

# Camtel shines the light on ICT development

Chinese funding and know-how has brought this local telco to the fore in Central Africa

With impressive, state-of-the-art infrastructure that guarantees a good quality, efficient telecommunications service in Cameroon, the country's fixed-line telephony operator, Camtel is delighted to have China on board as a partner as it continues to modernize and expand.

Having brought a number of important technologies to the country, including digital transmission, Internet, CDMA, and GSM, the dynamic company has gone from strength to strength since it was inaugurated in September 1998. Today, the ambitious company employs more than 2,600 people, 40 percent of whom are women.

General Manager David Nkoto Emame spoke to InFocus about the culture in Cameroon and his plans for the company.

"The oral culture is traditionally very strong and peculiar to Africa, which explains why the mobile penetration rate has been staggering, in relation to the Inter-



David Nkoto Emame,  
general manager of Camtel

have to tell you that if we had not established such cooperation, we would be in trouble. Together we have put in place a framework that we now follow. All the achievements of Camtel to date: the CTPhone, the national fiber-optic backbone, the Internet and so on, would have been impossible without cooperation with China.

panies, but also banks like Exim-bank. Camtel has found a reliable partner, and a strong ally in China.

## What have been your major projects during 2012?

This year, we started to upgrade the telecommunications network by laying optical fiber from the SAT-3 submarine cable. Work on this will continue until 2013. We want to link the whole national territory with the optical fiber.

The first phase was to lay 3,200 kilometers. Today Cameroon has 5,500 kilometers in total, managed entirely by Camtel for the benefit of all users.

We will continue the work this year beyond the urban areas, to allow all users to have better access, and play our role on behalf of the state of Cameroon which has complete confidence in us.

In addition, Cameroon is in the heart of Central Africa, so we want to make it a hub in the sub-region. We have expanded our fiber optics to Chad, for example, which,



PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Camtel is rolling out thousands of kilometers of fiber-optic cable to improve telecommunications.

rather everything else that is necessary to perform. We also have a lot of litigation, many land disputes. This greatly impacts the company's cash flow. The optical fiber project is estimated to cost around 100 billion CFA.

## How do you think cooperation with China has been a catalyst for the growth and development of Camtel?

Despite the difficulties, I can tell you again that without China, Camtel would not exist as it does today. We operate in a competitive environment alongside multinational companies that are developing strategies in various countries.

When they run a model, it has already been tested, so for them it's going extremely fast. Camtel does not have this strike power.

The real problem of Africa is infrastructure, and this is what we need to focus on. That's what we do at Camtel.

Cameroon now has 250,000 uni-

versity students, and when we see the infrastructures that host them, we say that we really need to do something.

We work on the digital university, on classroom sharing and on a project of equipping universities in computers.

Access to computers should be less expensive. In addition, Cameroon and Africa as a whole have a concern for content management. Even though you can access the web, there is no local content and no management policy of it.

This is another project for Camtel. We're working on it.

## China can help in reaching this goal because it can provide a lot of material at lower costs, making it a strategic partner. How do you think China can help you expand beyond the borders of Cameroon?

The ambition is for Cameroon to become the hub of Central Africa,

thanks to Camtel, and my Chinese friends know this very well.

China wants Cameroon to be the pilot country in Africa to test their 3G technology, which is very good technology.

They are good partners. With hard work and perseverance, we've managed to achieve great things together.

To quote our head of state, "It is not enough just to do well, you have to let people know."

We will therefore continue our efforts and promote the face of Cameroon as a stable country with a leader who nourishes a great destiny for his nation.

InFocus provided the story

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DAVID NKOTO EMAME  
GENERAL MANAGER, CAMTEL

net, for example, which is only just starting to get into the mindset," he said. "The latter is, however, a very promising area. In two years, the Internet has grown exponentially. On this component, Camtel is very present and intends to further reinforce its presence."

## How important is Chinese cooperation within your development strategy?

We have been working with Chinese companies since 2005 and I

China has been for us an essential collaboration to start a new beginning that bears fruit, and whose future is combined in terms of hope and greatness.

And I must say that for 20 years, the first credits that our country achieved with China were for Camtel. We were given 100 billion CFA (\$0.91 billion) for various projects that we are implementing now.

I myself go very regularly to China and have got to know all the Chinese telecommunications com-

panies, which is now connected to the world.

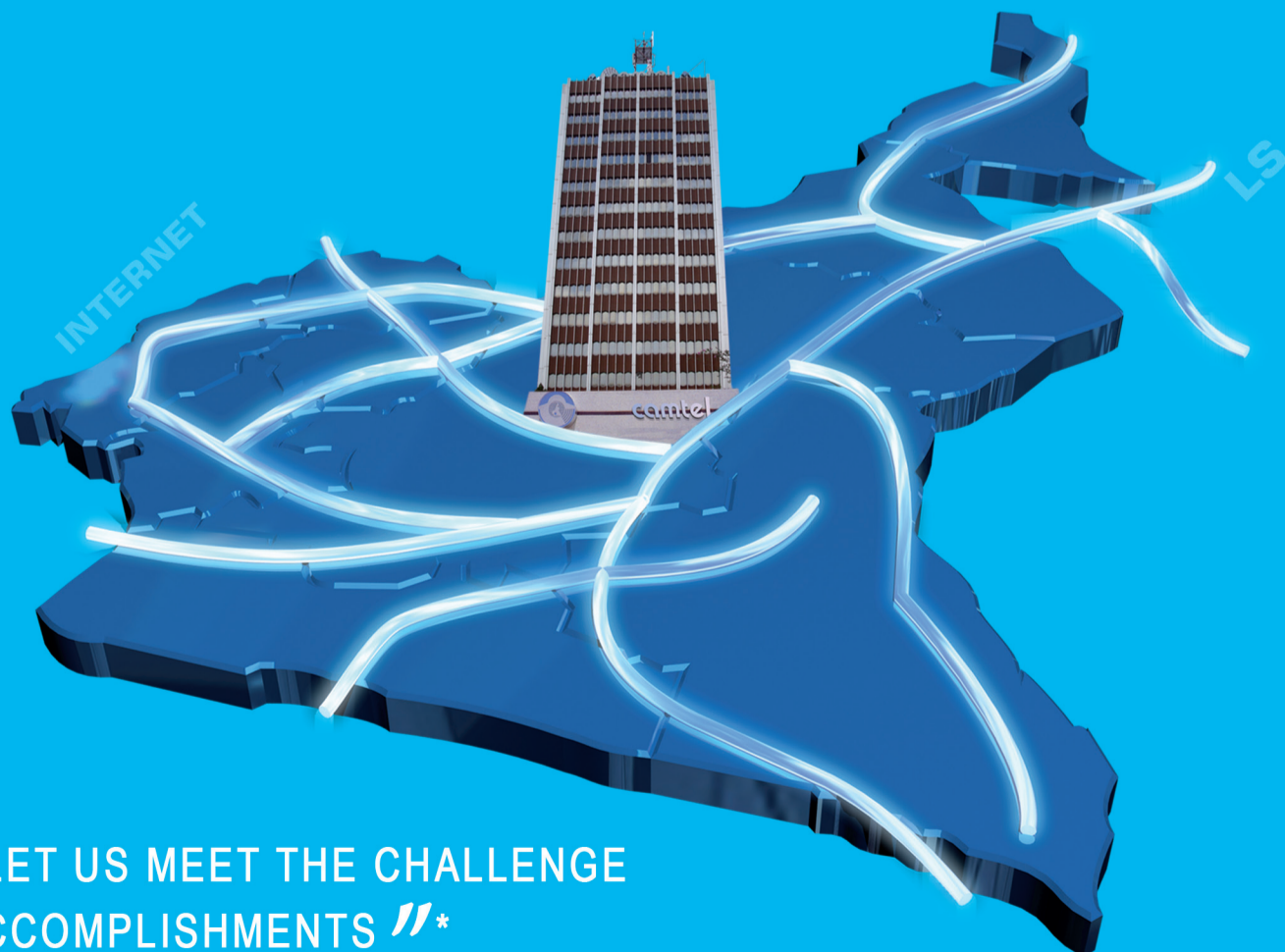
We will continue on this path with the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea, and are determined to have multiple digital entry points.

## What will you need to be able to achieve these high ambitions?

The hardest part is installing the infrastructure — installing the fiber is extremely expensive. It is not so much the meter of optical fibre, but

## NATIONAL FIBRE OPTIC NETWORK

"... The deployment of the OPTICAL FIBRE by CAMTEL, with the backing of a Chinese company, is now completed. The optical fibre backbone will provide broadband Internet and other related facilities, especially in the areas of information, education and research..."\*



http://www.camtel.cm

"TOGETHER, LET US MEET THE CHALLENGE OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS..."\*

\*His Excellency Paul BIYA, President of the Republic  
Maroua, October 2011 and the message to the nation on 25 October 2011

... AND THE BEST IS STILL TO COME !

