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**Improvement of Transit Systems in
CENTRAL AFRICA¹**

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INTRODUCTION

In Central Africa, the Central African Republic and Chad are the two main landlocked countries of the region, with no direct access to the sea.

I. THE TWO MAIN CORRIDORS FOR ACCESSES TO THE SEA FOR CENTRAL AFRICA AND FOR CHAD

The two main routes to the sea corridors cross the Cameroon and the Congo; there is a third route which is less important, which crosses Nigeria to arrive in Chad

TRANS EQUATORIAL CORRIDOR

The transequatorial corridor starts from Bangui on the Oubangui river to reach Pointe Noire in Congo or Matadi in Democratic Congo.

During the last twenty years, the navigational conditions have worsened and only a very small amount of traffic uses currently through this corridor.

Trans Equatorial Corridor

	Road	Railway	River	Total
Sarh (Chad) – Bangui	640 km			
Bangui-Brazzaville			1,200 km	
Brazzaville –Pointe Noire		512 km		

TRANSCAMEROON CORRIDOR

The Transcameroon corridor starts from N'Djamena (Chad) or Bangui (Central Africa Republic) to reach Douala.

The transport is either entirely a road or a combination of road and rail . rail between Douala et Belabo (in CAR) or between Douala – N'Goundere (in Chad).

In addition, a pipeline from Chad to Kribi (Cameroon) is under construction.

Corridor Douala- Central Africa Republic and Chad

	Road	Railway	River	Total
Corridor Central Africa Republic				
Douala-Bangui	1500 km			
Douala-Ngaoundere- Bangui	867 km	922 km		
Douala-Belabo- Bangui	670 km	n.a..		
Corridor Chad				
Douala –N'Djamena	2100 km			
Doula-N'Goundere- N'Djamena	750 km	922 km		

CURRENT ROLE OF EACH CORRIDOR SERVING CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC AND TCHAD

The following table shows the river traffic for the Central African Republic since 1980.

l'importance passé de ce corridor pour le trafic import/export de la RCA.

(unité : tonne)	Trafic Import	Trafic Export	Trafic Total
1980	86 155	122 347	208 502
1981	70 403	120 946	191 349
1982	96 996	107 991	204 987
1983	91 091	105 407	196 498
1984	84 893	130 457	215 350
1985	109861	113 774	223 635
1986	131 729	76 201	207 930
1987	115 419	58 530	173 949
1988	118 268	39 129	157397
1989	135 492	51 262	186 754
1990	113 543	44 299	157 842
1991	96 538	7918	104 456
1992	79 454	4 842	84 296
1993	66 878	5 325	72 203
1994	70 265	5 144	75 409
1995	78 666	6 785	85 451
1996	56 094	5 236	61 329
1997	47 362	12 524	55 886
1998	43 362	12 524	55 886
1999	60 785	14 000	74 785
2000	10 226	7 992	18 218
2001	21 393	4 292	25 685
2002	37 557	3 691	41 248

Source SOCATRAF Bangui

At present, the Cameroon corridor is the main corridor for both the Central African Republic and Chad .

TRANS CAMEROON :MAIN CORRIDOR WITH ACCESS TO THE SEA

Traffic along the conventional corridors (in tons) 2000-2001

	Corridor Cameroon –Chad			Corridor Cameroon –RCA		
	Imports	exports	Total	imports	Exports	Total
TOTAL	252,769	52,871	305,640	164, 044	332,706	496,750

Source : Problemes des Grands Corridors de Desserte des Pays Enclavés – cas de l’Afrique Centrale Memoirs presented by Alain Ford Djoukep Septembre 2002 laboratoire d’Economie des Transports Université Lumière Lyon France

The truck movements in 2000-2001 is shown in the following table :

	Corridor Cameroon –Chad			Corridor Cameroon –CAR		
	CAMIONS			CAMIONS		
	Total	Cameroon	Chad	Total	Cameroon	CAR

IMPORTS						
Total Trucks	10,452	3,137	7,315	5,709	3,416	2,293
%	100 %	30%	70%	100%	60%	40%
EXPORTS						
Total Trucks	1630	494	1136	10,361	7,466	2,895
%	100%	30%	70%	100%	72%	28%

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE TRASCAMEROON CORRIDOR

The corridor measured according to the following three points:

- a) The political will of the transit and landlocked countries to establish an efficient transport transit corridor, and the ability of the administrations to create a favourable institutional environment.
- b) The status and condition of the transport infrastructure from the port to the final delivery point, including the roads and railways
- c) The management of the traffic in transit and improvement of facilitation along the corridor.

A POLITICAL WILL AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Cameroon Government and the Governments of the CAR and Chad are fully aware of the importance of the Cameroon corridor and the need to make it safe, reliable and competitive.

They have negotiated and signed two Road conventions, « Conventions en Matière de Transport Routiers » between the Cameroons and Chad (13 April 1999) and between Cameroon and the CAR (22 December 1999).

These two conventions had for objectives to :

- a) Select the transport routes : all road, or a combination of road and rail.
- b) Formalise the implementation of freight quotas, starting from Douala, using the following split.
- c) Institute a special sticker for trucks and an international safe conduct document in addition to the international way bill for Road transport cargo.
- d) Identify single control points where all the administrations are assembled, for the transit of goods, the objective being to reduce the number of control points.
- e) Define the responsibility for distributing the freight between the National Land Freight Management Office.
- f) Exchange statistical data on the land transport flow

- g) To set up a Technical Commission responsible for drawing up conclusions concerning the implementation of the agreement

It is advisable that these “conventions” should be revised within the broader framework of a tripartite Transit Transport Agreement. This would allow a harmonization of the transit transport policy between the three countries concerning simplified and harmonized customs procedures, aligned and common customs transit documents, the adoption of common technical standards and legal instruments regarding the traffic in transit of movements of goods and vehicles.

The key role played first by UDEAC and presently by the CEMAC in the establishing of a common transport policy within the region must be noted².

The CEMAC succeeded in adopting between 1994 and 1999 a comprehensive set of regional regulations that provide a solid basis for a modern transport policy, but the implementation in the member states has barely started.

- la Convention Inter-Etats des Transports Routiers de Marchandises Diverses (CIETRM), inspired by the Convention CMR for road transport ;
- la Convention Inter –Etats de transport Multimodal de Marchandises en UDEAC based on UNCTAD/ITC rules for multimodal transport

There exists no effective enforcement mechanism. If CEMAC legislation is not enforced, there is a major risk of reducing the impact of recent or planned investment in infrastructure and transit traffic. Among the most urgent needs are effective enforcement of road limits and adequate road maintenance along transit corridors and across countries

B. STATUS AND USE OF THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

DOUALA PORT

The port of Douala has no capacity problem to service the needs of the two land locked countries. Transit cargos to the CAR and Chad have privileged tariffs and additional demurrage times.

² CEMAC (Communauté Economique et Monétaire d'Afrique Centrale includes 7 member states of Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR) Chad, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon). CEMAC was officially created in 1994 to replace UDEAC (Union Douanière et Économique de l'Afrique Centrale), the old institution that governed trade policy since 1964. The UDEAC was established as a formal customs union but the union did not become effective until the creation of CEMAC.

CEMAC's long term objective is to create a common market for goods, services, capital and persons. Trade and transport are the key to reaching this objective

Several factors favorable to regional integration of CEMAC member states exist: (a) a properly functioning monetary union; a fixed exchange rate pegged to the Euro, a strong regional central bank (BEAC); and the presence of regional projects such as the Chad –Cameroon oil pipeline or the road/rail transit corridors through Cameroon

LAND CORRIDORS

The two main routes to Chad and the CAR are part of the the CEMAC priority of “integrative” road networks (réseau intégrateur CEMAC 2000) adopted in December 1999. which include :

CAMEROON - CAR

1- DOUALA-YAOUNDE-BONIS-BERTOUA-GAROUA BOULAÏ-BANGUI

Two variants between Douala-Bonnis:

- Douala-Yaoundé-Belabo by rail and Belabo-Bonnis by road ;
- Douala-Yaoundé-Ayos-Bonnis by road.

CAMEROON - TCHAD

1 - DOUALA-NGAOUNDERE-GAROUA –MAROUA –N’DJAMENA

Two variants between Douala-Ngaoundéré :

- Douala-Yaoundé-Belabo-Ngaoundéré (by rail) ;
- Douala-Yaoundé-Ayos-Bertoua-Garoua Boulaï-Ngaoundéré (by road).

A number of these sections are earth roads that need to be bituminised.

One of the preoccupations of the Cameroon is the protection of its road assets (*Protection du patrimoine routier*). Within the CEMAC countries the axle load maximum limit has been fixed at 13 tons.

Cameroon has set up weigh bridges in five different locations

Toll road have also been established . A single rate is charged : 500 FCFA for light vehicles as well as for trucks.

- Douala- Yaoundé : 2 toll stations ;
- Yaoundé –Berthoua : 1 toll stations
- Berthoua – Garoua Boulaï 2 toll stations (not working)
- Ngaoundere – Garoua : 2 toll stations
- Garoua – Maroua : 2 toll stations
- Maroua–Kousseri :3 toll stations

Most trucks are overloaded and have to pay excess an load charge which can amount to 250,000 FCFA for the whole trip.

C. MANAGEMENT OF THE TRAFFIC IN TRANSIT AND IMPROVEMENTS OF THE FACILITATION ASPECTS OF THE TRANSPORT IN TRANSIT

Besides the funding of the infrastructures and the conditions of transport along the corridor, improving transport in transit implies actions on:

1. Organisation of the port segment
2. Structures regulating the traffic in transit
3. Customs regimes for the goods in transit

I. ORGANISATION OF THE PORT SEGMENT

Two structures have been established at the port level :

- The FAL Committee to improve the fluidity of the maritime and port traffic through Douala;
- Le Guichet Unique du Commerce Extérieur (a one stop shop for foreign trade transactions)

The FAL COMMITTEE

The FAL Committee (Comité National de Facilitation du Trafic Maritime International) or Doual Port Facilitation Committee was created in 1997 and has for its mission. :

- (i) To study the maritime and port traffic;
- (ii) To propose actions that will simplify and reduce procedures and formalities for the entry and exit of goods :
- (iii) To make recommendations concerning practices and appropriate methods with a view to improving imports exports and transits.

This committee has concentrated on reducing the time that the goods rest in the commercial port when being imported, and will soon be working on the goods exported..

The actual results do not correspond to the initial targets of the FAL committee (average delays are more than 16 days for imports.

Le committee aims at identifying the factors that block at present, and particularly the link between the average time taken to get the goods out of the port, the late payment of taxes and customs duties by some importers and the services effected by the customs.

At the same time the Committee will develop tests with the solvent operators to determine reasonable delays that can be applied to solvent operators using a well established transit company.

The first indications are about five working days. At the same time, the Committee has to develop tests with the good operators, to establish what are reasonable delays with a solvent operator

The FAL Committee is also interested in the functioning of transport and transit corridors leaving Douala.

With this in view, a procedures manual for the single control points, destined to supervise the progress of merchandise going to the land locked countries, has just been written.

THE SINGLE OFFICE FOR COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS–(Le Guichet Unique du Commerce Extérieur) (GUCE).

The GUCE has been created with the intention of reducing costs and delays in commercial and logistical operations in the port of Douala, to improve the circulation and efficiency of documents and forms retained by the different parties intervening in the transactions.

It replies to a logic for easing and simplifying procedures, to improve the economic expansion of the Cameroon and the sub-region.

It is in the form of a group of different institutions intervening in the import and export in the direction of Douala. It handles mainly merchandise coming from and going to the Cameroon, but also goods in transit.

Its objectives are :

- i. To minimise the risks and time lost, by assembling all the participators in export commerce to speed up the treatment of transport documents.
- ii. To optimise the advantages of exchanging information and data.
- iii. To inform the operators of the nature and importance of the procedures.

The GUCE will proceed with the sequential analysis from the emission of the customs document on the arrival of the boat to the advice note when the goods merchandise.

The time taken to treat the documents by the GUCE will be the same as for local merchandise and for the landlocked countries. (2 to 2.5 days)

Substantial improvements are expected with the computerisation of the document flow(presently being tendered). The lost time waiting in import and export ports is still far from what had been hoped for (16.8 days for imports against an objective of 7days in November, for example).

Concerning the merchandise in transit, the GUCE wants to develop computerised data exchanges when the information is completed, with the particular intention of closing files more rapidly once the goods have crossed the frontiers.

2. REGULATION STRUCTURES FOR TRAFFIC IN TRANSIT

LAND FREIGHT MANAGEMENT OFFICE IN EACH COUNTRY

The international road traffic network between Douala, Central Africa and Chad is managed by national freight :

- Le Bureau de Gestion du Fret Terrestre Camerounais (BGFT)

- Le Bureau d'Affrètement Routier Centrafricain (BARC) ,
- Le Bureau National de Fret (BNF, Tchad)

Although they have different legal status, their objectives are the same :

1. To collect and publish offers and demand for transport.
2. To manage the issuing of documents
3. To supervise, on behalf of their country, that the quotas are respected
4. To monitor the movement of goods overland and to keep statistics relating to the transport
5. of goods

The three structures supervise the global application of freight quotas for the transporters coming from the different countries, for goods leaving Douala, the person loading or the forwarding agent choosing the road transporter.

They say they act as arbitrators to balance the differences in the quotas and assure that the small operators have the same access as the larger ones to transport freight. Their regulatory role is limited to the supervision that the quotas are respected.

They do not fix the freight rates but communicate the rates between the different operators.

The BARC and the BNF also have a role as intermediary between the shippers and the transporters for finding the freight. They received a commission for all transport handled by Central African and Chadien transporters: 4,5% of the transport cost for BARC and 7,5% for BNF.

THE REGULATORY ROLE OF TRANSPORT AND TRANSIT ALONG THE CAMEROON CORRIDORS

The BGFT is looking to strengthen its role as the real the real transport and transit regulator. With this in mind it has set up single control points in the Cameroon, which are points through which all transport in transit must pass.

These single control points are supposed to assemble the different administrations controlling the transit of goods along the different routes.

The objective of these control points is to limit unnecessary controls and to make sure that only the official controls are assembled in the single control

The list of check points is given below :

Corridor Douala - Centrafrique

- Check-Point 1 at Yassa on leaving Douala
- Check-Point 2 at Berthoua
- Check-Point 3 Frontier Post at Garoua Boulai at the frontier (PK0)with the RCA (road toBeloko (PK2) Bouar-Bangui) .
- Check-Point 3' Frontier Post at Bombé (5km from the (PK0) frontier with tthe RCA (road to Gamboula (PK30 –Berberati-Bangui).

Corridor Ngaoundéré -Tchad

- Check-Point 1 at Dang on leaving Ngoundéré
- Check-Point 2 at Kollé (north of Figuil)
- Check-Point 2' Frontier Post at Delelé at the frontier with the Chad.
- Check-Point 3 Frontier post at Kousseri at the frontier with the Chad and D'djamena. ,

These posts do not function completely as they should and other “pirate” check points still exist.

FACILITATION INSTRUMENTS : ROAD TRANSPORTER DOCUMENTS

Three documents :

- « lettre de voiture » transport document issued for each vehicle and for each trip one by BGFT , and the other one either by BARC or ONT³ ..
- « Sauf conduit international » International safe conduct issued free of charge by CEMAC.
- « Vignette d'identification du véhicule comme véhicule de transport de marchandises en transit et international », vehicle identification stickers to justify that the truck is authorized to operate international transport within the region.: 25,000 FCFA per year.

From a practical point it seems that the different administrations involved in transport transit are taken some time in regrouping their services in the single control points set up by the BGFT and that controls continue to take place outside these control points.

BGFT PROPOSAL

BGFT would like to develop “observatories des pratiques” to survey the delays in the transit chain when goods and trucks are quitting the port up to the final destination in the same way that the Committee FAL has developed a method for the port operations.

3. PROCEDURES FOR THE TRANSIT OF GOODS AND THEIR CONTROL ON LEAVING THE TERRITORY

A Ministerial instruction dated 2nd January 2003 and signed by the Finance Minister of the Cameroon, concerning customs regulations for the transit of goods, should improve the system in speeding up the settlements.

This instruction sets out three points :

- a. transit permit are issued in addition of the D15 to accompany the trucks (the D.15 stay at the Customs office)
- b. The partial lifting of the guarantee once there is proof that the goods have left the Cameroon territory.
- c. Customs escorts have been stopped

³ 6,200 FCFA pour lettres de voiture issued by BARC, et 2000 FCFA for the ones issued by BGFT et le BNF

The new procedure is as follow:

- The routes set out in the Conventions are the only accepted routes.
- A “transit permit” is issued when the goods are collected and signed by Head of the Transit Department
- The “transit permit” becomes the customs document identifying precisely the goods in transit and has the same value as a D15 (a copy of which is attached to the transport document).
- Where shipments are combined road/rail with a break at Belabo or at Ngaoundéré, new documents, canceling those at the start, are issued to accompany the goods on the routes Belabo/RCA and Ngaoundéré/Chad
- The customs services only control goods at the control points set up under the conventions.
- The customs officers present at the check points assure that the seals have not been broken , the transit documents have not been altered, and the numbers refer to the goods being transported..
- They sign to say that the seals are not broken, and indicate the number of parcels that are being transported
- However, if the seals are broken, the transport documents are noted to this effect and the customs officers verify the shipment and they or the police make an official report.
- On passing the frontier the transport document is signed and sent to Douala directly for settlement.
- The settlement is made in the customs office where the transport document was issued on presentation of the controls at the different check points up to the destination.
- All D15 models of declarations are covered by a bank guarantee covering the duties and taxes. The partial lifting of the guarantee is signed when the documents indicate that the goods have been controlled at their destination.

FACILITATION INSTRUMENTS: CUSTOMS DOCUMENTS

Each truck must carry the following Customs documents :

- a. Connaissance de Route ou Bordereau de transport which is the road manifest prepared by the freighforwarders.
- b. D15 or the « transit permit » prepared by the Cameroon Customs ;
- c. « Feuille de Route » which is the customs document prepared either by the Central African or Chad Customs when the truck is entering the country.

4. BRIEF REMINDER OF THE TIPAC SYSTEM

Under the UDEAC, the customs system for international transit, called the TIPAC system (International transit in the countries of Central Africa) was officially retained by the Heads of State during their twenty first summit in December 1991.

The main objective of this system had, was to simplify customs procedures at departure, along the way and at the arrival of goods in transit ; it also was to render the different parties responsible for their own transport operation.

Delivery delays of goods in transit were to be considerably reduced, their security assureds and the transit costs would thus be reduced considerably.

The TIPAC procedure could be considered to be an agreement between, on one hand, the customs administrations of the six countries concerned, and on the other, the transport operators. The transport operator's responsibility was directly implicated.

The Customs agreed to implicate only one single control when the merchandise entered their territory. The operators agreed not to modify the initial characteristics of the goods whilst they were in transit.

To make the system viable, the Customs Administrations requested a financial guarantee, which was to be cancelled on delivery of the goods if the rules had been respected.

HOW THE TIPAC WOKS:

- The transit followed a pre-determined or TIPAC route, and no other.
- The method of transportation was agreed following clearly defined TIPAC procedures

To benefit from this system the principal operator had to acquire one document called a TIPAC booklet, which was valid for only one trip. This ticket must be signed by the transporter, indicating that he engages his responsibility from the start to the finish of the transportation.

This ticket has three functions :

1. To replace all other customs documents.
2. To limit controls to a strict minimum.
3. To guarantee the shipment during the transit and render the transporter the only person responsible during the voyage.

The responsibility of the transporter was engaged as soon as the TIPAC booklet was signed and the goods packed and sealed in the truck, by the Customs.

The transporter' responsibility was lifted when the Customs had lifted the seals at the destination.

The guarantee was limited to 15 millions FCFA by ticket, that is by voyage. Mutual guarantee funds must be constituted with the joint aid of the member states of UDEAC, the professionals themselves and the technical assistance of the lenders.

The management of the funds serving to settle litigations between the Customs authorities and the transport operators was to be effected at two levels:

- a. At the national level for the professionals using the existing procedures.
- b. At the regional level within the UDEAC, where the financial loan is assured if there is a problem at the national level.

In fact the TIPAC system was in a way the application of the TIR system and TIR carnet but adapted to the specific needs of the sub-region. The system was never properly implemented and it has been abandoned, although some of its procedures are starting to be used again.

III. CONCLUSION : Projet to aid the transit transport and international commerce in the CEMAC zone

The regional study group concerning the strategy of regional assistance of the World Bank in Central Africa, held on 16 and 17th October 2002 at Yaounde, clearly identified the easing of transport regulations in the CEMAC as one of the key objectives of the World Bank Regional Programme

Consequently the Bank has laid out a programme with the CEMAC executive to ease transport restrictions, which could be the object of financial help in the form of a gift to strengthen the Institutional Development Facility.

A gift of \$430.000 would cover ascertain number of institutional actions :

1. Make the participants more responsible concerning the protection of the road transport patrimony.
2. actions to harmonize community regulations.
3. Set up a discussion group concerning the international corridors departing from Douala.
4. Start observation of the practices in the corridors.
5. Help in determining the CEMAC strategy in transit matters

In addition it is suggested that a seminar on the Facilitation measures to improve transport in transit along the corridors Douala – Central Africa and Douala - Chad be organized with UNCTAD support .