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Discourses of FLEGT and REDD + Regimes in Cameroon: A Nongovernmental Organization and International Development Agency Perspectives

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Abstract: This paper applies the international environmental negotiations framework (IENF) and the multiple streams framework (MSF) to analyze the influence of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Development Agencies (IDAs) in the development and implementation of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade agreement (FLEGT) and the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) regimes in Cameroon. Deforestation, forest degradation, and illegal logging are critical issues in forest management in many forest-rich countries around the world. In attempt to curtail illegal logging, global forest governance in the past few years has witnessed the development of a number of timber legality regimes including FLEGT. In the same light, the international community has recently seen the emergence of the REDD+ regime to fight against global warming and climate change. Based on sixty-eight interviews in Cameroon with representatives of NGOs and IDAs, government officials, the timber industry, and members of forest communities, as well as eleven informal conversations, and more than sixty documents, the paper finds that NGO and IDA influence on the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon has been growing in three areas: stakeholder participation, project development, and institutional development. Thus, the increasing influence of NGOs and IDAs will pave the way for future interventions on social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues, including land tenure, carbon rights, benefit distribution, equity, Free, Prior and Informed consent, legality, and stakeholder process, related to the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon.

Keywords: Cameroon; Congo Basin; forest governance; FLEGT; international development agency; nongovernmental organization; REDD+

1. Introduction

With global warming and climate change taking center stage on global environmental issues, the international community agrees that a more rigorous emissions reduction mechanism on *avoided deforestation* should play a major role in the fight against global warming and climate change [1]. After decades of international negotiations on avoided deforestation mechanisms [2,3], the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015 recognized and acknowledged the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) program in the Paris Agreement [4]. The objective of REDD+ is to use financial incentives and market instruments to mitigate carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and to promote conservation efforts in developing countries [5]. The noteworthiness of the REDD+ regime, however, is susceptible to contentious debates. Some contend that the regime would significantly benefit tropical forest-rich countries as they would take advantage of the direct financial incentive while reducing deforestation and forest degradation at the same time [6–8]. Others, however, are concerned

that large financial flows in the REDD+ regime would lead to misuse and corruption [9,10], displacement of poor people [11], and possibly unreasonable benefits [12].

While there is less agreement about the effectiveness of the REDD+ regime, there is some consensus that the regime would be impacted negatively by illegal logging, which is endemic in tropical parts of the world, particularly in the forest-rich countries in the Congo Basin [13–15]. Illegal logging is repeatedly linked to forest loss and community dissension in the Congo Basin [16,17]. The forests of the Congo Basin spans across six countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Republic of Congo) in the central region of Africa. With an estimated area of about 227 million hectares [18], the forests of the Congo Basin is the second largest contingent of tropical rainforest in the world after the Amazon [19]. This expansive evergreen forest contains an estimated carbon stock of about 46 billion tons [20], and thus, has the potential to significantly regulate CO₂ emissions, which is known to be a major greenhouse gas (GHG), contributing to global warming and climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report (IPCC AR5) indicates that deforestation and forest degradation are a significant anthropogenic CO₂ emissions source [21]. Although annual rates of deforestation and forest degradation in the Congo Basin are low compared with other regions of the world like the Amazon and Borneo-Mekong, the net deforestation and forest degradation rates have increased over the past 25 years [16]. Forest degradation, in particular, has increased sharply from 0.01% between 1990 and 2000 to 0.09% between 2000 and 2005 [20]. In Cameroon, the rate increased slightly, from 0.06% to 0.07% during the same periods. The net increase is due, in part, to illegal logging, which is endemic in the region [22].

Given that illegal logging is a critical issue in forest management in many forest-rich countries around the world, particularly in countries in the Congo Basin like Cameroon [23,24], DRC [22], and Gabon [25], among others, the global community has developed a number of timber legality regimes to deal with the problem of illegal logging. These regimes include both voluntary governance agreements and legally binding policies such as the African Forestry Law Enforcement and Governance program (AFLEG), the European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade agreement (FLEGT), the United States Legal Timber Protection Act (LTPA), the ASEAN Timber Legality, and the Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Act (ILPA) [26–30], to name a few. FLEGT, the most recent of these regimes is claiming to be cross-cutting, as it is gradually engaging not only timber producing countries from different forest regions around the world but also private entities and organizations that use wood products in their businesses through the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) [30].

Given that the potential for synergistic relationships between the REDD+ and FLEGT regimes exists [31–35], many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international development agencies (IDAs) are not only interested in supporting these international forest governance regimes but are also interested in fostering the synergies between the two regimes. NGO and IDA support for international forest governance regimes has increased in recent years [36,37]. This could be attributed to the increased awareness of the critical role that forests play in the fight against climate change [38–40] and the potential for reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of forest dwelling peoples [41,42].

While many studies have been carried out on the influence of NGO and IDA on international environmental negotiations as a whole [43,44], few studies focus on forest governance regimes at the national level [45–47]. While a moderate number of studies have been carried out related to REDD+ and FLEGT regimes in Cameroon [48–52], little has been done on the specific influence of NGOs and IDAs, making it difficult to fully understand the extent of NGO and IDA interventions on the FLEGT and REDD+ processes and outcomes. To fill this research gap, this paper seeks to evaluate the degree to which NGOs and IDAs have influenced the process and outcomes of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon. Specifically, the paper seeks responses to two distinct questions: (1) does NGO and IDA activities lead to alteration in behavior and, ultimately, the process and outcome of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes? (2) How are capabilities turned into influence?

Cameroon was chosen for this topic because it was one of the first countries in Africa to initiate both FLEGT and REDD+ processes in the country, and broad NGO and IDA scenery is present there, making it a valuable study ground. Cameroon has been engaged in REDD+ since 2005 and is currently developing a national REDD+ strategy. The country started FLEGT negotiations in 2007 and signed the agreement in 2010. The agreement entered into force in 2011.

2. Analytical Framework

Since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, there has been a dramatic increase in the number, size, budget, power, and activity of NGOs and IDAs around the world [53]. Before turning to the discourses of FLEGT and REDD+, it is important that I clarify what exactly I mean by ‘NGOs’ and ‘IDAs.’ For the purposes of this paper, I use the terms NGOs and IDAs to refer to a whole range of nongovernmental organizations and development agencies that are locally, nationally, and internationally based, with connections to FLEGT and REDD+ regimes. This includes development organizations, international NGOs, environmental NGOs, science-based interest groups, business and industry-based interest groups, advocacy networks, grassroots organizations, and community-based organizations. Although NGOs and IDAs have a common purpose—to address social and economic issues—they are fundamentally different entities. On the one hand, IDAs are government organizations that operate mainly in developing countries focusing on social and economic issues related to poverty and inequity. IDAs’ mission is to understand why issues of poverty and inequity exist in developing countries and to find solutions to these complex issues. IDA initiatives range from financial agreements with national governments and grassroots microfinance projects with non-governmental organizations to enhancing environmentally sustainable projects. NGOs, on the other hand, are organizations that operate independently of any government and are organized at different levels—local, national, and international—to serve specific local social, economic, political, and environmental issues. It is equally important that I clarify what exactly I mean by ‘regime.’ In the context of this paper, I use the term regime to refer to a set of international norms, rules, and procedures that regulate the actions of governments and institutions.

In order to analyze the influence of NGOs and IDAs in the development and implementation of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon, this paper applies the international environmental negotiations framework (IENF) developed by Betsill and Corell [54], and the multiple streams framework (MSF) developed by Winkel and Leipold [55]. The IENF is developed around three research elements: *data type*, *data source*, and *methodology*. These three research elements are applied here in the national context; wherefore, the transmission of information to the relevant policy and decision-makers by NGOs and IDAs operating in Cameroon is analyzed based on the nature and amount of *activities*, *access opportunities*, and *resources* availability (see Figure 1). On its part, the MSF is based on discourse coalitions [56,57] and policy discourse analysis concepts [58,59]. A discourse coalition ‘is the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organized around a discourse’ [56] (p.47). Policy discourse is observable occurrences (such as dialogue, speeches, presentations, interviews, debates) in political forums in which participants strive to establish their identity vis-à-vis the desired policy outcomes. I draw from these frameworks to assess how far the efforts of NGOs and IDAs in Cameroon have influenced the process and outcomes of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in the country.

Figure 1. A map of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Development Agencies (IDAs) capability to influence Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade agreement (FLEGT) and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) regimes outcomes. Source: Author's elaboration. Note: The more the activities, access opportunities, and availability of resources, the more an NGO or IDA can influence FLEGT and REDD+ regimes outcomes. The size and level of a circle are, therefore, determined by the nature and amount of activities, access opportunities, and resource availability.

3. Methods

This paper is based on empirical data composing of sixty-eight open-ended semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from seven NGOs, four IDAs, two government ministries, six timber industry representatives, and eight members of forest communities—from four communities—involved in the policy-making process and implementation of FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon (see Table 1). The interviews were conducted primarily in English. However, the services of a French and a local language interpreter were used in cases where the interviewees were not fluent in English. The interviews lasted between 45–75 min and were recorded (with the concern of the interviewee) and transcribed using the software “Dragon Naturally Speaking.” Eleven informal dialogues were held with key personnel from NGOs, IDAs, relevant government Ministries, and the timber industry. Also, more than sixty primary and secondary source documents, governmental and organizational (e.g., legislative texts, policy briefs, policy guidelines, policy papers, expert reports), and scholarly and professional journal articles gathered from a range of sources were analyzed. These methods were chosen in order to obtain necessary information and perspectives, among others, from stakeholders involved in the policy-making process and implementation of FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon. The interviews serve as a check on NGO and IDA stance as indicated in written texts, and to seek opinions from other stakeholders on the influence they believe NGOs and IDAs have had on the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon. The aim of this multiple data collection method is to triangulate the sources to complement each other and avoid biases.

The data was collected between July 2014 and August 2016. The NGO and IDA personnel, and the public administration officials from GMs interviewed were selected based on their position with their institution, while FC members were selected based on their role as community leaders. The TI representatives were chosen based on their activities in the forest-rich East Region of the country. The interview consisted of a set of ten open-ended questions (see Appendix A) related to the nature of different legal, policy, and framework perspectives regarding the development and implementation of FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon. This set of questions was administered to NGO, IDA, and timber industry personnel. Another set of five open-ended questions (see Appendix B) related to government and forest community experiences with NGO and IDA activities was administered

to personnel of government ministries and members of forest communities. As a follow-up to the open-ended questions, general questions were asked about FLEGT and REDD+ and their overall benefit to local communities and Cameroon as a whole. The follow-up questions focused mostly on the respondents' involvement with issues related to timber legality, social equity, and livelihoods. To expand the scope of data, respondents were also allowed to introduce and discuss related topic issues of their choice. Transcripts of the interviews and informal dialogues, together with field notes, were analyzed using inductive and deductive coding techniques [60]. Inductive and deductive techniques involve reasoning broadly from the more general to the more specific (deductive), and from specific observations to the broader generalizations.

Table 1. Number of interviews and informal dialogues with policy actors.

Policy Actors	No. of Structured Interviews	No. of Informal Dialogues	Policy Actor Category
World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF); Center for Environment and Development (CED); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); Cameroon Living Earth Foundation (FCTV); Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS); International Center for the Support of Sustainable Development (CIAD); Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT)	26	3	NGO
Netherlands Development Organization (SNV)*; German Development Cooperation (GIZ); Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA); United States Agency for International Development/United States Forest Service (USAID/USFS)	18	3	IDA
Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOW); Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED)	10	2	GM
Timber Operators using Lucas Mill	6	1	TI
Heads of Families; Youth Association	8	2	FC
Total	68	11	

NGO: Nongovernmental Organization. IDA: International Development Agency. GM: Government Ministry. TI: Timber Industry. FC: Forest Community. *SNV is no longer active in Cameroon.

4. Results

A summary of the findings is reported in Table 2.

The results are presented in three sections: (1) Synthesis of NGO and IDA activities; (2) decision-making discourses of FLEGT; and (3) decision-making discourses of REDD+.

4.1. Synthesis of NGO and IDA Activities

Access effect: NGO access to the FLEGT negotiations was not limited to formal advice to the stakeholders. Their access to the FLEGT-VPA negotiations is attributed to the fact that the FLEGT concept originated with European-based NGOs, who wanted EU member countries to implement stricter rules for companies importing tropical timber into their country. This is demonstrated by the fact that international NGOs, led by the European Community Forest Platform (ECFP), working in collaboration with local NGOs, set up an internal information-sharing mechanism, which increased the participation of civil society organizations in the FLEGT process, albeit indirectly. Local NGO involvement in the FLEGT-VPA process was primordial to the negotiations as they served as sources of information gathering and sharing before actual negotiations. ECFP's early access to the process led to the formation of the multi-stakeholder working group, which is the liaison for the stakeholders and the Joint Implementation Council and the Joint Monitoring Committee, the two groups responsible for implementing the FLEGT regime in Cameroon. Through the multi-stakeholder working group, NGOs were able to transmit the concerns of civil society organizations and other community groups to policy makers who sit on the Joint Implementation Council and the Joint Monitoring Committee, hence influencing the outcome of the process. These access opportunities, because they led to the inclusion of some key stakeholders in the process—which otherwise would have been left out of the process—and transmission of their concerns to policy makers, reflects the high level influence elaborated (larger green circles) on the influence map (Figure 1).

Table 2. Systematic presentation of the facts of the results.

Triangulation	NGO and IDA Participation	Evidence of NGO and IDA Influence
Data type	<p><i>Activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards Pro-poor REDD+ Project • REDD-ALERT program • Dja Biosphere Regional REDD+ Project • Takamanda National Park REDD+ Project • Mount Cameroon National Park REDD+ Project • Korup National Park REDD+ Project • European Community Forest Platform on FLEGT clearinghouse (secretariat) <p><i>Resources:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legality grid reference system • The timber legality assurance system • Research and technical advice • Financial and technical support <p><i>Access:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The internal information-sharing mechanism • The Joint Implementation Council • The Joint Monitoring Committee 	<p><i>Outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation of the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) • The completion of the national REDD+ policy implementation strategy • Channeling of the concerns of forest communities and indigenous people to the FLEGT negotiation table <p><i>Outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building for example in forest monitoring • Institutional strengthening • Approval of the R-PP • Boosted capacity-building initiatives for local organizations <p><i>Outcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participation of civil society organizations in the FLEGT process • Formation of the multi-stakeholder working group • Inclusion of some key stakeholders in the FLEGT process
Data source	<p><i>Primary texts:</i> [26–28], Legal framework of the 1995 decree—Decree No 95–531; <i>Secondary texts:</i> [52,61–68]; <i>Interviews:</i> Sixty-eight open-ended semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from seven NGOs, four IDAs, two government ministries, six timber industry representatives, and eight members of forest communities—from four communities</p>	
Methodology	<p><i>Process tracing (Examples):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative efforts between international NGOs and local NGOs produced an information-sharing mechanism → the information-sharing mechanism increased participation of civil society organizations in the FLEGT process → increased participation was primordial to the FLEGT negotiations → the negotiations led to a signing of the FLEGT agreement • ICUN, USAID/USFS, and DANIDA created REDD+ civil society network → civil society network fostered collaboration between the Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, and civil society on REDD+ issues → collaboration gave representation to indigenous peoples on the national platform on REDD+ 	<p><i>Counterfactual Analysis:</i></p> <p>Without inclusive and effective participation of civil society organizations, the signing and ratification of the FLEGT agreement would have been delayed or stalled</p> <p>Without the collaborative work of the civil society network, indigenous peoples would have been left out of the national platform on REDD+</p>

Source: Adapted from [54].

Resources effect: International NGOs, together with IDAs, have made significant direct financial assistance to stakeholders in the Cameroon FLEGT and REDD+ regimes, including support for the setup of the legality grid reference system for all legislative actions on FLEGT, and the computerized forestry information management system (SIGIF). NGOs and IDAs also provided support for the timber legality assurance system (LAS), support for the development of community management structures for FLEGT and REDD+, and support toward the development of REDD+ pilot projects. Cameroon's FLEGT and REDD+ processes have also benefitted from NGO and IDA technical knowhow, mainly in the form of research and technical advice. By making these resources available to the various stakeholders, NGOs and IDAs helped Cameroon to stay on track toward meeting the country's FLEGT and REDD+ objectives, hence a reflection of the high level influence shown on the influence map.

Activities effect: NGOs and IDAs have influenced the REDD+ process in Cameroon through their activities in the forest sector and forest-related sectors. Their major activities include the IUCN Towards Pro-poor REDD+ Project, the Dja Biosphere Regional REDD+ Project, the REDD-ALERT program, the Takamanda National Park REDD+ Project, the Mount Cameroon National Park REDD+ Project, and the Korup National Park REDD+ Project. Many communities around the Dja Biosphere Reserve, for example, have received advice from the IUCN through the Towards Pro-poor REDD+ Project. When asked to shed light on the organization's activities in the area, personnel of IUCN had this to say:

"Our activities in the Dja Biosphere Reserve have focused mainly on the pro-poor initiatives like stakeholder participatory processes, assessment of the causes of deforestation and degradation, and livelihood support systems. We have created a REDD+ civil society network to help with indigenous people's participation in our meetings. In fact, we recently held a meeting on REDD+ at Hotel Mont Fébé here in Yaoundé where the civil society network representation was very high. The meeting was aimed at fostering collaboration between

the Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, and civil society on REDD+ issues”.

(IUCN interview)

The indirect outcome has been the validation of the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) and the completion of the national REDD+ policy implementation strategy. However, given that most of these activities are on public forest lands (state owned), many private forest land owners (individuals, business entities and institutions, indigenous and tribal entities) may feel left out of the REDD+ program. Thus, NGO and IDA activities reflect the medium level influence (red circles) shown on the influence map.

4.2. Decision-Making Discourses of FLEGT

The *raison d'être* of the FLEGT regime is not only to verify the legality of timber exports but also to improve forest governance in participating countries [61]. Decree No 95-531 of 1995, which requires the country's forest authorities to ensure the participation of all stakeholders in decisions affecting forests, supports stakeholder participation in forest management decision-making in Cameroon. Since passing the decree, NGOs and IDAs have sought greater involvement in the development and monitoring of forest policies and laws [62]. However, despite this regulatory measure, NGOs and IDAs still face many challenges in participating in decision-making affecting forests given that, in many cases, their participation is coerced and superficial. This was the case with FLEGT where the initial preparatory phase of the voluntary partnership agreement (VPA) meeting by the Cameroon authority saw only two NGO representations: the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with virtually no national civil society organizations represented.

To ensure broad multi-stakeholder participation in the VPA process (as envisioned in the legal framework of the 1995 decree), the European Community (EC) Forest Platform and the European Tropical Forest Research Network (FERN) group in 2005, organized a meeting of Cameroonian civil society organizations to discuss a joint plan of action for the involvement of civil society in the development of the FLEGT-VPA [52]. The meeting produced a 'mechanism that will guarantee the participation of all interested Cameroonian civil society groups in a political process' [63] (P. 1) and paved the way for the EC and other international NGOs and IDAs to play an active role in the FLEGT-VPA process. With greater EC involvement in the process, the European Community Forest Platform (ECFP) was able to set up an internal information-sharing mechanism to act as the *clearinghouse* (secretariat) for the participation of civil society organizations in FLEGT-VPA processes initiated in Cameroon. The ECFP information-sharing mechanism is a vital means of channeling to the negotiation table the concerns of forest communities and indigenous people living in Cameroon's forests. The ECFP also initiated and led a multi-stakeholder FLEGT participation process that brought together civil society organizations (CSO) and other stakeholders to enhance their participation in the process.

Financial and technical support from international NGOs and IDAs has boosted capacity-building initiatives for local organizations. For example, with the support of international NGOs and IDAs, many national NGOs and CSO are working to comply with Cameroon's timber legality assurance system (LAS), which is an audit mechanism that distinguishes between legal and illegal forest products. In general, NGO and IDA led initiatives contributed to a balance between a top-down and a bottom-up FLEGT-VPA process in Cameroon. This has helped to rationalize the FLEGT regime in the country, as it facilitates a working relationship between the government and forest communities. These NGO and IDA initiatives reflect the high level influence elaborated on the influence map.

4.3. Decision-Making Discourses of REDD+

Given that the FLEGT-VPA negotiation process in Cameroon, which was driven by the participatory approach through multi-stakeholder participation has made significant progress towards meeting

its goals, the government, following the four causal mechanisms for regime interaction—Cognitive interaction, commitment interaction, behavioral interaction, impact-level interaction [64]—learned from the FLEGT-VPA process and is applying the same participatory approach to the REDD+ process through the national platform on REDD+ and climate change. The platform, a joint initiative of some NGOs and the government of Cameroon was created in accordance with the legal framework of the 1995 decree on stakeholder participation. NGOs and IDAs also support the REDD+ process through capacity building and research.

5. Discussion

The results explained some courses of action by NGOs and IDAs that influenced the process and outcomes of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon. Even though it is difficult to fully engage in the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon, the NGO and IDA influence has been growing. While their influence has been growing on both regimes, the analysis indicates that it has been more impacting on FLEGT than REDD+. In this section, I discuss the logic of the objectives outlined in the introduction. I also base the discussion on the framework, showing links to empirical results elsewhere, and highlighting methodological connections.

One of the greatest strengths of the FLEGT-VPA initiative is stakeholder participation [61]. The ECFP led the multi-stakeholder FLEGT participation process in Cameroon. Multi-stakeholder participation drove the entire negotiations process. Multi-stakeholder participation led to the development of Cameroon's legal definition of timber, which covers all legislative aspects of its forest sector including international agreements that the country has signed and ratified. Despite the rough start to the FLEGT-VPA negotiations, the development of a strong definition of legality that incorporates the overall objective of the global NGO community has set Cameroon on the right path to achieving the overall goal of the FLEGT regime. However, the lack of political will and, to some extent, institutional resistance to the transparency could mar the implementation of the agreement.

For example, after two years of work on a computerized forestry information management system (SIGIF) by a consortium to develop a timber traceability system as stipulated by the agreement, the consortium failed to render the system functional at the close of the project in 2012. A number of reasons account for the failing SIGIF, including lack of political will at the ministerial level, lack of proper key stakeholder engagement, lack of consensus as to what constitutes the best timber information management system for Cameroon, and lack of good project steerage, which led to the engagement of some key stakeholders only at advanced stages of the development of SIGIF. At such advanced stages, it becomes challenging for the government to accept modifications or changes after investing a lot in the process.

Nevertheless, a major reason for the failing traceability system is the lack of consensus among the different stakeholders on how best to account for the activities of the informal domestic sector, which supports the livelihoods of thousands of people, living in forest communities but have no legal right to the forest and its resources. Building consensus among stakeholders with conflicting interests is a major aspect examined in many studies on participation [69,70]. The informal domestic forest sector in Cameroon is made up of a cross-section of local forest users ranging from chain-saw millers, small-scale farmers, indigenous communities, petit-traders, and subsistence wood users [23,71]. Due to the large number of individuals involved in informal forest activities coupled with limited organizational capacity, it was difficult for the consortium to agree with the multi-stakeholder platform on a traceability system that protects the interests of the informal sector without compromising the credibility of the country's legality assurance system (LAS). As other studies have shown [50,72], interactions between policy actors and institutional-setting systems are critical for the successful implementation of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes and forest governance in general.

A number of studies [6,7,73] have also highlighted financial and technical support as indispensable to the success of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes. Financial and technical support from international NGOs and IDAs is improving capacity-building initiatives for local organizations. This could prove

valuable in ameliorating some of the problems responsible for the failing SIGIF system. For example, the FAO ACP-FLEGT Support Program has provided financial support to a number of local NGOs, including the African Centre for Applied Forestry Research and Development (CARFAD), which provides forest governance support to community forest projects around the Batouri area in the East Region of the country; the Organization of Forests and Rural Development (FODER), which received funding to ameliorate community monitoring and participation in the implementation of the FLEGT regime in Cameroon; the Association of Forest Municipalities of Cameroon (AFCAM), which received support to help communal forests with technical adaptation issues related to FLEGT; the Cameroon Living Earth Foundation (FCTV), which was funded to help strengthen forest law enforcement in the country; the International Center for the Support of Sustainable Development (CIAD), working with Lucas Mill operators on organizational issues in community forests in Lomié, Messok, and Ngoyla in the East Region; and the Mbalmayo National School for Water and Forest (ENEF), which received funds for capacity building on FLEGT-VPA for teachers and students of the school.

Prominent international NGOs and IDAs, such as the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the EU's Thematic Program, have also supported FLEGT initiatives in Cameroon for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy (ENRTP) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The NGO, Cameroon Environment Watch was funded by the 10th EDF to set up an independent observatory for controlling and monitoring forestry offenses in the country. The Netherlands development organization (SNV), the Forest Peoples Program (FPP), the Center for Environment and Development (CED), the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT), and Forest and Rural Development all received support from the EU ENRTP 2009 and EU ENRTP 2010 programs to carry out local initiatives ranging from enhancing the ability of communities to produce and export timber legally, the effective participation of forest-dependent communities in FLEGT, to the establishment of a local forest operations monitoring system.

This is the case with one international NGO (requested anonymity) whose involvement in FLEGT is aimed mainly at small timber producers, helping them to meet the VPA requirements. During the interview, when asked to explain the organization's role in the FLEGT-VPA process, a personnel of this organization said the organization's prime role is to support small timber producers in meeting FLEGT requirements so that they can continue to sell their timber under the agreement. The personnel noted that 'we are working with community forest managers helping them to understand the modalities of the agreement so that they can continue to sell timber legally and generate money to carry out community development projects.'

At the beginning of the FLEGT implementation process in 2010-2011, the role of community forests in the process was not clear. The NGO personnel stated that one of the organization's objectives working with community forest managers was to have them represented at the national monitoring committee. The personnel also noted that 'after working with community forest managers and negotiating with the government of Cameroon, we have met our objective as community forest managers now have a seat at the national monitoring committee following the election of a representative in 2012.' Through this representative, the views of community forest managers are transmitted to the Ministry and to the Joint Implementation Council and the Joint Monitoring Committee [52].

Since, after the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) adopted a more rigorous emissions reduction mechanism on the avoided deforestation scheme in 2007, a number of REDD+ initiatives and projects have emerged in Cameroon. These include the Takamanda National Park REDD+ Project, the Dja Biosphere Regional REDD+ Project, the Mount Cameroon National Park REDD+ Project, the Korup National Park REDD+ Project, the IUCN Towards Pro-poor REDD+ Project, and initiatives such as the Ngoyla-Mintom forest initiative, the REDD-ALERT (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation through Alternative Land uses in Rainforests of the Tropics) initiative, and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility initiative, among others. The main initiative, however, has been efforts in developing a national REDD+ strategy that would enable the country to effectively contribute to global emissions reduction.

However, because REDD+ is also aimed at dealing with socio-economic and development needs of forest-dependent communities, the government of Cameroon is using REDD+ as a development tool to meet its development goals as described in the country's Vision 2035 paper [65] and the Growth and Employment Strategy paper [66]. Hence, one way in which the government of Cameroon is trying to use REDD+ as a development tool is making the participatory approach a central pillar of the national REDD+ strategy [67]. The following excerpt from the country's Readiness Preparation Proposals (R-PPs) document emphasizes this point:

"Civil society will be represented at all levels of the REDD+ process. It is an integral part of the Steering Committee and will be present in the decentralized and deconcentrated structures. It will participate in the activities carried out to construct the strategy and will be a key participant in implementing the REDD+ activities at the local level." [74] (p. 19)

Through their contribution to the development of the national platform on REDD+, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United States Agency for International Development/United States Forest Service (USAID/USFS)—through the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE)—and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) increased the participation of stakeholders in the REDD+ program. The involvement of IUCN, USAID/USFS, and DANIDA in the creation of the national platform on REDD+ helped in structuring the platform such that indigenous peoples are represented, as their support was specifically directed toward getting the civil society involved in the REDD+ process [51].

Before engaging in the development of the national platform on REDD+, IUCN and DANIDA had earlier, in 2009, launched a pro-poor REDD+ project in the Sangha Tri-national (TNS) forest area. The aim of this project was to educate the local communities on their right to participate in the REDD+ scheme and to ensure that the implementation of REDD+ does not become a liability to the communities, but instead an asset that requires careful management to maximize the benefits. In this light, therefore, the main activity of the pro-poor REDD+ project in the TNS is community participation in initiatives that identify and address causes of deforestation and forest degradation within the context of the REDD+ program [68].

Apart from the involvement of IUCN, USAID/USFS, and DANIDA in the creation of the national platform on REDD+, other NGOs and IDAs have been involved in the REDD+ process in Cameroon in different ways. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), for example, is involved in capacity building and collaboration between stakeholders on the implementation of REDD+ in the Mbam and Djerem and the Takamanda national parks. Both initiatives are aimed at strengthening the communities' capacity to participate in the REDD+ process and to ensure responsible management of the forest, as the local communities around the parks depend on the forest for their survival. Through capacity building and responsible management, the WCS initiative prepares communities to participate in the carbon market by selling carbon on the market and receiving direct cash benefits or other benefits in the form of social amenities, such as schools, health clinics, and pipe-borne water. The WCS works in collaboration with the two main government ministries involved with REDD+ on these initiatives: the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) and, hence, could be privy to vital information necessary for the successful implementation of the mechanism in these communities. Other IDAs with major REDD+ finance and technical support in Cameroon include the World Bank, the German Development Cooperation Agency (KfW), and the French Development Agency (AFD). The World Bank, for example, through the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) supported the national REDD+ readiness planning initiative by hosting the REDD+ secretariat and providing management support for funds from other donors.

IDA involvement in the REDD+ process has mainly been through the support of research initiatives through national and international research organizations. For example, the REDD-ALERT (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation through Alternative Land-uses in Rainforests of the Tropics) research project, supported by the European Commission's Community Research

and Development Information Service (CORDIS), through the Commission's seventh Framework Programme, selected the densely forested Southern central plateau regions of Cameroon as one of the areas for the REDD-ALERT research projects [75], which was carried out in three other countries: Indonesia, Vietnam, and Peru. Three research institutes in Cameroon: the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development, and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) were involved in the REDD-ALERT research project in various capacities in four administrative divisions in southwestern Cameroon: Nyong et So'o, Ocean, Mvila, and Valee du Ntem, from 2009 through 2011. Their activities in the region included: building understanding of the drivers of land use change, quantifying and monitoring land use change, quantifying greenhouse gas emissions from land use change, identifying and assessing viable policy options addressing the drivers of deforestation and their consistency, and developing new negotiation support tools [75].

Another research institute involved with REDD+ in Cameroon is the Center for Tropical Research (CTR), a United States scientific research institute based at the University of California Los Angeles. CTR worked in collaboration with Global Green Carbon (GGC), an international organization that focuses on developing carbon financed AFOLU (Agriculture, Forest, and Land Use) initiatives to develop the Dja Biosphere Regional REDD+ Project in the Dja Biosphere Reserve (DBR) in the East Region of Cameroon. Although not an IDA supported project, the GGC-CTR partnership constitutes a private sector/NGO consortium that aims to advance the REDD+ agenda in Cameroon. Hence, the GGC-CTR Dja Biosphere Regional REDD+ project is designed to not only address deforestation as a primary cause of global warming but also to address, by way of the 3E+ criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, plus co-benefits [76], other problems associated with forest loss and degradation, such as biodiversity loss, loss of water resource, and loss of non-forest products on which many forest communities depend for their livelihoods [77]. Therefore, the Dja Biosphere Regional REDD+ AFOLU project is an excellent example of a REDD+ project model that is consistent with the idea of climate change regimes co-benefits.

6. Conclusions

Employing two frameworks widely used in literature on NGO and IDA, this paper analyzed the influence of NGOs and IDAs in the development and implementation of the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes in Cameroon. The paper discussed, within the context of FLEGT and REDD+ regimes, a diversity of NGOs and IDAs and the social, economic, and political landscape in which they operate and the degree of influence they exert on the FLEGT and REDD+ processes and outcomes. The term 'influence,' used in this paper to indicate when "a player exercises influence if his presence, thoughts or actions cause a political decision-maker to meet his interests or objectives more than would have been the case if this player had been absent" [78] (p. 57), is exhibited by the different NGOs and IDAs discussed in this paper. The paper finds that NGO and IDA influence on the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes has been growing in three areas: stakeholder participation, project development, and institutional development. In the area of stakeholder participation NGOs and IDAs have informed and empowered civil society organizations through the advancement of procedures for stakeholder participation. In the area of project development, NGOs and IDAs initiated and financed REDD+ pilot projects, providing technical and human resources for monitoring, reporting, and a verification system. In the area of institutional development, NGOs and IDAs played prominent roles in the development of a FLEGT legal framework and a REDD+ national strategy. While the influence of NGOs and IDAs has been growing on both regimes, analysis indicates that it has been more impacting on FLEGT than REDD+. Although this study focused on the influence of NGOs and IDAs, it is equally important to look into the influence of demographic groups like the youth and women. Further research is also needed to better understand why the influence of NGOs and IDAs was more on FLEGT than REDD+.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for NGO, IDA, and Timber Industry Personnel

1. What is the agency's/organization's involvement with FLEGT/REDD+ and has the agency/organization established specific plans and activities or benchmarks to implement the goals and objectives of FLEGT/REDD+? If so please describe them.
2. How does the agency/organization perceive the impact of FLEGT/REDD+ on the rights of indigenous peoples and other forest communities to rely on the forest for their livelihood?
3. Does the agency/organization support indigenous people and other forest communities in their FLEGT/REDD+ activities? If so please describe the nature of the support.
4. What has been the agency's/organization's most significant and main contribution to the process and implementation of the goals and objectives of FLEGT/REDD+? How did the agency/organization transmit the information to policy makers?
5. How does the agency/organization plan to enhance the awareness of indigenous peoples and forest community issues related to FLEGT/REDD+ amongst its staff?
6. Please identify existing challenges and institutional limitations in the agency's/organization's capacity to enhance the implementation of FLEGT/REDD+ legal, policy and operational frameworks.
7. Has the agency/organization developed guidelines or a policy of how to engage with stakeholders in its work on FLEGT/REDD+?
8. Which are the main strategies, policies and activities that the agency/organization is considering now and in the future to support the implementation of FLEGT/REDD+ and raise awareness about its content at the local and national level?
9. In its annual reporting process does the agency/organization provide information and disaggregation of data with special emphasis on FLEGT/REDD+?
10. The purpose of FLEGT/REDD+ is to contribute to the legal basis for all activities in the areas of forest harvesting and trade, and to contribute to the fight against global warming. What is the agency's/organization's position on the overall strategies of FLEGT/REDD+?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Government Ministries Personnel and Members of Forest Communities

1. How knowledgeable are you about the government's/forest communities' involvement with the FLEGT/REDD+ processes? Please describe your knowledge of their activities.
2. In the context of FLEGT/REDD+, how would you characterize your (government/forest communities) experiences with NGOs/IDAs? Have your experiences been mostly positive or negative? Please describe your experiences.
3. Which NGOs/IDAs has your ministry/community worked with on FLEGT/REDD+ issues and what projects have you worked on?
4. Did your ministry/community participate in the development of any FLEGT/REDD+ documents and did your ministry/community collaborate with any NGO/IDA? Please describe the nature of your ministry's/community's participation.
5. How has the involvement of NGOs/IDAs impacted the outcome of FLEGT/REDD+ locally and nationally?

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