



**NES**

**NATIONAL  
ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY**

# **LEARNING FROM NES CAMEROON**

**GOOD PRACTICES FROM A  
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM**

**INTERNATIONAL  
LAND  
COALITION**





# NES

NATIONAL  
ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY

## SUMMARY

**NES Cameroon** has a **structure that guarantees effective decision-making and task distribution** within the multi-stakeholder platform. It features a NES Secretariat, and three bodies: 1) a National Platform, bringing together all NES stakeholders in the country; 2) a Steering Committee of ten members in charge of political decisions and of budget and action plan approval; 3) a Civil Society Working Group on Land Reform - composed of nine experts selected after a call for applications - which supports the NES Secretariat on technical issues. These bodies hold regular meetings throughout the year. NES stakeholders also get together in **"NES corners"** - ad hoc spaces at the margin of non-NES (but NES-relevant) events.

Since its creation, NES Cameroon has produced two **position papers**, summarising NES stakeholders' position on land governance. The first one was the outcome of the NES inception meeting.

The production of second one was encouraged in 2011 by the NES Secretariat, due to the usefulness of this tool, particularly in discussion and negotiation with the government. This paper showed that numerous stakeholders could speak with a single voice. It brought together the inputs submitted by all the CSOs that responded to a call for documents launched by the NES and validated - in the final combined form - by all contributors. Before this, CSOs would often be in competition with each other - addressing the government with policy proposals of variable nature and standard, proposing conflicting recommendations and submitting documents to different government departments with uncertain outcomes. The production of a unified position paper benefitted CSOs, consolidated the NES and increased the effectiveness of the requests presented to the government.

## NES CAMEROON GOOD PRACTICES TOWARDS MAKING LAND GOVERNANCE MORE PEOPLE-CENTRED

The **ILC's Database of Good Practices** is an initiative that documents and systematises ILC members and partners' experience in promoting people-centred land governance, as defined in the Antigua Declaration of the ILC Assembly of Members.

Further information at <https://www.landcoalition.org/en/explore/our-work/>

The activity of **NES Cameroon** supports people-centred land governance as it contributes to:



### COMMITMENT 1

Respect, protect and strengthen the land rights of women and men living in poverty.



### COMMITMENT 2

Ensure equitable land distribution and public investment that supports small-scale farming systems.



### COMMITMENT 4

Ensure gender justice in relation to land.



### COMMITMENT 5

Respect and protect the inherent land and territorial rights of indigenous peoples.



### COMMITMENT 6

Enable the role of local land users in territorial and ecosystem management.



### COMMITMENT 9

Prevent and remedy land grabbing.



### COMMITMENT 10

Respect and protect the civil and political rights of human rights defenders working on land issues.

## STRATEGIC PARTERS AND CORE DONORS

On behalf of  
**BMZ**  
Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development



**IFAD**  
Investing in rural people

**Irish Aid**  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

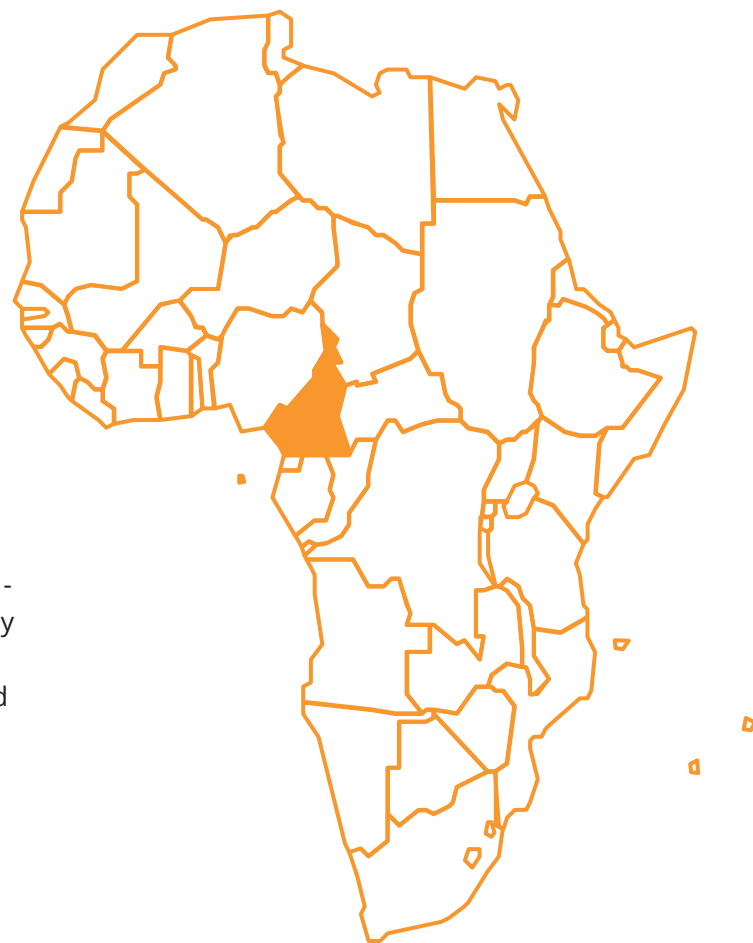


Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra  
Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC





# TIMELINE AND MAIN ACTIVITIES



In order to improve Cameroon's regulatory framework for land tenure - which is largely obsolete and has many loopholes that make it unresponsive to the needs of rural communities and vulnerable groups, such as women and indigenous people - in 2011 the Head of State His Excellency Paul Biya instructed the Ministry of State Property and Land Tenure to lead a land policy reform process. While this is expected to improve on the existing land governance framework, not enough has been done to influence the process in favour of vulnerable groups.

A NES was launched in Cameroon in 2013 with the objective to foster a land policy environment that responds to and protects the land rights and interests of these groups. The NES aims to influence the ongoing policy reform process to ensure that the resulting framework is more responsive to their needs; contributes to the improvement of pro-poor land rights administration; strengthens the capacity of communities to play a frontline role in negotiating,

protecting, and defending their landrights; strengthens the capacities of civil society to ensure good land governance and defend land access and ownership rights of vulnerable communities.

The activity of Cameroon's multi-stakeholder platform begun with a formulation workshop that brought together 60 representatives from CSOs, CBOs and relevant government ministries to discuss the main land governance challenges and identify the actions to be jointly undertaken during the implementation of the NES (read more in the **Cameroon Country Strategy 2013**).

## A CLEAR STRUCTURE FOR THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM GOVERNANCE

Besides the NES Secretariat, managing and representing the multi-stakeholder platform, the implementation of the NES in Cameroon currently relies on three bodies:

### The National Platform

It brings together all stakeholders in the country. The Platform is decentralised and in every region there is a regional hub. Members gather twice a year.

### The Steering Committee

It is composed of representatives from 10 NES members and is in charge of political decisions, providing support on any political issue faced by the multi-stakeholder platform.

It approves the budget and the action plan. Members meet once every three months. Two members of the Steering Committee have a special role, as - together with the NES facilitator - they discuss emerging issues in a smaller group and present them to the rest of the Steering Committee.

### The Civil Society Working Group on Land Reform

It supports the NES Secretariat on any technical issue. It is composed of nine experts selected after a call for proposals out of 16 candidates. The Working Group meets four times a year.

## USING COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY EFFECTIVELY

The NES Platform has produced two position papers on the land reform.

**First position paper** - After the NES inception workshop a paper was written to summarise the position of participants on land issues. This entailed discussion and convergence and showed the capacity of NES members to speak to the government with one single voice. Actors that are currently not part of the NES also contributed.

**Second position paper** - In 2011, NES Cameroon launched a call for documents

to all stakeholders who had submitted policy proposals to the government. The call was disseminated broadly amongst CSOs. Seven proposals were received - some of which were already available on the internet but had never been discussed in a multi-stakeholder framework. The NES Platform organised a workshop to engage with the organisations that had produced them. The Working Group pulled the main points of all seven documents together in advance of the meeting, preparing a first draft of the position paper. In the workshop, participants



were divided into groups to exchange views on specific thematic areas. The workshop was an occasion for CSOs to learn about each other's activities and achievements. It was not possible to reach an agreement on a final draft of the position paper during this gathering so the draft was made available online and participants were given the possibility to comment on it and propose amendments electronically. They were alerted and reminded of this with emails and text messages. At the end - after modifying the document several times - the Steering Committee validated it. The logos of all contributing stakeholders were included on the front page.

**Methodology and usefulness** - Because it relied on a bottom-up approach, the second paper was particularly useful to gather and explain the positions and propositions of a number of stakeholders with regards to land governance. For instance, there was space to describe the concept of people-centred land governance; to explain the importance for communities of mapping territories and resources; to outline the steps of the process used for the preparation of the position paper itself. Instead of being in competition with each other, CSOs - not used to working together - saw their interests and proposals converge thanks to the NES and they began to cooperate.

## ● "NES CORNERS"

**Setting up NES corner in non-NES events** - Every meeting called by any of the NES stakeholders can become an opportunity for discussion amongst NES members. "NES corners" are dedicated spaces for discussing specific issues that are relevant to the NES in delimited time slots of about 30 minutes. This way all NES members that are present at each event can exchange views and align their positions.



# CHALLENGES

**Dispersed efforts leading to uncertain outcomes in CS/government interactions** - Interactions between individual CSOs and the government used to often be inconclusive due to multiple claims of diverse nature and quality received over time by different government departments. Dispersed efforts led to uncertain outcomes. Bringing together through the NES Platform the stakeholders that had submitted policy proposals on land issues to the government indeed introduced a significant change in the dialogue between civil society and government, as all claims were gathered, justified and presented through one single document.

**High production costs for a position paper** - The Steering Committee was initially sceptical about the preparation of a position paper due to financial reasons. Producing a position paper, which entails bringing together different stakeholders, as well as a potentially long discussion and validation process, can be costly. They also doubted that it would be possible to come to a final agreement. The Working Group was the organ that advocated strongly in favour the position paper production. Eventually, the position paper did not only benefit the civil society that increased the effectiveness of its requests, but also the government, which stopped receiving a large number of different proposals to revise. The government showed great appreciation for this initiative.

# LESSONS LEARNED

## ● ENSURING INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION

**Finding a common ground and coordinating dispersed actions** - One of the success factors of the NES in Cameroon was it being a joint initiative. In Cameroon the NES allowed to bring together the points of view of multiple actors that had common objectives

but used to work in a non-coordinated manner. Gathering and coordinating positions and actions through a multi-stakeholder platform was key to improve the outcomes of civil society/ government interactions.



## ● ACHIEVING LONG-TERM LEGITIMACY FOR THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM

### Becoming a trusted interlocutor for the government

In Cameroon the government significantly appreciated having all civil society requests merged into one single document - the 2011 position paper - coming from the NES Platform.

This allowed the government to better grasp the nature and reasons of the claims and to avoid revising a higher number of policy proposals coming from multiple sides.

## ● NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATIONAL POLICY AUTHORITIES TO INFLUENCE CHANGE TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTERED LAND GOVERNANCE

### Good knowledge of the dynamics of interaction with the government

It is crucial to identify strategies for effective interaction with government officials. For example, when NES Cameroon wishes to invite a Minister to an event, the facilitator sends four letters - one to the Minister himself, one to the Ambassador of Cameroon in a different country, who will mobilise to understand who invited the Minister, one to the Prime Minister and one to the President of the Republic. This increases the chances of having the desired Minister at the event as he will receive inputs from multiple sides to investigate the nature of the event - which at this point has raised several influential actors' attention - and attend in order not to disappoint the other recipients.

Inviting guest speakers is also useful. If there is an important name in the programme of an event - for instance giving an inaugural lecture - people will attend because to be seen at the event and not to disappoint this famous person.







## WHAT IS NES?

In recent years, equitable access to land, particularly in rural areas, has been high on the international policy agenda and is recognised as a crucial element attributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Innovative and progressive land policies and laws, particularly at the national level, are key to determining equitable access to, use of, and control over land and other natural resources. The National Engagement Strategy (NES) is the first step of an approach being promoted by the International Land Coalition at country level, in order to create conditions for inclusive and people-centred land-related policy change. Jointly formulated and co-owned by ILC members and other relevant actors at national level, the NES itself is a framework for identifying key priority areas on which land-concerned actors see opportunities for catalysing change, either at the level of policy formulation or at the level of implementing existing progressive policies. The NES process also involves the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform that accompanies

the implementation of the NES, and makes necessary adjustments on the basis of lessons learned. A NES process is therefore aimed at facilitating collaborative and coordinated action amongst different stakeholders involved with land at the national level to promote people-centred land governance. Through these NES processes, opportunities are increasingly made available to national civil society actors to collaborate among themselves and with international actors, both governmental and non-governmental, and to engage with local and national governments.

Currently, NES exist in **Africa** (Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda), **Asia** (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, The Philippines) **Europe** (Albania) and **Latin America** (Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru).

NES are under formulation in Honduras, Jordan, Moldova, Mongolia.

This paper is based on the information shared during the NES Global Learning Workshop held in Tirana in October 2016; an interview with the facilitator of **NES Cameroon** Joseph Zebaze.

**For more information:**  
NES Cameroon Secretariat,  
email: [nes\\_cameroon@landcoalition.info](mailto:nes_cameroon@landcoalition.info)

It is produced in the framework of a collaboration between ILC and Collaborating for Resilience (CoRE) <http://coresilience.org/>

**Last update:** January 27, 2020.



## **INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION**

Secretariat at IFAD Via Paolo di Dono, 44, 00142 Rome, Italy

☎ +39 06 5459 2445 📠 +39 06 5459 3445 ✉ [info@landcoalition.org](mailto:info@landcoalition.org)

🌐 [www.landcoalition.org](http://www.landcoalition.org)