

Strengthening Institutional Planning Framework on Urban Slum Upgrading Challenges in Bamenda City, Cameroon

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Abstract

While slum upgrading depends significantly on a realistic institutional framework which provides functional and operational modalities, the pitfalls on urban planning for decent affordable housing conditions remain a nightmare in most African metropolis. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the constraints on slum upgrading challenges in Bamenda city. Field observation was carried out in the different slum development sites in Bamenda town to gather information on the state of slums vis-à-vis institutional actions in planning and development. Formal interviews were granted to personnel of the Ministries of Urban Development and Housing, Decentralisation and Local Development as well as the City Councils. These interviews were complemented with published materials and Council Annual Reports on planning efficiency, challenges and development implications. Findings reveal that slum upgrading is bedeviled by a plethora of challenges being the internal institutional conflicts, nepotism, embezzlement, bribery and corruption characterized by planning chasing development not development chasing planning and the lack of adequate, qualified and experienced manpower for planning and governance. Institutional capacity building as well as strengthening and adjusting urban planning frameworks is highly recommended for effective slum upgrading in the city.

Keywords: *Urban slums, upgrading, challenges, Institutional framework, Bamenda, Cameroon*

1. Introduction

Institutions as a whole remain a springboard for development (Doner, 2010). Institutional planning framework specify who does what, how, when, where, with whom and with what. When there are no clear answers to these fundamental development questions, there cannot be effective city management

and slum upgrading resulting to decent affordable urban housing. Consequently, the effectiveness of slum upgrading depends significantly on a realistic and functional institutional planning framework which provides functional and operational modalities. The current urban planning institutional lapses experienced in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular partly explains why in spite of repeated past attempts to plan cities and upgrade slums, there is yet to be an approved town plan for many cities. As such, slums keep on developing spontaneously without adequate planning and control.

Slum upgrading (improving the housing conditions and wellbeing of the slum dwellers) is a principal component of the UN-Habitat Global Housing Strategy addressing decent housing conditions in cities. The number of people residing urban slums have been increasing over the years. Globally, about 1 billion people (almost a third of the world's urban population) live in slum settlements (UN DESA, 2013; City Alliance, 2014). The number could reach 3 billion inhabitants by 2050 (UN DESA, 2013). In 2012 for instance, an estimated 863 million urban residents worldwide lived in slum conditions, compared with 760 million in 2000 and 650 million in 1990 (Bah *et al.*, 2018). With reference to the different world regions, the proportion of the urban population living in slum conditions in urban areas is particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa with 62% and, to a lesser extent, in Southern Asia (35%), compared with 24% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13% in North Africa (UN-Habitat 2014b). To improve on the housing and living conditions of the urban slum dwellers, slum upgrading is a feasible strategy in many world areas, particularly in the developing countries. Bah *et al.*, (2018) recognized slum upgrading as the most proactive and effective way of improving the housing conditions and lives of the millions of low-income and BOP (Bottom-of-the-Pyramid) households living in slums in African cities. The importance of upgrading city slums is highlighted by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)11; "ensuring access for all urban households to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services, as well as upgrading slums, by 2030". The aim of slum upgrading is to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable". The very first target of SDG 11 is to; "ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums" (UN, 2015).

Despite their rapid proliferation and negative impacts they pose to their occupants, upgrading slum neighbourhoods in the developing countries is a nightmare. For instance, Bah *et al* (2018) remarked that if the currently high growth rates coupled with the rapidly expanding urban populations continue, it is doubtful that cities will have the institutional, infrastructural and financial capacity to satisfactorily accommodate urban dwellers as the majority of new urban dwellers will likely reside in slums and informal settlements. As such, institutional planning lapses or weaknesses is a key slum upgrading challenge that the government of Cameroon have to address towards the drive of meeting the 'emergence' development agenda or goal by 2035, as slums continue to be an on-going and dominant feature of the country's urban centres. More than

half of Cameroonians now live in towns and cities (53%) and an estimated 60% of those are living in informal settlements and slums. With an urban growth rate of around 54%, the challenge of managing and preventing slums in the country is critical (Wanie, 2019). It is against this backdrop that this study examines strengthening and adjusting institutional planning in response to urban slum upgrading challenges in some Cameroonian cities towards attaining decent affordable urban housing.

As such, the study hypothesized that strengthening and adjusting institutional planning in response to urban slum upgrading challenges in Bamenda city could provide the missing link for efficient slum control towards realizing decent affordable urban housing conditions in Bamenda town. This study, therefore, designs an institutional planning framework towards strengthening and adjusting organisational structures in the Bamenda City Council (BCC) for efficient slum upgrading and control. The designed planning framework will (i) provide city councils with functional organisational structures of their technical services with clear job descriptions (ii) clearly spell out the processes and procedures for continuous administration of planning, land development and management, maintenance of networks/buildings (iii) upgrade and diversify the technical manpower available to city councils (iv) strengthen and broaden partnership at local, regional, national and international levels through appropriate mechanisms for participation and public involvement (v) facilitate realistic urban land reforms in support of planning and fair and just land redistribution (vi) facilitate access to regular and adequate funding for planning and slum upgrading, urban design, land development and maintenance.

2. Study Area

Bamenda is the capital of the North West Region of Cameroon. It is found in the Western highlands along the Cameroon Volcanic Line (CVL). Bamenda is located between latitude 5°56' and 5°58' North of the Equator and longitude 10°09' and 10°11' East of the Greenwich meridian (Figure 1). Bamenda is bounded to the North by Bafut, East by Bambui, South by Santa and West by Mbengwi and Bali. Bamenda is 374km and 316km from Yaounde and Douala respectively (North West Regional Delegation of Transport, 2017).

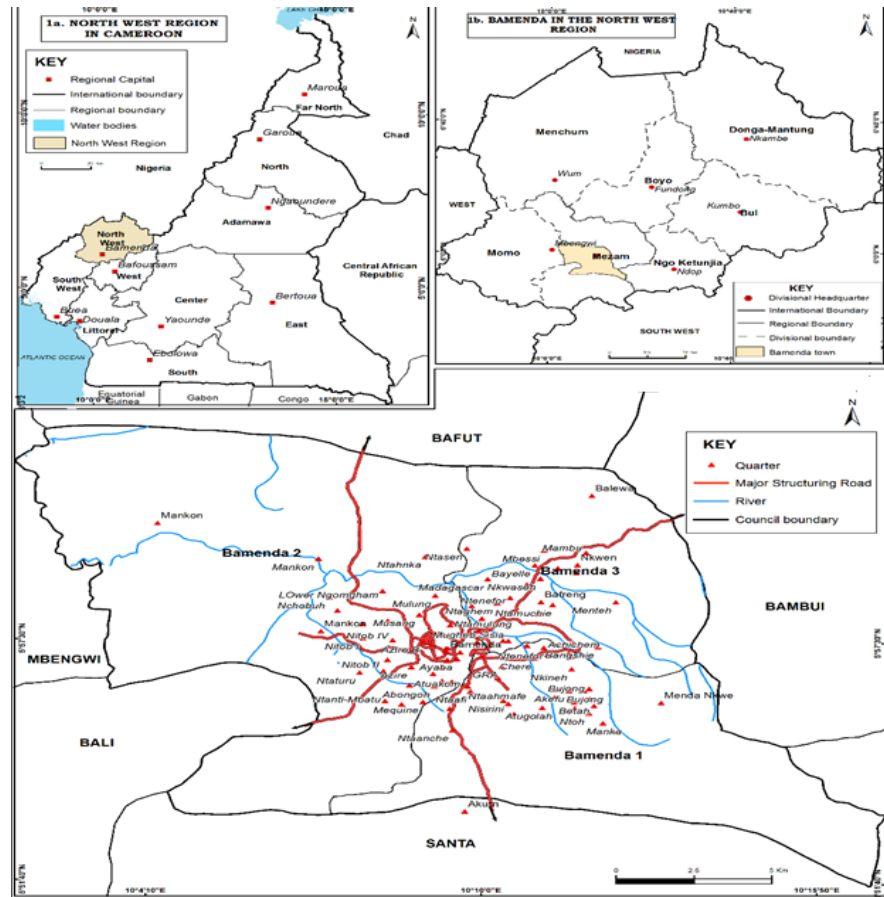


Figure 1: Location of Bamenda in the Northwest Region of Cameroon

Source: Adopted from the National Institute of Cartography (NIC) (1992) and Bamenda City Council (2019)

The local administration of Bamenda is structured into Bamenda I, Bamenda II and Bamenda III councils. Bamenda I is found on a high lava plateau (Up Station) with an altitude of about 1400m above sea level. Bamenda II and Bamenda III are found on the low plateau (Down Town) with an altitude of about 1100m above sea level. These two plateau surfaces are separated by a broad escarpment. Increasing rates of urbanization and urban development have, however, forced people especially the poor to construct houses on this escarpment without recourse to urban planning regulations with the end results being slum emergence.

3. Material and Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey design in the collection and analyses of data. Data collection was a blend of field work and published materials. Field

work involved a visit to the study area in which an inventory of neighbourhoods within the city where slums are common and needed upgrading were noted for questionnaires administration. This was followed by the circumscription of potential areas to collect the required data on the state of slums vis-à-vis institutional actions in planning and development. To simplify and facilitate the task of collecting data, the town was divided into zones. Each zone was visited and the expected assignment completed before another zone was visited in order to avoid mix-ups. Particular neighbourhoods of interest included; Sisia I, Sisia II, Sisia II, Sisia IV, Abaingoh, Ntangang, New Layout, Ntaturu, Ntenifor, Ntamulung, Old Town Valley, Below Foncha, Small Mankon, Musang, Atuzaire, Ndamukong, Banjah Street and Mulang (Figure 1).

The total human population of the study (322889 inhabitants) was obtained from the results of the 2005 Population and Housing census results in Cameroon obtained from the Institute National de la Cartographie (INC) and Bureau Central des Recensements et des Etudes de la Population (BUCREP) in Yaounde and projections by the Bamenda City Council. The sample size of the population for the study was obtained from the number of households in each neighbourhood since it was much easier to administer the questionnaire in terms of households than the actual population. Effectively, 4% for neighbourhoods having between 1 to 1000 households, 2% of neighbourhoods between 1001 to 2000 households and 1% with neighbourhoods having between 2001 to 3000 households and above were sampled in each of the three Council areas. This was in line with the proposition made by Nwana (1982). The random sampling technique was used in administering the questionnaire in the field (identified slum neighbourhoods). This technique was deemed indispensable since it achieved maximum precision in estimates within the given sample size and, therefore, played a fundamental role in avoiding bias in the selection of the sample.

Formal interviews were also granted to local experts like policy makers and city planners saddled with the responsibilities of controlling urban development. This included personnel of the Ministries of Decentralisation and Local Development, Urban Development and Housing as well as the Bamenda City and sub-divisional councils. The interview technique was complemented by the use of published materials and Council Annual Report on planning efficiency, challenges and development implications. The collected data was presented descriptively in tables, percentages and a figure to illustrate trends and patterns of institutional responses to slum development.

4. Findings and Discussions

In Cameroon in general, councils are charged with the responsibility to upgrade slums and involve in local planning and development though remain auxiliary to the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development. Other sectorial ministries including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MINDUH), Ministry of Secondary Education (MINSEC), Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE), Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB), Ministry of

Public Works (MINTP), Ministry of Surveys, State Property and Land Tenure (MINDCAF) and Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (MINEE) also contribute with respect to their areas of competences. Furthermore, local traditional authorities also make decisions which significantly affect the planning and development of the cities. Notwithstanding, field findings revealed that efficient city council institutional organisation towards slum upgrading in Bamenda city is bedeviled by a plethora of challenges including; internal institutional conflicts, nepotism, embezzlement, bribery and corruption characterized by planning chasing development not development chasing planning and the lack of adequate, qualified and experienced manpower for planning and governance.

4.1. Quality of Personnel at th local councils

The quality, quantity and capacity of personnel of decentralized local councils as well as government institutions charged with slum upgrading in their respective municipalities are major challenges to the institutional responses to slum upgrading in Bamenda city. In a bid to attain the policy objectives of promoting sustainable development through good governance, the government of Cameroon has been devolving some of its responsibilities to the local councils through decentralisation. Assigning some powers to municipal councils means fortifying their capacities to sustainably manage their various spheres of jurisdiction in matters of urban management such as slum upgrading. Results (Table 1), however, revealed that this was far from being achieved.

Table 1: Perception of respondents on the quality of personnel at the various local councils of the Bamenda city

Council Area	Neighbourhoods	Number of respondents (sample)	Quality of personnel			
			Good quality	Poor quality	Inadequate number	No idea
Bamenda I	Abaingoh Central	17	4	9	1	3
	Abaingoh Ntasha	13	2	7	2	2
	Ntangang	19	5	11	0	3
	Ayaba	30	6	18	2	4
	Ntenefor	10	2	5	2	1
Total for Bamenda I		89	19	50	7	13
Total Percentage (%)		100	21.3%	56.1%	8%	14.6%
	Lower Ngomgham	36	7	21	3	5
	Musang	29	6	15	2	6

Bamenda II	Mulang	20	2	13	1	4
	Atu-Azire	25	3	18	3	1
	Small Mankon	28	5	20	1	2
	Ntamulung	34	5	25	3	1
	Upper Ngomgham	14	2	9	2	1
	Old Town	36	5	25	2	4
Total for Bamenda II		222	35	146	17	24
Total Percentage (%)		100	15.8%	65.8%	7.7%	10.7%
Bamenda III	Below Foncha	18	4	11	2	1
	Ntasen	9	1	5	1	2
	New layout	25	2	17	2	4
	Sisia I	25	4	15	1	5
	Sisia II	29	6	13	4	6
	Sisia III	22	4	13	1	4
	Sisia IV	34	24	3	2	5
Total for Bamenda III		162	46	78	13	27
Total Percentage (%)		100	28.3%	48.1%	8%	16.6%
Grand Total		473	100	271	38	64
Percentage (%)		100%	21.2%	57.3%	7.9%	13.6%

Source: Fieldwork (2020)

The opinion of the population shows that the slum upgrading mechanism in Bamenda exhibits a clear evidence of inadequate/absence of human resources in specific disciplines to contain the proliferation and upgrading of slums. Despite some progress and opportunities in the devolution of functions, institutional deficiencies/fragility still continue to manifest itself as local resources and capacities for slum upgrading are lacking. Table 1 depicts that 57.3% of the population acknowledged that the quality of personnel at the various decentralized sectors of slum upgrading in Bamenda was poor, while 21.1% noted that the quality of personnel was good as against 7.9%, who averred that the number of personnel was inadequate in terms of numbers while 36.6% had no idea on the personnel quality. A greater percentage of the population stressed that poor personnel is masterminded by an acute if not insufficient quantity/quality of staff, sheer lack of professionalism in technical aspects of slum upgrading such as Information Technology (IT) use (Table 2).

Table 2: Existing knowledge of the different stakeholders charged with slum upgrading in Bamenda city

Institution	Knowledge on RS	Knowledge on GIS	Knowledge on Slum upgrading
Bamenda City Council	1	1	0
Bamenda I Council	0	0	0
Bamenda II Council	0	0	0
Bamenda III Council	0	0	0
MINDHU	1	1	2
MINCAF	0	0	0

❖ **RS-Remote Sensing, GIS-Geographic Information System**

Source: Fieldwork (2020)

The ability of urban authorities to sustainably manage the proliferation and upgrading of slums is dependent on timely access to spatial information and the competence of turning these data into information to support decision-making. This is because effective physical planning depends on the strength and authenticity of the spatial information on which it must invariably be based. Field work (Table 2), however, revealed a lacuna or incompatibility between urban management professionals as technical and professional inadequacies stand tall in the list of institutional challenges to slum upgrading in Bamenda city. There is the severe lack of specialized skills indispensable for quality data collection and treatment for the enhancement of effective slum upgrading and urban development operations such as modern day cartographic softwares in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Remote Sensing (RS) and Satellite Imagery (SI) applications.

Just 2 personnel in the entire North West Regional Delegation in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Department have a fair knowledge on slum upgrading, one in Remote Sensing and one in Geographical Information Systems. In the Bamenda City Council, just one personnel has a fair knowledge of both RS and GIS. In all three municipalities, individuals with such skills are non-existent. From such findings, it can reasonably be inferred that a dearth of spatial information from which to make intelligent governance decisions and from which to pre-empt and forecast the escalation of emerging or pre-existing slums and their effective upgrading exists. This means pre-existing spatial data or geo-information in the form of maps, plans, aerial photographs and satellite images which form the basis on which slum upgrading for sustainable planning is undertaken are poorly updated and put into use.

Besides, new data on the incidence of slums and their related implications is hardly being generated which renders upgrading onerous. Most often than not, experts on slum upgrading are sub contracted when need arises, but may hardly produce the desired/sustained results since they are more interested in making

financial gains. As a result, no realistic and sustainable slum upgrading programme can be done without an adequate spatial information base as it becomes difficult to plan, subdivide, develop and provide appropriately for infrastructure, utilities and services in order to enhance environmental vibrancy. Available scientific knowledge is thus limited and poorly utilized in forecasting the proliferation of slums and the necessary outreach for the benefit of the inhabitants of the city. Consequently, modern day critical up-to-date information collection and dissemination techniques indispensable in informing decision-makers in facilitating swift responses to slum upgrading is severely lacking. This is a clear indication that the activities of slum upgrading institutions in Bamenda city is still at their infancy as the continuous proliferation of slum neighbourhoods is the rule rather than the exception. Effective action is thus constrained by the very limited professional capacity to check the proliferation of new slum neighbourhoods and effectively upgrading existing ones.

Lack of skilled personnel in slum upgrading institutions in Bamenda city (Table 2) could be substantiated for by the fact that most personnel responsible for slum upgrading at all levels are government technocrats, trained as civil administrators or appointed into the government due to their political affiliations. Such policymakers generally lack basic knowledge on slum upgrading issues since they are not trained on urban management issues. They, therefore, lack basic professional experiences and qualification in relation to the portfolios assigned to them. Based on this, it is ostensibly clear that the various stakeholders are unable to make the requisite impacts as the quality and quantity of personnel to carry out slum upgrading is constrained.

Such a grim situation is worsened by the fact that recruitment at the various urban development/management institutions is through family ties and hardly by merit. As an informant avouched; it is common in Bamenda to see an unemployed individual roaming the quarter and the next day, you discover that he has been gainfully employed in either the BCC or one of the other three sub divisional councils. Such persons tend to do on-the-job training which most often is inadequate and in other cases no in-house training opportunities do exist. This has resulted to under-resourced institutions which make the delivery process in institutions for slum upgrading inefficient and irresponsive, hindering the effective coordination and management of slum upgrading due to a lack of comprehensive knowledge on various conceptual frameworks for integrating slum upgrading into the discourse and dynamics of urban development.

4.2. Financial limitations of the decentralized sectors for slum upgrading in Bamenda city

The euphoria with which decentralization was embraced as a new found mechanism for sustainable urban governance in Bamenda has faced a lot of slum upgrading challenges due to financial constraints. Mixed evidence on its successes exist largely because responsibilities devolved to local councils are

seldom matched by the commensurate financial resources. While some authority and functions have been decentralized to local councils, fiscal decentralization has been slow to follow suit. That is why the Mayor to the Bamenda II Municipality maintained that: *“The impact of decentralization is highly questionable given the fact that the limited powers devolved to local councils are not being accompanied by the commensurate financial resources”*. This is a direct contradiction of Section 7 of Law 17 of the 1996 decentralisation laws in Cameroon which requires transfer to councils of “the necessary resources and means for the normal exercise of the powers devolved” and article 55(2) which requires that “regional and local authorities shall have administrative and financial autonomy and be freely administered by elected councils”.

Therefore, despite some progress and increased resources brought about by decentralization to sub-divisional councils in the management of the Bamenda urban space, the sub divisional councils are continually being strapped by limited financial and revenue-generating capabilities as they experience obstacles in accessing capital markets leading to uncoordinated piecemeal interventions, compromised by lack of inclusion mechanisms required for upgrading slums. The consequence is weak institutional capacity to act, adapt and react to circumstances, particularly institutions charged with slum upgrading. Financial constraints on the part of the BCC which mars slum upgrading prospects in the town are caused by the fact that revenue collected from the town by the City Council is controlled and determined by the central government. According to the Government Delegate to the BCC; *“Our annual budget for 2016 was just 3.5 billion CFA (about \$7 million)”*. Due to such financial constraints, the availability of logistics to ensure sustainable slum upgrading practices is seriously constrained as most departments charged with urban development are poorly resourced in terms of adequate logistics to enable them carry out their functions effectively. There is the complete lack of modern equipment in the BCC as well as the three municipal councils to monitor and follow up unsound urban development practices like slum development. The Department of Urban Development in the Bamenda City Council has only 2 Pick-Up vehicles and a few other related tools for routine inspection and monitoring of on-going building projects and demolition of unauthorized structures in environmentally challenged zones. As a result, the enforcement and follow up of existing urban regulations is weak as routine inspection and monitoring of physical development is more of theory than practice. The implication is the resultant high spate and prevalence of unauthorized and haphazard physical development in the form of slums emerging while slum upgrading at the same time is hard to come by.

4.3. Conflicts in decentralization/urban governance and impact on slum upgrading in Bamenda city

Conflicts refer to competition and contradictions generated by differences in needs, interests, values as well as access to power and resources because of ethnicity, religion, politics or class (Nathan, 1998). It is thus the pursuit of

incompatible goals by different individuals or groups of people. Conflicting interests in urban governance in Bamenda constitutes a serious deterrent to the institutional framework for slum upgrading. Such conflicts arise from the fact that urban management (governance) is masterminded by different stakeholders with vested interests (goals). Decentralization was expected to transfer powers (responsibilities) of the central government to their respective municipalities. The manner in which these responsibilities have been devolved to sub divisional/municipal councils leaves much to be desired because since the creation of the BCC, political affiliations and overlapping responsibilities have opened up flood gates for the clashing of opposed principles as a result of opposition of incompatible wishes heightening conflicts in urban management and thus a significant challenge to slum upgrading (Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons for institutional conflicts on slum upgrading in Bamenda city

Council Area	Neighbourhoods	Number of respondents (sample)	Causes of conflicts		
			Creation of the B.C.C	Overlapping responsibilities	Political affiliations
Bamenda I	Abaingoh Central	17	8	4	5
	Abaingoh Ntasha	13	6	3	4
	Ntangang	19	6	6	7
	Ayaba	30	18	7	5
	Ntenefor	10	4	2	4
Total for Bamenda I		89	42	22	25
Percentage Total		100%	47.2%	24.8%	28%
Bamenda II	Lower Ngomgham	36	20	7	9
	Musang	29	11	10	8
	Mulang	20	8	5	7
	Atu-Azire	25	12	6	7
	Small Mankon	28	10	7	11
	Ntamulung	34	14	7	13
	Upper Ngomgham	14	5	4	5
	Old Town	36	17	8	11
Total for Bamenda II		222	97	54	71

Percentage total		100%	43.7%	24.3%	32%
Bamenda III	Below Foncha	18	7	7	3
	Ntasen	9	3	2	4
	Newlayout	25	9	9	7
	Sisia I	25	12	10	3
	Sisia II	29	13	11	6
	Sisia III	22	5	6	11
	Sisia IV	34	14	12	8
Total for Bamenda III		162	63	57	42
Percentage Total		100%	38.9%	35.1%	26%
Grand Total		473	202	133	138
Percentage		100%	42.7%	28.1%	29.2%

Source: Fieldwork (2020)

According to Table 3, 42.7% of the population attributed conflicts as a challenge to the institutional framework on slum upgrading in Bamenda to the creation of the BCC, 28.1% linked conflicts to overlapping responsibilities between the BCC, the municipal councils and other institutions charged with urban management while 29.2% acknowledged conflicts as a deterrent to slum upgrading in Bamenda urban space to political affiliations.

4.3.1. The creation of the Bamenda City Council and related conflicts on slum upgrading in Bamenda city

From Table 3, 42.7% of the population avowed that the creation of the BCC is the root cause of conflicts which has handicapped the institutional framework on urban slum upgrading. This is due to the fact that the government of Cameroon tacitly embraced decentralization as a viable administrative and political strategy for improving the management of its cities but the process has been stalled by excessive state intervention resulting in conflicts. With the advent of decentralization, came the balkanization of the overgrown Bamenda City Council into Bamenda I, II and III to be headed by elected mayors who were formerly lorded by a state appointed Government Delegate and presently by a City Mayor, in a council which has always been controlled by an opposition party. According to the 2nd Deputy Mayor of the Bamenda II Municipality (2019), *'Conflicts emanate from the 'recentralization' of 'decentralized' powers by the central government with the creation of the BCC and the appointment of a Government Delegate to 'lord' over municipal mayors duly elected by the people'*. That is why, Neuman (2005) avouched that the failure of governance in today's cities has resulted in the growth of informal settlements and slums that constitute an unhealthy living and working environments for a billion people. This pseudo-decentralization process leads to conflicts of authority especially in city councils such as Bamenda rendering the planning framework for slum upgrading weak.

Interview accounts from the mayors of the Bamenda II and III sub-divisional councils corroborated the above assertion as they revealed that; *'the Government Delegate has upward accountability to the central government and not downward accountability to the population and usually does not respect and execute action plans of the sub-divisional councils as proposed by the masses'*. This, they noted is because the mayor claims to be appointed by a superior personality (head of state) and, therefore, owes his loyalty more to the central government where his career is determined rather than to the local populations. Such a supervisory mandate exercised by the BCC infringes and constricts the activities of the sub-divisional councils towards the management of their respective municipalities resulting in conflicts. This is due to the inability of locally elected officials (mayors) to effectively establish their legitimacy and win confidence from the grassroots that elected them as they cannot adequately implement meaningful projects of top priority like slum upgrading as proposed in their manifestos prior to election.

This interventionist and obstructionist role of imposed officials in Bamenda and other cities in Cameroon (Mbuagbo and Tabe, 2012) has led to heightened conflicts at the level of urban management and thus a serious stalemate for slum upgrading. According to a Counsellor at Ntamulung in Bamenda II; *"recentralization of decentralized functions in Bamenda is inappropriate and thus a challenge to slum upgrading because it stifles local initiative and hampers the ability to configure urgent urban management issues of utmost importance"*. This is due to the continuous tendency of the central government through the Bamenda City Council to interfere in purely local matters despite the decentralisation policy given the fact that when two opposing views come into contact, there is often an osmotic tendency for the stronger one to absorb the weaker one, or at least influence it much more than it is itself influenced by the weaker one. This, according to a field informant at Ntamulung in Bamenda II is synonymous to *'selling a goat to a buyer and at the same time holding back the rope in order not to let go of that goat.'* This is corroborated by Judge (1995), who concluded that there is often a three-way tussle between union, state and local administrations, in which the weakest element, always the local government, finds its powers eroded in favour of special-purpose agencies of state or national government in India.

Further field responses revealed that in addition to the challenges mentioned above, conflicts arise because the presence of the BCC over the sub-divisional councils has implied that slum upgrading initiatives are subjected to lack of participation of the local people (Bamenda I, II and III municipalities) in the planning activities that affect their localities, policy inconsistencies, administrative bureaucracy and corruption. Such 'recentralized' system of governance under the mirror of 'decentralisation remains too inflexible to respond slum upgrading with a commensurate speed and agility. This is because major planning approval decisions relating to the slum upgrading such as building permits, land titles and town planning certificates are unusually

delayed since they must first be validated at the level of the Bamenda City Council.

In this context, the realization of sustainable and effective slum upgrading remain a remote prospect as such a fuzzy management framework is counter-productive for quick dispensation of justice in cases of contravention of urban planning/construction laws which in most cases heightens conflicts and ambiguity. Such an epileptic situation is further convulsed by the overlap of functions at different levels of authority between the government delegate and the different mayors resulting in delays in decision making and implementation. This makes the implementation and follows up of legislations guiding slum upgrading rather weak and ineffective. There is thus a clear disjuncture between the objectives of decentralization pursued by the state in Bamenda and the actual expectations of local inhabitants of the city of Bamenda. This has made the planning framework on urban slum upgrading more of a theory than practice, creating conflicts of authority between officials within these two different political spectrums. These conflicts present a colossal obstacle to the long-term planning needed to sustainably strengthen and fortify institutional capacities charged with slum upgrading in the city.

4.3.2. Overlapping institutional roles/responsibilities as a constrain to slum upgrading in Bamenda city

From Table 3, 28.8% of the population acknowledged the fact that overlapping responsibilities has brought about conflicts in urban governance and, therefore, a deterrent for a sustained institutional planning framework on urban slum upgrading. The roles and responsibilities of the City Council, the sub-divisional councils as well as other governmental sectors charged with slum upgrading are not very clear and tend to overlap and conflict even with the existence of the laws on decentralization. This is due to a lack of clarity between the roles of the City Council, sub-divisional councils and the regional, divisional and sub-divisional delegations of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. The fact that functions tend to overlap amongst these various institutions is a potential source of conflict, inertia and inefficiency as the institutional collaborations that strengthen slum upgrading are often very weak.

Based on the above, developers are left in limbo between the two sides of the divide leading to frustrations in their endeavor to comply with development control initiatives for slum upgrading. This has limited and stiffened interaction and association between these stakeholders and by so doing, opening flood gates for uncontrolled slum development as developers by-pass such an overlapping gulf and carry out development projects in areas which are not environmentally robust such as Sissia quarters. This accounts for the development failures in environmentally challenged zones in the town due to the inability to effectively and sustainably enforce strict development controls to curb slum development. Corroborating this finding, Nlep (2003) cited in Banillon *et al* (2012) stressed that the severity of these conflicts can be

partially identified in the overlapping and incoherence in the power sharing between the city councils and sub-divisional councils in the cosmopolitan areas, as the city council is seen as carrying out the ‘main job’ while the sub-divisional councils basically do the ‘finishing’. In a like manner, Nick (2004) held that overlapping responsibilities and rivalry between central and municipal government has also been a pre occupying issue in Mombasa (Kenya), where the centre’s district administration has the same boundaries as the municipal council.

4.3.3. Political affiliation constraining slum upgrading in Bamenda city

According to 29.2% of the population (Table 3), political affiliations are at the origin of conflicts which has challenged the institutional framework for urban slum upgrading in Bamenda city. The co-habitation of two political parties in the management of the affairs of Bamenda city is largely unproductive and breeds conflicts which adversely affects slum upgrading initiatives. This is because both parties have incongruent and contradictory interests that are mutually exclusive. Like all City Councils in Cameroon, the BCC is run by a City Board, made up of two arms: the executive, headed by a Government Delegate and the deliberative arm, made up of elected councilors selected from the three local councils. As a respondent alleged, the lack of cooperation between the Government Delegate to the BCC and the mayors of the various sub-divisional councils in Bamenda which constrains slum upgrading activities is due to their political affiliations.

From the analyses above, this study advocates that effective slum upgrading in Cameroonian cities in general and Bamenda in particular depends on institutional capacity building as well as strengthening and adjusting organisational structures of City Councils and empowering the technical services (Figure 2) for efficiency which is likely to provide decent affordable urban housing conditions.

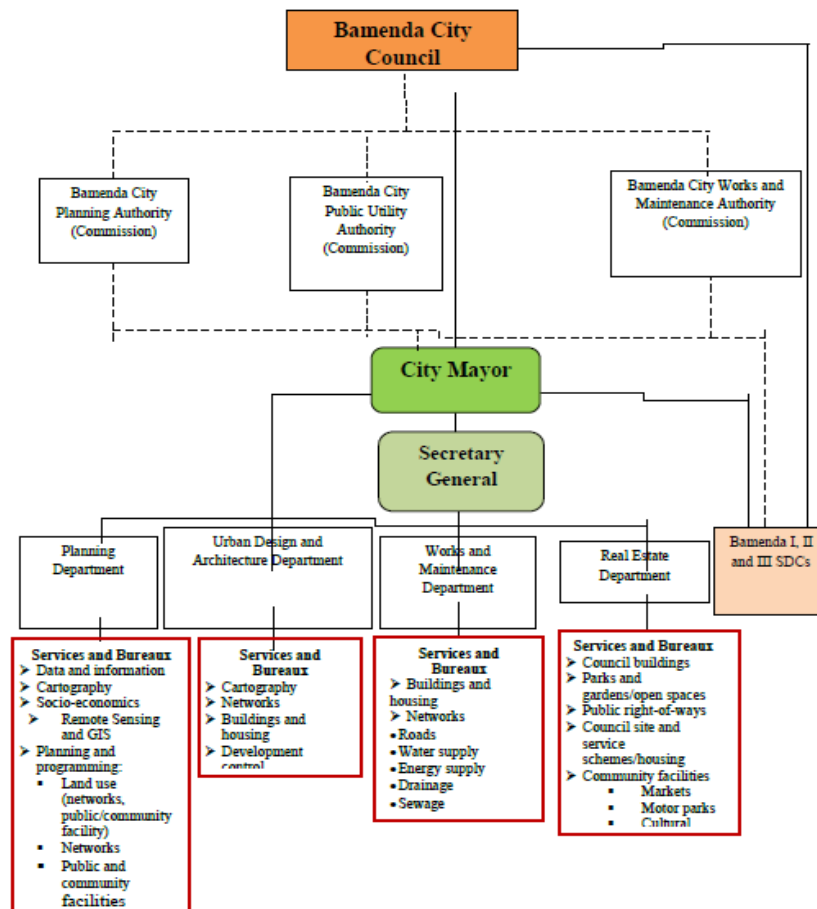


Fig. 2: Proposed Organisation of Bamenda City Council Technical Services for Effective Slum upgrading

Source: Fieldwork (2019-2020)

5. Conclusion

Slum upgrading and affordable housing conditions in Bamenda city has remained a nightmare due to, the deep institutional lacunas which fails to present a realistic institutional planning framework as well as conflict and overlapping responsibilities between government institutions (BCC, the different city councils, the Ministries of Urban Development and Housing, Surveys, State Property and Land Tenure) and the different divisional sub-divisional decentralized councils (Bamenda I, Bamenda II and Bamenda III) charged with slum upgrading. This is so because it is difficult to know where the functions of one institution starts and ends. As a result, good governance which is largely equated with democratic and decentralized institutions and

practices, accountability including transparency of policy making and administration has remained a text book concept. This study upholds that effective slums upgrading in Cameroonian cities in general and Bamenda in particular depends on a realistic institutional capacity building as well as strengthening and adjusting organisational structures of City Councils and empowering the technical services for efficient slum control and upgrading which is likely to provide decent affordable urban housing conditions.

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