

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN FAKO MUNICIPALITIES OF CAMEROON'S SOUTH WEST REGION, 1866-2010

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the evolution of local governance in Fako Municipalities of Cameroon. The focus is on the manner in which it has been adopted, as well as its effectiveness in local developmental-service delivery through infrastructure provision and the implications towards rural and urban sustainable development. Focusing on the objectives of local governance in Cameroon, the paper argues that it has largely been unsuccessful due to locally lacking preconditions for successful decentralization and the prevailing institutional constraints against it. Findings also confirm that the legal nature of decentralization maintains an afferent and a 'centripetal' state. If local governance must be a positive instrument of sustainable development in Fako and Cameroon as a whole, its current form and character must be redressed through adequate social inclusion, fiscal-administrative-political devolution. Phrased differently, the need for devolved political-administrative powers and resources to the local authorities, other than a cosmetic process of decentralization aimed to 'window-dress' the State to attract international unsustainable foreign funding.

Keywords: Fako Municipalities; Local Government; Decentralization; Infrastructure Provision; Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most fundamental problems which the African societies are confronted with is the transition from the state centered economy or neo-centralism to liberal or neo-liberal economic systems. The transition from centralist to liberal systems is complicated by the fact that the new paradigm stresses decentralization, subsidiarity, use of public-private partnership and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in former public functions and citizen participation in policy formulation and implementation. Institutional reform towards strengthening decentralization policies is becoming increasingly important in Africa. As a result, local governments are gaining in authority, powers and legitimacy in the political processes. The role of local governments in the delivery of social services like health and education is growing too. Thus the scope and possibilities for local governments to play a significant role in improving economic governance and public-private dialogue (both major drivers for a better business environment and creation of balanced growth and wealth) are gaining momentum (Van Der Val & Hilhorst, 2007, p. 4).

The question that this study leads us to ask is: how can local governments enhance a sustainable economic development through infrastructure provision in the Fako municipalities of Cameroon? Whilst raising the key role of local fiscal autonomy in infrastructural provision, there is the need for getting more insight in the (im)possibilities for local authorities to play a constructive role in stimulating economic development on a sustainable basis. Using Fako municipalities of the South West Region of Cameroon from 1866, this study will try to examine the issues raised. In this study, local government, municipalities and councils will be used interchangeably.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN FAKO DIVISION

The Fako Municipalities began as a village council in Bona-Bille headed by King Bille William of Bimbia. This settlement was named Victoria in 1858 by Alfred Saker. A treaty was signed with Queen Victoria of England and a Council was set up. The membership of the council was mainly made up of missionaries and some natives with a common court headed by Reverend Wilson of the Baptist mission as president of the Court (Sonde, 1978, p.10). In 1866, a court and a twelve-man City Council were created to promote hygiene, prevent crimes, and foster economic growth.

In 1884, the Germans annexed Kamerun and set up a Native Court which acted as the Town Council. After the death of King Bille William in 1908, John Manga William was made Chief and he took over the chairmanship of the Mixed Court and Town Council. In 1916, the German Victoria District was reconstituted to include territories of the Rio-Del-Rey District and renamed Victoria Division by the British who had evicted the Germans in 1915 (Ewumbue-Monono, 2001, pp.30-31). The British introduced a system of native administration based on three institutions controlled by local chiefs:

- The Native Authority regulated by the 1914 Native Courts Ordinance;
- The Native Courts regulated by the 1914 Native Courts Ordinance; and
- The Native Treasury regulated by the 1918 Native Revenue Ordinance (Ewumbue-Monono, 2001, p.31).

Between 1918 and 1922, Victoria Division was divided into eight districts. The local chiefs, that is, the District Heads constituted Native Authorities. From 1935 to 1938, the Divisional Officer for Victoria created three main Native Authorities in the Division: The Bakweri Native Tribal Native Authority, the Victoria Federated Native Authority and the

Balong Clan and Native Authority. In 1948, the Bakolle Clan Native Authority was created. Each of the Native Authority had a Native Authority Council (Ewumbue-Monono, 2001, pp.31-33).

On April 23, 1958, The Victoria Division Native Authority System was reformed creating six local authorities: the Bakweri Council; the Tiko Area Council; the Victoria Area Council; the Balong Council; the Bakolle Council; and the Victoria Divisional Council. The British colonial council architecture of 1958 remained until 1962 when the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) began the introduction of a new system of local government. The composition of councils in Victoria Division was amended by 1962 through 1964 to allow for equal representation between the indigenes and the settlers. In 1966, the six councils were dissolved and by 1968 the 1961 modified Local Authority Ordinance transformed the Native Authorities to Local Authorities: the Bakweri Council, the Tiko Area Council, the Muyuka District Council and the Victoria Area Council. The 1968 territorial reorganization removed the Bakolle area and changed the name Victoria Division to Fako Division (Ewumbue-Monono, 2001, pp.34-33).

Between 1961 and 1972 Cameroon was a Federation in a union between West Cameroon (British Cameroon) and East Cameroon (French Cameroon). Local governments still existed but did not maintain a British style where they could exercise some authority over their people. This was because the French believed they had annexed British Cameroon. They implemented French policies whereby the local elites had no say in any project that directly or indirectly affected their lives. In so doing, they undermined local governments. In 1972 a referendum was organised in which the people of Cameroon voted for a unitary state. A centralised government which ensued after the abolition of the federal system made local governments' autonomy undermined. In 1974 councils were organised as local governments. The reunification of West and East Cameroon in 1972 changed the pattern of local government in Fako Division. After two years, Decree N0 74/23 of December 5, 1974 reorganised local councils in Cameroon creating three types of councils: the special urban council under a Government Delegate, the special urban council under a Mayor, and the rural council under a Municipal Administrator. According to Decree N0 77/203 of June 19, 1977 setting councils and defining their boundaries, four councils were created in Fako Division. This system remained until Decree N0 95-082 of April 25, 1995 creating the Idenau Rural Council for the Idenau district. Thus the new local administration system implanted in Fako Division evolved into five main municipalities: Buea¹, Limbe², Tiko³, Muyuka⁴ and Idenua⁵(Ewumbue-Monono, 2001, pp.44-55).

¹ The Buea municipality is situated at the foot of mount Cameroon at an elevation of about 4000 feet. It is made up of many large and small villages which include among others: Molyko, Muea, Soppo, Bondouma, Tole, Bova, Bonakanda, Bokova, Bokwaongo, Likombe, Majanja, Bomaka. Buea serves as the Regional Headquarters of the South West Region.

² This municipality was formerly known as Victoria. It extends from Batoke in the North West to Mabeta and Kange, including coastal areas like Mukundange, Bobende, Ngeme, Wovea Botaland, Bimbia. It serves as Fako divisional headquarter.

³It is a municipality which was of importance to the Europeans because of its closeness to the coast and because of its geographical location on a plain. The entire municipality is made up of areas like Likomba, Bwinga, Mudeka, Misselele, Mondoni, Pungo, Sone, Mutengene.

⁴ This municipality located some few kilometers away from Buea. In terms of land, it is one of the highest municipalities in Fako Division. The entire municipality includes Ekona, Mpundu, Meanja, Yoke, Malende, Owe, Ikata, Bafia and Munyenge.

⁵ This municipality covers the territorial jurisdiction of the Idenua District. Mostly, Bakingili, Debunsha, Sanje and the Bomboko.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Local Government

Local government is a product of devolution as a dimension of decentralization. In general, it may be said to involve the conception of a territorial, non-sovereign community possessing the legal rights and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. According to the 1974 law on the organization of Councils in Cameroon, local government is defined as a decentralized public authority having the status of a corporate body under public law.⁶ Olowu, et al (2004) conceives local governance as a rule-governed process through which residents of a defined area participate in governance in locally important matters; As key decision makers, they participate in determining their priority concerns, how to respond to them, the resources to realise these concerns; and in managing and learning from these responses. The existence of local government has often been defended on the basis that it is an essential instrument of national or state government which unites the people of a defined area in a common organization whose functions are essentially complementary to those of the central government and in the interests of the local residents since they satisfy common community needs.

Local government is an essential link in the relationship between the government and the citizenry, especially because it is bound to particular geographical areas, and to the people who are affected by the problems that are peculiar to those areas. It is the means by which the residents can together accomplish what neither the national or state government nor the individual residents can accomplish as adeptly alone. Consequently, they provide more channels and opportunities to utilize the talents, insights and creative abilities of individual citizens. It is through the empowerment of local governments that municipal programmes, plans, and service provisions have a higher likelihood of reflecting local needs more accurately than in centralized systems of governance (Materu, 2001). Olowu (1988) in analyzing the prosperity of Zimbabwe in the 1980s, attributes this partly to the local government institutions – both urban and rural councils. Their contributions included the provision of basic social and economic infrastructures that support other development activities. Jager (1997) also contends that local governments have the ability to provide services more efficiently and cheaper compared to central governments. Citing the example of El Salvador, the analysis points to the fact that many public works were implemented by municipal governments at costs from ‘one-third to two-thirds lower than when the same types of works were executed by central government agencies. The reasons for this include: greater control over work crews, closer supervision, and shorter travel distances to work sites, scrutiny by the electorate and greater accountability by elected and appointed local officials’. This highlights the advantages inherent in local level decision-making, service delivery and control. The capacity of local governments to mobilize local resources cannot be over emphasized. Because they can more accurately reflect local priorities, they can also more accurately develop a sense of accountability among their constituencies. More still, local governments ensure that local processes are democratic and good democratic practice at the local level greatly improves construction, reconstruction and service delivery. Attuned to voters’ needs and reactions, local governments have the potential to build community consensus around controversial issues, including infrastructure building, and other environmental programs.

⁶ Law no 74-23 of 5 December, 1974, Organizing Councils in Cameroon.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an umbrella term for many activities referred to as “social overhead capital”. It is the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of society or enterprise. Infrastructure can also be defined as the underlying basic institutions, facilities and buildings or other essential elements that are necessary to sustain and enable growth and development of a community. In an economic context, infrastructure is considered to be the structural elements of an economy, which allow for the production process (Smith, Da Lomba & Anderson, 2008). In other words, the services and facilities necessary for an economy to function (Arthur & Sheffrin, 2003). Despite the lack of a specific definition, infrastructure includes a broad spectrum of services, institutions and facilities that ranges from transportation systems and public utilities to finance systems, laws and law enforcement, and education and research. But however defined, the basic purpose of infrastructure continues to be the same as in prehistoric times: “to support human activities”. Thus infrastructure provision is tightly linked to economic development especially in an era of accelerating change, where the infrastructure challenge is on how to continue to broaden that range of choice, and in so doing improve the quality of people’s lives.

Development and Sustainable Development

One of the most used terms in contemporary socio-economic lexicon is development.⁷ According to Ake (2001) development is the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values. It is conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. It must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individual and groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better (Todaro & Smith, 2004). According to Hoff (2003, 207), development depends on being able to create a never-ending supply of new opportunities in the future. This logically leads us to the issue of and need for sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development is highly contested because of its trans-disciplinary traits and applicability. Different fields of study take this advantage by defining and appraising sustainable development from a multi-variant dimension (Moffat, 1996). Therefore, there may be different sets of criteria and indicators used to depict sustainable development. In spite of the theoretical interweaves that obfuscate the concept; there is a common denominator among scholars about sustainability. Generally speaking the Brundtland Report (1987) defines sustainable development as “development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Sustainable development embodies a belief that people should be able to change and improve their lives in accordance with decisive factors which takes account of the needs of others and which protects the planet and future generations. More specifically, sustainable development requires each generation to bequeath to its successor at least as large a productive base as it inherited from its predecessor (Dasgupta & Maler, 2000). In other words, sustainable development is concerned with the quality of life, the range and distribution of resources and benefits, the interaction between environment and development, and provision for the future. In effect, it seeks to reconcile the socio-economic

⁷ See Online Compact Oxford English Dictionary, http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/infrastructure (accessed February 16, 2011).

aspirations of society with the ability of the natural environment and its resources to accommodate those aspirations; to ensure that development is within the carrying capacity of the environment. This need to strike an appropriate balance between development and conservation is at the heart of sustainable development (Guidelines on Local Agenda 21, p. 4).

With regard to the foregoing backdrop, the theoretical framework of this paper directly or indirectly shares in local government, infrastructural provision and sustainable development concepts. These concepts connect the themes that form the subsequent sections.

MUNICIPALITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION AND INDICATORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

From the viewpoint of development philosophy there has been a fundamental shift in development paradigm especially as regards the nature and role of the state in any development or transformation process. The development “virtues” of the centralized states especially in Africa have turned out to be more of a myth than reality. The post colonial state has become dysfunctional mainly as a result of excessive centralization and authoritarian rule. The failure of the centralized state and the “top down” development approach in Africa and other developing areas has led to a renewal of interest in the decentralization of the state and revitalization of local government especially by bilateral and multi-lateral donors. This has contributed to much more attention being focused on the development role of local government (Genmandze 2009, pp.25-26). Perhaps it is useful to note here that local government policies and programmes have a very substantial influence on the definition and achievement of sustainable development regionally and locally. This achievement is contingent on the integration of well-defined sustainability criteria into all programmes and activities concerning environment, infrastructure provision and development.

In Cameroon, municipalities have a key role to play in this regard, because of their wide-ranging responsibilities and functions. They are the political and administrative structures most closely related to local development (the environment, planning, housing and the provision of other physical and personal services). In order to address the question of infrastructure provision and who pays for what and how much, it is necessary first of all to understand the operation of the Cameroon planning system following the decentralization reforms.

In Cameroon, three bills voted by the House of Parliament in June 2004 were promulgated into law on July 22, 2004.⁸ Local authorities were and are empowered under section 2(1) of Law No. 2004/17 of July 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization. It states that: “Decentralization shall consist of devolution, by the state, of special powers and appropriate resources to regional and local authorities” (Genmandze 2009, p.12). The legal and regulatory instruments governing local governments expressly confer a developmental role on local authorities. Section 4(1) Law NO. 2004/17 of 22 July 2004 on the orientation of decentralization stipulates (*inter alia*) that the “mission” of “councils” of local authorities “shall be to promote economic, social, health, educational, cultural and sports development in their respective areas of jurisdiction” (Genmandze 2009, p.38). Their powers in this regard include ascertaining the views of the community, promoting interest and involvement in local government affairs, and promoting, organizing or assisting in

⁸ These laws replaced the hitherto disparate laws of 1974 on local councils with their multitude of subsequent amendments. See (Cheka 2007:181).

research, surveys and studies regarding the local community. These powers ensure that local authorities can develop initiatives with the full participation of the public which they represent.

In the Fako municipalities of the South West Region of Cameroon, infrastructure provision was and is an essential part of the process of defining and articulating sustainable development considerations at the local level and identifying how they can be approached and achieved. This include local infrastructure such as water, construction of municipal road networks, road signs, drains, sewers, refuse collection and household disposal equipment, public lighting, development gardens, open spaces, markets, Council building housing services and so on. Between 1968 and 2010, tables 1 to 5 attempt to detail infrastructure provision in Fako by the various Municipalities. Following are some of the key infrastructures.

Table 1: Provision and Maintenance of Water Points in Limbe Municipality, 1968-2010

S/N	Locality	Water Points from 1968-2010			
		1968-1978	1979-1988	1989-1998	1999-2010
1	New Town	15 (22.06%)	15 (22.06%)	21(21.43%)	25(20.66%)
2	Mbonjo	8(11.76%)	8(11.76%)	13(13.27%)	19(15.70%)
3	Bota	15(22.06%)	15(22.06%)	23((23.47%)	29(23.97%)
4	Mile Four	20(29.41%)	20(29.41%)	26(26.53%)	33(27.27%)
5	Mbende	10(14.71)	10(14.71)	15(15.30%)	15(12.40%)
	Total	68	68	98	121

Source: Author's Compilation from Research Findings, 2013

The statistics in table 1 purport that Mile four has the highest provision and maintenance of water points in Limbe Municipality from 1968-1978 (29.41%), 1979-1988(29.41%), 1989-1998(26.53%) and 1999-2010 (27.27) followed by Bota, New Town, then Mbende and Mbonjo.

Table 2: Provision of Market Stalls by Fako Municipalities, 1977-2010

S/N	Municipality	Market Stalls, 1977-2010			
		1977-1987	1988-1997	1998-2007	2008-2010
1	Limbe	45(17.50%)	50(14.49%)	75(16.48%)	105(18.07%)
2	Muyuka	38(14.79%)	45(13.04 %)	60(13.19%)	86(14.80%)
3	Tiko	102(39.69%)	150(43.49%)	190(41.75%)	220(37.87%)
4	Idenau	25(09.73 %)	40(11.59%)	45(09.90%)	50(08.61%)
5	Buea	47(18.29%)	60(17.39%)	85(18.68%)	120(20.65%)
	Total	257	345	455	581

Source: Author's Compilation from Research Findings, 2013

Table 2 depicts that Tiko has the highest provision of market stalls by Fako Municipalities from 1977-1987(39.69%), 1988-1997(43.49%), 1998-2007(41.75%) and 2008-2010 (37.87%) followed by Buea, Limbe, Muyuka and Idenau.

Table 3: Provision and Maintenance of Earth Roads (kilometers) by Buea Municipality, 1977-2010

S/N	Municipality	Earth Roads, 1977-2010			
		1977-1987	1988-1997	1998-2007	2008-2010
1	Lysoka	4(36.36%)	4(28.57%)	6(31.58 %)	6(31.58%)
2	Bolifamba	2(18.18%)	3(21.43%)	3(15.79 %)	3(15.79%)
3	Likoko	-	-	2(10.53 %)	2(10.53%)
4	Bova	3(27.28%)	4(28.57%)	4(21.05 %)	4(21.05%)
5	Bokwai	2(18.18%)	3(21.43%)	4(21.05 %)	4(21.05%)
	Total	11	14	19	19

Source: Author's Compilation from Research Findings, 2013

Table 3 reveals that Lysoka has the highest provision and maintenance of earth roads by Buea Municipality from 1977-1987(36.36%), 1988-1997(28.57%), 1998-2007(31.58%) and from 2008-2010(31.58%) followed by Bova, Bokwai, then Bolifamba and Likoko.

Table 4: Provision of Public Toilets by Fako Municipalities, 1977-2010

S/N	Municipality	Public Toilets, 1977-2010			
		1977-1987	1988-1997	1998-2007	2008-2010
1	Limbe	5(21.74%)	10(21.74%)	10(20.85%)	6(25%)
2	Muyuka	3(13.04%)	6(13.04%)	5(10.42%)	2(8.33%)
3	Tiko	8(34.78%)	16(34.78%)	15(31.25%)	7(29.17%)
4	Idenau	2(8.70%)	4(8.70%)	7(14.58%)	3(12.50%)
5	Buea	5(21.7 %)	10(21.74%)	11(22.92%)	6(25%)
	Total	23	46	48	24

Source: Author's Compilation from Research Findings, 2013

Table 4 portrays that Tiko has the highest provision of public toilets by Fako Municipalities from 1977-1987(34.74%), 1988-1997(34.78%), 1998-2007(31.25%) and 2009-2010(29.17%) followed by Buea, Limbe then Idenau and Muyuka.

Table 5: Provision of Classrooms by Muyuka Council, 1977-2010

S/N	Locality	Classrooms, 1977-2010	
		1997-2007	2008-2010
1	Muyuka	26(24.76%)	28(25.45%)
2	Oweri	15(14.29%)	26(23.64%)
3	Ikata	13(12.38%)	14(12.73%)
4	Bafia	13(12.38%)	15(13.64%)
5	Ekona	14(13.33%)	11(10%)
6	Yoke	12(11.43%)	9(8.18%)
7	Malende	12(11.43%)	7(6.36%)
	Total	105	110

Source: Author's Compilation from Research Findings, 2013

Table 5 shows that Muyuka has the highest provision of classrooms by Muyuka Council from 1997-2007(24.76%) to 2008-2010 (25.45%) followed by Oweri, Bafia, Ikata, Ekona, Yoke and Malende.

The findings in tables 1 to 5 reveal that the Fako Councils recorded some achievements within the period under study in relation to the available resources. Most of the successes enumerated were infrastructural. The most notable projects that have been carried out so far were in response to the needs of the people such as the construction of markets, roads, culverts, provision of classrooms, pipe-borne water and others, but these needs were and are not responded to in a satisfactory way. However, according to the information recorded from the ordinary people who include the indigenes of the Fako Councils and permanent residents, the achievements were far below expectation.

Challenges Encountered by Fako Municipalities

As indicative in tables 6 and 7, the first and most crucial problem faced by the Fako Municipalities is chronic budgetary shortfall and dilapidated infrastructure that necessitates major capital expenditure. The problem has not been fully addressed in the decentralization legislation so far passed. Many local governments were and are unaware as to how much freedom of choice they have over handling of innovative resources for infrastructure provision or how best to utilize them to deliver much needed basic services on a sustainable basis. In practice, the smaller and more rural councils had difficulty in fulfilling their new range of statutory duties mentioned above without a radical increase in their funding, although the new legislation specifies that where services have been transferred, any relevant infrastructure and other resources should also be transferred.

Deficiencies and advancements in budgetary allocations was and still is a serious problem in infrastructure provision that can lead to sustainable development. In Cameroon, the process of reconciling intended infrastructure development objectives with the basic process for allocating and controlling municipal funds for capital investment and recurrent operations is often exacting and inconsistent. The budget process largely replicates historical allocations and does not allow for increased emphasis on particular activities or the phasing out of others. For example in the transport sector,

allocations emphasize the construction of new roads over the urgent priority of maintenance or rehabilitation of existing ones.

The following statistics in tables 6 and 7 are extracted from the Fako local government administrative accounts. They show the comparative budgets of Fako municipalities for 2007 and 2008⁹, the amount of spending that is recurrent expenditure against spending on capital projects.

Table 6: Comparative Budgets of Fako Municipalities, Recurrent Expenditure and Capital Investment (CFA Francs), 2007

Municipality	2007					
	Budget	Revenue Collection	Recurrent Expenditures	% Recurrent Expenditure	Capital Investment	% Capital Expenditures
Buea	507,000,000	250,921,640	229,593,316	45.3	14,837,668	2.9
Limbe City	2,000,000,000	2,084,866,231	1,309,126,129	65	470,664,026	23.5
Limbe I	97,000,000	44,161,993	38,772,817	40	0	0
Limbe II	97,000,000	44,161,993	32,305,921	33.3	3,728,000	3.8
Limbe III	97,000,000	44,261,993	32,464,127	33.5	4,465,090	4.6
Idenau	256,000,000	139,703,833	113,257,898	44.2	2,433,739	9.5
Muyuka	350,000,000	168,413,314	126,322,430	36.1	22,177,216	6.3
Tiko	486,500,000	283,874,750	58,507,584	12	51,937,334	18.3
Total	3,890,500,000	3,060,365,747	1,940,350,222	49.9	570,243,073	14.7

Source: Regional Chief of Councils, Governor Office Buea, 2011.

⁹ These years were chosen because of availability of data.

Table 7: Comparative Budgets of Fako Municipalities, Recurrent Expenditure and Capital Investment (CFA Francs), 2008

Municipality	2008					
	Budget	Revenue Collection	Recurrent Expenditures	% Recurrent Expenditures	Capital Investment	% Capital Expenditures
Buea	600,000,000	308,317,091	235,093,238	39.2	72,418,340	12.1
Limbe City	3,399,187,278	3,399,187,278	1,842,324,588	54.2	251,168,329	7.4
Limbe I	400,000,000	426,545,846	245,671,275	61.4	146,316,076	36.6
Limbe II	438,000,000	286,259,816	210,962,102	48.2	65,457,329	14.9
Limbe III	400,000,000	423,582,725	292,775,125	73.2	99,250,476	24.8
Idenau	264,000,000	199,625,662	157,032,203	59.5	42,251,000	16
Muyuka	400,000,000	205,331,959	170,054,043	42.5	19,331,380	4.8
Tiko	500,000,000	350,184,854	245,869,383	49.2	98,286,512	19.7
Total	6,401,187,278	5,393,908,603.959	3,399,781,957	53.1	794,479,442	12.4

Source: Regional Chief of Councils, Governor Office Buea, 2011

1 US dollar exchange for 475.072 *Communaute Financiere Africaine* Francs (CFA Francs) at the time of data collection; (\$1= 475.072)

Tables 6 and 7 show poor commitment to capital investment in both 2007 and 2008. In all of Fako Municipalities, the average allocation to capital investment was very low. In 2007 it stood at 14.7% and in 2008 it dropped to 12.4. What is more worrisome is the declining trend. On the other hand, recurrent expenditure for the same period was average. In 2007, it stood at 49.9% and 53.1% in 2008. Thus, a large proportion of expenditure was invested on general public services (administration) and salaries rather than on capital investment. This reveals that fiscal decentralization (the control over the local budget) is often inadequate or not clearly defined. This has obvious implications for local government attempts to meet infrastructure and service requirements sustainably in their areas. In a recent study carried out in the Fako municipalities on the contribution of council authorities to the establishment of revenue generating project for the sustainable development of the municipality, the citizens expressed dissatisfaction. They were and are disappointed with council authorities for their inability to construct adequate modern markets; Provide sufficient portable water to communities; Construct adequate public toilets; Grant scholarships to sons and daughters of the council; Provide sufficient holiday jobs to students; Develop ecotourism in the council; and Construct schools.

At the level of the state and the local government, the people are of the opinion that the local government lacks the autonomy it deserves to effectively respond to its expectations. The success of the work of the Fako Municipalities was restrained by the kinds of functions and resources that have been devolved to them. They neither have financial, political, nor administrative autonomy. The whole ideology of democracy and decentralization exist, but not in practice. This

implies that it is not full flesh decentralization. With respect to democracy, it is a democratic process in a sense because there are certain elements of democracy such as the organisation of elections. But the nature of elections lacks democratic ideals. In effect, there is decentralization without empowerment. Hence, the state and the representatives are criticized for their frequent shifts in concerns and policies that reflect the needs of the local people. Centralization of power (non-devolution) is therefore the major explanation for the inadequate participation of the people and low level of commitment. Though the Fako Municipal authorities blame their inability to respond adequately and efficiently to the needs of the people on the lack of resources, this study reveals that it was largely due to lack of autonomy of the council.

The Fako Municipalities raised funds to run the council but these funds were not controlled by the Municipalities. Another institution FEICOM, that is, *Fonds special d'équipement et d'intervention intercommunale* (Special Council Support Fund for Local Authorities) was put in place in 1974 to manage council funds.¹⁰ This gave FEICOM the power to scrutinise and decide when and how to sign funds for the council. The ordinary people and the Municipal authorities of the different regimes accused FEICOM of mismanagement and discrimination. FEICOM was and is used as another control mechanism on councils that are not pro-government. Such councils were denied assistance from FEICOM to make sure that they achieve very little to the dissatisfaction of the people under its constituency. This was designed to make the people lose trust in opposition parties and turn to the ruling party. The question that comes to mind here is, if councils are capable of raising funds, why channel the funds to another institution to control? Is the state not creating more and more avenues for embezzlement and corruption? Is the state not creating avenues to slow down development in minority groups? For example, in the early 2000s, councils complained that the Anglophone parts of Cameroon (the North West and South West Regions) did not benefit any subventions from FEICOM. This was attributed to embezzlement of funds by the director of the institution. Admittedly, if FEICOM is not funded by the state to give subventions to councils then it has no reason to exist.

The law states that a council is a decentralized political and administrative unit with legal personality and financial autonomy; yet, the budget has to go through a lot of scrutiny and then approved by the state. So, there was a lot of administrative interference. It makes no sense to vote local government representatives when in effect they were supervised by appointed delegates, who were more corrupt than the democratically elected administrators. All evidence points to the fact that Cameroon is still operating under a very centralized system of administration because decentralization has in effect not been accompanied by democracy and empowerment.

A severe barrier to sustainable development in Cameroon has been the consistent failure of infrastructure providers to support facilities through appropriate maintenance programmes. The consequence of inadequate maintenance severely compromise efficiency in all sectors of infrastructure. In other words, the inadequacy of the operation and maintenance of

¹⁰The Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (FEICOM) is a public administrative establishment with a legal status and financial autonomy. FEICOM became operational in 1977, organized according to the municipal sector law (74/23) of December 1974 and Decree 85 of March 1977. It was reorganized twice by presidential decrees on 11 December 2000 and 31 May 2006. FEICOM gives financial and technical assistance to local authorities in order to promote their social and economic development. The history of FEICOM can be divided into three phases; 1976-1986: creation and expansion; 1986-1996: retrenchment due to lack of resources; 1996-to date: renewed expansion due to the availability of autonomous financial resources. FEICOM has two main activities which are ,first, funding capital projects (roads ,town halls, markets, water systems, trucks,..) ,it's original mandate since 1977 ,and ,second , distributing general grants to communes, a mandate given to it in 1998.

infrastructure has serious consequences for economic and social development. Also, the ability of municipalities to support productive public and private sector economic activity was severely hampered by substandard service delivery and deteriorating infrastructure caused by poor operations and maintenance. Unavailable resources, unskilled staff, inadequate project planning, and lack of coordination were the obvious factors for poor maintenance programmes; but there exists one consistently significant reason in all infrastructure sectors: a systematic bias in favour of new construction at the expense of maintenance and even efficient operations.

Thus inadequate maintenance continue to remain a serious challenge. Allowing for example municipal roads to deteriorate, water pumps to break down, and sanitation systems to overflow results in lost capacity, declining output and/or a substantial increase in additional investment needed to sustain existing levels of service. An indifference to maintenance is directly associated with poor infrastructure policies which in turn absorb scarce fiscal resources. Furthermore, poor policies lead to low quality and unreliable service, thereby alienating users. In many cases, because of poor construction and maintenance in areas dominated by low-income populations, the impoverished were the ones to suffer most.

CONCLUSION

The study investigates local governance and sustainable socio-economic development through infrastructure provision in the Fako Municipalities of Cameroon. In order to better understand this phenomenon, a historical overview of local government in Fako and the operation of the Cameroon planning system following the decentralization reforms are examined. The Constitution sets out the main objectives of the local government system: providing democratic and accountable government, ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, promoting social and economic development, promoting a safe and healthy environment, and encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in local government. The Laws on local government highlighted the need for local government to focus on realising developmental outcomes, such as the provision of household infrastructure and services; the creation of liveable, integrated cities, towns and rural areas; the promotion of local economic development; community empowerment and redistribution.

The results of the study reveal that many municipalities were making progress despite major obstacles relating to finance, human resources and limited autonomy. There were positive stories in the local government sector, ranging from municipalities that performed generally well to those that managed to fulfill their responsibilities in specific areas such as basic service delivery, poverty alleviation and infrastructure development. However, assessing these achievements in relation to the population and the needs of the people, it can be concluded that the achievements and performance of the local government were inadequate and inefficient due to less autonomy and the absence of empowerment. There were other related minor factors which contributed to the problem in Fako such as mismanagement, corruption, multiparty rivalry, tribalism, and nepotism. The major problem identified from the data was the persistent state grip on councils. A lack of clarity about the powers and functions of local government impeded progress in service delivery across a range of municipalities. In many cases, it has led to municipalities being saddled with a burden of “unfunded mandates” in areas such as housing, market stalls, education, libraries, roads, water treatment, sanitation and other infrastructure.

The Way Ahead

The financial viability of local government in any country depends largely upon the system of fiscal decentralization adopted. The development of responsible and responsive local government is dependent on municipalities having at least some degree of freedom with respect to local revenues, including freedom to make mistakes and be held accountable for them. This means that municipalities must have control over the rates of some significant revenue sources if they are to be fiscally responsible and able to innovate as to the way they finance basic infrastructure and services.

For infrastructure provision to impact on sustainable development, budgetary allocations need overhauling. Decisions on expenditure allocation within infrastructure sectors as well as across sectors need to be guided by consideration of the local government's underlying development goals, and to show particular respect to the environment and sustainable development. Municipal authorities need to be fully acquainted with externalities when deciding between new constructions and maintenance, and municipal preferences under rural and urban conditions. Flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances are two key elements in improving the equitable allocation of resources. Formal plans should be indicative rather than prescriptive.

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