International Journal of Science and Engineering Science Research
Volume 2 | Issue 3 | July-September 2026 | ISSN 3049-2793
Peer Reviewed (Referred Journal)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.63671/ijsesr.v2i3.154

Procurement Delays and Project Outcomes in Cameroon's Airport Sector

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Abstract

Public infrastructure delivery in sub-Saharan Africa is repeatedly undermined by delays that originate not on the construction site but in the procurement process that precedes it. This article examines the relationship between procurement delays and project outcomes in Cameroon's airport sector, drawing on documentary evidence from the Transport Sector Development Project (PDST), the ongoing modernisation of Douala International Airport, and the regulatory reform of Cameroon's public contracts system. The study is framed by transaction cost economics, principal-agent theory, and the time-cost-quality model of project success, and it employs a qualitative, case-based documentary design that triangulates World Bank implementation reports, government procurement guidance, and industry news coverage. Findings indicate that procurement delays in Cameroon's airport sector are driven primarily by fragmented institutional responsibility between the Ministry of Public Contracts (MINMAP) and the procurement regulatory authority, protracted contractor disputes and cancelled awards, slow disbursement and counterpart-funding bottlenecks, compliance requirements imposed by the International Civil Aviation Organization, and, until recently, a heavy reliance on paper-based tendering. These delays translate into schedule slippage of several years beyond appraisal targets, cost escalation, deferred safety and security certification, and diminished stakeholder confidence. The article concludes that digitalisation of procurement through the Cameroon Online E-Procurement System, clearer division of authority between MINMAP and the regulator, and stronger front-end project preparation are central to improving airport project outcomes, and it offers recommendations for policy and practice accordingly.

Keywords

procurement delays, project outcomes, airport infrastructure, public procurement reform, Cameroon, MINMAP, project management

1. Introduction

Airports occupy a distinctive place in national development strategy: they are simultaneously safety-critical infrastructure, gateways for trade and tourism, and symbols of a country's aspiration toward regional and international connectivity. In Cameroon, the airports of Douala, Yaoundé-Nsimalen, Garoua, and Maroua anchor the country's air transport network and underpin its ambition to consolidate Douala's position as a logistics hub for the Economic and Monetary Community of Central

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Africa (CEMAC) (Ecofin Agency, 2026). Achieving that ambition, however, depends on the timely and efficient delivery of the capital projects that renew runways, terminals, security systems, and navigational infrastructure. It is precisely at this point of delivery that Cameroon's airport sector has repeatedly encountered difficulty, not principally because of engineering failure, but because of delay accumulated well before the first excavator arrives on site.

Procurement is the administrative and contractual gateway through which public capital projects pass before implementation can begin. It encompasses needs assessment, tender preparation, bid solicitation, evaluation, contract award, and, frequently, dispute resolution. When this gateway functions poorly, every subsequent phase of a project inherits the resulting delay. The Transport Sector Development Project (Projet d'Appui au Développement du Secteur des Transports, or PDST), a World Bank-financed programme whose airport component was designed to strengthen safety and security at Cameroon's four certified international airports, illustrates the point starkly. Launched in September 2017 with an airport-component budget of CFA30.4 billion and an original completion target of 2024, the programme had, by December 2025, reached only a 98% execution rate and was rescheduled for final completion in June 2026, two years behind its original horizon (Business in Cameroon, 2026).

This article investigates why such delays recur in Cameroon's airport sector, how they propagate through the procurement-to-delivery chain, and what effects they have on the outcomes by which infrastructure projects are conventionally judged: time, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction. In doing so, it situates Cameroon within a broader African literature on construction and infrastructure delay while paying close attention to features that are specific to the Cameroonian institutional environment, notably the coexistence of the Ministry of Public Contracts (MINMAP) and the public procurement regulatory authority, a dual arrangement that reform advocates and international partners alike have identified as a source of ambiguity in contracting responsibility (World Economic Forum, 2015).

2. Statement of the Problem

Cameroon's development planning documents treat infrastructure, and transport infrastructure in particular, as a determinant of competitiveness and growth, and they explicitly warn that delay in infrastructure delivery carries consequences for the broader economy, a concern echoed in the country's National Development Strategy 2020–2030 (Nkafu Policy Institute, 2022). Despite this policy recognition, airport-related projects in Cameroon have shown a persistent pattern of schedule slippage. The PDST's airport component required almost nine years to approach completion against an original seven-year horizon; the renovation of Douala International Airport's passenger terminal, first announced for the first half of 2025, was still at the preliminary design stage in late 2025 with substantive works pushed to the second half of 2026 (Cameroon-Concord News, 2024; Ecofin Agency, 2026). More broadly, multilateral partners financing Cameroon's infrastructure portfolio have identified delays in signing agreements, slow release of counterpart funds, and weak procurement processes as recurring obstacles across the transport and energy sectors in which airports sit (African Development Bank Group, 2026).

What remains comparatively underexamined is how these delays are generated specifically within the procurement stage, as distinct from delays attributable to construction-phase inefficiency, weather, or force majeure, and how procurement-stage delay subsequently shapes the cost, quality, and safety-certification outcomes of airport projects. This article addresses that gap by treating procurement delay as an explanatory variable and airport project outcome as the variable to be explained, using documented Cameroonian cases as the empirical terrain.

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3. Objectives of the Study

The study pursues four specific objectives:

1. To identify the principal sources of procurement delay affecting airport infrastructure projects in Cameroon.
2. To examine how Cameroon's institutional and regulatory architecture for public procurement contributes to, or mitigates, such delay.
3. To assess the effects of procurement delay on the time, cost, quality, and safety-certification outcomes of airport projects.
4. To propose policy and managerial recommendations for reducing procurement-induced delay in the sector.

3.1. Research Questions

1. What are the principal causes of procurement delay in Cameroon's airport infrastructure projects?
2. How does the institutional division of labour between MINMAP and the procurement regulatory authority affect the pace of contract award and execution?
3. What is the relationship between procurement delay and project outcomes (time, cost, quality, and stakeholder satisfaction) in the airport sector?
4. What reforms could reduce procurement-related delay and improve project outcomes going forward?

3.2. Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to at least three audiences. For policymakers at MINMAP, the procurement regulatory authority, and the Cameroon Civil Aviation Authority (CCAA), it offers an evidence-based account of where in the procurement cycle delay accumulates and therefore where reform effort is likely to yield the greatest return. For development partners, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank, whose loan and grant instruments finance the bulk of Cameroon's airport capital programme, the study clarifies how procurement risk translates into implementation risk and disbursement delay. For the academic literature on infrastructure delivery in Central Africa, which remains comparatively thin relative to studies of West and East African construction sectors, the study extends existing delay research into the aviation infrastructure sub-sector and into a CEMAC-zone country.

3.3. Scope and Delimitation

The study is delimited to airport-sector procurement in Cameroon between 2016, the year the PDST was appraised, and mid-2026. It draws principally on three documented cases: the airport-safety-and-security component of the PDST covering Yaoundé-Nsimalen, Douala, Garoua, and Maroua airports; the terminal renovation and apron-expansion programme at Douala International Airport; and the broader reform of Cameroon's national public procurement architecture, including the 2018 Public Contracts Code and the roll-out of the Cameroon Online E-Procurement System (COLEPS). The study does not extend to private-sector aviation procurement (for example, airline fleet or ground-handling equipment purchases) and does not attempt a full econometric estimation of delay costs, a limitation discussed further below.

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4. Literature Review

4.1. Theoretical Framework

Three theoretical lenses inform this article. The first, transaction cost economics, associated principally with Williamson (1985), treats every contracting relationship as carrying costs beyond the price of the good or service exchanged: the cost of searching for and vetting a contractor, of negotiating and drafting a comprehensive agreement, and of monitoring and enforcing performance once the contract is underway. Applied to public procurement, transaction cost economics predicts that delay will be greatest where information is scarce, where the number of qualified bidders is small, and where contract enforcement is weak, conditions that recur in Cameroon's public works sector and that help explain why open international bidding, cancelled awards, and re-tendering, as occurred on the Babadjou–Matazem road section associated with the PDST, so often extend project timelines (World Bank, 2021).

The second lens, principal-agent theory, developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976), directs attention to the misalignment of incentives between a principal, here the Cameroonian state and its financing partners, and the agents charged with executing its mandate, including procuring entities, evaluation committees, and contracted firms. Where oversight is costly and information asymmetric, agents may pursue objectives, whether administrative caution, rent-seeking, or simple risk-aversion, that diverge from the principal's interest in timely delivery. Cameroon's own procurement regulator has documented such divergence directly, describing practices in which project officers delay compulsory preliminary studies, tailor selection criteria to favour particular bidders, or disclose tender information ahead of schedule (Business in Cameroon, 2021).

The third lens is the time-cost-quality framework long used in project management to define project success, more recently supplemented by criteria of stakeholder satisfaction and, in safety-critical sectors such as aviation, regulatory compliance (Project Management Institute, 2021). Under this framework, a procurement delay is not merely a scheduling inconvenience; it is a shock that propagates into cost escalation through inflation and remobilisation, into quality risk through compressed construction schedules, and into compliance risk where certification, such as ICAO Annex 17 conformity, is contingent on works being fully and correctly executed. Taken together, these three frameworks predict that procurement delay in Cameroon's airport sector should be traceable to (a) thin competition and weak enforcement, (b) misaligned incentives within a fragmented institutional chain, and (c) consequences that extend well beyond the tender stage into the ultimate safety, cost, and quality profile of the finished asset.

4.2. Conceptual Review

Procurement delay, for the purposes of this article, refers to any lapse of time beyond the schedule anticipated at project appraisal that occurs between the identification of a procurement need and the effective commencement of the corresponding works, arising from any stage of the tendering, evaluation, award, contract-signature, or dispute-resolution process. This definition deliberately excludes delay attributable purely to construction-site factors such as adverse weather, geotechnical surprise, or contractor underperformance once mobilised, although the literature recognises that procurement delay and construction delay frequently interact and compound one another (Assaf & Al-Hejji, 2006).

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Project outcome is treated multidimensionally, encompassing (a) time performance, measured as the gap between planned and actual completion; (b) cost performance, measured as the gap between appraised and actual expenditure; (c) quality and compliance performance, measured against technical specifications and, where relevant, international standards such as those of the International Civil Aviation Organization; and (d) stakeholder satisfaction, capturing the confidence of financiers, the flying public, airlines, and the business community in the delivered asset. This four-part conception follows the widely used time-cost-quality-satisfaction model in project management scholarship and allows the analysis to move beyond a narrow focus on schedule alone.

4.3. Empirical Review: Global and African Experience

The proposition that procurement inefficiency is a leading cause of construction and infrastructure delay is well established outside Cameroon. In one of the most widely cited studies of the subject, Assaf and Al-Hejji (2006) surveyed owners, consultants, and contractors on large construction projects and found that delay in progress payments, changes in orders, and slow decision-making by owners ranked among the most severe causes of delay, all of which have direct procurement-stage analogues. In West Africa, Frimpong et al. (2003) examined groundwater and rural infrastructure projects in Ghana and identified monthly payment difficulties, poor contract management, and material procurement problems as dominant causes of both delay and cost overrun. Kaliba et al. (2009), studying road construction in Zambia, similarly found that delayed payments to contractors and price fluctuation, both closely tied to how contracts are procured and financed, were principal drivers of schedule and cost overrun. Although none of these studies examines airports specifically, their consistent finding, that the procurement and financial-management interface between owner and contractor is where delay most often originates, provides the empirical scaffolding for the present study's focus on Cameroon's airport sector.

Within Cameroon itself, the World Bank's own supervision record of the PDST offers a longitudinal empirical trace of procurement-related delay. Early implementation status reports rated the project's overall risk as "High" and flagged the project as being "on its critical path," warning that further delay would jeopardise the jointly agreed implementation timetable (World Bank, 2017). By 2019, overall implementation progress had been downgraded to "Moderately Unsatisfactory" (World Bank, 2019), and by 2021 the project was still managing a cancelled contract on its road component and preparing to re-launch procurement for a new contractor under open international bidding, even as the airport component, benefiting from more contained scope, was assessed as "progressing satisfactorily" (World Bank, 2021). By 2025, nine years after Board approval, the airport component had still not reached full completion, standing at a 98% execution rate against a revised June 2026 target (Business in Cameroon, 2026).

4.4. The Cameroonian Institutional Context

Cameroon's contemporary public procurement architecture rests on the Public Contracts Code instituted by Decree No. 2018/366 of 20 June 2018, which consolidated and updated the country's procurement rules following the earlier framework established by Law No. 2000/13 of 13 June 2000 and its 2001 implementing decrees (Republic of Cameroon, 2018; Ministry of Public Contracts, 2025). Within this framework, two institutions share responsibility for the system's functioning: the Ministry of Public Contracts (MINMAP), created in 2011 as, according to the World Economic Forum (2015), the first ministry of its kind anywhere, with authority to execute high-value contracts on behalf of sector ministries and to design procurement policy; and the procurement regulatory authority, historically known as the Agence de Régulation des Marchés Publics (ARMP) and referred to in more recent government and industry material as the Cameroon Public Procurement Authority (CPPA), which is

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responsible for oversight, audit, capacity-building, and dispute resolution (Cameroon Public Procurement Authority, n.d.; Republic of Cameroon, Presidency, n.d.).[1]

This dual structure was intended to separate policy execution from regulatory oversight, but independent assessment has found that it instead "created confusion regarding contracting responsibilities and reduced incentives for key public investment management actors to collaborate for best results," with the World Economic Forum (2015) noting that in the year following the reform the government's capital budget execution rate fell to just 34%. More recent commentary continues to describe bureaucratic delay, extensive documentation requirements, and slow contract-to-payment cycles as persistent features of the system (Business in Cameroon, 2021; Public Contract Regulatory Agency, 2024).

A parallel and more encouraging institutional development has been the digitalisation of tendering through the Cameroon Online E-Procurement System (COLEPS), first piloted in 2018 with subsequent technical support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, and declared mandatory for most categories of public tender under MINMAP Circular No. 000002/MINMAP/CAB of 19 February 2026, formally ending parallel paper-based bidding for covered contracts (Tendersgo, 2026).[5] To the extent that a large share of historic Cameroonian procurement delay has been attributed to manual document handling, opaque timelines, and limited traceability of bids, the shift to mandatory e-procurement represents a structural change whose effect on airport-sector delivery times will only become fully observable in project cycles launched from 2026 onward.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design

This article adopts a qualitative, documentary, case-based research design. Rather than surveying individuals, the study treats publicly available institutional records, in particular the World Bank's Implementation Status and Results Reports and Procurement Plans for the Cameroon Transport Sector Development Project, Cameroon's Public Contracts Code and associated regulatory guidance, and contemporaneous specialised news coverage of airport-sector projects, as the primary data corpus. This design is well suited to a research problem, such as procurement delay, that unfolds over years and is documented in project-monitoring records more reliably and more granularly than it could be reconstructed through retrospective interview alone.

5.2. Data Sources and Case Selection

Three cases anchor the analysis: (a) the airport-safety-and-security component of the PDST, selected because it is the only multi-airport, donor-financed procurement programme in the sector with a continuous public monitoring record spanning nearly a decade; (b) the Douala International Airport terminal renovation and apron-expansion programme, selected because it illustrates procurement dynamics under a bilateral financing arrangement and a design-then-build sequencing distinct from the PDST; and (c) the national procurement reform process itself, including the 2018 Public Contracts Code and the COLEPS digitalisation programme, selected because it constitutes the institutional environment within which both project-level cases are embedded.

5.3. Data Analysis

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Data were analysed through qualitative thematic and chronological analysis. Sequential implementation status reports for the PDST were compared across time to trace how risk ratings, disbursement progress, and completion targets evolved, following the logic of a longitudinal case study. Thematic coding was applied across all sources to identify recurring causes of delay, which were then mapped onto the theoretical categories of transaction cost economics and principal-agent theory described above. Because the study relies on secondary documentary sources rather than primary survey or interview data, findings are best understood as an evidence-based synthesis and interpretation of the documented record rather than as statistically generalisable results, a limitation discussed in the closing section of this article.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

As a documentary study drawing exclusively on material already in the public domain, this research did not involve human subjects and did not require institutional ethics review. The authors have nonetheless sought to represent institutional sources, including the Government of Cameroon and the World Bank, fairly and in context, and to distinguish clearly between findings reported in primary institutional documents and the authors' own interpretive synthesis.

6. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

6.1. Case One: The Airport Component of the Transport Sector Development Project

The PDST was approved by the World Bank's Board on 27 October 2016 and became effective on 19 September 2017, with an original closing date of 30 June 2022 and a total programme financing of nearly CFA113 billion through an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development loan (World Bank, 2017, 2021). Its air transport safety and security improvement component, budgeted at approximately US$48.7 million within the overall programme, was designed to reinforce security fencing, patrol roads, and emergency operations centres at Yaoundé-Nsimalen, Douala, Garoua, and Maroua airports, works directly tied to compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization security standards.[2] Supervision records show that the programme's overall risk rating was assessed as "High" from the earliest monitoring cycle, with the 2017 report explicitly warning that the project sat "on its critical path" and that further slippage would jeopardise the agreed schedule (World Bank, 2017). By 2019, overall implementation progress had deteriorated to "Moderately Unsatisfactory" even as progress toward the project's development objective remained "Moderately Satisfactory," a divergence consistent with delay concentrated in the contracting and disbursement process rather than in the underlying technical design (World Bank, 2019).

By mid-2021, the road component of the programme had encountered a cancelled contract for the Babadjou–Matazem section, requiring the project implementation unit to prepare a fresh procurement process under open international bidding, while the aviation component, described as "progressing satisfactorily," had nonetheless been affected by pandemic-related constraints that slowed the completion of emergency operations centres at Maroua and Garoua and of security-wall works at Nsimalen (World Bank, 2021). By December 2025, more than nine years after Board approval and roughly two years past the airport component's originally intended completion, execution stood at 98%, with the Cameroon Civil Aviation Authority attributing the cumulative slippage to "delays, disputes, and adjustments needed to ensure compliance" with ICAO standards, and setting a further revised completion target of June 2026 (Business in Cameroon, 2026).[3] The PDST case therefore demonstrates a compounding pattern: an initially high procurement-risk rating translated into contract cancellation and re-tendering, which combined with pandemic disruption and standards-compliance adjustment to

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extend the project's life by roughly two and a half years beyond its original horizon, even though the technical scope of the airport component itself did not fundamentally change.

6.2. Case Two: Douala International Airport Terminal Renovation

Douala International Airport, Cameroon's principal commercial gateway, has faced sustained criticism over ageing terminal infrastructure. In November 2024, Aeroports du Cameroun's Director General publicly responded to such criticism from the business community, announcing that a comprehensive passenger-terminal renovation financed through a loan from the French Development Agency would begin in the first half of 2025, alongside interim measures to improve climate comfort in police and baggage-claim areas that were scheduled for completion by January 2025 (Cameroon-Concord News, 2024).[4] By mid-2026, however, the programme's own disclosures indicate a different chronology: the detailed preliminary design for the terminal renovation, prepared by the French consortium TPF/Kardham, was presented only at ADC's 136th board meeting, with substantive works still scheduled to begin in the second half of 2026 rather than in 2025 as first announced (Ecofin Agency, 2026). The first concrete procurement milestone under this programme, a CFA10.4 billion contract for construction of a new 36,000-square-metre apron, was awarded in October 2025 to China Harbour Engineering Company for a twelve-month execution schedule (Ecofin Agency, 2026).

The gap between the renovation's initially announced 2025 start and its actual 2026 procurement and design milestones illustrates a pattern distinct from, but complementary to, the PDST case: delay generated not primarily by contract cancellation or dispute, but by the time required to move from design commissioning to a finalised, biddable technical package, and by the sequencing choice to procure airside works (the apron) ahead of the more complex terminal building itself. Once complete, the renovation is projected to raise Douala's annual passenger capacity from 1.5 million to 2.5 million and to lift the airport's security rating to Level 7, a threshold of consequence for the airlines that may serve the route (Ecofin Agency, 2026), underscoring that the ultimate benefits of the project, and not merely its cost, are contingent on the pace at which procurement milestones are met.

6.3. Institutional Drivers Common to Both Cases

Reading the two cases alongside Cameroon's broader procurement reform record points to institutional drivers that recur across both. First, the coexistence of MINMAP and the procurement regulatory authority, while intended to separate execution from oversight, has been documented as a source of overlapping and sometimes competing roles that slow the working relationship between the two bodies, a dynamic the World Bank's own completion reporting on public-sector-effectiveness lending has explicitly identified as contributing to "significant slowdown in the implementation of activities" in procurement-related project components (World Bank, 2024). Second, counterpart-funding and disbursement bottlenecks recur across Cameroon's donor-financed portfolio more broadly: the African Development Bank Group's most recent portfolio review for Cameroon cites delays in signing agreements, difficulty meeting conditions precedent to disbursement, limited government counterpart funding, and late submission of audit reports as obstacles spanning "the entire project cycle, from procurement and contractor mobilization to the actual delivery of infrastructure and services" (African Development Bank Group, 2026). Third, until the 2026 mandate for e-procurement, the continued availability of paper-based bidding alongside the COLEPS digital platform preserved exactly the kind of opaque, manually verified tendering process in which, according to Cameroon's own procurement regulator, project officers have been documented steering evaluation criteria toward preferred bidders or disclosing tender information ahead of schedule (Business in Cameroon, 2021).

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7. Effects of Procurement Delays on Project Outcomes

7.1. Time Performance

Across both cases, procurement delay is the clearest driver of schedule slippage. The PDST's airport component required approximately two and a half years beyond its original horizon to approach completion, and its road component's contract cancellation triggered a full re-tendering cycle whose duration, by definition, could not have been anticipated at appraisal (World Bank, 2021; Business in Cameroon, 2026). The Douala terminal renovation similarly moved its substantive works start from an announced first half of 2025 to the second half of 2026, a full calendar year of slippage attributable to the time required to finalise design and launch the corresponding procurement package (Cameroon-Concord News, 2024; Ecofin Agency, 2026).

7.2. Cost Performance

While neither case in this study discloses a single, audited figure for delay-attributable cost overrun, the mechanisms through which procurement delay elevates cost are well established in the literature reviewed above, including price escalation during re-tendering, extended project-management and supervision costs, and, where currency or input-price volatility is significant, erosion of the real value of originally budgeted contract sums (Assaf & Al-Hejji, 2006; Kaliba et al., 2009). The need to re-launch international bidding for the PDST's road component after contract cancellation, in particular, is the kind of event that transaction cost economics predicts will carry a cost premium, since the search, negotiation, and verification costs of contracting are incurred a second time for the same scope of work (Williamson, 1985; World Bank, 2021).

7.3. Quality and Compliance Outcomes

Because much of the PDST's airport component exists specifically to bring Cameroon's airports into conformity with International Civil Aviation Organization security standards, delay in this case is not merely a scheduling inconvenience but a deferral of safety and security compliance itself; the Cameroon Civil Aviation Authority's own framing of the revised June 2026 target as necessary "to complete all works" needed for ICAO compliance makes this linkage explicit (Business in Cameroon, 2026). In the Douala case, sequencing airside apron works ahead of the terminal renovation is a defensible risk-management choice, but it also means that the capacity and security-rating benefits the programme is designed to deliver, a rise from IATA Level to Level C service and from a lower to a Level 7 security rating, remain unrealised until the more complex and, on the evidence of the design-stage timeline already observed, more delay-prone terminal component is procured and executed (Ecofin Agency, 2026).

7.4. Stakeholder Confidence

The public criticism from Cameroon's business community (represented by the employers' group GECAM) that prompted ADC's 2024 announcement of the Douala renovation, and the subsequent gap between that announcement and the programme's actual 2025–2026 procurement milestones, illustrate a further outcome dimension: repeated announcement and re-announcement of infrastructure timelines can itself erode stakeholder confidence, independent of the ultimate technical quality of the finished asset (Cameroon-Concord News, 2024). More broadly, the African Development Bank Group's own portfolio assessment frames faster project execution and reduced procurement delay as preconditions for its financing to "generate more than 14,500 direct jobs" and other development

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impacts it has projected for Cameroon, indicating that delay carries an opportunity cost measured in foregone economic and social benefit, not solely in direct financial terms (African Development Bank Group, 2026).

8. Recommendations

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, the following recommendations are advanced.

8.1. For Policy and Institutional Design

1. Clarify, through an updated implementing text, the precise division of contract-award authority between MINMAP and the procurement regulatory authority for airport-sector contracts above defined value thresholds, so that the two institutions' mandates are complementary rather than overlapping.
2. Accelerate the completion of the transition to mandatory e-procurement under COLEPS for all airport-sector tenders, and publish disaggregated, sector-specific performance data (average days from tender launch to award, by sector) to allow independent monitoring of whether digitalisation is in fact shortening procurement cycles.
3. Strengthen front-end project preparation, including feasibility studies and technical design, before procurement is launched, so that scope changes and design revisions, a documented driver of delay in the Douala case, are minimised once tendering begins.

8.2. For Project and Contract Management Practice

1. Build contingency time explicitly into airport-project schedules for anticipated ICAO compliance verification steps, rather than treating standards conformity as a final-stage formality.
2. Where contractor disputes lead to contract cancellation, adopt pre-qualified shortlists or framework agreements for recurring categories of airport works (security fencing, patrol roads, apron construction) to shorten the re-tendering cycle should cancellation occur.
3. Improve the predictability of counterpart-funding releases from the national treasury, given that development partners have identified this as a recurring, government-side bottleneck independent of the technical merit of individual projects.

8.3. For Further Institutional Transparency

Publish periodic, plain-language implementation updates for major airport projects, comparable in spirit to the World Bank's Implementation Status and Results Reports, to reduce the gap between public announcement and actual procurement milestones that this study observed in the Douala case.

9. Conclusion

This article has examined procurement delay and its effects on project outcomes in Cameroon's airport sector through two anchoring cases, the Transport Sector Development Project's airport-safety component and the Douala International Airport terminal renovation, read against the institutional backdrop of Cameroon's evolving public procurement architecture. The evidence assembled here supports the conclusion that procurement delay in this sector is neither incidental nor purely technical in origin; it is substantially institutional, rooted in the divided responsibilities of MINMAP and the procurement regulator, in the slow conversion of design work into biddable tender packages, in

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counterpart-funding bottlenecks common across Cameroon's donor-financed portfolio, and, historically, in the persistence of paper-based tendering alongside digital reform. The consequences of this delay are not confined to schedule alone: they extend to cost, to the deferral of internationally mandated safety and security compliance, and to the erosion of stakeholder confidence in the state's capacity to deliver announced infrastructure on the timeline it sets for itself. As Cameroon's airport-sector portfolio moves into a new cycle of projects launched under the mandatory e-procurement regime introduced in 2026, the extent to which these structural drivers of delay recede will be an important, and empirically testable, indicator of whether the country's procurement reform agenda is achieving its intended effect.

10. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study is subject to at least three limitations. First, its documentary, case-based design draws on the public monitoring record rather than on primary interviews with procurement officials, contractors, or airport users, and it is therefore better suited to identifying patterns and mechanisms than to producing statistically generalisable estimates of, for example, average delay duration or cost-overrun percentage across the sector as a whole. Second, the study's timeframe closes in mid-2026, shortly after the mandatory e-procurement regime took effect, so it cannot yet assess that reform's realised impact on delay outcomes; a follow-up study conducted once a full cycle of airport-sector tenders has been processed exclusively through COLEPS would be well placed to do so. Third, the study's focus on two cases, while chosen for their documentary richness, does not extend to Cameroon's secondary and domestic airports, where procurement dynamics, given lower contract values and more localised competition, may differ from those observed at Douala and Yaoundé-Nsimalen. Future research employing structured interviews with procuring entities and contractors, alongside a quantitative analysis of tender-to-award timelines drawn from COLEPS records once sufficient data has accumulated, would extend and test the findings presented here.

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