

Douala, Cameroon

Partner city

Status of the project: Completed Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan



Basic Information

Urban area: 923 km²

Population: 3,663,227 | Growth rate: 3.6%

Regional capital city

GDP per capita: USD 2,952

Modal Shares

Minibuses (paratransit): 1%

Walking: 35%

Private cars: 5%

Private motorbikes or 2-wheelers: 4%

Taxis (paratransit): 12%

Moto taxi (paratransit): 40%

Other: 3%

National GHG emissions per capita: 0.4 (tCO₂eq)

Exposure to climate change: HIGH

Context

The port city of Douala, the central economic hub of Cameroon, lies on a low coastal plateau with many natural drains and flood-prone valleys. With a population of more than 4 million inhabitants, which is anticipated to increase to 5 million by 2030¹, Douala is a dynamic, fast-growing city. Douala's rapid growth is particularly pronounced on the outskirts, where access to formal public transport services is low or non-existent. Urban sprawl forces people to travel further distances to access jobs, markets, health, and education. The low quality and inadequacy of infrastructure for walking and cycling add to the low provision of public transport services.

This combination of factors pushes travellers to rely on informal motorcycle taxis and mini-bus services instead of more sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and higher-capacity public transport. Informal transport services have taken an increasingly large modal share in outlying areas but also in the city centre. This entails threats to the citizen's health, safety, and comfort, as the precariousness of working conditions and high competitiveness of paratransit services are associated with a higher risk of traffic accidents and sexual harassment toward women. Ageing or badly maintained vehicles also significantly increase air and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Regulating and supervising urban development are significant challenges for the public authorities, as a large percentage of the urban territory is subject to unsanctioned land use, associated with the isolation of working-class neighbourhoods, the lack of tertiary roads, saturation of industrial zones and growing informal settlements on often unsuitable land.

¹ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/cameroon/douala>

In addition to this, the lack of dialogue between land-use planning, on the one hand, and mobility planning authorities, on the other, exacerbates the urban transport problem. Above all, creating the conditions for viable integration between urban and transport planning is necessary. This diagnosis has led to the recognition of the need to initiate a planning approach that is more operational than those previously at work to respond to the challenges resulting from the rapid development of metropolitan areas.

Support from the Partnership – Mobility Planning

Project description

Technical Assistance: Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)

Funded by: European Commission and FFEM

Funding amount: EUR 400,000

Implemented by: AFD through the MobiliseYourCity Africa Program

Local counterpart: Urban Community of Douala

Finance leverage: EUR 422,000,000

Supported activities:

- Organisation of Mobilise Days, in conjunction with Yaoundé, to officially launch SUMP development and raise awareness.
- Preparation of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for Douala, with three main objectives:
- Enhancing citizens' access to destinations, activities and services offered in Douala;
- Enhancing the urban environment in Douala;
- Renewing the governance of Douala, its mobility, and projects

Status of the SUMP process

Project start: 2018 Q1

Project completion: 2019 Q3

Completed outputs:

- Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan
 - » Diagnosis
 - » Vision and goals
 - » Action and financing plan

SUMP key measures and cost estimates

The following table highlights the most significant measures identified in the SUMP.

Measures	Cost estimates in M€	Proposed Financing Source	Implementation by
Physical investments (infrastructure, rolling stock, etc.)	508 M€		
Road infrastructure projects	107 M€	Domestic financing	2021
Purchase of 283 Bus 12m 2021: 150 2024: 133	66 M€ 2021: 33 M€ 2024: 33 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024
Bus facilities (stations)	24 M€ 2021: 4 M€ 2024: 20 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024
Purchase of 164 BRT 18m 2021: 50 2024: 75 2029: 39	66 M€ 2021: 20 M€ 2024: 30 M€ 2029: 16 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024 2029
BRT facilities (stations)	92 M€ 2021: 18 M€ 2024: 49 M€ 2029: 25 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024 2029
Cable Car line	26 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2024
Development of 5 major multimodal interchange centres and 15 transfer points	15 M€ 2021: 4 M€ 2024: 6 M€ 2029: 5 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024 2029
Walking plan	15 M€ 2021: 3 M€ 2024: 7 M€ 2029: 5 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024 2029
Investments for cycling	5 M€ 2024: 1 M€ 2029: 4 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2024 2029
Reinforcement of river links to Manuka	4 M€	Domestic financing	2021
Development of river and rail transport infrastructure	5 M€	Domestic financing	2029
Centralised Control Centre	10 M€ 2021: 3 M€ 2024: 4 M€ 2029: 3 M€	World Bank & Domestic Financing	2021 2024 2029
Project management, call for interest and contingency provision	63 M€ 2021: 15 M€ 2024: 37 M€ 2029: 11 M€	Domestic financing	2021 2024 2029

Measures	Cost estimates in M€	Proposed Financing Source	Implementation by
Development of logistical hubs and truck parking spaces	11 M€ 2024: 7 M€ 2029: 4 M€	Domestic financing	2024 2029
Complementary actions and policy reforms in three phases	38 M€ 2021: 10 M€ 2024: 10 M€ 2029: 38 M€		
Technical (studies, plans, designs, etc.)			
Short-term complementary studies and strategy setting			2021
Guidelines for logistics platforms and truck parking			2021
Concerted plans and strategies for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upkeep and maintenance of the road network • Valorisation/distribution of the public space • Tariff and ticketing of public transport 			2021
Integration of mobility and other urban networks (water, sewage, energy, waste)			2024
Municipal traffic and parking plans			2024
Anticipation of plans after the SUMP			2029
Policy & regulation			
Informal transport project			
Continuous formalisation of motorcycle taxis and informal buses through establishing a new institution responsible for vocational training, schedule regulation, and administrative formalisation.		European Union	2024
Implementation of a digital action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open data policy • Support the development of information and service platforms • Mobility Observatory 			2024
Strengthening the capacity of police officers about mobility			2024
Adaptation of public transport services and recruitment policy to tackle gender-related issues			2024
Improved road upkeep and maintenance			2024
Improved road signage			2024
Creation of a transport organising authority		European Union	2029
Monitoring and reporting on air quality and water pollution			2029
Emergence of new public transport operators			2029
Public support for the adoption of clean vehicles through financial incentives			2029
Optimised integration of port activities and reconversion of industrial disused sites			2029

The following table summarises the total capital expenditure (CapEx) estimates for different measures in the SUMP.

Urban transport investment measures	CapEx Estimate
Public transport and NMT	328 M€
Street shaping urban roads and traffic management	107 M€
Other measures	74 M€
Total	509 M€

Finance leverage

Leveraged financing (resulting or enabled by the SUMP preparation process)

Description	Source of financing	Secured	Amount
Grant for the implementation of SUMP soft measures	European Union		2 M€

Associated financing

Description	Source of financing	Secured	Amount
International loan for the BRT and other investments (associated)	World Bank		370 M€
Domestic contribution to the BRT and other investments (associated)	Government of Cameroon		50 M€

Projected impacts

Indicator	Impact 2030 (SUMP vs BAU)	Baseline - 2019	Projected 2030 BAU	Projected 2030 SUMP scenario
Total annual GHG emissions (Mt CO₂eq)	-0,19 Mt CO ₂ eq -20 %	0.548 Mt CO ₂ eq	0.95 Mt CO ₂ eq	0.76 Mt CO ₂ eq
Annual transport-related GHG emissions per capita (kg CO₂eq)	-36 kg CO ₂ eq / capita -20.7 %	161 kg CO ₂ eq / capita	174 kg CO ₂ eq / capita	138 kg CO ₂ eq / capita
Access Increase the proportion of the population living within 500 meters or less of a public transport stop.	Improved but not quantified	Not quantified	Not quantified	Not quantified
Air pollution Decrease in mean urban air pollution of particulate matter (in µg PM _{2.5}) at road-based monitoring stations.	Improved but not quantified	Not quantified	Not quantified	Not quantified
Modal share Increase of the modal shares of trips by public transport, walking and cycling	Formal public transport: +5% Informal public transport: 0% Walking: +6% Cycling: 0% TOTAL: +6%	Formal public transport: 2% Informal public transport: 1% Walking: 35% Cycling: 0% TOTAL: 38%	Formal public transport: 1% Informal public transport: 0% Walking: 34% Cycling: 0% TOTAL: 35%	Formal public transport: 6% Informal public transport: 0% Walking: 40% Cycling: 0% TOTAL: 46%
Road safety Decrease in traffic fatalities in the urban area per 100,000 inhabitants	Improved but not quantified	Not quantified	Not quantified	Not quantified

Insights from practice: lessons learned from the SUMP process

The three key strengths of Douala SUMP are that it is integrated, realistic, and inclusive.

It links mobility and urban planning, includes existing actors and modes of transport, and proposes innovative solutions beyond road infrastructure, such as constructing a cable car line.

The SUMP's Action, Financing and Governance Plan is fully fundable through already available financial resources, newly identified resources, and international finance. It is based on a transport investment plan from the previous decade, with additional revenues from heightened fuel taxation, car ownership, and parking. Funding is sourced from the public budget, resulting in a positive revenue-to-expenditure ratio for the operation of the public transport network. The SUMP is also tailored to the area's context, location, and specificities, ensuring a progressive and realistic implementation of the plan.

The Douala SUMP is inclusive, facilitating information workshops and thematic focus groups that include young people, women, and actors from both modern and informal private sectors. This participatory process identifies overlooked issues related to population groups and devises adequate solutions. Notably, these public and stakeholder consultations mobilised new actors to get involved in organising a car-free day.

Significant governance and institutional reforms are prerequisites to SUMP implementation.

Although the Douala Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) has its strengths and opportunities, structural and urban limitations still need to be acknowledged. The liberalisation of the economy and decentralisation have led to a proliferation of actors with different interests, sometimes conflicting with the existing laws and regulations, complicating the organisation of the transport sector.

The management of regulatory urban planning poses a significant challenge in Douala and other African cities of similar size, given the creation of new districts on the outskirts, which necessitate new infrastructure and improvements in urban transportation. However, given the city's current investment and management capacity, these may not be sustainable.

Additionally, mobility data is often outdated and unavailable in a format suitable for long-term urban planning. Institutional reforms are necessary, including establishing a Transport Organising Authority, an Urban Planning Agency, and a Mobility Observatory to improve coordination between urban planning and mobility. These institutions should prioritise the representation of women and consider vulnerable groups, such as children and older people, who face systemic mobility challenges such as safety and lack of suitable infrastructure, as identified by the diagnostic.

Perspectives for implementation

The Douala Urban Mobility Project (PMUD) to implement the BRT and improve the moto-taxi services in Douala

The Douala Urban Municipality (CUD) will be implementing two of the main measures of the SUMP adopted in 2019, through the Douala Urban Mobility Project (PMUD) signed in August 2024 between the State of Cameroon and the World Bank. The main objective of this project is to improve urban mobility by implementing a pilot BRT corridor in Douala, and to support economic and inclusive development along the BRT and feeder lines. The project will also help to improve governance in the sector, strengthen the stakeholders involved in urban mobility, and improve the service and working conditions of moto-taxis in Douala.

Last updated in December 2024