



## TOURISM HOTSPOTS IN KARTONG

- Tour to the Balantakunda community forest;
- Bike tours around the village and the river areas;
- Tour to the permaculture institute;
- Pelican island boat excursions;
- Sacred Folonko pond (enhanced by the COAST Project);
- Gambian cooking lessons;
- Birdwatching tours at the Kartong Observatory and the community forest;
- Kartong Festival (music), every February.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE COAST PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN THE GAMBIA, PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

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# SUSTAINABLE COASTAL TOURISM IN THE GAMBIA

## LESSONS FROM KARTONG





ABOUT THE KARTONG DEMO SITE

Kartong is one of the oldest settlements along the Gambian coast, comprising a population of approximately 5000. Kartong is uniquely different from the populous tourist hotspot in the Senegambia area, since it maintains a distinct aura of traditional villages that attract the interest of tourists interested in birdwatching and more authentic natural and cultural experiences. The site has a number of tourist attractions, including a birdwatching observatory (with close to 260 bird species recorded), a unique riverine ecosystem around the Hallahine River (a natural border separating the Gambia from Senegal's Southern Province of Casamance) and local historically and culturally rich spots such as the sacred Folonko Crocodile Pond, a cultural festival and the rich local Gambian cuisine.

“...The COAST Project was developed with an aim of reducing the harmful impacts of tourism practices to the coastal ecosystems.”

OVERVIEW OF THE COAST PROJECT

The Collaborative Actions for Sustainable Tourism (COAST) Project was implemented over a five year period (January 2009 - June 2014) in nine sub-Saharan African countries (Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles and Tanzania). The project was developed with an aim of reducing the harmful impacts of tourism practices to the coastal ecosystems. It was a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Project with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the implementing agency and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as executing agency in partnership with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

CHALLENGES IN KARTONG

- Besides the tourism industry there are no other major employment opportunities and most of the skilled hotel positions go to qualified people from outside the area. This leads to increased pressure on natural resources;
- Insufficient resource management education programmes in place;
- Lack of enforcement of the physical development plans for the coast and lack of enforcement of environmental laws;
- Overexploitation of mangroves;
- Limited understanding and education of ecological systems and functions in the tourism sector and local community;
- Inadequate awareness on marine resource use best practices.

THE COAST PROJECT IN KARTONG

The main objective of the Eco-tourism project activities was to develop new and sustainable community based tourism activities and promote the development of SMEs in line with Eco-tourism development goals and create pro-poor tourism opportunities for the communities of Kartong. In 2014, the COAST Project in the Gambia received an additional contribution from the EUROPAMUNDO foundation through UNWTO of EUR 21 000. The funds are meant to continue activities and consolidate the results of the COAST Project.



ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT KEY FACTS

- Kartong has about 260 species of birds;
- Well preserved coastline.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- The coastline in The Gambia is highly vulnerable to continued sea level rise as a result of global climate change;
- 48% of the Gambian territory is covered by forest, however yearly average rate of deforestation is around 6%, according to UNESCO;
- Inexistence of waste management systems in the rural areas.

TOURISM

TOURISM KEY FACTS

- Accounts for some 16% of the Gambian GDP and over 30% of exports. Main source of foreign exchange earnings.

MAJOR TOURISM FEATURES

- Excessive reliance on package tour products;
- Limited number of source markets (around 50% of arrivals come from Britain only);
- Strong cultural and natural heritage sites;
- Strongly positioned in niche tourism segments (birdwatching).

KEY ACTIONS

- Organize specific trainings in environmental and tourism issues in order to improve the engagement of communities in the protection of the coastal biodiversity;
- Develop Tesito Camp (a local Eco-tourism facility) into a camping site with facilities like toilets, showers and proper waste disposal arrangements as well as to introduce activities such as Gambian cookery classes with the village women;
- Strengthen the KART Association through managerial trainings and through the provision of equipment and bikes for rental.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS: KEY LESSONS & RESULTS

COMMUNITY BASED SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

» A SHARED VISION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF KARTONG

A vision was consultatively agreed among the stakeholders:  
*‘Kartong to remain the best example of conservation of ecosystems, culture and tradition through sustainable and responsible management of Eco-tourism to enhance community livelihood by 2026’.*

The exercise of unifying this vision across all stakeholders helped to solidly ground the project implementation.

» NURTURING ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

20 waste bins were distributed in the important tourism sites and in the village of Kartong under the coordination of the Kartong Association of Responsible Tourism (KART). Thanks to these efforts, visible reduction of waste in Kartong has been achieved with new waste management routines in the population adopted.

» BIODIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

25 members of community based initiatives, tour operators, hotel managers, private sector and NGOs participated in a ‘Biodiversity champions’ training in Kartong. Resulting from this, participants are able to provide concrete examples to the rest of the community on how to conserve their environment, including income generation activities related to recycling.

» EMPOWERING LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

The COAST Project closely collaborated with the KART Association to ensure Kartong was on the map as a leading tourist destination in The Gambia and to achieve pollution reduction in the village.

Today, 9 lodges, 7 restaurants, 1 honey café and 3 souvenir shops have registered with KART to cooperate in providing tour guiding services. The KART Association has also engaged in actively collecting tourism records. In addition, a business plan has been developed to ensure tours in the village are done in a responsible and sustainable manner.

TOURISM EXPERIENCES WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

The COAST Project supported the development of Eco-tourism activities and new tourism quality products as envisioned in The Gambia’s Tourism Master Plan, that aims at extending tourism benefits to community stakeholders. Some of the new activities developed include the following:

» BIKE TOURS

The KART Association with the support of the COAST Project developed a new bike rental service. As a result, an amount of D 6 000 was received in the last high season (November 2013 - March 2014). A percentage of the collected money helps ensure maintenance of the equipment and the organization of Kartong’s reknown cultural festival.

» COOKING CLASSES AT TESITO CAMP

Tesito Camp is a community managed accommodation facility established in 2002 which currently employs four staff in Kartong. The COAST Project allocated funds for the refurbishment of the facility (toilets, kitchen and camping materials), and for the improvement of its marketing as an accommodation for birdwatchers and a place for the display of local cooking classes. In this regard, ten people from Kartong (five men and five women) were trained to organize cooking classes and gastronomical tours. The local company Yabouy Home Cooking provided this expertise.

» ARTS AND CRAFTS AT THE SANDELE ECO-RETREAT

A craft initiative was started in February 2012 to showcase Arts and Craft at the Sandele Eco Retreat ([www.sandele.com](http://www.sandele.com)). A number of trainings were carried out by the hotel to improve the quality of the crafts, and to ensure they are truly local and environmentally friendly. The COAST Project’s training in waste recycling helped the expansion of the designs with new techniques being used to generate better crafts.

» WALKS AND BIRDWATCHING IN THE COMMUNITY FOREST

With the collaboration of the NEA, the KART Association managed to leverage an extra USD 25 000 from GEF’s Small Grant Program for the creation of a 43 Ha community forest. The community forest includes a component of permaculture (14 hives). 9 000 Malaina trees and 300 indigenous trees were replanted to redensify this degraded forest area. Different Eco-tourism facilities were also installed, including three birdwatching platforms and three resting canopies with 14 locals being trained as volunteer forest guards.