Project Management Update from Douala

PROJECT MANAGEMENT:
A CRUCIAL ISSUE FOR CAMEROON’S EMERGENCE ACHIEVEMENT
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ABSTRACT

The changing nature of the world economic trends has led to the development of unequal competitive edges. Sub-Saharan countries have been striving to develop fall-back plans to meet up with the global market demand and sustain internal growth. Project Management is nowadays recognised as a performance enabler due to its holistic approach in taking into consideration political, social, cultural and economic factors to produce shared, long term and measurable outcomes. Cameroon has developed a 25 years vision supported by the realization of great project and programs. The Project Management Knowledge however is just getting into governance culture. There is therefore a strong need to built incentive for project management culture, structure and applied project management to guarantee growth and sustainability in the long run.

This article pictures, in a certain manner, the realities of project management in Cameroon. Its objective is to raise awareness about the need to promote project management as an open door for lasting progress.
I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of World economic trends has progressively affected emerging economies. In addition to the global financial crisis, the global socio cultural integration, the rapid technological mutation and environmental changes have been more a threat than an opportunity for growth achievement. The development of more holistic organizational models happens to be an assurance for survival in this global unequal market. How governments sustain growth will then depends on how best they understand, integrate and adapt to environmental factor, socio cultural issues, to develop viable governance systems and create value.

Sub-Saharan African countries have gradually been trying to review their priorities and develop efficient growth models to catch up with this rapidly evolving crusade. In the past 5 years for example, there has been an increase of the GDP from 2,5% in 2009 to 3,8% in 2011 in the African Golf of Guinea.

Beyond the cultural factor, which is still a barrier for the rapid integration of market’s change, the slow growing economic processes have not been ideal to face the world completion. Cameroon, is not exempted, the country has been suffering from a flat growth since the 90’s financial crisis. Its uneasiness to integrate and implement Breton Wood Institution models, the lack of mastery of key internal development factors have resulted in:

- An increase in the rate of poverty.
- An Increase in the rate of Social insecurity.
- An increase in Poor governance practices.
- Slow economic growth.
- Lack of technological proficiency to develop infrastructure
- Increase in importation rate at the expense of exportation.
- Weak regional integration that hindered the regional and international relationship.

The country has been striving, with the achievement of the HIPC Completion Point in 2006, and recently the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) 2010-2014, that serve as a catalyst for attracting investors through major projects, to come out from this bloom.

In 2010, Cameroun launched its 2035 vision to be an emergent, democratic and united in diversity country. The realization of this vision relies imperatively on the implementation of great Programs and projects to enhance growth and ensure sustainability on the long run. The reality is that the country is not equipped as far as project and program management knowledge implementation are concerned. In addition, the question of alignment of the local need and realities to the governance strategic framework is still an issue.
Attaining this challenging vision could then become arduous or more, a mere dream. What strategy should be put in place in order to achieve this early purpose?

II. CAMEROON’S POTENTIAL OVERVIEW

1. Geographical data

The Republic of Cameroon is an African country found in the coast of guinea. It covers an area of 475,440 sq. km of which 8,536 sq. km are water, and has a 400 km coastline on the Gulf of Guinea. The human population was estimated at 19,9 million in 2010, with an average growth rate of 2,2%. It is expected to grow to 25million by the year 2020 (World Bank, 2010).

Cameroon is roughly triangular in shape with a base of about 700 km and a height of 1200 km. The country lies between latitudes 20 and 130 N and between longitudes 80 and 160 E. It is bounded to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo, to the north by Chad, to the east by the Central African Republic and to the west by Nigeria and the Atlantic Ocean (Green and Brown, 1994; Sayer et al., 1992).

Cameroon has been described as all of Africa in one triangle, since the country boasts a wide range of climates and ecosystems, from a Sahalien region to an Afromontane region (Green and Brown, 1994). In the north and extreme north extending up to Lake Chad, Sahalian Savanna covers the country, the center has the characteristics of high altitude moist savanna and the south is covered by dense tropical rainforest.

The geographical distribution of the population among regions varies significantly. The national average density is 40,1 hab/sq. km. There are three high-population density zones: Far North (61.5/ sq. km), West and North-West (78 to 108/ sq. km) and Littoral Province (78.9/ sq. km).

2. Economic data

Cameroon’s economy mainly relies on his natural resources, in particular oil, lucrative wood species, and high value-added agricultural products (coffee, cotton, and cocoa). Natural gas, iron, bauxite, and cobalt remain untapped resources. The Cameroonian economy is relatively diversified. In 2009, the services sector accounted for 44 % of GDP, agriculture and the processing industries for 19 % each, and the oil and mining sectors, for 7 %.

Debt relief obtained in 2006 under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) has significantly reduced the country’s debt level and created additional fiscal space, thus making it possible to accord a special place to poverty reduction expenditure. According to IMF estimates, the country’s GDP growth rate stood at 4.7 % at end-December 2012 (against 4.2 % in 2011). The main drivers of this growth are found in the non-oil economy (projected to increase by 5%). More notably, growth in the tertiary sector
is thought to have made the biggest contribution to the expansion of economic activity in 2012. A lack of infrastructure and an unfavourable business climate are curbing economic activity and achievement of the growth targets necessary to achieve a sustainable reduction in poverty.

Cameroon is a member of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC); a monetary union that functions as a multinational bank whose currency is pegged to the euro. Fiscal policy is therefore the main macroeconomic instrument available to the authorities. The country’s medium-term fiscal policy seeks to limit the budget deficit during periods of high oil revenue by using this revenue to fund growth-oriented investment and thus ensure that future generations are not saddled with unsustainable levels of debt. Moreover, the introduction of the program budget, starting in 2013, should pave the way for more efficient public expenditure. The program budget therefore provides a path to address most of the deficiencies that have undermined the country’s public finances—excessive centralization of budget processes that lead to low levels of budget execution and inefficient strategic allocation of resources, as well as a lack of optimization and quality of public services.

III. CAMEROON’S PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY.

A. J. Gilbert Silvius: “establishing a relationship between project management and sustainability, said in his article “The integration of Sustainability and Project Management” that sustainable development is a process of change”. He added, since projects can be considered as temporary organizations that deliver (any kind of) change to organizations, products, services, business processes, policies or assets, sustainability links to projects in the sense that sustainable development requires projects. In 2006, Association for Project Management chairman, Tom Taylor recognized that “Project and Programme Managers are significantly placed to make contributions to Sustainable Management practices” and called upon the project management community to assume responsibility for a more sustainable development. It is not therefore wrong to say that the end result of sustainability is performance of projects and satisfaction of stakeholders on the long run. The integration Project Management in governance culture becomes imperative to achieve and measure lasting added value output.

1. The DSCE (Growth and Employment Strategy Paper)

In 2009, Cameroon developed his Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (DSCE). This document essentially outlines the objective of reducing poverty to under 10 %, with the aim of elevating Cameroon to middle-income country status, making it an industrialized country, and strengthening democracy and national unity.

More specifically, the programs and projects underlined in the document aim to resolve problems of low productivity, the risk of an energy crisis, and effects of the global financial...
crisis, food insecurity, ambient poverty, and the high rate of unemployment. Significant infrastructure investment is expected as a stimulator of growth mainly in the energy sector, the road and port infrastructure, water supply, and information technologies.

Boosting productivity in the agriculture, livestock, and mining sectors as well as in the main value chains (wood, information and communication technologies, and tourism), and improving the business climate is considered. It further seeks to strengthen human development and to create massive employment in the formal sector in addition to taking concrete steps with respect to corruption, procurement, the business climate, and civic participation.

2. **REPARTITION OF INVESTMENTS ON PROJECT BY SECTORS (2010-2035).**

Priorities have been given to project and programs as followed:

![Diagram showing investments by sectors]

**Source:** Author’s estimations from DSCE projects and programs presentations

As above, strategic priority between 2010 and 2035 has been giving to infrastructural development (42%), then to industries development (26.8%), followed by social development (construction of schools, hospitals...) 17.8, and agriculture with 12.7%.

3. **ISSUES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN CAMEROON**

Some estimated data about the percentage of realisation of DSCE objectives initiated by the Cameroonian government were revealed by local medias:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Percentage realisation of</th>
<th>Observations: Project Management environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Development</td>
<td>Less than 2%</td>
<td>- Poor Project management culture (standards, structured change management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industries Development</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
<td>- Accountability, Accountability,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poor project management structure (Project portfolios, project managers, specialisation, Information system

- Poor applied project management
  Develop, execute, Control, deliver results

Source: Author’s adaptation from media’s release

3.1. ISSUES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Lack of a strong and viable strategic intention.

Poor identification of key comparative advantages.

Lowly promotion of specialization.

Poor conduct of planning development based on competitive advantages and potentials.

Poor Development of a legal framework

Poor organisation and low financial assistance and insurance support.

Poor governance practices (corruption, bribery,

Lack of recognition and promotion of project management (Culture, science, profession)

Lack of Promotion of the project management industry

3.2. ISSUES OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Lack of Corporate policy

Lack of competition based corporate vision

Inexistence strategic planning.

Poor traditional governance models

Lack of flexible cost structure and ineffective effective market watch mechanisms

Low accountability leadership

Lack of introduction of project management culture and structure.

Poor applied management practices

Lack of project management professionals

From the situation raise above, it logically appears that there is no clear for achieving the 2035 vision.
IV. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

- DEVELOP SMART PROJECT MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE APPROACH.

Though the DSCE underlined key projects and programs that could enable growth in between 2010-2035. There is no clear-based study conducted to show the relevance and the DSCE projects and programs as well as approaches to measure on-going output. The integration project management culture will enable the development of more transparent, effective and efficient governance system. Develop the sense of accountability and give room to a more structured change approach and more viable governance systems,

- DEVELOP INCENTIVE FOR CREATIVE ECONOMY GROWTH MODEL

Project Management is an enabler of creativity. The adoption of creative growth model will help identify key area of strategic competitive advantage. This will enhance specialisation and promote project management industry as a pool for sustainability. As a result there will a more holistic approach to development support by projects, efficient resource allocation and better strategies to face the global market.

- DEVELOP LOCAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY

Sustainable competency transfer should be promoted. This will help fill the gap in the need of project management systems and professionals to sustain an upcoming large demand to support both the public and private sectors growth. Local project management community development should be supported by the local government cause they are the room through which strong sustainability could be achieved.

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About the Author

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Ms. Marie Eliane Ndjib is a dynamic, results-oriented and pro-active professional, with three years of experience in strategic planning and management, and three years of experience in project planning, tracking and controls. Her interest is in helping organizations to improve their performance and optimize the implementation of programs and projects to sustain their strategy and better manage change issues. She is also a trainer on total quality management and project management. Among recent projects, she has contributed in the development of strategic plans for 3 organizations. She has developed a human resource tracking system for employee performance assessments, planned and implemented a total quality management system, planned and implemented a Lean Six Sigma project, and planned and implemented a management-by-results program in a company. Marie Eliane has a Bachelor’s degree in Geography from the University of Buea-Cameroon (2009) and a Master’s degree in Project Management (With the PMI-PMBOK approach) from the Panafriican Institute for Development-Central Africa (PAID-CA) (2012). She expects to have her PMP and MS Project certifications in 2013. Marie is motivated to modestly participate in the professional development of project management in Cameroon, including the planning for the first National Congress on Project Management in Cameroon. She wants to help people who are interested in this professional field to better develop their knowledge on Project Management. Marie Eliane can be contacted at eliane.ndjib@petros-online.com.