



# Cameroon



## Key Facts

**POPULATION (Census 2005)<sup>1</sup>:** 17,463,836

**AREA<sup>2</sup>:** 475,442 sq km

**CAPITAL:** Yaoundé

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP: -**

**CURRENCY:** Central African franc (XAF)

**EXECUTIVE HEAD OF STATE:** President Paul Biya

**NOMINAL HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:** Prime Minister Philemon Yang

**FORM OF GOVERNMENT:** republic

**PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:** bicameral<sup>5</sup>

**STATE STRUCTURE:** unitary

**LANGUAGES:** French and English (official)

**NATIONAL ELECTIONS:**

**National Assembly:** last: 2011, turnout: -; next: July 2013

**Presidential:** last: 2011, turnout: 82.2%; next: 2018

**LOCAL ELECTIONS:** last: 2007, turnout: 65.4%; next: 2013

## SUMMARY

Cameroon is a parliamentary republic with two levels of government, central and local (regions and councils). Constitutional provision is made not for both levels, though the intermediary higher territorial tier (regions) has yet to be implemented. The main laws governing local government are Laws No. 17, 18 and 19 of 2004 on decentralisation, councils and regions respectively.

The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation is responsible for government policy on territorial administration and local government. There are 376 local governments consisting of 320 councils, 14 city councils and 42 sub-divisional councils 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 tax levy on national taxes, 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.

**Table 1. Distribution of councils and population (Census 2005)**

Number of councils per region/province	Number of authorities			Population (Census 2005)
	Councils	City councils	District councils	
Adamawa	22	18	1	3884,289
Centre	71	63	1	73,098,044
East	34	31	2	1771,755
Far North	48	44	1	33,111,792
Littoral	37	23	3	112,510,263
North	22	18	1	31,687,959
North West	35	31	1	31,728,953
West	41	37	1	31,720,047
South	31	25	2	4634,655
South West	33	25	2	61,316,079
<b>TOTAL 374</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>17,463,83</b>

Source: National Institute of Statistics, Cameroon

## 1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Cameroon is a unitary republic with a bicameral parliament. The 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 or Assemblée nationale. 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, the Senate is provided for in the constitution and for which the first ever elections were held in April 2013. It will comprise 100 senators: ten from each region, of which seven are elected by indirect universal suffrage and three appointed by the president, all for a five-year term. The president appoints the nominal head of government, the prime minister.

## 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 2.1 Constitutional provisions

Section 55(2) of the constitution 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

The main legislative texts pertaining to local government are:

- Law No. 2004/017 on decentralisation
- Law No. 2004/018 on councils
- Law No. 2004/019 on regions.

Other decrees and laws relating to local government include:

- Decree 1987/015 sets up the city councils
- Decree 1987/1365 - Yaoundé city council
- Decree 1987/1366 - Douala city council
- Law No. 20§2/001 concerns electoral code



## 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 376 local government councils. Constitutional amendments in 2008 made provision for an intermediary provincial/regional level of local government, but this has not been implemented.

### 3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MINATD) is responsible for the preparation, implementation and assessment of government policy on territorial administration and decentralisation. This includes: 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 implementation of decentralisation policies.

### 3.3 Council types

There are three main types of local government: councils, city councils, sub-divisional council -which are councils within the city councils.

**3.3.1 Councils** and sub-divisional councils lack the special status granted to city councils. All councils are headed by a directly elected mayor who is supported by a team of councillors, the number of which depends on the population size of the jurisdiction. The council can appoint commissions to work and report upon any relevant issue. Membership of a commission can include people who are not elected councillors. Commissions must be convened during the first year of a council's mandate. Council responsibilities include planning, public works, education, markets and other facilities, or health

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

**3.3.3 Sub-divisional councils** are council areas created within each city council area. Most city councils have two or three district council areas, with the exception of Yaoundé and Douala which have seven each. The sub-divisional councils are headed by directly elected mayors.

**3.3.4 City councils:** in some larger towns, due to political complexities or strategic administrative considerations, executive power is vested in a government delegate appointed by the president. The rationale for an independent government appointee was to guarantee civic rights, particularly in urban communities

consisting of minority original inhabitants and majority non-natives; however, special status can be granted to councils for other reasons, for example, difficulties in the delivery of basic services such as water.

### 3.4 Traditional leadership

These are auxiliaries of the administration.

## 4. ELECTIONS

### 4.1 Recent local elections

The last local elections were held in July 2007, with a 65.37% turnout. The next are scheduled for 2013.

### 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 the elected councillors from among their number.

### 4.3 Elected representatives

The mayor is supported by councillors, the number of which 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
- More than 300,000: 61 councillors.

### 4.4 Women's representation

In 2009 approximately 1.5% of councillors were women (149 out of almost 10,000) including 14 mayors (3.9%) nationally. Only Northern region was without a single female mayor. South-west region has three women mayors and Central province has four; two of whom head sub-divisional councils in Yaoundé. Littoral region has one woman mayor.

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement

There is no legal requirement for community involvement in local authority decision-making. However, with the assistance of UNDP in collaboration with the World Bank, there has been strong participation of the communities in the drawing up of every council's development plan.

### 5.2 Implementation

Any citizen can suggest policy changes or improvements to local or regional authorities. Any inhabitant of a given council can, at their own cost, request copies of minutes, deliberations, budgetary information and accounts of a given council. Historically, political parties and or traditional leaders have communicated the needs of minority and special interest groups.

### 5.3 E-government

There is an e-government strategy which is managed by the mayors.

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVT.

### 6.1 National local government associations

The United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (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, capacity-building support and good practice dissemination as well as financial assistance.

### 6.2 Other local government associations

Government encourages inter-municipal cooperation. The Public Body for International Cooperation (Organisme Public de Coopération Internationale) coordinates councils at divisional level and builds networks with local authorities overseas. Councils are permitted, and increasingly encouraged, to seek decentralised cooperation ties with local governments abroad, especially in Europe and America.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

United Councils and Cities of Cameroon acts as an advisory body to the national government on matters affecting local authorities.

In situations where approval for action is required from central government, senior divisional officers and regional governors must acknowledge and respond to a council decision within 15 days.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

There are a number of central government bodies which monitor the finances of local authorities. These include the audit unit of MINATD, the Directorates General of Treasury and Budget, and the Higher State Control.

Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) is the national body which supervises the electoral process. Its members are appointed by presidential decree after consultation with political parties and civil society; although no elected official, political party member, traditional ruler or member of the forces of law and order is eligible for appointment as a member. ELECAM has regional and council representatives, and at divisional level the preparation and conduct of elections is overseen by divisional supervisory commissions.

A National Council for Decentralisation (Conseil National de la Décentralisation) which is charged 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, placed under the authority of the minister in charge of decentralisation. Its mission is to ensure the preparation and the follow-up of transfers of competences and resources transferred 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

Local authorities cannot set deficit budgets.

### 9.1 Locally raised revenue

Local councils are empowered to levy taxes and charges including direct council taxes, cattle tax and licences, market fees and rents on shops, and motor park fees. They can also charge a business levy, which is an annual licence payment calculated on the basis of the nature and size of an individual's economic activity, with a maximum assessment of CAF100,000 (US\$200).

### 9.2 Transfers

Local authorities receive grants from the central government through MINATD via its Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (Fonds Spécial d'Équipement et d'Intervention Intercommunale) (FEICOM) based in Yaoundé with ten regional branches. The grants are given according to a council's population, surface area and other considerations.

FEICOM also provides loans for investments and council running costs; and supports social projects such as school infrastructure, water supply, healthcare facilities, slaughter-houses and transport infrastructure. The loans granted depend on the type of project being funded. 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 communal structures.

One of FEICOM's key roles is the collection, centralisation and redistribution of the additional council tax (centimes additionnels communaux) (CAC). CAC is a 10% levy on certain national taxes 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% goes to central government, 20% to FEICOM and 70% to councils. Of the total that goes to councils, 20% goes to Douala City Council; 40% to Yaounde City Council 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 communes has led to considerable inequalities in resources.

### 9.3 Local authority staff

The secretary general (head of administration) and the municipal treasurer are the only council staff who are appointed by MINATD. Appointments are made from among council staff or via secondment from relevant ministries in consultation with central authorities.

The training centre for all local government officials is the Local Government Training Centre (CEFAM), based in Buéa in South West Province. CEFAM is supervised by MINATD and trains both current council personnel and new recruits, on three course cycles. There is so far no legal provision to manage the career of local government personnel. This often leads to a lack of qualified staff even in the larger councils.

Complete information across all councils is not available, but it is the case that small councils will spend only on the most important functions such as staff costs, road maintenance, healthcare and education; while other councils are able to cover a wider range of services.

## 10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

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

- Utilities, including water, sewage and waste disposal
- Town planning and urban development
- Municipal roads and public transport
- Registration of births, marriages and deaths
- Community health and safety
- Social services
- Primary education and literacy
- Sport, culture and leisure.

In practice, it is likely that the smaller councils have difficulty fulfilling their statutory responsibilities without an 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. Major capital expenditure is needed but this problem has not been fully addressed in the decentralisation legislation that has so far been passed.

### References and useful websites

1. National Institute of Statistics, Cameroon [www.statistics-cameroon.org](http://www.statistics-cameroon.org)  
Census 2005 [www.statistics-cameroon.org/news.php?id=18](http://www.statistics-cameroon.org/news.php?id=18)
2. UN statistics <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>
3. IMF statistics [www.imf.org/external/data.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/data.htm)
4. Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation [www.minatd.gov.cm](http://www.minatd.gov.cm)
5. Cameroon is only constitutionally bicameral; in practice the legislature is unicameral since the upper house, the senate, has not yet been established.
  - Government of Cameroon [www.spm.gov.cm](http://www.spm.gov.cm)
  - UNDP Human Development Report [www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org)
  - United Councils and Cities of Cameroon [www.cvuc-uccc.org](http://www.cvuc-uccc.org)
  - Report of the National Councils' Forum, Yaoundé, Cameroon, [www.casetra.org/NationalCouncilYaoundeMarch10.pdf](http://www.casetra.org/NationalCouncilYaoundeMarch10.pdf)
  - Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance [www.feicom.cm](http://www.feicom.cm)
  - National Community-Driven Development Program [www.pndp.gov.cm](http://www.pndp.gov.cm)
  - Kumbo Council [www.kumbourbancouncil.org](http://www.kumbourbancouncil.org)
  - Constitution of Cameroon [www.prc.cm/index\\_en.php?link=h](http://www.prc.cm/index_en.php?link=h) (French) <http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/Cameroon.pdf> (English)



**Annex A. Summary of service provision in different spheres of government**

Service	Delivering authority			Remarks
	Central	Provincial	Local Government	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>				
Police	■			
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil justice	■			
Civil status register			■	
Statistical office	■	■	■	All three levels of government (should) have statistical responsibilities.
Electoral register	■		■	
<b>EDUCATION</b>				
Pre-school	■			Communes are to contribute to secondary and vocational educational establishments where possible.
Primary	■			
Secondary	■			
Vocational and technical	■			
Higher education	■			
Adult education	■			
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>				
Kindergarten and nursery				Social welfare coverage is near non-existent.
Family welfare services				
Welfare homes				
Social security				
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>				
Primary care	■	■		Responsibilities are split between national and local government (division yet to be fully defined). Construction of basic facilities is expected to devolve to local authorities.
Hospitals	■	■		
Health Protection	■	■		
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>				
Housing			■	Responsibilities in this area are currently ill-defined in both legislation and practice.
Town planning			■	
Regional planning				
<b>TRANSPORT</b>				
Roads	■		■	Seaports, railways and airports are the responsibility of stand-alone public and private organisations.
Transport			■	
Urban roads			■	
Urban Rail			■	
Ports			■	
Airports			■	
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>				
Water and sanitation			■	
Refuse collection and disposal			■	
Cemeteries and crematoria			■	
Slaughterhouse			■	
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				Electricity supply has been privatised. Privatisation of water is underway. There is no provision for heating and gas.
District heating				
Water supply				
Electricity				
<b>ECONOMIC</b>				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■		■	
Economic promotion	■		■	
Trade and industry	■		■	
Tourism	■		■	

■ = Discretionary service by the local authority. Table reflects the impact of decentralisation legislation of 2004