



Rising Sea Levels: Kribi Faces Unprecedented Loss and Damage

By Paul Lodry



For 63-year-old Mama Mitoule Aghate, the sound of the ocean is no longer a lullaby. It's a warning. Living in a past far removed from the sea, she now watches the grey, restless waves crash where, just ten years ago, a row of coconut palms stood. "I grew up here, I went to my wedding here," she whispers, "and now the violent waves break right by the wall of my house."







His anger has become a daily occurrence in the "seaside town." Kribi, the proud, touristy city in the South Region of Cameroon, with its white sand beaches and the famous Lobé Falls plunging directly into the ocean, is losing its footing. Sea level rising, once a distant concept debated at international conferences, has become a brutal reality measured in meters of lost land, extinction of crops and culture, and upended lives.



Loss and damage is no longer a projection; they are inscribed in the landscape of the city of Kribi.



In Bwambè, a seaside resort in the commune of Kribi, the laughter of tourists used to mingle with the lapping of the waves. The terrace of one of the most upscale hotels was swallowed up.

In the Wamé neighbourhood, beachfront restaurants were literally emptied by the fury of the ocean, leaving their foundations exposed like broken bones. Meanwhile, the fishermen of Ngoyé's beach have less and less. Their nets, which represent their livelihood, are dwindling, forcing them to venture further out to sea to find anything.







Fishing, a vital economic and cultural lifeline for thousands of families, is struggling to survive. Catches are dwindling because venturing far out has become too risky. Xavier, a 75-year-old fisherman like his father before him, shakes his head. For him, it's not just fishing and the passing down of this cultural tradition to the next generation that are affected.



He also points to the disappearance of the "fairy ladies" who used to come every evening to the rocks to commune with the locals. These "fairy ladies" can no longer come because the rocks are submerged by the rising sea and the power of the waves.

But the most critical damage is a scar that threatens to cut Kribi off from the rest of the country. National Route 7, the vital artery linking the port city to Douala and Yaoundé, is now on borrowed time. Near the Bilingual High School, the ocean no longer merely laps at the asphalt; it eats away at it. With each high tide, saltwater floods the roadway, and the bitumen crumbles. If this road collapses, it's not just tourism that suffers, but the economy of the Deep-Water Port and Kribi's very future, which is threatened.

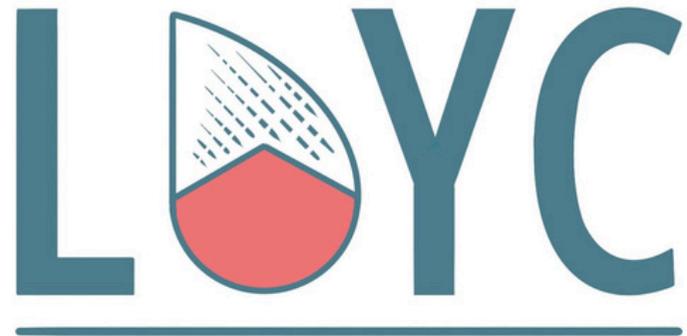


The tragic irony of Kribi is that its development, this frantic race to build luxury hotels and residences along the seafront, has accelerated its own vulnerability. By uprooting the mangroves and coastal vegetation that served as a natural shield, the city has exposed itself to an ever-rising sea level.

Kribi is no longer just fighting for its beaches. It's fighting for its road, its high school, its homes, its culture, and its history. Mama Aghate and Papa Xavier aren't talking about centimeters of sea level rise by 2050; they're talking about their vanished homes, their broken canoes, and the constant fear of rising ocean levels that threaten to sweep everything away in the very near future.

A story collected by Paul Lodry.

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