



## Transformational and transactional leadership practices in community forestry in Cameroon

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### Abstract

Transformational leadership style is characterized by the leader that empowers community members, causing positive social change and inducing sustainable development. Whereas in transactional leadership style the leader focuses on using community members as a mean to arrive at his end, with no consideration for their empowerment. This study assessed the leadership practice of community forests (CFs) leaders in Cameroon, based on transactional and transformational leadership theories. Data were collected through the administration of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires short form (MLQ-S6) to 204 households' members, selected based on availability and willingness to participate in the survey, key informants' interviews and documents review. Findings reveal that 34.2% of respondents viewed their leaders as transformational, while a significant majority of them perceived their leaders as mostly transactional ( $\chi^2=34.32$ ,  $P=0.000$ ). Leaders in the Mbam & Kim division exhibited higher levels of transformational leadership style than those of Upper-Nyong ( $P=0.002$ ); while no significant difference was found for transactional style ( $P=0.1$ ) between the two divisions. Key constraints to transformational leadership style included inadequate government support in the CFs' approval process, lack of training on leadership and management for CF's leaders, and lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of leadership and governance. Considering the above, if objectives of participatory forest management in Cameroon are to be sustainably achieved, there is a need to promote transformational leadership style development for CFs' leadership, and so address the current status of business as usual that mostly favors the expression of transactional style.

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## Introduction

Ever since the concept of participatory forests management (PFM) became topical in the early 1980s as a model to increase community participation in the management of forest, scholars and development actors have continuously raised leadership deficiencies as one of the causes of failure of community forestry to meet its intended objectives (Ameha *et al.*, 2016; García-López 2019; Warren & Visser, 2016). This is particularly true for most countries in the Congo basin and for Cameroon in particular, that enacted the law on community forestry in 1994 (Law No 94/01 of 20 January 1994). In fact, the current legal foundation of community forestry in Cameroon lies on the 1994 forestry law and its 1995 decree of application. This policy provision has become the center of criticism from scientists and development workers as the root causes of some of the governance gaps that drive failures in most of these community forests in Cameroon (Alemagi *et al.*, 2022; Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). This outcome has mainly been attributed to persistent elite capture in the leadership of community forest institutions (Foundjem-Tita *et al.*, 2018; Mvondo, 2006).

Leadership is widely regarded as “the particular act in which a leader engages during the course of directing and coordinating the work of group members” (Fiedler, 1967) for achieving a common vision. Transformational leadership style has been described as the ‘new leadership’ paradigm that causes positive change in individuals and social systems (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Whereas, transactional leadership focuses on leaders maximizing benefit by utilizing followers as a means to arrive at their goal (Howell & Avolio, 1993). While transformational leadership has been documented to be highly effective in sectors such as security (Russell, 2017), health (Alghamdi *et al.*, 2018), and education (Saleem, 2015), it is scantily documented in the environmental field; particularly in forestry (Evans *et al.*, 2015).

Since the enactment of Cameroon’s 1994 Forest law aimed at (i) community participation, (ii) improved community livelihoods, (iii) forests conservation, these expectations have widely remained debatable to date

(Foundjem-Tita *et al.*, 2018; Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). These results have been associated to the quality of leadership by those at the head of community forest institutions (Foundjem-Tita *et al.*, 2018; Piabuo *et al.*, 2018). However, research on leadership styles in community forestry in Cameroon remains scantily documented.

Without a proper characterization of the leadership styles in Cameroon’s CFs, it will be difficult to provide policy directions that would promote attainment of the objectives in the law. This study therefore examines the leadership style of CFs leaders in Cameroon, in connection with transformational and transactional styles. Specifically, the study assessed the extent of transformational and transactional leadership styles in community forestry and determined the key constraints to transformational leadership style of community forest leaders.

### *Background of community forestry in Cameroon*

Cameroon’s 1994 forestry, wildlife, and fisheries law defines community forest as a forest with a maximum exploitable area of 5000 hectares, located adjacent to a given village or villages with customary rights to the forest. This law gives to the local community access to the forest upon signing an agreement with the government on conditions to conserve the forest while creating livelihood benefits for local people. The community requesting the allocation and establishment of a community forest is required by this law to set up a formal community organization in the form of a community initiative group, association or cooperative and economic interest groups. This legal entity is led by a CF management committee, with at their head a delegate responsible for steering the overall management of the CF on behalf of the community. The CF management committee is constituted by; a manager, deputy manager, secretary-general/responsible of forest operations, deputy secretary-general, treasurer, deputy treasurer, financial controller, and advisers.

Since 1994 forest reforms in Cameroon, about 2.4 million ha of forest have been converted to CFs corresponding to about 686 community forests created

so far, 345 of which have their final management agreements (The World Resources Institute & Ministry of Forests and Fauna, 2020). Though CF has been a great improvement in Cameroon's forest governance, the new regulatory frameworks seem not to have adequately addressed the leadership aspect as a key ingredient to the achievement of expected results (Alemagi *et al.*, 2022). This study, therefore, uses community members' perceptions to examine the extent of exhibition of transformational leadership style in community forestry in Cameroon. The study was based on the assumption that if leaders exhibited transformational leadership style and its behaviors "more often than transactional leadership, then these leaders would manage CFs successfully and sustainably as exemplified in other sectors (Alghamdi *et al.*, 2018; Russell 2017; Saleem, 2015).

#### *Theoretical framework*

This study was anchored on transformational and transactional leadership theories as advanced by Bass (1985) to unravel community forest's leadership in Cameroon.

Transformational leadership theory is an approach that causes change in individuals and social systems by enhancing followers' motivation, morale, and ability for better performance by inspiring them not to focus only on their interests, but on a greater goal for the community as a whole (Bass, 1985). Many authors see transformational leadership as the contemporary method of leadership theories needed for successful organizations (Bass, 1998; Russell 2017; Saleem, 2015). This leadership style consists of four leadership behaviors including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; the 4Is (Bass and Riggio, 2005).

Accordingly, *idealized influence* is the extent to which leaders display the qualities, attitudes and confidence which cause followers to view them as their role models, as they hold themselves at very high moral standards and present high ethical conduct. *Inspirational motivation* is the level to which a leader

can take different actions such as designing a visionary future and confidently encouraging followers on what is required for its accomplishment. Leaders motivate and empower followers through perceiving an optimistic future, setting up ambitious goals, projecting an approach and convincing followers that this vision and objective is reachable. In *Intellectual stimulation*, followers are brought to question basic approaches and become creative and more innovative in addressing challenges. The leader challenges followers by stimulating their thinking, imagination, and confidence in developing solutions for problems faced. *Individualized consideration* is displayed when the leader pays attention to the developmental needs of followers through individuals' mentoring and coaching and encourages followers to reach their own goals and full potential.

Transactional leadership theory also identified as "give and take" leadership is seen as a contract between followers and the leader (Larsson & Eid, 2012). The relationship brings about reward for followers in case of positive results, and punishment for negative ones. Two factors describe transactional leadership style including management by exception and contingent reward. *Contingent reward* denotes the exchange occurring between the leader and the follower, where followers' effort is rewarded by the leader. In this process, the leader receives agreement from followers on the expected outcomes as well as return for work well completed (Larsson & Eid, 2012).

According to the above author, *management-by-exception* is when leaders concentrate on mistakes, avoid responding on time and delay making decisions. This method is categorized into active and passive transactions. In the active form, a leader continuously monitors followers' diligence and outputs and strives to take the lead prominently. In the passive form of management-by-exception, the leader states standards and potential rewards or penalties at the beginning, then the follower is left to implement with no supervision. The leader only gets involved when the goal is not completed or when mistakes have happened.

According to Bass (1998), though transformational leadership and transactional leadership represent distinct entities, they are not mutually exclusive processes. Rather, they build on one another, thereby broadening the effects of the leader on effort and performance. A leader may use both styles at different times and situations or in different amounts and intensities (Bass, 1985). However, Bass (1998) argue that transformational leadership style goes beyond transactional leadership by elevating leaders and helping followers achieve higher levels of organizational performance or goals.

In this regard, transformational leadership is needed as the most appropriate style of leadership to create lasting and sustainable positive change in community forestry in Cameroon as seen in other sectors (Russell 2017; Saleem, 2015).

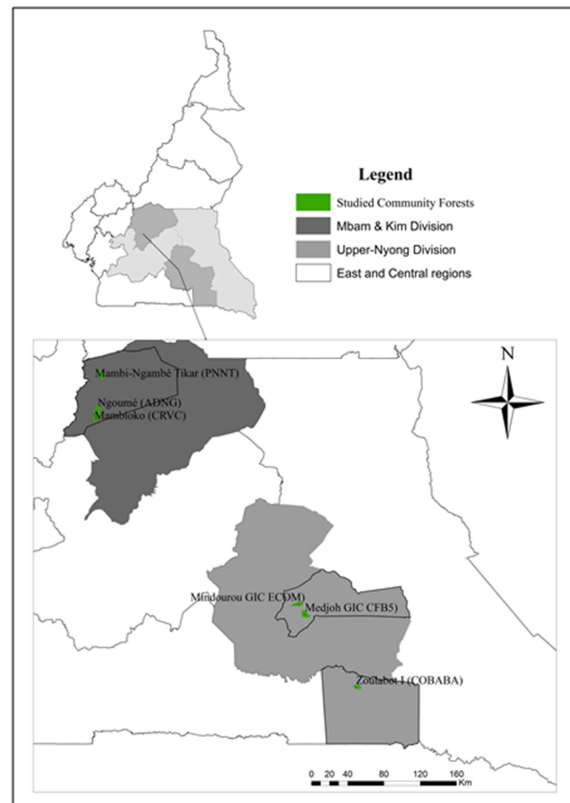
## Research methodology

### Study area

This study was carried out within the framework of the DRYAD project “Financing Sustainable Community Forest Enterprises in Cameroon”, an intervention of the World Agroforestry. The Central and East, two of the five regions of Cameroon where this project was implemented were purposively selected for the study. The choice of CFs in the East and Central regions of Cameroon was informed by the fact that the two regions hosted most CFs in the project intervention. Additionally, Southwest region was declared a no go zone due to insecurity; and the number of CFs in the Littoral and South regions were few (four in total) and geographically very dispersed, thus limiting access to these parts of the country. Fig. 1 below shows the selected community forests in the East and Central regions.

The study was specifically carried out in the Mbam & Kim, and Upper-Nyong divisions, in the Central and East regions of Cameroon respectively. In the Mbam & Kim division, research was done in Ngambé-Tikar subdivision which is located 270km from Ntui (Headquarter of the division) and 465km from Yaoundé. Ngabe-Tikar is characterized by two

dominant vegetation types including the dense forest and the savannah forest with shrub or trees. The area is very rich in fauna species. The main livelihood activities of the local communities include crop farming, petty trading, small scale traditional livestock breeding, hunting, fishing, and forest logging.



**Fig. 1.** Map of the study area.

In the Upper-Nyong division, the research mainly concerned two subdivisions, Mindourou and Ngoyla. The division is generally classified as moist evergreen forests, with a very rich faunal diversity. Livelihood in this area is primarily crop farming; and activities such as petty trading, small scale traditional livestock breeding, hunting, fishing, exploitation of NTFP and forest logging in CFs, council forest and state forest (UEFA) are Secondary.

### Research design, population sampling and data collection

Data for the study were collected between March and August 2020. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which describes events as reported by individual participants in the study at a particular

point in time. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to generate data and information to address the objectives of the study. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Short Form, 6 S (MLQ-6S) (Bass and Aviola, 1992) was adopted, thus leadership style was assessed on 5 points Likert scale (0= Not at all, 1= Once in a while; 2= Sometimes; 3= Fairly often; 4= Frequently if not always). A pilot study was executed to determine the feasibility of study objectives. The pilot site was not included in the actual data collection sites. Questionnaires were pre-tested during the scoping exercise and subsequently amended to enhance validity and reliability. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, participants' names or identifying information were not recorded and informed consent was obtained from respondents before interviews. To facilitate data collection, enumerators (research assistants) were trained on the data questionnaires to enhance their capacity to capture appropriate and relevant data.

In the target divisions, in both East and Central regions, the DRYAD project is implemented in twelve CFs. From these, 6 CFs were purposively selected, based on criteria of longest time in existence and highest number of annual exploitation permit obtained since inception. These criteria (time in existence and exploitation permit) demonstrate that these CFs have been active and thus provided opportunities for the communities to interact with their leadership. In each division under study, 3 CFs (50%) were selected for data collection; including GIC CFB5, COBBAB'A and GICECOM in the Upper-Nyong Division and, CRVC, ADNG and PNNT in the Mbam and Kim Division (Fig. 1).

We used a combination of data sources including the Cameroon 2005 census data and DRYAD project's data (2019) to generate an estimate of the population of each of the twelve CFs/villages in the study area. In Mindourou, a township with a cosmopolitan population, the researcher worked with the local elders to generate a list of indigenous heads of households. We applied Yamane's (1967) formula to determine the sample size of 276 for household interviews.

A total of 204 (73% response rate) household representatives were interviewed based on their availability (Table 1). This response rate was considered to be adequate, based on Fincham (2008) who stipulates that 60% response rate and above is acceptable in scientific research. Of the 204 respondents, 139 (68%) were males and 65 (32%) were females. All the age groups were represented; with the majority of respondents 53 (26%) being of the 35-44 years old group, and the lowest representation 11 (5.4%), the 18-24 years old group. The majority of respondents had attended either primary school 101 (49.5%), or secondary school 77 (37.7%), and very few 5 (2.5%) and 2 (1%) got college and university education levels respectively. Participation was based on respondents' availability and willingness.

**Table 1.** Sample Frame Showing Number of Households Interviewed.

Division	CFs	HH targeted	HH interviewed	% HH sampled
Mbam & Kim	CRVC	32	26	81%
	ADNG	54	47	87%
	PNNT	48	27	56%
Upper-Nyong	COBAB'A	9	9	100%
	GIC CFB5	66	51	77%
	GICECOM	67	44	66%
<b>Total</b>		<b>276</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>73%</b>

Key informants were selected purposively based on their experience in the area, ability to inform the study, and social or professional position in relation to community forestry in the area. Table 2 below displays the number of key informants interviewed during fieldwork. Additional qualitative data and information were obtained through participatory observation and document review. All these information served for triangulation with quantitative information.

**Table 2.** Sample Frame for Key Informants' Interviews.

Stakeholders	Upper-Nyong	Mbam & Kim	Total
CFs leaders	2	3	5
village chief	3	3	6
Forest officer	2	1	3
Agricultural officer	2	1	3
Local NGOs	2	1	3
CF secretary	2	2	4
Treasurer	3	1	4
Responsible for forest operations	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>34</b>

### *Reliability of different variables*

The reliability checks for each variable of study using Cronbach's alpha shows the following reliability coefficients: Transformational leadership (0.938), Transactional Leadership (0.632) after removing 2 items of lowest "Item Total Correlation" and Laissez-faire leadership (0.406). All variables with Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.60 were considered of high internal consistency, hence good for further analysis (Janssens *et al.*, 2008). Laissez-faire leadership style was removed from the data analysis for low coefficient of reliability (<0.60). Hence, only transformational and transactional leadership styles were used in the paper for further analysis.

### *Data analysis*

Quantitative data from the household survey were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, from where descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Mann Whitney U and Chi-square tests of difference) were performed to compare between leadership styles and divisions in the study area. Qualitative information gathered through key informant interviews, informal discussions, participatory observation, and documents review were analyzed using meaning condensation to supplement and triangulate quantitative information. Meaning condensation consist of extracting, abridging, and abstracting the most important themes emanating from the interview texts.

## **Results**

In this section results are presented on the practices of transformational and transactional leadership in the Mbam & Kim and the Upper Nyong divisions. Constrains to transformational leadership style by community forest leaders are equally reported.

### *Transformational and Transactional leadership styles in community forestry*

#### *Transformational leadership style*

The majority of respondents reported that the four transformational leadership behaviors [Idealized influence (47.2%), Inspirational motivation (44.1%), Intellectual stimulation (46.5%) and Individualized

consideration (48.5%)] were exhibited "not at all" to "once in a while" by CF leaders, while (38.4%), (36.5%), (28.9%), (33%) of the above leadership behaviors respectively were exhibited "fairly often" to "frequently if not always". This shows that leaders in the study area displayed a low level of transformational leadership behaviors. The comparison of transformational leadership behaviors between the two studied divisions revealed that CFs leaders in the Mbam & Kim division displayed more transformational leadership behaviors than those in the Upper-Nyong, except for Inspirational Motivation that was not significantly different between the two divisions ( $P > 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

Subsequent to the above, the majority of respondents (46.6%) indicated that Transformational leadership style was exhibited "not at all" to "once in a while", while only (34%) of them thought this leadership style was exhibited "Fairly often" to "Frequently if not always" in the entire study area (Table 3). Hence a low level of transformation leadership style was exhibited by CF leaders in the study area. There was however a significant difference in the level of exhibition of Transformational leadership style between CF leaders of the case study divisions; with those in the Mbam & Kim division exhibiting higher mean rank scores for almost all the items used to measure transformational leadership style compared to those CF leaders in the Upper-Nyong ( $P < 0.05$ ).

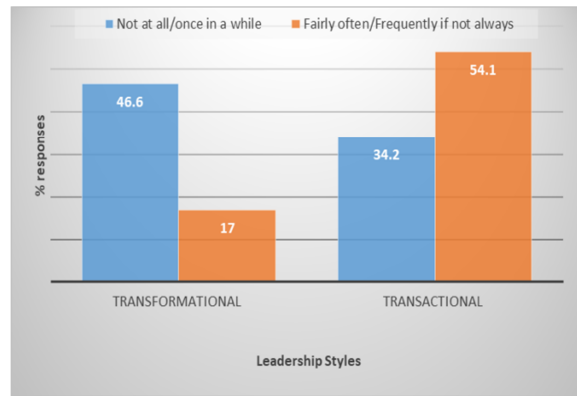
#### *Transactional leadership style*

On average, the majority of community members thought their leaders exhibited Contingent reward (52.2%) and Management-by-exception (55.9%) "Fairly often" to "Frequently if not always". This shows a high level of exhibition of transactional leadership behaviors by CFs leaders, and hence low consideration of community interest in the management of the CF by the leaders. As a result, (54.1%) of respondents reported that their leaders exhibited transactional leadership style "fairly often" to "frequently if not always". The comparison of transactional leadership behaviors between the two divisions of the study shows no significant difference

between their mean rank scores ( $P > 0.05$ ). Consequently, no significant difference was found ( $P > 0.05$ ) in the level of exhibition of transactional leadership style between study divisions (Table 3).

*Comparing transformational and transactional leadership styles*

Generally, both leadership styles were present in the study area at various levels or frequencies. Hence, there was a significant difference in the level of exhibition of these two leadership styles ( $\chi^2 = 34.32$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). A significant majority of respondents (54.1%) reported that their leaders exhibited transactional leadership style “fairly often” to “frequently if not always”, compared to transformational leadership style, for which most respondents (46.6%) thought their leaders did “not at all” to “once in a while” exhibit this form of leadership (Fig. 2). Only (34.2%) of respondents revealed their leaders exhibited transformational leadership style “fairly often” to “frequently if not always”.



**Fig. 2.** Comparison Between Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles.

For effective analysis, the researcher pulled together the two extremes [“not at all” + “once in a while”] and [“fairly often” + “frequently if not always”], leaving out those who said “sometimes” and “missing values” as this could not be attributed to one of the above extremes (see Table 3). Explaining why percentages for transformational leadership and transactional leadership in Fig. 2 do not total to one hundred.

**Table 3.** Leadership Behaviors and Styles in the Upper-Nyong and Mbam & Kim Divisions.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently if not always	Total	Mean Ranks Upper Nyong	Mean Ranks Mbam & Kim	Mann Whitney U P-value
Idealized Influence	(36.4)	(10.8)	(14.4)	(26.5)	(12.0)	(100)	83.91	116.92	0.000***
Inspirational Motivation	(24.5)	(19.6)	(19.4)	(31.6)	(4.9)	(100)	91.90	107.42	0.055
Intellectual Stimulation	(24.8)	(21.7)	(24.6)	(26.7)	(2.2)	(100)	88.73	110.72	0.007***
Individual consideration	(31.2)	(17.3)	(18.5)	(26.2)	(6.7)	(100)	89.95	109.45	0.016**
<i>Transformational Leadership</i>	(29.2)	(17.4)	(19.2)	(27.8)	(6.4)	(100)	87.51	113.13	0.002***
Contingent reward	(5.2)	(11.9)	(30.8)	(47.0)	(5.2)	(100)	92.98	106.29	0.094
Management-by-exception	(4.9)	(12.1)	(27.2)	(45.9)	(10.1)	(100)	95.19	103.98	0.267
<i>Transactional Leadership</i>	(5.0)	(12.0)	(29.0)	(46.5)	(7.6)	(100)	92.99	106.28	0.100

Percentages are in parenthesis Mean rank scores in bold Mann Whitney U test:  $P < 0.05$  \*\*,  $P < 0.01$  \*\*\*

Key informants’ interviews confirmed the above findings that CF leaders in both study divisions were mostly characterized by transactional leadership behaviors. Interviews with members of the bureau of the different CFs pointed out to lack of collaboration between the bureau leaders with other bureau members. In most cases, these bureau members were not allowed to do the job for which they were appointed, because the CF leaders had concentrated

all the power and authority on themselves. For example, treasurers in most of the CFs confessed not to be the ones taking care of CFs’ finances. All the treasurers interviewed revealed to have some receipt books that were given to them when they were selected for the position, but they have never been given any money to handle but are often called only when their signature is needed.

These leaders looked for the potential buyers of forest products, negotiated and handled all financial transactions by themselves. Most of the time they only involve the person in charge of forest operation with which they entertained personal or much closed relationships. In almost all the CFs visited, it was observed that the CF bureau was reduced to the President and the person responsible for forest operations, making other members of the bureau (Deputy President, Secretary, treasurer, auditor) lose interest in CF activities.

Key informants purported that CF leaders were mostly focusing on getting personal benefits from the forest than working for the interest of the community. Village chiefs were always not aware of actions undertaken by CFs leaders which resulted in conflicts between the village traditional authorities and CF leaders. In the same vein, government officers and NGOs' local representatives felt that CFs' leaders

considered the CF resources as their own private business (for example, an officer said 'Some CFs' leaders even affirm they will leave office with their CF, as they were the founders'; ignoring that this CFs belong to the entire community. This was acknowledged by one CF leader, stipulating that: 'It is necessary to exert a bit of dictatorship on village community, because the management of CF is made up of obstacles from within the village'. Although key informants interviewed generally thought that CF leaders in the study mostly exhibited transactional leadership behaviors, some believed however that a few of the leaders displayed some level of transformational leadership behaviors. For example, two government officers and a local NGOs' representatives argued that some leaders were initiators or action takers that could be seen in the difference in the number of CFs' annual exploitation permits and the number of partners that have been exploiting the forest in the different areas.

**Table 4.** Community Forests' Information from Review of Documents.

Items	COBABA	GIC CFB5	GICECOM	CRVC	ADNG	PNNT
Date created	2004	2002	2002	2009	2009	2008
The main activity of the leader	Farmer	Self-employed	Council officer	Farmer/village chief	Civil servant	Retired gendarme
Years as leaders	6 years	8 years	6 years	8 years	11 years	12 years
Leaders' education level	Secondary	College/training	Secondary	Secondary	University	Secondary
Number of leaders since inception	03	03	04	02	01	01
<u>Information in CFs' Constitutions</u>						
Term of office for leaders	3 years	5 years	2 years	3 years renewable	Not specified	Not specified
Criteria for application to the leadership position	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified

*Key constraints to transformational leadership in CFs in Cameroon*

Key informant interviews, document reviews and participant observation of leadership and management revealed constraints included lack or inadequate government support in the process of creation of CFs, lack of training on leadership and management for CFs leaders, lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of leadership, all detailed in the subsequent subsections.

*Lack or inadequate government support in the process of creation of CFs*

Most key informants argued that governmental bureaucracy and conditions for establishing

documents and required permits for CFs to operate constitute one of the major challenges for effective leadership and community development. According to the forest law 1994 (section 37(1)) the government through the services in charge of the forest should support communities for the creation of CFs by providing them with free technical assistance. However, this is not the case on the ground as the community must pay for the service, and the cost of creation or renewal of CF's documents was estimated to be about 5 million FCFA (Cuny, 2011). Though the majority of CFs in the study were created with support from NGOs, who financed the process, the renewal of CFs' documents after NGOs support have been withdrawn is usually challenging.



Community forest leaders have therefore resorted to either (i) paying from their pocket or associate a few members who can provide financial contribution, as the community members are often not willing or do not have the money or (ii) looking for pre-financing from partners (saw millers) who would then exploit their forest when the CF has received the necessary approval documents. In both cases, the leaders who have been instrumental in the starting of CFs activities by finding finances and/or partners will naturally take the lead of the CFs. So, they would have full control to recover all their initial investment and make a personal benefit.

#### *Lack of training on leadership and management for CFs leaders*

Community forest as a social enterprise with the mandate of producing benefit for the community, enhancing the capacity of their leaders to drive this agenda is an important factor of success. From key informants' interviews, it was found that a key constraint to stimulate transformational leadership in CFs leaders is the lack of training and capacity development program on leadership and management. All the community forest leaders interviewed revealed that since the came to office they have never receive any leadership training and management training. They mostly relied on their personal life experiences. A situation which may complicate CFs leaders to be transformational and bring about effective sustainable development outcomes.

#### *Lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of leadership*

The Manual of procedures for the attribution and norms for the management of community forests (Government of Cameroon 2009) taking from article 32(2) of the 1995 forest Decree states that community forests members' are in charge of monitoring and evaluation of their CFs, and denounce possible breaches to the forest administration. However, only one (1) CF had provision for a committee responsible for monitoring and evaluation in its constitution, but even this was not effectively implemented due to lack of capacity. Generally, in all the CFs in the study,

monitoring and evaluation of CF leaders' actions based on set goals were not done. Leaving the leaders free of any check and balance necessary for effective and transformational leadership. In addition, the researchers noted that most community members had attended either primary school, 101 (49.5%) or secondary school 77 (37.7%), further demonstrating the low level of education that could limit their action. Hence necessitating specific M&E training for the local community to understand and know what is expected of them and of their leaders.

### **Discussions**

#### *Transformational and Transactional leadership styles in CFs*

The above results suggest that both transformational and transactional leadership styles were exhibited by CFs leaders, albeit at different levels. With specific regards to transformational leadership style, only 34.2% of community forest members viewed their leaders as having such attributes. The level of exhibition of transformational leadership style differed significantly between leaders of the two divisions: with those of the Mbam & Kim division exhibiting transformational leadership style more often than leaders in the Upper-Nyong ( $P=0.002$ ). This result could be because leaders in the Mbam & Kim were more educated (Table 4), hence could better articulate their vision and follow up on them than leaders in the upper-Nyong. In addition, leaders in the Mbam & Kim held, and some still hold (during the fieldwork) positions in the public service which gave them the advantage of proximity with public officers in charge of community forestry in the ministry, especially for the acquisition of CF's exploitation permits, and the ability to find partners that could finance the process. This was observed through the number of forest exploitation permits obtained since inception by CFs in the Mbam & Kim as compared to those in the Upper-Nyong (Table 4). This agrees with researchers (Kahsay & Medhin, 2020) who argue that the level of education of CF leaders was an important factor for improvement of leadership quality as it improves leaders perspective and skill.

Moreover, the researcher observed that there was more social realization in CFs in the Mbam & Kim as compared to the Upper-Nyong as a demonstration of some aspects of transformational leadership. External support by NGOs could also be explain the difference in leadership in the two areas, as during the study CFs in the Mbam and Kim were still supported by some NGOs while those in the Upper-Nyong where largely working without external support.

Concerning transactional leadership style, findings revealed a relatively high level of the exhibition (54.1%) among leaders, and no significant difference in the level of exhibition of this leadership style between CFs leaders of both studied divisions. This shows that leaders in both divisions were all mostly focused on exchange relationships with community members, as they cared less for the community but on making personal gains. These findings resonate with Foundjem-Tita *et al.* (2018) who suggest that CF leaders sacrifice community benefit and satisfy their selfish-interest by using their position power and getting followers to perform in leaders' ideal way.

One key factor that could have promoted the high level of transactional leadership in both study divisions was the way these leaders were selected to head the CF organization. Leaders were usually not in power because of the esteem community members had for them based on clear criteria of capacity/qualification and integrity. It was noted from the documents review that all CFs' constitutions did not have clear criteria on who could be a candidate for leadership of a CF's organization (Table 4). Most leaders were selected either through the use of social relations with community members, imposed by the powerful elite or were put in position because they financed the creation of the community forest. Concurring with Foundjem-Tita *et al.* (2018) who argues that community forest leaders were often chosen because of who they are rather than their capacity to manage. This was further demonstrated by CF leaders in the Mbam & Kim who have been in leadership position since the creation of CFs in their villages because they contributed to its creation (Table 4).

According to key informants, it is obvious that a CF financed by its leaders who are the elites in the village will likely have a dictatorial (transactional) style of leadership. Similarly, Oyono and Efoa (2006) indicated that 43% of members of the management committee were self-appointed and elites who initiate and contributed significantly to the creation of the CF often decided among themselves to share the management positions.

Though it was found that leaders in the study area were mostly transactional, they, however, exhibited some level of transformational leadership style. These results confirm the fact that both leadership styles are not mutually exclusive and the level of adoption of a leadership style may depend on the specific situation or condition in the surrounding environment (Bass 1998). This is in line with Bass's opinion that transformational and transactional leadership styles, though conceptually separated dimensions, are simultaneously exhibited in the behavioral repertoire of leaders. Both styles of leadership are complementary rather than competitive, and transformational leadership augment the effects of transactional leadership behaviors (Bass 1998).

An ideal situation of transformational leadership in PFM is expected to depict the four elements i.e., of Idealized influence, Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation, and Individual consideration for followers. Consequently, the CF members would perform beyond expectation in enhanced forest conservation and community livelihoods. However, this was not the case in the two-study site which depicted dominance of transactional leadership style which is a business-as-usual scenario. These may limit the potential of CFs in Cameroon to sustainably reach its ultimate objectives.

Moreover, findings point out to lack of willingness by CF leaders to empower community members, which is contrary to transformational leadership that seek to elevate followers to reach their highest potential (Bass 1985; Howell & Avolio 1993). This could be justified by the need for the leaders to continue consolidating

their selfish position and keep other bureau members and the community away from key decisions. These results agree with Oyono and Efoa (2006) who found that CF's leaders use their position for personal rent-seeking, the pursuit for power and the desire to break out with the "co-presence" required by environmental representation in rural areas. Similarly, Foundjem-Tita *et al.* (2018) stipulate that the power relations and the institutional environment in community forestry in Cameroon open the way for some leaders to sacrifice community benefits for individual gains. In the same vein, Mvondo (2006) found CFs leaders in Southern Cameroon to transform CFs into their personal forest. De Blas *et al.* (2011) also pointed out the transactional leadership behavior of CF leaders in Cameroon; they argued that rent appropriation and control of forest resources by community forest leaders was the source of systemic conflicts.

#### *Key constraints to transformational leadership in CFs in Cameroon*

According to key informant interviews, document reviews and participant observation, many constraints limit the development of transformational leadership in CF in Cameroon.

Firstly, the inadequate government support in the process of creation or renewal of CFs has been a hurdle that has contributed to positioning the elite with financial capacity or ability to form partnerships with businessmen to take CF leadership, usually for personal gain. The fact that these elites are the main actors in making CFs functional by personally financing or getting money from a partner for the approval process in government offices opens the way for transactional leadership. These leaders would want to first recoup their investment before any benefit can be released to the community.

These same challenges of the long and costly process for approval of CF documents were also noted by Oyono (2004) as helping local elites to capture leadership positions of CF. Furthermore, once self-appointed or co-opted as leaders, this elite establish alliances with town-based logging companies or

partners, to whom they have promised their villages' forests. Then the following transactions are to create alliances with government bureaucrats to have administrative "green light" and the hijacking of management committees for personal gains (*ibid*). This also made Mvondo (2006) see the CF management committee as 'hijacked' to private ends by local and external elites. Furthermore, Foundjem-Tita *et al.* (2018) suggested reduction of procedures and operational costs of obtaining CF official documents and provision of sustainable funding model or starting capital as key measures to improve leadership (Transformational) and management of CF.

Secondly, the lack of training on leadership and management for CFs leaders, to give them the necessary capacity and tools to drive community transformation was also seen as the key challenge to transformational leadership. Barling *et al.* (1996) argue that leadership capacity development have the potential to enhance leaders' leadership qualities or style, and followers rated consideration for the leader as well as performance. Accordingly, Howell and Avolio (1993) in demonstrating the importance of leaders' capacity building state that training and goal-setting intervention is able to change leaders' behaviors in the expected direction. These idea was also corroborated by research (Foundjem-Tita *et al.* 2018) who question the capacity of CF leaders to effectively manage such forests as business that generates profit and still meet their social and environmental objectives.

Thirdly, the lack of an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of CF governance and leadership has denied CF leaders the opportunity of transformational leadership development. Monitoring and control of leadership is important for the leaders themselves as absolute power can corrupt a good or transformational leader. Evans *et al.* (2019) found that participatory monitoring of governance provides a mechanism to identify obstacles to community governance by creating a space for community members to evaluate local governance, identify issues and develop adequate solutions.

If CFs' leaders know that they will be evaluated on specific criteria, they will take appropriate action to provide the quality of leadership (transformational style) that will allow them to achieve maximum benefit and satisfaction for the entire community.

### Conclusions

This study has attempted to document the first empirical evidence on leadership status in community forestry in Cameroon. Findings suggest that although transformational leadership style is recognized as that with high potential for sustainable results, CFs' leaders in Cameroon are more of transactional leaders with special emphases on selfish gain for the leaders. This is regrettable because such transactional leadership would not be able to induce effective economic benefits for the community and forest conservations, thus delaying the realization of the PFM goals.

When comparing leadership styles across the two divisions studied, no significant difference was found in the level of exhibition of transactional leadership style. However, it was found that leaders in the Mbam and Kim division exhibited transformational leadership style more often than their counterparts in the Upper Nyong. The variance in education level between leaders in the two divisions was identified as the major likely factor for the difference. The community forests are faced with constraints for transformational leadership, including inadequate government support, lack of training, and lack of effective leadership monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Based on the above, if the current status of business-as-usual that promotes high dominance of transactional leadership style in community forestry in Cameroon is not addressed through transformational leadership development, the sustainability objective of PFM in the country is unlikely to be achieved.

### Recommendations

On the basis of the above research findings and implications, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government of Cameroon should make a deliberate effort to effectively implement the

provisions of law by providing the necessary support to communities for the creation and/or renewal of their CFs documents.

2. The Government of Cameroon and NGOs should provide training and/or coaching for leaders and the entire community forest committee to embolden transformational leadership and management.
3. The government and NGOs should train the community on participatory monitoring and evaluation of CF governance and leadership and capacitate them to produce regular reports by collating all information based on the agreed annual work plans and performance indicators.
4. The Cameroon government should institutionalize transformational leadership style in policy frameworks from top to bottom. The strategy should involve training top-level leaders at government ministries and services so that they promote and become role models for effective transformational leadership behavior in community forestry.

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