Pro Index | Journal of Sustainability in Integrated Policy and Practice
Volume: 3 Issue: 7 Year: 2025
ISSN: xxxx-xxxx | http://journals.proindex.uz

# The Execution of Public Contracts for Sustainable Development in Cameroon: The Case of Mezam Division

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***Abstract:*** The study captioned the execution 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 execution of projects, which has negated sustainable development due to malpractices fueled in the execution plan. Considering the fact that public contracts ultimately explores 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 Contracting out theory by Kettl (1988) which legalizes and justifies the need for contractors to execute public contracts. 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 management 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.

***Key points:*** Execution of Public, 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 execution of public contracts for sustainable development in Cameroon. 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 and Hutchens, 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 Ohene, 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 has 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 (UNEP, 2012:23). 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 management 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 (Cameroon Tribune, 2010:8).

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.

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.

In addition, community participation is seen as a major problem that further goes to complicate the sustainable development efforts of state actors. In this light, there is need to investigate the complexities surrounding adequate community participation in project execution and how such public contracts or projects can be sustained.

With these, also comes the need to know the extent to which low quality material purchased and used in project execution affects its durability and sustainability especially when it has to do with construction works and road works.

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

In what ways do low quality materials used in contract execution influence sustainable development in Mezam Division?

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To understand how the use of low-quality materials in the execution of public contracts affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

$H_0$: Low quality materials use in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

$H_1$: Low quality materials use in contract execution positively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 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.

**The Concept of Material Quality**

Indeed, quality has been defined as excellence, value (Feigenbaum, 1951:12). Arditi and Gunaydin (1997:57) define the concept of quality as meeting the legal, aesthetic, and functional requirements of a project. However, the term quality has sometimes become a problem as it is a subjective matter and understood differently by different people and organizations.

Quality is a prime factor to measure the performance of a project. Quality assurance of building materials is vital in order to create strong durable and cost effective structures. Each construction project has a different set of specification and requirements. The contractors are required to select and procure suitable construction materials so that they can meet the contract specification. Unless a specific brand and model number is stated, it is advisable to conduct thorough study and analysis of the different material properties to check for its compatibility in the different zones of the building. The materials are only ordered after receiving approval.

Moreover, according to studies carried out by Chen et al (2007:45), Chinese Construction Firms in Africa complained of not having the amount or quality of material that can meet their needs and the needs of all construction projects there. In addition to this, the China International Water & Electric Corporation (CIWEC) states "There is almost nothing in Africa. Although there are some cement factories and brick factories in North Africa, it cannot meet all their needs of construction projects. In some Sub-Sahara Africa, everything has to be imported". Balogun et al (2009:9), argues that steel is produced in Nigeria, Ghana and other West African countries, but the chemical properties need to be modified to attend desired strength. Amasuomo, (2014:32) further assert that construction materials like clay soil, river sand, gravel and timber are found in Nigeria. So too is same in Cameroon.

Elanga et al (2014:17) report concludes that developing countries are often characterized by lack of conformity of materials to standards that contribute to lower construction quality. According to a

survey conducted by them in Cameroon site, laboratories for the testing of materials are rarely found which led to high risk of use of poor-quality materials in construction which have harmful consequences for the solidity of the structure. In the case of road construction, increased energy costs influence material costs and may slow down projects significantly.

**Positive impact of quality materials in execution of projects**

Some of the positive impact of quality materials in execution of projects were outlined by Uphold (1986:14-16) as seen below.

Strength- Obviously quality materials are stronger than inferior ones. For instance, iron rods are in grades, the imported ones from Ukraine and others from Nigeria that goes through test are usually stronger with better tensile capacity as compared to local ones of low standard, and hence government always recommend companies go for the test to confirm that they are good for construction. Also, other materials like blocks, tiles among others that are of good quality are always stronger.

Durability- Better quality lasts longer. Sound insulation- materials of good quality are solidly built/produced, so they have better sound insulation ability. For instance, good solid doors, concrete well mixed and compacted, better roof/ceiling.

Aesthetics- The chemical components in quality paints like Dulux bond better, gives you a nice look. Also, other materials that are of high-quality falls same.

Cost- Better quality, higher cost at the point of sale, but long run, cheaper because of less waste and maintenance with greater longevity.

Recycling/Reusable-Quality materials on site can be used severally during construction. Marine plywood is always used and re-used as form-work compare to planks made of soft wood which gets bad after one use. So also, is fittings in the house.

Health and Safety-Quality materials do not quickly cause accidents on site and may not emit poisonous substances as most would have gone through proper laboratory testing. Ease of installation-quality materials are well produced with less error which also makes their use easier for construction workers. Adaptability; because of strength and durability, they can go for other non-conventional uses on site. Structural capability; a good reinforcement with right application will prevent your building from collapsing. Just as a wall formed with a good block will have less cracks.

Maintenance; quality materials give room for ease of maintenance and less cost of repairing and maintaining. Moisture/weather resistance- because of quality components, good materials resist moisture and inclement weather conditions better, to poor quality materials. Material deterioration-inferior materials will deteriorate faster to that of a better quality. Consistency in outlook-materials are graded based on consistency. Eco-friendliness; a high quality product for the home will be made using sustainable methods, which also minimize the amount of energy wasted in its use. Less waste-quality material gives room for far less waste.

**Disadvantage of poor-quality material on project execution**

According to Wallman (1969:3-4), poor quality material lacked durability, aesthetic and durability. Higher quality material looks better than poor quality materials and this can enhance the overall aesthetics of a project. Low quality material cost less initially but in the long run, the material may settle, rut, wash out, warp, fade, break, chip, and corrode. Higher quality materials will last much longer and this increases the durability of a project.

Cost can be affected. While you will initially save money on the project by opting for low quality materials, chances are that it will cost more in the long run are low. If you are a contractor, poor quality material can actually hurt your reputation and also lose your business, demotivation of the project team.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Contracting Out Theory

This theory was propagated by Kettl in 1988. This is a contemporary doctrine of management in public administration. According to him, since the mid-1990s, a steadily increasing percentage of public activities have been carried out "indirectly" or privately done by contractors and for virtually every conceivable government function. This is an attempt to rationalize capitalism. This is also a new liberal view. Thus, to be effective and sustainable, such contracts must be highly precise regarding the quality of materials and work man-ship. Contractors are ordinarily held to very tight specifications by the contracting governments' project manager; particularly for large scale contracts.

The critical point in the contract is the link between the governments' project manager (principal) and the firm's project manager (agent). To be effective, a combination of extensive technological knowledge, trust, and toughness must be evident (Donahue, 1989:65). Contracting out phenomenon goes by several names such as third party government (Smith and Lipsky 1993:35-40), hollow government; the hollow state (Milward 1994:20, 1996:12, Milward and Provan 2000a:12-15), Shadow government and the contracting regime (Kettl 1988:10). Contracting out is also a theory of the control of bureaucracy and of organisation theory. Here, we shall deal only with contemporary government contracting as a theory of management.

For more insight, contracting is being adopted and practiced on a large scale even in developing Countries (Loevinsohn et al, 2005:8). Contracting out reduces the direct provision of Services by the state; thus, rolling back the state and creating more space for the market mechanisms to allocate society's resources (English and Skellern, 2005:62). In the Theory of Managing by Contract by George Frederickson (1997b:26-35, he cited an example of the United State Defence Department which has always contracted for airplanes, ships, tanks, guns, and war technology. Most of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Department of Energy are done by contract. It is estimated that one-sixth of total federal spending (including entitlement) has gone to contractors, this amount, as shown by Federal spending figures, has been more than matched during the 2000s. The Federal government has many more civilian employees on the "contract" payroll than on the actual civilian payroll. It has been shown that cuts in the Federal workforce can result in an increase in the contract payroll. (Frederickson 1997b: 120-121).

Government generally contract out because of want of resources, capacity and information to produce the service or because of their belief in the efficiency of the market. To deliver value, contracting requires a set of conducive conditions and may not be suitable in all contexts. Therefore, identifying the determinant of contract effectiveness not only requires an understanding of the factors influencing contracting but also their interactions that critically shape contract effectiveness.

The Purpose of contracting is to exploit gains from co-operation. This requires aligning incentives of different parties and mitigating conflict of interest through a well-designed contract. However, designing an effective contract is challenging to achieve because of three reasons. First, forecasting all possible future events in a complex and unpredictable world is nearly impossible. Secondly, negotiating over all events that could unfold over time is difficult and thirdly, it is also extremely difficult to write down all possible conditions in a contract such that they are interpreted and enforced by a third party in the same spirit.

Contracting in the public sector faces some additional challenges given the uncertainties involved due to the political process, rigidities due to existing laws and the administrative system and the existing goals. Besides, factors such as efficiency, transparency and fairness must also be addressed (Brown et al, 2009:7). Contextual conditions such as competitiveness between firms, institutional arrangements, values of the contracting parties and policy capacity also influence the choice of terms of contracts and governance mechanisms during implementation shaping the incentives of contracting parties.

For contracts to be effective, each party needs to have some level of certainty about the value it brings and receives in the process. For the buyer, this includes value received from the specific features and characteristics of product/services and the cost incurred. For the seller, this includes cost incurred to produce a product or service of particular characteristics and features (Brown et al, 2016:41).

Ideally, risk should be allocated to a party that has more control over the risk factor, and the extent of allocation should depend upon the vendor's ability to manage and minimize the risk. Apart from specifying the value, exchange rules-details about the exchange-when, where, amount of compensation and payment method, allocate the contract risks and determine incentives to parties under different circumstances. In Fixed–price contracts, a fixed price per unit is service/product is paid to the seller, who bears the risk of cost variation. It is used for similar products for which cost is easy to determine. Fixed cost method is known to incentivize shedding of quality, especially if not observable by the other party. The most common exchange rule that allocates the risks is the compensation rule, that is, how much and in what way the seller is compensated. Two common forms of compensation are fixed-price contracts and cost-reimbursement contracts.

In the cost reimbursement method, the price is determined after the production, leaving the risk of cost variation to the buyer. However, the seller may focus only on particular dimensions of quality (gold plating) to give a false impression of high quality, to inflate price (Brown et al 2015:13). The second exchange rule is about contract duration. For cases, which require flexibility and adaptation investment, shorter contract duration is more optimal allowing switching of providers, whereas an investment with higher specificity would require longer contact duration to protect the party from hold-up. Shorter contract duration, along with frequent contract renewal and retendering imposes market discipline on inefficient partners. (Iossa et al, 2007:40)

On the other hand, a long-term contract signals a credible commitment by each party to deliver value to the other thus, contract duration influences competition and efficiency if aligned with the nature of the transaction. The third exchange rule relates to the bundling of task. Task that have positive externality with each other, when bundled together generate higher social welfare, even if the quality is not observable. On the contrary, task with negative externality should not be bundled together. The parties are expected to work as a team, facilitating and supporting each other.

Iossa et al (2007:6), points out the role of the market and competition for efficiency gains. In their view, market and competition, introduced by contracting out public services are the key to less bureaucracy and more efficiency. Despite imperfections in contract design and contract implementation, contracting could still deliver public value at least to some extent if governed effectively. This would mean tolerating some inefficiency.

One of the best studies of contracting concludes that contracting works are best when; what needs to be done can be clearly and precisely described for purposes of contract negotiation and compliance, desired outcomes can readily and easily be measured or identified, penalties are imposed for non-compliance with the contract and contractors may be discontinued or changed (Donahue ,1989:52).

Contracting for the construction and maintenance of buildings, highways, bridges and other capital facilities need to meet these criteria. As long as the four criteria are met, principal-agent ideology can adequately explain management by contract. The reason for our skepticism about the value of principal-agent ideology here is that these criteria are rarely met. In contracting for discrete projects, there are usually many qualified bidders or put another way, a genuine market and a capacity on the art of the government to get the best product at the best price (Rehfuss, 1989:70). In the abstract and theoretical sense, those who support contracting argue that, contracting out should allow managers to focus on goal setting, performance standards and policy framing and leave the contractor to do the rowing (Osborne et al, 1992:87). They pointed to the fact that contractors may be viewed in two ways; positively as partners or negatively on special interest.

Domberger, et al (1997:74) examine the theory and evidence of contracting out in the public sector. They discuss the theory and show theoretical points where it is problematic to contract out. They

discuss broader issues like public sector accountability and employment effect. For them, unlike privatization, contracting out (or simply contracting) does not generally involve the sale of publicly owned assets…. It considers the theoretical conditions such as contractual incompleteness and the ownership of physical assets, which may impede efficient contracting. This contracting out obligation differs broadly from the first modern philosophical view of contract theory articulated by Thomas Hobbes in 1651, in his work Leviathan. This rather encompassing view deals with the social contract theory and so should not be misconstrued with the traditional management theory and the contracting out theory as postulated in context.

The relation between natural and legal rights is often a topic of social contract theory. Social contract arguments typically posit that individuals have consented, either explicitly or tacitly, to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the ruler or to the decision of the majority in exchange for protection of their remaining rights or maintenance of social order. Hobbes defines contract in this sense as "the mutual transferring of rights". In the state of nature, everyone has the right to everything- there are no limits to the right of natural liberty. However, this is still inter related with this research endeavor since the topic attempts to evaluate the level of efficient execution of public contracts and how it impacts sustainable development influencing the welfare of people's rights and natural liberty. Contracting out or outsourcing is a part of public sector reform strategy where in government engages a private entity to provide a service within a set of specific conditions. Dissatisfaction with the government delivery of services and search for a low-cost, high-quality alternative, drove the movement for privatization and contracting out during the 1960-70s.

Performance of contracting as a policy tool has been less than expected. This can mainly be attributed to the fact that for a contract to be effective, it requires meeting many conditions, some of which can be challenging and not always feasible. To work effectively, contracting requires suitable context, an appropriate contract design, an effective contract management such that the parties engage in consummate behavior rather than perfunctory or predatory behavior.

In their article "Contracting out by the Public Sector: Theory, Evidence, Prospects; Domberger et al, (1997: 20) examines the theory and evidence of contracting out in the public Sector. The imperial evidence says that it is possible to save around 20 percent of the Service Cost by Contracting out. To them; contracting out, means that a certain part of the public sector is opened up for competition. Competition or biding for a contract means that the tender with the lowest cost will be accepted. As a result, the service will be provided at the lowest cost level.

**Weaknesses of the theory**

Though contract design and governance have been studied extensively, little research attention has been paid to understanding the interaction between contract design and contract governance.

However, there are uncertainties involved in determining performance ex-ante, compounded by difficulties in measuring and verifying; which together make these requirements hard to satisfy.

The gaps in contract represent the governance needs of the transaction which have remained unfulfilled. This unfulfilled governance needs are filled to some extent by values of the parties and institutions of the society. As these are not sufficient, parties in the contract generally design governance mechanisms to meet the unfulfilled governance needs.

In theory, contracting out seems to be more efficient as it improves focus on cost and quality; but contrary to expectations, evidence suggests that efficiency gains are not realized in many cases. The quality-shading hypothesis says that private suppliers have a bigger incentive to reduce cost. This leads to less quality if the costs are in an adverse relation. As harder it is to contract quality, the more cost can arise through contracting out.

Contract failure means that a certain part of the contract is wrong and a market failure arises if there is a systematic failure of contractual transactions. A key point why many contracts could fail is the reason that it is difficult to monitor the fulfilling of contracts completely.

**Relevance of the theory to the work**

Supporters of contracting out argue that it introduces competition, controls political interference, reduces public expenditure and improves governance performance (Osborne et al, 1992:23).

Effective contracting out leads to outcomes that leave both parties better off by engaging in contracting rather than self-production. In order to be effective, the contract needs to provide the right set of incentives and also ensure that they are managed well. Brown et al (2016:31), as well as informal institutions such as social norms, customs and traditions. Even though incentives have a major influence in performance, feasibility studies and project management remain the pivot for sustainable development, thus, this theory also ties well with this study.

Contextual factors shape contract-design, and thus incentives to parties. First, effective contracting requires the ability to design and manage contracts, a task that requires significant capacity. Initially, it is the analytical capacity; that is governments need to have the ability to generate and analyze complex quantitative economic and financial information, and they do trend analysis and forecasting for drawing contract.

Secondly, the competitiveness of the market, another contextual condition influences efficiency and quality. Ex-ante Competition drives cost consciousness and improves the quality which in turn improves efficiency.

Thirdly, value alignment between parties in the contract determines the specificity of the contract and the need for contract monitoring (Brown et al, 2006:19). In this context; values refer to stakeholders' preferences about equity, efficiency, profits, relationship etc. thus very relevant to public contract execution for sustainable development, a core issue in this research work. Contracting between parties with similar values was obscured to be less specific and required limited monitoring.

Parties use a varying mix of both formal governance mechanisms such as monitoring, authority, and penalty, as well as informal mechanisms such reciprocity, trust and relational norms, creatively mixing and tailoring them to meet governance needs of the context.

## 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**

**In what ways do low quality materials used in contract execution influence sustainable development in Mezam Division?**

Respondent's opinion on some of the instruments used for high quality control of projects.

**The concrete sclerometer**: This device allows the resistance of concrete to be assessed non-destructively. This method is interesting because of its simplicity; it allows for quick checks on the regularity of the concrete in a structure.

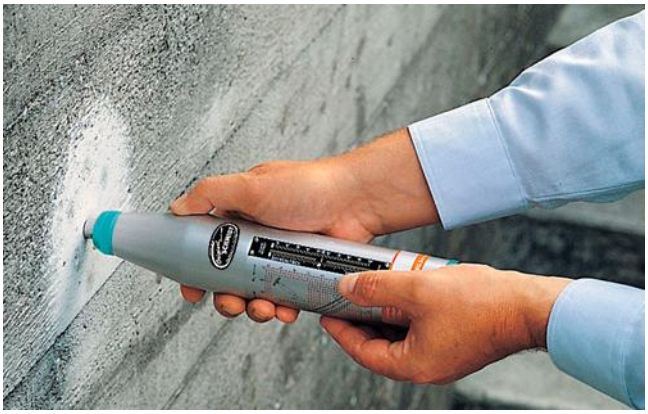


**Plate 1 : The sclerometer test**

**The concrete pachometer:** This device measures the coating and diameter of the reinforcement in the concrete. It also marks the location of the reinforcement.

**Plate 2 : The concrete pachometer**

**The concrete pachometer test**

**The gamma densitometer:**

This device allows quick and accurate moisture and density measurements on various soils, earthworks, aggregates, concrete and asphalt mixes without the need for sampling or other destructive methods.

**Plate 3: The gamma densitometer:**

**The laser rangefinder:** This device allows the distance between two objects to be measured instantly at the touch of a button (maximum range 100m). It also offers the following features;

- Easy aiming with the high brightness laser;
- Quick calculation of area (square meters) and volume;
- Easy addition and subtraction function.


**Plate 4: The laser rangefinder measuring a distance with a laser rangefinder.**

**The odometer or pedometer:** This device allows one to accurately measure very long distances. It can measure up to 9.999 m. The integrated counter in the odometer guarantees reliable measurements.

**Plate 5: Measuring with the odometer or pedometer**

**GPS (Global Positioning System):** This device allows geo-location. It allowed one to locate work sites on a map (roads, buildings, etc.)


**Plate 6: The GPS**

**Digital cameras:** To carry out photographic reports of the sites monitored.


**Plate 7: Camera**

**Respondent's opinion on sanctions for poor quality execution or abandoned contracts.**

The respondents said to a greater extent it is true because individual contractors have multiple company names. So once a particular company is suspended because of an abandoned project or poor execution, he uses another company name to still tender and execute and there is no system platform in place to check the sanctions of these individuals. So, it tastes "like old wine in new bottles".

**Respondents Knowledge on poor quality in Public Contract**

| How knowledgeable are you about the public contracts rules and regulations | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Good | 147 | 43.8 |
| Very good | 145 | 43.2 |
| Excellent | 24 | 7.1 |
| No opinion | 20 | 6.0 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** |

**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

**Bar chart showing respondents knowledge on poor quality Public Contract**


**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

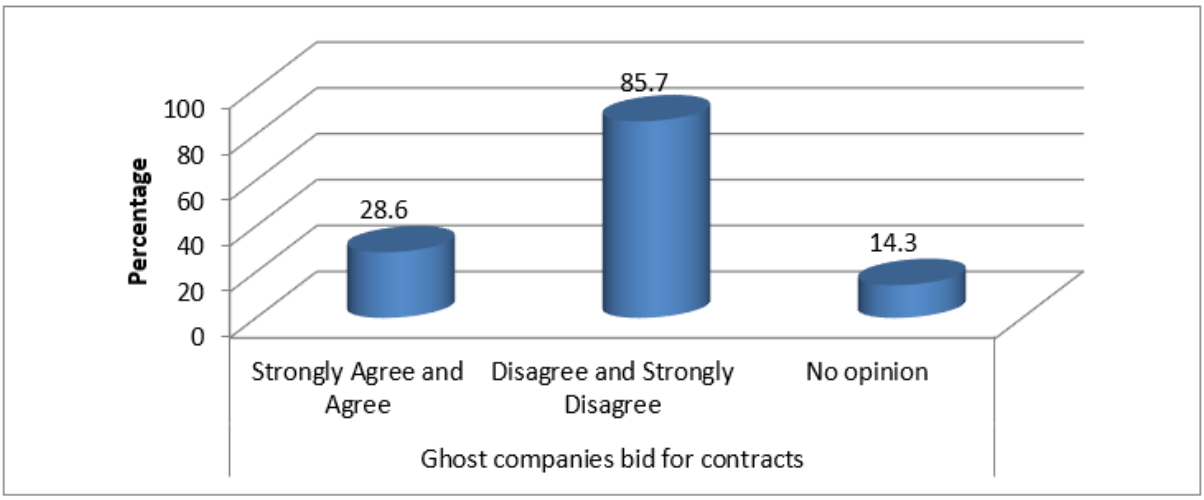
Based on respondents' knowledge on public contract, 43.8% (147) of respondents rate their knowledge as good, while 43.2% (145) rate theirs as very good, 7.1% (24) are excellent and 6.0% (20) of respondents did not answer the question. The researcher selected experts in this field of procurement and public contract execution that is why respondents have good and very good knowledge about the subject matter. With some even rated as excellent.

**Do Ghost Companies Bidding for Contracts affect quality?**

| Ghost companies bid for contracts | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agree | 96 | 28.6 | 28.6 |
| Disagree | 120 | 35.7 | 64.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 72 | 21.4 | 85.7 |
| No opinion | 48 | 14.3 | 100 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** | |

**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

**Bar chart showing ghost companies bidding for contracts affect quality**




**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

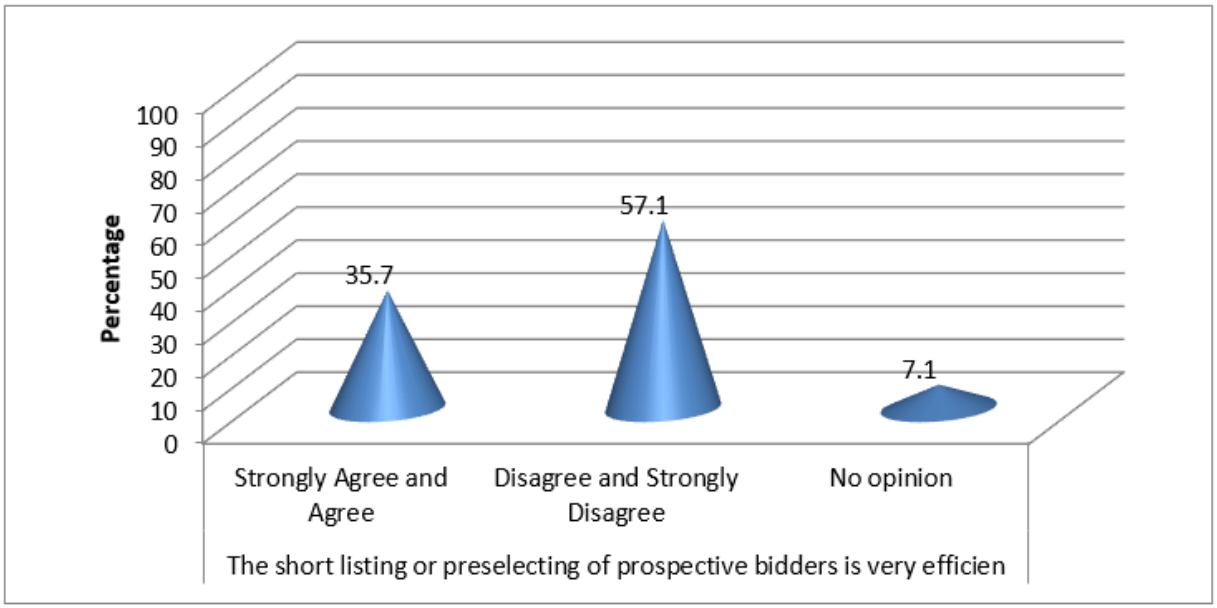
Cumulatively, 28.6% (96) of respondents agreed that ghost companies bid for contracts while a majority of respondents 85.7% (192) disagreed. This is very relevant because every company must be owned by somebody since these companies are registered and have registration certificates. They equally pay taxes to government and to be qualified to bid each company must present an attestation of Bank account among other conditions.

**Respondents Opinion on the Pre-selection of Bidders to guaranty quality.**

| The short listing or preselecting of prospective bidders is very efficient | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 24 | 7.1 | 7.1 |
| Agree | 96 | 28.6 | 35.7 |
| Disagree | 192 | 57.1 | 92.9 |
| No opinion | 24 | 7.1 | 100 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** | |

**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

**Bar chart respondent's opinion on the preselecting of bidders to guaranty quality**




**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

Cumulatively, 35.7% (120) of respondents indicated that, the short listing or pre-selection of prospective bidders is very efficient, while 57.1% (192) of respondents indicated that it is not effective. It is not effective since most contractors pay to the project owners; lobbying to be given

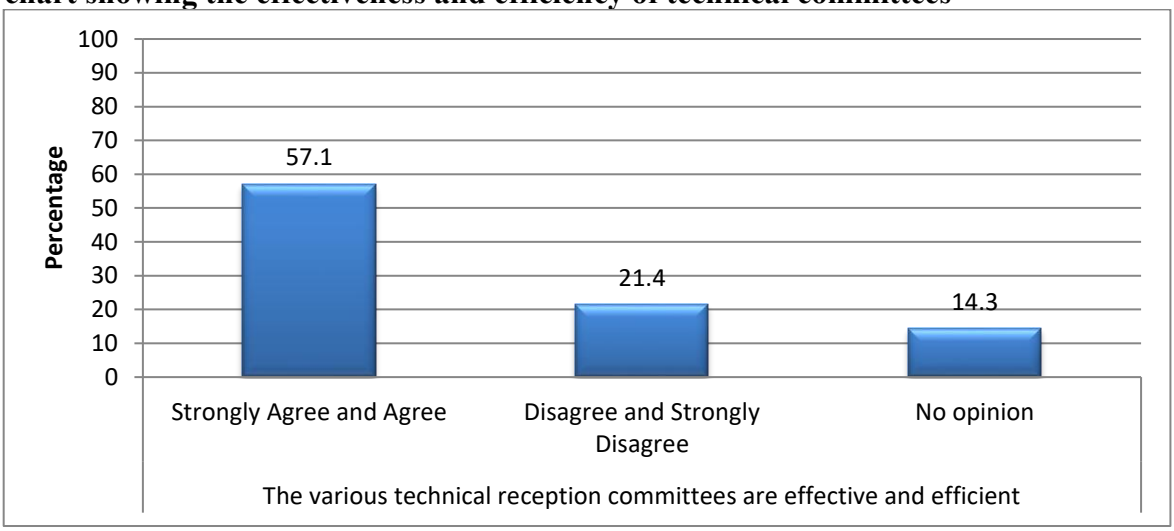
the contract. Those are usually the companies shortlisted by the project owner after hiding the launching of the bid from other contractors. That is why there is always serious conflict when the tender is launched in the official journal for public contracts at ARMP giving opportunity for other contractors to tender for the bid. 35.7% of respondent are also correct because the contract must be published, giving room for other contractors to tender for the job and most often they are qualified and preselected and some even end of winning the bid. Moreover, buying the D.A.O is not restricted to particular contractors. It's an open process despite the corruption. That is why if the tenders' board declares a winner of the bid and the project owner awards the contract to a different bidder, the project owner will be sanctioned by the minister in charge of public contracts to the extent that his signature can be suspended.

**How does the Technical Committee guaranty quality**

| The various technical reception committees are effective and efficient | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 24 | 7.1 | 7.1 |
| Agree | 192 | 57.1 | 64.3 |
| Disagree | 72 | 21.4 | 85.7 |
| No opinion | 48 | 14.3 | 100 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** | |

**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

**Bar chart showing the effectiveness and efficiency of technical committees**




**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

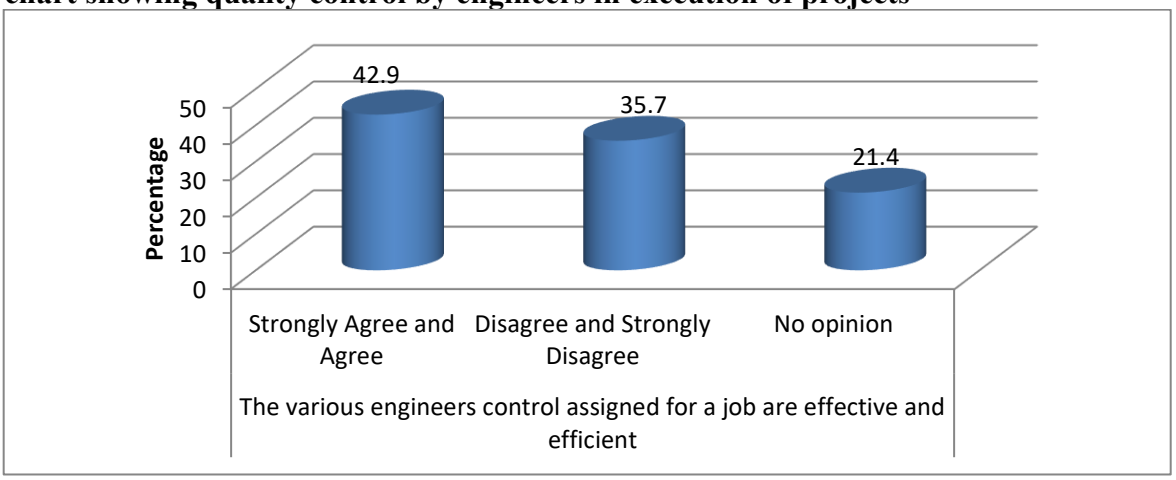
Cumulatively, 57.1% (192) of respondents indicated that the various technical reception committees are effective and efficient while 21.4% (72) of respondents states that the various technical reception committees are not effective and efficient. They are only effective by making their report and observation, but the contract award commission still goes ahead to award. Thus, it seems they are just "toothless bull dogs" despite their role to check irregularities.

**Quality control by Engineers in Execution of Projects**

| The various engineers control assigned for a job are effective and efficient | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 24 | 7.1 | 7.1 |
| Agree | 120 | 35.7 | 42.9 |
| Disagree | 120 | 35.7 | 78.6 |
| No opinion | 72 | 21.4 | 100 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** | |

**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

**Bar chart showing quality control by engineers in execution of projects**




**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

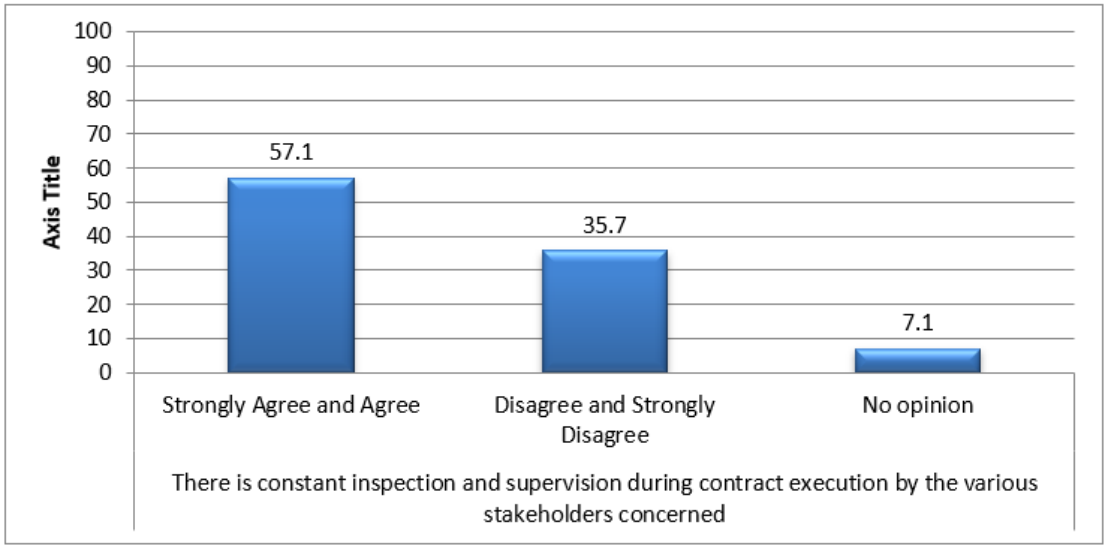
Cumulatively, findings show that 42.9% (144) of respondents indicated that the engineers are effective and efficient in the execution of projects while 33.7% (120) of respondents indicated that the engineers are ineffective and not efficient. Some engineers don't go to the field due to insecurity, thus cannot guaranty quality whereas they are technically responsible for quality; they are held first in the event of checking quality. Of course the studies are done by the engineers effectively before the project is funded. But most often, since they don't go to the field for studies, they simply copy and paste quantities which do not reflect the reality on the ground for different environments. Sometimes, the quantities are in French language making it difficult to be interpreted during execution.

**Quality Inspection and Supervision of Public Contracts**

| There is constant inspection and supervision during contract execution by the various stakeholders concerned | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 48 | 14.3 | 14.3 |
| Agree | 144 | 42.9 | 57.1 |
| Disagree | 120 | 35.7 | 92.9 |
| No opinion | 24 | 7.1 | 100 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** | |

***Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025***

**Bar chart showing quality inspection and supervision of public contracts**




**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

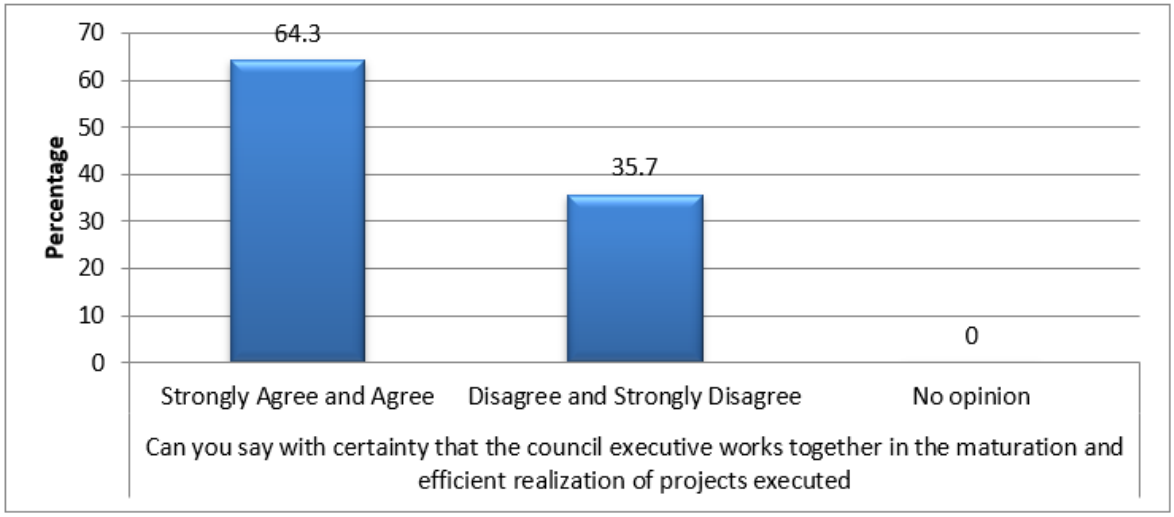
Cumulatively, findings show that 57.1% (192) of respondents indicated that there is constant inspection and supervision during contract execution by the various stakeholders concerned while 35.7% (120) of respondents indicated that there is no constant inspection and supervision of contracts during execution. The supervision is not constant and not by various stakeholders concern but on paper it seems so. Most of the projects get to it completion without most stakeholders setting their foot on site. The question then is; what about site installation and respect for specifications in the process of execution? Are the investments sustainable?

**Council Executive Working Together in the Maturation and quality control of Projects Executed**

| Can you say with certainty that the council executive works together in the maturation and efficient realization of projects executed | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 24 | 7.1 | 7.1 |
| Agree | 192 | 57.1 | 64.3 |
| Disagree | 120 | 35.7 | 100 |
| **Total** | **336** | **100** | |

**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

**Bar chart council executive working together in the maturation and quality control of projects executed**




**Source: Field survey by researcher, 2025**

Cumulatively, findings show that 64.3% (216) of respondents said that the council executives work together in the maturation and efficient realization of projects executed, while 35.7% (120) of respondents indicated that the council executive do not work together in the maturation and efficient realization of projects executed. There is nothing like council executive in this domain. The mayors who are the vote holders as they are called project owners are having an open cheque from contractors and manages contracts as a private issue. It is a no go area for any other member of the council executives.

**Summary of findings**

**Overall Findings**

| Execution of public contracts | Responses | |
|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Adequate quality | 151 | 44.9 |
| Inadequate quality | 143 | 42.6 |
| No opinion | 42 | 12.5 |
| Total | 336 | 100 |

In overall, findings showed that 44.9% (151) of respondents indicated that public contracts have adequate quality, while 42.6% (143) of respondents stated that public contracts do not have adequate quality with 12.5% (42) of respondents voiceless. The gap is so close, giving the impression that a lot still needs to be done to move from 44.9% to a better percentage. The quality impact at this percentage cannot be felt. 42.6% indicates that there are still a lot of irregularities affecting good quality in the process of execution of procurement and public contracts in Mezam.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

$H_1$: Low quality materials used in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

$H_0$: Low quality materials used in contract execution positively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

**Observed frequency**

| No | Perception of Respondents | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | A | D | SD | N | Total |
| 1 | 147 | 145 | 24 | 0 | 20 | **336** |
| 2 | 96 | 0 | 120 | 72 | 48 | **336** |
| 3 | 24 | 96 | 192 | 0 | 24 | **336** |
| 4 | 24 | 192 | 72 | 0 | 48 | **336** |
| 5 | 24 | 120 | 120 | 0 | 72 | **336** |
| 6 | 48 | 144 | 120 | 0 | 24 | **336** |
| 7 | 24 | 192 | 120 | 0 | 0 | **336** |
| 8 | 151 | 0 | 143 | 0 | 42 | **336** |
| **Grand Total** | **538** | **889** | **911** | **72** | **278** | **2688** |

**Source: field data by researcher, 2025**

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

**Table: 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 | 147 | 67.25 | 79.75 | 6360.06 | 94.57 |
| 2 | R1C2 | 96 | 67.25 | 28.75 | 826.56 | 12.29 |
| 3 | R1C3 | 24 | 67.25 | -43.25 | 1870.56 | 27.82 |
| 4 | R1C4 | 24 | 67.25 | -43.25 | 1870.56 | 27.82 |
| 5 | R1C5 | 24 | 67.25 | -43.25 | 1870.56 | 27.82 |
| 6 | R1C6 | 48 | 67.25 | -19.25 | 370.56 | 5.51 |
| 7 | R1C7 | 24 | 67.25 | -43.25 | 1870.56 | 27.82 |
| 8 | R1C8 | 151 | 67.25 | 83.75 | 7014.06 | 104.29 |
| 9 | R2C1 | 145 | 111.13 | 33.87 | 1147.18 | 10.32 |
| 10 | R2C2 | 0 | 111.13 | -111.13 | 12349.88 | 111.13 |
| 11 | R2C3 | 96 | 111.13 | -15.13 | 228.92 | 2.06 |
| 12 | R2C4 | 192 | 111.13 | 80.87 | 6539.96 | 58.85 |
| 13 | R2C5 | 120 | 111.13 | 8.87 | 78.68 | 0.71 |
| 14 | R2C6 | 144 | 111.13 | 32.87 | 1080.44 | 9.72 |
| 15 | R2C7 | 192 | 111.13 | 80.87 | 6539.96 | 58.85 |
| 16 | R2C8 | 0 | 111.13 | -111.13 | 12349.88 | 111.13 |
| 17 | R3C1 | 24 | 113.88 | -89.88 | 8078.41 | 70.94 |
| 18 | R3C2 | 120 | 113.88 | 6.12 | 37.45 | 0.33 |
| 19 | R3C3 | 192 | 113.88 | 78.12 | 6102.73 | 53.59 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | R3C4 | 72 | 113.88 | -41.88 | 1753.93 | 15.40 |
| 21 | R3C5 | 120 | 113.88 | 6.12 | 37.45 | 0.33 |
| 22 | R3C6 | 120 | 113.88 | 6.12 | 37.45 | 0.33 |
| 23 | R3C7 | 120 | 113.88 | 6.12 | 37.45 | 0.33 |
| 24 | R3C8 | 143 | 113.88 | 29.12 | 847.97 | 7.45 |
| 25 | R4C1 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 26 | R4C2 | 72 | 9 | 63 | 3969 | 441 |
| 27 | R4C3 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 28 | R4C4 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 29 | R4C5 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 30 | R4C6 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 31 | R4C7 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 32 | R4C8 | 0 | 9 | -9 | 81 | 9 |
| 33 | R5C1 | 20 | 34.75 | -14.75 | 217.56 | 6.26 |
| 34 | R5C2 | 48 | 34.75 | 13.25 | 175.56 | 5.05 |
| 35 | R5C3 | 24 | 34.75 | -10.75 | 115.56 | 3.33 |
| 36 | R5C4 | 48 | 34.75 | 13.25 | 175.56 | 5.05 |
| 37 | R5C5 | 72 | 34.75 | 37.25 | 1387.56 | 39.93 |
| 38 | R5C6 | 24 | 34.75 | -10.75 | 115.56 | 3.33 |
| 39 | R5C7 | 0 | 34.75 | -34.75 | 1207.56 | 34.75 |
| 40 | R5C8 | 42 | 34.75 | 7.25 | 52.56 | 1.51 |
| | **TOTAL** | | | | | **1442.62** |

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

Chi Square Value = **1442.62**

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

= (8-1) (5-1)

= 7x4

= 28

Significance Level= 0.05

Table or Critical Value= 41.337

**Conclusion**: Since the chi-square value which stands at 1442 .62 is greater than the table value which stands at 41.337, we reject the alternative hypothesis ($H_1$) which states that, low quality materials used contract execution positively affect development and accept the null hypothesis ($H_o$) which states that low quality materials used in contract execution negatively affect sustainable development in Mezam Division.

**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.

Arditi et al (1997:57), define the concept of quality as meeting the legal, aesthetic, and functional requirements of a project. However, the term quality has sometimes become a problem as it is a subjective matter and understood differently by different people and organizations. Quality is a prime factor to measure the performance of a project. Quality assurance of building materials is vital in order to create strong durable and cost-effective structures. Each construction project has a different set of specification and requirements. The contractors are required to select and procure

suitable construction materials so that they can meet the contract specification. Unless a specific brand and model number is stated, it is advisable to conduct thorough study and analysis of the different material properties to check for its compatibility in the different zones of the building. The materials are only ordered after receiving approval. Rather, from our findings in this study, there is still the usage of low-quality materials in executing projects despite the studies carried out. Most often this is as a result of three factors. Firstly, most of the studies are done using french terminologies which are not easily and properly translated thereby giving the contractor the ability to easily manipulate the type of materials needed for a project. Moreover, most of the quantities are just copied and pasted as a formality on similar projects without site visits thereby not having a proper appraisal of the landscape for construction projects hence, giving a wrong estimate for the use of materials. In attempting to survive with the unforeseen challenges in the field, the contractor starts reducing the quantities and qualities to meet up with the budgeted cost of executing the project.

Moreover, according to studies carried out by Chen et al (2007:45), Chinese Construction Firms in Africa, complained of not having the amount or quality of material that can meet their needs and the needs of all construction projects there. In addition to this, the China International Water & Electric Corporation (CIWEC) states "There is almost nothing in Africa. Although there are some cement factories and brick factories in North Africa, it cannot meet all their needs of construction projects. In some sub-Sahara Africa, everything has to be imported". Balogun et al (2009:9) argue that steel is produced in Nigeria, Ghana and other West African countries, but the chemical properties need to be modified to attend desired strength. They further assert that construction materials like clay soil, river sand, gravel and timber are found in Nigeria. So too is same in Cameroon. From the above, we see that as a third developing country we still lack the technology to have sufficient quality material that meets the international standard used by developed countries.

According to a survey conducted by Elanga et al (2014:17), Cameroon site laboratories for the testing of materials are rarely found which led to high risk of use of poor-quality materials in construction which have harmful consequences for the solidity of the structure. In the case of road construction, increased energy costs influence material costs and may slow down projects significantly. The next issue in view is corruption. Most contractors bribe their way to being awarded contracts and during execution they do everything to manage the project with poor material in order to catch up with the monies earlier paid to the contracting authority to be awarded the contract. That is why during supervision and reception, there is collaboration to accept the poor quality of the material used simply because the contracting authority and control engineers are accomplices. Even were a report is written by the control engineer identifying poor quality of the work, it goes nowhere because the chain of bribery and corruption continues up and down the ladder of hierarchy. Lastly, within this Anglophone crises period, some contractors in the field have paid unknown gun men to keep shooting guns during execution of project in red and yellow zones especially when controls plan to visit the site to check the nature and level of execution. That is the reason this research also made use of the contracting out theory. The contractor keeps saying that there are shooting guns and that it's not safe to visit the site. While the control engineer or control mission runs away, the contractor executes the work with poor quality material till finish before access to the project site is possible during reception of the projects. There is also incompetency of local contractors who are selected through the Lowest Bidder principle and later fine it impossible to execute the contract within the minimal amount in the bid, so forced to use low and sometimes insufficient quality of material to execute a project. It is for the above reasons that the research sets out to understand how the use of low-quality material in the execution of public contracts affects sustainable development in Mezam Division. That is why, poor quality material lacked durability, aesthetic and durability. Higher quality material looks better than poor quality materials and this can enhance the overall aesthetics of a project. Low quality material cost less initially but in the long run, the material may settle, rut, wash out, warp, fade, break, chip, and corrode. Higher quality materials will last much longer and this increases the durability of a project.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### In what ways do low quality materials used in contract execution influence sustainable development in Mezam Division?

In overall, findings showed that 44.9% (151) of respondents indicate that public contracts have adequate quality, while 42.6% (143) of respondents' states that public contracts do not have adequate quality with 12.5% (42) of respondents voiceless. The gap is so close, giving the impression that a lot still needs to be done to move from 44.9% to a better percentage. The quality impact at this percentage cannot be felt. 42.6% indicates that there are still a lot of irregularities affecting good quality in the process of execution of procurement and public contracts in Mezam. All stakeholders involved are to ensure good quality of materials used for their project through the control mechanism set out by the code and also with the use of equipment to test the quality of every executed project. As postulated by a scholar, 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 Ohene, 2012:4).

Also, the findings showed that penalties/sanctions are not imposed on contractors for poorly executed or abandoned contracts and contractors of poorly executed projects are still awarded with contracts due to multiple names use, as there is no system platform in place to check the sanctions. Based on this, the stakeholders suggested that defaulters should face heavy sanction, strict award and control of contracts and supervision be put in place, staff and actors concerned in public contracts should be well trained, follow up be carry out to ensure that contracts are executed to realization. The award process should be done electronically; so as to curb fraud. With all these findings, the hypothesis that states Low quality material-use in contract execution negatively affects sustainable development in Mezam Division. Reducing the total costs can be perceived as reduced quality of products. Cost efficient procurement doesn't imply that the quality of products would decrease (Bhat, 2011:54).

In a study carried out by the National Public Procurement Integrity Baseline survey, 2006:4, it revealed that at a local level, procurement management is believed to be one of the principle areas where corruption is endemic. This is clearly depicted in the findings of our study, where some of the respondents reported incidents of fraud in the procurement of public contracts in Mezam Division which negatively affects quality. Fraud in public investment contracts evolve around payment method, quantity verification, quality specification and execution. The gap between amounts disbursed for execution and the actual implementation of projects is widening due to widespread and unbending corruption, costing billions of francs CFA to the state yearly.

## 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, the study was guided by an objective which is; to understand how the use of low-quality materials in the execution of public contracts affect sustainable development in Mezam Division. With the data collected from the field and analyzed, the findings revealed that a majority of respondents are of the opinion that low quality materials used in contract execution negatively affects sustainable development in Mezam Division.

The regulation of public contracts is ensured by the Public Contracts Regulatory Body, which monitors and facilitates the public contracts system. The findings also revealed that the government has adopted e-procurement of public contracts with the purpose to improve transparency and equity in the public procurement system. Despite the various actions and stakeholders involve in the procurement of public contract, when it comes to the awarding and executing of public contracts, the respondents said that most contracts executed by the government are based on certain considerations such as regional balance, political appeasement rather than the immediate or actual needs of the population. Penalties/sanctions are not imposed on contractors for poorly executed or

abandoned contracts, contractors of poorly executed projects still awarded with contracts due to corruption. The multiple names use by contractors is also rampant as there is no system platform in place to check the multiplicity of names of contracting companies owned by defaulting contractors nor follow-up their sanctions, if given.

Based on this, the stakeholders are suggesting that defaulters should be heavily sanctioned, strict award and control of contracts and supervision be put in place, staff and actors concern in public contracts should be well trained, follow up be carried out to ensure that contracts are executed to realization, the members of tender board should have good knowledge of the public contract code, the government should resolve the Anglophone crisis which is also preventing the successful execution of projects, the execution of contracts should be free from politics (apolitical) and that the award process should be done electronically so as to curb fraud. With all these, it was evidence that the measures of procurement and public contracts execution are non-sustainable in Mezam Division. Yukins et al., (2013:12) believe that harmonized systems ensure accountability which incorporates rigorous means of enforcing procurement rules throughout a bid process and, had long stated that this process comprises clear and transparent public procurement legislation, modern purchasing techniques, efficient and independent enforcement and remedies system, competent contracting authority and competitive bidders. Therefore, in order to ensure that public execution is effective and efficient in Mezam Division, several measures have to be put in place and respected.

## 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.

High quality Material use**.** A proper on-the-spot inspection should be carried out during material purchase and field works. On a day-to-day basis, a council representative should be appointed by the mayor to follow up the use of such material to ensure material quality and auditing. For effective and quality work to take place, the contracting authorities (mayors) in councils should choose competent contractors to manage public contracts on a free and fair environment and not based on party affiliation, nepotism and corruption.

When that is done, mayors should prepare progress reports based on field visits. Vote holders should also identify and maintain close contact with contractors and actively seek opportunities to control the work with them. The mayors should always meet with contractors and find out what challenges they are facing at each stage of the contract. This will encourage contractors and lay a proper foundation for strong partnership and efficiency.

### 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 contractors 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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