



The changing world: Finance and trade (how they affect forests and people) Cameroon's reality*

A paper by

Rose Tanyi Mbianyor

Master of Arts in Public Administration, Senior Tax Inspector,
Coordinator of the Forestry Revenue Enhancement Program

* For further information please refer to the book "Forestry Revenue Enhancement Programme: An Instrument of Reference. Publication 2005

Abstract

The first reaction one gets on reading the topic would be to seek to establish a link between finance in its broadest sense, commercial activities and how they would affect forests and people. During the era of trade by barter, inhabitants of the forest survived without the use of fiduciary notes, their resource and its components were exploited for subsistence reasons. With the introduction of modern instruments of financial transactions and emphasis on profit, as well as state of the art exploitation equipment, the pressure on the resources is on a constant rise and people who hitherto were self sufficient, living in their natural environment seem to be making more demands aimed at getting more material benefits out of the forest.

In Cameroon, the state, recognizing the importance of forests resources in the economy, even in a context of political and economic liberalization, stepped in to regulate the sector. The evolution in the legislative and regulatory framework seems to have debatable impact on finance, trade, the forests and the people.

The Forestry policy of 1993, the forestry law of 1994 and subsequent legal instruments set out the main orientations centred around the permanent search for the sustainable management of the resource, increasing the contribution of the forests to the state budget, while ensuring poverty alleviation through development of village communities. Modifications in yearly finance bills, opinions of different auditors and consultants, institutional reforms in the domains of forests resource management in the course of the last ten years confirm the conviction that increasing finances through international, regional or within national trade could with certain measures, be an efficient poverty alleviation strategy. More that 28 billion FCFA derived from forestry revenue and destined for the development of local councils and village communities have been made available to fight poverty in Cameroon. The results however do not yet live up to expectations.

This paper will analyse the impact of trade and finance on people and forests, with inspiration from Cameroon. It will show the evolution which while bringing some positive results have not brought corresponding encouraging levels of poverty reduction and the local development of the target population as envisaged by the policy makers. Among proposals for a way forward, it would be evident that there is the need for concerted action within the global village in order to sustain the positive impact of trade and finance on people and their forest resources.