Multi stakeholder engagement Analysis – Cameroon

Executive Summary

On 25 September 2015, Cameroon, like many other countries, adopted Agenda 2030 to "eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all". This agenda is broken down into seventeen (17) SDGs, one hundred and sixty-nine (169) targets and nearly two hundred and forty (240) indicators. Agenda 2030 was the result of an inclusive and participatory process. It emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches for sustainable development and prioritises the most vulnerable and voiceless people as a means of leaving no one behind.

A civil society consultant was mandated by the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Cameroon to develop recommendations to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and the integration of sustainable development goals in Cameroon, as well as a stakeholder engagement strategy.

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This consultant’s report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Cameroon or the United Nations, and neither the Government nor the UN shall be held liable for its contents.

To this end, the consultant conducted interviews with seven (07) SDG engagement platforms. These meetings highlighted several elements that allowed the construction of an inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue framework for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs.

These analyses were based, firstly, on UNITAR methodologies that propose key questions that stakeholders must answer in order to analyse multi-stakeholder commitments on SDGs; and secondly, on the principles set out in the "Common minimum standards for multi-stakeholder engagement in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)".

Regarding stakeholder engagement in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and SDGs at the national level in Cameroon, the following points must be underscored:

(i) sustainable development and SDGs are not yet fully internalised as a reference for the leaders of the organizations and their members. Sustainable Development does not seem to be well known to them, despite the fact that some actors claim in one way or another to take action on one or more SDGs. Various motivations have been evoked by actors to justify their actions in favour of SDGs. Some act out of conviction with regard to the stakes involved. Others also mentioned the desire to strengthen contacts, exchanges and communication with other stakeholders in order to better position themselves.

(ii) The monitoring and evaluation mechanism at the level of the platforms is still not operational. As a result, it is difficult to measure results. Genuine dialogue between actors is almost non-existent. Several actors (CSOs, Councils) have expressed the wish that a real framework for dialogue between the authorities and the private sector be established. Information from public authorities on sustainable development and SDGs remains inaudible to the general public because of the current communication strategy, which is not adapted to the realities and needs of the actors. The consultation processes most
often mentioned are the temporary working groups, which suffer from numerous shortcomings. CSOs feel that they do not always have the resources to participate efficiently in consultations with the public and private sectors.

In terms of multi-stakeholder engagement in the UNSDCF:

(i) The UN system in Cameroon has engaged at the request of the Government in the "Delivering as One-Dao" initiative for better coherence and improved efficiency and effectiveness of the National Development Strategies. As a result of the multifaceted support provided by the United Nations agencies, the number of women and vulnerable groups to sustainable social protection measures and inclusive quality education has increased. Similarly, the nine UNDAF 2018-2020 outcomes and the various outputs for which the United Nations system is accountable are aligned with national priorities from the perspective of equity and equality and the reduction of disparities between men and women, girls and boys.

(ii) monitoring-evaluation is not aligned with the coordination mechanism to allow feedback at all levels. Most of the Agencies do not seem to be aware of the concept of multi-stakeholder partnership although the latter is a requirement of the UNSDCF. The UNDAF 2018-2020 had provided for strengthening synergy through the establishment of a joint work plan, a joint budget and a steering and steering committee co-chaired by MINEPAT and the United Nations system coordinator. These structures have not yet been established.

Based on the results of the interviews, challenges and opportunities, and good international engagement practices, 10 recommendations were proposed:

Strengthen the dissemination of SDGs and stakeholder awareness;

Strengthen and promote synergies of actions between stakeholders;

Mobilize financial resources for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs;

Establish a framework for operational dialogue between the authorities, the private sector, BTCs, academics and CSOs;

Strengthen the monitoring-evaluation mechanism at the level of the commitment platforms;

Establish a framework for legitimisation and accountability;

Align the monitoring and evaluation system of the United Nations system with the coordination mechanism;

Make the governance tools and structures provided for in the UNDAF 2018-2020 operational;

Put in place a mechanism for engaging non-State stakeholders in the next UNDAF;

Establish early warning mechanisms.

Next, an inclusive institutional framework was proposed to ensure better stakeholder involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the MDGs, with variations at national, regional and local levels. Finally, this report ends with an Action Plan for the implementation of the inclusive dialogue framework for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.
Chapter 6: Recommendations and actions to strengthen the multi-stakeholder dimension of SDGs in Cameroon

Interviews with actors and the document review suggest challenges and concerns regarding the commitment of actors to the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Cameroon. The consultant took particular note of these challenges and sought more information at every possible opportunity. Thus, the recommendations are based on the results of interviews with stakeholders and several resources including the documents entitled "Integration of the Sustainable Development Programme for Agenda 2030" and the Mid-Term review of the UNDAF 2018-2020.

**Recommendation 1**: Strengthen the dissemination of SDGs and stakeholder awareness.

Most of the stakeholders interviewed do not have a good knowledge of the SDGs or this knowledge is only patchy and does not yet really influence their activities. Sustainable Development, the 2030 agenda and the SDGs are still far from being a reference framework for most of the actors within their organizations and with their members. This is probably due to a lack of awareness and interest in SDGs. The interviews carried out in the framework of this study made it possible to raise the awareness of some of the actors met.

Major awareness-raising work remains to be done with the stakeholders and all their members. A common level of understanding needs to be reached between state and non-state actors. This is a necessary condition for change management. Several actions can be envisaged:

- Organise awareness raising workshops on SDGs, particularly in national public administrations and at the level of decentralised local authorities. Workshops can be organised by inviting local officials, authorities or private companies;

- Review the current communication strategy on SDGs by adapting it to the sociological context. This approach will also rely on the media and social networks to allow for a wide range of popularization.

**Recommendation 2**: Strengthen and promote synergies of actions between actors.

During the interviews, most of the actors said that they wanted to work with others to create synergies, to better understand what others are doing. If these partnerships are effective and the authorities support them, they contribute to the integration of SDGs in multi-stakeholder projects. The presence of facilitators to accompany these projects is important. Actions will have to go in the direction of:

- Support (capacity building and support) multi-stakeholder partnerships based on the SDGs identified as a priority;

- Create a partnership support project per region based on a few priority SDGs.

**Recommendation 3**: Mobilize financial resources for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

During the interviews, several civil society actors felt that they did not always have the resources to participate efficiently in the consultations. The implementation and monitoring of the SDGs would require significant financial resources from different stakeholders. The Addis Ababa Programme of Action (AAAA, 2015) listed a variety of stakeholders whose "resources, knowledge and ingenuity" will be critical in helping national governments to achieve the SDGs, namely: "the private sector, civil society,
the scientific community, academia, philanthropy and foundations, parliaments, local authorities, volunteers and other stakeholders”.

It is recommended to involve business and CSOs to achieve Participatory Budgeting for Results. The orientations proposed to the UN Country Teams and Cameroon are threefold:

- With the support of relevant UN agencies, UNCTs can assist Cameroon in outlining a diversified and high-level funding strategy to achieve the SDGs by 2030;

- Implement participatory results-based budgeting, to support the results framework and the participatory nature of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs;

- Test results-based budgets for the achievement of one or more of the SDGs of a sector policy.

**Recommendation 4** - Put in place a framework for operational dialogue between the authorities, the private sector, Decentralised local authorities, academics, CSOs.

There is no real strategy for the inclusive participation of stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs. Several actors (CSOs, CTDs) expressed the wish that a real framework for dialogue between the authorities and the private sector be established. The functioning of most public and private administrations and associations is still essentially hierarchical; the culture of participation is not very present, yet these actors organise the participation of other actors directly or indirectly (participatory consultation, public inquiry, etc.). It is established that Cameroon has already set up planning, budgeting and monitoring processes with variable stakeholder participation. The policy areas discussed here are aimed at transforming, going beyond the usual mode of governance and meeting the ambitions of Agenda 2030. It is recommended to support cultural change to improve participation in SDGs and SD. To achieve this, we suggest the following actions:

- Structuring certain stakeholders, including CSOs, the informal private sector, academics, ;

- Defining a vision of stakeholder engagement;

- Involve stakeholders as early as possible in the implementation and create spaces for dialogue at national, regional and local levels;

- To allow the inclusion of the stakeholders necessary for the debate and the emergence of collective intelligence;

- Develop a strategy for stakeholder participation;

- Provide facilitators for participatory processes.

**Recommendation 5:** Establish a framework for legitimization and accountability.

Cameroonian Civil Society Organizations suffer from problems of legitimacy and representativeness. This is due to their weak structuring. The administration or the private sector evokes their weak representativeness. They do not always report to their headquarters. Several actions are recommended to curb this problem. In particular:

- Conduct a diagnostic study of the state of legitimacy of CSOs;
- Funding CSOs that have a good governance system and several visible actions;
- Study the structuring of CSOs.

**Recommendation 6**: Align the UN monitoring and evaluation system with the coordination framework.

Despite the efforts of the Government and the United Nations system to strengthen the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation system, weaknesses have been noted. In fact, the latter has never been aligned with the coordination mechanism to allow for feedback of information. The UNCT and the RCO, in consultation with the Programme Management Team, should review the UNDAF and its results matrices to ensure that additional precautions are taken to propose performance indicators, objectives and data collection procedures relevant to the impact of the programme where it takes place.

It is recommended that the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation mechanism be strengthened through the following actions:

- Link the national monitoring-evaluation mechanism to the UNDAF organizational framework;
- Setting up a database to facilitate the feedback of information from local coordination Regional Office - Inter-agency coordination;
- Strengthen the capacities of the Agencies on the new monitoring-evaluation mechanism put in place;
- Systematize the monitoring of effects by organizing at least annual data collection to inform the indicators;
- Carry out the evaluation of joint programmes before the final independent evaluation.

**Recommendation 7**

Operationalize the governance tools and structures provided for in the UNDAF 2018-2020. UNDAF 2018-2020 had provided for strengthening synergy through:

- The establishment of a joint work plan and a joint budget;
- A steering and orientation committee chaired by MINEPAT and the Coordinator of the United Nations system.

None of these actions has been formalized to date. The following actions are recommended:

- Operationalize the UNDAF steering and orientation committee;
- Formalize the steering committee and establish who is responsible for it;
- Put in place tools for its optimal functioning;
- Put in place the UNDAF joint action plan;
- Drawing up the annual inter-agency work plan to promote the genuine joint implementation logic which is the raison d’être of the UNDAF;
- Continue with joint programming. It helps to improve coordination and synergy and reduces the duplication of interventions. It strengthens collaboration between UN agencies. The aim will thus be to
capitalize on the lessons learned from joint programmes already carried out and to identify opportunities for improving and further developing the joint programme for the next UNDAF. These programmes must be more focused on vulnerable areas and the strategic areas of the United Nations (UN) agencies.

**Recommendation 8**

Establish a mechanism for engaging non-State stakeholders in the next UNSDCF. Stakeholders urged with one voice "governments to create spaces and mechanisms for engagement". In Cameroon, a weak integration of stakeholders was particularly noted in the UNDAF 2018-2020. Some countries have already institutionalized these "spaces" in the form of formal multi-stakeholder councils or similar bodies that may have helped to facilitate dialogue on sustainable development among national stakeholders. As part of the transition from UNDAF to UNSDCF, strengthening the participation of non-governmental actors in UNDAF is essential.

Furthermore, UNDAF must be a vehicle for making SDGs the centrepiece of the United Nations development strategy in Cameroon. The UNCT has received many guidelines on how to achieve this, i.e. how to make the SDGs the organizing elements of the UNSDCF.

**Recommendation 9**

Establish early warning mechanisms. The programme has been destabilized by the security and humanitarian crisis in NOSO. Humanitarian needs continue to exceed humanitarian response capacity and the funds available to respond to this crisis.

As this crisis was not envisaged as a potential risk, the programme certainly lacked foresight in this regard, especially since the seeds and other warning signs of this crisis since October 2017 were already in place and relatively legible. For the next programme, attention should be given to anticipating latent conflicts and working with the Government to reduce the risk of potential conflagration rather than allowing the disaster to occur and then acting as a "firefighter".