



# CAMEROON

## SUMMARY

Cameroon is a bicameral parliamentary republic with two levels of government, national and local (regions and councils). There is constitutional provision for local government, as well as for an intermediary higher territorial tier (regions), although this has yet to be implemented. The main laws governing local government are Law No. 2004/17 on the Orientation of Decentralization, Law No. 2004/18 on Rules Applicable to Councils, and Law No. 2004/19 on Rules Applicable to Regions. The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization is responsible for government policy on territorial administration and local government. There are 374 local government councils, consisting of 360 municipal councils and 14 city councils. There are also 43 district sub-divisions within the cities. Local councils are empowered to levy taxes and charges including direct council taxes, cattle tax and licences. The most important mechanism for revenue-sharing is the Additional Council Taxes levy on national taxation, of which 70% goes to the councils. All councils have similar responsibilities and powers for service delivery with the exception of the sub-divisional councils, which have a modified set of powers. Council responsibility for service delivery includes utilities, town planning, health, social services and primary education.

## 1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Cameroon is a unitary republic with a bicameral parliament.<sup>8.1</sup> The de facto head of state is the president, who is directly elected by universal adult suffrage for an unlimited number of seven-year terms. The parliament is called the National Assembly (Assemblée nationale). The president appoints the nominal head of government, the prime minister. The National Assembly is elected every five years on a direct universal suffrage basis. It has 180 members and sits three times a year, for a maximum period of 30 days per sitting. An upper chamber, known as the Senate, was constituted in 2013 and comprises 100 senators who sit for a five-year term. There are 70 elected senators: ten from each of the seven regions, who are elected by the councillors of the 360 municipal councils. There are also 30 senators appointed by the president - with a minimum of three from each region. Following the 2013 national elections, 31.1% (56/180) of elected representatives and 20% (20/100) of senators were women.<sup>8.1b</sup>

## 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 2.1 Constitutional provisions

Section 55 (2) of the constitution<sup>8.2a</sup> states that regional and local authorities shall have administrative and financial autonomy and shall be freely administered by elected councils.

### 2.2 Main legislative texts

- Law No. 2004/17 of 22 July 2004 on the Orientation of Decentralization<sup>8.2b</sup>
- Law No. 2004/18 of July 2004 comprising Rules Applicable to Councils
- Law No. 2004/19 of 22 July 2004 comprising Rules Applicable to Regions.

Other decrees and laws relating to local government include:

- Law No. 1987/015: sets up city councils
- Decree 1987/1365: City Council of Yaoundé
- Decree 1987/1366: City Council of Douala
- Law 2009/019 on the Local Fiscal System
- Law 2012/001 on the Electoral Code.

### 2.3 Proposed legislative changes

No known proposed legislative changes.

### 2.4 National urban policy

Following the signing of the UN's New Urban Agenda by the Government of Cameroon, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has started to develop a national urban policy. A cross-government workshop held in May 2017<sup>8.2c</sup> identified eight critical factors for success in developing a national urban policy for Cameroon. This included: linking national urban policy to territorial planning; supporting evidence-based policy-making; linking the national urban policy to the Cameroon 'Vision 2035'; continuous capacity development of actors including senior officials; working with various 'champions' and change agents to promote transformational leadership; taking into account culture and diversity; aiming at better management of land; and adopting smart urban development approaches.

## 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 3.1 Local government within the state

Cameroon is divided into ten administrative areas called regions. Regions are in turn divided into divisions (départements), which are further divided into sub-divisions (arrondissements), which correspond to the 374 local government councils. Constitutional amendments in 2008 made provision for an intermediary regional level of local government, but this has not been implemented.



## KEY FACTS

### POPULATION (2017 estimate):

23,248,044

### AREA (UN 2012):

475,442 sq km

### CAPITAL:

Yaoundé

### CURRENCY:

Central Africa Franc (XAF)

### EXECUTIVE HEAD OF STATE:

President Paul Biya

### HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

Prime Minister Philémon Yang

### FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

republic

### PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

bicameral

### STATE STRUCTURE:

unitary

### LANGUAGES:

French and English (official)

### NATIONAL ELECTIONS:

#### National assembly:

last: Sept 2013, turnout: 76.8%; next: 2018

#### Presidential:

last: Oct 2011, turnout: 82.2% next: 2018

### WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2013):

31.1%

### LOCAL ELECTIONS:

last: 30 Sept 2013, turnout: 76.8%; next: 2017 (postponed)

### WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2013):

~28.0%

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government budget 2015/16:

2.9%

**Table 8.1a Distribution of councils and population**

Region	Councils	Cities	City sub-divisions (district)	Population (2005 Census)	Population (2017 estimate)	% rural (2005 Census)
Adamawa	22	1	2	884,289	1,182,998	61.2
Centre	71	1	7	3,098,044	4,147,506	28.1
East	33	1	2	771,755	1,033,370	63.5
Far North	48	1	3	3,11,792	4,166,210	77.6
Littoral	34	3	9	2,510,263	3,359,620	7.4
North	22	1	3	1,687,959	2,258,450	72.1
North West	35	1	3	1,728,953	2,302,871	62.9
West	41	1	3	1,720,047	2,104,146	57.4
South	21	2	4	634,655	848,672	64.2
South West	33	2	6	1,316,079	1,844,201	57.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>17,463,836</b>	<b>23,248,044</b>	<b>51.2</b>

Source: MINATD communication with CLGF, 2005 Census<sup>8.3a</sup> and the National Institute of Statistics population estimates<sup>8.3b</sup>

### 3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization<sup>8.3c</sup> (MINATD) is responsible for the preparation, implementation and assessment of government policy on territorial administration and decentralisation. This includes: preparing regulations pertaining to the organisation and functioning of regional and local authorities; exercising supervisory powers over regional and local authorities; and overseeing regular evaluation of the roll-out of decentralisation.

### 3.3 Council types

There are three main types of councils: city councils, sub-divisional councils (within a city council), and councils.

**3.3.1 Councils** lack the status granted to city councils. All councils are headed by a directly elected mayor who is supported by a team of councillors; their number depends on the population size. The council can appoint commissions to work on any relevant issues, membership of which can include non-councillors and must be convened during the council's first year. Typically, their remit would include planning, public works, education, markets and other facilities, or health.

**3.3.2 City councils** serve urban areas, their territory overarches that of sub-divisional councils, and they are headed by government delegates appointed by presidential decree who mirror all the duties and powers of mayors. They are assisted by an executive team composed of persons appointed by order of the president. The deliberative body of the city council comprises the executive team, the sub-divisional council mayors and one additional councillor designated by each of the sub-divisional councils.

**3.3.3 Sub-divisional councils** are council areas created within any city council area. Most city councils have two or three sub-divisional council areas, but Yaoundé and Douala have seven and six respectively. The sub-divisional councils are headed by directly elected mayors.

### 3.4 Traditional leadership

Local chiefs are auxiliaries of the local administration and chiefs are permitted, and often do, take part in local elections. They also play an important role in encouraging people to turn out and vote.<sup>8.3</sup>

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections

The most recent local elections were held on 30 September 2013 with a turnout of 76.8%, up from 65.4% in 2009.<sup>8.4</sup>

### 4.2 Voting system

Councillors are elected by universal suffrage with elections taking place according to a mixed list system. The leader of the council is a mayor who is elected by and from amongst the councillors.

### 4.3 Elected representatives

The mayor is supported by councillors, whose number varies according to the population of the constituency as follows: less than 50,000: 25 councillors; 50,000–100,000: 31 councillors; 100,001–200,000: 35 councillors; 200,001–300,000: 41 councillors; and over 300,000: 61 councillors.

### 4.4 Women's representation

Following the 2013 elections, approximately 28% of councillors were women, up from around 1.5% following the 2009 election (see Table 8.1b).

The number of female chairpersons/ mayors following the 2013 elections was 9.1% (30/330), also up from 3.9% (14/345) in 2009. The number of female deputies following the 2013 election was 33.2% (332/1,000).

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement

With the assistance of structures like the National Programme for Participatory Development in collaboration with the World Bank, there is strong participation by communities in the drawing up of every council's development plan.

### 5.2 Implementation

Any citizen can suggest policy alterations or improvements to local or regional authorities. Any council resident can request copies of minutes, discussion notes, budgetary documentation and accounts. Political parties and/ or traditional leaders have historically communicated the needs of minority and special interest groups.

### 5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

No information is available.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 6.1 National local government association

The United Councils and Cities of Cameroon<sup>8.6</sup> (UCCC) Communes et Villes Unies du Cameroun) was formed from the merger of the Cameroon Association of Towns (Association des Communes et Villes de Cameroun) and the Cameroon Union of Towns and Councils (Union des Communes et Villes du Cameroun). The association provides members with information and capacity-building training, disseminates good practice, and also provides financial services.


**Table 8.1b Elected women representatives following the last two election periods**

Women elected representatives	2009-2013		2013-2017	
<b>Councillors</b>				
Female councillors	149	-1.5	na	-28.0
Male councillors	-9,851	-98.5	na	-72.0
<b>Total councillors</b>	<b>-10,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Mayors/chairpersons</b>				
Female mayors/chairpersons	14	3.9	30	9.0
Male mayors/chairpersons	345	96.1	330	91.0
<b>Total mayors/chairpersons</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

~ = approximate Source: MINATD communication with CLGF

## 6.2 Other associations of local government

The Public Body for International Cooperation (Organisme Public de Coopération Internationale) has also been set up to coordinate councils at divisional level and build links with local authorities overseas. Councils are permitted to seek decentralised cooperation ties with local governments abroad, especially in Europe.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The UCCC acts in an advisory capacity to the national government. In situations where approval for action is required from national government, senior divisional officers must acknowledge and respond to a council request within 15 days.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

There are a number of national government bodies which monitor the finances of local authorities. These include the audit unit of MINATD, and the Directorates General of Treasury and Budget. Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) is the national body which supervises the election process. ELECAM has regional and divisional representatives, and at divisional level the preparation and conduct of elections is overseen by divisional supervisory commissions. The National Council for Decentralisation (Conseil National de la Décentralisation), which is charged with the follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of decentralisation, and the Interministerial Committee on Local Services (Comité Interministériel des Services Locaux) which is an interministerial organ for consultation, are placed under the authority of the minister in charge of decentralisation. The minister's mission is to ensure the preparation and the follow-up of transfers of competences and resources to regional and local authorities (councils) by the competent authorities. Legislation passed in 2003 provides for an Audit Bench (Chambre des Comptes) under the Supreme Court to enforce proper standards in the collection and use of council taxes and accounting procedures.

Decree 2004/099 provides for a Control Brigade to monitor the functioning and management of local and regional authorities.

## 9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

### 9.1 Local government expenditure

In 2015/16 local government expenditure was approximately 2.9% of total government expenditure<sup>9.9a</sup>; see Table 8.2b. Aggregate expenditure information across all councils is not available. Anecdotal evidence is that most rural councils spend only on the most vital core functions, such as staff costs, road maintenance, pharmacy, healthcare and education. More complex urban councils are committed to a wider range of services.

### 9.2 Locally raised revenue

Local councils are empowered to levy taxes and charges including direct council taxes, cattle tax and licences, market trading licences, ground rents on shops and public transport licences. They can also charge a business levy, which is an annual licence payment calculated on a sliding scale according to the nature and size of an individual's economic activity, with a maximum assessment of XAF100,000 (US\$211).

## 9.3 Transfers

Local authorities receive block grant revenue from national government through MINATD via its Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (Fonds Spécial d'Équipement et d'Intervention Intercommunale) (FEICOM)<sup>8,9b</sup> based in Yaoundé with ten regional branches. These grants are weighted according to a council's population, surface area and other considerations. Top priorities for FEICOM's own resources include utilities and urban development. Funding is also available for the training of council staff. FEICOM also provides councils with non-financial support, including expert technical assistance, project evaluation, and other facilities. This is a vital role, given the lack of technical competence in many councils. FEICOM's key revenue role is the nationalised collection and redistribution of the Additional Council Tax levy (Centimes Additionnels Communaux or CAC). CAC is a 10% levy on certain categories of national taxation specifically destined for council finance. Taxes that this levy is applied to include general income tax, business tax, entertainment tax, and value-added tax. CAC revenue is collected and allocated as follows: 10% to national government, 20% to FEICOM and 70% to councils. Of the total that goes to councils, 20% goes to Douala; 40% to Yaoundé and 36% to other councils. The remaining 4% is retained by FEICOM and used for a range of purposes, for example to compensate councils for revenue that is paid beyond their borders, to support infrastructure projects in border councils or to help councils affected by natural disaster. Forty per cent of forestry royalties are also redistributed to councils on a per capita basis. The fragmented nature of revenue appropriation and the widely varying circumstances of individual councils has led to considerable inequalities in resources.

**Table 8.2a Income and expenditure for local government 2015/16**

Income	2015/16 XAFbn	Expenditure	2015/16 XAFbn
<b>Centre-local transfers</b>		<b>Administration</b>	
Special Council Support Fund	10.0	Staff	na
Transferred to authority	38.1	Other administrative costs	na
<b>Locally raised revenue</b>		<b>Services</b>	
Council taxes	55.5	Roads	na
Licences and fees	na	Water	na
Other income	na	Other	na
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>123.6</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>-123.6</b>

~ = approximate Source: MINATD communication with CLGF



**Table 8.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013–2017**

	2015 actual XAFbn	2015/16 estimated XAFbn	2016/17 budgeted XAFbn
Total government expenditure	na	4,249.8	na
Total local government expenditure	na	123.6	227.5
<b>Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure</b>	<b>na</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>na</b>

Source: MINATD communication with CLGF, and budget statement 2016<sup>8,9a</sup>

**9.4 Loans**

FEICOM also authorises loans for revenue and capital spending. FEICOM’s priorities, in line with other similar organisations in Africa, are capital projects of social value, including schools, utilities, healthcare and transport infrastructure. Loans are for a maximum of two years. The proportion of loan to grant depends on the type of project being funded.

**9.5 Local authority staff**

The secretary-general (head of the paid staff) and other administrative and technical officials of councils are appointed by MINATD, either from among the local staff of the councils or on secondment from relevant ministries, in consultation with national authorities. The training establishment for all local government officials is the Local Government Training Centre (CEFAM), based in Buéa in the South-West Region. CEFAM is subordinate to MINATD and trains both current council personnel and new recruits, on two course cycles. There is so far no statutory instrument regulating the individual status and career structure of local government personnel. This often leads to a lack of local competence on the administrative side even in large urban councils.

**10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY**

**10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility**

All councils and city councils have similar responsibilities and powers for service delivery, whilst the sub-divisional councils have a modified set of powers. Council responsibility for service delivery often includes:

- utilities, including water, sewage and waste disposal
- town planning and urban development
- municipal roads and public transport
- births, marriages and deaths registration
- community health and safety
- social services
- primary education and literacy
- sport, culture and leisure.

In practice, it is likely that smaller councils will have difficulty fulfilling their statutory duties without a radical

increase in their funding, although Law No. 2004/017 on decentralisation specifies that where services have been transferred, any relevant infrastructure and resources should also be transferred. Chronic budgetary shortfalls and dilapidated infrastructure, however, create situations that are difficult for often poorly staffed local authorities to manage. Major capital expenditure is needed, but this problem has not been fully addressed in the decentralisation legislation so far passed.

**10.2 ICT use in service delivery**

No information is available.

**10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

A UNDP- supported national plan for the contextualisation and prioritisation of the SDGs was approved in 2017 by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development. The plan identifies 152 SDG targets as being relevant to Cameroon.<sup>8,10a</sup> Additionally, the Cameroon Civil Society Engagement Charter for the Sustainable Development Goals commits Cameroonian civil society to working with local governments, among other actors, on local efforts to achieve the SDGs.<sup>8,10b</sup>

- 8.3c Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization [www.minatd.gov.cm](http://www.minatd.gov.cm)
- 8.4 Elections Cameroon: General report on the conduct of the twin legislative and municipal elections of 30 September 2013 [www.elec.cm/en/documentation/reports.html](http://www.elec.cm/en/documentation/reports.html)
- 8.5 No references for this section
- 8.6 United Councils and Cities of Cameroon [www.cvuc-uccc.org](http://www.cvuc-uccc.org)
- 8.7 No references for this section
- 8.8 No references for this section
- 8.9a Calculated by CLGF from the figure provided in Table 2a and the 2016 national budget statement. <http://minfi.gov.cm>
- 8.9b Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance [www.feicom.cm](http://www.feicom.cm)
- 8.10a Sustainable Development Goals: Cameroon Validates Contextualisation Plan [www.cameroon-tribune.cm/articles/12140/fr/sustainable-development-goals-cameroon-validates-contextualisation-plan](http://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/articles/12140/fr/sustainable-development-goals-cameroon-validates-contextualisation-plan)
- 8.10b Institutionalized dialogue between the Government and Civil Society in Cameroon on the SDGs [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/133921nstitutionalized\\_dialogue\\_between\\_the\\_Government\\_and\\_Civil\\_Society\\_in\\_Cameroon\\_on\\_the\\_SDGs\\_in\\_Cameroon.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/133921nstitutionalized_dialogue_between_the_Government_and_Civil_Society_in_Cameroon_on_the_SDGs_in_Cameroon.pdf)
- 8.11a UN 2012 statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 8.11b National Community Driven Development Program [www.pndp.gov.cm](http://www.pndp.gov.cm)
- 8.11c Abangma, JA, 2009 ‘Functional autonomy and the performance of communes in Cameroon: local government for local people?’ African Journal of Contemporary Issues, Vol. 9, No 1 [www.tropicalfocus.org/?attachment\\_id=20](http://www.tropicalfocus.org/?attachment_id=20)
- 8.11d UNDP HDR Cameroon country profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CMR>

**REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES**

- 8.1 Government of Cameroon [www.spm.gov.cm](http://www.spm.gov.cm)
- 8.2a Constitution of Cameroon <http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/Cameroon.pdf>
- 8.2b Law 2004/017 22 July Loi d’orientation de la décentralisation [www.cvuc-uccc.com/minat/textes/13.pdf](http://www.cvuc-uccc.com/minat/textes/13.pdf)
- 8.2c Improving Knowledge on National Urban Policy to Change Mindsets [www.urbangateway.org/news/improving-knowledge-national-urban-policy-change-mindsets](http://www.urbangateway.org/news/improving-knowledge-national-urban-policy-change-mindsets)
- 8.3a Cameroon Census 2005 population by residence <http://cameroon.opendataforafrica.org/dqhimmc/residence>
- 8.3b National Institute of Statistics (NIS) [www.statistics-cameroon.org](http://www.statistics-cameroon.org). The last Census was in 2005, so these estimates are calculated by NIS using an estimated population growth.







## Annex 8a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Cameroon

Services	Delivering authority			Remarks
	National government	Councils	Sub-divisional councils	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Police	■			
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil status register		■	■	
Statistical office	■	■	■	
Electoral register	■		■	
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)	■			
Primary	■			
Secondary	■			
Vocational and technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>				
Family welfare services	■			
Welfare homes	■			
Social security	■			
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>				
Primary care	■			
Hospitals	■			
Health protection	■			
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>				
Housing		■	■	
Town planning			■	
Regional planning				
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
Roads	■			
Transport				
Urban roads				
Urban rail	■			
Ports	■			
Airports	■			
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>				
Water and sanitation	■	■	■	
Refuse collection and disposal	■	■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria	■		■	
Slaughterhouses	■		■	
Environmental protection	■	■	■	
Consumer protection	■			
<b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>				
Theatre and concerts	■	■	■	
Museums and libraries	■	■	■	
Parks and open spaces		■	■	
Sports and leisure	■	■	■	
Religious facilities	■			
<b>UTILITIES</b>				
Gas services				
District heating				
Water supply			■	
Electricity	■			
<b>ECONOMIC</b>				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■	■	■	
Local economic development/promotion	■	■	■	
Trade and industry	■	■	■	
Tourism	■	■	■	

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service