International Land Tenure Facility.



LESSONS LEARNED

To gain the trust of the community and all stakeholders in general, it is essential to engage in a transparent and inclusive process. The main areas that should be focused on include:

- 1 identifying all the institutions that are active in mapping and have inclusive process;
- 2 ensuring that government representatives are formally designated by their respective ministries and report back to them on a regular basis;
- 3 ensuring that government and the main donor engage with each other to agree on common funding priorities; and
- 4 ensuring that the national administration in charge of land mapping plays a key role in the process.

In order to empower the community to lead the process of developing a common mapping protocol, the implementing organisation must adopt a step-by-step approach, prioritising important issues like community tenure and knowledge and understanding of key government offices and their duties.



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