



# Small Grants Fund project for the protection of the Inner Niger Delta completed

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Mali

The Inner Niger Delta is a complex and unique area characterized by different natural wetland types such as rivers, lakes, marshes and flood plains located in the centre of Mali. It is extremely rich in biodiversity and constitutes an important source of livelihood for nearly one million people.

Due to its rich natural resources, the Inner Niger Delta is constantly exposed to intensive exploitation for fishing, cattle farming, grazing, agriculture, cutting of trees and hunting. Despite its designation in 2004 as a Ramsar Site, its resources are not being used wisely. The lack of water resources in the Sahel, the ignorance of the benefits and values of wetlands and the degradation of the riverbanks are putting lots of pressure on the delta and its resources.

The Small Grant Fund project SGF/ML/2009 *Sauvons le delta intérieur du fleuve Niger* was approved in 2009 to mitigate the impact of human activities on the site and to devise a solution in consultation with local communities.

In total, more than 30 meetings targeting 170 villages from the Mopti, Djenné and Tenenkou Cercles, or districts, were organized to raise awareness among the local communities.



Workshops were organized to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining the Inner Niger River Delta and using its resources wisely.

Local radio stations and networks of the "Groupe de recherches et d'application techniques" (GRAT) broadcasted wise use and conservation messages underlying causes and consequences of the degradation of the Delta. The messages were developed in various languages including Peulh, Bozo, Bamanan, Sonrhai, and French.

Some 5,000 native trees were also planted to protect the severely affected banks. These included tamarind, baobab, mahogany, locust bean tree (*Parkia biglobosa*), and members of the *Spondias* genus from the cashew family. About 10 hectares of the site were reforested and fenced to ensure the protection of the young plants.



Reforestation project in Narawal in Ouré Guiré, Tenenkou district.

To ensure the sustainability of the project, 10 brigade units each composed of 20 members of the local community were trained and equipped to monitor the progress of the conservation efforts.

This project and two previous projects launched in 2002 (*Technical assistance to implement the Convention*) and 2007 (*Preparation and implementation of the National Ramsar Committee Action Plan*) and funded through the Swiss Grant for Africa served as the basis for a new ten year programme funded by Sweden (Programme de développement durable du delta intérieur du Niger, PDD-DIN) aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of rural farmers in the region.

*The Ramsar Small Grants Fund is intended to assist developing countries and those with economies in transition in implementing the Convention and to support the conservation and wise use of wetland resources, with a strong human and social dimension.*

*Report summary by Dédé Amah, Ramsar Assistant Advisor for Africa*

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