



# Public sector governance in Cameroon: A valuable opportunity or fatal aberration from the Kribi Campo integrated coastal management?



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## ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, integrated coastal management (ICM) has been widely used all over the world to overcome the inadequacies of sectoral approach and manage anthropogenic activities in ocean and coastal areas, with momentous results achieved and valuable lessons learned. The ICM approach offers a comprehensive agenda to address environmental, economic and social objectives, thus enabling the fulfillment of sustainable coastal development. In Cameroon, Kribi Campo was selected to be developed as the first ICM demonstration site. Although the ICM success story is emblematic with the inculcation of all relevant stakeholders, the Kribi Campo ICM still lags behind as it has proceeded in public sector governance (PSG) fashion. PSG in Cameroon is largely characterized by lengthy and undefined bureaucratic lanes with major decisions pivoting at the capital, Yaounde. Though the decentralization process in Cameroon is well circumscribed in the constitution, palpable evidence of Kribi Campo coastal development remains the callous agenda of political elites in the PSG hierarchy. This article, therefore, depicts the challenges of implementing ICM while employing the current PSG approach. A paradigm shift from centralized-PSG to decentralized-PSG is therefore of urgency to develop Kribi Campo coastal area.

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## 1. Introduction

Integrated coastal management (ICM) within the last decades has gained prominence among other coastal management strategies (Ngoran and Xue, 2015). The ICM approach is clamored with success stories from many countries. Many countries have favored equitable governance of natural resources by delegating policy making and resource control to the local populations (Ribot et al., 2006a,b). In China, the devolving of more powers by the Chinese Central Government to municipal governments to implement new environmental laws and the opening up to bilateral and multilateral assistance created a favorable atmosphere for ICM conceptualization and implementation. Currently, ICM has moved to the second stage after a successful implementation in Xiamen, China (Ngoran and Xue, 2015). The Philippines and Thailand fruitfully implemented ICM (Kong et al., 2015); Japan and Korea have developed institutions and have put in place the necessary

resources to effectively implement the ICM program (Liu et al., 2012). In Europe, wide ranging ICM policies have been implemented among European countries. Yet, successful strategies for coastal management in Europe are still in accordance with the 8 principles recommended in EC Recommendation 2002/413/EC as the strategy for ICM in Europe (Reis et al., 2014). In Africa, Tanzania in 2000 adopted the National Integrated Coastal Environment Management Strategy (ICEMS) (Torell et al., 2007). The implementation strategy of the ICEMS was through district-level ICM action plans. This approach helped set the stage for sustainable coastal development while contributing to the Government of Tanzania objectives to alleviate poverty (Torell et al., 2007).

Governance plays a prominent role in the ICM implementation. However, there is no general consensus in scientific literature as to which form of governance is best for ICM implementation. Though Lane, 2006; Wever et al. (2012) solicit a more decentralized form of governance for ICM implementation, Christie and White (2007) advocate for a centralized form of governance. Kong et al. (2015) point out that due to the different regimes and legislation of each country, it is unrealistic to ascertain that a particular form of governance is a pivotal point for ICM implementation. Despite the parallel views on the role of governance in enhancing ICM, there is a

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common consensus that the inculcation of all stakeholders is imperative for an effective ICM implementation (Ehler, 2003; Bowen and Riley, 2003; Ngoran and Xue, 2015).

In response to coastal problems, the Cameroon government through public sector governance (PSG) decided to implement ICM in the 2000s. Kribi Campo was selected by the Cameroon government to be developed as the first ICM demonstration site. For more than a decade, the Kribi Campo ICM is yet to produce the expected outcome owing to the gaps in PSG. The goal of this research is to explore if the stagnation of the Kribi Campo ICM is due to PSG causation or due to misconception of the ICM approach. A case-by-case approach of the ICM tenets and PSG in Cameroon is analyzed in order to realize this study. This article, from the authors' viewpoint is the first of its kind to make an appraisal of the impacts of PSG and ICM on sustainable coastal development. Hence, the present study brings new insights into the literature and offers opportunities for further research questions.

## 2. Characterization of terms

### 2.1. What is public sector governance?

There is no unanimously agreed-upon definition for the term public sector governance (PSG) in scientific literature. Moreover, there is limited literature on PSG. The Association of Public Accounts Committees (APEC, 2011) views PSG as the central government institutions and organizations which create the governance environment for the public service and the wider state sector. The organizations of interest are the central institution which supports the collective political decision-making of the executive, and which regulate their execution by the public sector. This is done via the institutions for: strategic planning, policy development and coordination, service delivery, economic management, public sector organization, public sector leadership, accountability and control (Goodson et al., 2012). These central bodies are also accountable for ensuring that executive action is in accordance with the Law and accountable to the Legislature and the general public.

In the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA, 2013) report, PSG is demarcated as the relationships between organizations and institutions of the State. These relationships could be between organizations of the State such as between central government agencies, or between various levels of government, or how the rule of law can be prescribed. Notably, PSG deals with the relations between the State and society: how the State intermingles with people to provide services, how the State makes itself accountable to citizens, and how the State guarantees the security and the rights of its citizens. According to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO, 2003) and International Federation of Accountants (IFAC, 2014), PSG aims to ensure that the institution achieves its overall outcomes such to enhance confidence in the organization, its decisions and its actions.

Edwards (2002) terms PSG as the policies and procedures used to direct an establishment's activities to provide rational assurance that the stipulated objectives are met and operations carried out in an ethical and accountable manner. In the public sector, governance relates to the ways by which goals are established and accomplished. It also includes activities that ensure a government's standing/credibility, establish equitable provision of services, and assure appropriate behavior of government officials and reducing the risk of public corruption.

### 2.2. What is ICM?

According to the European Commission, ICM is a dynamic, multidisciplinary, and iterative sequence to advance sustainable

management of coastal zones. It embraces a full cycle of information gathering, planning, policy making, management, and monitoring of implementation (Ngoran, 2014). ICM uses the informed participation and collaboration of all stakeholders to evaluate societal goals in a given coastal milieu, and take actions towards meeting these objectives. ICM seeks, over the long-term, to balance environmental, economic, socio-cultural, and recreational objectives, all within the limits set by natural dynamics. 'Integrated' in ICM denotes the integration of objectives and also to the incorporation of the many instruments needed to meet these objectives (Ngoran, 2014). It means integration of all relevant policy areas, sectors, and levels of administration. It means integration of the terrestrial and marine constituents of the target territory, in both time and space (Ngoran and Xue, 2015).

Knecht and Archer (1993) define ICM as a "dynamic and incessant process of administering the use, development, and protection of the coastal area and its resources towards common objectives of national and local authorities and the aspiration of different resource user groups".

ICM is a dynamic process which aims, through a set of actions and inter-sectoral participation, to improve the quality of life of people living in the coastal zone and promote sustainable development by protecting ecosystems and coastal resources. According to Klumb-Oliveira and Souto (2015), the approach used in the ICM; comprises four elements: geographic, temporal, sectoral and political-institutional. Its development process involves generation of five consecutive stages: a) identification and preliminary evaluation of relevant aspects, b) preparation of the program, c) formal adoption and funding, d) implementation and e) evaluation (Klumb-Oliveira and Souto, 2015). The process is continuous and resumes at the end of the fifth phase, until the program is perfected (Olsen, 2003). Since it is an ongoing process, the perfection is a goal that will never be achieved (Ehler, 2003). The ICM is consistent with the sustainable development objectives, since it seeks to integrate the economic, social, ecological, and political institutional dimensions of the coastal zone, as seen in the overall goal of the ICM: ICM is a process that unites the community and the government, management and science, sectoral and public interests in preparing and implementing an integrated plan for the protection and development of coastal ecosystems and resources. The overall goal of ICM is to improve the quality of life of communities that depend on coastal resources while maintaining the biological diversity and productivity of coastal ecosystems (Ngoran, 2014).

While PSG is largely the domineering role of the state, especially for a country like Cameroon, ICM is rather a localized management approach set forth to achieve the objectives of the government in the coastal environment. Therefore, the structure of PSG is an underlying factor in determining the successful implementation of ICM. PSG may either be centralized, decentralized or both, depending of the country's regime. Whereas laws governing decentralization in Cameroon have been enacted, centralized governance championed by the sector approach is still the order of the day.

## 3. Why coastal areas?

A large portion of the world's population has always inhabited the coastal areas (Martínez et al., 2007). Fertile coastal lowlands, abundant marine resources, water transportation, aesthetic beauty, and intrinsic values have long motivated coastal habitation (Wongthong and Harvey, 2014). Coastal economies include commercial, recreational and artisanal fisheries, ports and industrial facilities that rely on shipping, and tourism, agriculture and forestry dependent on the coastal climate. Coastal areas are a critical part of the economies of virtually all nations bordering the sea, particularly

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