



# ECOTOURISM AS A MECHANISM TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE IN TUMANI TENDA, GAMBIA

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**ACTIVITY AREA:** ——— Adaptation

**FOCUS AREA:** ——— Delivering

**COUNTRY:** ——— The Gambia

## SECTORS

**INVOLVED:** ——— Cross-sectoral

**TIMEFRAME:** ——— 1997 - present

**CASE SUMMARY:** ——— Ecotourism as a practice involves the regeneration of the environment through annual tree planting (especially during the rainy season), the promotion of alternative tourism and biodiversity conservation (Drame and Kiema, 2016). It has become a common practice for the Tumaní Tenda community located in the west coast region of The Gambia since its creation in 1997. People in this area have adopted the ecotourism practice as a result of climate change, which has caused irregular rainfall for many years, leading inter alia to a decline in agricultural production, loss of vegetation and biodiversity (ibid.).

The ecotourism project activities include: annual tree planting, environmental monitoring to prevent systematic tree felling, hunting and bushfires, introduction of new plant and animal species, vegetable production and day-to-day management of the ecotourism camp. The main objectives of these activities are to: i) strengthen community resilience to climate change; and ii) improve food security and livelihoods for the people of Tumaní Tenda through the development of a sustainable economy that enables them to supplement the gains from agriculture.

Overall, the interventions were effective in strengthening community resilience, preserving and regenerating the environment, and strengthening social cohesion within the communities. The case constitutes a good practice as it is financially viable, replicable in similar contexts and provides sustainable development benefits.





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**BACKGROUND:** Climate change adversely impacts the state and development of The Gambia's natural resources. For example, an increase in flooding and salinity from sea level rise has led to a decrease in the productivity of mangrove ecosystems (Government of The Gambia, 2007). Since the late 1960s, the country has faced a continuous decline in rainfall as a result of climate change which has weighed heavily on the country's natural resources and ecosystems. The current evolution of the rainfall patterns is expected to continue over the coming decades, leaving the country significantly exposed to disasters such as floods and droughts (GEF, 2009).

The Gambia's rural populations are primarily dependent on agriculture, which makes them highly vulnerable to climate change. Apart from rainfall, agricultural productivity in The Gambia is low due to a number of other factors, including: a weak political environment, low levels of technology adoption, inadequate access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, low private sector investment, underdeveloped markets, poor infrastructure and insufficient energy supply (FAO, 2018).

The Gambia committed itself to the international effort to address climate change by signing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and ratifying it in 1994. Since the ratification, The Gambia has taken steps to address the challenges and effects of climate change by preparing, submitting and implementing its national communications, the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) and the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) (Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Forestry, Water and Wildlife, 2016). The country also signed the Paris Agreement in April 2016 and ratified it in November 2016.

Despite its historical and natural wealth, The Gambia's tourism potential is still relatively modest with around 150,000 visitors per year (BBC, 2017). Since 2009, The Gambia has been engaged in a process of harmonising climate change policies with other sectoral policies, including tourism through the promotion of ecotourism. The ambition was to implement integrated climate change adaptation policies by involving communities in the conservation and protection of protected areas and promoting ecotourism.

Aware of the need for the participation of local communities in natural resource management, The Gambian government has set up an initiative that integrates community participation in forest management and the construction of ecotourism camps. To this end, a new forest policy (1995-2005) and new forest legislation (1998) have been approved by the government. In 2013, about 111 communities managed about 14,416.83 ha of forest (Sonko, 2013). There is also a National Forest Fund and a Local Community Fund that have been established to finance forest management activities (Government of The Gambia, 1998). Similarly, the Gambia's Biodiversity Act of 2002 provides some additional financial resources for protected area management and community initiatives.

As a result of climate change, the community of Tumaní Tenda has experienced erratic rainfall for many years, leading to a decline in agricultural production, loss of vegetation and biodiversity, including birds and animals. All of these factors have led to a loss of income (Drame and Kiema, 2016). This situation has led actors in this area to initiate the practice of ecotourism. This has included direct community involvement in the protection of the region's natural resources through activities such as protecting the communal forest and establishing an ecotourism camp including modest accommodation, food services, extraction and sale of forest products owned and managed by the community. The activities in Tumaní Tenda are supported by various organisations, including the National Environment Agency (NEA), the Saint Joseph Family Farm project and the Ministry of Water and Forests (ibid).



Figure 1: Illustration of an ecotourism camp (Drame and Kiema, 2016)

**ACTIVITIES:** ————— A series of activities has been realised in the community of Tумани Tenda (Drame and Kiema, 2016), including the following:

- **ANNUAL TREE PLANTING:** Reforestation is carried out every year, especially during the rainy season, to help regenerate the environment. This practice has become necessary due to the continued low rainfall and resulting deforestation that exposes the community to severe storms and reduced livelihoods from items such as firewood, roofing and fencing materials. As a result, the community has become aware of the need for such a project, which will not only protect the environment, but also improve access to livelihoods.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING:** A village committee has been set up to monitor natural resource protection activities and prevent systematic felling of trees, hunting and bushfires.
- **SPECIES INTRODUCTION:** The introduction of new plant and animal species contributes to the conservation of threatened species and the restoration of agricultural land.
- **NATURAL RESOURCE ENTERPRISES:** Establishment of natural resource-based businesses managed by local communities.
- **CREATION AND MANAGEMENT OF AN ECOTOURISM CAMP:** A community owned and managed ecotourism camp has helped to strengthen social cohesion, particularly between young people and adults, who are now communicating in an improved manner.

In addition to these village level activities, the specific activities developed and conducted by the community for revenue generation from the actual tourist attendees include (see also Tумани Tenda website):

- **HISTORY AND CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS:** Presentation about the history and culture of the Jolla people (an ethnic group) in Senegal and The Gambia as well as demonstrations of traditional ceremonies such as the Naming Ceremony, Marriage Ceremony, and Initiation Ceremonies;
- **FISHING AND COOKING LESSON:** Demonstration of local fishing and oyster collection methods and locales as well as a demonstration of local cooking techniques and fare;



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- **FARMING AND HORTICULTURAL GARDEN TOURS:** Tour of subsistence farming operations in the community including farming methods, growing seasons, and crop varieties;
- **ENVIRONMENTAL TOURING:** Tour of the community forest, canoe tour of the Balong River, and birdwatching/wildlife expeditions including instruction on local plants and wildlife;
- **CRAFTSMANSHIP DEMONSTRATIONS:** Hands-on demonstrations and lessons for traditional salt making, soap making, and batik/tye-dye;
- **FAMILY AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCES:** Home visits with families in the community and demonstrations of local Jolla dancing and singing

### INSTITUTIONS

#### INVOLVED:

- **GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:** National Environment Agency (NEA), Ministry of Water and Forests, Ministry of Tourism, Department of Community Development
- **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS:** Enda Energy in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) as part of the C3D+ program (Capacity Development for Adaptation to Climate Change and GHG Mitigation)
- **INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:** European Commission, Austrian Development Cooperation
- **OTHER INSTITUTIONS:** The NGO 'family farm' of Saint Joseph

#### COOPERATION WITH:

Association of small businesses working in tourism, development support NGOs, bilateral development partners

#### FINANCE:

An exact amount of finance for the development of the ecotourism practice in Tuman Tenda is currently not available. However, it has been estimated that 100'000.00 Dalasi (around USD 2000; Conversion rate: USD 1= 49.60 Dalasi) are necessary to develop one hectare of territory ready to be used for ecotourism.

#### IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES:

- **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE:** The aforementioned activities have led to improved resilience of Tuman Tenda through increased income, enhanced food security and improved livelihoods. Specifically, the vegetable garden products are sold and consumed locally, and income from the ecotourism camp and the sale of forest products is reinvested to support and meet emerging community needs. The implemented activities have also created local jobs and provided income opportunities for the community. It is estimated that around 3000 people have benefitted from the various activities implemented (Drame and Kiema, 2016).
- **PRESERVATION AND REGENERATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT:** Ecotourism has helped to restore mangrove stands that had seriously suffered from climate change-induced degradation. Similarly, abandoned land has been restored.
- **STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION:** Ecotourism has strengthened social cohesion within the community through representation of all social categories and more particularly, because of shared community benefits. While the ecotourism practice has been initiated primarily by the younger (female and male) members of the community, all sections of the community benefit from its activities.

## WHY IS IT GOOD

- PRACTICE:** —————
- **FINANCIAL VIABILITY:** The project managed to establish new income streams from the extraction and sale of forest products to help support the long-term economic viability and sustainability of the ecotourism camp. Further, two separate savings accounts were opened by the community - one for the camp and one for the Village Development Committee. Therefore, the ecotourism approach has proved to be financially sustainable as the community members can generate their own financial benefits in the longer term.
  - **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS:** Regular tree planting and prevention of bushfires and other activities that deplete available natural resources help to ensure environmental sustainability and contribute to the protection of the ecosystem and biodiversity. This has been evidenced through the return of vegetation cover and native species such as elephants.
  - **REPLICABILITY:** The initiative has already been replicated in other communities such as Brefet, Kartong, Limbambulu and Guinea-Bissau, showing that the ecotourism has great potential to be transferred to other contexts. Notably, certain conditions need to be considered in that regard - for example the social relations on the ground or the availability of land for different businesses (Dame and Kiema, 2016).

- SUCCESS FACTORS:** —————
- **STRONG MOBILISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND APPROPRIATION OF THE PRACTICE:** Young people are the main actors and beneficiaries of ecotourism. The principal activities undertaken - management of the ecotourism camp and the sale of forest products - have created jobs and significantly reduced the rural exodus of young people.
  - **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:** A strong consensus among the various stakeholders existed with regards to establishing the ecotourism practice, which facilitated their continued presence and engagement. Due to its strategic nature, the practice has attracted but also benefited from the support of stakeholders such as producers and workers in agroforestry, local authorities, the departmental community, technical services and development partners.
  - **IMPLEMENTATION OF MODERN ENDOGENOUS TECHNOLOGY:** Faced with food insecurity, soil erosion, reduced rainfall and shorter rainy seasons, people are implementing non-traditional 'endogenous technologies' that are alternative practices for securing their livelihoods and addressing climate change (Seck, 2007). Communities are thus developing alternative techniques and adopting organisation, management and self-monitoring mechanisms for the use of natural resources. In this sense, ecotourism is a practice, initiated by the communities themselves (main beneficiaries), that makes it possible to overcome the challenges of deteriorating vegetation cover, lack of pastureland, water shortages and more generally a lack of sustainable land management.



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### OVERCOMING BARRIERS / CHALLENGES:

#### WHAT WERE THE MAIN BARRIERS / CHALLENGES TO DELIVERY?

##### **SOCIO-CULTURAL:**

There is a lack of cooperation at the local level, which limits the financial resources needed to develop income-generating activities. For example, women who sell traditional fabrics to visitors in the tourist camp are sometimes forced to stop their activities due to a lack of financial support.

##### **TECHNOLOGICAL:**

Scientists and decision-makers have shown a lack of sensitivity and recognition for the importance of the transfer of endogenous technologies that are part of the practice of ecotourism. Practices and technologies derived from local and endogenous knowledge (inherited from grandparents and transmitted from generation to generation) are sometimes insufficiently taken into account by scientists while they contribute to the protection of the ecosystem and to the better management of natural resources (water, soil, biodiversity).

#### HOW WERE THESE BARRIERS / CHALLENGES OVERCOME?

The establishment and signing of inter-village agreements has made possible to set up the 'Tumani Tenda Village Development Fund', financed by local partners and visitors to the ecotourism camp, and thus to mobilise resources to support the development of community projects.

The initiative to document and scale up endogenous technologies was placed on the researchers' agenda. The scaling up was done through broad communication and mobilisation for the involvement of decision-makers and the appropriate populations.

### LESSONS LEARNED:

- **PROVIDE CONCRETE AND SHORT-TERM BENEFITS FROM ECOTOURISM TO COMMUNITIES TO GET THEM ON BOARD:** Environmental investments generally produce results over a longer time period. For example, reforestation takes several years to produce tangible results. Therefore, it is important that interventions such as ecotourism provide more immediate results (e.g. by generating income) for the community to convince them of the approach and thereby ensure that the longer-term environmental benefits can be realised.

### HOW TO REPLICATE

**THIS PRACTICE:** To enable a replication of the ecotourism practice, it is necessary to:

- **ORGANISE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE VISITS:** This is essential in order to facilitate information sharing and development of best practices.
- **IDENTIFY AN AVAILABLE AREA FOR ESTABLISHING AN ECOTOURISM SITE:** This decision should be based on key environmental and community criteria, e.g. whether the area actually provides the necessary environmental resources to develop ecotourism as a practice.

- **ENSURE CONTINUOUS CONSULTATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP:** These get-togethers can be crucial to identify key focal persons for resource management and ensure buy-in and awareness of all stakeholders involved and affected.
- **INVOLVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES:** This step is necessary in order to anticipate potential issues concerning land management and other concerns.
- **PROVIDE A MINIMUM LEVEL OF SUPPORT RESOURCES:** These resources inter alia entail internet connection and agricultural equipment.
- **ORGANISE ACTORS INTO GROUPS,** as a means of strengthening cooperation, coordination and resource mobilisation.
- **COMMUNICATE AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE PROJECT:** Particularly useful for communicating the essential components as well as the benefits of the ecotourism practice is the community radio, which remains the primary conduit for information sharing in rural areas.

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**FURTHER KEY RESOURCES:**

- Drame, A., Kiema, A. (2016). Connaissances endogènes : les bonnes pratiques d'atténuation et d'adaptation aux changements climatiques en Afrique de l'ouest (Endogenous Knowledge: Good Practices for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in West Africa). Available at: <http://test.endaenergie.org/wp1/wp-content/uploads/Connaissances-Endogenes.pdf>

**WEBSITES:**

- Website of Tumani Tenda 's Ecotourism Camp: [www.tumanitenda.co.uk/](http://www.tumanitenda.co.uk/)

**CASE STUDY**

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**CASE STUDY**

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