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Power, the Hidden Factor in Development Cooperation. An Example of Community Forestry in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concomitant with our comparative study analysis of the interests and power of the stakeholders involved in Community Forestry (CF) in six countries. The study hypothesises that, "governance processes and outcomes in CF depend mostly on interests of the powerful external stakeholders". For this paper which is on CF in Cameroon, the study hypothesizes that, "Power is a hidden factor in Development cooperation". Based on political theories, the paper uses the "actor-centered power" (ACP) concept of the Community Forestry Working Group (CFWG) in Göttingen, Germany, the post-development theory and empirical findings, to back up the assertions made in the study through the analysis of thirteen different CFs in the South West region (SWR) of Cameroon. It analyzes the empirically applicable ACP concept, that consists of three elements: trust, incentives and coercion and at the same time connects these elements with the post-development theory. The elements were derived from the basic assumptions on power made by Max Weber in political sciences and Max Krott in forest policy. The study confirms the existence of powerful internal and external stakeholders that influence CF in Cameroon and aims to empower important but marginalised communities. It concludes that, CF as a development instrument to alleviate poverty and increase livelihood while sustainably managing the forest has actually not brought significant or meaningful development to the targeted sector of the society

KEYWORDS

Community Forestry; Devolution; Power; Development; Post-Development; Theory; Trust; Incentive; Coercion

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