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Community capacity for social enterprise development: Empirical evidence from community forest enterprises (CFEs) in Cameroon

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Highlights

- Community forest enterprises (CFEs) are considered to be important in terms of local development
- Community capacity at individual, organizational (CFEs), and networks levels are explored
- Communities in Cameroon show low capacity on different levels
- Individual capacities and networking capacity should be prioritized

Abstract:
With increasing forest devolution globally, community forest enterprises (CFEs) are emerging as potential options for local development. CFEs trade to meet their economic, social, and environmental goals; however, empirical studies have highlighted capacity deficiencies as key drawbacks to their development. Knowledge of what these capacity gaps are is fragmented. This paper, therefore, focuses on exploring systematically existing capacity and deficiencies in capacity, and the relation between the two among CFEs. Using the contextualized organizational capacity theory in combination with asset-based community development theory, data was gathered from 31 CFEs in Cameroon, based on focus group discussions. Principal component analysis, descriptive statistics were used to evaluate community capacity at individual, organizational (CFE), and networks level, and Pearson correlation tests were used to explore the relationships between different domains of community capacity. The results indicate that community members and development practitioners both agree that communities are weak in partnerships, and networks, resource mobilization. Meanwhile, community evaluation highlights major capacity gaps in infrastructure, skills and knowledge of members, and sense of community. This confirms that capacity gaps were higher at the individual and social networks level, except for the sense of community and resource mobilization, organizational capacity had better scores. Although individual capacities of members are low, they correlate strongly with organizational capacity, thus the potential of the CFEs within the communities to meet objectives depends a lot on individual capacities and networking capacity, thus these should be prioritized in community capacity development efforts. Community capacity development should be a process involving a network of multiple stakeholders with high policy support and community participation.

Keywords: Organisational capacity, partnerships, and networking, sustainable development,

1. Introduction

The last three decades have been characterized by a paradym shift in forest management from a centralized government management to devolution of management rights to local communities in a bid to increase local participation in forest management (Shackletonand Campbell, 2001). Over time, more than 15% of tropical forests have been allocated to community management and are a source of livelihood to more than 1.2 billion people (FAO and UNEP, 2020; RRI, 2014; Agrawal et al. 2008). To ensure livelihood improvement through the devolved access and management rights to rural communities, community-based development approaches that promote social change, address the needs of the poor and establish economic resilience have emerged over the past decade (Chaskin, 2001, Minang et al., 2019). These community-based approaches for local development equally used business

approaches in generating profits for community development. These approaches coincide with a growing number of enterprises with a principal social mission that emerged at different scales globally (Eversole et al., 2013; Antinori and Bray, 2005; Foundjem-Tita et al., 2018). These approaches have led to the widespread proliferation of community forest enterprises (CFEs), defined as "*an entity that undertakes commercial business based on forests or trees. A credible representative body oversees it. The enterprise can claim legitimacy within a self-defining community in terms of people and area, and it generates and redistributes profits within that community"* (Macqueen, 2008, p3). These CFEs have been promoted because they create employment, wages, capital accumulation, profit sharing, investments in public goods, and enhance sustainable forest management (Donovan et al. 2006).

However, the ability of these CFEs to generate profits for social development has been questioned over the past decade (Counsell et al. 2007; Lescuyer et al. 2012, Gilmour, 2016; Ojha et al. 2016, Minang et al. 2017). Given that CFEs are rooted in a community, CFEs are often developed based on the available capacities in that community (Hsia, 2021), but these seem to be a major reason for the below-par impact. Community capacity evaluation so far has been done in a fragmented manner with most authors evaluating the business and governance capacities of communities (Foundjem-Tita et al. 2018; Piabuo et al., 2018; Beauchamp and Ingram 2011). Not surprisingly, therefore, a lot of efforts have been made to develop these business management capacities of local communities involved in CFEs (Minang et al., 2019, Macqueen et al 2010). Unfortunately, these efforts have not met desired outcomes because only fragments of the community's capacity were improved. Zurcher et al (2018) underscore that employing a systems approach permits a better understanding of the system and relationship between capacities, thus greater impact. However, studies employing a systems approach in evaluating the community capacity of CFEs are sketchy or non-existent in Cameroon, this paper will therefore fill this gap. The systems approach is preferred because it permits better self-organization (Ostrom, 2009), more effective and efficient use of natural, social, and economic assets, the development of synergies to take on emerging challenges (Vachon et al., 2001), and the development of social networks necessary for a CFE to function and achieve development objectives (Beckley et al., 2008; Ojha et al., 2016). Chaskin (1999) equally emphasizes that the employment of a systems approach has the advantage that it also considers other elements of the community such as infrastructure and social capital, thus the need for community capacity building. Contrary to existing studies that dwelled on practitioners perceptions of community capacity, this paper captures community capacity from the perpective of practitioners and communities themselves to paint a clear image of community capacity in CFEs.

Against this background, this research aims to contribute to the literature exploring community capacity development in CFEs. In contrast to much of the community development literature, which focus either on economic outcomes in terms of quantitative indicators (including employment rate and income) to determine "success" (see e.g. (Beckley & Burkosky,1999; Beesley & Russwurm, 1989; Reimer, 2000; Schatan, 1990) or focus on social aspects enhancing positive social gains (including education attainment, community activeness, and community satisfaction) (see e.g. Brown, 1993; Goudy, 1990), we follow Beckley et al. (2008) in their view that community capacity encompasses a range of assets and outcomes. These need to be evaluated to understand how communities, in a certain context, can effectively mobilize the resources available to meet the ongoing challenges.

For the evaluation, we will make use of a systems approach. The reason for taking such an approach is that community capacity (1) is more than the collection of individual capacities,

(2) should be considered as the outcome of ongoing and multiple non-linear interactions between systems within a community and (3) is responsive to its external environment. This is in sharp contrast to traditional and reductionistic approaches to community capacity and provides the advantage that it can capture the complexity of a community dealing with certain situations (Amadei, 2020). Thus, this paper seeks to answer the following research questions;

- What are the existing areas of capacities and deficiencies within CFEs in Cameroon?
- What is the relationship between different capacities?

From a theoretical perspective, this evaluation is difficult because, contingencies theories developed by Fiedler (1967), House and Mitchell (1974), Vroom and Yetton (1973) underscore that leadership and management styles should be adapted to the organizational context (Schmid, 2006). Goodman et al. (1998) in an attempt to identify and define dimensions of community capacity underscored that they should be contextualized and appropriate assessment methodologies developed, this paper will therefore contextualize for CFEs in Cameroon. The CFE set-up also encloses specific risks, opportunities, and challenges embedded in their hybrid character which makes community capacity evaluation important but complicated. This paper is relevant from two fronts; (i)empirically, attempts to evaluate community capacity have considered fragmented aspects of community capacity which do not give an overall appraisal of community capacity. This paper fills this gap by using a systems approach, exploring existing capacity and deficiencies at the individual, organization (enterprise), and network level. (ii) Analysis of the relationship between capacities will guide CFE development practitioners to better prioritize community capacity development initiatives.

The research focuses on CFEs in Cameroon because the country has been practicing community forestry for more than 25 years, with a long history of CFE development initiatives (Dryad, 2015; IIED. 2019). This paper also comes on the hills of a special issue that reviews two decades of community forestry in Cameroon, elements of community capacity were highlighted in different papers based on data collected at different dates over the past two decades (Foundjem-Tita et al., 2018; Piabuo et al., 2018). For proper development, empirical investigation of community capacity with recent data covering all aspects of community capacity is thus relevant for CFE development. This paper thus seeks to draw lessons that can further be used to develop the CFE landscape in Cameroon and provide lessons for scaling up in other countries engaged in community forestry and CFE development.

Methodology

To evaluate the community capacity of CFEs in Cameroon, this paper draws from the theoretical framework developed above. Community capacity domains were captured using 10 capacity domains and several capacity items (see appendix 1). An interview guide that captures the different domains using items was developed. Although quantitive methods provide broad knowledge, they do not offer the depth of data on the different aspects of community capacity. Quantitative methods have been used by Aref (2011) to investigate barriers to community capacity development. To benefit from the advantages that qualitative and quantitative research designs offer, this study employs a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative design. Qualitative data collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) were analyzed to bring out community capacity gaps from the different CFEs and quantitative techniques such as

correlation analysis were used to capture the relationship between the different community capacity domains.

1. Results

4.1: Rating of community capacity gaps by development practitioners

To understand development practitioners' perception about capacity domains for which communities have the highest gaps, they were asked to rank capacity domains based on development practitioners' perceptions of domains they think communities have low capacity, which if enhanced will improve socio-economic and environmental development of CFEs. The relative importance index and the rankings of community capacity by development practitioners are presented in table 4. Resource mobilization capacity (0.910) is ranked 1st; thus, development practitioners perceive that communities seriously lack this capacity. This capacity domain captures the ability of communities to generate revenue from resources in their communities through trade. The ability of communities to create and maintain partnerships and social networks for enterprise development was ranked as the second community capacity domain with significant gaps, this is because their ability to partner with both public, private sector firms, and civil society organizations determine the type of support they receive and thus their growth. These two findings also correlate with the findings of Duguma et al (2018) who ranked benefit generation and partnerships as the first and second most important enablers of community forest success.

Table 4: Expert ranking of community capacity domains

Community capacity domains	**Relative importance index**	**Rank**
Resource mobilization capacity	0.911	1
Partnerships and social networks	0.819	2
Shared vision	0.778	3
Participation	0.736	4
Leadership	0.708	5
Financial management	0.681	6
Skills and knowledge	0.653	7
Sense of community	0.625	8
Natural resource availability	0.625	8
Infrastructure	0.542	9

The shared vision was classified as the third domain where communities are lacking behind, an immediate outcome of this incoherence is low participation, which is ranked fourth. This, therefore, underscores the fact that aligning CFE vision to community interests is key in enhancing participation. Proper leadership is required to have this in place, development practitioners think the leadership of

most communities is not appropriate and needs proper support. Financial management capacity, skills, knowledge of community members, and natural resource availability were classified sixth, seventh, and eighth positions respectively. Development practitioners think the community capacity gap for a sense of community and infrastructure is not high and thus is ranked eighth and ninth respectively. To adequately gauge how true these expert perceptions are, communities used the same items and domains to score their capacity. In the following section, empirical evidence of community capacity evaluation by communities is presented.

4.2 Community evaluation of community capacity

Table 4 gives an overview of the different domains of community capacity. Results show that the factor loadings for all items are greater than 0.7. Scale percentage of variance above 70% and KMO and Bartlett's test values are all above 0.7, thus the items adequately explain the domains and thus are adequate for factor analysis. The mean (+-SD) values show the scores for the different capacity domains, they reflect the mean for all items in each domain, they equally indicate the empirical situation of CFEs for each domain (Appendix 1 shows details for items). The results suggest that CFEs score higher on the organizational capacity for the six domains except for the sense of community for which they recorded a mean score of 2.84. However, scores for community asset mobilization are generally low except for natural resource availability.

Table 4: Results community capacity

Domain	**Mean scale (+-SD)**	**item factor loading**	**scale % of the variance**	**KMO and Bartlett's test**
Organizational capacity				
Sense of community	2.84(1.34)	0.7-.942	73.58	0.74
Shared vision	4.29(1.15)	0.84	70.56	0.71
Participation	4.07(1.21)	.75-.88	70.467	0.85
Resource mobilization	2.51(1.34)	0.852	72.52	0.80
Natural resource availability	4.08(1.16)	.74-.90	63.42	0.792
Human capital (individual capacity of members)				
Skills and knowledge	1.58(1.18)	.76-.82	80.425	0.82
Financial management	3.19(1.59)	.72-.90	76.73	0.72
Leadership	3.94(1.29)	.74-.849	78.157	0.87
social networks				
Infrastructure	1.38(.722)	.786-.948	78.98	0.86
Partnerships and social networks	1.33(.55)	.75-.94	75.73	0.89

4.2.1 Organizational capacity

Community perception of organizational capacity is captured by several key indicators; a sense of community reflects the transparency of the management team in making the community books readily accessible to members is very low within the communities averaging 1.96, suggesting weaknesses in governance by the leadership. Community engagement in decision making and regularity in holding community meetings come next with average scores of 2.9 and 3.64 respectively. Having a shared vision is captured through CFE's capacity to pass their dream and mission to community members and have their buy-in. In most cases, community members showed prove of a good understanding of the vision of the enterprise. This is reflected by the high scores of 4.22 and 4.3 respectively attributed to the presence of clear rules and regulations coupled with a clear organizational chart.

The capacity of community members to participate in community activities had an average score of 4.07. Communities rated their participation in the election of the management team at 4.16 and rated the participation of women, youths, and minority groups in the leadership at 3.5 on a scale of 5, and community participation in decision making scored 4.48. The average score for resource mobilization in this sample is 2.51, in most cases, communities have spent years without any activity due to their incapacity to negotiate and sub-contract timber exploitation to partners. Only 06 CFEs showed proof of constant sales records and business transactions with a good mastery of partners and funding sources, these CFEs have been in constant activity with income and expenditure statements. The average ratings for the availability of resources that could be developed into products for enterprise development were found to be high 4.08, and most of the NTFPs resources can be exploited sustainably without negative impact on the environment with easy access by women, youths, and minority groups.

4.2.2 Human capital (individual capacity of members)

Communities' rating of leadership averaged 3.94, leaders scored high on demonstrating some level of motivation to lead the group (4.16), a low rating of the leadership team was highlighted for having the right experience to meet targeted production and revenue objectives (3.64), they equally think the reputation of the leadership team is ok (4.03). These highlights that although leaders have the right motivation and reputation to meet community vision, they don't seem to have the required experience to produce goods and services and make profits for community development. Most of these leaders have been engaged in sub-contracting timber but lack the same experience in other community businesses such as self-production and marketing of timber, Non- Timber Forest products, agriculture, or other businesses.

The capacity of CFEs in managing finances requires a clear recording and filing of all transactions, the capacity to keep income and expenditure statements received the lowest score of 2.93. This is because communities do transactions, however, they don't keep records of the transactions such as amount spent, amount generated, and how income was spent, thus making it difficult for management to be accountable. Most of the communities did not have outstanding debts or loans, thus the score of 3.97 however, most of these communities did not have bank accounts with a standard bank, in most cases, they had accounts in micro-finance/cooperatives or did not have an account at all. To adequately generate profits for development from available resources, resource mobilization capacity is critical.

For community members to adequately develop CFEs as SEs, they require a basket of skills and knowledge. Table 4 illustrates that community members have skills in agriculture, however, these skills are for subsistence agriculture, when it comes to large-scale agriculture, community members still require additional training. Communities were especially poor in business management (1.15), marketing (1.29), and financial management(1.06), very few community members have skills on these topics.

4.2.2 Social networking capacity

Mean score for partnerships and social networking is low (1.48), this is reflected through CFE capacity to collaborate with research and educational organizations (1.4), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (1.48), and ministries (1.67). Research and educational institutions and NGOs have been working with communities to help them create the community forest and develop their simple management plans and annual exploitation permits. Other NGOs and partners have gone further to train communities on sustainable forest management practices. Ministries partnered with these communities to enforce the law and other regulations including providing advice to communities. However, most of these partnerships did not enhance the entrepreneurial dimension of these communities. Partnerships with other community forests are often informal for information sharing.

Communities with a mix of different aspects of infrastructure set the basis for community capacity development in other aspects. The average rating for this domain is extremely low, averaging 1.38. This underscores the fact that these communities are in areas where there is a significant infrastructural gap. Most of the schools in these communities lack teachers, didactic materials, or even classrooms, this makes it difficult for students to learn, thus the high rate of rural-urban migration of youths. Most of these villages do not have hospitals, they have clinics with very few equipment, drugs, and health personnel. The road network within these communities is poor, most of them are not motorable during the rainy season.

4.3 Correlation between domains of community capacity

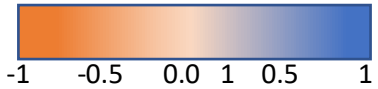
To strategically develop community capacity, it is important to know which community capacity domains can have positive spillover effects on others if developed. The correlation analysis (table 5) shows a strong and positive correlation between skills and knowledge with partnerships, this relationship is statistically significant at a 5% level. The correlation analysis equally shows a positive but weak relationship between financial management and leadership, this is true because community members will trust leaders who keep good records of funds, manage funds for community interest and enhance achievements of the community vision. There is equally a statistically significant relationship between financial management and resource mobilization, this is because when the community keeps clear financial transactions and good management of funds, it is enough to prove to partners to engage with the community for income-generating activities.

The participation of community members also depends on the type of leadership, the correlation table shows a very strong positive correlation between participation and leadership, which is statistically significant at 1% level. Thus, community members participate more when the leader is reputable, elected by community members and when the books are open to all community members. Community members equally participate more when they share the vision of the group, thus the positive correlation between shared vision and participation, this relationship is statistically significant at 1% level. The participation of community members also enhances the management of natural resources, the correlation matrix shows a positive and strong correlation between participation and natural resources, this is statistically significant at a 1% level. When community members participate,

they can better monitor the forest resources to prevent encroachment, work together for sustainable exploitation of resources.

Table 5: Correlation between domains of community capacity

	Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Individual capacity of members(Human capital)	(1) Financial management capacity	1.000									
	(2) strategic leadership capacity	0.363*	1.000								
		(0.045)									
	(3) Skills and knowledge	-0.194	-0.045	1.000							
		(0.295)	(0.811)								
Organizational capacity	(4) Sense of community	0.779*	0.287	-0.076	1.000						
		(0.000)	(0.117)	(0.683)							
	(5) Participation	0.313	0.714*	0.023	0.196	1.000					
		(0.087)	(0.000)	(0.904)	(0.291)						
	(6) Shared vision	0.104	0.582*	0.000	0.066	0.533*	1.000				
		(0.578)	(0.001)	(0.999)	(0.722)	(0.002)					
	(7) Resource mobilization capacity	0.700*	0.452*	-0.207	0.524*	0.372*	0.201	1.000			
		(0.000)	(0.011)	(0.264)	(0.002)	(0.039)	(0.278)				
	(8) Natural resource availability	0.208	0.722*	-0.241	-0.003	0.751*	0.664*	0.399*	1.000		
		(0.261)	(0.000)	(0.192)	(0.988)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.026)			
Social networking capacity	(9) infrastructure capacity	0.023	-0.247	0.161	0.032	-0.249	-0.310	-0.097	-0.294	1.000	
		(0.904)	(0.181)	(0.386)	(0.865)	(0.178)	(0.090)	(0.602)	(0.108)		
	(10) Partnerships and social networking	0.064	-0.003	0.536*	0.083	0.161	0.297	0.023	0.076	-0.179	1.000
		(0.731)	(0.987)	(0.002)	(0.656)	(0.386)	(0.104)	(0.900)	(0.686)	(0.336)	



* p<0.05, parenthesis represent value of p

The leadership of communities and associated enterprises have a significant effect on how people see the community. The correlation analysis shows a strong positive correlation between leadership and shared vision, a good leader should be able to make the vision of the group known and shared by all members. This will enhance community engagement and support for group activities. Leadership equally correlates with resource mobilization, the ability of leaders to seek innovative ways of raising money to meet the social goals of the group is important in ensuring adequate resource mobilization. The leadership of a group equally affects the natural resource, this study shows a positive and strong relationship between leadership and natural resources, this relationship is statistically significant at 1% level. Thus, good leadership enhances sustainable management of the resources by engaging the group in sustainable management practices, ensuring partners respect sustainable forest management and monitoring of forest resources.

There is equally a positive correlation between a sense of community and resource mobilization, when community members share the same vision, with a clear organizational structure, they can better attract investors, donors or organize themselves to undertake income-generating activities. There is equally a positive but weak correlation between resource mobilization and availability of natural resources, this is because resource mobilization from these communities comes from the resources they have in their forest, thus, for communities to continuously mobilize resources, they must sustainably manage their resources. Some communities are taking measures such as tree planting to reconstitute their forest with high timber tree species. The correlation analysis equally underscores a strong correlation between infrastructure and the level of education of community members, communities with many schools, and teachers benefit from educational facilities. There is equally a weak positive and significant relationship between infrastructure and partnerships, this is because these communities are not very accessible, lack basic infrastructure, thus making it difficult for the community to engage with partners and other social networks.

4.4 Discussion

One of the key contributions of this paper is analysis community capacity from the perspective of practioners and community members, a lot of studies so far have dwelled on practitioners perspective of community capacity. Expert opinion of the most important community capacity domains for CFE development ranked resource mobilization capacity, capacity for partnerships and networking, shared vision, participation, and leadership as the first five key capacity domains communities are most lacking in. However, empirical evaluation by communities ranks infrastructure, social networking, skills and knowledge of members, and resource mobilization capacity as capacity domains with the highest gaps. These results underscore the fact that technical support CFEs received so far depends on expert perceptions of community capacity gaps, however, community evaluation of their capacity shows that contrary to expert perception, infrastructure, skills and knowledge of members and sense of community are key capacity domains communities are poor in. Communities and development practitioners both agree that communities need significant support in partnerships and networking and resource mobilization. This finding corroborates with that of Hall et al. (2003) who highlighted that lack of partnerships that develop and attract qualified staff with skills to help organizations meet their mission remains a major challenge for organizations. The low scores for asset mobilization capacity are also related to the low skills and knowledge of community members. Community entrepreneurship capacity depends on individual attributes of community members and the local environment (Stam, 2010; Tamásy, 2006). CFEs initiatives in the USA and Europe are succeeding because they are embedded in communities where

education, years in the labor force, work record, occupation, and industrial sector of employees and community members affect the success (Oliver and Shapiro 1995).

The asset endowment of the community in terms of human resources, physical resources, and social capital are key elements of community capacity that are not well enshrined in CFE literature in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some communities have seen community engagement drop due to community perception of poor management and feeling of being side-lined from management activities. They thus lose the sense of community, and the community forest is seen as the "business" of a group of individuals. In communities without income-generating activities, they hardly hold meetings, while others hold meetings on average one or two times a year. However, the frequency of holding meetings depends more on community activities going on within the community. The low participation of women, youths, and minority groups in leadership can be explained by many factors which can be context-specific or cultural. In the Mbam et Kim division of the Centre region, the low participation of women is greatly affected by their strong tradition which prevents women from having certain community discussions with men. In the littoral and East, women believe community issues are for men, thus poor female empowerment is the major issue. The absence of youths in most communities is due to a lack of community activities, thus they lose interest in community activities and engage more in fast yielding income-generating activities with the community or out of the community.

One of the major challenges identified by Foster (2001) is a community culture that does not favor entrepreneurship, the culture of the community should value innovation and be less skeptical about changes and risk-taking. Distance from markets and services equally emerge as major challenges faced by rural communities, they are very remote with a poor road network. These communities are usually very small and thus cannot attract a significant supply of services such as high-speed internet, industry clusters, and processing companies, thus making communities unattractive for investors. Minang et al (2019) underscore that although community partnerships are generally low, partnerships aimed at enhancing knowledge generation and sharing can catalyze innovation. To unlock innovations and promote local asset mobilization for development by CFEs, Minang et al (2019) proposed inter-CFE and private sector partnerships and collaboration, increased capacity building, capital investment, and incentive mechanisms (financial and non-financial).

One of the key contributions of this paper ociliates around the employment of three levels of analysis, contrary to existing literature that has dwelled on organizational capacity (Foundjem-tita et al., 2018; Duguma et al., 2018). This paper expands the scope of community capacity by looking at the community as a system with individuals, whose capacities are harnessed within an organization for a common good while leveraging on social networks. As outlined above, organizational capacity gaps highlighted in this paper corroborates with existing research, however, this paper adds value by showing that to improve overall community capacity, efforts should be made to improve individual capacity and networking capacity. This is supported by significant relationship between domains of individual capacity such as financial management, leadership capacity and domains of organizational capacity such as sense of community, participation and natural resource availability. Also, partnerships and social networking correlates with skills and knowledge of community members.

Conclusion and policy implications

Over the past two decades, governments, development partners, and NGOs have invested a significant amount of money as part of a descentralisation and local empowerment process of forest dependent communities. However, capacity gaps have been reported in the literature as one of the major setbacks to these descentralisation and empowerment efforts. Contrary to many papers that have reported capacity gaps in fragmented elements, this paper uses a broader systems approach to conceptualise community capacity from three levels; individual, organizational (CFE) and social networks. This permits a better view of community capacity gaps at different levels, it goes further to capture community capacity gaps from development actors and practitioners in CFE development and the communities themselves, which permits a good evaluation of community capacity from different perspectives and paints a better picture of the real situation. This paper is key to civil society organisations, NGOs and individuals active in CFE development because it provides key community capacity domains required for socio-economic and environmental development of CFEs, it also underlines capacity domains where CFEs are particularly weak and identifies community capacity domains which when improved can have positive effects on others.

The results indicates that both development practitioners and communities agree that communities are weak in resource mobilization, partnerships, and networks. However, the community evaluation indicates major community capacity gaps in infrastructure, skills and knowledge of members and sense of community. Communities had better scores in natural resource availability, shared vision, and sense of community. However, the leadership capacity of community leaders was judged by development practitioners and communities to be lacking. This confirms that capacity gaps where higher at the individual and social networks level, except for sense of community and resource mobilization, organizational capacity had better scores.

The implications of this study are multiple folds (i) conceptualization of community capacity should not be limited at the level of the organsiation (CFEs), it should be seen as a system that are interrelated, thus capacity evaluation and development should look at it from a systems perspective. With capacity gaps highlighted at all the different levels, capacity development should be a process that includes multi-stakeholders. For example, infrastructure development, especially roads, hospitals and schools are key activities undertaken by the government, this requires lobbying and networking attimes for some of these to come to communities. As shown on the correlation table, individual capacities have a strong positive correlation with domains of organizational capacity, thus one of the key options in enhancing organizational and community capacity will be to enforce individual capacities as a starting point, then enhance networking and partnerships to enhance skills and knowledge of the community. By doing so, this solves the problem currently prevailing in most communities where only few community members have the right capacities to run community affaires, when they are not around, community initiatives fail. Therefore prioritization of community development efforts by developing individual capacities and leveraging on these capacities to further develop organizational capacity and networking capacities are critical steps in enhancing community capacities in Cameroon. These processes will take some time, desired outcomes will not be achieved after some training sessions, it should be a process supported by public policy, civil societies, international organisations and the communities themselves.

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