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Feasibility Study in Public Contracts and its Effects on Sustainable Development in Cameroon: The Case of Mezam Division

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Abstract: The study captioned the feasibility study of public contracts for sustainable development in Cameroon, sets out to investigate why a series of reforms intended to solve the vices in public contract execution have brought forth little or no changes in the process in Mezam Division. The main thrust of this research as an exposition to public contract; underscores the unsatisfactory feasibility studies, which has negated sustainable development due to malpractices fueled in the execution plan. Considering the fact that public contracts ultimately explore such trends and patterns geared towards development strides in achieving sustainable development goals, the researcher had as main objective to explain why Cameroon continues to face problems of sustainability in the execution of public contracts despite the availability of legislation; guiding the execution process. The study made use of the Decision-making theory by Herbert Simon of 1947. The researcher adopted a mixed method of data collection using both primary and secondary sources. The tools for data presentation and analysis included frequency distribution tables, percentages, charts and chi-squared. Major findings show that despite the development of reforms and institutions to facilitate public contracts execution in Mezam Division, there are some irregularities in contract operations which negatively affects sustainable development through inadequate feasibility studies of contracts. The researcher; based on the findings, suggested some vibrant, robust and meticulous measures that will fast tract socio-economic and infrastructural sustainable development as envisaged. Admittedly, government should establish and reinforce control and audit mechanisms that will help to reduce the rate of in appropriation by contracting authorities and stakeholders. Serious disciplinary measures should be put in place as an ombudsman to regulate excesses and inefficiency. This will foster public accountability and transparency.

Keywords: Feasibility study, Contracts, Sustainable Development, Cameroon, Mezam Division;

INTRODUCTION

From the Renaissance period where the authority of the church was declining to the modern state in the 21st century where science was on the rise; public contracts execution has been a socio-economic priority and political evolution in government programs. The emergence of states made things more difficult for the church that led to the Thirty-Years-War which ended in 1648 with the treaty of Westphalia Sanctioning the Sovereignty of states. Throughout the world, public purchases are a very important component in the delivery of services and functioning of various departments

of government institutions. Very few studies have been carried out by researchers in the public procurement or public contract execution system in Cameroon's public sector. Thus, it is imperative on the government to ensure that goods and services are provided efficiently to the public. All goods and services for public utility should be guided by the public procurement requirements and regulatory framework.

In effect, public procurement requirements include economic goals, environmental protection or green procurement, social goals and international trade agreements among states (This applies within the BRICS countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). This research is focused on the feasibility studies of public contracts for sustainable development in Cameroon, particularly in Mezam Division. Public contracts are executed for the most part with governments budgetary allocations intended to benefit the entire public and the goods and services so procured are generally provided by private enterprises (Houston et al, 2009: 15-16).

Public contract is the process of acquiring goods, works and services at the best possible total cost, in the right quantity, quality, time and place for the benefit of society (Asantewaa, 2012:4). Public procurement is described as the process by which public sector organizations, ministries and local authorities acquire goods and services. These goods and services are quality items, stationery and standard to more complex expenditures such as the construction of roads and key services to citizens. Thus, effective evaluation and monitoring of a public contract process have sustainable development impact on corporate economies of developing countries (Bolton, 2006: 43). Between 50 to 70% of the country's budget and 14% of the Gross Domestic Product is spent on public purchases. Thai, (2001:12) states that various governments have used procurement systems as an important tool to achieve economic, social and other objectives that create opportunities to implement selected national policies within a country.

Moreover, sustainable development emerged as a new development paradigm and has been adopted by the international community as an overarching development goal since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. The concept was introduced by the Bruntland Commission in its report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987 as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The Rio declaration at the UNCED of 1992 endorsed a total of 27 principles towards achieving sustainable development that are captured in Agenda 21. Agenda 21 provides a thorough and broad-ranging program of actions demanding new ways of investing in our future to reach global sustainable development in the 21st century. Its recommendations ranged from new ways to educate, to new ways to care for natural resources, and new ways to participate in designing a sustainable economy.

Sustainable development is not just a concept; it is a stated objective of governments around the world. It is increasingly becoming the goal of businesses and organizations in the public and private sector, as well as that of individuals and communities. Sustainable development requires governments and organizations to consider the social, economic and environmental aspects of their operations. With sustainability, issues becoming vital in the developmental agenda of nations, it is time to shift the focus of developing countries' public procurement systems from mainly immediate economic advantages to sustainable public procurement systems, which will result in long term benefits.

Natural resources like land and water are limited and their per capital availability is diminishing due to rising population on the one hand and also due to excessive use of common pool resources on the other hand. The degradation of natural resources reduces the wellbeing of people; especially the poor and women suffer more, as they depend more on natural common property resources for fuel and water. Cameroon is a victim of climate change caused by rapid urbanization, industrialization and economic development activities worldwide.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Contract management is a crucial component of any project. As construction projects are complex and difficult to manage, adequate attention must be given to related contract management issues. Poor feasibility studies of public contracts can bring about serious unfavorable consequences that can even result in a project failure.

The consecration of the principle for the execution of public contracts and its enforceable practice; led to the creation of the Ministry of Public contracts in 2010 necessitated by lack of a harmonized system of operation that could guaranty efficiency and sustainability of executed projects.

The execution of public contracts today in Cameroon is seen by most top officials and contractors as the easiest source of wealth accumulation (Gerddes-Cameroon, 1999:32). As a consequence, scholars have observed that the financial outlay on public contracts is higher than the value of the project and/or goods and services supplied. To say the least, most of the money ends up in private pockets with the job poorly done or not executed at all.

By Decree No. 2013/7987/PM of September 2013, a Technical Follow-up Committee for Physical and Financial Execution of Public Investment Projects was set up to savage the in appropriation. According to reports from the divisional delegation of MINEPAT by the Mezam Divisional follow-up Committee for the physico-financial execution of Public Investment projects during their quarterly participatory follow up meetings from 2018 through to 2021, the execution of public contracts and procurements in Mezam have been highly unsatisfactory and inefficient, therefore negating sustainable development due to poor feasibility studies by officials in charge.

These negations are compounded by inadequate feasibility studies. With poor feasibility studies, scholars argue that project lifespan is heavily reduced, and such poorly executed projects fail to meet the needs of local communities. There is therefore the need to unravel with as much clarity as possible the intricacies on how poor feasibility studies in contract execution affect sustainable development.

According to decree No. 2018/4992/PM of 21 June 2018 which lay down the rules governing the process of maturation of public investment projects, stems from the shared observation that we have not yet taken full grasp of the interest and importance attached to the sound maturation of projects which negatively affects most projects during execution, irrespective of security challenges in the study area.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does poor feasibility study in contract execution affects sustainable development in Mezam Division?

Research Objectives

To examine the effects of poor feasibility study in the execution of public contracts in Mezam Division.

Hypothesis of the Study

H_O: Poor Feasibility studies in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

H_1: Poor Feasibility studies in contract execution positively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feasibility Study

Generally, the word “feasibility study” is an expression in the accounting and economic sciences that appeared in the early sixties to simply define precise examinations and reviews to determine the feasibility of different investment alternatives by calculating benefits and costs to extract

measurements for every alternative. The outcome of the feasibility study helps in selecting a defined project that meets the stated objectives of the project, together with a broad plan of implementation Frederick (1997b:4). That is the reason why a feasibility study will determine the performance outcome and the lifespan of a project.

Feasibility analysis is a detailed study of how a project can be completed and accounting for factors that might affect it such as technological, economic, legal and scheduling factors (Osbome et al, 1992:1). Without such a detailed study, there might be some factors that will negatively affect the success rate of implementing a project.

Feasibility studies allows determining and organizing all the necessary details to produce successful business work (Aliza et al, 2011:23). Application of Monte Carlo simulation in planning. It has become one of the most important tools for strategic planning nowadays. Moreover, feasibility analysis considers as an effective methodology for the strategic management of projects in various investment and economic activities, which lead to the investment decision-making over the project' whole life with the least possible degree of uncertainty (risk) (Brown et al 2016:8). That is why the researcher has used the decision-making theory to justify the rational decision-making Processes.

The feasibility analysis has been generated from the economic theory core to support investment decision-making under a certain degree of risk and/or uncertainty and stemmed from the existence of many internal and external variables concerning with the future that might affect decisions *(* Ndefru, 2016:565).

A real estate project is feasible when the real estate analyst determines that there is a reasonable likelihood of satisfying explicit objectives when a selected course of action is tested for fit to a context of specific constraints and limited resources *(* Mutamuliza et al, 2018: 47).

Cost feasibility is the simplest way of comparing options to ascertain whether to go ahead with a project. The notion is to weigh up project costs against benefits and identify for a project. Feasibility studies explore intervention-specific issues, such as research methods and protocols, context-specific relevance and practicality and efficacy potential but undue emphasis is commonly placed on efficacy potential in feasibility reports. Feasibly studies are a critical first step in determining whether an intervention should be subject to efficacy testing, such as in a randomized controlled trial (Bowen et al, 2009:4-17).

The Concept of Sustainable Development

According to Hylton (2019: 41, 515-534), in September 2000, the United Nation General Assembly adopted the UN Millennium Declaration that committed signatory states to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out a series of eight time-bound goals popularly known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)-with a deadline of 2015. The MDGs therefore served as a guide for the development, planning and evaluation at national and global levels.

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly in its resolution 70/1 adopted a new development framework referred to as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This new imperialistic framework, which identifies a total of seventeen development goals, now known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was elaborated on the bases of an evaluation of the level of achievement of the MDGs. The 2030 Agenda with its 17 SDGs is the current internationally agreed plan of action to end poverty, protect the planet’s biosphere and ensure prosperity for all. This is achievable through the execution of public contracts by properly managing the public investment budget. The overall goal of sustainable development is the long term economic, social and environmental stability. This is only achievable through the acknowledgment and integration of economic, environmental and social concerns when planning and implementing development interventions through public contracts execution.

The 17 sustainable development goals, specified in 169 targets, incorporate the themes already addressed by the MDGs. Cameroon subscribed to these post 2015 agenda without undermining the

commitment undertaken earlier on. The current national framework, through which Cameroon is nationalizing the 2030 global agenda, is the National Development Strategy 2020- 2030.This new national development framework is elaborated within the framework work of a long-term development vision adopted in 2009, which aims to make Cameroon "an Emerging Country, Democratic and United in its diversity by 2035".

The Sustainable Development Goals had strategic objectives such as; to create a conducive environment for economic growth, the accumulation of national wealth and ensure that necessary structural adjustments are made for the country's industrialization. The targets are to increase the annual growth rate from 4.6% to 8.1% on average between 2020 and 2030; increase growth of the secondary sector (excluding oil) beyond 8% on average.; reduce trade balance deficit from 8.8% of GDP in 2018 to less than 3% in 2030.The next strategic objective is to improve on the living conditions of populations as well as their access to basic social amenities, by ensuring that poverty and underemployment are considerably reduced. The main targets are to reduce the rate of poverty from 37.5% in 2014 to less than 25% in 2030, curb underemployment from 77% in 2014 to less than 50% in 2030, increased human capital index from 0.39 in 2018 to 0.55 as well as human development index from 0.52 in 2016 to 0.70 in 2030. Objective three is to intensify adaptation and mitigating measures against the effects of climate change and environmental management to ensure economic growth as well as sustainable and inclusive development, meanwhile objective four is intended to improve governance in order to strengthen public action performance in attaining development goals. This will include pursuing necessary reforms to enhance proper functioning of institutions and speeding up decentralization.

Analyses of some Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

These are examples of goals that are related to the activities leading to public contract execution, to ensure sustainable development:

Goal number four ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. Our schools are not child friendly. Thus, there is less interest in education. Yet, the sub-divisional councils are in charge of primary and nursery education.

SDG number six is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. It is a basic human need that everybody should have access to good drinking water following Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. But Water is still a major challenge in almost all the municipalities of Mezam Division. There is need to protect the eco-system by planting of trees around catchments and existing water points. Construct wells and boreholes as well as transform and purify water sources. All the councils have a hygiene and sanitation department, but the level of an unhealthy environment is very unhealthy, especially in the toilets of many households and even public utilities. Therefore, more attention must be given to the health of the population exposed to these health hazards.

SDG number seven ensures access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. If Menchum Fall in the North West was developed, for example, there will have been the establishment of industries in Mezam Division which will improve the standard of living of its inhabitants through growth in the economy through industrialization. Rather we have shortage of energy and constant power cuts that cannot improve the life of the denizens thereby leading to under development. It seems to me that the laws we have rather retard our development in this domain.

This directly influences ***SDG number eight*** intended to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Rather unemployment is on a steady rise. When employment is not well distributed, we find ourselves in crisis. This lack of energy also affects ***SDG number nine*** intended to build resilient infrastructures, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. Councils must work towards local development.

But looking at Africa entirely, this concept of sustainable development is not needed due to the fact that developed countries or western powers use it to maintain their control and dominance over developing or third world countries or colonies. An exposition of the concept can be examined worthwhile.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Decision -Making Theory

It is associated with the early work of Herbert Simon and particularly his *Administrative behavior*, first published in 1947. Rational choice theory is an application of decision theory that is heavily influenced by economics and the logic of Markets; it tends to use mathematical models to test the relationships between preferences or objectives and alternative courses of action. The purpose is to determine the most efficient or rational decisions to achieve preferred objectives; ordinarily thought to be individual self-interest or organizational survival. What has come to be called the decision-making theory is the other important application of early decision-making logic and it has evolved into arguably the most mature and fully developed body of empirically informed theory in Public Administration. Certainly, decision making theory is the most obvious multidisciplinary body of theory in Public Administration, influenced as it is by economics, organizational Sociology, social psychology and political science. Key elements of decision -making theory are found in virtually all other theoretical perspectives.

In greater details, since the 1990s, there has been a growing movement, backed largely by experimental research, to define how decisions are bounded, not by cognitive or environmental constraints, but instead by patterns or biases in individual information processing. Simon's *Administrative behavior* (1947/1997) argues that administration is a world of deciding and that decisions are as important as actions. Indeed, decisions are the predicates of actions and actions are almost always based on accumulated decisions. The modern study of administration needed to be more scientific, and the science of administration needed to be based on a new and different unit of analyses-making the decision. Epistemologically, the firm scientific grounding of decision-making theory is hardly surprising given its intellectual origins.

Certainly, as conceived by Simon, a theory of decision making has to be based on the logical positivist argument that there must be a primarily distinction between facts, which can be tested and verified, and individual and collective preferences and values, which cannot be scientifically verified. At the base of Simon's decision theory is the concept of efficient administrative rationality. The correctness of an administrative decision is a relative matter. It is correct if it selects appropriate means to reach desired end. The rational administrator is concerned with the selection of these agreed means. Rationality is based on means-ends logic and assumes that the question at hand is selecting the best means to achieve agreed-upon ends. Facts and values are related to means and ends. In the decision-making process; those alternatives are chosen which are considered to be appropriate means for reaching desired ends. Ends themselves, however are often merely instrumental to more final objectives.

Efficiency is however a tenet of orthodoxy that has refused to decline. No one now believes in a strict separation of politics and administration; but in the proposition that there are "Value decisions" and "Factual decisions" and that the latter can be made in terms of efficiency. To decide is to choose between alternatives, to choose between alternatives is to introduce values. In decision making theory, therefore it is rational for organizations to minimize risk and to regard collective institutional survival as an end or a value (Wallman, 1969:8). Simon also argued that the relationship between organizations and the individuals in them can be understood as equilibrium between the personal goals and preferences of individuals and organizational needs. Both the effective individual and the rational organization will tend toward conserving efficiency; that is, they will make decisions that will achieve as much of organizational preferences and values as possible within given resources and other contingencies.

Decisions made under conditions of the rational conserving efficiency concept will be guided by preferences for institutional order, stability, predictability and survival (Uphoff, 1986:12). This understanding of decision-theoretic rational conserving efficiency, although generally descriptive of public-sector decision behavior, de-emphasizes the shared values of decision makers and their collective commitments to organizational purposes.

In its rudimentary form, rational decision theory sought to clarify and put in priority order; organizational values and objectives, consider the available alternative or alternatives that might achieve those objectives and analyze alternatives to find the alternative or group of alternatives most likely to achieve preferred objectives. In its most simplified form, rational decision-making theory describes goal-oriented behavior. Rationality is a central concept in decision making theory. Although rationality has many meanings (Sane, intelligent, calculating), in decision making theory, rationality is more narrowly defined "as a particular and very familiar class of procedures for making choices" (Milward, 1996:2). This includes a rationality of process, usually called procedural rationality, which links choices to preferred outcomes; usually called substantive rationality.

Two distinct patterns of rational logic also appear in decision making theory. Both are based on Simon's initial logical-positivist means-ends description of rational decision making, but they define ends differently. One is the rational decision-making logic of consequences; the other; the rational decision-making logic of appropriateness. In the former, rational decisions are consequential because actions based on those choices anticipate preferred future consequences, results or ends. The rational logic of consequences is most compatible with Simon's early conceptions of decision-making theory and with substantive rationality (March et al, 1993:9). The decision-making logic of consequences is more suited to modeling, cost-benefit analyses, performance measurement, risk analyses and quantitative methodologies. The modeling of Songwa, (1999:28) illustrates the decision-making logic of consequences.

The rational logic of appropriateness is much less connected to Simon. Decisions are thought to be appropriate when choices are based on shared understanding of the decision situation, the nature or "identity" of the organization and accepted rules of what is expected in particular situations. The rational logic of appropriateness tends to emphasize procedural rationality. The decision-making logic of appropriateness is more suited to institutional analyses. The research tightly coupled high reliability systems illustrates the decision-making logic of appropriateness. Decision theorist working from the appropriateness perspective tend to focus heavily on the usually obvious points that not all alternatives can be known and considered and not all preferences or values can be reconciled. Instead of seeing the individual or the organization as intensely rational, they emphasize Simon's "Satisficing" concept that, rather than finding the best course of action, decision makers usually search for actions that are good enough. In a rational decision-making theory framework, the key questions, problems and challenges all have to do with the limits of rationality. The closer decision theorists come to accurate descriptions of decision-making behavior, the more likely they are to improve the capabilities of decision makers and the results of their decisions.

Theorists of bounded rationality were driven in large part by the need to explain decisions or choices that deviated from rational choice theory, and within the decision-making theory framework, such deviations were explained as being the result of environmental and cognitive constraints. Feigenbaum, (1951:23) demonstrated that decision making is consistently biased by certain environmental conditions or general human predispositions. The irrationality framework emerging from Tversky and Kahneman,s research, suggest that even with complete information and absent external constraints, decisions follow a predictable, irrational pattern based on the way in which individuals process information. Given the rich tradition in public administration on the psychology of decision making, it seems only logical that public administration scholars should look to this emerging field for new insights into how bureaucrats make decisions.

WEAKNESSES OF THE THEORY

Risk in decision making theory is a function of the influence of uncertainty on rationality. Decision making rationality is bounded by uncertainty regarding the consequences of present actions, and even greater uncertainty regarding the possible future consequences of possible future decisions. The propensity toward risk taking is associated with goals or targets. Less risk will be taken if goals are met or nearly met, whereas more risk will be taken if the individual or institution expects to fall well below expected goals. Goals and targets tend to be adjusted to adapt to risk. Successful risk-taking opens the way for higher goals and unsuccessful risk-taking leads to lower aspirations (Milward 1996: 11)

Ambiguity is at the center of an alternative understanding of rationality and of institutional decision making. Ambiguity is a lack of clarity or consistency in interpretations of reality, causality and intentionality. Ambiguous outcomes are fuzzy. In the ambiguous decision-making world, alternatives are hazy, objectives are contradictory and reality is not so much to be discovered as it is to be invented.

Rational decision theory was challenged early on because it was considered *unrealistic* and out of touch with actual patterns of organizational decision making. Rather than make rational choices, organizations "muddle through" by making small incremental decisions that are based on mixed-together means and ends that are made with limited knowledge, limited analytic capabilities and limited time and that are less likely to involve big risk (Feigenbaum 1951:84). Rationality is therefore limited or bounded. Herbert Simon noted the limitations to the logic of means-ends analysis and the hierarchy of ends because means and ends can never be entirely separated. Ends are often incomplete and unclear and both means and ends are influenced by time and changing circumstances. Those rational choice theorists inclined towards pure decision-making theory as well as to the logic of consequences now accept limited rationality and tend to refer to individuals and organizations as "intendedly rational". In spite of their best efforts to be rational, decision makers, individually and especially collectively are constrained by limited cognitive capacity, incomplete information and unclear linkages between decisions and outcomes.

RELEVANCE OF THE THEORY

Simon argues that administration is a world of deciding and that decisions are as important as actions. Indeed, decisions are the predicates of actions and actions are almost always based on accumulated decisions. This is very relevant to this work because procurement and execution of public contract must be backed by an administrative decision capable to ensuring effective compliance to the public contracts procedure. The correctness of an administrative decision is a relative matter-It is correct if it selects appropriate means to reach desired end. The rational administrator is concerned with the selection of these agreed means. Rationality is based on means-ends logic and assumes that the question at hand is selecting the best means to achieve agreed-upon ends.

When Simon says a theory of decision making has to be based on the logical positivist argument that there must be a primarily distinction between facts, which can be tested and verified, and individual and collective preferences and values, which cannot be scientifically verified, this means that public contract execution must be based on physical realization of projects which is the fact in issue; thus, very relevant to this research. At the base of Simon's decision-making theory is the concept of efficient administrative rationality which is factual. Facts and values are related to means and ends. There are "Value decisions" and "Factual decisions" the latter can be made in terms of efficiency. To decide is to choose between alternatives, to choose between alternatives is to introduce values. In the decision-making process; those alternatives are chosen which are considered to be appropriate means for reaching desired ends. Ends themselves, however are often merely instrumental to more final objectives. This gives complete relevance to this work.

In decision theory, it is rational for organizations to minimize risk and to regard collective institutional survival as an end or a value (Wallman, 1969:45). Simon also argued that the

relationship between organizations and the individuals in them can be understood as equilibrium between the personal goals and preferences of individuals and organizational needs. Both the effective individual and the rational organization will tend toward conserving efficiency. Consider the available alternative or alternatives that might achieve those objectives and analyze alternatives to find the alternative or group of alternatives most likely to achieve preferred objectives. In its most simplified form, rational decision-making theory describes goal-oriented behavior.

The decision-making logic of consequences is more suited to modeling, cost-benefit analyses, performance measurement, risk analyses and quantitative methodologies. Rational decisions are consequential because actions based on those choices anticipate preferred future consequences, resulting in the search for sustainable development despite environmental and cognitive constraints.

Decision making theorist working from the appropriateness perspective tend to focus heavily on the usually obvious points that not all alternatives can be known and considered and not all preferences or values can be reconciled. Instead of seeing the individual or the organization as intensely rational, they emphasize Simon's "Satisficing" concept that, rather than finding the best course of action, decision makers usually search for actions that are good enough to satisfy the general needs while providing public utilities through the execution of public contracts. The rational logic of appropriateness tends to emphasize procedural rationality. Very relevant since there can be no procurement or execution without laid down procedures.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is the survey design. With this, the description, interpretation and analysis of facts collected by the use of questionnaires were carried out. It facilitated the researcher to arrive at her findings. A large population was studied by collecting and analysing information from a sample population considered to be a representative of the whole. The researcher made use of stratified random sampling technique to administered questionnaires.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to analyse the data collected from the field. Findings from quantitative data are presented using frequency distribution tables, charts and all inferential statistics presented at 95% level of confidence interval with Alpha set at 0.05 levels, accepting 5% margin error. The findings have been analysed using chi square.

Data presentation and analysis

Presentation and Analyses of Issues Raised

To what extent does poor feasibility study in contract execution affects sustainable development in Mezam Division?

To answer this research question, a series of sub questions were presented in the questionnaire for respondents to provide their opinions or perspectives with regards to feasibility study of projects.

Who are the stakeholders in the renewed procurement system responsibilities to carry out feasibility study.

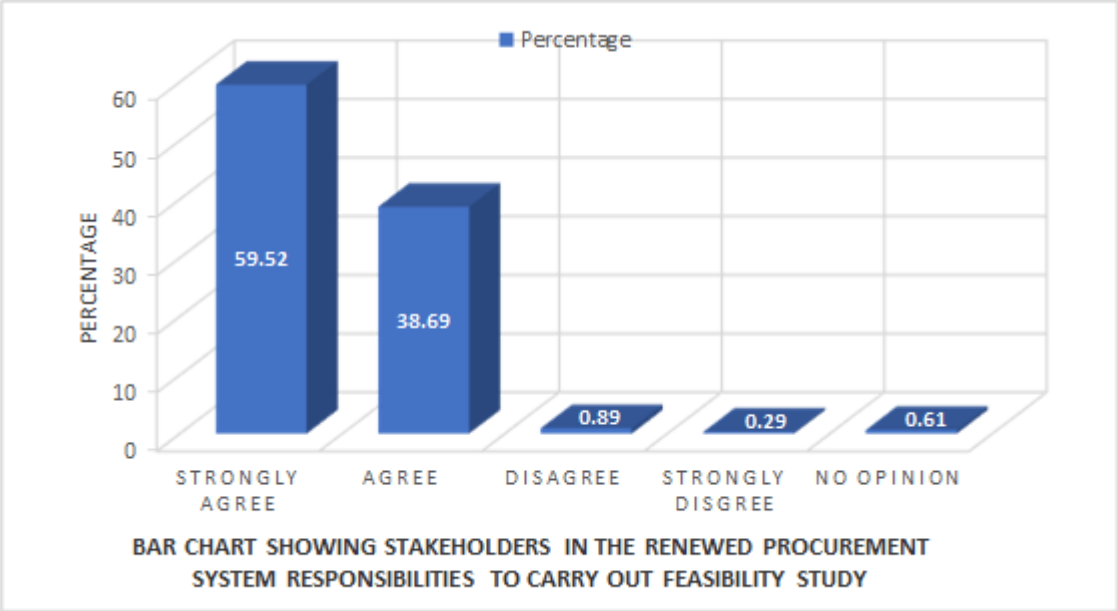
We cannot be discussing about feasibility studies without having an understanding as to who are the actors responsible for ensuring an effective feasibility study.

The project managers (PMs) or deputy project managers (DPMs) are responsible for carrying out preliminary or feasibility studies. Data collected from the field confirmed that the stakeholders involved in the procurement system are; Project managers (PMs) and Deputy Project Managers (DPMs); Internal Structure of Administrative Management of Public Contracts (SIGAMP); Public Procurement Commissions (CPM). The SIGAMP are placed at the disposal of the Project owners/mangers and delegated project owners for assistance in the execution of their duties. Below is a tabulated representation of responses attesting that these actors are competent authorities to ensure an effective feasibility study.

Stakeholders in the renewed procurement system responsibilities to carry out feasibility study.

Response scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Strongly Agree	200	59.52	59.5
Agree	130	38.69	98.2
Disagree	3	0.89	99.1
Strong Disagree	1	0.29	99.4
No Opinion	2	0.61	100
Total	336	100	

Source: Field survey, 2025



Based on the data presented, 59.52% (200) respondents strongly agreed that the actors in question are responsible for ensuring effective feasibility studies in contract procurement and execution. At the same time 38.69% (130) respondents agreed in support of the fact that the stakeholders named are in charge of ensuring effective feasibility study. On the other hand, those who disagreed, strongly disagreed, and had no opinion are so few, giving the impression that in case of a poor feasibility study the stakeholders in question should be held responsible.

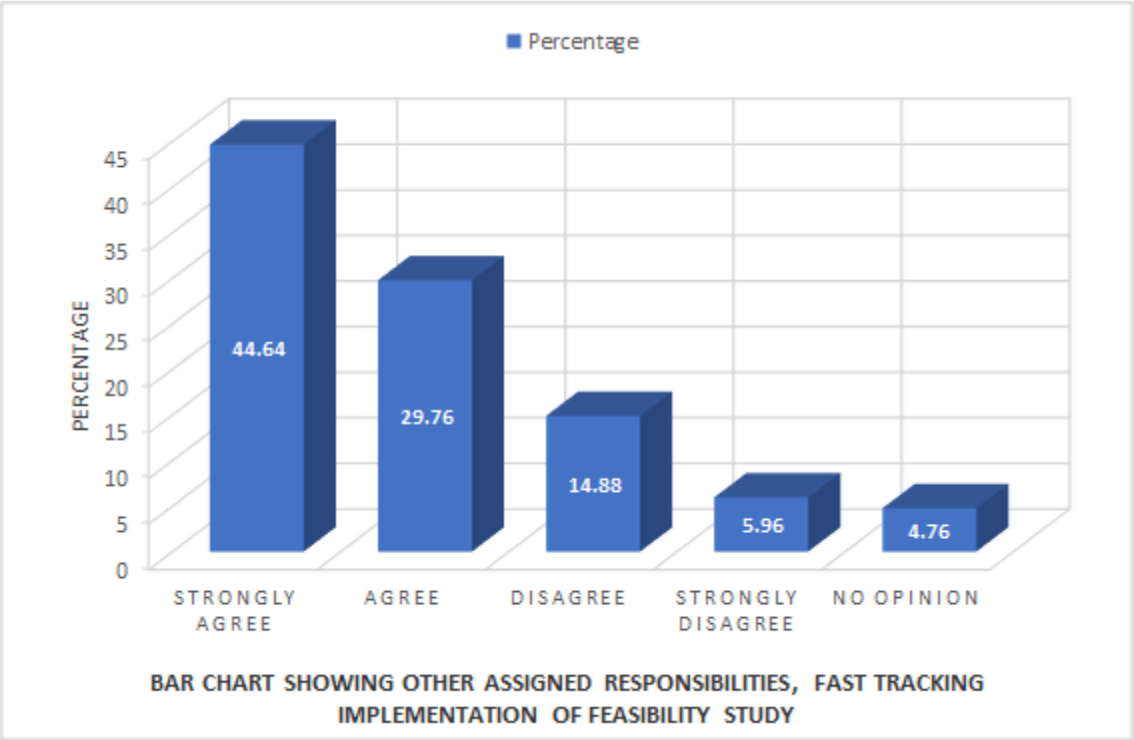
Apart from a feasibility study, what role do they also play?

In conjunction with the administrations concerned, they equally ensure the projects to be budgeted for, mature; the preparation of the draft contract and implementation plan; ensure the availability of funding; prepare consultation files; launch consultations; award contracts; sign and notify contracts; terminate public contracts and; then transmit periodic reports on the award and execution of contracts to the Ministry in charge of public contracts and to the body in charge of regulating public contracts.

Other assigned responsibilities fast tracking implementation of feasibility study

Response scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Strongly Agree	150	44.64	44.7
Agree	100	29.76	74.4
Disagree	50	14.88	89.3
Strongly Disagree	20	5.96	95.2
No Opinion	16	4.76	100
Total	336	100	

Source: Field survey, 2025



BAR CHART SHOWING OTHER ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES, FAST TRACKING IMPLEMENTATION OF FEASIBILITY STUDY

It was found that 44.64% (150) respondents strongly agreed that other responsibilities are assigned to stakeholders responsible for ensuring effective feasibility study, 29.76% (100) respondents agreed. Meanwhile 5.96% (20) respondents strongly disagreed to the idea that other responsibilities have a bearing on the implementation of the feasibility study, while 14.88% (50) respondents disagreed, and 4.76% (16) respondents had no opinion to this effect.

Respondent's understanding of project maturation for feasibility or studied projects.

Based on data collected from the field, 256 respondents strongly agreed that project maturation is the most appropriate consideration during which a project is designed, developed, planned and executed well while ensuring its sustainability, while 70 respondents agreed that project maturation is not necessarily a precondition in the life of a project. Meanwhile 4 respondents strongly disagreed, with 6 disagreeing that project maturation is necessary phase in project maturation. However, 20 respondents did not even understand the meaning of maturation of projects, thus had no opinion to share. In the field of public investment, a project is said to be mature when all the processes that make it up are under control and enable the objectives to be achieved. This control is checked as the project progresses.

Elements that account for an efficient feasibility study

Data collected from the field is evidenced to the fact that contracting authorities should carry out an environmental impact assessment study and ensure that there is the *maturation* of projects before execution. The stages in the maturation of an investment project are: Project design, Preparation for project implementation, Preparation of project operation, Preparation of project maintenance, and Feedback.

1. Considerations in project identification such as the economic importance of the project, projects must emanate from the council development plan (CDP), the communal importance of the project (not individual), the socio-cultural importance, inter-communal, touristic importance and revenue generation impact.

2. Check list for project maturation has to do with:

- Conception of the project, how the project response to the needs of the beneficiary. Location of the project, that is; proof of ownership of land (Attestation of land availability for new projects). In the case of roads; secure the right-of-way.

- Geotechnical studies to be carried out by a geo-technician, risk analyses report, other technical studies for things like boreholes and water schemes.
- Environmental impact notice to be carried out by an environmentalist (Certificate of environmental conformity). For big projects, carry out environmental and social impact studies.

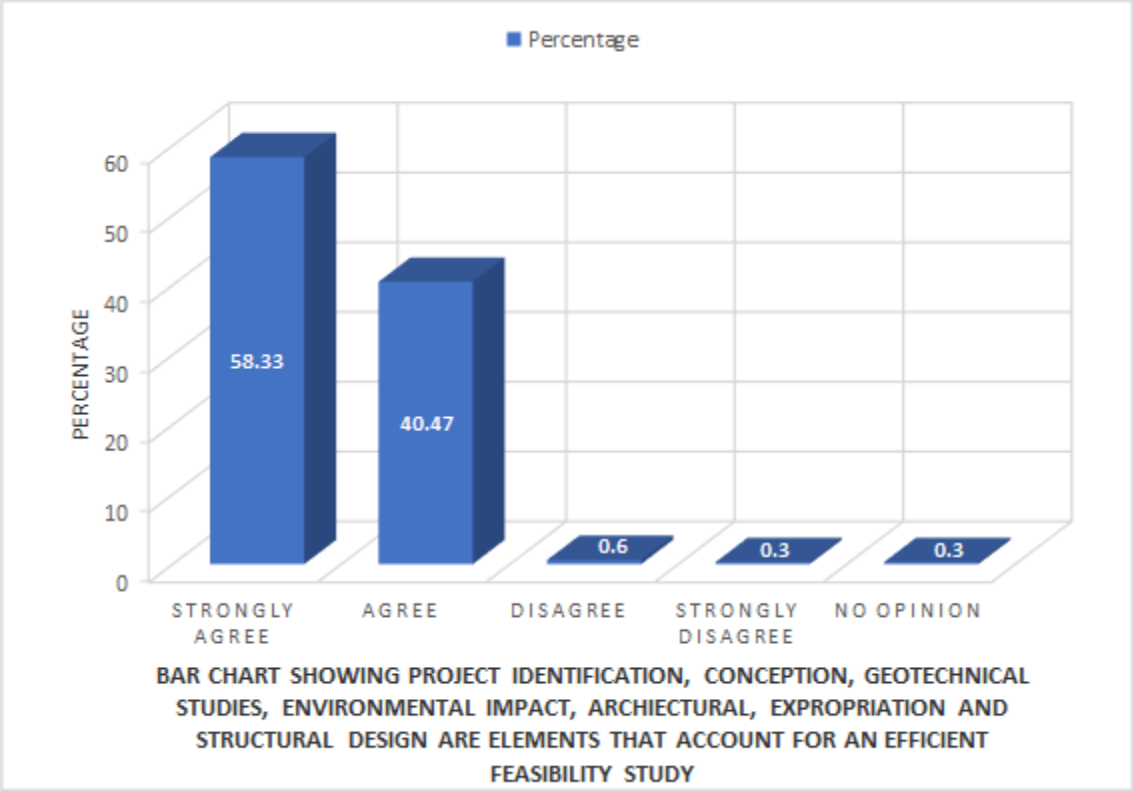
Design buildings (Architectural). Ground floor only; need an architect or an Engineer, more than one floor, by an architect.

- Bridges to be carried out by an engineer. Certificate of expropriation (for giant projects); compensation report (for roads projects and giant structures/heavy water schemes or electrification).
- Structural design by an engineer, production of quantitative cost estimates for execution and must be signed by an engineer.

Project identification, Conception, geotechnical studies, environmental impact, architectural, expropriation and structural design are elements that account for an efficient feasibility study?

Response scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Strongly Agree	196	58.33	58.3
Agree	136	40.47	99.8
Disagree	2	0.6	99.4
Strongly Disagree	1	0.3	99.4
No Opinion	1	0.3	100
Total	336	100	

Source: Field survey, 2025



BAR CHART SHOWING PROJECT IDENTIFICATION, CONCEPTION, GEOTECHNICAL STUDIES, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, ARCHIECTURAL, EXPROPRIATION AND STRUCTURAL DESIGN ARE ELEMENTS THAT ACCOUNT FOR AN EFFICIENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

Almost all the respondents are in support of the opinion that project identification, conception, geotechnical studies, environmental impact, architectural design, expropriation and the structural design are elements that facilitate an efficient feasibility study for a project. Those who really strongly agree are 196 respondents at 58.33% and those who agreed equally stood at 40% of 136

respondents. This is in support of the fact that these elements must be considered while engaging into major feasibility studies.

Respondents' opinion on the consequences of a poorly studied project

From the data collected from the field 320 respondents were of the opinion that a poorly studied project will not be successfully executed and in the case where the project is even executed it will not be sustainable. 10 respondents saw nothing wrong with the project execution whether feasibility study is available or not. 6 respondents had no opinion as to the consequences

Testing of Hypothesis

H_O: Poor Feasibility studies in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

H_1: Poor Feasibility studies in contract execution positively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

Observed frequency

No		Perception of Respondents					
		SA	A	D	SD	N	Total
1		200	130	3	1	2	**336**
2		150	100	50	20	16	**336**
3		256	70	6	4	0	**336**
4		196	136	2	1	1	**336**
5		320	10	2	2	2	**336**
	Grand Total	**1122**	**446**	**63**	**28**	**41**	**1680**

Source: field data 2025

$$x^2 = \Sigma\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Distribution showing the Calculation of Chi-square using Fo and Fe

No.	Categories	Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	$(Fo-Fe)^2$	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
1	R1C1	200	224.4	-24.4	595.36	2.65
2	R1C2	150	224.4	-74.4	5535.36	24.67
3	R1C3	256	224.4	31.6	998.56	4.45
4	R1C4	196	224.4	-28.4	806.56	3.59
5	R1C5	320	224.4	95.6	9139.36	40.73
6	R2C1	130	89.2	40.8	1664.64	18.66
7	R2C2	100	89.2	10.8	116.64	1.31
8	R2C3	70	89.2	-19.2	368.64	4.13
9	R2C4	136	89.2	46.8	2190.24	24.55
10	R2C5	10	89.2	-79.2	6272.64	70.32
11	R3C1	3	12.6	-9.6	92.16	7.31
12	R3C2	50	12.6	37.4	1398.76	111.01
13	R3C3	6	12.6	-6.6	43.56	3.46
14	R3C4	2	12.6	-10.6	112.36	8.92
15	R3C5	2	12.6	-10.6	112.36	8.92
16	R4C1	1	5.5	-4.5	20.25	3.68
17	R4C2	20	5.5	14.5	210.25	38.23
18	R4C3	4	5.5	-1.5	2.25	0.41
19	R4C4	1	5.5	-4.5	20.25	3.68
20	R4C5	2	5.5	-3.5	12.25	2.23

21	R5C1	2	8.2	-6.2	38.44	4.69
22	R5C2	16	8.2	7.8	60.84	7.42
23	R5C3	0	8.2	-8.2	67.24	8.2
24	R5C4	1	8.2	-7.2	51.84	6.32
25	R5C5	2	8.2	-6.2	38.44	4.69
	Total					**414.23**

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Chi-Square Formula; $X^2=\Sigma \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$

Chi Square Value = 414.23

Degree of Freedom = (Nc-1) (Nr-1)

= (5-1) (5-1)

= 4x4

= 16

Significance Level= 0.05

Table or Critical Value= 26.296

CONCLUSION

Since the chi-square value which stands at 414.23 is greater than the table value which stands at 26.296. We reject the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that "poor feasibility studies in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in MezamDivision" and accept the alternate hypothesis H_1 which states that "poor feasibility studies in contract execution positively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division".

From the data collected from the field, it shows that a majority of respondents are of the opinion that the project managers (PMs) or deputy project managers (DPMs) are responsible for carrying out preliminary or feasibility studies. Data collected from the field confirmed that the stakeholders involved in the procurement system are; Project managers (PMs) and Deputy Project Managers (DPMs); Internal Structure of Administrative Management of Public Contracts (SIGAMP); Public Procurement Commissions (CPM). The SIGAMP are placed at the disposal of the Project owners/mangers and delegated project owners for assistance in the execution of their duties.

Based on the data presented, 59.52% (200) respondents strongly agreed that the actors in question are responsible for ensuring effective feasibility studies in contract procurement and execution. At the same time 38.69% (130) respondents agreed in support of the fact that the stakeholders named are in charge of ensuring effective feasibility study. On the other hand, those who disagreed, strongly disagreed, and had no opinion are so few, giving the impression that in case of a poor feasibility study the stakeholders in question should be held responsible. It was also established that apart from a feasibility study, there are other responsibilities assigned to these stakeholders to fast track an implementation of the feasibility study.

It was found that 44.64% (150) respondents strongly agreed that other responsibilities are assigned to stakeholders responsible for ensuring effective feasibility study, 29.76% (100) respondents agreed. Meanwhile 25.96% (20) respondents strongly disagreed to the idea that other responsibilities have a bearing on the implementation of the feasibility study, while 14.88% (50 respondents disagreed, and 4.76% (16) respondents had no opinion to this effect.

Based on data collected from the field, 256 respondents strongly agreed that project maturation is the most appropriate consideration during which a project is designed, developed, planned and executed well while ensuring its sustainability. Moreover, almost all the respondents are in support of the opinion that project identification, conception, geotechnical studies, environmental impact,

architectural design, expropriation and the structural design are elements that facilitate an efficient feasibility study for a project.

From the data collected from the field 320 respondents were of the opinion that a poorly studied project will not be successfully executed and in the case where the project is even executed it will not be sustainable. 10 respondents saw nothing wrong with the project execution whether feasibility study is available or not. 6 respondents had no opinion as to the consequences.

Discussion of Findings

There are a lot of implications and interpretation relating to the findings of this study which will be analyzed as a result of this research. Moreover, new trends might have emerged in the course of this research.

In perspective, the outcome of a feasibility study helps in selecting a defined project that meets the stated objectives of the project, together with a broad plan of implementation (Frederickson 1997b:4). That is the reason why a feasibility study will determine the performance outcome and the lifespan of a project. It goes without saying that a poor feasibility study only helps to shorten the lifespan of the project hence no sustainability

Feasibility analysis is a detailed study of how a project can be completed and accounting for factors that might affect it such as technological, economic, legal and scheduling factors (Osbome at al, 1992:1). Without such a detailed study, there might be some factors that will negatively affect the success rate of implementing a project. From this study, we have realized that there are authorities in charge of such studies and the elements to be considered have been identified thus holding them liable in the event of a poorly executed project due to an unrealistic study. The project engineers or managers should take responsibility to examine the various factors enabling a proper study. It has become one of the most important tools for strategic planning nowadays. Moreover, feasibility analysis considers as an effective methodology for the strategic management of projects in various investment and economic activities, which lead to the investment decision-making over the project' whole life with the least possible degree of uncertainty (risk) (Brown et al, 2016:8). That is why the researcher has used the decision-making theory to justify the rational decision-making Processes.

The feasibility analysis has been generated to support investment decision-making under a certain degree of risk and/or uncertainty and stemmed from the existence of many internal and external variables concerning with the future that might affect decisions (Ndefru, 2016:565).This is true because there are a lot of factors that can negative affect the execution of a project such as increase in prices of material which affect cost estimate or environmental or climate change which are global effects. The outcome or effect of a poorly studied project affects sustainability that is why one of the objectives of the study is to identify the defects of poor feasibility study in the execution of public contracts in Mezam Division. In essence, proper feasibly studies is a critical first step in determining whether an intervention should be subject to efficacy testing, such as in a randomized controlled trial (Bowen et al, 2009:17).

Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to explain why Cameroon continues to face problems of sustainability in the execution of public contracts despite the availability of legislation; guiding the execution process.

In doing so, specific objective was to identify the defects of poor feasibility study in the execution of public contracts in Mezam Division. The study opines that, poor feasibility studies in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, with the main aim of improving on public procurement contracts, the following recommendations if taken into consideration by the authorities concerned

in the process of awarding public contracts, will go a long way to address some of the challenges hampering the public contracts system in Mezam Division in particular and Cameroon at large.

Ensure effective and efficient feasibility studies

To ensure that there is a proper feasibility study in order to enforce an effective execution process that brings sustainable development, all the elements necessitating an effective feasibility study should be taken into consideration by the project managers and the other stakeholders and engineers involved while commencing the process. A feasibility study committee or commission be created made up of technicians in the various public contract departments.

To the Cameroon Government

The government of Cameroon should put in maximum time to check the activities of the argents in charge of public contracts such as the ministry of public contracts with its organs; like the public contracts regulatory agency (ARMP) and the ministry of economy, planning and regional development (MINEPAT). Should equally consider the following:

Due to difficulties encountered in the activities of programming, draft tenders should be transmitted on time and incentives paid after this exercise. This should equally be the case during award where required documents should be transmitted as well.

Considering difficulties encountered in the physico-financial control of the execution of projects and due to the vast nature and difficult road network of many Sub Divisions, each controller be provided with a motor-cycle; the amount allocated for missions and fuel be increased considerably.

- The financial allocation for vehicle maintenance is very small. As the vehicle and the bikes get older, a reasonable amount should be set aside for such maintenance. Basic control equipment should be provided for control of structures.

Looking at difficulties encountered in the reinforcement of supporting means and governance:

- The Ministry should continue in the automatic advancement of personnel at the level of the Ministry of Finance. Allowances and incentives to workers should be regular.

All projects should systematically be published in the required Journal and on the notice boards of the Divisional Delegation and the Councils. All bidders should be given equal attention in the procurement of the tender files. The award process be carried out smoothly and Control should be effectively carried out on the projects within Mezam.

Financial Audits

The Cameroon government should set up mechanisms that will reduce the rate of embezzlement and corruption involved in the process of awarding of public procurement contracts, execution and final reception. Regular Audit is imperative. In a situation where there is a huge system of loopholes coupled with laxity in legal and administrative systems, compounded by non-transparency and extensive discretionary powers in the hands of politicians, there needs to be concerted effort to ensure strict enforcement of laws to achieve the purpose for which those laws were enacted. To this effect, the Supreme State Audits, the ministry in charge of public contracts and the various ministerial departments involved have been organising seminars to sensitised and fight against corruption and embezzlement in the public contract sector.

Sanctions of defaulters

Defaulters, once caught should be sanctioned according to the legislation. Justice should never be compromised. They should be treated according to the laid down rules and regulations put in place so as to warn others from doing same act.

Organise More Training Seminars

The Country's Procurement Assessment Report of Cameroon produced in 2003 revealed that most staff of Ministries, Delegations and Agencies responsible for procurement were not procurement

proficient, even though they have been trained. The report contended that broad training and refresher programmes for officials in charge of procurement are very necessary. Similarly, the lack of proper training of managers on the procurement process is a challenge that confronts procurement reforms. Even technicians to conduct feasibility studies and other stakeholders involved in public contracts equally need training to facilitate the process. More seminars bring more experience. On this note, more training and seminars should be organised for stakeholders in order for them to be more vest with the contracting system.

Provision of means of transportation

The various ministries concerned in public contracts (MINMAP, MINTP and MINEPAT) should provide for their collaborators at all levels on the field, sufficient means such as transport fare, motor bikes and vehicles to ensure effective and efficient control of public contracts management.

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