

Assessment of stakeholders' perceptions and expectations regarding alternative livelihoods in support of sustainable mangrove management in Senegal

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Mangroves in the region of Sine-Saloum Delta (Senegal) provide people with a range of ecosystem services (e.g. habitat for fish, timber & non-timber forest products) that are the basis of the livelihoods of many people in Sokone and surrounding villages. Despite their importance, these mangroves are experiencing different threats mainly due to overexploitation and unsustainable use by the local population living within and around this ecosystem along with global forces such as climate change. Measures have been taken by the government of Senegal in partnership with different other stakeholders to ensure that mangroves of the region are conserved and sustainably exploited. Among the measures adopted is the elaboration of a sustainable management plan for mangroves. The plan will aim at reducing the high dependence and overexploitation which are threatening mangrove resources whilst providing for communities with income-generating activities resulting in improved livelihoods.

The aim of this ongoing research is to probe strategies for sustainable mangrove management that respond to the expectations of all stakeholders in Sokone. Specifically, the research will identify potential alternative sources of income to improve the livelihoods of local communities living around the mangroves of Sokone and assess possible differences between villages in their preferences regarding these alternative sources.

Data were collected using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). The NGT method is a suitable tool in problem-solving by generating solutions and priorities for actions. Eleven sessions of NGT were conducted to identify potential alternatives and expectations of local communities. The NGT process involved an individual reflection about the nominal question followed by group discussion & clarification of ideas, and concluded with individual voting and ranking resulting in prioritized ideas. The NGT as a participatory method promoted participation and inclusion of all participants through the above listed steps whereby ideas from each participant were recorded and considered in the voting thus reducing the domination of influential people. Its use provided with opportunities to explore various viewpoints and stakeholder preferences concerning alternatives to the current exploitation of mangrove resources.

Preliminary findings that will be presented include the use of mangrove resources by communities living in Sokone and surrounding villages. Prioritized income-generating activities collected in NGT sessions will also be presented.

Keywords: mangrove; sustainable mangrove management; Nominal Group Technique; Sine-Saloum Delta