



CAMEROON: DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROJECT DESIGN

AMEX organized a five-person team of two Cameroonians and three expatriates to design the Cameroon Democratic Governance Project for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The team sought full community participation in defining the priorities and identifying viable partners. After careful research, the team interviewed a wide range of officials and political actors. The team held two three-day brainstorming sessions with non-governmental organizations in different parts of the country. The team also went into villages, accompanied by local counterparts, to understand rural perspectives on governance priorities.

A consensus emerged that assistance should concentrate on strengthening civil society and on helping the legislative and judicial branches of government increase their ability to check executive-branch dominance. The team proposed two approaches: one geared toward supporting governmental institutions and the other geared toward supporting nongovernmental institutions.

The governmental program included providing lawmakers with training in legislative procedure and access to comparative law data bases, building the judiciary through in-service training and legal reform of the laws governing the judiciary, and supporting the electoral process.

The nongovernmental component aimed to empower civil society. The team designed an Open Forum Fund, where nongovernmental organizations and researchers interested in working on human rights, civic education, press freedom, legal aid to the poor, and constitutional issues could apply for funding.

To respond to crosscutting objectives of USAID's Cameroon mission, the team analyzed local governance processes in a variety of existing projects, ranging in content from health to forestry to agricultural marketing policy. The team provided the full range of project design elements mandated by USAID, from the logframe to an analysis

of social impact, a comparison of the economic costs and benefits of the options chosen and of alternative designs, and a consideration of environmental and gender factors.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

AMEX has found that with full community participation, the design process becomes a development process. Instead of polling passive "interviewees," the AMEX team engaged community members in the conceptualization of the design and encouraged them to organize and act on their ideas without waiting for outside funding.

Cameroonian NGOs followed through, even when USAID decided to close its Cameroon mission. The NGOs convinced the mission to use its closeout funds for training in proposal writing and organizational development. Some of the organizations agreed to share scarce resources, and they organized networks for mutual support and exchange of information at the national and international levels.