

Achieving Climate Governance in Cameroon: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

Climate change poses risks including economic output losses, heightened poverty, food insecurity, and increased vulnerability of communities, which are compounded by institutional weaknesses and policy gaps. The research problem centers on Cameroon's fragmented and insufficient climate governance framework, characterized by weak legal regulations, poor coordination among institutions, inadequate integration of climate concerns into public financial management, and limited resources for climate action. The main objective is to identify key challenges obstructing effective climate governance while exploring prospects and strategies for improvement. The study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing climate policies, legal frameworks, and stakeholder engagements to assess governance dynamics. Major findings reveal institutional capacity deficits, lack of comprehensive regulatory frameworks, fragmented policy implementation, limited climate finance, and coordination challenges across levels of government. The study concludes that despite notable progress in policy development and international commitments, Cameroon's climate governance remains hindered by systemic barriers. It recommends strengthening institutional capacities, enacting binding climate laws, enhancing coordination mechanisms, mainstreaming climate change into public finance and development planning, and mobilizing diversified climate finance to build resilience and promote sustainable development in the face of climate change.

Keywords: climate, governance, climate governance, challenges, prospects

1. Introduction

The effectiveness of strategies implemented to achieve climate governance in Cameroon is a critical area of inquiry given the country's vulnerability to climate change and its significant socio-economic impacts. Cameroon, often described as "Africa in miniature" due to its diverse geography and climate zones, faces increasing challenges such as floods, landslides, and agricultural disruptions that threaten development and livelihoods for over 70% of its population dependent on agriculture. The government has recognized climate change as a key challenge within its National Development Strategy (SND30) and Vision 2035, emphasizing adaptation and mitigation as essential for sustainable and inclusive growth. Despite important steps in establishing institutional frameworks such as the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and sectoral strategies in forestry, agriculture, energy, and waste, Cameroon still grapples with gaps including the absence of comprehensive climate legislation, limited regulatory

enforcement at local levels, and challenges in coordination and financing.

2. Challenges Encounter in Achieving Climate Governance in Cameroon

Cameroon faces significant challenges in climate governance, including weak institutional frameworks, limited private sector involvement in climate financing, and the need for better integration of climate considerations into public financial management.¹ However, there are also prospects for improvement, such as the country's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ongoing efforts to build resilient infrastructure and agriculture, and increasing awareness of the need for climate action.

2.1 Weak Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Despite some progress, Cameroon lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework for integrating climate change into public policies, planning, and budgeting.² There is still a lack of a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework governing climate reforms. Climate considerations are yet to be effectively integrated in the Public Financial Management (PFM) framework, including in fiscal planning and public investment management.³ The government also faces capacity constraints and lacks an effective coordination mechanism; it is yet to operationalize its institutional and governance frameworks to respond to climate challenges.⁴ Cameroon's current legal framework addresses climate change issues only implicitly and in an unstructured manner. Existing laws are insufficient to comprehensively tackle climate challenges, which hinders effective and immediate responses to climate impacts. However, this gap also presents an opportunity to develop new, more coherent, and targeted climate legislation.⁵

Even where laws exist, weak enforcement, corruption, and lack of coordination among government agencies significantly undermine climate governance. There is no effective institutional framework to integrate climate change into public financial management, planning, or investment decisions, leading to duplication of efforts and poor resource allocation.⁶ The effectiveness of climate governance in Cameroon is undermined by weak institutional capacity, fragmented responsibilities among government agencies, and limited coordination between local and national levels.

2.2 Limited Private Sector Participation

The private sector's contribution to climate financing remains low, with public funds and international sources dominating. Achieving climate governance will not be possible without private sector involvement. Going forward, mobilization of private sector financing will be key to address climate related challenges. Climate Policy Initiative estimates that in 2019-20, private financing only accounted for about 2.6 percent of total mobilized climate financing.⁷ Therefore, participation of the private sector poses a significant challenge to implementing climate policies in Cameroon. Moreover, partnerships with businesses and industry associations can promote sustainable practices, technological innovation, and investment in low-carbon solutions⁸. There is a need for a dynamic and competitive private sector to achieve long-term economic growth and support the country's climate agenda. However, private sector's involvement in climate considerations has so far been limited.⁹

Among other obstacles, private sector has been constrained by weaknesses in the national Public - Private - Partnerships (PPP) framework. Although the legal framework for PPPs has been in place for over a decade, management of PPPs varies among sectors, with some line ministries and agencies conducting PPPs autonomously without involvement of national PPP structures.¹⁰ Sectoral governance issues, such as in the

¹ MINPT, (2020). Presentation du reseau routier Camerounais au 30 Juillet 2020. <https://www.mintp.cm/fr/projets-realisation/presentation-du-reseau-routier> (Accessed on 15/6/2025)

² African Development Bank Group, (2023). Rapport Pays 2023 - Cameroun - Mobiliser les financements du secteur prive en faveur du climat et de la croissance verte. African Development Bank Group. <https://www.afdb.org/> (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

³ Beck, H., Zimmermann, N., McVicar, T. et al., (2018). Present and future Koppen-Geiger climate classification maps at 1-km resolution. *Scientific Data*, 5, pp. 18-34, 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bottom-up climate. https://cdkn.org/sites/default/files/files/Cameroon_Booklet_WEB.1-1.pdf (Accessed on the 18/6/2025)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ AfDB (2023).

⁸ Agence Française de Developpement. Cameroon. <https://www.afd.fr/en/page-region-pays/cameroon> (accessed: 11/6/2025)

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ UNDRR and CIMA (2019). Cameroon Disaster Risk Profile. And MINTP (2020).

energy sector and ports, may send negative signals to prospective investors. Therefore, a comprehensive review of the PPP framework and its implementation, including funding for the Support Council for the Realization of Partnership Contracts, the PPP unit, would support the development of climate-smart infrastructure projects.¹ It will be critical to ensure a uniform and efficient implementation based on the capacity and convening power of the national PPP structure, line ministries, and agencies, as well as developing a PPP pipeline based on sector assessments, to create a roadmap for mobilizing private financing.²

2.3 Corruption

Corruption undermines the enforcement and implementation of climate laws and policies in Cameroon. Legal frameworks are weakened by abuse of power and lack of transparency, which lead to mismanagement of climate funds and ineffective regulatory oversight. Corruption erodes public trust and deters stakeholder participation, further weakening climate governance. The absence of strong anti-corruption measures within climate legislation and enforcement mechanisms contributes to this challenge.³

2.4 Inadequate Integration of Climate into Public Financial Management

Climate change considerations are not adequately integrated into public investment management and project cycles. From a legal standpoint, Cameroon lacks a regulatory framework that requires the integration of climate change considerations into its PFM system. Climate risks are not incorporated into fiscal planning,⁴ budgeting, or public investment management. Laws do not mandate the classification or monitoring of climate-related expenditures, nor do they require climate risk assessments in project selection or procurement processes.⁵ This legal gap prevents effective prioritization and tracking of climate finance, limiting transparency and accountability in public spending on climate actions.⁶

2.5 Deforestation

Rapid deforestation hinders Cameroon's ability to achieve its mitigation goals. Rapid deforestation hampers Cameroon's ability to achieve its mitigation objectives. Cameroon has large areas of rainforests of the Congo Basin, the second largest rainforest in the world. It covers about 40 percent of its territory, but unfortunately is subject to considerable deforestation problems related to logging and farming, ineffective forest management, climate change, and growing population. Despite the authorities' conservation efforts, annual rate of deforestation is around 0.6 percent and exceed the rate of reforestation of only 0.1 percent.⁷ Given the role of the rainforest in mitigating the climate change, protecting the rainforest and reforestation policies can play a crucial role in addressing climate challenges. Forest conservation and sustainable forest management are also components of Cameroon's NDC. Further strengthening forestry governance and law enforcement against illegal logging would support the policies to reduce deforestation. Promoting ecotourism would also make the rainforest more valuable and be part of the conservation strategy.⁸

2.6 Climate Risks

Intensifying climate risks, including rising temperatures, increased extreme weather events, and their impact on livelihoods, food security, and displacement, pose significant challenges. Climate change is an imminent threat to the people and the economy of Cameroon⁹. It is expected to result in significant output losses, exacerbate

¹ *Ibid.*

² Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung. Cameroon. <https://www.bmz.de/en/countries/cameroon> (accessed: 11/6/2025)

³ Bottom-up climate legislation in Cameroon. https://legalresponse.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Cameroon_Booklet.pdf (Accessed on 22/6/2025)

⁴ Climate Change in Cameroon: Key Challenges and Reform... <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2024/052/article-A003-en.xml> (Accessed on 18/6/25)

⁵ Cameroon climate laws and policies. <https://climate-laws.org/geographies/cameroon> (Accessed on 18/6/2026)

⁶ climate change in Cameroon - IMF eLibrary. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/journals/002/2024/052/article-A003-en.pdf> (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

⁷ NDC 2021, FAO 2020.

⁸ Trisos, C. H., Adelekan, I. O., et al., (2022). *Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, p. 123.

⁹ *Ibid.*

poverty and inequality, food insecurity and conflict risk, leading to increased population displacement.¹ Climate-related losses in output would impede export capacity, and may increase imports either to cope with food, sanitation and health needs during crises or to invest in rebuilding after crises. Therefore, climate change will also increase balance of payments needs and require fiscal space. Social and economic impact would affect human capital accumulation, jeopardize development, and hinder inclusive growth.²

Cameroon is ranked 16th most vulnerable to impacts of climate change globally. Climate hazards are getting more severe in Cameroon. Temperatures are getting progressively warmer, with the temperature increase especially pronounced in recent years, and this trend is projected to continue. While precipitation projections are less certain, models predict an increase in the number of heavy precipitation days.³ Extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, are increasingly reported-with the number of recorded events doubling in the past three decades.⁴ These changes have a significant impact on the society and the economy, causing both immediate damages and long-term output losses. Climate change is projected to cause a GDP loss between 4 to 10 percent by 2050, with larger output losses in the most pessimistic scenario and if no adaptation action is taken- according to the World Bank CCDR.⁵

While some areas are less vulnerable to climate risks, all regions face their specific challenges, and failing to address them may lead to spillovers to other regions and the economy as a whole. Northern regions in the desert and semi-arid areas are most vulnerable to climate change and exposed to droughts and desertification. Historically, between 20 and 50 percent of the Extreme North's population has been affected by droughts.⁶ Central and coastal regions experience heavy rainfalls and floods, which often take lives and damage vital infrastructure. The sea-level rise damages Cameroon's coastline and will continue causing coastal erosion. South Cameroon is the least affected by climate events, but deforestation and mining activities undermine conservation efforts of the second largest carbon sink of the world, the Congo Basin.⁷

2.7 Low Adaptation and Mitigation Efforts

World Bank Climate Change and Development Report (CCDR) estimates that Cameroon will incur GDP loss ranging from 4 to 10 percent in the most pessimistic scenario by 2050 due to climate change if no adaptation action is taken.⁸ Cameroon is vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, in particular, through its impact on human capital and economic sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure.⁹ Being a hydrocarbon producer and exporter, the country should also advance its mitigation efforts and reforms to further energy transition, as the global low carbon transition could lead to spillovers risks, including to the country's financial stability.

2.8 Mobilizing Climate Finance Is a Serious Challenge for the Authorities

In the near term, the main source of climate-related financing will likely remain donor financing. Going forward, Cameroon needs to develop its capital markets to harvest the potential private funding for climate investments and engage the private sector in supporting its climate agenda.

¹ Tomalka, J., Lange, S., Gleixner, S., Gornott, C., (2022). *Climate Risk Profile: Cameroon* (Climate Risk Profiles for Sub-Saharan Africa), Potsdam: A joint publication by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the KfW Development Bank, p.12.

² *Ibid.*

³ Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2022, Climate Risk Profile: Cameroon.

⁴ IDMC (Internal displacement monitoring center). Cameroon | IDMC - Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (internal-displacement.org); EM-DAT.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Pathway for Net Zero Policies: Aligning Nationally Determined... http://www.globalscientificjournal.com/researchpaper/Pathway_for_Net_Zero_Policies_Aligning_Nationally_Determined_Contribution_s_NDCs_for_Holistic_Sustainable_Development_in_Cameroon.pdf (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

⁷ World Bank CCDR, (2022). The results are reported for three Representative Concentration Pathways—RCP2.6, RCP4.5 and RCP8.5, the largest effect being under RCP8.5.

⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), (2022). Cameroon: Humanitarian Dashboard. <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-humanitarian-dashboard-january-march-2023> (Accessed on 17/6/2025)

⁹ World Bank Group, Climate Change Knowledge Portal, (2023). URL: <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>. (Accessed: 17/6/2025)

Mobilizing adequate climate finance remains a serious legal and institutional challenge. Cameroon's NDC¹ estimates adaptation financing needs at over US\$32 billion until 2030, but the lack of a comprehensive legal framework to facilitate access to international climate funds and to regulate domestic climate finance flows hinders mobilization. Weak legal provisions for financial incentives, public-private partnerships, and climate budgeting limit the authorities' ability to attract, manage, and deploy sufficient resources for climate projects. Furthermore, the absence of clear legal mandates for climate finance coordination and accountability complicates effective fund management.²

2.9 Resource Constraints and Dependence on External Funding

First, both central and local governments face resource and technical capacity constraints in implementing adopted plans. Second, there is still no comprehensive regulatory framework that would require to integrate climate change into the government's policy, planning instruments and processes³. Finally, there is a lack of an effective coordination mechanism across arms and levels of government. This leads to duplication of functions and mandates with other agencies, which warrants clearly defining roles and responsibilities across ministries and designing appropriate coordination processes.⁴ Cameroon's climate governance is hindered by limited financial and technical resources at both central and local government levels, which impairs the implementation of climate policies and plans.⁵ The absence of a comprehensive legal framework mandating resource allocation for climate action exacerbates this problem. Without legally binding obligations to allocate sufficient budgetary and technical support, climate initiatives remain underfunded and poorly executed, undermining adaptation and mitigation efforts.⁶

Mobilizing adequate climate finance remains a critical challenge. Cameroon heavily relies on donor funding, with limited domestic capital markets and private sector engagement for climate investments⁷. Weak public-private partnership frameworks and fuel subsidies further complicate mitigation efforts. This financial gap restricts the scaling up of adaptation and mitigation initiatives necessary to meet national and international commitments.⁸

2.10 Governance Challenge at Local and Upon Level

Governance issues such as inadequate urban planning, bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and limited local autonomy increase vulnerability to climate risks like floods and landslides in Cameroon's cities. These challenges reduce resilience and complicate the implementation of climate adaptation strategies at the grassroots level, highlighting the need for decentralization and improved local governance capacity.⁹

Many climate-related policies and programs in Cameroon do not explicitly address climate change or are poorly coordinated across ministries and stakeholders. Interaction between government and NGOs is limited, and public participation is low.¹⁰ This fragmentation, coupled with weak enforcement and communication, undermines the effectiveness of climate governance and adaptation efforts. Inclusive, transparent, and participatory governance is essential to build resilience and ensure equitable climate action.¹¹

¹ Challenges and barriers to implementing cameroon's ndc insights... https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5181225 (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

² *Ibid.*

³ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), (2023). EM-DAT: The Emergency Events Database. <https://www.emdat.be/> (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Bottom-up climate. https://cdkn.org/sites/default/files/files/Cameroon_Booklet_WEB.1-1.pdf (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

⁶ Progress, Challenges and Prospects for Climate Policy in Cameroon <https://camepi.org/agriculture-and-trade/progress-challenges-and-prospects-for-climate-policy-in-cameroon/> (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

⁷ Cameroon Country Climate and Development Report 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-country-climate-and-development-report-2022> (Accessed on 19/6/2024)

⁸ Challenges and barriers to implementing cameroon's ndc insights... https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5181225 (Accessed on 18/4/2025)

⁹ Role of Governance in Implementing Climate Change Adaptation... <https://journaljgeesi.com/index.php/JGEESI/article/view/751> (Accessed on 22/4/2025)

¹⁰ Urban Governance and Climate Resilience in Cameroon. <https://revues.imist.ma/index.php/AJLP-GS/article/view/52589> (Accessed on 22/4/2025)

¹¹ Climate change / Cameroon | Interactive Country Fiches. <https://dicf.unepgrid.ch/cameroon/climate-change> (Accessed on 22/4/2025)

3. Prospects for Climate Governance in Cameroon

Cameroon has made significant progress towards achieving climate governance in Cameroon. These progress stems from the various strategies adopted so far as discussed under the chapter three of this research work. However, below are some of the Prospects for achieving effective climate governance in Cameroon.

3.1 Commitment to Emission Reduction

Cameroon has committed to a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 as part of its updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, this commitment is conditional on the availability of financing, which remains a significant challenge. Legally, Cameroon lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework mandating public institutions to integrate climate change into policy, planning, and budgeting processes¹. Most sectors also lack legislation supporting adaptation and decarbonization goals, which weakens enforcement and accountability mechanisms for emission reductions. Strengthening laws to require climate integration in public policy and establishing clear legal mandates for emission reduction are critical to making hi hi vi this commitment effective.²

3.2 Focus on Adaptation

Cameroon emphasizes enhancing adaptation efforts in agriculture and infrastructure, recognizing their importance for long-term economic health. Adaptation is recognized as a key pillar in Cameroon's climate strategy, with the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2015-2019) and sectoral strategies addressing agriculture, forestry, and water. Legally, the institutional framework is evolving, with the Ministry of Environment and its agencies playing central roles.³ However, there is no overarching law that compels sectors to mainstream adaptation into their policies. The absence of formal mechanisms for consultation and monitoring limits adaptive governance. Legal reforms to institutionalize adaptation planning and ensure cross-sectoral integration, backed by enforceable mandates, would enhance resilience to climate impacts.

3.3 Legal and Institutional Reforms

There is a push for legal and institutional reforms to improve policy coordination, monitoring, and the enabling environment for private sector involvement in climate action⁴. Cameroon took important steps towards building its institutional framework governing climate policies⁵. The key climate change policy documents are the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2015-19, which is accompanied by a costed implementation plan, and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) updated in 2021⁶. Cameroon had signed key international conventions on climate change, has developed strategies in some sectors, e g., in agriculture and water. Several regional and municipal governments adopted local Climate Change Action Plans (CCAP).⁷ The central role in Cameroon's NDC institutional mechanism was given to the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) and its agency, the National Observatory on Climate Change (ONACC).⁸ Cameroon has established a range of national policies aimed at addressing climate change, including the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which highlights the need for integrated approaches to climate governance.

3.4 Territorial Focus

Inclusive climate action requires a territorial focus, considering regional vulnerabilities and building the capacity of regional and local institutions. Cameroon's climate governance recognizes the importance of local and regional actions, with several regional and municipal governments adopting local Climate Change Action Plans (CCAPs). Legally, decentralization is part of the National Development Strategy (SND30), which could empower territorial authorities in climate governance. However, the effectiveness of territorial focus depends on

¹ World Bank Document. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099950111012212064/pdf> (Accessed on 17/6/2026)

² Urban Governance and Climate Resilience in Cameroon. <https://revues.imist.ma/index.php/AJLP-GS/article/view/52589> (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

³ Climate Change in Cameroon: Key Challenges and Reform... <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2024/052/article-A003-en.xml> (Accessed on 18/6/2025)

⁴ UNICEF, (2021). The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Osano, P., (2022). *Climate change amplifies the risks for violent conflicts in Africa*, p. 89.

⁷ OECD, (2023). Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Statistics Database. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/> (Accessed on 12/6/2025)

⁸ *Ibid.*

clear legal frameworks that define roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation at sub-national levels. Without such legal clarity and capacity building, territorial initiatives risk fragmentation and underperformance. Strengthening laws to support decentralized climate governance and ensuring coordination between national and local levels is essential.¹

3.5 Private Sector Engagement

Mobilizing the private sector is crucial for climate financing, requiring a change in the public-private partnership framework and access to long-term funding. The private sector's role in climate governance in Cameroon is currently marginal, contributing only about 2.6% of climate financing.² Legally, the existing Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework is weak and inconsistently implemented across sectors, limiting private investment in climate projects. Institutional weaknesses and regulatory uncertainties deter private sector participation. To unlock private sector potential, Cameroon needs to strengthen its PPP legal framework, develop financial instruments such as green bonds, and create incentives for private investment in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and climate innovation. Legal reforms should also promote transparency, accountability, and risk mitigation to attract private capital.³

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to achieve climate governance is a critical determinant of a country's ability to respond to the escalating challenges of climate change. While various policies, plans, and institutional frameworks have been established to guide climate action, their success largely depends on robust legal backing, clear coordination mechanisms, adequate resource allocation, and active stakeholder engagement. Effective climate governance requires not only setting ambitious targets but also ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in implementation. The strategies must be adaptable to evolving climate realities and integrated across sectors and governance levels to maximize impact. Ultimately, continuous monitoring, evaluation, and reform of these strategies are essential to bridge gaps between policy intent and practical outcomes, thereby fostering sustainable development and resilience in the face of climate change.

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¹ With Prompt Reforms, Cameroon Can Turn Wealth into a Green and Resilient Future for All — World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/04/with-prompt-reforms-cameroon-can-turn-wealth-into-a-green-and-resilient-future-for-all> (Accessed on 20/6/2025)

² Progress, Challenges and Prospects for Climate Policy in Cameroon. <https://camepi.org/agriculture-and-trade/progress-challenges-and-prospects-for-climate-policy-in-cameroon/> (Accessed on 19/6/2025)

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