

CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)
Pilot Studies on the Enabling Environment for CSOs

CAMEROON REPORT

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(COSADER)

August 2013

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
CPDE	CSO Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
COSADER	Collective of OSCs for Food Security and Rural Development
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EE	Enabling Environment
EU	European Union
FPI	Foreign Policy Index
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
HLF	High Level Forum
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PASC	Civil Society Strengthening Programme
PASOC	Support Programme for the Structuring of Civil Society in Cameroon
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TFP	Technical and Financial Partner
TI	Transparency International

I Introduction

“Dialogue with the State is key. Civil Society struggles are far too great, far too compelling to be won through physical force.”

Cameroon CSO EE Pilot study participant

1. The Researcher welcomes the opportunity provided by the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) to report on the current climate for civil society activities inside Cameroon.
2. Cameroonian CSOs have come a long way since rising from the ashes of a democracy struggle which began with their country’s independence in 1960 and culminated with its leap into multipartism in the 1990s. Today over 3000¹ organisations categorised under the *not-for-profit* umbrella work alongside Cameroon public authorities, political parties, the private sector, technical and financial partners, and the international community at large, everywhere global development challenges need local answers.
3. Thus in the case of Cameroonian CSOs, their involvement in the education, health and agriculture sectors, among other areas of focus, is helping to sustain a vision of social justice fundamentally at the service of local livelihoods. Crucially, organised citizen engagement should increase the likelihood of Cameroon’s broader SDG obtainment in line with the country’s plans to achieve emergence by 2035. This is highly significant as poverty affects 40 per cent of the local population².
4. But effective development visions start with strong actors, and during the past two decades **CSOs have generally been at their intrinsic best when identifying and filling an ‘advocacy gap’**. In fact, whether they are long established or relative newcomers to the field, rural or urban, CSOs *a priori* differ from other development stakeholders due to their advocacy-driven, citizen-led, non-partisan and rights-based approaches to development.

¹ Les Cahiers du PASCO N°13

² Cameroon Household Survey 2007

5. Citing freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly, and reiterating the presence of such freedoms in the preamble of the Cameroonian Constitution, CSOs whose recent experiences constitute the backdrop of this study told the Researcher about the need to **‘safeguard our hard won interests by creating new opportunities to meaningfully engage the grassroots’**.
6. However, **local authority selective interpretations of the national CSO legal framework due to widespread confusion about CS aims and objectives increasingly lead to CSOs being unfairly labeled and deligitimised as ‘social agitators’**; and with no foreseeable end to this trend, never have CSO study participants been as preoccupied by the persisting crackdown on civil society voices.
7. The following three indicators were specifically used to analyse participant comments:
 - **Universally accepted human rights and freedoms affecting CSOs**
 - **Policy influencing**
 - **Donor – CSO relationships**

A fourth indicator (other areas) gave participants further scope for sharing their views and was integrated to the overall data analysis.

II Methodology

8. The main tool used in this pilot study was the CPDE Enabling Environment Questionnaire shared with, and/or commented by, eighty one (81) CSO representatives. Based on Cameroon’s two official languages, an English or French version of the questionnaire was made available to respondents.
9. Two separate focus groups (namely G1 and G2) of eight (8) CS representatives each were handed paper copies of the questionnaire prior to its electronic dissemination in a bid to familiarise respondents with contents. Respondents in this first wave primarily came from the capital city Yaoundé, or were based in the centre region.
10. G1 and G2 respondents both highlighted the relevance of the line of questioning and study data collection process favoured by the EE study. Indeed both sets of respondents immediately conveyed their interest in allocating sufficient time and space to answers and comments, leading to a 100% per cent response rate.
11. The second wave of CS respondents had greater geographic spread and consisted of the most representative thematic networks in Cameroon (PLANOSCAM, Dynamique

Citoyenne, Gender, Human Rights Defenders, Disabled Persons, Cameron Aids, Global Environment, Aid Effectiveness group). Questionnaires were sent using the networks' E-groups mailing lists. For reasons of convenience and to reduce travelling costs, respondents in this set were sent the questionnaire by email only. The researcher received questionnaire comments from six (6) out of the eight (8) E-groups.

12. In all communications with her target audience the researcher provided the context and rationale of the EE study, adding links to the CPDE web portal and encouraging study participants to obtain more thematic information through this channel.
13. The need to deepen her analysis at the outset led the researcher to seek other data collection tools. As a case in point, two discussion meetings with the European Delegation in Cameroon, one of Cameroon's main technical and financial partners (TFP), came at the researcher's request.
14. The first of these meetings provided the backdrop for the researcher's initial interaction with G1; having learned of the relevant TPF plans to host a working session with local CSOs, the researcher had asked to make use of this facility to (a) present the aims of CPDE and (b) personally introduce the questionnaire to the 15 participants in G1.
15. The second meeting was a one-to-one discussion with the relevant EU's contact person for issues relating to CS effectiveness in Cameroon. In particular, the researcher used this less formal platform to share her hopes of seeing a workable relationship being established by the two parties to support Cameroonian efforts toward the implementation of an enabling environment for CSOs and other development actors working nationally.
16. The researcher also consulted newspapers and web articles released throughout the month of the study (August 2013) to help form a mental image of the Enabling Environment situation in Cameroon in real time. The vibrancy and diversity of the Cameroonian press and their awareness of current topics proved really useful, as did topical televised debates.
17. In a bid to broaden her scope of analysis the researcher then met with representatives from Cameroon's sole *fourth degree* CSO network, PLANOSCAM. It happened during an EE consultation session hosted by the Platform (see annex), the official announcement of which was made through the abovementioned E-groups.
18. The meeting itself was attended by close to 50 delegates with whom the researcher had a fruitful exchange. Due to high participant turn out she allowed for extra time to collect all EE questionnaires on the same day.

19. In addition, the researcher browsed through a handful of publications geared toward good governance in Cameroon.
20. The researcher also sought inputs from Civil Servant Official Mr BATE MOSES AYUK, Rapporteur of the National Paris Declaration Monitoring Task Force at Cameroon's Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development, also in charge of Busan Agenda local implementation. Mr AYUK was thus selected due to his insider knowledge of Government policy toward the CS sector.
21. Last but not least, informal discussions with fellow Cameroonians allowed the researcher to get more insight into public perceptions of democracy, human-rights and citizen participation in Cameroon.
22. The information obtained through these various sources was then dissected, interpreted and analysed by the researcher, with technical support from the Collective of CSOs for Food Security and Rural Development in Cameroon (COSADER).

III Study Rationale - CPDE momentum

In a nutshell, this study aims to positively reinforce the conditions needed by Cameroonian CSOs to thrive as development actors in their own right. The study charts progress thus far in terms of CS consolidation in Cameroon, making recommendations for CS and other development actors' effective implementation of a collectively owned 'Enabling Environment'.

23. The national decentralisation strategy adopted by the Government of Cameroon since 2004 is designed to increase citizen capacity to implement localised poverty reduction strategies. Project ODTA-ICT4GOV for instance, under implementation since 2010, stems from a partnership between local government, the World Bank's Open Development Technology Alliance and the European Union precisely aimed at fostering local citizens' adherence to the ideals of participatory democracy; in this case participatory budgeting.
24. Other participatory governance initiatives in Cameroon have been oriented more toward regional MDG ownership. Such is the case of the Central Africa Rural Academy's local ECOL-AWOUT-PEFER-SIPS project which is being jointly overseen by the 'Regional Centre for the Promotion of Decentralised and Participative Development' (CRD), the 'Partnersariat Afrique/Monde des Empires de Développement Durables' (PAMEDD), with technical support from COSADER's Civil Society Food Security Experts. Still at the early stages of implementation ECOL-AWOUT-PEFER-SIPS has received peerage from several of the main rural authorities in the Dja et Lobo

circumscription, which makes it a good example of civil society-led participatory democracy in Cameroon (see annex – French).

25. The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) sets out to develop the capacity of CSOs to meet their development aims through the normalisation of similar projects. CPDE advocates for greater consideration of civil society voices in development frameworks.
26. By commissioning pilot studies on the enabling environment for CSOs, CPDE emphasises the need for inclusive and collaborative governance to feature prominently in the international, regional and national socio-political agenda.
27. Cameroon can help shape this global discussion through CSO sharing and capitalizing on their experiences within and beyond the CPDE remit.
28. Hence, more than an advocacy tool, the present study is about providing Cameroonian CSOs a free space to bring their “enabling environment” experiences closer together, the vast majority of which simply go unreported. Data collected throughout this study represent one more step to ensure this is no longer the case.

IV Data Analysis

a. Participatory democracy: A Cameroonian approach

29. In June 2013 two local municipalities in the capital city Yaoundé started experimenting with SMS enabled participatory budgeting, with a total of 91 local councils already interested in taking part³. It is thus possible to conclude that there is rising interest in participatory democracy within Cameroon.
30. Adopted to various degrees throughout the first half of the 20th century, participatory democracy is thought to have been revived in the 1980s by Brazil’s Porto Alegre. It has since spread to other countries in South America, with North America, China, the European Union and Great Britain also adopting different variants of the concept.
31. A World Bank study (ref) found that in areas where it is hence promoted, participatory democracy leads to a substantial improvement in the quality of life for local residents. Indeed, participatory democracy is widely credited for reviving the fortunes of Porto Alegre after the breakdown of the city’s state apparatus. Before participatory democracy was introduced in the city, aspirin stocks across hospitals

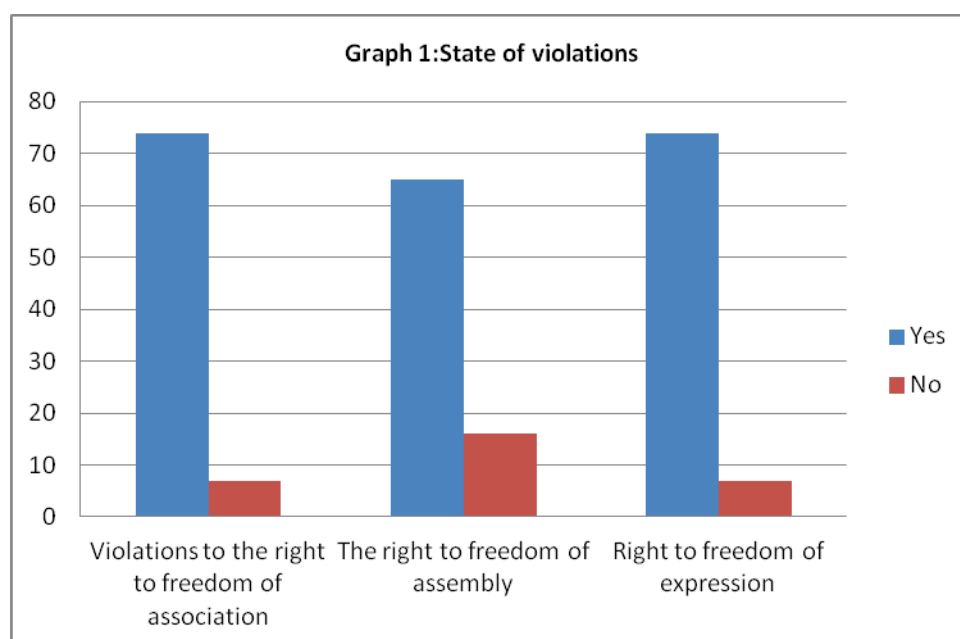
³ <http://zunia.org/post/participatory-budgeting-cameroon>

barely existed, schools had almost no chalk left. But things dramatically improved after citizens got involved and Porto Alegre is repeatedly cited as a case study to describe not just how, but why participatory democracy matters.

32. In 2012 the Commowealth Foundation and UN Millenium Campaign's 'Breaking Point' project in which Cameroon CSOs took part was a broader adaptation of participatory democracy. 'Breaking Point' provided Cameroonian CSOs together with CS in fourteen other countries an opportunity to shape the Post 2015 agenda to compensate for lack of CS voices in the initial MDG framework.
33. But CS involvement in issues of governance, democracy, human rights and MDG obtainment by and large has not always been welcome. Increasingly, CS endeavours toward multistakeholder, transparent and inclusive governance face many obstacles, including in Cameroon.

b. Universally accepted human rights and freedoms affecting CSOs in Cameroon

34. As **Graph 1** (below) shows, an overwhelming majority of participants feel lack of progress toward the *right freedom of association, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression*.



35. Some participants noted that the Arab Spring had caused public authorities' response vis-à-vis CS advocacy in Cameroon to be fundamentally defensive in its approach, irrespective of whether a law had been broken. They observed that a combination of legal and political measures, which ranged from the most dissuasive to the most correctional, were all designed to limit CS reach.
36. Distancing themselves from opposition party agendas while still maintaining their observer integrity was 'a constant game of cat and mouse', one participant said. 'There is a lot of confusion around what we stand for', the participant added.
37. Another participants expressed regrets over 'the fact segments of Cameroonian society merely consider CSOs to be the new opposition activists and do not readily sympathise with us when things go wrong'.

Authoritarian rulers may have drawn the lesson from the 2011 Arab uprisings that civil society is a key driver of political change, particularly where opposition political parties are weak.

Freedom House⁴

38. Some hence considered global CSOs solidarity around public authority violations of CS members' rights in Cameroon to be of great comfort.
39. While there were cases of CSOs - Dynamique Citoyenne and Public Sector Central Union Trade (CSP), to name but a few - that had won law suits brought against them by public authorities, most study participants said their organisation simply lacked the financial means to secure a similar victory in case of violations on their members.
40. Poor national socio-economic governance symbolised by the rapid rise of corruption practices since the late 1990s have, participants said, also led to local civil society organisations being seen as antidotes to the opaque, heavy, change unaware, and wholly outdated, state institutions. Adherence to CS was therefore seen as one way to hold Government to account.
41. By and large, participants saw sound implementation of the current legal framework as an important component of CS advocacy space re-enlargement. Indeed, many

⁴ Resisting the Global Crackdown on Civil Society, Freedom House – Policy Brief, July 2013

participants described the end of public authorities' dissolutive power as prerequisite to effective relationship building between CSOs and public authorities.

b.1 The Cameroonian CSO legal framework

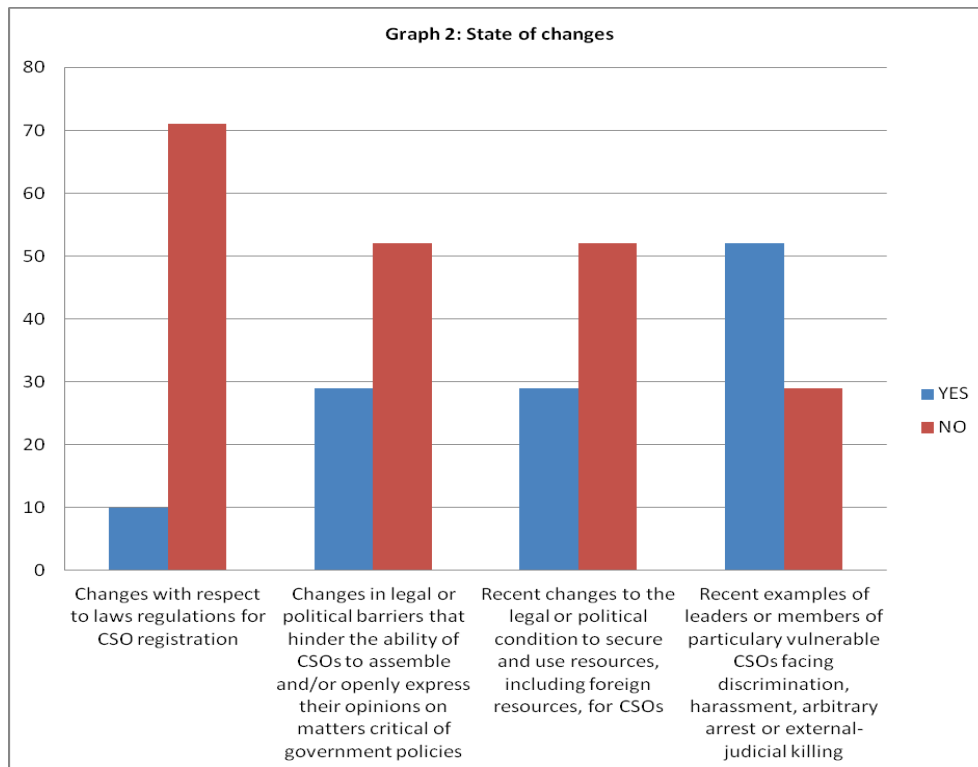
Current CSO and NGO laws are not the problem. Their random implementation is.

CSO EE Study participant

42. Since 1990 Cameroon has devised a framework for Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to operate legally. In theory, the provision permits **NGOs and CSOs to be registered by the Government of Cameroon under the Law on Freedom of Association (Law N0 90/053 of 19 December 1990), the Law relating to Co-operative Societies or Common Initiative Groups (Law 92/006 of 14 August 1994), or both.**
43. Further extension of the framework in 1999 through an NGO law was designed to grant access to public funding to Non Governmental Organisations only. This followed reports that some associations were claiming to have NGO status without prior NGO registration.
44. But these adjustments have failed to produce a national consensus over the real merit of the resulting framework as demonstrated by participants' broad uncertainty around what is entailed or who benefits.
45. In 2008 a 'perceptions' study realised by the *Support Programme for the Structuring of Civil Society in Cameroon*, PASOC, found the framework not to be conducive to greater CS stakeholder ownership due to its overwhelming character.
46. Indeed, most participants did not consider the extension of the legal framework to have gone far enough to protect some of their fundamental rights, like the right to openly criticize government policies without being victimised, as illustrated in **Graph 2** (below).

23 years might have passed since the 1990 law was introduced but our struggles remain the same.

CSO EE Study participant



47. Other participants noted that partial law reform was as responsible for their security woes as public authorities' selective interpretation of the individual law articles, adding that both shortcomings led to their members' rights being constantly violated.

The 1990 law has a fundamental flaw. CSOs have been given a lot of information relative to 'public utility organisations' but objective criteria on how to become one are harder to find.

CSO EE Study participant

48. Isaac Tamba, Secretary General of the Centre for Sustainable Development Research in Africa (CREDDA) further explains that:

The legislation on associations does not normalise the context for legal obtention of associative status, but takes into consideration a certain number of basic factors which could be applied to any type of organisation, provided the latter meets certain exigencies. As consequence, the CSO legal framework is rather diverse and complex, a situation which does not always allow for greater citizen ownership and crucially, does not facilitate CS leaders' understanding (ref Reunion 9 Juillet).

49. In a bid to improve citizen and CS ownership of the legal framework CREDDA has published a booklet – *the Legal Guide for CSOs in Cameroon* – which provides information on individual CSO types and their exact legal requirements. CREDDA has also collaborated with PASOC and the EU to publish in May 2011 a *Memorandum on the Legal Framework for Cameroonian Civil Society Organisations* where recommendations abound. These include:

- ✓ Public authorities should be sensitised on associational remits
- ✓ The laws should be harmonized in order to ease legalisation of CSOs
- ✓ There is a need to create a more robust law to tackle corruption
- ✓ There should be objective criteria for the representation of CSOs in key dialogue mechanisms
- ✓ Civil Society should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of governmental programmes at all levels (national, regional, constituencies and mayoral)
- ✓ CSO funding laws ought to be appropriately implemented and made public
- ✓ Public authorities' dissolutive powers must be strictly abolished
- ✓ Only the judiciary should have the right to order the abrogation of CSO status

Based on participants' earlier comments, implementing the aforementioned recommendations is a necessary step to create an enabling environment for CSOs.

Access to resources

50. There were examples of accredited CSOs preparing for regional meetings with implicit governmental agreement but which would later be told to meet their own travel expenses, while other CSOs remained exempt 'most likely owing to their affinities with decision-makers' a participant said.

51. On the same issue of unfair distribution of resources, participants noted that the law on political party funding did not have a CS equivalent. With no funding laws to accompany their endeavours, most CSOs carried the excessive burden of self-financing. Ordinary CSOs were not well versed on the official channels to access public funding due to lack of system transparency and lack of information, despite favorable provisions in **Article 32 of the 1990 NGO/CSO law**.

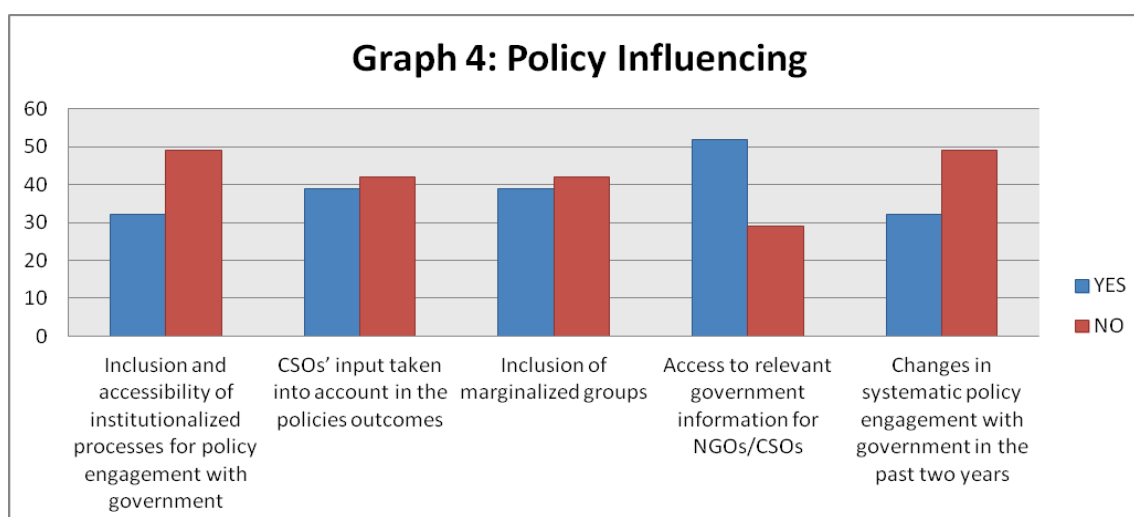
c. Policy Influencing

52. A series of multistakeholder mechanisms have been created by Government which are designed to foster dialogue and partnerships between CSOs, public authorities and other development partners.

53. A study carried out by AID GROUP Cameroon in 2010 (ref) found there were 37 of those inclusive mechanisms in existence. In terms of focus areas within these instruments, the study cites public finance, decentralization, agriculture, forests and the environment, health, and education. Positive outcomes are subsequently noted as being:

- ✓ Mutual learning among stakeholders
- ✓ Stakeholders having greater access to information
- ✓ Myriad opportunities for CSOs to directly influence policy debates and shape final inputs
- ✓ Possibility for CS ideas to lead to adoption of new laws, as evidenced through the Social Housing Law initiated by the Resident National Network (date); also, the agriculture law reform project proposed par COSADER in 2011.

Despite such advances in policy influencing, there is still work to be done to convince some CSO study participants of the veracity of the aforementioned mechanisms, as shown in **Graph 4** (below). Improvement in access to information was the only indicator which overall scored a higher proportion of favourable participant views.



Among other issues of concern, participants evoked lack of transparency in the selection process for Civil Society representation within the mechanisms. Until 2012 for example, CS representatives were chosen by Government or TFPs.

By and large, participants wanted the aforementioned mechanisms to be a true reflect of CS increasing capacity to durably impact Governmental policy. Indeed some participants noted

that lack of public funding may have contributed to ‘many CSOs falling outside of the required standards’.

Participants nevertheless recognised that the creation of PLANOSCAM had contributed to some shortcomings being addressed, not least in terms of effective CS representation in key dialogue mechanisms which now see regular participation of the Platform.

d. Donor- CSO Relationships

In its cooperation with partner governments, the EU will seek to scale up public authorities’ capacity to work constructively with Civil Society, increasing trust and competencies to build up dialogue and opportunities for partnership.

The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations, September 2012

- e. The European Union supports Cameroonian CS strengthening through a host of frameworks. In 2009 the EU launched the National Civil Society Strengthening Programme (PASOC) designed to support CSOs structuring which resulted in the creation of the National Platform of CSOs in Cameroon (PLANOSCAM).
- f. PASOC’s successor, PASC which started in 2012 builds on previous EU endeavours to enhance local CSO effectiveness.

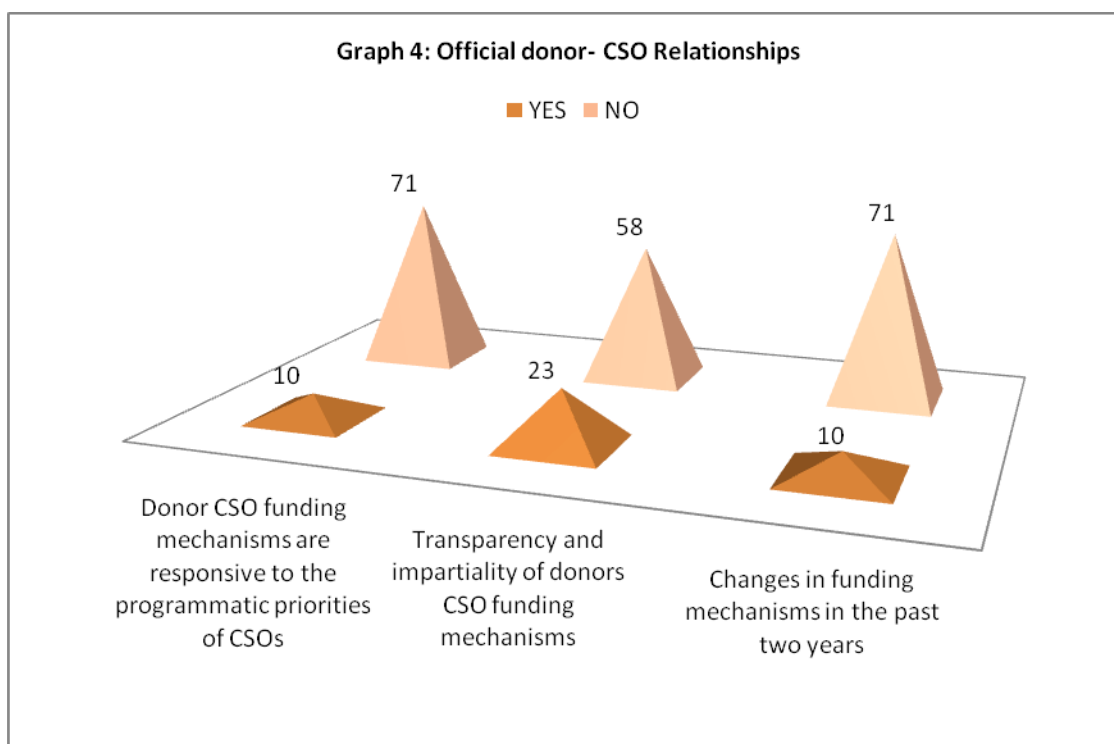
Some EU funded CS oriented projects since 2011

- European Justice Support Programme (PAJ)
- Programme d’Appui à l’Amélioration des conditions des détenus (PACDET)
- FLEGT

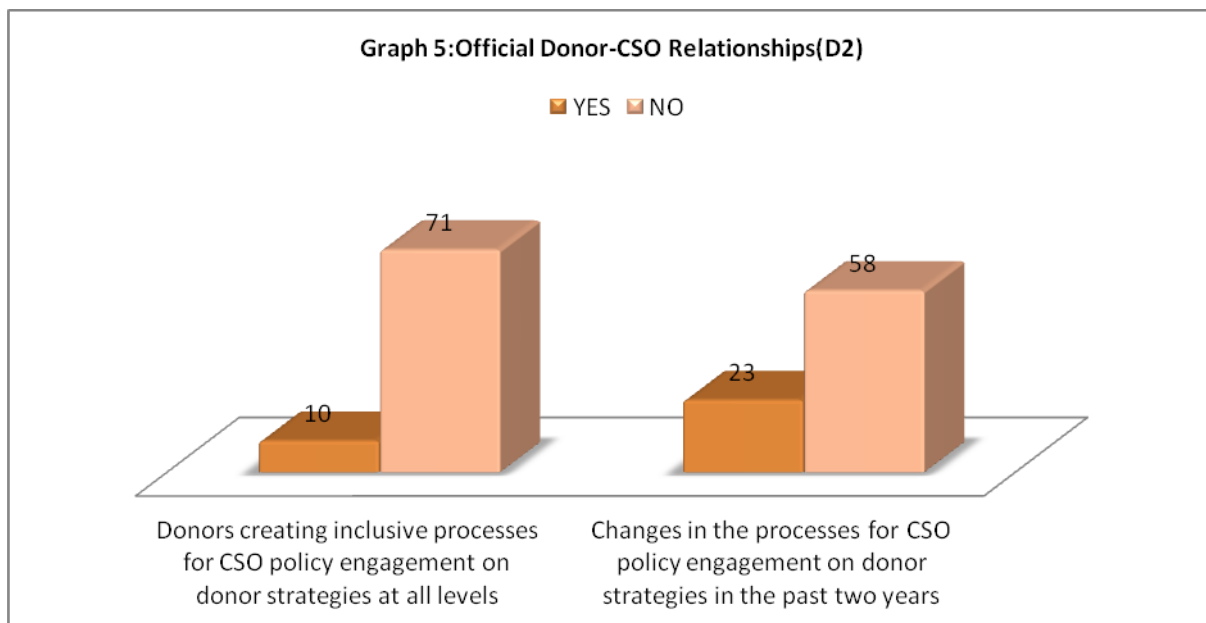
55. It remains that for Donor-CSO relations in general the 2008 economic crisis had a most profound effect. First, it increased Donor focus on transparency, ‘value for money’ and accountability due to a scarcity in resources. Second, it led to greater competition among local CSOs. Yet the vast majority of Cameroonian CSOs were simply ill-prepared to fulfill tighter Donor funding requirements.

56. Some CSOs are however being trained to meet tighter funding requirements.

57. As per **Graph 4**, the majority of participants (87,65%) stressed the need for more responsive donor funding mechanisms. Issues of donor transparency were also significantly raised, as 71,60 % of participants found the current funding mechanisms to be opaque. On the other hand, only 12,35% per cent of participants found the current mechanisms to be responsive enough to CSOs programmatic priorities.



Participants described state funded CSO mechanisms as virtually non existent, a situation not helped by lack of governmental information. As consequence, CSO had no other recourse but to seek funding through Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) whose mechanisms 87,65% per cent of participants said were not more inclusive as shown in **Graph 5** (below). Despite donor's broad support toward CS internal structuring, around (71,60%) of participants deemed the processes for CSO policy engagement on donor strategies to be static.



e. Other factors

e.1 Regional Considerations

Cameroon is bordered to the north by Chad, to the west by Nigeria, to the East by Equatorial Guinea and Niger, and to the south by Gabon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. To the exception of Nigeria this nucleus of countries form the nations of Central Africa together with Angola, Burundi, and Sao Tome-and-Principe.

58. On 1st January 2014 the removal of visa controls within the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) will allow the free circulation of goods and people. It is set to generate fresh opportunities for government, the private sector and other visitors to the region.
59. On the whole study participants were encouraged by these changes, stating that CSOs would specially benefit from no longer having to factor in visa expenses when attending a forum or workshop.

The removal of visas across the ECCAS area opens up a whole new world of opportunities for us.

CSO EE Study participant

e.2 International community perspectives

60. Since 2005 the Foreign Policy Index (FPI)⁵ has analysed the security profile of most of the world's countries. The Index is based on a comprehensive list of indicators which range from:

- The **socio-anthropologic**: Demographic pressures, refugees, group grievances, deligitimisation of the state, human rights or fractionalized elites; to
- The **economic**: Uneven development, economic decline; to
- The **politically strategic**: Security apparatus or external intervention

61. In 2013 and for the third year in a row, FPI classed the DRC in second place, behind Somalia. Chad, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and the Republic of Congo all feature in the top 40 of failed states, with Cameroon's 27th position also unchanged. The only country to score out of the Index's red zone is Gabon, with a ranking of 99.

62. FPI's reading of the dynamics of conflict in the region is to a large extent emblematic of the international community views on Central Africa. Based on UN assessment and analog evaluations, the region is home to not one but two 'triangles of death'. Nevertheless, Cameroon is often cited as an island of peace and stability in the region.

63. The spread of democracy across Cameroon in the 1980s and early 1990s created unprecedented scope for local citizen engagement. With over 3000 registered civil society organisations in 2010⁶, and 2007 of political parties officially listed in 2007⁷, the current national socio-political landscape is in stark contrast to the one party-system that characterized Cameroon before and long after the country's 1960 independence.

64. Notwithstanding their vision and sacrifices to get this far, and Cameroon's privileged reputation as a country of peace, some CSOs study participants still expressed doubt over public authorities' commitment toward democratic governance. In fact, these participants cited **low levels of citizen engagement, repressive government policies, system opacity, widespread corruption, unequal distribution of resources**, among factors which they said could potentially undermine governmental efforts toward the maintenance of security and stability in Cameroon.

⁵ <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/failedstates>

⁶ Les Cahiers du PASOC N°13

⁷ http://www.dibussi.com/2007/06/cameroon_why_so.html

Concluding remarks on participant inputs

For most participants, the past two years have seen recurring violations of *the right to association, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to freedom of expression* against a backdrop of discriminations, threats and arbitrary arrests. Participants noted that the legal framework has not been updated since the 1990s, making it inadequate for the present context. Furthermore, participants saw implementation of the current framework by public authorities as being carried out randomly.

Among factors responsible for Government mistrust of CS, many participants talked about government's generally poor opinion of CSOs due to misconceptions of CS aims and objectives.

A few of the participants called on CSOs to self-evaluate, through greater ownership of their public image and of their intrinsic role in shaping a government policy toward CS.

In terms of financing, participants deemed the legal framework not to be conducive to more CSOs having access to public funding.

While participants welcomed CS inclusion in growing number of multistakeholder committees and governmental commissions they deplored the subsequent lack of consideration toward CS inputs.

Most participants identified lack of accountability among public authorities as an impediment to effective CS mobilisation. There were many accounts of participants declaring their intention to organise an activity, only for the competent authorities to revoke their members' right to peaceful assembly.

CSO study participants who had been the targets of recurring public interrogations described a culture of mistrust toward their aims and objectives.

"Government seems to think that CSOs are being instrumentalised by outside forces that want CSOs to succeed where weak political opposition parties failed."

CSO EE Study participant

One participant emphasized the need to include a gender-sensitive indicator in Enabling Environment monitoring as the number of women occupying political roles was still relatively low, the participant said.

Another participant's request to access the *Malaria National Strategic Paper 2011-2015* was purely and simply rejected on the basis that it should have been presented as a formality.

Some of the participants emphasised the central role Civil Society Organisations are to play in the construction of a truly enabling environment. Disparate or non-existent Civil Society codes of conduct, these participants said, were a missed opportunity to present the sector in a serious light.

Participants noted the negative impact of such factors on CS efforts toward consolidation vis-à-vis their natural 'grassroots' audience. They argued that this made government inclined to limit and constrain CS strategic mobilisation, and in countless cases, allowed public authorities to interpret 1990, 1994 and 1999 laws in a manner that systematically undermines the right to freedom of assembly.

Citizens' ownership of local challenges, participants said, should run parallel with a scaling up of governmental action toward greater civil society participation in national governance frameworks.

But participants expressed real concern over government use of 'ghost CSOs', some of which had been created by public authorities to circumvent donor conditionality of civil society representation in multistakeholders development frameworks.

One participant recalled their NGO application being rejected five times. The participant attributed its success in the end to 'constant pestering' of public authorities.

In fact, the public commissions designed to grant NGO status were found by participants to be largely unhurried in their decision-making approach. One CSO had waited 5 years to obtain their verdict.

Another participant asked whether current CS struggles were due to the sector's tendency to overtly criticize governmental action. Some participants, on the other hand, noted that there was no real governmental strategy to include marginalised groups in policy planning.

Participants also touched on successive electoral frauds to help justify current voter apathy and citizens' lack of political engagement.

V Recommendations

This study provided a unique opportunity for the researcher to see Cameroonian CSOs in action. At the very least it helped to further raise CS participant awareness of their rights at a time when an increasing number of civil liberties are often eroded.

While it would be well indicated to look at how far Cameroonian CS has come in terms of recognition, increasingly it is more important to shape the direction in which, as a development sector, local CS will be moving in the next five, ten, twenty years.

Indeed, in 2014 Cameroonian CSOs can do a lot more than being misrepresented, misunderstood or mistreated by public authorities who may or may not know what CSO aims are. The time to consolidate CS values is now.

CS can do this:

- **Through ownership of the ‘Istanbul Principles’. Efforts should be scaled up to promote the principles wherever possible, with emphasis on youth ownership of CPDE guiding values**
- **Through the implementation of an ‘Enabling Environment Award’ for the persons and organisations that embody those values**
- **Through greater promotion at local level of African Human Rights Day (21st October)**
- **Through the adoption of a unique ‘Code of Conduct’ for Cameroonian CSOs**
- **By avoiding duplication of CS inputs**
- **Through the capitalization of CS ‘best practices’**

These recommendations aim to empower Cameroonian CSOs with the capacity to transform their struggles into strategic gains.

VI Annex



A day of experience sharing on “CSO Enabling Environment” in Cameroon

The National Platform of CSOs in Cameroon (PLANOSCAM) gathered its members on 20th August 2013 for a working session at the Platform’s executive offices in Yaoundé. Around 20 participants had been invited by Mrs ELOMO TSANGA, the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness Resident Consultant, to attend a Workshop on the theme of “CSO Enabling Environment in Cameroon”.



Mrs Christine Andela speaking about
PLANOSCAM guiding values

The workshop aims were presented by Mrs Christine ANDELA, Current Chair of PLANOSCAM and meeting’s hostess. In her opening address Mrs ANDELA briefed participants on the history of the Platform of which she has charge, highlighting the role it played in bringing CPDE into existence. She reiterated her organisation’s guiding ethos, linking PLANOSCAM values to the Istanbul Principles⁸ and reminding participants of its national vision, mission and objectives.

⁸⁸⁸⁸⁸ **Istanbul Principles:** (1) Respect and promote human rights and social Justice, (2) Embody gender while promoting women and girls’ rights, (3) Focus on people’s empowerment, democratic ownership, and participation, (4) Promote environmental sustainability, (5), Practice transparency and accountability, (6) Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity, (7) Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning, (8) Commit to realising positive sustainable change

Following Mrs ANDELA's comments, it was the turn of Mrs ELOMO TSANGA, CPDE Workshop Facilitator, to present CPDE in greater detail. She retraced the Partnership's origins to 2012, noting that CPDE was directly inspired from the 2011 Busan Agenda and the result of global civil society endeavours toward effective sectoral representation in Busan High Level Forum's Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation outcome mechanism.

CPDE aims to foster a 'global light, country-heavy' approach to development, Mrs TSANGA said. Adding that the promotion of the Istanbul Principles was an integral part of CPDE advocacy work, she then referred to her own strand of activities within CPDE – the Working Groups.

She provided a list of the current (06) Working Groups, namely:

- **Enabling Environment**
- **Civil Society Development Effectiveness**
- **Human-Rights Based Approach**
- **Post 2015**
- **South-South Cooperation**
- **Effective Institutions**

The Busan Agenda which underpins Working Groups initiatives, Mrs TSANGA said, is based on:

- Civil Society inclusion and participation toward key strategic frameworks
 - Equality between development partners
 - Respect of peoples' rights and freedoms
 - Greater transparency in the management of development resources
 - Cooperation and shared knowledge
-

- Management for results
- Good governance
- Enabling environment

The Enabling Environment Working Group has designed a framework to evaluate progress toward an enabling environment for CSOs, Mrs TSANGA said. She added that two pilot studies were being undertaken in Africa – Cameroon and Zimbabwe - to support the CPDE report on the state of Enabling Environment which will accompany the OCDE report ahead of the first GPEDC Ministerial Meeting due to be hosted in Mexico in 2014. The Cameroon study thus contributes to CPDE Enabling Environment country-level assessment.

The exposé was followed by a discussion with participants later filling copies of the CSO Enabling Environment questionnaire.



Group discussions on CSO Enabling Environment in Cameroon

Discussion themes

I – Universally accepted human rights and freedoms affecting CSOs

For most participants, the past two years have seen recurring violations of the right to association, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of expression against a backdrop of discriminations, threats, arbitrary arrests. There was less certainty among participants on the issue of murder. Nevertheless, participants noted that the legal framework has not been updated since the 1990s, making it inadequate for the present context. Furthermore, implementation of the current framework by public authorities is done in a random manner.

Among factors responsible for Government mistrust of CS, many participants talked about government's generally poor opinion of CSOs due to misconceptions of CS aims and objectives. In terms of financing, participants deemed the legal framework not to be conducive to a majority of CSO having access to public funding.

A few of the participants called on CSOs to self-evaluate through greater ownership of their public image and intrinsic role in shaping a CSO enabling environment. **“How should PLANOSCAM maintain dialogue with Government ?”** emerged as the key question during group discussions.

II - Policy Influencing

While participants welcomed CS inclusion in growing number of multistakeholder committees and governmental commissions they deplored the subsequent lack of consideration toward CS inputs.

III – Official Donor – CSO Relationships

Participants described state funded CSO mechanisms as virtually nonexistent, a situation not helped by lack of governmental information. As consequence, CSO had no other recourse but to seek funding through Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) whose mechanisms were altogether more inclusive. Increasingly, participants said, TFP made it a conditional upon the State to include CS in State processes.

Working Session with Mr Bate MOSES AYUK – 02 September 2013

Rapporteur of the National Paris Declaration Monitoring Task Force

Cameroon's Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development

The researcher thanked Mr AYUK for his participation in this study. She highlighted the importance of adding a governmental perspective to the report for balancing purposes.

To the question **‘how do you rate the current environment for civil society activities in Cameroon?’** Mr AYUK noted that much was changing in Cameroon as Civil Society inclusion in policy frameworks was becoming common practice. On several occasions he evoked CS current level of expertise, saying that such expertise was ‘of utmost value to Government’.

Mr AYUK said that it was increasingly difficult to see a development programme ‘getting off the ground without CSOs having been included at all stages of the planning process’. This he said, was testament to Government’s favourable view of CSOs. To corroborate this, he mentioned that several consultations with CS actors had been undertaken by Government as reflected in the Growth and Employment Strategic Paper.

He also talked about training sessions being periodically hosted by public authorities to inform CS actors on new changes in the wider governance arena.

When probed on the legitimacy of the aforementioned CS representatives, Mr AYUK acknowledged the level of public interest in this issue. Nevertheless, he emphasised progress made thus far in terms of meaningful dialogue between government and Civil Society.

On the issue of CSO funding, Mr AYUK cited PASC’s largely successful first three years of existence. He said that there had been no hesitation on the part of Government to renew funding for this CS mechanism, mentioning its positive impact on the capacity of CSOs to organise forums among other activities.

The researcher then asked Mr AYUK if there was anything he thought CS should do to improve Government perception of the sector aims and objectives, to which he replied ‘CSOs must respect the rule of law’.

Finally the researcher enquired about the current peace and security climate in Cameroon, asking Mr AYUK overall Cameroon could be considered a country of peace. Mr AYUK’s gave a favourable response, adding that it was due to Cameroon being very accommodating to non-Cameroonians also.

Evaluation de l'appui de l'UE à la SC: résultats majeurs de la discussion du 9 juillet

Question d'évaluation: Dans quelle mesure l'appui de l'UE a-t-il renforcé la participation des OSC aux politiques et programmes nationaux de développement?

Criteria	Situation in 2005	Current situation (2013)	Impact of EU support (positive or negative)
1. Legal framework permitting CSOs to participate in the public arena	- Favorable legal environment (law 90, 92, 99) but still some resistance in their implementation by public authorities and lack of citizen ownership - Access to subsidies and donations is prohibited - Disabling legal framework for CS participation in the public arena - Disabling legal framework for CSO effectiveness - Legal framework geared toward individual CSOs - Lack of freedom of association	- CSOs prohibited from receiving state subsidies, donations and foreign subsidies - Legal framework geared toward individual CSOs - Disabling legal framework for CSO capacity development - Renforcement de l'environnement légal - No real progress although discussions are ongoing - SC key asks lead to Enabling Environment being incorporated to the Growth and Employment Strategic Paper	Points positifs : - L'UE a fait de l'implication de la SC un critère de bonne gouvernance (cfr. plateforme de dialogue sur les FP) - Le PASOC a joué un rôle capital - Appui à l'émergence d'une plateforme nationale - Les procédures de l'UE ont favorisé la mise en réseau - Appui à la structuration des réseaux et plateformes - De manière générale, l'appui de l'UE a été évolutive surtout sur le plan institutionnel ; en 2013 l'appui cible sur les OSC pour leur renforcement de capacités - Appui massif du PASOC sur le plaidoyer - Soutien aux actions de plaidoyer des OSC - Rôle positif à l'appui aux plaidoyers pour un environnement propice Points négatifs:
2. Increased CS network visibility and credibility among their membership	- Structuring of minority and sectoral CS platforms - Low representation among CS platforms - CSO competitiveness weakens potential for partnerships	- Visible trend of CS platform having members' recognition - Improvement in CS platform and network representation - Institutional and organisational capacity strengthening among CSOs and platforms	
3. CSOs recognition as actors in their own right	- Only partly visible (Min. Health, Minepat, Minader, Minfi), and CS proposals not yet taken seriously - Misconception about CSOs' role as development actors in their own right - Systematic attempts to instrumentalise CS - Figuration	- Slight progress but still no institutionalised CS-Government dialogue framework - CS actor recognition through inclusion in policy planning (varying from one ministry to another) - Mixed recognition of CSOs' role in the policy arena	
4. CSOs' capacity to make their voices heard in the policy making process	- Strategies geared toward mass mobilisation - Low capacity for proposal making - Weak political bargaining power	- Improvement in CS political bargaining power - Competences in proposal formulation, effective advocacy techniques and strategy - Existing tools to achieve 'share of voice' that need reinforcing - CS learning (dialogue and partnership)	

