

Ensuring Electricity Reliability and Consumer Protection in Cameroon: A Corporate Law and Regulatory Governance Perspective

Dr. Nchofua Anita Nyitioseh¹

¹ PhD in Corporate Law, Lecturer, Department of English Law, University of Bertoua, Bertoua, Cameroon

Correspondence: Dr. Nchofua Anita Nyitioseh, PhD in Corporate Law, Lecturer, Department of English Law, University of Bertoua, Bertoua, Cameroon.

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Abstract

This article examines the critical challenges facing Cameroon's electricity sector, with a particular focus on power reliability and consumer protection from a corporate law and regulatory governance perspective. Cameroon's electricity infrastructure is characterized by frequent power outages, limited generation capacity, and aging facilities, which undermine the sector's ability to meet national energy demands effectively. These structural deficiencies are further compounded by weaknesses in corporate governance, regulatory oversight, and accountability mechanisms within electricity service providers. Through an analysis of the existing legal and regulatory framework governing the electricity sector, including the roles of key institutions such as the Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL), state-owned entities, and private operators, this study identifies governance gaps that contribute to service unreliability and inadequate consumer protection. It argues that the absence of enforceable consumer rights standards and weak corporate accountability leave electricity consumers with limited remedies in cases of prolonged outages, service fluctuations, and unfair billing practices. In this light, adopting an in-depth content analysis based on primary and secondary sources of data collection is imperative to achieve our goal. The article proposes legal and policy reforms grounded in corporate law principles, including enhanced regulatory oversight, increased investment through public-private partnerships, diversification of energy sources with an emphasis on renewables, and the adoption of a comprehensive Consumer Rights Charter for the electricity sector. This will go a long way to contribute to the development of a more reliable, accountable, and consumer-oriented electricity sector capable of supporting sustainable economic growth and improving the quality of life in Cameroon.

Keywords: electricity reliability, consumer protection, corporate governance, regulatory oversight, Cameroon

1. Introduction

The availability of reliable electricity is a cornerstone of socioeconomic development, powering industries, enhancing education, and improving overall quality of life. In Cameroon, however, the electricity sector continues to face significant challenges. Unstable electricity supply, high tariffs especially prepaid, frequent outages, and poor service quality are common issues, which directly impact economic productivity and public well-being.¹ Inconsistent power has been attributed to multiple factors, including insufficient infrastructure, dependence on a limited range of energy sources, and outdated equipment that strains the grid's capacity.²

Cameroon's power generation is largely based on hydroelectricity, making it vulnerable to climate variability.

¹ Amadi, M. (2021). Electricity Infrastructure and Investment in African Nations. *Journal of Energy Policy Studies*, 15(3), 218.

² Ndongmo, B., & Sun, Y. (2021). Cameroon's Electricity Sector: Challenges and Future Prospects. *Journal of African Energy*, 4(2), 55.

Periods of drought, for example, have led to reduced power output, exacerbating supply issues.¹ Despite government reforms, state-owned utility companies continue to struggle with inefficiency and inadequate service provision, which further compounds the issue.² Moreover, the lack of a competitive market in the sector limits incentives for improving operational standards, leaving consumers with limited options and often insufficient recourse when service fails to meet expectations.³

It should be recalled that the electricity sector in Cameroon is governed by a set of laws, including mainly Law N°2011/022 of 14 December 2011 governing the electricity sector in Cameroon which replaces Law N°98/022 of 24 December 1998. This law contains the legal provisions of the electricity sector, from generation (from primary or secondary sources) to the distribution, sale and transport of energy. More specifically, it deals with (i) regulation of water storage and hydroelectricity, (ii) regulation of competition in the electricity sector, (iii) regulation of non-competitive activities, (iv) regulation of environmental protection in the electricity sector, (v) regulation of consumer protection, (vi) regulation of internal electrical installations and electrical equipment, (vii) establishment of a Transmission System Operator (TSO) for electrical energy, and (viii) renewable energy and electrical energy management.⁴

Notwithstanding the comprehensive legal and policy framework, persistent power outages and voltage fluctuations in several parts of the country raise serious questions about the effective implementation of these reliability strategies. The gap between the legal standards prescribed under Law No. 2011/022 and the actual performance of electricity service providers underscores the need for stronger regulatory enforcement and enhanced protection of electricity consumers' rights.⁵

Given these persistent issues, there is an urgent need for reforms that prioritize both reliability and consumer rights. This article seeks to address these challenges by examining legal and policy strategies that can enhance power sector performance and protect consumer interests.

2. The Current Landscape of Cameroon's Electricity Sector

Economic development generally goes hand in hand with increasing energy consumption. Without energy, there can be no industry, no transformation of raw materials, and consequently no modern economy.⁶ Recognizing the strategic importance of electricity, the Cameroon Government passed the Electricity Law in 1998 which established an electricity sector regulator and a rural electrification agency with the objective of attracting private sector participation.⁷ In 2001 the Government privatized the state-owned electric utility SONEL through a 20-year concession to the American power company AES. AES SONEL was granted a monopoly over transmission and distribution and the right to own up to 1,000MW of generation capacity. In 2014, AES sold its stake in AES SONEL to Actis. The company was renamed ENEO. ENEO (formerly known as AES SONEL) has achieved over 500,000 new connections since entering private hands. The concession agreement obligates ENEO to connect new customers and the concessionaire originally met this obligation by focusing on urban and peri-urban areas, to the detriment of rural areas. However, over time specific regional access targets were set. The Government of Cameroon and donors finance grid extension projects and then transfer them to ENEO, thereby extending ENEO's service perimeter. According to the report, around 35 percent of ENEO's one million connections are in rural areas.⁸ Despite these efforts the electricity sector continues to face several challenges one of which is the relatively high tariffs charged by ENEO.

2.1 Overview of the Electricity Supply Chain

Cameroon's electricity sector is structured around a few major entities responsible for generation, transmission, and distribution, with ENEO (Energy of Cameroon) serving as the main utility provider. ENEO, a partially state-owned company, is responsible for much of the electricity generation and distribution, while other agencies

¹ Kariuki, S. (2020). Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks in Sub-Saharan Africa's Electricity Sector. *Energy & Policy Journal*, 17(2), 45.

² Okoye, P. et al. (2018). Corruption and Efficiency in Africa's Electricity Sector. *Journal of Governance and Development*, 5(2), 96-112.

³ Che, N. (2021). Public Awareness and Consumer Rights in Africa's Energy Sectors. *African Journal of Public Policy*, 9(1), 102-118.

⁴ African Development Bank Group. (2018). Country Priority Plan and Diagnostic of the Electricity Sector. <https://www.afdb.org>, accessed on the 16/11/2024, p. 28.

⁵ Teke, D. (2022). Assessing Cameroon's Electricity Law for Consumer Protection. *Law and Society in Africa*, 6(1), 28.

⁶ Kimbi, L. S., Kongeh, V. B. (2024). The Legal and Institutional Appraisal of Renewable Energy as A Means of Diversifying Energy Sources in Cameroon. *International Multilingual Journal of Science and Technology (IMJST)*, 9(4), 7264.

⁷ Evaluation of Rural Electrification Concessions in sub-Saharan Africa Detailed Case Study: Cameroon Report to World Bank December 2015, Prepared by Castalia, a part of the worldwide Castalia Advisory Group, p. i.

⁸ Ibid.

support regulatory oversight.¹ The Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL) was established to oversee tariff structures, monitor service quality, and protect consumer interests, though its powers are often limited by resource constraints.² Additionally, the Electricity Development Corporation (EDC), a state-owned entity, manages the country's main hydroelectric dams, which form the backbone of Cameroon's power generation infrastructure. This structure, however, is burdened by bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of coordination between these agencies, contributing to inconsistent service delivery.³

The sector's heavy reliance on hydroelectric power, which accounts for around 60-70% of total electricity generation, makes it vulnerable to climate-related disruptions, especially during periods of drought. This dependency on hydro sources, coupled with limited diversification into other energy forms, contributes to frequent power outages and underscores the need for a more diversified energy supply chain. Despite recent government efforts to increase investment in renewable energy and attract private investors, the electricity supply chain remains inadequately diversified and poorly funded, resulting in operational challenges (Amadi, 2021).

2.2 Challenges to Reliability

The reliability of electricity in Cameroon is consistently challenged by infrastructural and financial limitations. Much of the grid infrastructure is outdated, with equipment that has not been upgraded to accommodate increasing electricity demand. This outdated equipment not only contributes to frequent outages but also increases the risk of accidents and operational inefficiencies.⁴

The persistent challenges of ensuring reliable electricity supply in Cameroon are starkly illustrated by the prolonged power outage experienced in the West Region, particularly in Dschang, in September 2024. Between 12 and 28 September, the entire community was subjected to a total blackout following the failure of a transformer supplying electricity to the area. This incident revealed serious structural weaknesses in the electricity infrastructure and exposed the significant social and economic consequences of supply unreliability.

As observed by the author, the absence of electricity during this two-week period severely disrupted essential services. Educational activities were particularly affected, as the outage coincided with the back-to-school period. Teachers faced difficulties preparing lesson materials due to the high cost of charging electronic devices up to 500 FCFA for laptops and 200 FCFA or more for mobile phones, often without obtaining a full charge. Students were likewise unable to study effectively or complete assignments because of inadequate lighting. Economic activities were equally impacted. Many small businesses and informal-sector operators rely heavily on electricity for their daily operations. Entrepreneurs, artisans, and professionals without access to alternative energy sources suffered considerable financial losses. Even those with generators were constrained by the high cost and limited availability of fuel. Researchers and academics were also adversely affected, as access to essential facilities such as internet services and printing became extremely difficult.

Notably, the restoration of the transformer did not resolve the underlying reliability concerns. Electricity supply in Dschang remains unstable, with frequent outages often triggered by minor weather conditions such as strong winds. Recurrent voltage fluctuations sometimes resulting in multiple power interruptions within minutes have caused damage to household appliances and professional equipment. These conditions highlight ongoing deficiencies in service quality and raise serious concerns regarding the protection of electricity consumers' rights, particularly with respect to continuity, safety, and quality of supply.

A similar situation was witnessed in 2015 where approximately 2,500 containers destined for countries that rely exclusively on the Douala Seaport were piled up for six weeks due to power failure. With the cost of holding a container at 25000 CFA francs per day, a disruption lasting 20 days would amount to 500,000 CFA francs per container. Such disruption took a heavy toll on the economy, particularly by constraining the manufacturing sector through an increase in the reliance on alternative generating capacity.⁵

These situations underscore the socioeconomic consequences of unreliable electricity supply and the urgent need for improved maintenance and robust infrastructure especially as many towns in Cameroon are experiencing this problem. It also raises critical questions about consumer rights and the responsibilities of electricity providers to

¹ African Development Bank Group. (2018). Op. Cit., P. 28.

² Ndongmo, B., & Sun, Y. (2021). Op. Cit., P. 57.

³ Teke, D. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 37.

⁴ Njomo, A. (2020). Sustainability and the Electricity Grid in Cameroon. *Journal of African Infrastructure*, 13(3), 203-219.

⁵ Egong, M.A. (2020). Aziz, E. M. (2020, January 30). *Key problems and proposed solutions to Cameroon's energy sector*. Nkafu Policy Institute, Denis & Lenora Foretia Foundation, 2. [https://nkafu.org/key-problems-and-proposed-solutions-to-camerouns-energy-sector/\(nkafu.org\)](https://nkafu.org/key-problems-and-proposed-solutions-to-camerouns-energy-sector/(nkafu.org))

mitigate such disruptions and provide equitable compensation for the adverse effects experienced by communities.

Another significant factor affecting reliability is Cameroon's limited generation capacity, which often falls short of demand. The grid's low capacity is exacerbated by environmental factors impacting hydroelectric production, such as reduced water levels during the dry season. This instability is worsened by the country's reliance on an underdeveloped transmission network, which results in high transmission losses and further disrupts service.¹ Financial constraints within the sector also play a role. Despite consumer dissatisfaction and demand for improvements, the financial stability of state-owned entities is tenuous, and they frequently depend on government subsidies and international loans. The lack of sustainable financing solutions means that investments in infrastructure and maintenance are often deferred, worsening power reliability issues.²

From a corporate law standpoint, electricity providers as corporate entities bear obligations under both the sector law and their respective concession agreements to uphold continuity and quality of service, yet breaches often go unremedied due to weak enforcement regimes and limited regulatory sanctions.

2.3 Consumer Rights and Legal Framework

Cameroon's regulatory framework for the electricity sector is primarily shaped by the Electricity Law of 2011.³ This legislation provides the basis for the operation of electricity services and establishes the responsibilities of regulatory bodies like ARSEL.⁴ Law No. 2011/022 affirmatively includes the objective of protecting consumer interests in terms of price, conditions of supply, and safety of services, along with guaranteeing continuity and quality of service. However, the law stops short of establishing an independent consumer rights charter with specific enforceable standards, leaving consumers without clearly defined statutory entitlements for redress.⁵

Corporate law principles such as transparency, accountability, and contractual performance are implicit within the legal framework (e.g., through pricing rules and service obligations) but are not explicitly tied to enforceable consumer rights frameworks. This gap weakens corporate accountability; as corporate entities are not sufficiently compelled under law to internalize consumer protection obligations in their operational governance.⁶

The Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL), constituted under Section 72 of Law No. 2011/022, is tasked with protecting consumers' interests regarding price, supply, and quality of electricity, enforcing compliance with laws, and arbitrating disputes among sector actors. Unfortunately, resource constraints limit ARSEL's regulatory enforcement capacity, undermining effective oversight and leaving consumers without practical recourse mechanisms (Njomo, 2020).

3. Legal and Policy Strategies for Reliable Power Supply

Law No. 2011/022 of 14 December 2011 governing the electricity sector in Cameroon establishes a clear legal and policy framework aimed at ensuring the reliability of electricity supply. At the outset, Section 1(2) of the Law expressly provides that the electricity sector is governed in a manner that guarantees the continuity and quality of electricity services, thereby placing reliability at the core of the regulatory objectives.⁷ This principle is further reinforced under Section 3(2), which defines electricity as a public utility service and outlines its fundamental objectives⁸. These provisions demonstrate that reliability of electricity supply in Cameroon is not merely a policy aspiration but a legally binding requirement imposed on both the State and electricity service providers.

3.1 Improving Regulatory Oversight

Recent policy and institutional developments suggest a renewed governmental commitment to addressing long-standing challenges of reliability, governance, and consumer protection in Cameroon's electricity sector. Notably, in late 2024, the Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL) directed the national distributor, Eneo Cameroon S.A., to standardize electricity tariffs by applying the same regulated rates to both prepaid and

¹ Kariuki, S. (2020). Op. Cit., P. 77.

² Okoye, P. et al. (2018). Op. Cit., P. 107.

³ LAW N° 2011/022 of 14 December 2011 Governing the electricity Sector in Cameroon, Section 1(2), (v).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Teke, D. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 40.

⁶ Che, N. (2021), Op. Cit., P. 110

⁷ Ibid, section1(2).

⁸ LAW N° 2011/022 of 14 December 2011 Governing the electricity Sector in Cameroon, Section 3(2).

postpaid consumers, a measure intended to enhance transparency, equity, and consumer confidence.¹ In parallel, the government adopted a National Energy Compact as a strategic roadmap aimed at improving sector discipline, particularly by ensuring timely payment of electricity bills by public entities through mechanisms such as payroll deductions and direct subsidy offsets. Complementing this initiative is the planned rollout of smart meters in public buildings between 2025 and 2026 under the National Energy Efficiency Programme (PRONAME), with the objective of reducing billing disputes, improving metering accuracy, and curbing commercial losses. Furthermore, the State's decision to renationalize Eneo in late 2025, alongside the implementation of a CFA 400 billion sector recovery plan supported by international partners such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, signals a shift toward stronger public control, infrastructural modernization, and expanded access². However, while these reforms reflect an ambitious regulatory and governance agenda, their practical effectiveness remains uncertain, as most are yet to be fully implemented. Their success will ultimately depend on institutional capacity, regulatory independence, financial discipline, and sustained political commitment, raising important questions about enforcement, accountability, and long-term consumer protection within Cameroon's evolving electricity governance framework.

3.2 Investment in Infrastructure

Improving the reliability of Cameroon's electricity supply chain requires substantial investment in infrastructure. The current infrastructure, marked by outdated equipment and insufficient generation capacity, is ill-equipped to meet the country's growing demand. Modernizing the grid and expanding generation capacity are essential steps toward reducing system losses and enhancing reliability³. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) present a viable solution, where private investors can partner with the government to fund and execute infrastructure projects. By introducing clear regulatory guidelines that encourage private investment, Cameroon can attract foreign investment and technical expertise that contribute to modernizing its grid. For example, structured PPPs in Kenya's energy sector significantly improved grid reliability and reduced financial strain on the government.⁴ Additionally, transparent funding mechanisms are crucial to ensuring that allocated funds are directed toward grid improvements without diversion. Adopting sustainable financing options, such as green bonds and long-term loans specifically aimed at renewable energy projects, could also enable more stable financing to support infrastructure upgrades.⁵

3.3 Promoting Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Articles 63 to 65 of the law governing the electricity sector in Cameroon provides that renewable energy contributes to meeting the energy needs of consumers. It also plays a vital role in environmental protection and in ensuring security of supply. However, despite being provided for under the applicable regulations, renewable energy remains largely underdeveloped and almost nonexistent in Cameroon.⁶ To mitigate this, it is essential to diversify energy sources by promoting renewables like solar, wind, and biomass.⁷ A diversified energy mix also reduces reliance on single-source hydroelectric power and decreases the risk of grid instability caused by environmental factors.⁸ Countries like Ghana have seen improvements in supply reliability through similar energy efficiency initiatives, highlighting the potential benefits for Cameroon's energy sector⁹.

3.4 Addressing Corruption and Inefficiency

Corruption and inefficiencies within Cameroon's power sector are substantial obstacles to reliability. Corrupt practices, such as misallocation of funds, over-billing, inflated procurement costs, and bribery, undermine the effectiveness of investment and reduce public trust in utility companies. To address these issues, instituting strict anti-corruption policies and establishing transparent procurement processes are essential.¹⁰ For instance, clear audit requirements and third-party oversight on large energy contracts can help ensure accountability and prevent

¹ <https://theelectricityhub.com/cameroon-targets-6-5-billion-private-investment-to-power-energy-plan/>

² Ibid.

³ Ndongmo, B., & Sun, Y. (2021). Op. Cit., P. 61.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Amadi, M. (2021). Electricity Infrastructure and Investment in African Nations. *Journal of Energy Policy Studies*, 15(3), 210-225.

⁶ Edith N. O. (2024). Electricity in Cameroon: What is the Way Forward? Denis & Lenora Foretia Foundation, p. 6.

⁷ Zarma, R. (2019). The Case for Renewable Energy in Cameroon. *African Journal of Renewable Energy*, 7(3), 139-153.

⁸ Kariuki. (2020). Op.Cit., P. 50.

⁹ Che, N. (2021), Op. Cit., P. 110.

¹⁰ Miloš, Resimić. (2023). Corruption and anticorruption efforts in Nigeria's electricity sector, U4 Helpdesk Answer, p. 7.

fund diversion.¹ Moreover, fostering a culture of transparency through the publication of financial statements, project timelines, and progress updates can enhance accountability and help deter corrupt practices. Implementing these measures would not only improve reliability but also strengthen public confidence in the sector, paving the way for greater support for infrastructure projects and regulatory reforms. Successful examples from Nigeria's power sector reform show that anti-corruption policies and transparency initiatives can contribute significantly to sectoral efficiency and reliability.²

4. Protecting Consumer Rights in the Electricity Sector

Law No. 2011/022 explicitly recognises consumer protection as one of the core aims of the electricity regulatory framework. Article 1 of the Law states that, in addition to modernising and developing the electricity sector, the law lays down the rules governing the protection of consumers' interests in terms of prices, conditions of supply and safety of the services.³

4.1 Establishing a Consumer Rights Charter

A crucial step in safeguarding consumers in Cameroon's electricity sector is the establishment of a formal Consumer Rights Charter. This charter would provide a structured framework to set out clear service standards, including reliability expectations, and guarantee compensation for service failures such as power outages or inconsistent supply.⁴ A robust Consumer Rights Charter would define the minimum quality of service that consumers should expect from electricity providers, alongside transparent processes for addressing complaints, reporting inefficiencies, and seeking redress in cases of service failure.⁵ A statutory charter should include minimum reliability standards and outage thresholds; transparent pricing obligations grounded in pricing rules (e.g., Section 82 pricing principles) to prevent arbitrary billing⁶; and clear consumer grievance and redress procedures enforceable against corporate entities.

This framework would also help mitigate the vulnerability of consumers to unreliable electricity services, ensuring that they have clear and enforceable rights, which in turn fosters trust in the electricity supply chain and enhances overall consumer satisfaction.

4.2 Empowering Consumers

Empowering consumers is essential to protecting their rights and ensuring that they are informed of their entitlements within the electricity sector. Consumer education campaigns, which provide accurate information on their rights and responsibilities, can significantly enhance public awareness and help consumers understand how to navigate the electricity sector's service and complaint mechanisms. Through collaborations between ARSEL, electricity providers, and civil society organizations, these campaigns can reach a wider audience, addressing common gaps in understanding about how to file complaints, demand improvements, and access compensation.

Access to clear and simple complaint mechanisms is also a vital component of consumer empowerment. Consumers must have readily available and transparent avenues for lodging complaints, whether related to billing disputes, frequent outages, or technical issues. Providing toll-free helplines, online platforms, and dedicated customer service desks ensures that consumers are not discouraged by bureaucratic hurdles.⁷

Although the Law places the primary responsibility for consumer protection on the electricity sector regulatory agency, ARSEL, under Article 72, it does not provide specific mechanisms for dispute resolution⁸. Consequently, ARSEL must ensure that customer complaints are addressed efficiently and within reasonable timeframes, making active consumer engagement a central element of sectoral reform.

4.3 Consumer Advocacy and Legal Recourse

Encouraging the formation of consumer advocacy groups is another critical step to protect consumers in the electricity sector. These groups can represent consumers' interests in policy discussions, ensuring that their needs and concerns are included in regulatory reforms and sector planning. By forming coalitions, consumers can present a united front, advocating for policy changes that prioritize reliability, affordability, and fairness in

¹ Okoye et al. (2018). Op. Cit., P. 98.

² Mbah, P. (2022). Electricity and Consumer Rights in Cameroon: Legal Perspectives. *Cameroon Law Review*, 8(4), 15-33.

³ LAW N° 2011/022 of 14 December 2011 Governing the electricity Sector in Cameroon, Section 1.

⁴ Mbah. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 25.

⁵ Teke. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 40.

⁶ LAW N° 2011/022 of 14 December 2011 Governing the electricity Sector in Cameroon Section 82.

⁷ Teke, D. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 37.

⁸ LAW N° 2011/022 of 14 December 2011 Governing the electricity Sector in Cameroon Section 72.

service delivery.¹ Additionally, well-established advocacy groups can hold electricity providers accountable by lobbying for improvements and engaging with regulatory authorities to bring about reforms.

Moreover, it is essential to ensure that there are clear legal pathways for consumers to seek redress when their rights are violated. Establishing well-defined procedures for legal recourse, whether through administrative tribunals or civil courts, ensures that consumers can effectively challenge poor service delivery, such as power outages or unjustified billing increases.² Legal recourse mechanisms would ensure that consumers have a clear understanding of how to assert their rights and demand accountability from electricity providers. For example, in countries like Kenya and South Africa, legal frameworks allow consumers to directly challenge utilities through court systems, which has led to enhanced service delivery and more responsive policies in the energy sector.³

In Cameroon, the creation of such legal pathways, coupled with the establishment of specialized energy courts or consumer protection bodies, would guarantee that consumer rights are adequately protected. As in other jurisdictions, these legal avenues can play a transformative role in enhancing consumer confidence and improving the overall functioning of the electricity sector.

5. Challenges to Implementation

Cameroon's energy sector is of potential value to economic growth and social development. Nonetheless, its degree of potentiality to contribute to the country's economy is questionable based on the numerous challenges faced by the sector.⁴

5.1 Institutional and Bureaucratic Obstacles

One of the primary challenges to implementing reforms in Cameroon's electricity sector is institutional inertia and the bureaucratic barriers that slow down decision-making and policy enforcement. These barriers are often due to the entrenched interests within state-owned companies, regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders who may be resistant to change or lack the capacity to adapt to new policies.⁵ For example, while the Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL) is tasked with overseeing the electricity supply, it faces challenges such as insufficient staffing, limited technical expertise, and weak enforcement capabilities. These challenges often lead to inefficiencies in regulatory oversight and delay the implementation of necessary reforms.

To mitigate these challenges, targeted regulatory reforms are required. This includes revising the mandates of regulatory bodies to give them more power and resources to monitor and enforce service standards effectively. Capacity-building initiatives for both the regulators and service providers would also be crucial in overcoming institutional inertia. By strengthening the institutional framework and providing training in areas such as policy enforcement, technical standards, and customer service, Cameroon can build a more responsive and efficient regulatory system.⁶ Additionally, streamlining bureaucratic processes would allow for quicker decision-making and more timely implementation of reforms aimed at improving power supply reliability.

5.2 Financial Constraints

Cameroon's electricity sector is heavily constrained by financial limitations, which restrict its ability to invest in modern infrastructure, renewable energy, and improved service delivery. The government's limited budget for energy infrastructure has led to underinvestment in key areas, including the upgrading of transmission networks and generation capacity, as well as the expansion of renewable energy sources.⁷ With insufficient public funds, implementing large-scale infrastructure projects and transitioning to renewable energy sources becomes increasingly difficult.

However, there are ways to address this issue. One potential solution is to leverage international funding from development partners, such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and bilateral aid from countries like France and the United States. These institutions can provide financial assistance through grants or low-interest loans specifically aimed at enhancing energy infrastructure and promoting renewable energy projects.⁸ Additionally, Cameroon could incentivize private investment in the energy sector by offering

¹ Amadi, M. (2021). Op. Cit., P. 220.

² Che, N. (2021). Op. Cit., P. 110.

³ Zarma, R. (2019). Op. Cit., P. 150.

⁴ Egong, M.A. (2020). Op. Cit., P.2.

⁵ Mbah, P. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 20.

⁶ Teke, D. (2022). Op. Cit., P. 45.

⁷ Zarma, R. (2019). Op. Cit., P. 148.

⁸ Okoye, P. et al. (2018). Op. Cit., P. 108.

favorable tax policies and establishing public-private partnerships (PPPs). By attracting private sector involvement, Cameroon can reduce the burden on the national budget while ensuring much-needed investments in the power sector.¹

5.3 Public Awareness and Buy-In

Public awareness and buy-in are crucial components of any successful reform initiative. In the case of Cameroon's electricity sector, consumers must be well-informed about their rights, responsibilities, and the benefits of the planned reforms. Without public support, even the best-intentioned policies are likely to face resistance, and their effectiveness will be undermined. Education campaigns that target consumers' understanding of their rights in relation to power supply, billing, and complaint resolution are essential for building a foundation of trust and cooperation.²

These campaigns should not only inform the public about their consumer rights but also emphasize the importance of renewable energy and energy efficiency in improving power reliability. Public buy-in could also be enhanced by ensuring that consumers feel empowered to participate in the decision-making process, such as through consultations or feedback mechanisms. When the public understands the rationale behind reforms and feels involved in the process, they are more likely to support the implementation of new policies, even if these involve some short-term disruptions for long-term gains.³ Additionally, civil society organizations, media outlets, and regulatory bodies like ARSEL should work together to ensure that information reaches all consumer segments, particularly those in rural and underserved areas.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined the structural, regulatory, and governance challenges confronting Cameroon's electricity sector, with particular emphasis on service reliability and consumer protection. It has demonstrated that, despite the existence of a comprehensive statutory framework, significant regulatory gaps persist, limiting effective enforcement and weakening consumer safeguards. In this regard, the institutional capacity and authority of the Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL) remain central to any meaningful reform, as enhanced powers, adequate resources, and greater operational independence are necessary to ensure compliance with service standards and fair billing practices. The study further highlights the persistent infrastructural deficits affecting generation, transmission, and distribution networks, which continue to undermine the stability and reliability of electricity supply. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment in modern infrastructure, including the rehabilitation of transmission and distribution systems and the expansion of generation capacity. Public private partnerships, alongside increased deployment of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, offer viable pathways for mobilising capital and improving long-term energy security. Importantly, adopting a corporate law and regulatory governance perspective reveals that the effectiveness of sectoral reforms depends not only on technical and financial interventions but also on the strength of corporate governance obligations imposed on electricity operators. While recent policy initiatives signal a renewed commitment to reform, their largely prospective nature underscores the need for enforceable corporate accountability, transparent management practices, and robust consumer protection mechanisms. Aligning electricity sector governance with core corporate law principles particularly transparency, accountability, fairness, and stakeholder protection would strengthen regulatory oversight and enhance consumer confidence. If effectively implemented and sustained, such an approach would significantly contribute to a more resilient, efficient, and consumer-oriented electricity sector capable of supporting inclusive socio-economic development.

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¹ Amadi, M. (2021). Op. Cit., P. 220.

² Che, N. (2021). Op. Cit., P. 117.

³ Njomo, A. (2020). Op. Cit., P. 213.

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