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# TREES FOR THE FUTURE, SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA



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Naturefriends International

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## PROJECT CONCEPT

Like all countries of the Sahel zone, Senegal and The Gambia are subject to the dramatic consequences of climate change, too. Precipitation, which is low already, will continue to decrease due to man-made global warming. What is more, clearings to produce firewood and gain farmland and grazing land cause forests and the tree population to decrease. Both together lead to a massive change for the worse of soil and thus to the destruction of the population's livelihood, to poverty and emigration.

Women are particularly affected by desertification, as they play a key role in rural areas due to their diverse tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and in the household and family. Nevertheless, women rarely have ownership rights to land, soil, trees, or water, and often have only limited say and decision-making powers.



In the Sahel zone, reforestation projects have led to an improvement of the situation in many places. For the population, this means more income and better nutrition, for the environment, stabilisation of water resources and conservation of soils, as well as reduced vulnerability to climate change. Nevertheless, there was still an acute need for action. Local initiatives with the participation of the population could make an important contribution here.

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## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project aimed to counteract ecological degradation by planting trees in the border region of Senegal and Gambia and to contribute to an improvement of the livelihood of the population.

Through the participation of the population, the planting of trees in private areas and school gardens and through fencing, it was to be ensured that the trees were maintained and cared for in the long term.

The planting of fruit trees was intended to create additional benefits for the population in that the fruit can be used for their own consumption and/or marketed.

In addition, the project intended to contribute to the formation of awareness of the added value of sustainable land use and to impart knowledge about the importance of tree planting as a measure against desertification, but also as a source of valuable food and additional income.

In this way, people were empowered to actively participate in improving the ecological situation themselves.

Furthermore, the activities were also intended to strengthen the role of women in the village community and within families.





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## ACTIVITIES

The project implementation targeted the following activities:

- Raising awareness among the population in the border region Senegal/Gambia regarding the consequences of desertification and the role of sustainable land use;
- Safeguarding and maintenance of the tree population planted in the context of the project by the population and thus contributing to combating desertification;
- Improving the quality of life of the population;
- Strengthening the role of women, e.g., through capacity building in the field of forest management.



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## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project "Trees for the future" was implemented by Naturefriends Senegal in close cooperation with Naturefriends Gambia and regional stakeholders.

The initiative included the following activities:

### Start a dialogue with the local population

At the beginning of the project, the Naturefriends Senegal and Gambia project team visited the selected villages and started a dialogue with the local population. The focus was on the active participation of the local people, who were also offered the opportunity to take part in decision-making processes relevant to the project, such as the selection of the specific locations for the plantations.

In order to enable the population to take responsibility for the project, a mix of educational activities (lectures, personal talks with the families, installation of information boards) was used to impart basic knowledge about the causes and consequences of desertification, about the ecological relevance of the trees and about the possibilities of sustainable use, but also relevant technical knowledge, e.g. about the grafting of fruit trees and the role of soil conditions for tree growth.

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## Planting of a total of 2,000 fruit trees

The tree plantings were planned in villages in the border region Senegal/Gambia. The population of the villages was invited to participate in the selection of the locations as well as in the tree plantations themselves. Tree planting in the area of the schools was done together with the pupils.





## Capacity building workshop for women

In addition to the local activities, a three-day workshop was organised in the region, to which a total of 20 women from the region were invited.

The content of the workshop was the general role of women, their tasks in agriculture, household and family and the added value that tree planting brings, especially for the situation of women.

In addition, information was provided on the possibilities of using and processing fruit, and strategies for the sustainable preservation of the trees and for marketing the fruit will be developed together with the women.

The workshop also provided an opportunity for exchange between the participants from the different villages, encourage reflection on the course of the project from the women's point of view, and provide an opportunity for the women to exchange ideas and experiences.



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## MONITORING & EVALUATION

In early 2018, 2,000 fruit trees have been planted in four villages in the region spanning from Kounghoul (Senegal) to Janjanbureh (The Gambia). The trees have been handed over into the care of the local population and protected from grazing animals. An international Naturefriends tour group visited some of the sites in early 2022 and confirmed that the trees are thriving and already bearing fruit.

### Continuous support, training, and participation of the population

After the planting, the project team visited the villages regularly, check the condition of the trees and support the population in the necessary maintenance measures. After one year, it was planned to replant dead trees.

The project team could also be contacted by the population at any time between the visits. Each village community was asked to select a volunteer contact person who will be available as a contact person for the population and for the project team during the project.

### Presentation of the project as good practice

In the future, the region is to be visited by European Naturefriends' groups in the framework of Naturefriends' trips. This will give the local population the opportunity to present their projects to an interested audience. The travellers will gain an insight into the positive effects of partnership projects and the implementation of measures against desertification and climate change. The aim is to facilitate an exchange between the population and the travellers, to give the population an appreciation of the travellers' activities and to raise the travellers' awareness of the consequences of climate change and of climate justice.

In addition to the trips, Naturefriends International will provide information about the project through its media (newsletter, website, social media) as well as in the context of expert meetings and conferences.

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## SUSTAINABILITY

The communication of the necessary basics and the participation of the population in the project were intended to achieve the highest possible identification with the project idea and the project goals and thus ensure active support for the project (and thus also for the tree plantations).

The empowerment of women in the local communities played a special role in the project. The women-specific activities were intended to strengthen the self-confidence and the role of women in the village community and in the families in the long term. Through the participation of schools, important multipliers are gained in the form of pupils who share the knowledge about the added value of tree plantations for the families and the village community with their families.

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*When trees are planted in Africa, it benefits not only Africa but also Europe. Let us plant for our planet and for a good future for all people!*

*MAMADOU MBODJI, Project Coordinator  
Naturefriends Senegal, President of  
Naturefriends Africa network and Vice President  
NFI*

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