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Forestry Local Management as a Strategy for Poverty Alleviation in Senegal

This research project will document and analyze the role forest products play in rural livelihoods in Senegal. Further, the project will evaluate how the decentralization of forest management has affected the fate of the forests and the local use and income from them. I will explore the extent to which local management based on traditional knowledge and practices in Senegal can contribute to cost-effective management of semi-arid lands and forests in ways that benefit local people.

The PEN survey will provide socioeconomic background data necessary to evaluate the outcomes of the recent adoption of more decentralized and participatory forms of natural resource managements in various parts of Senegal. Qualitative data collection on decentralization will improve our understanding further, for example, whether the adoption of participatory systems is necessary for the rural population to apply its ecological understanding and take advantage of economic opportunities while holding onto valuable cultural tenets.

The project's main hypothesis is that local management based on traditional knowledge can be effective in terms of forest preservation and development. A key aspect of decentralization is the devolution of authority over these forests to local communities and the harnessing of local knowledge and institutional forms in forestry management. To what extent have these been done? What have been the effects of these changes on local populations lives and forests?

To answer these questions related on the effects and nature of decentralization, I will have a temporal comparative perspective by looking at secondary data on what existed before decentralization happened. Since 1996, the Senegalese government has increased authority to elected rural council to plan and oversee natural resources management. A range of literature on forest management has been produced since colonial period. I will also make spatial variation, comparing two (2) different levels of local population implication to manage forest. Research will be hold then in two areas: the *Keur Samba*

Dia palm forest, an area of 752 hectares in western Senegal, and *Sambande* Forest, an area of 1050 ha in western Senegal. While in *Keur Samba Dia* forest, forest management is under State forest service authority with the possibility of a participatory management with local communities, in the *Sambande* forest, the village members have all authority on forest management (protection and use).

Keur Samba Dia is located in Fatick Region, one of the poorest in Senegal, where the poverty rate reaches 46,3% (PSPR, 2003). It was classified as a Biosphere reserve in 1979. Long spells of dry weather since the 1970s, demographic pressures and soil salinization forced people to clear parts of the forests, thus threatening the protected forest. Of particular importance to researchers is the predominance of borassus palms that grow within it, and its economical and cultural values for the local population. Intergovernmental programs and village-centered volunteer efforts have played roles in protecting and restoring the forest. So I am particularly interested in gathering empirical evidence on the extent and nature of the role played by local institutions in the forest management, and their partnerships with the state forest service.

The second study area is situated in Kaolack where poverty is estimated at 45,5 %. Six years ago, the rural council and the 10 villages members around the forest agree to put the *Sambande* community forest under protection. Internal rules (bylaws) and a management plan have been established, and a local governing board implemented. Through this research, information will be collected on what has resulted from these arrangements in *Sambande* Forest, and how they have influenced the poorest parts of the population.