

## REGIONAL INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS ON THE MONITORING REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) IN CAMEROON



### BERTOUA & EBOLOWA

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### Introduction

In response to the recommendations of the national workshop on the inclusive localization of the SDGs in Cameroon, Africa Development Interchange Network (ADIN) and the other CSOs members of Cameroon's National Strategic Group for Development Effectiveness and the SDGs took the initiative of organizing regional information and consultation workshops, on the Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF) for the SDGs in Cameroon. These consultations are part of the national ownership process for the “2030 Agenda” for sustainable development. The first regional information and consultation workshop on the Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF) for the SDGs in Cameroon took place in Bertoua, from 11-12 May 2017. The second one followed in Ebolowa from 3-4 July 2017 in Ebolowa with the close collaboration of the Supreme State Control (CONSUPE).

### Objectives and scope of the workshops

The regional workshops, organized in an open Multi-Stakeholder Discussion (OMD) format, while continuing aim to sensitize people on the concepts and terminology of the SDGs, to mobilize them to participate in the implementation follow-up, at the local and national levels. The purpose actually is to prepare Cameroonian citizens, including people from the grassroots, for an effective participation in that follow-up, with the Decentralized Local Authorities (DLA), in a well-formalized and concerted framework, through simple and relevant indicators. It is therefore about:

- *reinforcing information of the Decentralized Local Authorities (DLA), who normally work with grassroots populations, on the sustainable development Goals, so as to enable a good understanding of the stakes and challenges for people's participation in the monitoring of the SDGs' implementation at local and national levels;*

- *presenting and discussing the concept, characteristics and functioning of a Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF) for the SDGs, as well as the role of the various development actors in its operation;*
- *carrying out, in a participatory process, the identification, definition and selection of simple indicators to be implemented in the MRAF, in order to ensure citizen's participation at the local level, in the assessment of development services delivery in a view to achieving the SDGs;*
- *laying the foundations for constructive advocacy on the SDGs at local level, in order to meet the challenges of mobilizing and optimizing resource management, for the effective implementation of the Agenda.*

The regional workshops constitute the second stage of a study, currently underway, on the feasibility and the steps of the implementation of a Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF) for the SDGs in Cameroon. The third stage of the study for finalization will use the results of the regional consultations to operationalize the MRAF, the concept of which was formulated in the second phase, by complementing it with simple indicators for capturing the qualitative progress assessment of the SDGs by citizens, with the ultimate objective to inform the official national SDGs report.

The regional sensitization and consultation process is essential to help the general public be well acquainted with SDGs related relevant concepts. It should facilitate partnerships between all development actors, in particular: State public services, Decentralized Local Authorities (DLA), national and local companies and civil society at all levels, for a successful implementation and progress assessment of the SDGs at local level. The initiative is meant to lead to the production of an advanced version of the conceptual and practical reference document for the Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF), which will progressively be fine-tuned during each regional workshop.

The consultation in Bertoua brought together around 80 participants while a bit more than 60 attended the event in Ebolowa. Attendance included civil society actors; Mayors; Traditional Authorities and Regional Delegates of the Ministry of Economy Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) in those Regions as well other Regional Delegates and other sectoral officials from in each of the host Regions (East and South respectively), especially in sectors identified as priorities during the national consultations on the Post 2015 Agenda on the SDGs (Health, Education, Employment, Environment); plus a group of SDGs Experts and representatives of the Cameroon National Strategic Group on Development Effectiveness and the SDGs.

In the course of the regional workshops, the write-up of the Monitoring and Accountability Framework (CSSR) on the SDGs in Cameroon, and other reference documents of the civil society's work on the SDGs were presented for review and lessons learning, with the aim of finding the best approach to implement and qualitatively monitor the SDGs. The purpose is to define simple indicators and propose pillars for the operationalisation of the MRAF. Following those technical presentations on the SDGs, by Officials of the MINEPAT MINREX and CONSUPE, Experts from the national Strategic Group on Development Effectiveness and the SDGs elaborated on the monitoring of its implementation, considering the actual development challenges that face regional actors, especially such as the Decentralised Territorial Entities (DTE), before a questions and answers (Q/A) session.

That format offered an opportunity for a better sensitization of the regional public and traditional Authorities on the stakes, and the operationalisation approach of the Monitoring, Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF) for the SDGs in Cameroon, at local level. Group work sessions provided space for participants to discuss and propose simple indicators to be used by grassroots people to assess progress toward the SDGs. The yielded set of indicators will be used to complement the draft write-up of the MRAF for SDGs in Cameroon.

The document, which will be finalized during the third phase of the study, will include the operational and functional guidelines of the MRAF, with details on the data collection method, the institutionalized stakeholder meetings on the implementation of the SDGs, the Accountability path and a reporting system in line with the national SDGs monitoring and evaluation system in Cameroon, of which the MRAF is an integral part.

Alongside the regional workshops the media campaign helped to inform and raise awareness about the SDGs through various actions, including interventions on radio, television and printed press. Community radios in the south Region in particular were put to contribution with programs in local languages. A press conference also took place in that vein on Friday 09 June 2017 at the Ministry of External Relations (MINREX), in Yaoundé on the theme: ***"Actions of the Cameroonian Civil Society in the framework of the contextualisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the related Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF)."*** Actually, media of all categories play an important and crucial role, particularly with regard to the communication strategy on the SDGs, which is part of the ***"program to position CSOs to play an active role in SDGs implementation in Cameroon"***.

## **Results of the regional workshops in Bertoua and Ebolowa**

Beyond updating the Cameroonian public opinion on the importance of the SDGs, one key result achieved by the first two regional workshops in Bertoua and Ebolowa was the enrichment of the original concept of the MRAF with the contribution of the Supreme State Audit (CONSUPE) on their new "Public Goods embezzlement Prevention Programme" that enhanced the fight against corruption component of the MRAF. With that approach in public management, a promising collaboration opportunity is open between the Civil Society and the CONSUPE, to be capitalized on for the other regional workshops and beyond.

The two workshop above all provided for an opportunity for Traditional and Local Council Authorities to frankly discuss development issues of concern with Official of the Ministry of Economy Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT). These in particular included the failure in completion of several development projects in the Regions, due to poor management, as well as inadequate project design that most of the time misses the real needs and expectations of the people from the grassroots.

In the case of Ebolowa for instance, Traditional Authorities deplore the fact that almost all the last 2010 Ebolowa's Agro-pastoral Show projects never were completed. This led to the strong recommendation from the National Participative Development Programme (PNDP) that hence a new approach will be adopted for project selection and implementation to make sure that grassroots people not just participate in designing, but be key actors in implementing. In that respect, the PNDP will be considering two

categories of projects endogenous ones to be implemented by local beneficiaries themselves and the traditional exogenous ones that may be implemented by outsourced capacities.

In Bertoua, the key outcome was the very good understanding and strong ownership of the MRAF by Local Council Authorities, some of whom welcomed it a potential effective tool for the multi-stakeholder dialogue, for local development that they had already anticipated and initiated in their constituencies. A first set of proposals were also made by grassroots people, in Bertoua, and Ebolowa of simple indicators for SDGs implementation follow-up. These proposals will be processed from one regional workshop to another and for all the remaining Regions of the country in a view to eventually complementing the MRAF with an indicator table, for the qualitative assessment of progress toward the SDGs in Cameroon.

## **Conclusion**

The regional information and consultation workshops on the MRAF so far reveal that there are good reasons to anticipate the building of an effective SDGs M&E mechanism on that basis. This confirms the feeling that was triggered by the presentation by the Civil Society of the MRAF, the Civil Society Engagement Charter (CSEC) and the Common Working and Collaboration Platform (CWCP) for the SDGs, during the “National Workshop on an Inclusive Contextualization of the SDGs in Cameroon, organized by the Cameroonian Ministry of Economy Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) in December 2016. Recommendation was then made as one of the outcomes to the Civil Society to:

- *Popularize the SDGs implementation platform and the "Civil Society Engagement Charter", as well as the other aspects of Civil Society's contribution, based on a communication strategy permitting to reach all sectors and all levels of the society, including in particular grassroots populations in all the Regions;*
- *Set up a tool to facilitate the sharing of information on the status and functioning of the CWCP and deepen reflection on the operationalization of the Monitoring Review and Accountability Framework (MRAF);*
- *Ensure the representativeness and inclusion at local and regional level of all categories of CSOs for the implementation of the SDGs.*

The Bertoua and Ebolowa regional workshops are first steps on the response path to those recommendations.