

# An inter-communal partnership in Kribi-Campo

## Sustainable tourism and local development

Cameroon



Communes

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Partnership

**The coastal area around Kribi and Campo in Cameroon has significant potential as a tourist destination, but is threatened by uncontrolled speculative development. The urban commune of Kribi wanted to set up an office to promote tourism, but shares the 150 km coastal area with two neighbours, the rural communes of Kribi and Campo. With SNV's assistance, the three communes entered into a strategic partnership to advance their common interests. In consultation with stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector, they drew up a plan for the development of the entire coastal area. Thus the idea of a tourist office in one commune expanded into an inter-communal partnership, and the desire to attract tourists gave way to a wider programme to promote local development**

### **Kribi and Campo**

Within the communes of Kribi and Campo, on the Atlantic coast of Cameroon, lie 150 kilometres of pristine beach, the tropical forests of the Campo-Ma'an national park, and many other natural assets. The area already attracts a small number of tourists, but has enormous potential for further development as a major tourist destination.

The urban commune of Kribi and the rural communes of Kribi and Campo lack the resources to invest in such a venture. The communes derive most of their income from logging fees, local communal taxes and a small business tax (impôt libérateur). With a total area of 6360 square kilometres and a population of just 54,000, the local tax base is small, yielding revenues amounting to only 290 million CFA francs (about ?500,000) per year. These revenues are barely sufficient to fund the activities of the municipal councils to meet local needs. The local people live mainly from fishing, tourism and small businesses. Because of the lack of better alternatives, increasing numbers of young people and women are seeking employment, however precarious, in these sectors.

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Kribi is already the main tourist town in Cameroon, and the number of hotels is growing rapidly. Many of the area's attractions are located in the rural communes of Kribi and Campo, including the Campo-Ma'an national park, with its rich biodiversity and forests that extend down to the seashore, beaches where sea turtles come to lay their eggs, and many sites of archaeological and historical interest. The area is also home to several ethnic groups with very different cultures and lifestyles, including forest peoples, coastal peoples, and the hunter-gatherer Bagyeli pygmies.

### **Problems and challenges**

The area's natural assets offer significant potential for the development of the tourist sector, but are not being exploited at present, and may even be threatened if tourism is allowed to develop in an uncontrolled manner. In fact, land speculation is already evident along the coast, with runaway construction and the appropriation of public beaches by private landowners, and increasingly frequent disputes. In some places, new buildings have blocked access to the beach, making it difficult to plan and run tourist attractions properly. Local fishermen with their own small businesses are frequently attacked by the employees of industrial fisheries companies, who seize or destroy their equipment. Industrial activities, particularly oil and gas extraction and agro-industrial developments, could result in serious pollution of coastal waters unless effective control and response mechanisms are put in place.

This chaotic situation can be attributed, at least in part, to the lack of effective, properly enforced coastal regulations, and the lack of coordination among the agencies involved. The responsibilities of some agencies overlap and tend to cancel each other out. For example, no less than four ministries, as well as the communes,

may issue titles to land, construction licences and fishing permits, and are responsible for land use planning. Other stakeholders interested in the development of the area include various government agencies and the private sector, represented by the association of hotel owners along the coast.

Until recently, responsibility for development planning lay with the central government (Ministry of Economics), and its local offices. Today, as a result of the ongoing decentralisation process, many communities are gradually waking up to their new role and responsibilities. However, they are struggling to make other public actors, including state agencies, recognise that they have a legitimate part to play in local planning processes. In order to reap the benefits of the development of their coastline, the communes of Kribi and Campo face a number of challenges. These include the lack of local experience in managing the area and maintaining its infrastructure, and in planning to create the necessary conditions to encourage more viable businesses and employment opportunities for local people. They therefore realised that they would have to join forces to ensure that the process of tourism development was controlled, rational and sustainable.

### **The inter-communal partnership**

Kribi urban council decided to set up an office to promote tourism. It soon became clear, however, that since it shares the coastal area in question with the two neighbouring rural communes of Kribi and Campo, it would have to enter into a strategic partnership with them. SNV was invited to facilitate negotiations on a joint venture to ensure the sustainable development of the coast.

The communes agreed to draw up a development plan for the entire coastal strip, and set up a steering committee, representing all interested parties, to provide a forum for decision making, monitoring and directing the planning process. SNV offered advice and facilitated the meetings of the steering committee, which began by defining its terms of reference and deciding what kind of expertise it would require. The meetings were organised and financed by the communes, with the committee members acting in a voluntary capacity.

SNV encouraged the partnership between the communes, but it was the urban commune of Kribi,



because of its initial involvement and the human resources it had available, that tended to lead the process. The two rural communes are still wary of being dominated by Kribi town, but are conscious that they need to work together share common interests. They are proud of the plan that has been drawn up, which the three councils have enthusiastically endorsed.

To take matters forward, at a meeting facilitated by SNV, the three communes signed a joint declaration – the Campo declaration – setting out the arrangements for handling their shared interests. It was decided to set up an inter-communal tourist office, to be operated by the three communes as a public commercial enterprise, to ensure that the work and the benefits are equitably shared. The three municipalities requested SNV's advice in setting up the inter-communal tourist office, negotiating funding for the implementation of the plan, and developing an information system to support tourism in the area.

Once the development plan was completed, a list of priority actions was drawn up for the period November 2004–June 2005, the aim being to establish the overall framework for the development plan and to create suitable conditions for carrying it out. By the end of this period, it is expected that the plan, now approved by the government, will have obtained support from the funding agencies, and the inter-communal tourist office will be in operation.

A team of experts will be commissioned to draft the mission plan for the tourist office and the rules on which it will be based. SNV will continue to support the establishment of the office, making it operational and negotiating funding. SNV has played a crucial role by providing technical expertise, and the communes are anxious that SNV continues to do so until they are

able to find the resources to pay for it. Without SNV's assistance, it is feared the process may be delayed or even brought to a halt altogether.

### **Achievements and future prospects**

Now that the development plan has been realised, all the actors and partners have a clear view of how they wish the coastal strip to be developed, and have begun to cooperate in carrying it out. Inter-communal collaboration is increasingly seen as a valuable and effective way of working.

The communes have emerged as influential actors in local development, and in doing so have highlighted the inefficiency of the Task Force for Ocean Surveys and Development Planning (MEAO), which was set up in 2001 by the government, but has not yet come up with any results. The Ministry of Economics and Planning, which is responsible for supervising the MEAO, has openly stated that this is not satisfactory, and has welcomed the initiative taken by the communes. Having shown that they can be effective in their new role as local development planners, the communes are demonstrating how the necessary match can be made between the sectoral planning carried out by various ministries, and the spatial planning operation carried out at the communal and inter-communal levels, under local coordination.

### **Positive outcomes**

With the support it has received from all the players involved, the Kribi–Campo development plan has attracted favourable notice at national level, and has produced positive outcomes in several areas. SNV has since received other requests for assistance from the Ministry of Tourism, the Campo Ma'an national park authorities, and various local entrepreneurs.



The Kribi–Campo experiment is providing an ideal opportunity for testing the transfer of responsibilities and resources from central government to the local level in the process of decentralisation in Cameroon. The success of the three communes in meeting this challenge will be a significant contribution to this process. Having learned what the experiment has to teach in terms of positioning and obtaining institutional support, other communes are now preparing to launch joint ventures based on shared interests that are clearly identified, understood and shared by all the parties concerned.

About 1400 local people are engaged in small-scale fishing (the most important activity) and in tourism. Including the downstream jobs created by these activities, and the families of those involved, more than 4000 people are dependent on these sectors (the commune of Campo has only 5500 inhabitants!). When put into action, the Kribi–Campo development plan will help to improve the viability and profitability of these activities, as well as increasing tourist numbers. All of this will have a positive impact on local businesses, employment security and, hopefully, the creation of many more new jobs in the future.

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## Resources

SNV Cameroon: [www.snvworld.org/cameroun](http://www.snvworld.org/cameroun)

Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation and Management Programme, Ministry of the Environment and Forestry: [www.biocam.net](http://www.biocam.net)

Campo-Ma'an National Park – 'A walk in the forest: Ecotourism Cameroon style', WWF International, 3 February 2005:

[www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/where\\_we\\_work/africa/stories/news.cfm?uNewsID=18010](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/africa/stories/news.cfm?uNewsID=18010)

Guide touristique Kribi:

[www.cameroun-plus.com/s37/visite/index.htm](http://www.cameroun-plus.com/s37/visite/index.htm)

Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project: [www.worldbank.org/afr/ccproj/index.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ccproj/index.htm)

'Pipeline's profits may bypass Africans', Los Angeles Times, 17 June 2003:

[www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/wbimf/1426.html](http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/wbimf/1426.html)

Pipeline Watch: [www.pipelinelwatch.org/mainpage.htm](http://www.pipelinelwatch.org/mainpage.htm)

SNV is dedicated to a society where all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. Our advisors contribute to this by strengthening the capacity of local organisations.

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