



# A participatory process for reducing conflicts over land in Senegal



## Key terms

**Land use plans** or POAS (*Plans d'Occupation et d'Affectation des Sols*): local conventions established by rural communities themselves, to manage activities on the land and the use of the relevant natural resources.

**Rural communities:** administrative units comprising several villages, formerly headed by a PCR (Président de Communauté Rurale) elected every 5 years; since 2014 these have become 'Rural Communes' headed by mayors.

**Watch committees** (*Observatoires*): committees responsible for monitoring, mediation and conflict prevention; members are drawn from Rural Communities.

**SODAGRI** – The Société de Développement Agricole et Industriel du Sénégal (SODAGRI): a corporation with majority public ownership under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture. SODAGRI has been managing the development of the Anambé basin since 1974.

## Main achievements and innovations

- POAS are an innovative tool for achieving sustainable management of natural resources and avoiding conflict between different users.
- GWI's participatory approach has enabled stakeholders to take

Rural communities in the Anambé river basin in Senegal have been helping to raise awareness of local land use planning processes (POAS) in their local areas. This approach has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of conflicts over land in the region, and could be replicated elsewhere.

The Anambé basin covers an area of 4,250 square miles in the Haute Casamance area of the Kolda region in southern Senegal. The Confluent dam, constructed in 1984 on the confluence of the Kayanga and the Anambé rivers, and the Niandouba dam, constructed in 1997, together have a capacity of 150 million cubic metres of water. Their construction was accompanied by the development of 5,000 hectares of irrigated agricultural land and five pumping stations.

The basin extends across seven rural communities in the Kolda region. The agricultural area is divided into six sectors, which are irrigated by the five pumping stations.

## Conflicts and disagreements between herders and farmers

Land development and the construction of the dams in the basin changed the nature of the area by creating a large irrigated farming capacity. But the design of the development failed to take the livestock sector properly into account, resulting in

(for example) a lack of sufficient grazing areas, livestock corridors and pastoral wells. This undermined social cohesion because of recurrent conflicts between farmers and herders over access to and control of natural resources.

To remedy this state of affairs, which was a threat to the achievement of the production goals of the irrigation scheme, in 2004 SODAGRI began to support the seven rural communities in the river basin in drawing up land use plans (POAS). However, rural councils did not raise awareness of these plans, and so they were not understood or applied by local people.

## Raising awareness of the POAS: 2012-2013

The Global Water Initiative (GWI) in West Africa has been working with SODAGRI in the Anambé basin and Confluent and Niandouba dam areas to support the rural communities of Kandiaye, Kandia, Saré Colly Sallé and Médina Chérif to raise awareness about their POAS.

ownership of the process, and so has contributed to making the results durable in the long term.

- The awareness-raising process is relatively low cost (US\$5,400 per rural community), and produces immediate results, including a decline in the number of conflicts over land.
- Reducing the incidence of conflicts allows local governments to devote less time to conflict resolution, and more to development in rural communities. Pastoralists and farmers are also able to invest in their systems of production with more confidence.

From May to September 2012 a number of information sessions were held with all the actors involved, followed by 12 community meetings to update the landholding maps, set up the watch committees, and train the committee members in the codes of conduct for the POAS. The watch committees then held 34 village meetings in the project area, and conducted information and awareness-raising programmes through broadcasts on the FM radio stations of Tewdou FM (Diaobé) and Bamtaré FM (Vélingara).

### Changes as a result of awareness-raising activities

After the awareness-raising activities, GWI and SODAGRI carried out a participatory stock-taking exercise with representatives of all the different actors in the rural communities of Kandia, Kandiyaye, Saré Colly Sallé and Médina Chérif. A series of important changes were documented.

Governmental and locally elected officials say that they are now much less frequently called upon to resolve conflicts linked to straying livestock, whereas in the past arbitrating and managing conflicts between herders and farmers took up a large part of their working time.

**Figure 1. Changes in numbers of herder-farmer conflicts linked to encroachment of fields in the period 2008-12**



*“GWI has opened our eyes, showing us that with limited resources, we can solve many problems”.*

**Alioune Bousso**  
President of Kandia rural community

In all four rural communities farmers are beginning to open up the livestock corridors which they were previously occupying illegally. The majority of herders are ensuring that animals are herded from the beginning of the rainy farming season. There is a general compliance by farmers with the prohibition on clearing land for farming within the grazing zones. In Saré Colly Sallé, the watch committees have been working to regulate seasonal livestock migration. They have established committees to welcome and allocate space for pastoralists migrating with the seasons (transhumants), based on the zoning system set up under the POAS. In the same community, fire breaks have been cut to prevent and limit bush fires.

In financial terms, Saré Colly Sallé and Kandia rural councils have received support from the Agence Régionale de Développement to draw up local conventions. Kandia rural community has included 500,000 FCFA (about US\$985) in its annual budget, for work to ensure the long term sustainability of the outcomes of the POAS process.

### Ensuring continuity

A number of challenges will have to be addressed by local organisations with the support of SODAGRI and other partners. The main ones are:

- Building up the organisational capacity of the watch committees through training on their roles and responsibilities.
- Achieving synergy between the committees of the different rural communities and joining them up with the state land commission
- Making provision for the functioning of the watch committees in commune budgets (financing of bicycles, meetings, radio programmes etc.)
- Extending awareness-raising about the POAS process to other areas of the Anambé basin.

**Modou Diouf**  
GWI Coordinator in Senegal

### GWI in West Africa

The Global Water Initiative (GWI) in West Africa is implemented by IIED and IUCN and is funded by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation as part of the global GWI. In West Africa we are working in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal on the theme of agricultural production linked to large dams and irrigated perimeters.

To find out more about our work in Senegal: [www.gwiwestafrica.org/en/countries/senegal](http://www.gwiwestafrica.org/en/countries/senegal)

