

## Overcoming Invasive Species in the Senegal River: Building Partnerships to Mobilize Resources

**SGP Grantee:** Diapanté Development Association

**Location:** Senegal River delta, Senegal

**Ecosystem Type:** freshwater river and wetlands

**Biodiversity Significance:** UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ramsar wetland site

**Key Themes:** invasive species, protected areas, revolving funds

**SGP Contribution:** \$50,000 (October 2000) and \$50,000 (January 2002)

### Background

In the past decade, major parts of the Senegal River have been overwhelmed by invasive aquatic plant species, such as *salvina molesta*, creating serious disruption to the river ecosystem and preventing the normal use of the river for fishing and transportation. The presence of dams on the river and the resulting standing water appear to have caused the spread of the invasive species. The river flows through areas of high biological significance, including the Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary, home to an estimated 1.5 million birds, which is a World Heritage Site and a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention.

### Project Implementation

Beginning 2000, the GEF Small Grants Programme in Senegal has supported Association Diapanté, a local NGO to address the problem. Diapanté has worked closely with another local group, the Civil-Military Committee to Support Development (CCMAD), to carry out this project. Diapanté has taken responsibility for administrative management, including fundraising, distributing information, and raising awareness, while CCMAD has undertaken execution of the project activities, including organizing teams of volunteers to actually go out on the river to pull out the invasive plants and protect them from future invasions. Together, the two NGOs have formed a committee to oversee the project, in which local community leaders also participate. To formalize this, some local village chiefs have signed agreements with the project's management committee to support the clean up efforts. Diapanté has also established a small revolving fund to finance micro-projects led by local communities. For example, the women of Médina Maka, a village near the bird sanctuary, have been strong participants in efforts to remove the invasive species. Through its revolving fund, Diapanté has supported their efforts to establish livelihood activities, such as agroforestry and producing incense.

### Results and Partnerships

The efforts in Senegal have yielded impressive results. Over 27,000 square meters have been cleaned in more than 90 sites along the river; the product of 6,262 people-days of work. Diapanté has received fourteen requests for micro-project funding and has provided funds to eight of them.

The strong partnerships developed by Diapanté have contributed significantly to their success so far. By coordinating with CCMAD, Diapanté has access to boats and other military equipment, and to volunteers from around the country. By working with local communities and funding associated livelihood activities, the NGO has helped ensure that communities can sustain their efforts to protect the river and prevent the return of the invasive species. Diapanté has submitted a proposal for a medium-sized GEF grant to support efforts in the Guiers Lake area, which has been highly impacted by the invasive species, to integrate natural resource protection into development efforts. In addition, SGP's program in Mauritania, which is on the other side of the Senegal River, has recently funded another project to address the invasive species problem. Coordination across the two countries could further expand efforts to make the river clean and usable, and to remove threats to the critical biodiversity found within this river delta.

