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Railway Transport Sustainability and Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Cameroon

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Abstract

A sustainable and reliable railway transport system is quite pertinent in instigating production and distribution of goods and services especially in far-off enclave areas. However, the operation of this transport sector in Cameroon is yet to come to its prime. It is bogged down by a wide range of challenges which cuts across delays, poor infrastructure, and accidents occurrences linked to poor management which sometimes results from the use of old-fashioned and worn-out engines/wagons. This is in sharp contrast with other developing countries who uses Metro and TVG (Train à Grande Vitesse). This study was therefore designed to investigate into these challenges and point out key areas to ameliorate. Methodology used involved secondary and primary sourced data. Secondary data was germane from published and unpublished sources such as the Cameroon National Railway Mater Plan, Camrail website, related articles amidst others. Primary data was gotten from field studies where observations and interviews were conducted to draw insights about the Cameroon railway sector in view of the sustainability and challenges. The processed data revealed that, in terms of management, delays and late arrivals of trains based on time schedules was common. More so, frequent occurrences of accident results from poor management (overloading) the case of Eseka on October 21, 2016, along the Yaoundé-Douala railway line. Apart from overloading and accidents, infrastructure is poor especially railway tracks which lacks sufficient maintenance. More so, it was observed that, rail infrastructure since 1999 when Camrail began its operation under Boloré African Logistics, infrastructure have been a deteriorating base on observations and comparison before Camrail emerged. This study, however, strongly recommends, increase investments in Cameroon railway lines through upgrading of infrastructure, and most importantly the introduction of electric trains such as TVG and Metro which are efficient and swift to meet the needs of increasing population and to meet agenda 2035.

Keywords: Railway transport, sustainability, challenges, development, management, Cameroon.

1. INTRODUCTION

World over, the rail transport sector is perceived as the best platform for massive haulage of goods and services on land. Railway transport designates the transportation of passengers and goods on wheeled vehicles running on rails/tracks. A sustainable and efficient railway transport system is germane in achieving trade promotion, social integration and economic development (Soretire *et al.,* 2024). The sector enables seamless transportation that engenders robust economies, anchored on human resources, and services within limited regulatory intervention by government or its bodies (Oguchi, 2020). Muhammad *et al.,* (2018) itemised that the optimistic stimulation of economic activities through the improvement of spatial interaction ensures the abundance of scarce resources which had hitherto been out of reach of citizenry due and spatial disparities. The railway transport sector, therefore, have the capacity to close these disparities by swiftly linking all angles of the country in a while. Agricultural produce, petroleum products, cloths, animals etc can easily be transported nationwide and across trade blocs through this railway system. In fact, railway transport played a pivotal role in the industrial revolution in Europe and North America, and it was a viable alternative to steamboats that were employed for traveling through canals and rivers (Faajir & Ziddan, 2016). Nwanze, (2002) underpinned that railway transport attracts residential, commercial, educational and recreational activities and cottage/large scale industries around its axis. Today, the Metro and TVG (*Train à Grande Vitesse*) trains in developed countries are very swift and can cover several trips within a few hours especially in the European Union.

However, in most cases, the railway transport sector in most developing countries such as the sub-Sahara Africa still faces a wide range of challenges to meet up with such criteria. Efficiency, connectivity and the use of modern infrastructure remain challenging. This is in sharp contrast to developed countries where Metro and TVG trains are used. In Cameroon, the rail transport has been operating as a Public Private Partnership (PPP) since the 19th of January 1999 managed by Camrail. This came shortly after the economic crises of early 1980s where privatisation of most organs, Camrail inclusive were seen as the only way to effectively manage the sector.

In 2015, Camrail recorded an annual turnover of US$113 million and an operating profit of US$4.8 million. Since the beginning of the concession in 1999, aggregated financial flows to the Government have amounted to over US$270 million (including fixed and variable concession fees, taxes, import duties, etc. (Bolore African Logistics, 2017). Even at this, locomotive engines are still used which do not sufficiently answer to the mobility needs of Cameroonians. Delays at stations, poor and limited infrastructure, and high fares are still issues that this transport sector suffers from in this 21st century Cameroon. Nigeria in 2022, launched their first Blue Line electric train to answer to the mobility needs of their huge population which the results have been visible since then (Soretire *et al.,* 2024). In fact, this transport sector no longer exerts a strong influence no play a competitive role in present day Cameroon. In terms of infrastructure and maintenance, the Grand North of the country (Maroua and Garoua regions) are yet to experience this type of transport which limits greatly, resource exploitation and transportation of goods from the Grand North to the Grand South. Though, operating as PPP, management and maintenance remain challenging. These are all gaps that literature still must fill, and most authors have been mute reason why this study was designed to investigate sustainability and challenges of this transport sector in Cameroon.

An overview of the railway transport sector in Cameroon

Before the First World War, two railway lines were built inland from the port at Douala: one eastward as far as Eseka; and one from Bonaberi, opposite Douala on the north side of the Wouri estuary and to Nkongsamba in the north (Murdoch and Jill, 2005). After the Second World War, Cameroon became a French colony, and the Eseka line was extended to Yaoundé adding a short branch to Mbalmayo (which is now closed) (International Union of Railways, 1990-2010). In 1960, Cameroon became in dependent, and another short railway branch was extended from Mbanga linking Kumba of 187km. In 1974, a 626 km of Trans Cameroon Railway was completed from Yaoundé north to Ngaoundere (*Agence Francaise de Development*, 2010). Sited at the Gulf of Guinea and precisely in the west coast of Africa, Cameron is geographically located between longitudes 9°10'0" and 16°18'10" east of the Greenwich meridian and latitudes 2°60'02" and 13°12'0" north of the equator (Figure 1). It is a country that has gone through various stages of development; politically, economically and socially. Economically, the transport sector especially the railway sector has also evolved greatly since However, today, very little have been done to improve the rail transport sector in Cameroon (National Railway Master Plan-NRMP, 2010). Literature displayed by some international organizations such as WB (World Bank) or UN (United Nations) and African Development Bank (ADB) concludes that the railway network in Cameroon must be reformed and renewed for Cameroon's economic progress (Table 1). These research all agreed that the State of Cameroon must urgently reform the railway network in order to maximize the country's potentials, as the overall backwardness of the national economy to foster resource exploitation and distribution.

Table 1: CAMRAIL indicators from 1994-2015

Figure 3 Camrail Key Indicators 1994-2015

	1994/5	1999/00	2005	2010	2015
Volumes					
Tonnes (000)	1,452	1,401	1,751	1,648	1,779
Ntk (000)	812	995	1,119	1,080	960
Passengers	1,728	1,320	1,053	1,406	1,631
Pax-km (000)	317	309	324	506	565
Financials (Euro million*)					
Freight	32	36	57	76	70
Passengers	5	7	8	13	14
Other	1	0	9	12	17
Total	38	43	74	100	100
Operating expenses	24	43	55	74	96
Total expenses	37	45	65	88	99
Operating margin	37%	0%	26%	26%	4%
Staff, Equipment, Track					
Employees	3,754	2,711	2,376	2,098	1,921
Locos (linehaul)	32	32	30	29	29
Wagons	1,194	1,287	1,130	1,190	1,234
Coaches	77	76	65	63	90
Route-km	1,016	1,016	977	977	977
Productivity					
Labor (000 TU/staff)	301	488	607	756	794
Loco (million TU/loco)	35	41	48	55	53
Wagons (000 TU/wagon)	680	773	990	907	778
Wagon turnaround (days)	n.a.	8	6	8	9
Breakdowns/100,000 loco-km					
CC2200	n.a.	9	5	-	-
CC2600	n.a.	6	13	13	16
Loco availability (linehaul) (%)	n.a.	73	77	86	83

Note: 1 XOF = 0.00152 Euro

Source: National Institute of Statistics-(NIS), 2025 and World Bank toolkit, 2017

Figure 1: Location of the study
Source: National Institute of Cartography-(NIC) and NIS (2025)

The railway infrastructure remains old-fashioned, less competitive in terms of speed and connectivity which hinders proficient transport. For resources to be effectively exploited and transported to ports or main cities in time, improvement of the transport sector is the number one priority. This falls in line with Cameroon's 2035 long-term vision which points out the importance of expanding and reinforcing the transport network, and the railway reformation is noted as the most urgent task to be executed (Henry *et al.,* 2020 and NRMP, 2010). To carefully carry out this study, appropriate tools and methods were used to collect the needed data to attain the objectives of the study and to display the results for policy reformulation and implementation.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were sourced from published and unpublished sources. Some of the documents consulted included newspapers on Camrail, journals, online blogs on Cameroon railway lines, Cameroon National Railway Plan, articles, projects documents and students' thesis and dissertations on transport and logistics. This was to construct a rich insight and fill knowledge gaps that exist as far as the rail transport sector is concerned in Cameroon.

As concerned primary data, it was collected on site using personal observation and granting of interviews. The study sampled of the Douala and Yaoundé Railway Stations for observations and granting of interviews. Through observations, photographs were taken and some relevant GPS points collected. Cartographic data was generated using cartographic software such as QGIS. The data collected and processed was presented in form of tables, graphs and maps.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

The railway transport sector in Cameroon from our field findings revealed to us that the sector is yet to be fully sustainable. This is indicative of several irregularities form the sector which constitute the challenges plaguing the sector despite the relevance of the economic standpoint of this transport sector nation-wide. The setbacks of the sector are many and can be seen visible in almost all aspect of this transport mode.

3.1: Journeys, timing and frequencies

The stipulated number of journeys and timing in most train stations in Cameroon were noticed to be very irregular in several ways. It was realised that in most cases, the train way leaves later than that stipulated time or arrive later than expected. This goes even for the VIP and the Classic sections. This makes the operation of the system very irregular and sometime passengers needs to wait for a longer or even reschedule their journeys because of such irregularities. It is however, clear that inconveniences can emanate but when such instances become occur repeatedly it becomes incompetence and sometimes deliberate (Table 2).

Table 2: Timing and frequencies of train movements

Line	Trains	Types	Journeys	Frequencies	Departure
WEST	165	Omnibus	Douala – Kumba Kumba – Douala	Twice a week	14h30
	162	Omnibus			16h30
	171	Omnibus	Mbanga – Kumba	Everyday	08h50
	172	Omnibus	Kumba –Mbanga		10h30
	173	Omnibus	Mbanga – Kumba		12h10
	174	Omnibus	Kumba - Mbanga		13h40
	175	Omnibus	Mbanga – Kumba		15h10
	176	Omnibus	Kumba - Mbanga		16h40
TRANS-CAM 1	3	Omnibus	Douala – Yaoundé Yaoundé - Douala	Everyday	8h30
	4	Omnibus		except Sundays	8h30
	IC 21	Inter-city	Douala –Yaoundé	Everyday	07h15
	IC 22	Inter-city	Yaoundé -Douala Douala -Yaoundé		07h40
	181	Express	Yaoundé -Douala		16h00
	184	Express			16h00
TRANS-CAM 2	13	Omnibus	Bélabo - Ngaoungéré Ngaoungéré –	Thrice a week	14h35
	12	Omnibus	Bélabo		06h30
	191	Couchette	Yaoundé – Ngaoungéré	Everyday	18h10
	192	Couchette	Ngaoungéré – Yaoundé		18h20

Source: *Compiled from société CAMRAIL – Douala – Cameroun, Web*: http://www.logistiqueconseil.org

Field investigation revealed that the laid down the operation timetable though well designed and looks very good is never really respected maybe because of poor infrastructure or deliberate delays to wait for more passengers and cargo which is not the way it supposed to function. In an interview with one of the passengers in the Yaounde Railway Station, it was outline that,

> *...since 6:30am that I was here to travel to Douala, by 7:40am till now, the train is yet to be arranged for us to travel. Am tired already and I think I will just reschedule it in the evening or better still use the road transport*…A passenger, Camrail Station-Yaoundé, 12/02/205

These irregularities were observed at the level managing authorities and even some passengers who booked for journeys and later came late. However, making passengers to wait for long hours or to postpone trips is one of the outstanding challenges faced by the operation of the transport sector in Cameroon (Photo 1).

Photo 1: Waiting passengers at the Yaounde Railway Station
Source: *Tufoin, K.D, 13/03/2024*

In terms of costing, it was also pointed out during investigations that the cost of transport fare for the CAMRAIL are high and cannot be afforded by many especially the law class and average citizens reason why most people prefer alternative means of displacement rather than using the railway line, which is first of all irregulars and then, expensive. It is therefore important to point out that modifying transport fares will promote mobility and especially in places within the reach of the Cameroon railway lines. Data collected from the CAMRAIL revealed the pricing policy as indicated in (Table 3).

Table 3: CAMRAIL transport fare

Line	Journey	2nd class		1st class	
		Full seat	½ seat	Full seat	½ seat
WEST	Douala – Mbanga	950		N/A	
	Douala - Kumba	1000			
	Mbanga – Ediki	300			
	Mbanga – Kumba	500			
	Kumba – Ediki	300			
TRANS-CAM 1	Douala- Edéa	1600	900	2900	2000
	Douala -Eséka	2500	1500	5100	3100
	Douala – Makak	2700	1900	5600	3700
	Douala – Yaoundé	3000	2400	6000	4300
	Yaoundé – Makak	1600	900	3000	2000
	Yaoundé – Eséka	2400	1300	4500	2700
	Yaoundé – Edéa	2800	1900	5600	3700
TRANS-CAM 2	Yaoundé – Obala	1700	900	2300	1700
	Yaoundé –Mbandjock	1700	900	3400	2300
	Yaoundé –Nanga Eboko	2800	1400	5600	3300
	Yaoundé – Bélabo	4700	2400	9200	6600
	Yaoundé – Ngaoundal	7900	4000	14700	7900
	Yaoundé – Ngaoundéré	10000	5000	17000	10000
	Ngaoungéré – Ngaoundal	2300	1200	4500	2600
	Ngaoundéré –Bélabo	5400	2700	10100	5350
	Ngaoundéré – Nanga Eboko	7400	7250	14100	3700
	Ngaoundéré – Mbandjock	9400	8850	17000	4700
	Ngaoundéré – Obala	9400	9300	17000	4700
		Compatible with a bed of 4 places		Compatible with a bed of 4 places	
		Full seat	½ seat	Full seat	½ seat
	Yaoundé –Mbandjock	17000	11000	20000	12000
	Yaoundé –Nanga Eboko	17000	12000	20000	14000
	Yaoundé – Bélabo	20000	13000	23000	15000
	Yaoundé – Ngaoundal	23000	19000	26000	20000
	Yaoundé – Ngaoundéré	25000	20000	28000	13000
	Ngaoungéré – Ngaoundal	15000	10000	18000	13000
	Ngaoundéré –Bélabo	19000	18000	26000	20000
	Ngaoundéré – Nanga Eboko	25000	18000	26000	20000
	Ngaoundéré – Mbandjock	25000	19000	28000	21000

Source: *Compiled from société CAMRAIL – Douala – Cameroun, Web*: *http://www.logistiqueconseil.org*

When these tariffs/fares are compared to road transport fares, they are quite low reason why most passengers prefer road transport despite the comfort they may have first class section of the rail transport. Irrespective, the rail transport haulage is by far greater than that of the road transport. The rail transport contributes substantially to the movement of freight and passengers contributes. Indeed, the railway transport can provide the most cost effective, affordable, energy and environmentally friendly form of transport when traffic densities are high. More so, when properly integrated with other modes of transport to provide efficient services especially when electric tractions are used (Adesoji, 2010). However, when this mode of transport is poorly integrated with other modes of transport and worst of all with poor infrastructure, the situation becomes worst.

3.2: Integration and infrastructural challenges

The rail transport operates as a system and as such, it must be sufficiently integrated with other transport modes such as maritime, road, and air. These sub-components or systems cannot function alone; they therefore depend on one another to exist and co-exist. Should one sub-system fails, the entire system is affected (Figure 2). It is difficult for a country or a community to claim to enjoy transport and transportation if all the modes of transport are not interconnected together. Confronting this discourse with field investigations it was revealed that the rail transport sector in Cameroon is yet to be fully integrated to other transport mode. For example, in Tiko, Limbe and even Idenau were there are secondary seaports yet are not linked with railway lines. In this condition, it becomes very difficult for the transport system as whole to function properly.

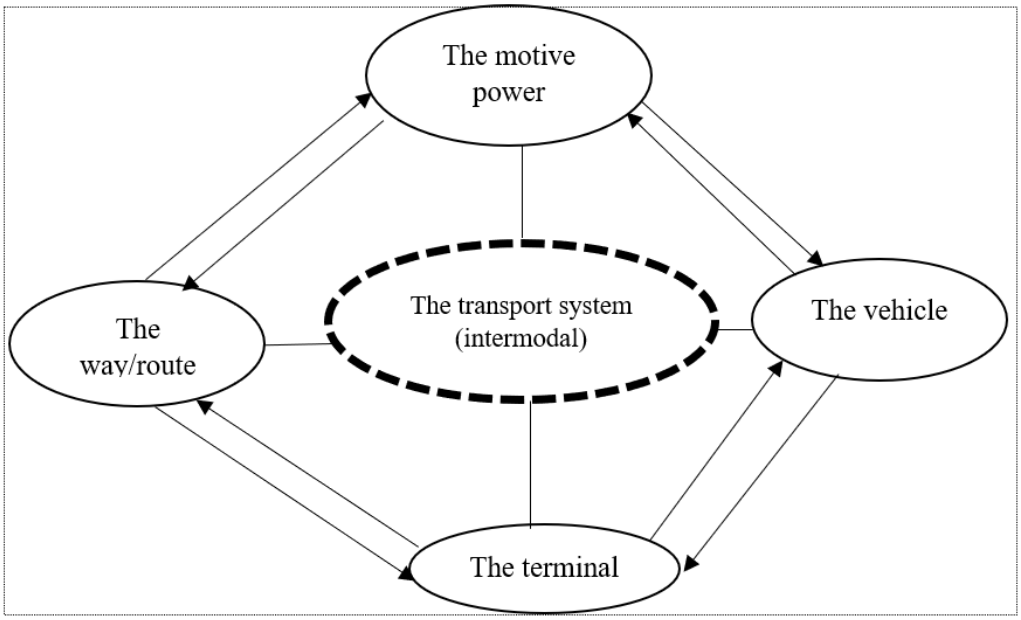

Figure 2: Intermodal transport system
Source: *Adopted and modified from (Bamidele, 2013)*

Legend

The Vehicle	-	*Cars, Ships, Aircrafts, Wagon.*
The Motive Power	-	*Engines/Locomotives,*
The Way	-	*Roads, Sea routes, Airlines/Air Ways, Rail Tracks.*
The Terminals	-	*Garage, Car Parks, Sea Ports, Airports, Train Stations.*

It is important to note that roads, railway lines and ports deliver economic and social benefits by connecting firms to international and regional markets and by enabling individuals to reach various destinations and thereby speeding up a greater portion of economic activities and social life in general. When infrastructure is broken or congested it no longer performs its connective functions, and a greater part of the economy suffers (Bamidele, 2013). This is so because essential transactions and movements are delayed or disrupted, transport cost rises, individuals may lose time in unremunerated commuting, and firms must fight harder to compete. To bring the connective power of infrastructure back to its optimal level, new infrastructure must be built and old infrastructure enlarged or ameliorated. Transport infrastructure is not cheap to build. Railway infrastructure was surveyed, and it was that much if it was broken and even the existing did proved to last long (Plate 1).

Plate 1: Rail transport infrastructure

Photo 2: Location of the study
A railway track beside Mvog-Bi market-Yaoundé which sometimes filtered with market waste
Source: Tufoin, K.D, 12/02/2025

Photo 3: Location of the study
A railway track beside a road which can seemingly slip-off in case of any instability
Source: Tufoin, K.D, 14/03/2025

It is because of such attribute that the transport sector becomes vulnerable to all forms accidents which have been very common with Camrail. The latest one occurred For example in on October 21, 2016, an inter-city train (No. 152) travelling from Cameroon's capital city (Yaoundé) to the economic capital (Douala) had a fatal accident at about 12.30 p.m. in Eseka about 75 miles from Yaoundé with about 1300 passengers on board leading to several loss of lives and property (Henry *et al.,* 2020) The train derailed at a bend causing four carriages to overturn (Plate 2). At the time of the accident, the train was overloaded with 700 more passengers than its normal capacity of 600. More than 200 people died and about 1000 were injured (Henry *et al.,* 2020) although the official government report said 81 dead and 801 injured. By this, it is evidently clear that there is poor management in our railway transport sector. However, Preceding the train derailment heavy rainfall and landslides on the early hours of Friday, October 21, 2016, had caused a bridge to collapse over the Doupe River at Manyai, 43 miles from Yaoundé, along the busy Yaoundé-Douala highway, which has the heaviest traffic in the country. On this basis, there was considerably high passenger built resulting from the stranded passengers who sort alternative ways of transportation which was the rail. Consequently, the number of passengers travelling by rail increased tremendously. In response, the management of the rail network, Camrail added more carriages to the Yaoundé-Douala intercity trains which provoked the basis of the accidents.

Plate 2: CAMRAIL accidents along the Yaoundé-Douala railway line in Eseka 2016

1 **2**

3 **4**

1*=Passengers rushing away from the derail train,* ***2****=Stranded passengers at Eseka and some media men to cover the event,* ***3****= technical teams for inspection,* ***4****=the over tuned or summersaulted train.*

After this tragic event, technical teams, medics scholars, different media platforms, state officials, rescue agents were all at the scene to witness and give their reports and to ensure the rescue and care to the victim. This was followed by the setting up of Commission of Enquiry (COE) later May 23, 2017, the results of the enquiry were published which stated that stated that Camrail had "total and entire responsibility" for the crash and was mainly to blame for the accident.

Similarly, a local news agency reported on the 9th of April 2025, that a train locomotive arrived at the Yaoundé railway station without four (4) of its wagons. They have been cut-off and abandoned along Ngoundere-Yaounde axis. All these are indicators of mismanagement and lack of a good political will to effectively manage and priorities to the sector. This is unimaginable in the 21st century Cameroon. The railway station in Kumba was observed and it shows that there has been great deterioration of the infrastructure. Though several prospects have been to manage and modernise the sector, they are yet to come to fruition.

3.3: Prospects and management

Camrail carries about 40% of the freight between Douala and Ngaoundere in the north. At the start of the concession, camrail faced substantial tasks in improving all areas, from operations to labour, management, investments, rehabilitation, security, and environmental issues. Camrail's financial performance was positive but fell short of the margins anticipated by the financial projections at concessioning. Camrail has undertaken a substantial investment program, combined with planned investment programs in signalling, and track and infrastructure improvements as part of the World Bank Multimodal Development program. These programs will help Camrail achieve its initial commercial and financial objectives by increasing the reliability of services, and therefore the capacity on the network, which has become a major constraint.

However, Camrail is a success story in terms of meeting Government objectives for privatization. Now the railway is recovering a greater share of operating costs, and it relieved Government of almost a decade of significant capital expenditures until the 2008 concession amendment. Major investments have been made, traffic volumes have increased, and the concessionaire, as a major railway user, has created a much-improved service for its own traffic. Both the Government and the operator have therefore benefitted. So have other freight shippers, as far as can be judged, with improvements in service quality, security, and reliability. Although Bolloré was a shareholder and a major railway user, there is little evidence of favouritism at the expense of other shippers (Henry *et al.,* 2017).

The government projects the construction short railway lines to link most places in southwestern part of Cameroon. Investigating the railway connectivity to ports, and major urban areas becomes very important to reduce traffic jam and manage efficiency. For example, it is projected on the National Railway Master Plan revealed that the secondary ports in Fako coastal belt of Cameroon will all be linked with railway lines before 2025 and many other areas in Cameroon. Yet, goods in bulky quantities leaves these ports to countries such as Chad, Central African Republic which are all land lock countries. The state has made unfulfilling promises to link these areas with a railway line and constructing a deep seaport in Limbe, but all these promises remain nightmares (Table 4).

Table 4: A projected railway development plan in Cameroon

No.	Section	Major Intermediate points	Function
1	Edea-Lolabe (Kribi Deep Sea Port)	Koukoue, Mbebe, Fifinda, Londji	Brach line
2	Mballam-Mbalmayo-Lolabe (Kribi Deep Seaport)	Djoim, Sangmalima, Mbalmayo, Kribi	Branch line
3	Douala-Limbe	Tiko	Industrial/ branch line
4	Ngoundere-Douala	Ngoundere, Bertoua, Obala, Yaounde, Mbalmayo	Main line

Source: *The National Railway Master Plan, Cameroon (MINEPAT) reported by JICA survey team, 2017.*

The most significant development is that this concession was restructured to ad dress two fundamental issues that are by no means unique to Cameroon. First, most passenger rail services do not cover their costs and even covering routine above-rail (direct) costs is a serious challenge. Therefore, without external contribution, passenger rail services cannot be a business priority for commercially focused concessionaires (WB, 2017). They consequently make only cosmetic investments in these services. The Cameroon press regularly levels heavy criticism at Camrail passenger services (although service levels have recently improved between Yaounde and Douala, capacity and average fare levels remain a concern). Media criticism mostly reflects nostalgia for the old government-controlled Regifercam, and the public (and the government) expected the concession to bring significant improvement in passenger services (WB, 2017). This was not going to happen, considering the lack of specific government contribution, particularly for the first three years when the government failed to fulfil its public service obligations (PSOs) 199. It was easier, then, to put the blame on the concessionaire rather than address this fundamental funding issue.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Policy framework and implementation in the rail transport sector can suggestively contribute significantly to the transformation of the Cameroonian economy, which is the case in many countries especially in the sub-Saharan Africa. However, more resolute steps and stronger political-will need to be exhibited. Apart from merely addressing the fundamental *'rail transport problems'*, rail transport policy in Cameroon should be sufficiently receptive to the existing and future rail transport users' needs, in terms of distribution of goods and services, for rail transport services, especially in the light of developing industrial economy road map of Cameroon among others. More so, the attractiveness, extent of usage and operating profits, and the bulk of railway problems on rail operations and management would be some of the critical factors that would determine the sustainability of the Cameroon railways; hence, the need for their urgent revival and bringing them back on track. Incidentally, each mode of transport has some comparative advantages over the others, including the railways. For rail transport, its advantages lie in its huge loading capability and relatively lower transport cost, in respect of goods hauled over long distances amidst others. For these and other reasons, the diminishing fortunes of the railways need to be turned around quickly, so that the highways which have suffered considerable deterioration, partly because of the poor state of the rail transport sector, can also be saved from further deterioration. Also, existing and potential clients, with improved rail services, can save considerable cost on goods haulage, if they are well connected to the railway network, while job opportunities would also be created through the expansion and growth in rail transport-related activities. Moreover, the railway experience in Cameroon reflects a wider dynamic of sub-Sahara Africa. The sustainability of the railway in Cameroon have been noticed not only to be a question of technical infrastructure but also of institutional frameworks and policy consistency. Various partnerships with private and international development stakeholders are crucial in mobilising both financial and technical resources to improve and modernise the railway sector in Cameroon. Even at this, without good and consistent national policies to prioritise the railway sector, piecemeal interventions will not reflect meaningful results. Based on the findings, the way forward for Cameroon mainly lies in a strategic rethinking of transport systems, where rail investment occupies a cardinal position in a long-term sustainability plan. This turns around integrating rail, ports, roads and air infrastructure in a multimodal framework, thus, strengthening management and transparency while aligning development. The case of Cameroon ultimately shows that if suitably restructured, it will act as a pedal for economic growth and regional integration. The challenge is not actually whether rail transport can contribute to sustainability of economies and resilience but whether the government, stakeholders and regional institutions can summon the political will, investment and innovative thinking required to transform this long-standing but underutilised mode of transport into a driver of sustainable change.

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