



SUCCESS STORY

Putting Rural Senegal on the Maps

Cartography empowers communities to manage their natural resources



Photo: USAID/Senegal/Aaron Brownell

Jacques Sarr, chief of the Department of Water and Forests' Office of Inventory and Mapping in Tambacounda, prints out maps that have become key tools in local natural resource management.

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When the rural community of Koulor tried to establish a new village and harvest trees in an area that another community, Kothiary, contended was under its jurisdiction, it was the beginning of a contentious dispute. To resolve it, Kothiary raised the issue with the courts and turned to the Department of Water and Forests for assistance.

Previously, the department lacked the means to address these types of resource disputes. However, with the support of USAID, the department, through its Offices of Inventory and Mapping (OIM), now has the capacity to analyze geospatial situations. The OIM was able to effectively resolve the conflict by providing Kothiary with the definitive coordinates and jurisdiction of the disputed area.

“Seeing something once is better than hearing about it a thousand times,” said Jacques Sarr, the OIM’s chief. The OIM “can show the realities of the land,” said Baba Ba, a regional inspector for the department.

A USAID-funded program trained the OIM team in mapping and taking inventory of the land. Now, people have the tools to directly and sustainably manage their natural resources.

Mapping technologies are empowering communities to take charge of their natural resources. In addition to resolving disputes, the tools enable communities to establish and mark the boundaries of community forests and inventory the vegetation and natural resources in their jurisdictions.

The community of Kothiary is only one of many clients seeking the services of the OIM. Although the primary purpose of the office was to provide tools to help manage forests and other natural resources, others are benefiting from the OIM, including tourism associations, researchers, conservationists, local government, the police, and the military. Demand for cartography is so high that the four regional offices that USAID supports produced 147 maps in 2007 on a pay-for-service basis. The income generated from these efforts will ensure that the office remains sustainable.