

**TENURE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
IN THE GAMBIA:**

A CASE STUDY OF THE SANDU DISTRICT

by

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FIGURE 1: MAP OF THE GAMBIA

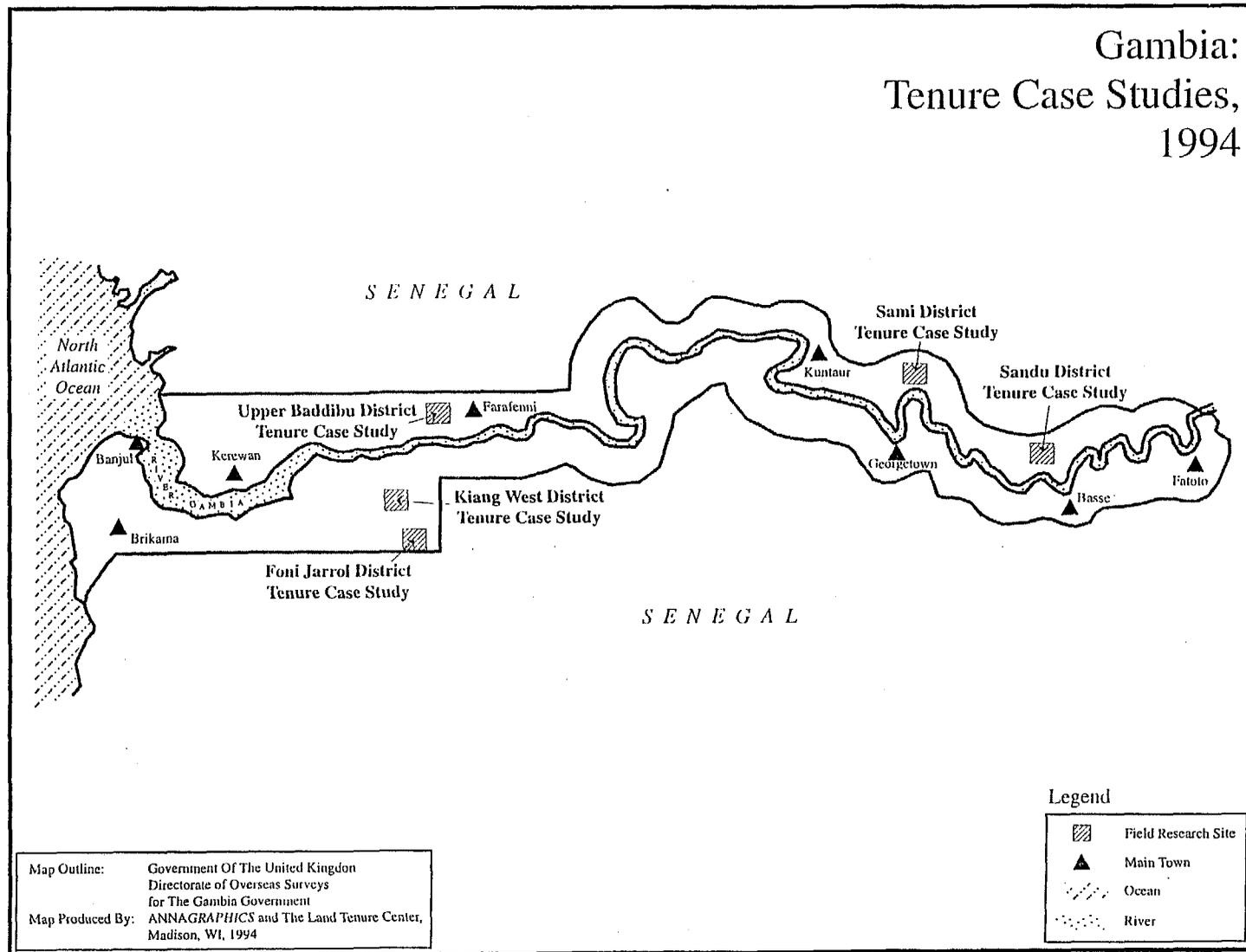
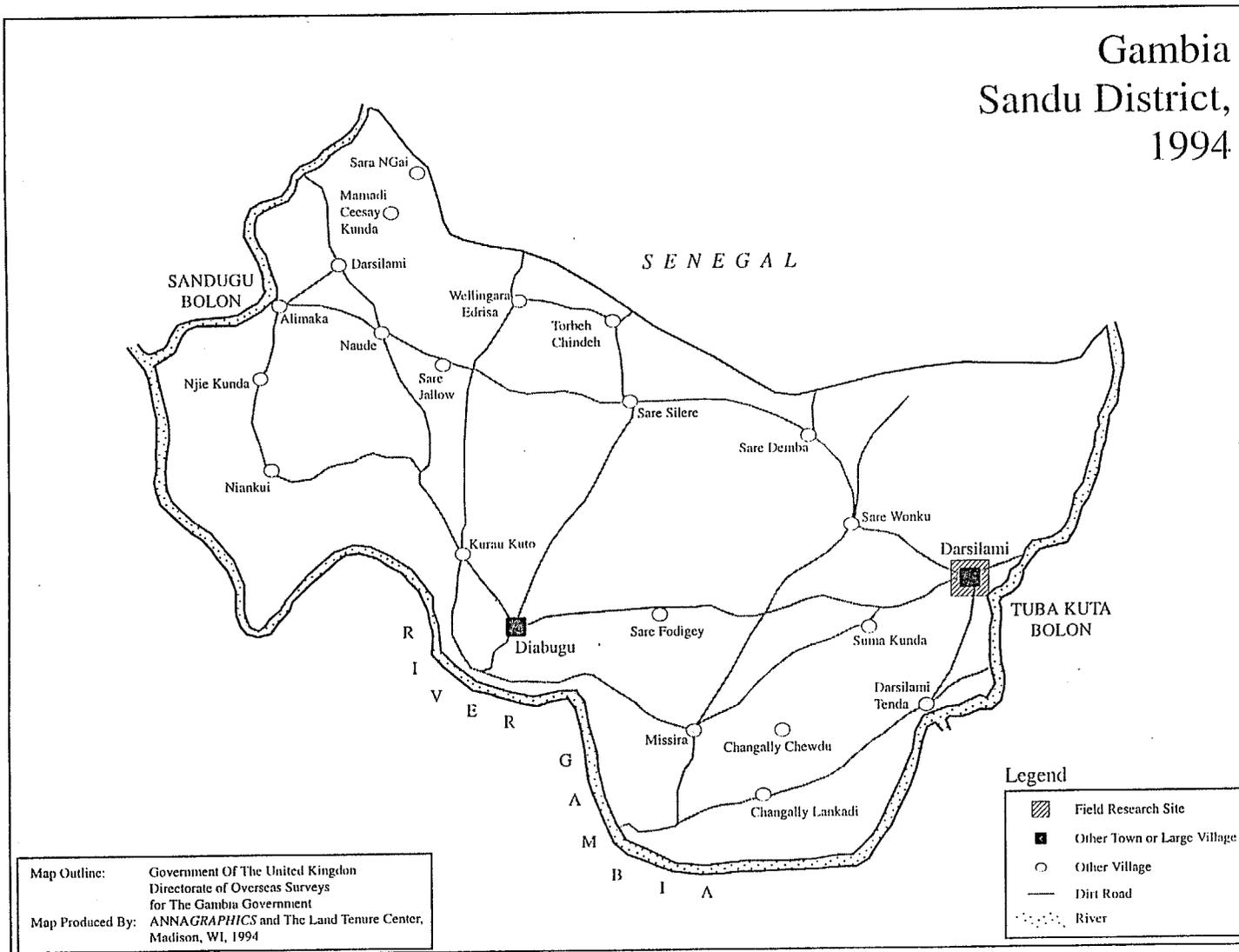


FIGURE 2: MAP OF SANDU DISTRICT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY

This report presents a case study of natural resource management practices in the village of Darsilami located in Sandu District, Upper River Division, The Gambia. The case study was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development-The Gambia (USAID) under the Agricultural and Natural Resource (ANR) Program and implemented by the Land Tenure Center (LTC) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the inter-ministerial Working Group on Resource Tenure and Land Use Planning of the Government of The Gambia. The purpose of this case study and others¹ developed under the auspices of USAID, LTC and the Working Group is to provide policy makers with detailed information on rural natural resource tenure arrangements so that a national debate on land and resource policy options can take into account local realities in The Gambia.

There already is a growing debate among Gambian policy makers on issues relating to land and resource tenure. The Gambia's "Environmental Action Plan: 1992-2001" highlights the need for public participation in the implementation of environmental policies. However, as the Action Plan notes, few environmental policies facilitate this needed public participation. The Plan suggests improving environmental legislation in order to increase public participation in environmental programs. To do so, the Action Plans calls for a study of the relation between property rights and natural resource management so that the government could perhaps begin to share management of land and resources with local communities and individuals.² In addition, policy makers have revised the land laws of The Gambia. For example, the State Lands Act of 1990 is intended to introduce a system of leasehold: the Government of The Gambia (GOTG) designates an area as State land thereby vesting ownership of this designated area in the hands of the State. Individuals or families holding customary rights to land located in these designated areas take out leases from the State. The purposes of the Act are to

¹ Three additional case studies were conducted in Karantaba Villages, Sami District; Maka Farrafenni Village, Upper Baddibu District; and Dumbutu Village, Kiang West District. Readers are also referred to an earlier study conducted by the Land Tenure Center, "Institutions and Natural Resource Management in The Gambia: A Case Study of the Foni Jarrol District."

² Government of The Gambia. The Gambia Environmental Action Plan: 1992-2001. Vol. I. May 7, 1992. p. 41

create greater security of tenure intended to encourage investment in land and agricultural pursuits, to facilitate access to credit and bank loans and to provide greater land and environmental regulatory powers to the State. However, the pace of implementation of this Act is presently being debated. Policy makers are asking questions such as: where are the priority areas for designation of State lands? How are government agents and citizens to determine which rights are to be listed on leases—are ownership rights to land parcels only to be listed or are usufructory and owners rights to trees, grazing tracts and wells (which overlap land rights) also to be included on land leases? What level of tenure security do customary tenure systems provide? Is a leasehold system needed for the rural areas of The Gambia? Gambian women policy makers are particularly concerned with how the new land laws will affect women's rights to resources. They are highlighting also the need for environmental legislation which will recognize the role women farmers play in Gambian agricultural systems.

USAID/The Gambia, through the implementation of the ANR Program, is trying to respond to the recommendations of the Environmental Action Plan, the questions posed by policy makers since the passage of the new land acts, and the concerns of Gambian women policy makers. One of the main purposes of the ANR Program is to promote institutional and policy reforms. It is intended that these reforms will create the legislative framework to which local communities can turn in order to assume greater management control of, and to gain greater financial benefit from, the resources in their regions.

Given this policy agenda, this research initiative is to generate more information on the links between property rights and resource management, to begin to answer some of the questions on the adequacy of customary tenure regimes, to examine women's rights to resources and to recommend measures for achieving government and community cooperation in the management of natural resources.³

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The specific questions that this case study seeks to answer are:

- o What are the tenure rules resource users construct to regulate the use of natural resources in their territory?
- o What are the tenure rules district and divisional authorities, as agents of the Government of The Gambia, construct to regulate the use of natural resources in Sandu District?

³ Mark Freudenberger. Research Proposal: Tenure and Natural Resources in The Gambia. February 1, 1993. Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

- o What are the tenure constraints on and the opportunities for sustainable management of natural resources?
- o What village, district and/or divisional institutions play key roles in the management of natural resources and the resolution of resource-related disputes?
- o What are the concerns and policy recommendations of village residents and district authorities?

To explore answers to these research questions the research team used various Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques during its two weeks living and working in the village of Darsilami. The research team was composed of nine members representing the Ministries of Local Government and Lands, Natural Resources and the Environment, Arts, Culture and Tourism; the Ministry of Justice; the Women's Bureau; The Gambia Women's Finance Corporation (a private banking NGO); and, Radio Gambia.

C. THE CASE STUDY SITE

Darsilami is composed of two different ethnic groups: Mandinka and Serahuli. Oral settlement histories revealed that the Mandinka community members descend from some of the original founders of Darsilami. Serahuli residents came to settle only recently (1930) in Darsilami. As the research team came to realize, the specific time of settlement dictated the physical and administrative boundaries of the village of Darsilami. On any map of The Gambia, Darsilami appears as a single village unit when in fact it is divided into three distinct sub-villages, separated by ethnic affiliation, each with its own *alkalo*, imam, and *kafo* organizations. These three sub-villages are called: Sandu Darsilami (Mandinka), Taxotala (Serahuli), and Bulembu (Serahuli).

The ethnic and administrative distinctions among these three sub-villages has become more marked in recent years. Disputes over questions of land ownership and land use have pitted Mandinka and Serahuli neighbors against one another. The most recent dispute erupted when the two Serahuli sub-villages requested land for a cemetery for members of their communities. The land which they requested was located in territory owned by their Mandinka neighbors. Although "officially" resolved, this particular dispute continues to be the source of ill-feelings between Mandinka and Serahuli residents of Darsilami. The dispute not only has adversely affected the religious and social fabric which once may have bound Darsilami together into one village, it has altered the land and tree tenure system in the village. As will be seen in both the summary below and in the body of this report, the dispute did influence the team's entire field activities. Thus, while the research team took care not to aggravate the wounds caused by this dispute, it did examine the dispute's affect on natural resource tenure relations in the village territory.

D. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RRA TEAM

During a two day workshop immediately proceeding the field research, the research team members reflected upon some of the initial answers to the questions posed during the field work. The research team then made policy recommendations concerning the use and conservation of natural resources in the case study site.

Finding:

Villagers implement different tenure rules tailored to the particular resource and agro-ecological zone. Some of these rules have direct historical antecedents, while others have evolved or have been constructed more recently to meet changing environmental, economic, and social realities.

An example of a tenure rule that is strongly rooted in historical antecedents is the *tonge*. Local leaders such as *alkalolu* and women *kafo* presidents continue to establish and enforce *tonge*, or prohibitions against the cutting of unripened fruit from selected tree species. There also are instances of "evolved" tenure rules. For example, Gambian farmers have had a long tradition of lending land to each other without exacting a usury price. Recently, the terms of these lending arrangements have changed. In Darsilami, some farmers still lend land; however, they are now more likely to charge a monetary rent for the use of the land. Some farmers may also lend land for a shorter period of time in order to ensure that their ownership of the land is not questioned. A relatively new tenure rule reflects the commoditization of land. A few Serahuli land owners have used their land holdings as collateral to receive loans from local money lenders.

Recommendation:

RRA tools such as participatory mapping are useful in discovering these different tenure rules as they pertain to different agro-ecological zones, resources, and land users.

Finding:

Some natural resources tenure rules are constraints to sustainable resource management or cause tension among land users while other rules are opportunities for the sustainable use and conservation of resources.

One example of a resource tenure opportunity is the existence of village rules designed to maintain sanitary conditions around drinking wells. Women impose a prohibition against the washing of cooking pots and clothes in close proximity to these wells. Such rules and the ability to enforce them are crucial since both

villagers and livestock share these wells. In the rice and outer agricultural fields, women farmers cultivate sorrel and okra bushes along the boundaries of the fields they are using for the season. This strategy reduces the risk of disputes and could also form the basis for agroforestry research. Among some farmers, flexible borrowing arrangements exist. These arrangements are opportunities in the sense that borrowing allows farmers to practice rotational agriculture regardless of their original land holdings.

Recommendation:

RRA tools and focus group interviews are useful in uncovering tenure constraints and opportunities. Tenure opportunities could form the foundation for extension activities. Policies and specific laws could also be drafted around these opportunities.

Finding:

The majority of women gain access to land by borrowing land from their husbands or other members of their husbands' families, from their own families, or from female and male friends and neighbors. These borrowing arrangements confer seasonal usufructory rights to land parcels. Women have individual ownership over the crops they plant on these borrowed parcels. They are discouraged from planting trees.

Finding:

There are instances when women inherit land from their parents. These women possess individual ownership of these land parcels and can bequeath them to their children.

Finding:

Increasingly, women are expressing frustration over the tenure insecurity they experience as land borrowers. They have stated that this insecurity is not commensurate with their responsibilities—responsibilities which have increased due to male out-migration in recent years.

Recommendation:

Through a participatory planning process, greater security of tenure for women needs to be created perhaps by writing contracts, recording verbal testimonies of land borrowing arrangements, and/or taking out leases.

Finding:

The team found that the cemetery land crisis in Darsilami has caused serious ill-feelings among the residents of Darsilami. This crisis poses a serious impediment to any present or future natural resource development in the area.

Recommendation:

Before any developmental programs are initiated in this area, the RRA team recommends that government officials, religious leaders, and others make every effort to assist Taxotala, Bulembu, and Sandu Darsilami residents settle the cemetery land dispute.

Finding:

The cemetery land dispute in Darsilami sadly illustrated that customary tenure principles can be revised, reversed, and even abrogated given changing economic and ecological conditions. Reversal of these customary tenets has created a number of tenure pressure points for the Serahuli farmers. For example, one tenet is that if a farmer owns a large amount of agricultural land, it is his/her obligation as a neighbor and community member to lend this land out if s/he is not in need of this land. In Darsilami, however, Sandu Darsilami farmers no longer lend or rent land to their Serahuli neighbors even though the land lies "unused." Serahulis feel bitter about this situation; they must go to other villages to seek land for both their agricultural activities and cattle tracks.

There is yet another example of a reversal of a customary tenet. By custom, trees planted by an individual are owned by that individual regardless of whether s/he owns the land and provided that s/he obtained permission from the land owner to plant trees. In Darsilami, however, trees planted by Serahuli farmers on land borrowed from Sandu Darsilami farmers have been appropriated by their Mandinka land owners even though the Serahuli farmers state that they had received planting permission. (Free roaming cattle and bush fires probably play a greater role in hindering tree planting in fields surrounding Darsilami.)

Finding:

Because they are more likely to possess farming equipment, Serahuli farmers state that they do not have enough land to farm. They need to borrow land from farmers in neighboring villages because they cannot borrow from Sandu Darsilami families. This high demand for land along with a rather reliable source of non-agriculture income (i.e., remittances) has resulted in a certain amount of land transactions being monetized. For example, Bulembu and Taxotala farmers have rented land

from Sandu Darsilami farmers. Bulembu and Taxotala farmers also presently rent land from Senegalese farmers. In addition, Taxotala farmers may use their land as collateral when seeking a loan from local money lenders.

Finding:

There is a high degree of tenure insecurity concerning access to and control of agricultural lands. Sandu Darsilami residents feel that their ownership rights to the land surrounding Darsilami are being threatened. These residents attest to their absolute right to these lands because of the fact that they are descendants from the first settlers to Darsilami. However, they feel that Bulembu and Taxotala residents are attempting to squeeze them out by virtue of their greater population and wealth. Bulembu and Taxotala residents have expressed insecurity over the land which they have been either given or lent from their Mandinka neighbors. These insecurities have been accentuated by the cemetery dispute.

Finding:

Within particular families, members possess a strong sense of their usufructory rights over family-held agricultural land. There is also a strong sense of individual ownership of agricultural land that is "self-acquired" and that can be subsequently given as a gift or inherited.

Finding:

There is wariness on the part of some residents in Darsilami about government acquisition of land. Some residents stated that having leases to land will protect them from uncompensated government seizure of land.

Recommendation:

Residents must receive greater tenure security before undertaking development activities in Darsilami. Rent agreements or contracts may be useful for some farmers in this area. Family leases which list usufructory rights may be applicable in Darsilami environs. Individual leases may also be applicable in particular cases.

Recommendation:

Focus group discussions could also be held to assuage the fears of these two ethnic groups.

Finding:

At the village-level, the traditional authorities of the *alkalo*, his group of advisors, the imam, women *kafo* presidents, and individuals noted for their peace-making skills all play important and over-lapping roles. These roles include resolving disputes, authorizing wood cutting permits, enforcing *tonge*,⁴ fulfilling requests of new immigrants to the area who may wish to settle, organizing community members for various development activities, galvanizing community members into action in order to fight bush fires, and, last but not least, hosting the numerous government and NGO visitors who visit the area. In addition to these institutions, the *seyfo* and the district tribunal play important roles in the management of resources and the resolution of disputes. However, the government has paid little attention to the administrative requirements of these diverse institutions.

Finding:

The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members were found to lack the necessary depth of knowledge about recent resource legislation. The team also found that none of the village residents knew about the new land laws of 1990. However, many residents were aware of certain forestry regulations, e.g., the need for timber cutting permits and the prohibition on the burning of agricultural residues and grasses in the bush.

Recommendation:

The RRA team recommends that the GOTG address the administrative concerns raised by village and district institutions. The GOTG could help to sponsor a legal education process for local leaders and district tribunal members—a process aimed at informing citizens about the different laws of The Gambia while also listening to the suggestions of citizens in reforming these laws to make them more applicable to, and thus more enforceable by, a diversity of resource users.

Finding:

Other governmental agencies intervene at various times and at various levels to settle disputes. Their interventions may or may not be necessary at the given time.

⁴ A ruling imposed by the *alkalo* which prohibits anyone from cutting unripe fruit from a designated tree species. The prohibition usually lasts until the fruits are ripe at which time people can commence harvesting.

Recommendation:

Policy makers must devise ways to facilitate the coordination of individuals and institutions involved in dispute resolution.

Finding:

The three communities are keenly aware of their own problems. Some problems voiced during the RRA include:

- o land scarcity for Serahuli farmers;
- o lack of credit and farming equipment for Mandinka men and women farmers and Serahuli women farmers;
- o high cost of fertilizer;
- o Striga spp infestation;
- o rice cultivation no longer economically viable option for women farmers because of the drought conditions. There is a need for barrages and drought tolerant seed varieties;
- o inadequate cattle tracks for Serahuli farmers;
- o lack of ownership of land for women farmers;
- o tree planting restriction on land borrowers; and,
- o threat of bush fires.

However, some residents may lack the sufficient skills to prioritize these problems or to recognize where solutions may lie.

Recommendation:

There is a need for NGOs along with government extensionists to facilitate development planning with the three communities. After a peaceful solution to the cemetery land dispute is found, the team recommends that the GOTG should facilitate a development planning process with the villagers in Darsilami. This process should be designed to assist villagers in the creation of a resource management plan.

Finding:

Government officials have taken land administration actions based upon inadequate knowledge of what powers these acts confer upon them as government officials. The following quotes help to illustrate some of the misconceptions expressed by government officials:

- o "The new lands act increases the land administration powers of the commissioner to acquire land."
- o "The commissioner can acquire land whenever it is in dispute."
- o "All land is owned by the State."
- o "Land in dispute is owned by the State."

These misconceptions on the part of government officials and citizens alike have led to problematic government actions and fear among residents of losing customary inheritance rights.

Recommendation:

The RRA team recommends that the (Ministry of Local Government and Lands (MLG&L) undertake an awareness building campaign in order to inform both divisional and district authorities about the implications of the State Lands, the Physical Planning and Development Control, and the Compensation Acts, along with the Forestry, and Wildlife Acts, etc. There is also a need for a legal education process to be initiated which will include not just the distribution of written pamphlets (because of the high illiteracy rates) but also radio broadcasts and focus group meetings (especially among women who have the most to lose from not knowing about new land laws and much to gain from this knowledge).

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SANDU DISTRICT CASE STUDY

This report presents a case study of natural resource management practices of villagers in the rural village of Darsilami, in the Sandu District of the Upper River Division in The Gambia. The case study was funded by U.S. Agency for International Development-The Gambia (USAID) under the Agricultural and Natural Resource (ANR) project and implemented by the Land Tenure Center (LTC) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the inter-ministerial Working Group on Resource Tenure and Land Use Planning of the Government of The Gambia. The primary purpose of this case study and others⁵ developed under the auspices of USAID, LTC and the Working Group is to provide policy makers with detailed information on rural natural resource tenure arrangements so that a national debate on land and resource policy options can take into account local realities in The Gambia. Specific research objectives are listed below. The research team hopes that by providing this information for a national debate on resource tenure policy options, the specific problems expressed by village participants in all of the USAID/LTC/Working Group case studies can be ameliorated.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective I: Identification of Resource Management Practices

- A. Describe the uses of natural resources
- B. Describe the natural resources tenure arrangements of resource users in micro-ecological zones
- C. Assess the influence of social, economic, and ecological factors on changes in tenure systems.

Objective II: Identification of Resource Management Institutions

- A. Describe the settlement history of the case study site
- B. Describe the role of organizations and institutions in the use and management of natural resources
- C. Describe tenure pressure points
- D. Describe the knowledge of current laws concerning land and natural resource utilization and conservation
- E. Assess the influence of development projects on resource arrangements

⁵ Three additional case studies were conducted in Karantaba Villages, Sami District; Maka Farrafenni Village, Upper Baddibu District; and Dumbutu Village, Kiang West District. Readers are also referred to an earlier study conducted by Land Tenure Center, "Institutions and Natural Resource Management in The Gambia: A Case Study of the Foni Jarrol District."

Objective III: Identification of Resource Disputes and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

- A. Describe the types of natural resource disputes that are heard by village level institutions and individuals (e.g., *alkalo*, imam, women's *kafo* President)
- B. Describe the types of natural resource disputes that are brought before the district tribunal
- C. Describe informal and formal conflict resolution mechanisms employed at both the village and district levels
- D. Assess how conflict resolutions may or may not be leading to new resource tenure rules and norms

Objective IV: Policy Recommendations

- A. Summarize tenure issues that affect the use and management of natural resources in the case study village
- B. Assess the adequacy of the tenure system for meeting resource needs of various resource user groups
- C. Describe tenure and natural resource policy recommendations of various resource user groups
- D. Assess how village level policy recommendations can be incorporated into national policy and legislative reforms and into improvements of administrative practices

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, SITE SELECTION, AND TEAM COMPOSITION

To fulfill the research objectives of the case study a nine-member team of researchers used various Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques. RRA is a qualitative research methodology which relies on a multi-disciplinary team that spends a limited but intensive time at the case study site, using a variety of methods designed to promote the active involvement of the local population in the collection of information. These methods include: participatory mapping, transects, institutional diagramming, matrices, wealth ranking, and semi-structured and focus group interviews.

The selection of the case study site of Darsilami was not a random, but rather a purposeful process based on the following criteria thought to be causes for differences in tenure rules and resource use patterns among villages and districts:

- o ethnic composition of the village and district as a whole;
- o divisional location;
- o proximity to urban centers;
- o known disputes in the area;
- o proportion of land used for settlement versus agricultural purposes;
- o population size and growth rates; and,
- o existence or absence of major development projects.

The population of Darsilami is composed of both Serahulis and Mandinkas. The RRA team was especially interested in learning about the resource management and tenure

arrangements of the Darsilami Serahulis since no previous studies had been conducted in a Gambian Serahuli community on issues of resource tenure. The village of Darsilami also was chosen because of its divisional location; none of the USAID/LTC/Working Group case studies had been conducted in the Upper River Division. Darsilami is located in relatively close proximity to a main feeder road in the Basse urban area. A land dispute was known to have occurred in this village. Finally, the Working Group wished to explore questions of tenure in an area of land and labour scarcity—issues that the Working Group thought Darsilami would represent.

For this case study, the nine-member RRA team spent 12 days during the month of November 1993 in Darsilami with occasional visits to neighboring villages. Upon arrival, the RRA team learned that it could not treat Darsilami as a single village unit but rather as three distinct sub-villages. The three sub-villages are: Sandu Darsilami, Taxotala, and Bulembu, each with their own *alkalo* (village chief) and imam (religious leader). Given this situation, the nine-member team decided to divide into three smaller groups, each group conducting its own RRA in the three sub-villages. The team reconvened to interview jointly the Sandu district authorities in Sera Gubu and divisional government representatives in Basse. These three teams consisted of the following individuals:

(1) Bulembu Team

- Amie Bojang: Radio Gambia, Rural Programming Division, The Government of The Gambia.
- Nancy A. Sheehan: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Research Associate; Gender Analysis and Natural Resource Management Specialist.
- Gumbo A. Tourey: Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Department of Physical Planning and Housing: Urban and Physical Planner.

(2) Taxotala Team

- Haddy M'Boge: Gambia Women's Finance Association: Direct Lending Programmer; Independent Consultant.
- Tamsier Bobb: Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Livestock Services: Senior Animal Husbandry Officer.
- Lance Robinson: University School of Rural Planning and Development, University of Gulph: Master's Student.

(3) Sandu Darsilami Team

Tijan Jallow: Ministry of Natural Resources, Policy Analysis and Planning Unit: Planner.

Alhaji Marong: Ministry of Justice: Attorney; Law Reform Commission: Legal Researcher.

Fatou Sonko: Women's Small Enterprise Development Specialist.

The team provides a cautionary note to the readers of this report. This case study is based on research in one village in the Sandu District. Therefore, care must be taken not to generalize findings based on the situation in Darsilami to the district or the country as a whole.

II. PATTERNS OF NATURAL RESOURCE USE IN DARSILAMI, SANDU DISTRICT

A. SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Darsilami is administratively located in the Sandu District of the north bank of the Upper River Division. In the first two days in Darsilami, the RRA team members conducted several participatory mapping exercises in order, one, to obtain a sense of how Darsilami residents defined their territory and, two, to learn about the important ecological features and physical structures in and around Darsilami. (A territory is the area surrounding a village which villagers identify as their own.)

During these exercises, residents explained to the RRA team members the boundaries separating Darsilami into three neighborhoods. These boundaries were far from apparent to the team members most of whom were strangers to the area yet these boundaries are one of the basic physical manifestations of social differences in Darsilami brought about by differing settlement histories, economic endowments, and ethnic affiliations. The participatory mapping exercises revealed to the RRA team that residents do not treat Darsilami as a single village unit; they identify strongly with their respective distinct sub-villages called Taxotala, Bulembu, and Sandu Darsilami. Members of the Serahuli ethnic group reside in Taxotala and Bulembu. The majority of residents in Sandu Darsilami are Mandinka. As will be discussed in proceeding section on conflicts, these sub-village identifications have become more pronounced in times of land disputes among the Mandinka and two Serahuli communities of Darsilami.

During the mapping exercises, the RRA team also learned that villagers have established boundaries between their own sub-villages and neighboring villages. As villagers noted, these village boundaries are marked by important trees or rocky ridges. RRA team members also learned about important structures in Taxotala, Bulembu and Sandu Darsilami. As can be noted in figures 3-8 (Village and Territory Maps), *bantabas* (common meeting area usually located under a shade tree), mosques, compound units, wells, a public health clinic, and schools (both arabic and government) are important to villagers in each of the three sub-villages.

FIGURE 4: BULEMBU TERRITORIAL MAP

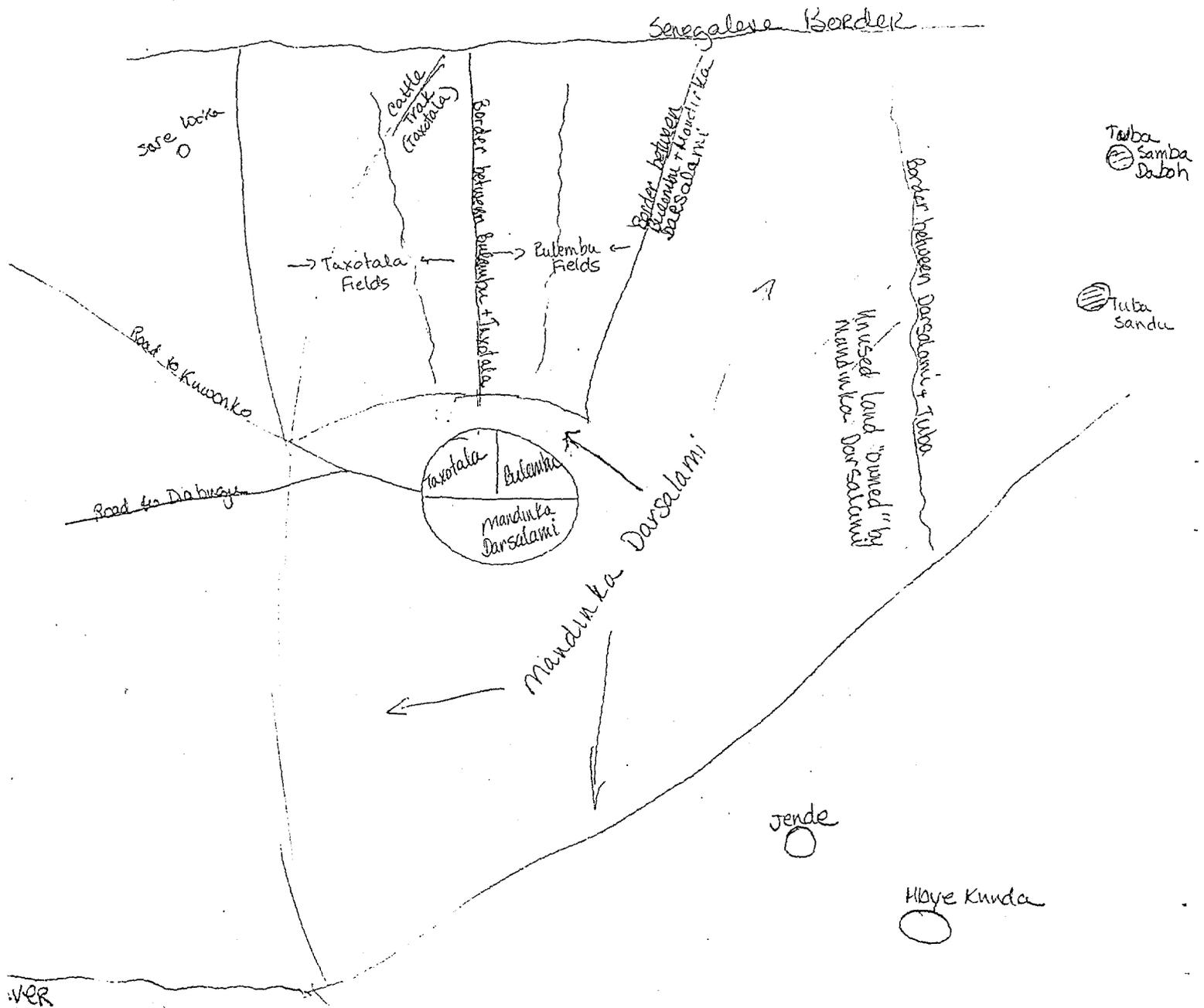


FIGURE 5: TAXOTALA VILLAGE MAP

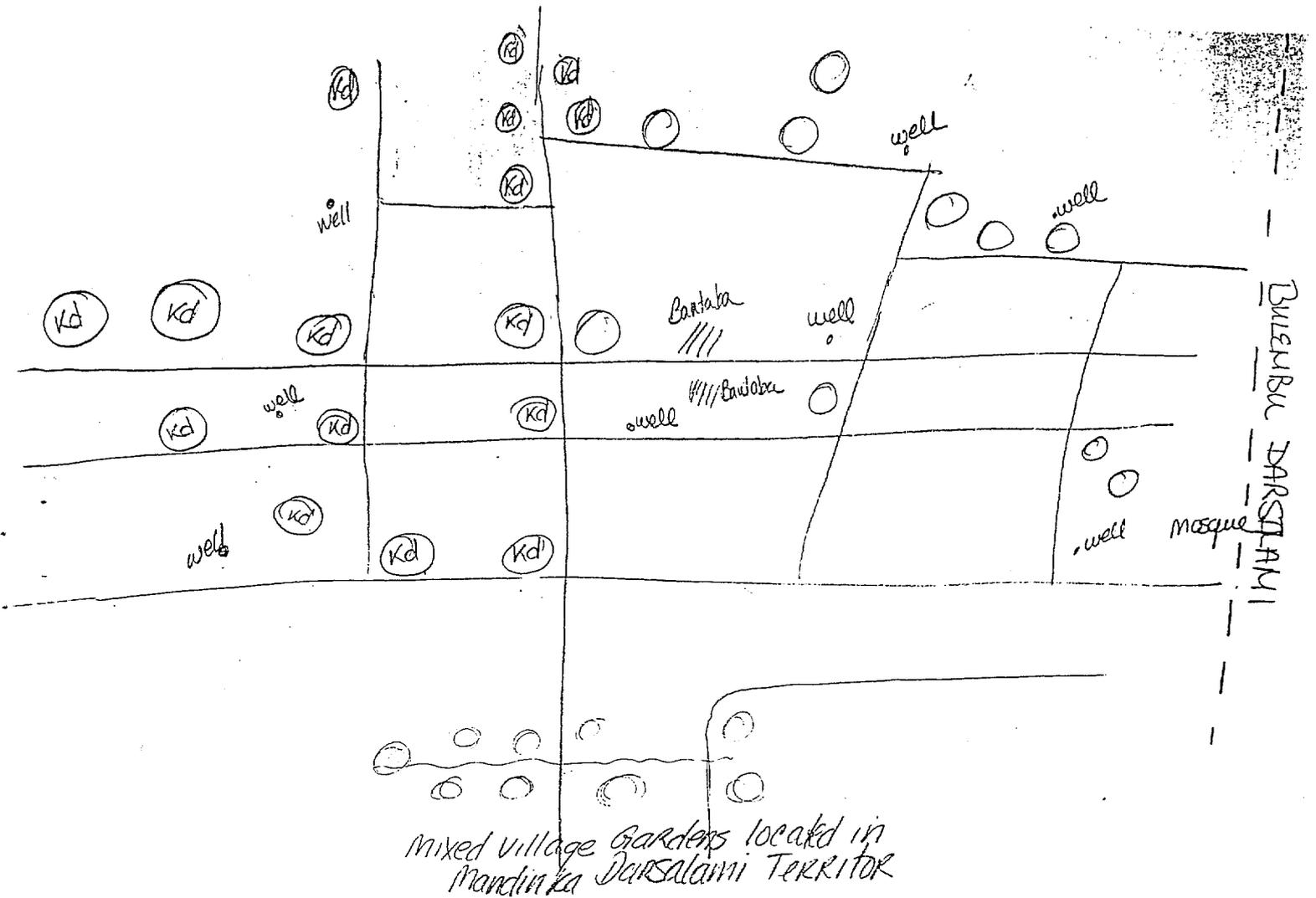
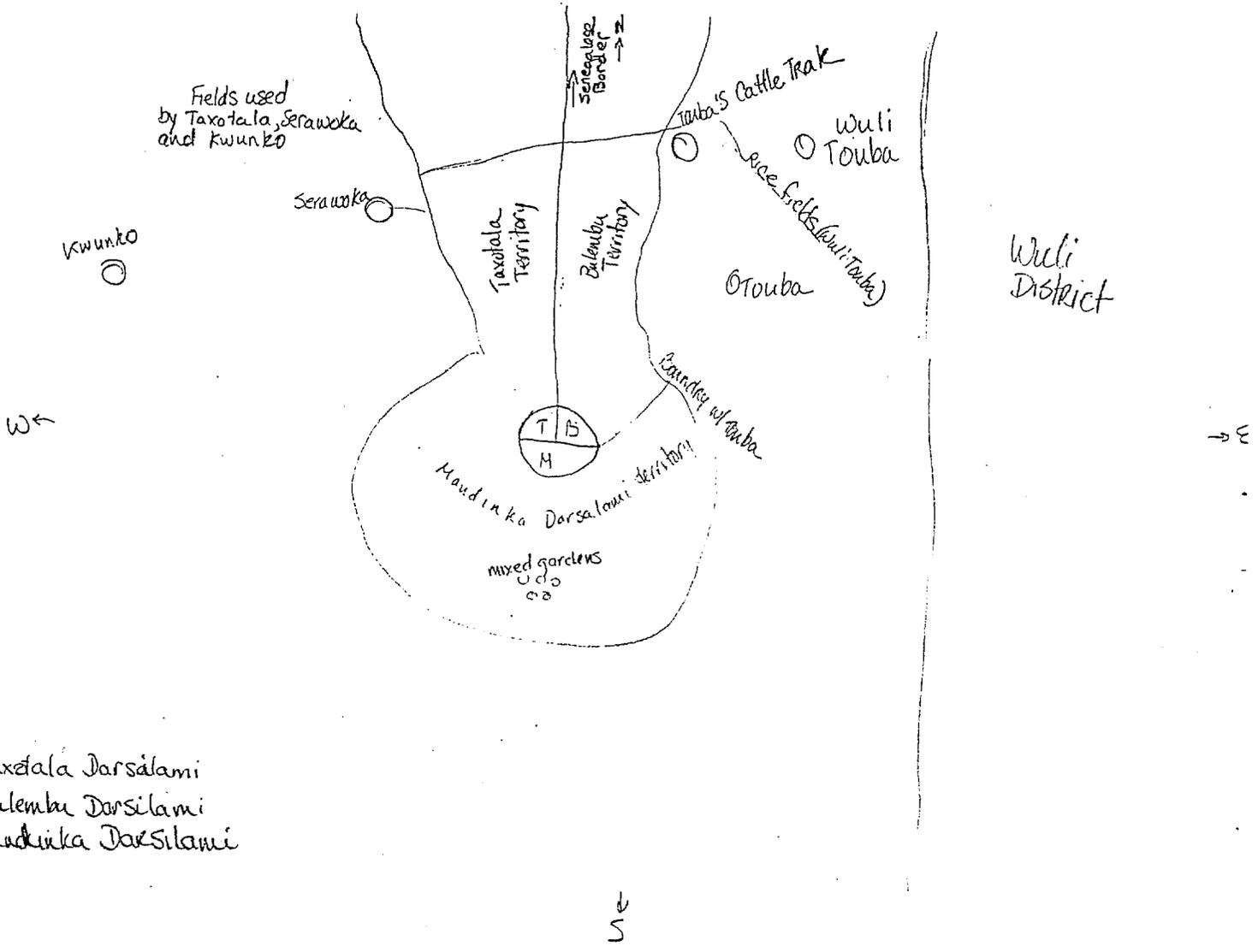


FIGURE 6: TAXOTALA TERRITORIAL MAP



- T = Taxotala Darsilami
- B = Bulembu Darsilami
- M = Maudinka Darsilami

FIGURE 7: SANDU DARSILAMI VILLAGE MAP

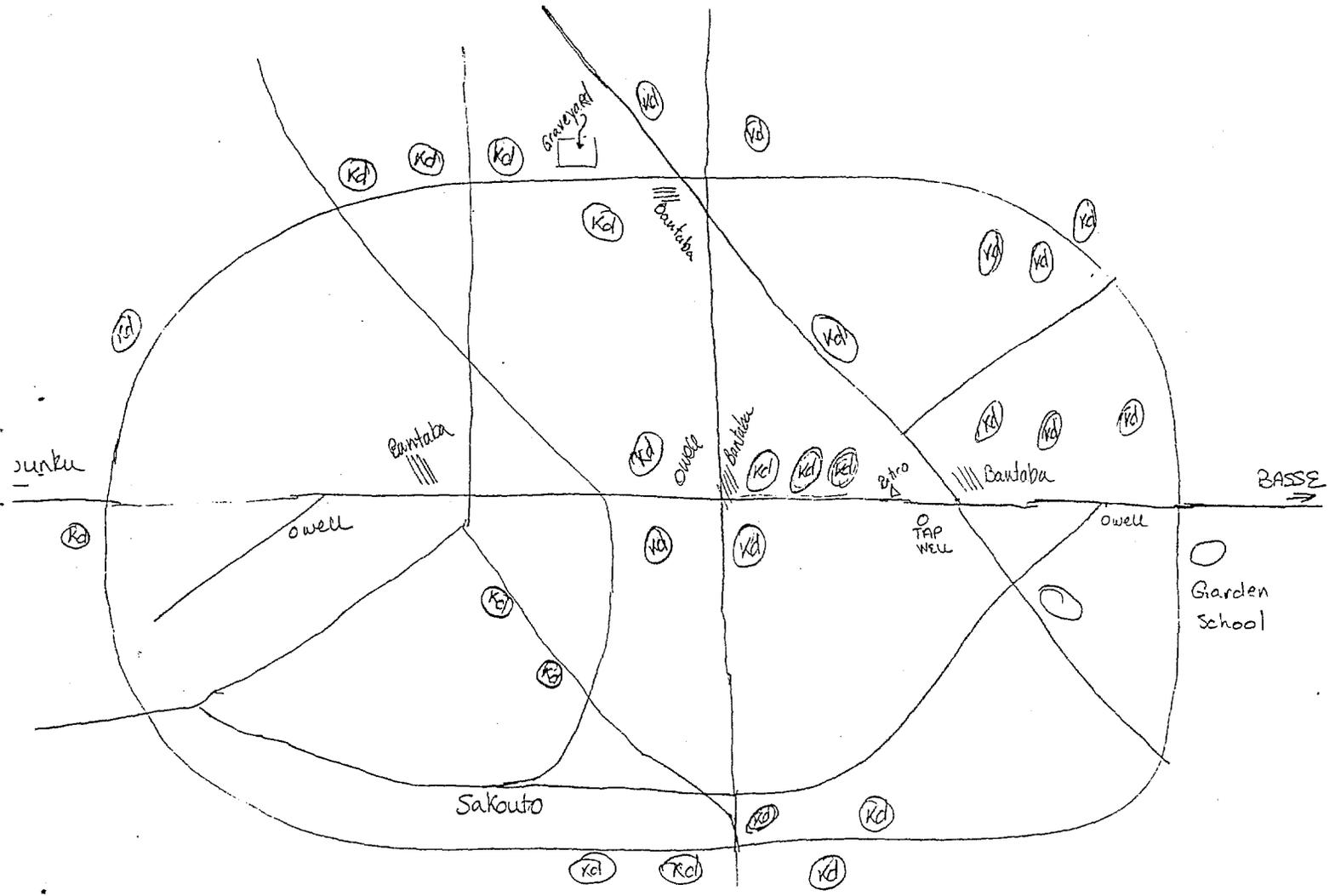
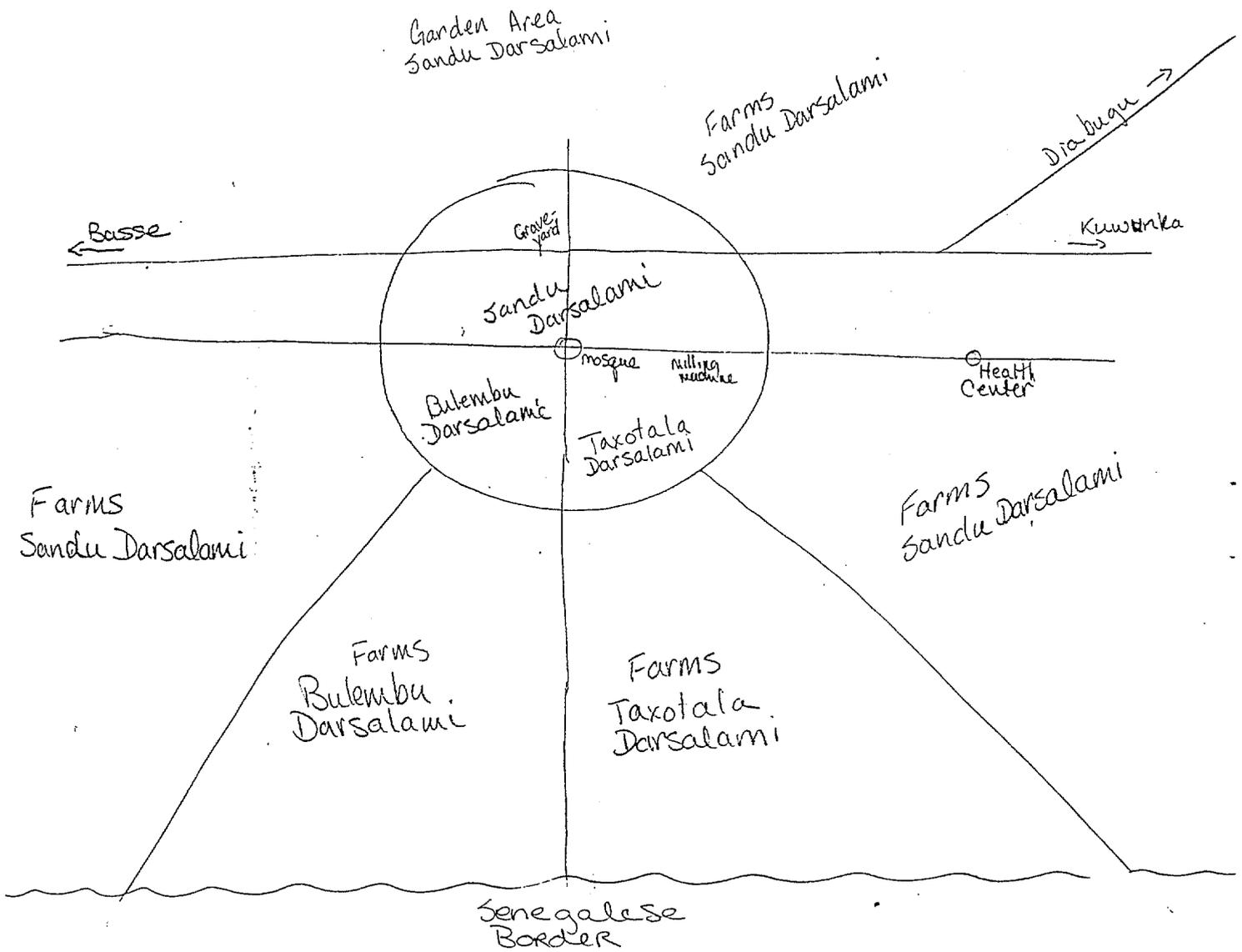


FIGURE 8: SANDU DARSILAMI TERRITORIAL MAP



B. RESOURCE USE PATTERNS, TENURE ARRANGEMENTS, AND TENURE CONSTRAINTS BY AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ZONE IN BULEMBU, TAXOTALA, AND SANDU DARSILAMI

A customary tenure system found in a particular region or territory is usually a composite of different rules governing resource use and ownership. These rules are often unique to the different agro-ecological zones found in the territory (e.g., rice agro-ecological zone vs a pasture zone) and to the individual resources found in these zones (e.g., trees vs land parcels vs wells). These rules also vary according to the individual or social group who uses the particular resource (e.g., men vs women; farmers vs pastoralists) found in different agro-ecological zones.

In order to discover the configuration of these different tenure rules associated with a particular agro-ecological zone, resource, or land user, RRA team members conducted a field transect,⁶ held semi-structured interviews and visited individual land parcels with various village participants. During and at the close of the RRA team's field work, the team constructed an "analytical" transect.⁷ The description below presents the team members' analytical transect, listing the tenure relations found in each of the agro-ecological zones surrounding the three sub-villages of Darsilami. The agro-ecological zones are: the village settlement area, backyards, inner fields, rice zone, rocky ridge area, and outer fields.

The following description addresses separately the tenure systems of Sandu Darsilami and the two Serahuli communities of Bulembu and Taxotala. These separate descriptions were deemed necessary in order to highlight the differences between Mandinka and Serahuli tenure systems. Section II.C. then summarizes the tenure constraints and opportunities found in the agro-ecological zones surrounding Darsilami.

B.1 THE SUB-VILLAGES OF BULEMBU AND TAXOTALA

1. SETTLEMENT AREA

The soil type in this agro-ecological zone is called *niyenbene*. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Most residents in Darsilami know the boundaries between Bulembu, Taxotala, and Sandu Darsilami. In fact, these boundaries are clearly marked by various

⁶ A transect is a form of participatory mapping whereby the researchers and the village participants traverse the different micro-ecological zones found in a given territory.

⁷ An analytical transect is a summary sheet of all information collected by the team members on natural resource tenure relations in each main agro-ecological zone located around Darsilami.

fence posts. The areas immediately behind or to the side of individual compounds were used as cemeteries in the past.

There are two main lineage-based groups (*xabila*) in Bulembu. These two lineage groups, as well as the slave and cobbler families who have been associated with them over the years, live on separate sides of Bulembu. Imams come from one of the lineage groups and *alkalolu* always come from the other lineage group.

There are four *bantabas* in Bulembu. The people of Bulembu have four horns they use to call different groups of individuals to these *bantabas*. One horn is reserved for the youth. Another horn is blown when the middle-aged men must meet. A third horn is only blown if there is an emergency such as bush fires. The fourth horn is reserved for calling the community together for general work to be done.

Trees: Various fruit and some timber trees are found within Bulembu and Taxotala. These trees include mangoes, guava, "karankajebah," "kitijabeh," neem, and Gmelina. To ascertain the tree tenure arrangements around trees located in compounds and *bantabas*, the RRA team asked questions such as: Who planted tree X? Did that person need permission to plant tree X? Who watered and generally cared for the tree? Who has the right to harvest tree X's products? Who has control over the benefits of tree X's products? Is there a *tonge* on tree X? Answers to these questions indicated to the RRA team that trees planted by particular individuals are the property of the individual regardless of who holds the land upon which the tree is grown. These individuals have the right to impose regulations on use. Both men and women of all castes can and do plant trees. However, younger men and all women must first seek the permission of their compound head if they wish to plant trees within their compound. Having said this though, fewer women than men have planted trees. As one woman explained, women lack the knowledge of how to plant fruit tree seeds.

Some species of trees may be more frequently planted by particular castes. For example, those of the cobbler caste may be more inclined to plant "karankajebah" because of this tree's usefulness in the tanning of leather—an income generating activity for some individuals of the cobbler caste. Others can use the tree for medicinal purposes without charge. Another example is the "kitijabeh" tree. While greater numbers of men plant "kitijabeh," women are the main users of this tree. Women use the seed pods of the "kitijabeh" as dye for hand decoration. If the woman making the dye does not have her own tree she must ask permission to collect the pods. The tree owner does not levy a charge.

There appears to be no particular division of space within the compound where men and women are likely to plant trees. In most cases, planted trees are located either in the middle of the compound yard or along compound fences. There is an absence of trees in the backyard spaces of Bulembu and Taxotala. Residents from both sub-villages have constructed latrines and bathing areas in the space located immediately behind their houses. This configuration could be the result of several factors. As participants

explained, Bulembu and Taxotala residents cannot expand their household backyards in order to plant trees for several reasons: compounds abut one another and/or Sandu Darsilami residents will not give them additional land.

Bulembu residents do not impose (nor have they in the past imposed) a *tonge* on any tree found within their settlement area. Contrary to this, the *alkalo* of Taxotala has placed a *tonge* on the collection of unripe mango fruits. The male youth group of Taxotala assists the *alkalo* by enforcing the *tonge*. The *alkalo* levies a fine of five dalasis on whomever violates the *tonge*. The male youth group collects the fine. The group then is able to use this money for various development activities such as the establishment of an orchard. Bulembu residents must follow the *tonge* imposed by residents of Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami. For one mango fruit cut during the prohibition period the offender is charged one dalasis. For one baobab fruit cut during the prohibition period the offender is charged five dalasis.

Water: Although dug by individual compound members, wells located in the settlement area of Bulembu and Taxotala are considered open access resources to all citizens of Bulembu and Taxotala, and Bulembu guests. In fact, these wells serve both the human and animal populations of Bulembu.

Residents of Bulembu were aware of some environmental health issues pertaining well use. The women's *kafo* has imposed a *tonge* on washing dirty plates and buckets around wells. If the *tonge* is violated then the women's *kafo* president imposes a fine on the offender. In addition, residents of Bulembu are concerned about health risks posed by having to water their livestock at the same wells they themselves use. Bulembu residents stated that they are unable to build separate troughs for their livestock because of the scarcity of land. Some residents are trying to avert this risk. For example, one Bulembu man dug a separate cattle trough. However, the trough is located only meters from the well used by his family. The three cattle herds which use this trough are the same herds tethered in Bulembu's rocky escarpment area during the rainy season.

Livestock and Wildlife: The land shortage is particularly acute in particular sections of Taxotala and Bulembu. Women from these compounds find it particularly difficult because they do not have enough space to tether their small ruminants at night. During the rainy season, cattle migrate to the riverside, but sheep, goats, horses, and donkeys are kept within the village.

2. BACKYARD FIELDS

The soil type in this agro-ecological area is *niyenbine*. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes are grown in this agro-ecological zone. In general, backyard fields are owned by individual compounds, and compound heads are

the managers of these areas. Land in this agro-ecological area is inherited patrilineally. However, in some cases when a man dies and leaves more than one wife, the land will be divided among the daughters as well as the sons. Because of their settlement histories, few compounds in Taxotala have backyard areas. During the time of settlement, residents of Sandu Darsilami did not give the Serahulis of Taxotala and Bulembu enough land to build their compounds as well as to have space for a backyard. Also, some families in Taxotala lost backyard space when *seyfo* Batapa interceded in an earlier land dispute. To establish the boundary between the three sections of the village, the *seyfo* along with the *alkalolu* at the time had to redistribute some of the backyard lands. Because of this past redistribution, only four Taxotala compounds own backyard areas. Some of Taxotala's original backyard land holding was also redistributed to one Bulembu family. Fearing a hostile reception, no one from Taxotala will pose a counter claim to the land redistributed to the Bulembu family. When possible, those compounds which do not own backyards rent (for cash) land from various Mandinka families.

Trees: There are few trees within the fences of the cassava fields. As several people explained to the RRA team, trees would shade out maize and cassava and thus would not be economical. Anyone has access to the naturally occurring fruit trees growing in these backyard fields. Even strangers are allowed to pick the fruit from these trees. However, planted trees in these backyard fields are owned exclusively by the individual who planted the tree. Both men and women are allowed to plant trees in these backyard areas granted that the land is held by their family. Borrowers can not plant trees in borrowed backyard fields.

Water: No wells have been dug in Bulembu's cassava and maize fields.

3. OUTER FIELDS

The soil type in this agro-ecological area is called *seyigne*. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Most of the fields located in the outer ring around Darsilami are owned by the Mandinka villagers. In the past, these lands were lent to the Serahuli farmers free of charge. Gradually, as the Serahuli came to use more mechanized agricultural implements, the Mandinka started charging a rent for the use of their land. Many Bulembu and Taxotala farmers rented land from Mandinka families for 80 to 200 dalasis per hectare per season. Some women farmers in Taxotala used to borrow land to cultivate rice. However, since the drought in the early 1980s, these women farmers have been unable to grow rice. Additionally, as a result of a land dispute, the Mandinka have ceased to rent out this land to the Serahuli.

However, a small percentage of the fields located in this outer ring around the village are owned by Taxotala and Bulembu. These fields were given to the Serahuli, in perpetuity, at the time of their arrival. These lands are inherited patrilineally.

There is a form of land hocking in Taxotala. As one Taxotala resident stated, land can be used as a form of collateral when requesting a loan of cash from one of the local Serahuli money lenders. If a borrower is unable to pay back a loan, these money lenders have the right to seize the land collateral. Male compound heads are the nominal owners of agricultural land in Bulembu territory. Individual women and men farmers in a compound have certain user rights, but the individual owns the crop produced on these individual fields. The explicit ownership of crops cultivated by individuals is visually evidenced by the boundary markers placed between fields. Walking along paths crossing groundnut fields to the north of Bulembu, one notices immediately the okra and sorrel bushes growing in neat rows along field boundaries. As the Bulembu residents explained, women plant sorrel and okra along the boundaries between their groundnut fields to reduce the risk of boundary disputes and to take advantage of space that would otherwise just be a pathway (see photograph 1). For women farmers, sorrel and okra are important subsistence crops and sources of income. Only a few men plant okra and sorrel in the boundaries between their groundnut fields. There is a two-fold reason for this cropping pattern. First, women are the main farmers of groundnuts in Bulembu. Second, men rarely process and sell okra and sorrel as an income-generating activity.

There is no fallowing of land due to land scarcity. Men and women exchange fields in order to maintain a rotation from millet to groundnuts across growing seasons (see photograph 2).

Trees: There are only a few trees such as baobab, locust bean, and "kembo" located in the outer agricultural fields of Bulembu and Taxotala. Trees occurring in the outer fields are under an open-access tenure regime, i.e, trees which naturally regenerate are not owned by any one person. Anyone from Bulembu, Taxotala, or other villages can cut or harvest products from these trees. A *tonge*, however, is imposed on certain trees such as "nette," "wankarre," and "wulokono duto." In the past, farmers used to use long poles to collect the "nette" pods and mango fruits. Now, men and women use cutlasses to cut down the pods and fruits and in the process also lop off branches. In an effort to protect these trees, the *alkalo* of Taxotala imposes a *tonge* prohibiting anyone from cutting unripe fruit. A violator of the *tonge* will be fined about D5.00. The male youth club enforces this *tonge* and collects the fines. This club then uses the fines they collect for digging wells and occasionally buying kola nuts. Thus, the male youth clubs have emerged as an important institution in the enforcement of natural resource rules and management schemes.

Livestock and Wildlife: Women own all the goats and half of all the sheep and cattle in Bulembu. Men own the other half of the sheep and the cattle in addition to the horses and donkeys. During the dry season, the four cattle herds of Bulembu are taken to land near the River Gambia. During the rainy season, these four herds are tethered in two locations. One of these is the rocky ridge area where there is a natural watering hole. The other location is in the lowland area (adjacent to the rice growing area) on land borrowed from one Mandinka family. There, a Bulembu cattle owner has dug a well.

PHOTOGRAPH 1: WOMEN'S FIELDS, BULEMBU



Women farmers plant sorrel to mark the borders between peanut fields.

PHOTOGRAPH 2: MILLET HARVEST, BULEMBU



A Bulembu farmer surveys his millet harvest.

During cropping season, herders from Taxotala take their cattle to the riverside in order to avoid risk of crop damage and to take advantage of the higher quality grazing lands near the river. Sheep and goats are tethered between field boundaries for grazing. Horses, donkeys, and ox are used to till the land.

Water: Located in the open fields of Sandu Darsilami's territory, there is a second cattle trough used by one of Bulembu's cattle herds. Before the cemetery land crisis, the compound head of Jawara kunda received permission from the *ex-alkalo* of Mandinka Darsilimi to dig this cattle trough and to cordon off an area for tethering the herd he manages in the rainy season. While this compound head expressed some concern, he expects to be able to continue to use this trough in the ensuing years.

4. OUTER FIELDS BORROWED FROM NEIGHBORING VILLAGES

The soil type in this agro-ecological area is called "data." The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: The RRA team asked several Bulembu women to describe the process by which they borrow land from their Touba neighbors. As these women described, several years ago, a handful of Bulembu men visited Wuli Touba and Touba and established initial contacts with individual male compound heads. Subsequent to these initial visits, the Bulembu men were able to borrow land for their wives. After the first year of successful borrowing, the women of Bulembu were able to return to Touba and Wuli Touba, without their husbands, to negotiate their own borrowing arrangements. Usually, the Bulembu women will formally request land three times before a land parcel is finally lent to them by individual farmers of Touba and Wuli Touba. Their first request is made at the end of the harvest period. This request is mainly to inform their Touba hosts that they are interested in borrowing land next year. A "reminder request" will be made during the trade season. A final request will be made several weeks before the time of land preparation. It is at this time that their Touba hosts will grant (or not grant) the women a plot of land.

Farmers from Taxotala use the land located to the north of the neighboring village of Kwonko. Apparently, because this part of the land had been fallowed for several years, the Taxotala farmers did not think it necessary to ask permission from the Kwonko people first before using it. As the Taxotala interviewee stated, eventually several farmers from Kwonko joined them to farm this section of land.

Trees: The Bulembu women are able to pick fruit and leaves and strip bark from certain trees in the outer agricultural fields of Wuli Touba and Touba without gaining permission first from the residents of Wuli Touba and Touba. These trees include "yahe" ("fara," M—the bark is used by the women to make rope and the leaves are used by women to make medicine) and "pampalingo" ("sibo," M—the bark is pounded into long strips from which sponges are made to sell at *lumos*). To pick the fruit and seed pods of

"nette" and mangos, however, the women must first seek permission from the residents of Wuli Touba and Touba. The residents of Wuli Touba and Touba also place a *tonge* on the cutting of fruit from these trees. The women of Bulembu are obliged to honor this *tonge*. If the *tonge* is violated, a monetary fine is imposed. For mangos picked under the *tonge*, a fine of one dalasis for each unripe mango will be levied. For unripe Baobab fruit picked, the fine is five dalasis.

Livestock and Wildlife: These fields borrowed by the Bulembu women are not used to tether their small ruminants. Occasionally, however, small ruminants and cattle owned by the villagers of neighboring Touba and Wuli Touba do encroach on agricultural fields. These incidences can be sources of disputes.

Water: There are no water holes located in this agro-ecological zone that Darsilami villagers use.

5. ROCKY RIDGE AREA

The soil type in this agro-ecological area is called *koche*. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Because the soil fertility is poor and the soil texture rocky, a large portion of land in this ecological zone is unused. This uncultivated land is *de facto* under an open access tenure regime. A grazing area was identified by the villages of Bulembu and Taxotala. A large section of this grazing area was later taken over for agricultural activities primarily by one compound, which coincidentally owns a large cattle herd.

Trees: The tree species found in this ecological zone are: "wunkuno," "bembe," "sambe," "fa," "bumma," "telle," "turu," "saho,"⁸ "kare," "sanne,"⁹ and "tumbe." All of the tree species found in this agro-ecological zone fall under an open-access tenure regime. Anyone, even a stranger, can harvest fruit, collect dead branches for firewood and even cut down trees in this area. A *tonge* is put on "netto" and "wankarre" before they are ripe. The same method of enforcement is applied in this zone as in the previous zones mentioned.

This area is used by the male youth of Bulembu and Taxotala. For example, last year the male youth group of Taxotala acquired a plot of land here for planting trees both for fruit and fuelwood. They have fenced this area. In addition, the male youth of both Bulembu and Taxotala are responsible for collecting firewood for their families. Usually, the male youth will make collecting expeditions once a week. According to these youths,

⁸ This tree species has medicinal uses for nursing mothers.

⁹ This tree species has medicinal uses for children.

they will leave early in the morning and be back for the mid-day meal (served around 2:00 pm). They only collect dry wood and therefore have no problems with the Forestry Department. Very few people sell firewood in Bulembu and Taxotala. Apparently, not many Senegalese come into the Bulembu and Taxotala territory to collect firewood.

These male youths collect the dead wood from about 10 different tree species for firewood. These species are listed in figure 11. According to one youth whom the Bulembu RRA team interviewed, "take," "hamba," and "gongeh" are the most useful ("important") fuelwood species. This male youth also assessed the change in availability of the firewood species. These changes are illustrated in figure 11. As the male youth described, "take" does well in disturbed ecosystems. The number of this species has therefore increased over the years as bush fires have swept more frequently through the area surrounding Darsilami. (The youth placed 1000 beans to represent the availability of "take" in the present as compared to the past, which had only 100 beans.) "Hamba" species have increased in availability mainly because these trees are located far from the village and, therefore, are harder to cut down. The proportional availability of species such as "wanhareh," "balumbo," "koreh," and "gongeh" have remained relatively steady mainly because they are long-lived and too large to cut down. The male youths also collect fruits from various tree species (see figure 9).

Local carpenters also use the tree species found in this agro-ecological zone. As figure 10 illustrates, "wulokono duto" is the most important species for the construction of houses. One local carpenter with whom the Bulembu RRA team spoke discussed some of the economics of his carpentry operation. His main cost is the fee for the tree cutting permits. These fees vary according to tree species cut. For example, a permit for "wulokono duto" and "keno" is D200 per tree. The permit for "bunkungo" is D300 per tree whereas the permit for "jallow" is D800 per tree.

This carpenter also described the procedure which he follows to obtain a permit. The first step a carpenter must take is to go to the particular *alkalo* who manages the territory in which a particular tree is located. The carpenter must obtain the *alkalo*'s permission to fell the tree. Second, a carpenter must visit the *seyfo* to obtain a letter of approval and a signed application for a cutting permit. The third and final step that a carpenter must follow is to travel to the Forestry Department Divisional Office in Basse where he will obtain a cutting permit. The income he is able to generate is based on the following prices for his products. He sells one bed for D500 to D600. He sells one door frame for D350. Window frames are sold for D180 to D200.

No farmer will plant trees in this ecological zone because of the lack of water, the lack of appropriate tree seedlings, and the high risk of livestock predation.

Bulembu residents do not impose (nor have they in the past imposed) a *tonge* on any tree found within this agro-ecological zone. Bulembu residents, however, must follow any *tonge* imposed by residents of Sandu Darsilami on mangos, baobabs, and "netto."

There are no Forest Parks or National Parks located near Darsilami.

Water: There is a seasonal water pool located near a rocky escarpment in Bulembu's territory. This water pool is used by two of the four herds of Bulembu. This watering hole marks the boundary between Taxotala and Bulembu.

Livestock and Wildlife: The location of rainy season grazing areas are jointly decided by the *alkalo*, his advisory group, and cattle owners.

6. BAMBADALA AND LANDS RENTED FROM THE SENEGALESE

The soil type in this agro-ecological area is called "data." The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Bulembu farmers do not undertake soil conservation measures (contour plowing, manuring) nor do they plant trees on land located in "Bambadala." It would appear that distance from Darsilami, lack of water, and lack of extension services are the main constraints to tree planting and manuring in this area.

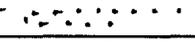
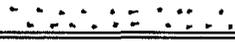
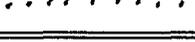
Because of the land scarcity situation in Darsilami for the Serahulis, Taxotala and Bulembu male farmers are forced to rent land from Senegalese farmers. These Senegalese rent their land for approximately D30.00 per season. Only those farmers who have transport (horses, donkeys, carts), and who can afford paying rent, use land in Senegal.

Water: There are no water holes located in this agro-ecological zone. However, Taxotala has a cattle track that cuts a north-south diagonal across this area.

**FIGURE 9: EDIBLE RESOURCES COLLECTED BY MALE YOUTHS:
BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**

RESOURCE	Collected in VILLAGE	Collected in OUTER FIELDS	Collected in BUSH
Mango	X	X	
Guava	X	X	
"Tahumeh"	X		
"Kideh"	X	X	
"Wonkareh"			X
Oranges	X	X	
Lime	X	X	
"Taba"		X	
"Toubab soho"	X	X	X
"Bimma"			X
"Gangeh"			X
"Nette"			X
"Saba"			X

**FIGURE 10: RANKING OF IMPORTANT TREE SPP BY A CARPENTER
WORKING IN BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**

TREE SPECIES	For carpentry - IMPORTANCE	Availability - PAST	Availability - PRESENT ¹
"Wulo kono duto"	1	30 	10 
"Keno"	2a	30 	20 
"Bukungo"	2b	30 	25 
"Jalo"	3	30 	20 

1/ in relation to "past" = 30

**FIGURE 11: FIREWOOD COLLECTION MATRIX WITH MALE YOUTH:
BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**

FIREWOOD SPECIES	IMPORTANCE ¹	Availability - PAST ²	Availability - PRESENT ²
"Take"	1	100	1000
"Hamba"	2a	100	200
"Dumbuleh"	6	100	90
"Wanhareh"	4	100	100
"Balumbo"	3	100	100
"Huluhulu"	5	100	300
"Handeh"	8	100	40
"Koreh"	9	100	100
"Choanye" ("Basse")	10	100	70
"Yiting huleh"	7	100	50
"Gongeh"	2b	100	100

1/ Number 1 corresponds to the most important firewood spp. Number 10 corresponds to the least important firewood spp.

2/ The respondent was asked to add to or subtract from 100 beans placed next to each tree spp representing past availability. For example, the availability of "take" spp has increased from 100 beans to 1000 beans.

B.2 THE SUB-VILLAGE OF SANDU DARSILAMI

1. VILLAGE SETTLEMENT AREA

The soil that underlies this agro-ecological zone is black clay. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Land is owned by the compound. The ability to distribute land is vested in the hands of the compound head. There are two types of public spaces in Sandu Darsilami. These are the various *bantabas* and the mosque. There are also a few government-sponsored public facilities. These are the public health center, the primary school, and a borehole well. To establish these public facilities, the State under the mediation of the *alkalo* requested that individual land holders donate land. One family in Sandu Darsilami donated this land. No compensation from either the *alkalo* or the State was given to this land holder for his donation. This land holder's request to become the caretaker for the primary school was even denied.

Trees: The following tree species are found in this area: mangos, Gmelina, neem, guava, "tabo," baobab, "dualingo," "fundano," "nebedio," and papaya. Trees found within compounds are individually owned, and men appear to have planted the majority of the trees. *Tonge* is established over fruit trees within the village to ensure that the fruit are not harvested before maturity.

Wildlife and Livestock: Sharing the space in this zone with the human inhabitants are sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, chicken, and ducks. Both men and women own the sheep and goats. Men own the horses and donkeys. Both men and women own cattle, although the majority of the cattle are owned by men.

Water: There are numerous hand-dug wells located within individual compounds. There is one bore-hole water pump.

2. BACKYARD AND INNER FIELDS

The soil type in the backyard and inner fields areas is a mixture of black clay and sand. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Land ownership is vested in individual compounds. The ability to distribute land is vested in the hands of the compound head.

Several agricultural crops predominate in this zone including maize, millet, sorghum, cassava, and potatoes.

Trees: Various tree species such as mangos, baobab, guava, "tabo," and "soto" are found in these backyard and inner field areas. Trees planted in this ecological zone are individually owned by the person who plants the tree(s). Usually, trees are found within the gardens and are predominantly planted by women farmers. There is an open-access regime governing the use of wild trees in this zone.

Wildlife and Livestock: Sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, "kacho," and chicken are the predominant animals in this zone.

Water: A few wells are located in this zone. Anyone from Sandu Darsilami can use these wells. Outsiders can only use these wells after receiving permission from the compound head in which the well is found.

3. RICE FIELDS

(The team did not find out what the soil type was for this agro-ecological zone.) The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Land is owned by individual compounds and the land-use management responsibility of distributing land in this area is vested in the compound head. Women are the absolute users of the rice fields in this ecological zone. However, the cultivation of rice has become a less profitable enterprise for the women of Sandu Darsilami. Over the past several years, they have seen a steady decrease in their harvests. After becoming increasingly discouraged, they did not plant any rice in 1991 and 1992. This year they tried planting an early variety of rice, but still the harvests were not worthy of their time.

Women also have dry season gardens in this zone. These vegetable and fruit gardens are managed mainly by women of Sandu Darsilami. However, some Mandinka families continue to lend land to a few Serahuli families for gardening. These Mandinka families have not taken back the land that they had lent previous to the land crisis. Originally, the Mandinka families placed no conditions upon the lending arrangements they made with the Serahuli families. Thus, the Serahuli families were able to plant trees (cashews and mangos) in their borrowed gardens. As our Mandinka guides informed us, it was within the purview of the Mandinka to set conditions on lending arrangements and to revoke any lending arrangement. While some Mandinka farmers still hold that a land owner can not claim ownership of trees planted on his land by the Serahuli (i.e., that trees belong to those who plant them), other Mandinka families have reversed this "rule."

Trees: Various trees such as "jungo," "wolo," oranges, and cashews are found in this zone. Other notable tree species in this area are "netto koto bulo" and "singeng." Fruit from the "netto koto bulo" is a source of fodder for cattle. "Singeng" is a multi-purpose tree. Children collect dead wood from "singeng" for firewood, and the leaves from this tree are used for medicine and wrapping bananas. An open-access regime prevails in this ecological zone. Even strangers can use the products from such trees as

the "netto koto bulo" and "singeng," and this fact does not seem to cause any consternation among the people of Sandu Darsilami. Only the Forestry Department regulates the use of tree species in this area in terms of issuing or not issuing timber cutting licenses to non-Gambians. Trees planted in this ecological zone are individually owned by the person who plants the tree(s). Usually, trees are found within the gardens and are predominantly planted by women farmers. All other trees are under public user rights.

Livestock and Wildlife: The following wildlife species were observed in this zone: "kansolo," "taweyo," "kanjeroma," "sunkang," "falo," "kanaa," "kacho," and "ducks." There is an open-access regime governing the use of these wildlife species. Farmers did not mention any Department of Wildlife regulations concerning the use of these species.

Water: Water found in this zone is open to anyone to use.

4. OUTER FIELDS

Speaking with Sandu Darsilami farmers, the RRA team learned that "dato" is the prominent soil type for this agro-ecological zone. The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: Land in this zone is owned by individual compounds. Land allocation responsibilities are vested in compound heads. Both women and men have access to land in this ecological zone. One way to gain access is to request land from an individual's own compound head. If land is not available through one's own compound head, then the individual can ask to borrow land outside his/her own compound. Land will be lent if it remains unused. The main crops grown in this area are: sorghum, millet, "wooso," groundnuts, beans, and "jabehro." Male farmers cultivate sorghum and millet. Women cultivate "wooso" and "jabehro." Both men and women cultivate groundnuts and beans.

Trees: Several tree species are found in this zone; "jungo," "wolo," "sinjengo," "sama," "tinyo," "farra," and "tabo." Trees planted in this ecological zone are individually owned by the person who plants the tree(s). Usually, trees are found within the gardens and are predominantly planted by women farmers. All other trees are under public user rights.

Wildlife and Livestock: Sheep and goats were seen grazing in this zone. Sheep and goats found in this ecological zone are owned by both men and women. The wild birds known as "kacho" in Mandinka were also apparent. There is open access to wildlife species found in this ecological zone.

Water: There were no wells or watering holes in this area.

5. ROCKY RIDGE AREA

The resource use patterns, tenure arrangements, and tenure constraints are described in the following paragraphs.

Land: An open-access tenure regime predominates over the resources found in this ecological zone.

Trees: Tree species found in this area are as follows: "jambecatango," "keno," "wolokonoduto," "netto," "kulankalango," "kulingo." Anyone can collect wild fruits, leaves and dead wood for firewood in this agro-ecological zone. The only existing laws guiding the use of resources in this zone are various Forestry Regulations, and these are applied only infrequently.

Livestock and Wildlife: Wildlife species found in this area are as follows: bush pigs, red monkeys, black monkeys, "kongo," rabbit, squirrels, "klato," bush dogs, "kuuto," "totomeyo," "kama," "kilinkonco," and "mansadibongo." There is an open access regime governing the use of the wildlife species in this area.

Water: There are no wells or watering holes in this zone.

C. SUMMARY OF CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES BY AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ZONE FOR THE THREE SUB-VILLAGES OF BULEMBU, TAXOTALA, AND SANDU DARSILAMI

1. SETTLEMENT AREA

Constraints

- o Lack of sufficient numbers of wells; villagers and livestock must share common drinking wells which poses environment health risks.
- o Male heads of households control most of the compound space. Little priority is given to space for the tethering of small ruminants, the majority of which are owned by women. The risk of small ruminant predation of food stocks is increased.
- o Extension officials still lack of awareness that male out-migration has left women *de facto* heads of households. Women farmers continue to support their families without receiving information, farming equipment, or rights commensurate with their responsibilities.
- o Tension exists over access to public facilities located between the Mandinkas (Sandu Darsilami) and the Serahulis (Taxotala and Bulembu). Serahulis are less likely to use the public health clinic as a result.
- o The Government of The Gambia has not compensated villagers for lands "acquired" by the government for "public purposes." This precedent raises serious questions concerning possible future acquisitions.
- o Women must obtain permission from compound heads to plant trees in their marital and natal compounds.

Opportunities

- o Villagers have constructed rules designed to maintain a healthy environment around village wells. Extension programs could build on these existing rules.
- o *Alkalo* and villagers have established and enforce *tonge* on certain tree species. *Tonge* could form a basis for future conservation programs.
- o There is individual ownership of trees regardless of land ownership.
- o Villagers expressed interest in planting economical and medicinal trees. This interest could form a basis for forestry extension work which is lacking at the present time.

2. BACKYARD FIELDS

Constraints

- o According to Serahuli residents, there is not enough backyard space for new settlers. This situation is a result of the particular settlement histories of the three sub-villages and past government interventions to resolve disputes.
- o Tension exists between the two Serahuli communities over the ownership of adjacent backyard spaces. These tensions remain even after past government intervention.
- o Farmers perceive all trees as competitors to crops (cassava and maize) grown in backyards. Because backyards are fenced, these areas may hold potential promise for the implementation agroforestry systems.
- o Land borrowers are discouraged from planting trees.

Opportunities

- o *Alkalo* and villagers have established and enforce *tonge* on certain tree species. *Tonge* could form a basis for future conservation programs.
- o An individual who plant a tree own the tree regardless of whether they own the land.
- o Villagers are interested in planting economical and medicinal trees. This interest could form the basis for further extension work. Women showed a particular interest in planting trees, although they expressed lack of knowledge to do so. Extension activities are required.

3. RICE FIELDS AND OUTER FIELDS

Constraints

- o Rice cultivation is no longer an economically viable option due to drought conditions. There is a need for barrages and drought tolerant seed varieties.
- o Original settlers no longer lend or rent out fields to new settlers in Darsilami.
- o Serahuli farmers report that they no longer fallow their land because, as they state, they do not have enough land. They report that this is a direct result of the land dispute with Sandu Darsilami (Mandinka) farmers.
- o There is an open-access regime on trees found in this zone. There is no *tonge*.
- o There is a lack of cattle troughs during the dry season.
- o Serahuli herders lack sufficient land to create cattle tracks for dry and rainy season cattle herding.
- o Short-term Serahuli borrowers of land from neighboring villages cannot plant trees.

- o Land borrowers experience some insecurity over access to borrowed land from one year to the next.
- o Open grazing of livestock and small ruminants hinders tree planting in outer fields.

Opportunities

- o Women farmers clearly mark their use rights to land parcels and their individual ownership of crops by cultivating sorrel and okra bushes along field boundaries. This strategy reduces the risk of disputes and could also form the basis for agroforestry research.
- o There are flexible borrowing arrangements among household members. The ability to borrow land enables farmers to employ a rotational agriculture system even if they only possess a small number of plots over a dispersed area.
- o Flexible borrowing arrangements between the Taxotala and Bulembu and neighboring villages have relieved some of the pressure from the disputes raging between Taxotala and Bulembu residents and Sandu Darsilami residents.
- o *Tonge* is imposed by Sandu Darsilami *alkalo* and enforced by the Male Youth Group.

4. ROCKY RIDGE AREA

Constraints

- o There is an open access tenure regime on land and trees.
- o There is open grazing of livestock and small ruminants that hinders any possible tree planting initiatives in this area.
- o There is a lack of water for cattle and tree planting activities.
- o Bush fires are a constant threat to crops and tree regeneration.

Opportunities

- o Because the soil is not conducive to agriculture, this zone remains relatively wooded.
- o Indigenous knowledge exists concerning firewood spp—i.e., their usefulness, their availability, and their ecology.
- o Knowledge of acquisition of forestry permits exists, however, discussion indicate that procedures are time consuming and costly.
- o Villagers complain that there is little forestry extension or enforcement of forestry regulations in this area.

5. BAMBADALA

Constraints

- o Farmers must travel very far from the village in order to undertake agricultural activities.
- o There are no water sources.
- o There is an grazing regime during the dry season.

Opportunities

- o Land ownership is vested in the hands of Serahuli farmers.

III. AGRO-ECOLOGICAL AND SETTLEMENT HISTORIES: A RETROSPECTIVE IN EXPLAINING PRESENT-DAY RESOURCE USE PATTERNS, TENURE ARRANGEMENTS, AND TENURE CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A. AGRO-ECOLOGICAL HISTORY

Through the construction of Agro-Ecological Matrices (see figures 12 and 14), the village participants described the ecological changes experienced by past generations in Darsilami. As these village participants noted, the dominant ecological changes have been the declines in rainfall and soil fertility levels. These two ecological changes have had far reaching effects on the farming systems of Darsilami residents. Some of these effects include:

- o an increase in youth out-migration;
- o an increase in the amount of land cultivated;
- o an abandonment of fallowing;
- o a increase in the use of animal traction, when possible;
- o a shift from drought-intolerant to drought-tolerant crop species and varieties;
- o an increase in the use of chemical fertilizers, when possible;
- o an increase in striga infestation;
- o a modification in the types of tree species used; and,
- o a modification in diets.

More youth of Bulembu and Taxotala have migrated to urban and overseas locations in order to obtain employment. Sandu Darsilami youth, however, have not migrated in similar numbers to those of their Serahuli peers. In fact, the Sandu Darsilami farmers who participated in constructing the ecological matrix stated that the village's population has actually increased. (As they noted, their population has increased because of improved medical and health care facilities.)

With less rainfall and degrading soil fertility, Serahuli and Mandinka farmers now need to cultivate more land in order to maintain harvests comparable to the past. To cultivate more land with less labour, Bulembu and Taxotala farmers do not fallow their fields. Bulembu farmers argue that they cannot fallow their land for two reasons. First, the Sandu Darsilami residents did not give them enough land to cultivate at the time of their settlement. Thus, the Serahulis are experiencing a land shortage. Second, less rainfall and greater mechanization has necessitated the cultivation of more land (see figure 13). They also have increased their use of animal traction. The increased use of animal traction was also noted by Sandu Darsilami farmers.

In the past, Mandinka women cultivated more than half of all arable land in Sandu Darsilami territory (see figure 15). Also in the past, women cultivated rice as well as groundnuts. They also maintained vegetable gardens. Women farmers' present use of the land has decreased whereas men's use of land has increased. As participants explained, women are no longer able to cultivate rice due to inadequate rainfall. Also, men were able to increase their use of land because they have had access to mechanization. Because of the increase in population among families with fewer land holdings, the amount of land lent out to others has increased. Today, because of the higher demand for land, less land is left unused than in the past.

Both Mandinka and Serahuli farmers in Darsilami have responded to less rain and lower soil fertility levels by a shift in crop emphasis. However, the two ethnic communities diverge in their choices of crops. Whereas in the past Bulembu and Taxotala farmers cultivated more groundnuts and sorghum, they have shifted to early millet and maize (see figures 12 and 14). Even though Mandinka farmers are growing more early millet, maize, and beans than they did in the past, their main emphasis is on the cultivation of sorghum and groundnuts (see figure 16). The fact that the Serahulis emphasize early millet and maize and the Mandinkas favour sorghum and groundnuts may in part be explained by differing settlement histories. The Mandinka farmers, being the original settlers of Darsilami, have access to more fields located on the rich, well-drained soils (called *signbinai* in Serahuli) best for sorghum and groundnut cultivation. Being late settlers to the area, the Serahuli farmers were not given, by their Mandinka hosts, many fields located in the *signbinai* soils zone. What *signbinai* lands they were given have been degrading, and thus they can not grow as much sorghum as they did in the past.

Because of less rainfall, few farmers in Taxotala and Bulembu cultivate pumpkins. In addition, women farmers of Sandu Darsilami no longer find rice cultivation a productive and lucrative endeavor. Even with the lack of markets, women farmers of Sandu Darsilami find that gardening is a more profitable agricultural activity than the cultivation of rice (see figure 17).

To offset the decreasing trend in soil fertility (a situation further exacerbated by the lack of a fallowing system), some Bulembu and Taxotala farmers try to purchase fertilizers. However, given the high price of chemical fertilizers, this option is not open to many farmers. The weed *Striga* spp wrecks greater and greater havoc on millet crops every year. While Bulembu farmers stated that manuring fields can reduce *Striga* infestation; they added that manuring fields is difficult due to the lack of cattle watering troughs at field sites.

Lower rainfall has also adversely affected the health of the village's forested parklands. Certain tree spp are not as available as they were in the past, which in turn has led to a change in tree spp use and cropping patterns. Today, farmers are forced to use inappropriate tree species for fencing. For example, Bulembu farmers use "jaba katango," which neither resists termite infestation nor withstands waterlogging. Also, Bulembu and Taxotala farmers no longer cultivate as much cassava and potatoes as they did in the past

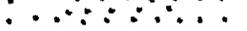
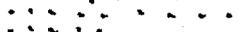
when they had enough fencing material to protect these crops from animal grazing (see figures 12 and 14).

The Bulembu participants in the Agro-Ecological Matrix also remarked that today there are more cattle but there is less milk.¹⁰ Again they attributed this agro-ecological change to rainfall that is insufficient to recharge naturally occurring water pools and to rejuvenate fodder species.

Men from Bulembu used to fish in the river waters that flooded the fields near Darsilami. In the past, the fish catch from one day would be sufficient to feed a whole compound for two days. Now the river no longer floods as it did in the past. As a result, villagers must purchase most of their fish from fish mongers who travel from fishing points along the River Gambia.

¹⁰ Whereas in the past they used to have 1 to 2 calabashes of milk from one cow, now they may only have 1/2 to 1 calabashes.

**FIGURE 12: AGRO-ECOLOGICAL MATRIX WITH THREE ELDERS:
BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**

IMPORTANT RESOURCES	Availability - PAST ¹	Availability - PRESENT ²
Rains	25 	17 
Fields planted in maize	25 	50 
Fields planted in sorghum	25 	10 
Fields planted in groundnuts	25 	13 
Fields planted in cassava and potatoes	25 	10 
Fields planted in pumpkin	25 	10 
Tress for fencing	25 	7 
Fruit trees in village	25 	10 
* Cattle	25 	45 
Milk from cattle	25 	10 
Gardening vegetables	25 	25 
* Fish from the floodplains of the river	25 	0

1/ Past = About thirty years following Serahuli settlement in Darsilami in the 1930s.

2/ Present = Past five years. Numbers represent "present" availability in relation to "past" availability (25).

* Resources suggested by the team members

Note: Participants were asked first to list out resources that are important to them. The RRA sub-team then placed 25 beans next to each of the resources they suggested. These 25 beans were to represent the past availability of the resources. The RRA sub-team next asked the participants to add or subtract from the 25 beans in order to represent present availability of the particular resource. For example, participants stated that fields planted with sorghum have decreased from 25 beans to 10 beans.

**FIGURE 13: PROPORTION OF LANDS IN FALLOW: BULEMBU,
DARSILAMI**

PRESENT

25 beans	0 beans—Lands in fallow
	25 beans—Lands in cultivation

PAST

25 beans	5 beans—Lands in fallow
	20 beans—Lands in cultivation

Note: Participants were asked to divide 25 beans to show the proportion of land in cultivation and land in fallow at present and in the past.

Note: Past = About thirty years following Serahuli settlement in Darsilami in the 1930s.
Present = Past five years.

FIGURE 14: AGRO-ECOLOGICAL MATRIX: SANDU DARSILAMI

RESOURCE\TIME	Availability - PAST	Availability - PRESENT ¹
Trees/forests	100	50
Rains	100	50
Wild animals	100	40
Cattle	100	80
Goats/sheep	100	80
Horses/donkeys	100	140
Farmland area (or area used for agricultural purposes)	100	120
Farmland fertility	100	50
Population	100	150

Note: Participants were asked first to list out resources that are important to them. The RRA sub-team then placed 100 beans next to each of the resources participants suggested. These 100 beans were to represent the past availability of the resources. The RRA sub-team next asked the participants to add or subtract from the 100 beans in order to represent present availability of the particular resource.

1/ Past availability = 100

FIGURE 15: LAND DISTRIBUTION MATRIX: SANDU DARSILAMI

LAND USER\ LAND AREA CATEGORIES	Used by men	Used by women	Lent out	Left unused
PAST ¹	20	55	7	18
PRESENT ¹	40	30	25	5

Note: This matrix indicates (1) the proportion of land used by male farmers and the proportion of land used by female farmers; and (2) the proportion of land which has been lent and the proportion of land left unused.

1/ Total of land used = 100

FIGURE 16: IMPORTANCE OF CROPS FOR MALE FARMERS: SANDU DARSILAMI

CASH CROPS	Proportion of total crop income - PAST ¹	Proportion of total crop income - PRESENT ¹
Groundnuts	65	45
Millet	10	15
Sorghum	6	10
Maize	4	5
Beans	15	25

Note: Participants were asked to divide 100 beans which they were told represents their total income in one year among the five crop types. The amount placed beside each crop type thus represents the proportion of income contributed by the crop type to the total income of the participants.

1/ Total crop income = 100

FIGURE 17: CROP RANKING BY MEN AND WOMEN FARMERS IN SANDU DARSILAMI

CROP	PROPORTIONAL RANKING (100 each)
Yams	41
Wooso	41
Tiokolong	41
Okra	62
Bitter tomatoes	59
Pepper	94
Groundnuts	115
Findo	93
Rice	50
Beans	61
Maize	88
Tomatoes	92
Cabbage	68
Greens	76
Salot	67
Cassava	55
Sweet potatoes	71
Mangos	111
Onions	80
Oranges	57
Guava	74

Note: Participants were asked to place beans next to each category. 100 beans were to represent "most important;" 0 beans were to represent "least important."

B. SETTLEMENT HISTORIES AND LAND TENURE ARRANGEMENTS IN DARSILAMI, SANDU DISTRICT

Contemporary tenure arrangements and tenure disputes in Darsilami, Sandu District are the result of historical processes. To reconstruct the path leading from the historical to the contemporary situation in Darsilami, each RRA team tape recorded the settlement histories of Bulembu, Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami as told by male elders in these communities.¹¹ These three histories are presented below. They are similar in that all three versions relate that the Mandinkas of Darsilami hosted the immigrant communities of Taxotala and Bulembu around the 1930s. These histories also recount how the Mandinka hosts gave their Serahuli guests land upon which to build compounds and grow subsistence crops. However, the settlement histories diverge from each other in two important ways. One, the history presented by the Mandinka residents of Darsilami differs from that presented by the Serahuli residents in its account of how much land was given to the Serahulis by the Mandinkas. Two, the Mandinka and Serahuli histories differ in their description of the conditions imposed by the Mandinka on land given to the Serahulis. Where these settlement histories diverge helps to explain the occurrence of recent land-use disputes in Darsilami. Therefore, the section immediately following this section on settlement histories will describe one of these land-use conflicts. This section traces a path from the settlement and agro-ecological histories to the contemporary agro-ecological situations in Darsilami. This section will illustrate how both historical and contemporary events converge around the recent land-use dispute and have shaped the tenure systems of today's Darsilami.

1. SETTLEMENT HISTORY AS NARRATED BY TAXOTALA AND BULEMBU ELDERS

Darsilami was settled by a Mandinka man and a Serahuli man both of whom were powerful marabouts. Indeed, the grave of the Serahuli marabout is located in front of Darsilami Mandinka mosque. The son of this Serahuli marabout was Kekorah Sillah. Kekorah Sillah later became the leader of the Serahulis who emigrated from Darsilami to a village named, Banikokekora near Basse. The reason for this migration of the Serahulis is unknown.

An inter-tribal war caused another group of Serahulis from Bundu, Casamance to scatter. After the war ended, the scattered population regrouped and eventually settled a new village called Bulembu, Senegal. After some time, this same group of Serahulis migrated again to Manato in Casamance. After spending some time in Manato, they migrated a third time to the village in Senegal called Taxotala.

While in Senegal, the French colonial government periodically imposed a *serewiso*, or decree, which required able-bodied Senegalese to work on designated public works

¹¹ The tapes of these interviews were then returned to the village participants for their use.

projects. For example, the forefathers of the oral historians for Sandu Darsilami were required to transport boulders on their heads in order to build a wall seven meters long and seven meters wide. The French colonial government also imposed a *serewiso* which conscripted male youth into the French army. Youths were taken to Nginginew, Senegal, where they were forced to do hard labour for military training. At that time, the father of the narrator of this story, Massireh Drammeh, was a district Authority in Senegal. Fearing that his young people would all be taken away, Massireh Drammeh sent a delegation of elders to *seyfo* Batapa Drammeh of Diabugu, Sandu District, The Gambia. He did this because the Drammehs in Diabugu were related to the Drammehs in the Casamance. Through the delegation, Massireh Drammeh requested that his people be given refuge in The Gambia from the hardship in Senegal. *Seyfo* Batapa Drammeh and his advisors met and decided to give Massireh and his people sanctuary. Batapa Drammeh chose the area presently known as Darsilami Taxotala. The delegation went back to the Casamance to inform Massireh Drammeh that a site had been found not far from relatives in Diabugu. Thus, sixty-seven years ago, 40 Serahuli compounds, the predecessors of present of Taxotala Serahulis, came to settle in Darsilami.

Approximately 30 Serahuli compounds, the predecessors of present-day Bulembu Darsilami, arrived two to three weeks after the arrival of the Taxotala Serahulis. Upon arrival, the Taxotala and Bulembu Serahulis had no permanent shelters; thus, several Mandinka families hosted the Serahulis for one dry season. During this time the Serahulis were able to build their own houses and to transport their belongings from Senegal to Darsilami, The Gambia.

After the rainy season was over, one Sandu Darsilami family gave land to the Bulembu Darsilami people to farm. This farmland, given in perpetuity, was located to the north-east of Sandu Darsilami (to the border with the village of Touba). In addition, two Mandinka families in the village of Touba lent the Bulembu Sarehulis farmland located adjacent to the farmland given by the Sandu Darsilami family. Because the Touba family was not using this farmland, they agreed to a long-term lending arrangement. The Touba family, however, retained the right to annul the borrowing contract.

Land was given to Taxotala Serahulis in a similar fashion. The village of N'Jenne also gave the Bulembu Serahulis farmland located to the south of Darsilami. When both the Taxotala and Bulembu Serahulis settled in Darsilami, the Fula village of Sena N'Gye Kunda was located to the west of Darsilami. After a short period of time, these Fulas emigrated from the area. The Sandu Darsilami residents claimed ownership of the Sena N'Gye Kunda farmland. The Mandinka residents of Darsilami then gave some of this land to the Taxotala Serahulis in perpetuity.

According to the narratives of Taxotala and Bulembu historians, the territory immediately to the north of Darsilami was "virgin" land when they settled in Sandu District. After the Serahulis built their homes, and in preparation for their second rainy season in Darsilami, individual compound members in Taxotala and Bulembu cleared this

land. Because of this act of clearing the land, the farmers from Bulembu and Taxotala consider themselves owners of the farmland to the north of Darsilami.

The physical strength of the original Serahuli migrants to Darsilami determined the number of fields individual compound members own today in Taxotala and Bulembu. But physical strength alone does not account for the present-day land distribution in Bulembu. Two other factors interceded. Two families of the original Bulembu settlers came with large herds of cattle. These two families cleared and then tethered their cattle in this northern area. Other Bulembu families, fearing crop damage by cattle, were reluctant to clear farmland next to these herds. Thus, descendants from these two families are the major land holders of land located to the north of Darsilami.

In 1946, the Sandu Darsilami residents claimed ownership of some of this northern land. A land dispute erupted between Taxotala and Bulembu residents and Sandu Darsilami residents. *Seyfo* Batapa Drammeh interceded. To settle the dispute, the *seyfo* established boundaries among the three sections of Darsilami. These are the boundaries depicted on the three territorial maps of Bulembu, Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami (see figures 6-11). A boundary was established between the territories of Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami and between the territories of Taxotala and Bulembu. The Taxotala-Mandinka border is marked by a road that extends approximately north-west. The Taxotala-Bulembu border begins at the boundary between the two village settlement areas and extends northwards toward the Senegalese border. A Taxotala oral historian stated that the Taxotala people lost portions of their territory to both the Mandinkas and Bulembu residents of Darsilami. Also, the *seyfo* unequally divided land among the different compounds in Taxotala. As a result, some compounds have more land than others. Because of this, disagreements occasionally arise among *kabilos* in Taxotala concerning field boundaries.

Both residential and farmland is nominally "owned" by men in Taxotala and Bulembu. When the eldest man in a compound dies, his eldest son inherits the land. Thus, land is inherited patrilineally. It is interesting to note, however, that the elders with whom the RRA teams spoke, stated that both men and women inherit land. Occasionally, if the deceased man's daughter is married and living in Taxotala then she can inherit a piece of her father's land. If the daughter lives outside the village, however, she will not be entitled to inherit any piece of her father's land. It is also important to note indigenous perceptions of inheritance. Both male and female elders in Bulembu stated that women have rights akin to inheritance rights to land used by their mothers-in-law and managed by their husband and his family. Thus, while land is held by men in Bulembu and Taxotala, women have use and inheritance rights to land belonging to their fathers and their mothers-in-law (through their husbands).

2. SETTLEMENT HISTORY AS NARRATED BY SANDU DARSILAMI ELDERS

This village was founded Foday Mamudu Barrow who came from Hireh in Futa Toro. The ethnic origin of the Sandu Darsilami people was Fula. Before Mamudu Barrow

settled in Darsilami, there was a Soninke settlement. However, they left before Foday Mamudu's arrival. Thus, when Mamudu Barrow arrived no one was present in the village.

Foday Mamudu was a Marabout. He arrived in Darsilami in the morning and, because he saw a mosque and a *bantaba*, he decided to stop for a rest. That same evening a Serahuli man and his family arrived. The Serahuli man's name was Nfa Alimaneh Sillah. Foday Mamudu advised this Serahuli man to spend the night till the following day. The third man to arrive on that day was Sirimang Darboe, a Mandinka.

The next morning the Mandinka and Serahuli men asked each other what they had seen the previous night since both of them were Marabouts. They agreed that present-day Darsilami was a place they could settle and worship Allah.

Foday Mamudu then told the Serahuli man that since he came in the evening whilst he, Foday Mamudu, arrived in the morning, he was to be the host. He, therefore, gave the Serahuli man the imamship while he became the *alkalo* of the village.

In the days of the Serahulis, this village was called Kutafara. Nfa Alimarieh Sillah later died and was buried behind the small Mandinka mosque. After his death his family members and his followers migrated to Kumbija and to Sabi. After the Serahulis migrated, Foday Mamudu decided to rename the village "Fi Dari Islam" from which the present name "Darsilami" is derived. There was a period of 153 years between the arrival of Foday Mamudu and that of the present Serahuli community.

Foday Mamudu had three sons: Bakary Barrow, Foday Barrow, and Ebrima Barrow. It is not known whether he had any daughters. The first son, Bakary Barrow, succeeded his father as *alkalo*. Foday Barrow, succeeded Bakary. Next in line was Foday's eldest son, Kebba Barrow. After Kebba Barrow's rule, because the present *alkalo* was too young to become *alkalo*, it had to be given to someone outside the Barrow family. It was then that Malamin Sanyang became *alkalo*. Then came Bokari Jarra. At this time, the practice was that the eldest man in the village was given the post of *alkalo*. Through this practice, Bakary Bintou Sanyang, Ngaling Sanneh, Malang Sanyang and Ebrima Karumba Jarra all became *alkalolu*. Because he felt that he could no longer perform his duties, Ebrima Karumba Jarra resigned as *alkalo*. After his resignation, the village elders met and decided to change the practice once more, i.e., instead of giving the *alkaloship* to the eldest male member of the village, they decided to return it to the Barrow family. So the present *alkalo* became *alkalo* only because the village elders decided to go back to tradition.

The *alkalolu* of Sandu Darsilami:

Foday Mamudu Barrow
Bakary Barrow

Foday Barrow
 Kebba Barrow
 Malamin Sanyang
 Bokari Jarra
 Bakary Bentou Sanyang
 Ngaleng Sanneh
 Malang Sanyang
 Ebrima Karumba Jarra

There were late settlers also. Most of these late settlers were Serahuli from Guinea (including Sadou Sowe and Muhammadu Keita). When these late settlers came, the farmland surrounding Darsilami belonged to those of the Mandinka community. When Foday Mamudu came, this whole area was forested. Gradually, the Mandinkas cleared the forest so that by the time the Serahulis arrived, the area had been cleared. The Serahulis did not, therefore, clear any forest or virgin land.

The two Serahuli villages of Bulembu and Taxotala arrived together each with an imam and an *alkalo*. As they explained, they migrated from Cassamance because of a war. They wished to stay in Darsilami in the name of Allah and his messenger. The Mandinka community accepted them and provided them with food and shelter. The Mandinkas allowed them to settle in Darsilami side by side. The Serahulis were each given a place to reside and a backyard. However, the Mandinka ancestors realized that the land had to be preserved for the future generations of Mandinkas, and so they decided to retain ownership of the farmland. Thus, as one elder remarked: "It is true that this is all Darsilami but there are different sections and Sandu Darsilami is the host section...The other settlements all originated from Sandu Darsilami. However poor Sandu Darsilami may appear, we are the original settlers of Darsilami."

C. THE LAND DISPUTE CRISIS IN DARSILAMI AND ITS EFFECT ON RESOURCE USE PATTERNS AND TENURE ARRANGEMENTS

On the road to Touba and Wuli Touba, a six foot cement wall encloses a three-hectare cemetery. Two large steel doors painted starkly in red break the impenetrability of the cement wall. Through these doors, residents of Taxotala and Bulembu enter, separately, to bury their dead. The cemetery is located on land previously held, under customary tenure, by residents of Sandu Darsilami, and herein is the cause for the tense land dispute which has pitted Mandinka and Serahuli neighbors against one another, and which has adversely affected the religious and social fabric binding Darsilami together as one village.

Residents of Sandu Darsilami, Taxotala, and Bulembu no longer attend the central mosque for Friday prayers. Instead, residents attend their own mosques located in their respective sides of town. Taxotala and Bulembu residents perceive

social institutions and infrastructures located in the Sandu Darsilami side of town to be "off limits." Taxotala and Bulembu residents never draw water from the borehole pump located in Sandu Darsilami territory. They do not use the public health center which is also located in Sandu Darsilami territory. Comparing the Venn Diagrams (figures 27-29) for Taxotala, Bulembu, and Sandu Darsilami pictorial illustrates this unequal access to infrastructure. Actually, it is immaterial whether this unequal access to infrastructure, such as the public health center, has resulted from real or perceived interdictions on the side of the Sandu Darsilami residents. The fact remains that the health of Serahuli children as well as their parents suffers.

In addition, the dispute has altered the land and tree tenure system in Darsilami. One of the main tenets of customary tenure systems in The Gambia has been revoked. This tenet, previously thought to be sacrosanct, held that if a land holder was not using a piece of land, it was his or her social obligation to lend this land to those in need. Now the original settlers of Darsilami allow land to lie unused refusing to lend, or even to rent, land to those Serahuli residents who could use the land. The Mandinka families who had lent fields to Serahulis before the land dispute now threaten to take back this land. For example, the imam of Bulembu and other members of his family cultivate groundnuts in land given by the Mandinkas to the imam's forefathers. This land is located near the Mandinka's rice fields to the southeast of town in an area called "Tobaleh kunda." As the imam stated, the Mandinka youth are threatening to take back this land.

In addition, Serahuli residents are reluctant to plant trees on land given to them for gardens. They are also wary that the trees they have already planted in these gardens will be appropriated or up-rooted. In fact this has already happened. One Sandu Darsilami family rescinded a garden-land borrowing arrangement of another Taxotala woman. This woman is still trying to negotiate with the Mandinka family in order to retain her right to harvest the fruits from the trees she planted.

Needless to say, residents of Darsilami suspected that this research mission was a government investigation. As a result, people were fearful that the team would favor one part of town over another. To dispel these fears, the RRA team divided into three separate groups so as to provide each of the three communities with equal research time. The three RRA sub-teams also decided not to avoid the land dispute. While the RRA team agreed not to judge, the team felt that it was part of its mission to listen to the problems arising in the management of land in and around the village of Darsilami. Thus, the sub-teams decided to listen and record, as accurately as possible, the three sides of the cemetery dispute in Darsilami. What follows is a description of what was heard. In the Section VI., the team appeals to government officials, religious leaders, and others to intercede to help the residents

of Darsilami negotiate a settlement that will allow them to once again live peacefully side by side.

1. THE DISPUTE AS NARRATED BY BULEMBU AND TAXOTALA RESIDENTS

In the past, residents in Bulembu and Taxotala buried their dead in the backyard areas of their compounds, usually under a large shade tree. Because of government health campaigns, the Serahulis learned that this burying arrangement was not a healthy practice. In 1976, as a solution, the Serahulis of Taxotala and Bulembu joined the graveyard of the Mandinkas in Darsilami. This arrangement worked for only a short while. When they joined the Mandinkas in burying their dead in one graveyard, it appeared that more and more Serahulis were dying in rapid succession. Evil spirits were thought to inhabit the communal grave site. The father of the present Bulembu imam tried to drive the evil spirits from the grave site but he died before the task was completed. The Sandu Darsilami residents then transferred the graveyard to the west of the village. Since this was located at a distance from the Serahuli neighborhoods, the Serahulis started once again to bury their dead in their backyards. However, this arrangement became untenable in the last five years. The population of the Serahuli neighborhoods was growing. Because of remittances, many Serahuli farmers also had mechanized farming equipment. Thus, their need for compound and agricultural land was increasing. To expand compounds, Taxotala and Bulembu residents would occasionally need to dig up, or to build on top of, old graves.

At this point, the Taxotala and Bulembu residents requested land for their own graveyard. Apparently, the Serahulis requested land from the Sandu Darsilami families. They even offered to purchase the land for the sum of 21 million pesos (an amount sent by expatriate Serahulis). At first, the then *alkalo* of Sandu Darsilami agreed to sell the Serahulis land. However, when the *alkalo* did allocate the Serahulis a plot of land, the customary owner refused to give up his land. An internal political dispute ensued in Sandu Darsilami. This infighting led to the resignation of the then *alkalo* (in fact, this happened the day before the RRA team arrived). The Serahuli communities requested that the commissioner become involved in settling the disputes. The Serahulis made this request under the presumption that disputed land becomes the property of the State and thus, the commissioner has the right to allocate the land as he deems fit after judging the situation. The then commissioner interceded and allocated the land to the two Serahuli communities for a graveyard. No monetary compensation was given to the Sandu Darsilami family who lost its land since they refused to agree to the decision of the then commissioner. As far as Taxotala and Bulembu residents are concerned,

the matter is closed. The Sandu Darsilami residents, however, see the dispute as far from over, as will be seen in the following section.

2. THE DISPUTE AS NARRATED BY A GROUP OF MEN FROM SANDU DARSILAMI

One man called Kebba Kayo came to the village of Darsilami from Nyakoi Kerewan for Friday prayers. After the prayers he announced that the elders should stay as he had something to discuss with them. He said this concerned the graveyard issue. He said that the Mandinka had a graveyard but that the two Serahuli communities did not, and that it was high time that they did. The matter was referred to the three *alkalolu* of Darsilami Mandinka, Bulembu, and Taxotala. They suggested that the matter be laid to rest until after the rains because no land could be identified at that time.

After the rains Kabba Koyo reminded the elders again. The matter was discussed by the three *alkalolu*. The two Serahuli *alkalolu* said they did not have any lands. The then Mandinka *alkalo*, Ebrima Kasamba Jarra, said he did not have any land in the east but would contact those who did and get their reaction.

The Serahulis later came and asked Kuuti Sanneh, a Sandu Darsilami farmer, to give them part of his land located on the eastern part of town for a graveyard. Kuuti refused on the grounds that the Serahulis themselves owned land in the east and should therefore use that instead of asking for his.

However, the two Serahuli *alkalolu* with the then Mandinka *alkalo* and Karamo Jatta (now deceased) went around to both the Serahuli and Mandinka eastern lands and identified Kuuti Sanneh's land without the latter's consent. They sent people to measure the land, again without the owner's consent. The Mandinka therefore accompanied Kuuti to the piece of land to object that the land should not be taken without the owner's consent.

The Serahulis went to report the matter to the then commissioner, Omar Khan. Two or three days later the commissioner paid the Serahulis a visit. He invited both the Mandinkas and Serahulis to a meeting to discuss the graveyard issue. He asked Kuuti Sanneh why he refused to give up his land. Kuuti replied that he would have given up his land if the Serahulis did not have any land themselves in the area. But that since they did and the graveyard was for their own people, Sanneh said he could not give up his land. The commissioner then said that if the matter could not be resolved amicably he would use the powers conferred on him by law to take the land compulsorily. The Mandinka *alkalo* at the time, Karamba

Tana, offered to give his land in exchange for Kuuti's. The Serahulis objected to this offer. They stated that the *alkalo*'s land was less fertile than that of Kuuti's and was located far into the bush. The Serahulis suggested that the *alkalo* offer his land, which was located immediately behind the village and was fertile. This suggestion was not accepted by the *alkalo*. At this stage, the commissioner called another meeting. During this meeting, the commissioner threatened to seize the land compulsorily if the parties could not agree amicably on a land exchange. The commissioner then called for the "Fatiha" and declared the meeting closed.

Subsequently, the Serahulis came with fencing poles on the land owned by Kuuti and started to build a fence. The Mandinka elders, objecting to the action of the Serahulis, pulled out the poles erected by the Serahulis. The Serahulis, insisting that the land had been given to them legally by the commissioner, once again sent for the commissioner. The commissioner sent a contingent of Tactical Support Group officers to the village. These officers stood guard at the land in dispute while the Serahulis constructed a cement wall around the area. While the Tactical Support Officers forbade any Mandinkas from going to the area, one night a group of Mandinka youths visited the area. They were promptly arrested by the officers. Later that night the Mandinka elders, who went to ask about the fate of their youths, were also arrested and taken to the Basse Police station. They spent three to four days in police cells.

Before this a senior police officer, Mr. Bojang, was sent to the village to discuss the dispute. He came to the Mandinkas and asked them why they could not share their graveyard with the Serahulis. The Mandinkas replied that they were willing to do so and were also willing to extend their present graveyard to accommodate the Serahulis. Mr. Bojang then suggested to the Serahulis to join the Mandinka's present graveyard. The Serahulis rejected this suggestion. The Serahulis stated that they wanted their own graveyard.

The commissioner interceded again. He acquired the land and gave it to the Serahulis. Presently, the Sandu Darsilami residents are contesting this action. They have hired a private lawyer and intend to pursue the issue in court.

IV. SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE RURAL ECONOMY IN DARSILAMI, SANDU DISTRICT

A. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

1. SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN SANDU DARSILAMI

There are two *kabilos*¹² in Sandu Darsilami. If a stranger farmer comes to Darsilami wishing to farm, he is hosted by one compound in a *kabilo*. His host will provide accommodations, food, and land to farm during his stay. In exchange, the stranger farmer will work on the fields of his host and provide some remuneration to the wives of his host for the cooking and laundry work they do for him. However, if the stranger farmer comes with his family wishing to settle in Darsilami then the stranger farmer can establish his own *kabilo*. This is what happened with one of the two *kabilos* in Sandu Darsilami. One of the *kabilos* settled with a large family and an entourage of slaves, so the founding *kabilo* allowed them to establish their own *kabilo*.

2. SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF BULEMBU AND TAXOTALA DARSILAMI

The main units of social organization in the two Serahuli communities are the *xabila* (i.e., clans or lineage groups). Members of the same clan live together and form neighborhoods. In Bulembu there are two such neighborhoods. The Bulembu *alkaloship* descends from one of these neighborhoods while the imamship descends from the other of these neighborhoods. The *xabila* within Bulembu and Taxotala are further divided into *kane*, or compounds, composed of a patriarch, his wives, their unmarried children and the families of his married sons. A *ka* (singular form of *kane*) is traditionally headed by the eldest male member (or *kagume*) of this patrilineally-extended family. Often, however, due to out-migration of men or the personal circumstances of particular women, women become "heads" of compounds. The descriptive box details one such woman-headed household in Taxotala, Darsilami (see box).

The *kagume*, or compound head, has two main management responsibilities. One, the *kagume* has a certain amount of control over the labour of the male relatives in his compound. Traditionally, all male relatives within one *ka* cultivate collectively a *kirsenteh* or *hurubanteh*, field. *Kirsenteh* or *hurubanteh* fields are, in essence, communal fields. The *kagume* decides which crop is to be grown on these communal fields. (Usually, groundnuts are cultivated on these communal fields.) Two, the *kagume* controls the harvest from these fields. He is responsible for storing the harvest in a central grainier. He is also responsible for unlocking the grainier so that the women, who are responsible

¹² Mandinka term meaning ward or neighborhood in English.

for cooking the *huruba*¹³ meals, can measure out the daily grain allotment. Traditionally, all members of a *ka* eat from this common (*huruba*) breakfast and lunch bowl.

There are two other types of fields cultivated by Bulembu and Taxotala farmers—*duranteh* and *salumateh* fields. *Duranteh* is the Serahuli term for individual fields used by women farmers. As several Bulembu women explained, every woman has her own individual field which she cultivates sometimes with the assistance of her unmarried daughters. The harvests from these *duranteh* fields are controlled solely by each woman. Likewise, male farmers have their individual fields. The Serahuli term for these fields is *salumateh*. The male farmers who cultivate *salumateh* fields retain control over the harvest of these fields. Male labour allocation on *salumateh* and *hurubanteh* fields is worked out so that all men of one compound will usually work on the *hurubanteh* field in the morning and the *salumateh* fields in the afternoon.

The caste system still plays an integral part in the social system of Bulembu and Taxotala. Villagers of Bulembu and Taxotala still draw distinctions among nobles, slaves, cobblers and smiths. In the past, each *kane* of the noble caste would have their associated *ka* of slaves, cobblers, and smiths. Slaves played a major role in the system of production. Nobles controlled the labour of their slaves. Slaves were required to work in the fields of their nobles. They were also responsible for the processing of the harvest. Cobblers and smiths were responsible for activities such as tanning leather, preparing women for their weddings, and preparing and performing circumcision ceremonies. All these tasks were undertaken without remuneration.

While the caste system was official abolished at The Gambia's independence, the remnants of the caste system can still be found in the division of labour within Bulembu and Taxotala. For example, those of the noble caste still request that their slaves process their harvests. However, the crucial difference between the past and the present is that now nobles pay slaves for their labour. Those of the slave, cobbler, and smith castes can never become *alkalolu* or imams. They do, however, enjoy political representation in the various village organizations such as women's *kafos*. There is also a sense of pride among these different social groupings. For example, descents of the cobbler caste gain pride from exhibiting their knowledge of leather making and the important role they play in their communities. As will be seen in the next section on wealth status, caste affiliation was found to have no correspondence to an individual's wealth, e.g., some descendants of the slave caste were ranked "wealthy" by their peers.

¹³ *Huruba* is a Serahuli term referring to the common meal shared by all members of one *ka* or compound.

DESCRIPTIVE BOX : A WOMAN HEADED HOUSEHOLD, TAXOTALA

Traditionally, the eldest male of a compound is referred to as the head of the household. In reality, however, the responsibilities and duties of a head of household can be often assumed by other members in the compound. Increasingly, women are becoming *de facto* heads of households as their husbands migrate to urban centers or die. One RRA team member spoke with a woman resident of Taxotala who, at the death of her husband, has become the *de facto* head of her household. While she has "married" another man in the village, as she describes, this marriage is in name only. This woman has remained in the compound where she lived with her deceased husband. The wives of her sons also live with her while their respective husbands live in Spain. She receives no financial maintenance from her "husband" who only comes to visit her "from time to time." This woman undertakes all the duties male heads of the households undertake. For example, she negotiates land renting agreements with one family in Sandu Darsilami. Through this agreement, she rents two groundnut fields and one late millet field. She has also borrowed land for a garden and fruit tree orchard under a tenuous borrowing arrangement.

The Sandu Darsilami family prohibited her from planting trees; nonetheless, she went ahead and planted a few fruit trees. As she remarked, the Sandu Darsilami family could take back the land upon which her garden is situated at any time. The Mandinka family could also appropriate the trees she planted.

Two, aside from these land administration and cultivation tasks, this woman, as the head of her household, distributes the food portions for each day to her daughters-in-law to cook. This woman undertakes three income generating activities to make additional food and clothing purchases. She makes necklaces from clay and also scented body oil from the sap of the "sonke" tree. With these two items, she sells to or barter with people in Darsilami or in Sera Gye during *lumo*¹⁴ days.

This woman interviewee responded to the question of whether there is a difference between a woman's and a man's ability to head a household by stating that, "there is no difference between men and women when it comes to work. I go out into the groundnut fields...to hoe, weed, and harvest my groundnuts just like a man. I look after my family and provide food for them...There is no difference in reality, it is just tradition which makes that distinction between men's and women's roles."

¹⁴ *Lumo* is a Mandinka term referring to a traveling market. A market day is held once a week in a village neighboring Darsilami.

B. WEALTH AND INCOME GENERATION

1. DEFINITIONS OF WEALTH

The following list represents a composite definition of wealth which was generated by four Bulembu villagers¹⁵ during the RRA wealth ranking exercise. As was expected by the RRA team members, just the fact of having capital is not the sole indicator of wealth. Other endowments are equally important. As will be seen in the following section, farmers who possess farming equipment and who have relatives overseas seem to be better off than other farmers who do not possess these endowments.

- o Having children
- o Owning livestock (i.e., cattle, sheep, goats)
- o Having extended family members
- o Owning gold
- o Owning horses which enable male farmers to go to distant farms
- o Owning carts and donkeys which enable male farmers to go to distant farms
- o Having a small business
- o Having good health
- o Knowing a skill (e.g., baking)
- o Gardening (but only with good fences)
- o Having money

The distribution of the thirty-one (31) compounds in Bulembu across five wealth categories are presented in figure 18.

¹⁵ 3 women and 1 man

FIGURE 18: WEALTH RANKING OF THIRTY-ONE BULEMBU COMPOUNDS

CATEGORY ONE — "WEALTHIEST"

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5 compounds | - 2 compounds—noble caste |
| | - 2 compounds—slave caste |
| | - 1 compound —cobbler/smith caste |

CATEGORY TWO — "WEALTHY"

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6 compounds | - 1 compound —noble caste |
| | - 3 compounds—slave caste |
| | - 2 compounds—cobbler/smith caste |

CATEGORY THREE — "MIDDLE WEALTH"

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 9 compounds | - 4 compounds—noble caste |
| | - 5 compounds—slave caste |
| | - 0 compounds—cobbler/smith caste |

CATEGORY FOUR — "LOWER WEALTH"

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6 compounds | - 5 compounds—noble caste |
| | - 1 compound —slave caste |
| | - 0 compounds—cobbler/smith caste |

CATEGORY FIVE — "POOREST"

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5 compounds | - 4 compounds—noble caste |
| | - 1 compound —slave caste |
| | - 0 compounds—cobbler/smith caste |

TOTAL FIGURES FOR BULEMBU

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| 31 compounds | - 16 compounds—noble caste |
| | - 12 compounds—slave caste |
| | - 3 compounds—cobbler/smith caste |

Note: Both the Taxotala and Bulembu RRA teams asked participants to rank male heads of compounds. However, ranking the head of the compound is not necessarily indicative of the wealth of all members within a compound. Other members of the compound may have a different wealth status than that of the compound head. Wealth differentiation occurs at the compound head level as well as at the *saluma* (or *sinkiro*) level.

In Taxotala, slave compounds were found to be the "poorest." No slave compounds were ranked among the six "wealthiest" compounds. Only two slave compounds are among the eighteen "wealthiest" compounds. Interestingly, village participants ranked cobbler compounds at various levels of wealth. One cobbler compound was ranked among the three wealthiest compounds.

During various interviews with residents of Sandu Darsilami, two factors emerged which differentiated the livelihood strategies of these farmers from the livelihood strategies of Taxotala and Bulembu farmers. One differentiating factor was that few residents of Sandu Darsilami had travelled abroad. Thus, remittances played only a minor role in the wealth profile of these Mandinka farmers. A second factor was that residents of Sandu Darsilami had greater access and more secure tenure rights to the agricultural land surrounding Darsilami. Thus, residents of Sandu Darsilami were observed to place a greater reliance on gardening, tree planting and other agricultural activities than did their Serahuli neighbors. This observation is revealed in the revenue matrix constructed with the women's *kafo* in Sandu Darsilami (see figure 25). This matrix features various vegetables and fruits as sources of income.

Figure 26 is a revenue matrix constructed with male farmers in Sandu Darsilami. Male farmers placed a greater significance on petty trading and livestock sales as sources of revenue than did the women farmers in Sandu Darsilami. Male farmers have increasingly pursued these various revenue-generating activities, particularly maize and cotton cultivation and livestock production.

2. CONNECTIONS AMONG ACCESS TO SOURCES OF WEALTH, LAND HOLDINGS, AND LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

As several Bulembu and Taxotala residents remarked, amount of land holdings had little to do with a farmer's wealth or caste affiliation. The main determinant of amount of land holding was the strength of one's ancestors to clear land (see also section II.B.). Thus, if an ancestor, whether slave, cobbler, or noble, was able to clear land when he first came to Darsilami then the descendants from that ancestor would own land today. Regardless of this aspect of the Serahuli tenure system, which does not appear to discriminate on the grounds of caste or present wealth status, there is inequality in land holdings among families in Bulembu and Taxotala. For example, only four families in Taxotala own backyard farmlands. These four families were ranked "better off" in the wealth-ranking exercise; no poor families owned land in this area. As Taxotala residents explained, this unequal land distribution was more a result of how land was originally allocated to the Taxotala Serahulis by the Mandinka rather than of a family's access to source of wealth. Indeed, few compounds actually own land in either Taxotala or Bulembu. This scarcity of land is due to the fact that about seventy-five percent (75%) of the area surrounding Taxotala and Bulembu is owned by Sandu Darsilami families.

From the wealth ranking exercise, the Bulembu RRA team proceeded to select three individuals from the different wealth groupings. The team then interviewed these

three individuals in order to obtain a more detailed picture of (1) the main determinants of wealth and (2) the connections between access to sources of wealth and the particular livelihood strategies pursued by individual farmers.

Determinants of Wealth

As the revenue matrices (figures 20-26) illustrate, the wealth in individual compounds is strongly determined by whether or not members from the compound have travelled abroad. By travelling abroad, the expatriate Gambians can send remittances home either in the form of hard currency or farming equipment. By travelling abroad, the expatriate Gambians can also save money from which they can start their own businesses either overseas or when they return to The Gambia.

The RRA sub-team tried to find out what the aspirations of the male youth were in Bulembu. The RRA sub-team asked four members of the Boys Youth Group of Darsilami during an interview to assess the proportion of their male peers who wanted to be farmers when they grew up. The four boys with whom our team spoke stated that none of their peers wanted to be farmers. As the leader of the Boys Youth Group stated during an interview, most of his friends want to leave Darsilami to travel abroad because, "If we all stay here then we won't have enough land. Already we have to rent land."

Other important sources of wealth are groundnut cultivation, cattle and small businesses.

Access to Wealth and Livelihood Strategies

The livelihood strategies of Bulembu farmers are affected by their access to sources of wealth in three important ways. First, access to sources of wealth meant less reliance on agricultural activities to survive. Second, access to sources of wealth differentially influences who in the community has easier access to better quality land. Third, access to wealth affects gender division of labour.

(1) Reliance on Agricultural Activities to Survive: Without these remittances and outside employment opportunities, members of poorer compounds try to diversify their income sources while relying heavily on agricultural activities. As one women stated, "We only do so much farming because we don't have anyone abroad." An important source of income for several Bulembu residents ranked "poor" and of the slave caste is from duties performed for those of the noble caste. Duties include threshing grains and preparing "noble" brides for marriage. It is interesting to note that those members ranked "poor" spoke more frequently of the lack of time to undertake agricultural activities which would be more monetarily lucrative—this was especially true for poorer women farmers. Lacking any labour-saving devices and having to undertake all household maintenance activities, these poorer women had no time to plant beans which they could then harvest and process into bean balls for sale. It is also interesting to note that "poorer" members of Bulembu spoke more frequently of hungry periods and benefits gained from an open-access tenure

regime on certain tree species. As one "poor" woman remarked, "During these hungry periods, I cut "nette" (*Parkia bigliobosa*) in the bush to make into a paste for my children."

A revenue matrix constructed with the women's *kafo* in Taxotala indicated some of the income-generating activities women undertake (see figure 24). Groundnut as well as sorghum cultivation are the most important sources of income for Taxotala women farmers. The collection of wild fruits from the bush area surrounding Darsilami is also an important source of income. However, these farmers have experienced a decrease in revenue they gain from wild fruit collection. These farmers attribute this decrease to poor harvesting habits (e.g., using cutlasses). Many women in Taxotala embroider bedclothes, curtains, skirts, and other items with colorful cross-stitch designs. These embroidered items are either sold or become the property of daughters upon their marriages.

Gardening activities constitute only a small proportion of income for Taxotala women. One reason may be that the women have problems obtaining land for gardening. The Mandinka are reluctant to give them land and what land the Mandinka families have given to the Serahulis is not secure—the Mandinkas can take the land back at any time.

Because of government programs such as the provision of seeds and seedlings, fruit tree cultivation has become an important source of income. However, the majority of women do not benefit from these government programs.

(2) Access to Better Quality Land: Serahuli farmers who own cattle, horses, and donkeys are able to cultivate better quality fields located in "Bambadala"¹⁶ and in Senegal. These farmers were invariably men. While over half of the Bulembu women own cattle, no Bulembu women own horses or donkeys; all donkeys and horses belong to men (see figure 19).

As the woman *kafo* president described, all land is vested in the hands of the compound heads who manage the land on behalf of their extended family. It is the responsibility of the compound heads (the majority of whom are men¹⁷) to divide and to allocate land for both the male and female members of the compound. Frequently, however, there is not enough land to divide among everyone. The woman *kafo* president provided a glimpse of this ironic situation, "However small the portion of family land is, the compound head must share this portion with the women in his compound, still there are some women who do not have any land." While this woman's statement is also true for some men, the majority of Bulembu and Taxotala men do not need to borrow land from neighboring villages. As several of the women *kafo* members pointed out, because of

¹⁶ "Bambadala" is a place name referring to the area located between a rocky ridge to the north of Darsilami and the Senegalese border (see figure 4).

¹⁷ See descriptive box 1 for a description of a woman headed household.

their access to horses, donkeys, and carts, Bulembu male farmers can use land in "Bambadala" and borrow or, in some cases, rent land located in Senegal. (Bulembu farmers rent land for approximately 500 CFA.) Originally, the land located in "Bambadala" was "virgin" bush which the men from Bulembu and Taxotala cleared for their use. The act of clearing conferred ownership rights to these Bulembu and Taxotala men.

In contrast, women lack the necessary means of transportation which would enable them to cultivate land in "Bambadala." Because of their "double burden" (i.e., being responsible for domestic as well as agricultural tasks), women must be able to cook breakfast and lunch for their families and to perform various morning household chores before they leave for their fields. They must also be able to return to their homes in time to cook the evening meal. Given these household obligations, women farmers could not walk to fields in "Bambadala" and fulfill these obligations. The only recourse for women farmers is to borrow land, on a short-term basis, from neighboring villages. At present Bulembu and Taxotala women farmers are able to borrow as much land as they request. Borrowing arrangements with neighboring villages remain flexible. However, this type of schedule and borrowing arrangement presents several difficulties for women farmers. First, child care for infants becomes a concern. Second, women farmers may find it more difficult to protect their borrowed fields from bush pigs because of the distance from the village and the need for these women farmers to spend more time at home. Third, women farmers who borrow land are forbidden to plant trees in these fields.

Bulembu women farmers cannot borrow land from Sandu Darsilami families because of the land-use dispute. According to these Bulembu women, the people of Sandu Darsilami have become "bad neighbors" because they are unwilling to lend out land that otherwise lies unused.¹⁸

(3) Gender Division of Labour: From the description presented by the eldest woman resident of Bulembu, before the Serahuli migrated from Bulembu, Casamance, both men and women "held" land (see appendix II). Men and women farmers cleared, plowed, sowed, weeded, and harvested in their own fields, separately. Contact with Mandinka social systems, the introduction of animal traction and mechanization, and the distribution of remittances changed this traditional gender division of labour. Upon arrival, the Serahuli remained first within the compounds of the Mandinka. Subsequently, the Mandinka first settlers, recognizing men as heads of households, gave the Serahuli men land upon which to settle and farm. This pattern of land giving appeared to change in the way men and women "held" land within the Serahuli community. Remittances sent home from abroad accrue to the male members of compounds. These remittances have

¹⁸ There are, however, a few exceptions. About four Sandu Darsilami families continue to lend parcels of land to Bulembu farmers -- although these parcels were lent out before the cemetery land crisis. The women were unsure whether the Sandu Darsilami residents will ask for this land back.

allowed men farmers to purchase horses, donkeys, and farming equipment such as sine hoes. Women farmers have not been so lucky. As a result, women farmers must rely on their male relatives to gain access to draft animals and farming equipment.¹⁹ The result is that now male farmers, who mainly cultivate millet, use animal traction and other equipment first on their own fields. Only after clearing, plowing, and sowing their millet fields do the male farmers clear and plow the fields (predominantly groundnuts fields) of their wives (see photographs 1 and 2). If a husband has several wives, he will first plow and sow the fields of his first wife before moving over to the fields of his second (and other) wife (or wives).

Once their fields are plowed, women farmers sow and weed their fields. The women with whom we spoke remarked that it can be a problem to have to wait for their male relatives to plow their fields. This problematic situation is especially true for second and third wives in a compound. This wait can cause delays in their sowing time.

During the harvest period, male relatives will also assist women by pulling the groundnuts while the women farmers will be responsible for stacking the groundnuts into large heaps. Women are responsible for the processing of the groundnuts (e.g., pounding the seed for certain dishes, roasting and grinding for peanut butter, oil, and soap). Women keep their own stores of groundnuts. To ascertain how women use their groundnuts harvests, the team asked three women to distribute 20 beans (representing their total groundnut harvest last year) among all the different uses of groundnuts. These women participants allocated 5 beans to represent the proportion of groundnuts sold; 5 beans to represent the proportion of groundnuts kept for seeds; and 10 beans to represent the proportion of groundnuts consumed.

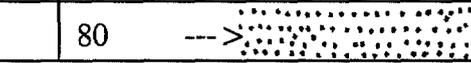
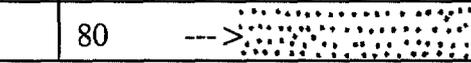
While women farmers do not help their male relatives cultivate millet, they do process the millet harvests. Women are responsible for threshing millet, pounding the millet grain into powder, and cooking the processed millet.

FIGURE 19: WOMEN'S OWNERSHIP OF CATTLE, DONKEYS, AND HORSES

100 beans representing all Bulembu women	— 0 beans - women with horses
	— 80 beans - women with cattle
	— 0 beans - women with donkeys

¹⁹ All of the Bulembu women with whom the team spoke stated that their male relatives share this farming equipment with them free of charge.

FIGURE 20: REVENUE MATRIX WITH A MALE COMPOUND HEAD RANKED "AVERAGE WEALTH" DURING THE RRA WEALTH RANKING EXERCISE²⁰

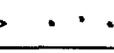
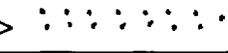
SOURCE OF INCOME	Proportion of total - PRESENT ¹	Proportion of total - PAST ²
Travelling ³	15 ---> 	8 
Farming - groundnuts	2 ---> 	5 
Farming - millet	3 ---> 	5 
Business ⁴	80 ---> 	60 

- 1/ Present = Average over the last five years
 2/ Past = Eleven years ago when the participant first traveled to Europe
 3/ Travelling = Being employed overseas
 4/ Business = Being self-employed primarily overseas but could also be in The Gambia

Note: The team first asked the participant what his sources of income were. The participant was then requested to divide the 100 beans, representing his total income, among his sources of income categories. The participant's division illustrates that "Business" endeavors contribute the most to his total income whereas "Groundnut Farming" contributes the least (80 beans compared to 2 beans). The participant was then asked to compare his present division to the past. This exercise illustrated that the "Business" endeavors contributed a slightly lower proportion to his income (60 beans compared to 80 beans).

²⁰ This family is also among the slave class in Bulembu.

FIGURE 21: REVENUE MATRIX WITH A WOMAN MEMBER OF A COMPOUND RANKED "POOR" ACCORDING TO THE RRA WEALTH RANKING EXERCISE²¹

SOURCE OF INCOME	Proportion of total - PRESENT/ ¹	Proportion of total - PAST/ ²
Groundnuts	50 --> 	10 
Threshing of coos	17 --> 	4 
Gardening	5 --> 	3 
Picking fallen groundnuts remaining in the fields of others after harvest	10 --> 	2 
Growing beans	15 --> 	5 

- 1/ Present = Typical year in the past 5 years. Proportional representation of income from a total proportional representation of 100 beans.
 2/ Past = Before the drought compared to the present allocation.

Note: The team first asked the participant what her sources of income were. The participant was then requested to divide the 100 beans, representing her total income, among her sources of income categories. The participant was then asked to compare her present division to the past.

²¹ This family is also among the slave class in Bulembu.

FIGURE 22: REVENUE MATRIX WITH A MALE MEMBER OF A COMPOUND RANKED "VERY WEALTHY" ACCORDING TO THE RRA WEALTH RANKING EXERCISE²²

SOURCES OF INCOME	Sons in France and Spain	Groundnut farming and selling of the harvest	Shop-keeping of a brother	Selling of Cattle when old or large
PRESENT	70/100	50/100	40/100	40/100
PAST	0/100	22/100	18/100	10/100

Note: This participant seemed unable to divide up the pot of 100 beans and allocate them to different sources of revenue. The participant preferred to take a proportion from the 100 beans for each source.

²² The compound head is also of the slave class.

**FIGURE 23: REVENUE MATRIX WITH THE WOMEN'S *KAFO*:
BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**

SOURCES OF INCOME	PROPORTION OF TOTAL ¹
Groundnut farming and selling	20 
Vegetable gardening (e.g., bitter tomatoes, onions, "karang karang", pepper, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage)	4 
Petty trading - selling smoked fish purchased in Basse	17 
Petty trading - selling condiments for the food bowl	20 
Weaving	12 
Soap-making	14 
Selling cooked bean balls	6 
Selling cooked pancakes	7 

Note: The team asked the participants to list their sources of income. The team then asked the women to divide 100 beans, representing total income, among their sources of income categories. Women are the primary groundnut farmers in Bulembu as well as Taxotala. As this revenue matrix indicates, groundnut cultivation is one of the two most important sources of revenue for the members of the older women's *kafo* in Bulembu. Petty trading during the dry season is the other most important source of revenue.

1/ Total income = 100

**FIGURE 24: REVENUE MATRIX WITH THE WOMEN'S KAFO:
TAXOTALA, DARSILAMI**

SOURCE OF INCOME	Proportion of total - PRESENT ¹	Proportion of total - PAST ¹
Planted fruit trees	9 -->	6
Wild fruits	16 -->	40
Groundnuts and sorghum	38 -->	20
Vegetables	7 -->	3
Sewing and embroidery	14 -->	0
Selling food	5 -->	4
Patron-client activities	11 -->	4

Note: The team asked the participants to list their sources of income. The team then asked the women to divide 100 beans, representing total income, among their sources of income categories.

1/ Total income = 100

FIGURE 25: REVENUE MATRIX WITH A GROUP OF WOMEN: SANDU DARSILAMI

SOURCES OF INCOME	Proportion of Total - PRESENT ¹	Proportion of total - PAST ²
Mangos	10	15
Guava	3 . . .	--
Pepper	10	13
Cassava	10	15
Sweet Potatoes	5	8
Onions	10	--
Bitter Tomatoes	3 . . .	7
Peanuts	28	39
Beans	4	7
Okra	3 . . .	5
Tomatoes	5	8
Cabbage	5	--
Eggplant	2 . .	--
Green leaves	2 . .	3 . . .

Note: The team asked the participants to list their sources of income. The team then asked the women to divide 100 beans, representing total income, among their sources of income categories.

1/ Total income = 100

FIGURE 26: REVENUE MATRIX WITH A GROUP OF MEN: SANDU DARSILAMI

SOURCES OF INCOME	Proportion of total - PAST ¹	Proportion of total - PRESENT ¹
Groundnuts	25	75
Millet	30	70
Sorghum	30	70
Maize	10	90
Beans	5	95
Petty trading	15	85
Livestock	5	95
Cotton	10	90

Note: The team asked the participants to list their sources of income. The team then asked the women to divide 100 beans, representing total income, among their sources of income categories.

1/ Total income = 100

C. VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS

Villagers have created various local institutions, associations, and groups all of which contribute, directly or indirectly, to the sustainable management of resources and to the day-to-day religious and social demands on the time of individual residents. These institutions may be indigenous to the communities or they may be linked to religious and/or governmental or non-governmental agencies. Some of these institutions may be adequately meeting their goals while others may need assistance to achieve a more sustainable use of resources. Team members used the RRA tool known as Venn Diagramming to discover which institutions are important to Darsilami residents. Extensionist and policy makers should be cognizant of the fact that different institutions may have differing importance to men as opposed to women and Serahuli as opposed to Mandinka residents.

Religious and Educationally Based Institutions: For many residents, one of the most important institutions mentioned by men and women and by Serahuli and Mandinka residents alike were the mosques located in the three sub-villages of Darsilami. However, it is interesting to note that the women of Bulembu and Taxotala did not place much importance on the imam as a key individual in their communities. As these women of Bulembu stated, "All he [the imam] does is ask us only to persevere through hardship. He doesn't really understand our problems." Both the men and women of the Serahuli communities of Bulembu and Taxotala felt that the Quranic schools in their communities were key to the religious education of their children most of whom do not go to the government school located in the Sandu Darsilami part of town. In a subsequent meeting with the *alkalo* of Bulembu, the team asked why parents in Bulembu and Taxotala do not send their children to the government school. The acting *alkalo* of Bulembu responded by stating that the Serahulis have had little interest in participating in formal education because, "it has not been our tradition." However, as the acting *alkalo* said, attitudes towards formal education are changing for a number of reasons. First, the Serahuli youth, who want to travel abroad, must first apply for visas and other papers—a process which may be difficult (and costly in terms of bribes) for those who can not read. Second, those who can read and write "take advantage" of those who can not read and write. To prevent this from happening, many Serahulis now want to learn to read and write. In contrast to this situation, the Mandinkas of Sandu Darsilami thought that the government primary school was very important to them.

Wells: Women residents mentioned that wells and large kitchens located in each compound form "the basis of every thing," and thus feature prominently on the Venn Diagram as important institutions. Men residents were more likely to mention that the sources of water for livestock (i.e., village wells and watering troughs) are important to them.

Caste System: For residents of the Serahuli communities of Darsilami, the caste system is an integral part of the Bulembu community. As the women *kafo* members of

Bulembu described, cobblers arrange various ceremonies in the community. Cobblers are also the messengers of those in the noble caste. Likewise, those belonging to the slave caste are responsible for carrying out any directive given to them by those belonging to the noble caste: "If they (the nobles) want them to do anything then they (the slaves) will do it." Frequently, women slaves process the millet, sorghum, and groundnut harvests from the fields of noble farmers. Male slaves work on the fields of noble farmers, attend meetings on behalf of those of the noble caste, etc. In the past the activities undertaken by slaves for the nobles were part of their born responsibilities. Now, however, nobles must pay slaves for their labour. Thus, "slave work" has become a source of income which has allowed some slaves to increase their wealth. In turn, if members of the slave caste run out of food during the year, they can appeal to the *alkalo* who is obligated to give them food.

Women's *Kafos* and Prominent Women: Women's *kafos* (i.e., women's groups) and individual women play important roles in Bulembu, Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami societies. For example, there are two *kafos* in Bulembu: one for middle- to older-aged women and the other for young girls. The *kafos* are important institutions for Bulembu women because it is through the *kafos* that women can generate income. The older women's *kafo* of Bulembu has 167 female members and 6 male members. *Kafo* activities include: establishing a fund to purchase a horse and farming equipment (e.g., a sine hoe), cultivating a communal maize field (about 4 ha.), and hiring out their labour to work on other Bulembu farmer's fields. In the past, they borrowed the land for their communal farm from Sandu Darsilami. Since the land dispute, which arose over the placement of the cemetery, the people of Sandu Darsilami took back this land. The Bulembu women's *kafo* turned to the village of Genda to borrow land for their communal field. The Bulembu women's *kafo* also receives some training in income generating activities such as tie and dye production, soap making, and numeracy and literacy training.

There is also a women elders association. As the *kafo* members described, the women elders help to settle quarrels. They are also practicing herbalists and thus one can turn to them for advise concerning sick children.

The Bulembu women involved in this RRA exercise also stated that there is one women in their community who is noted for her peace-making skills. Other women turn to her to settle various types of quarrels (see figure 32).

Institutions Related to Life Cycles: The Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) and the Assistant Birth Attendants play important roles in the three communities as they bring new residents into the world. Circumcision ceremonies are integral rights of passage in Serahuli and Mandinka culture. In the Serahuli cultures, the male and female smiths in charge of male and female circumcisions (respectively) feature in the Venn Diagrams of Bulembu and Taxotala. The female leader of the cobbler caste also plays an important role in Bulembu society. As the women *kafo* members stated, "She makes the brides beautiful." TBAs also play a role in the settling of marriage disputes.

Overseas Fund: Many men and women from Bulembu and Taxotala have migrated to countries in Europe and elsewhere. For example, taking 22 beans to represent all the youth of Bulembu, women *kafos* members assessed that 16 beans of the 22 beans would represent the proportion of their sons and daughter who have migrated. The remittances these young people send back to their community are important sources of income which Bulembu and Taxotala residents use to meet food and farming needs. Some portion of the remittances is pooled into something called the "Overseas Fund." The *alkalo* manages this fund. In Bulembu, the *alkalo* uses this fund to purchase sacrificial cattle for the various Islamic holy days. The meat is distributed among all the compounds in Bulembu. The *alkalo* may also use this fund to buy condiments such as salt for every compound. In Sandu Darsilami, fewer Mandinka youth have traveled abroad. Thus, Mandinka farmers have had less opportunity to take advantage of remittances to improve their agricultural operations. In fact these types of overseas funds do not show up at all in the Venn Diagrams for Sandu Darsilami.

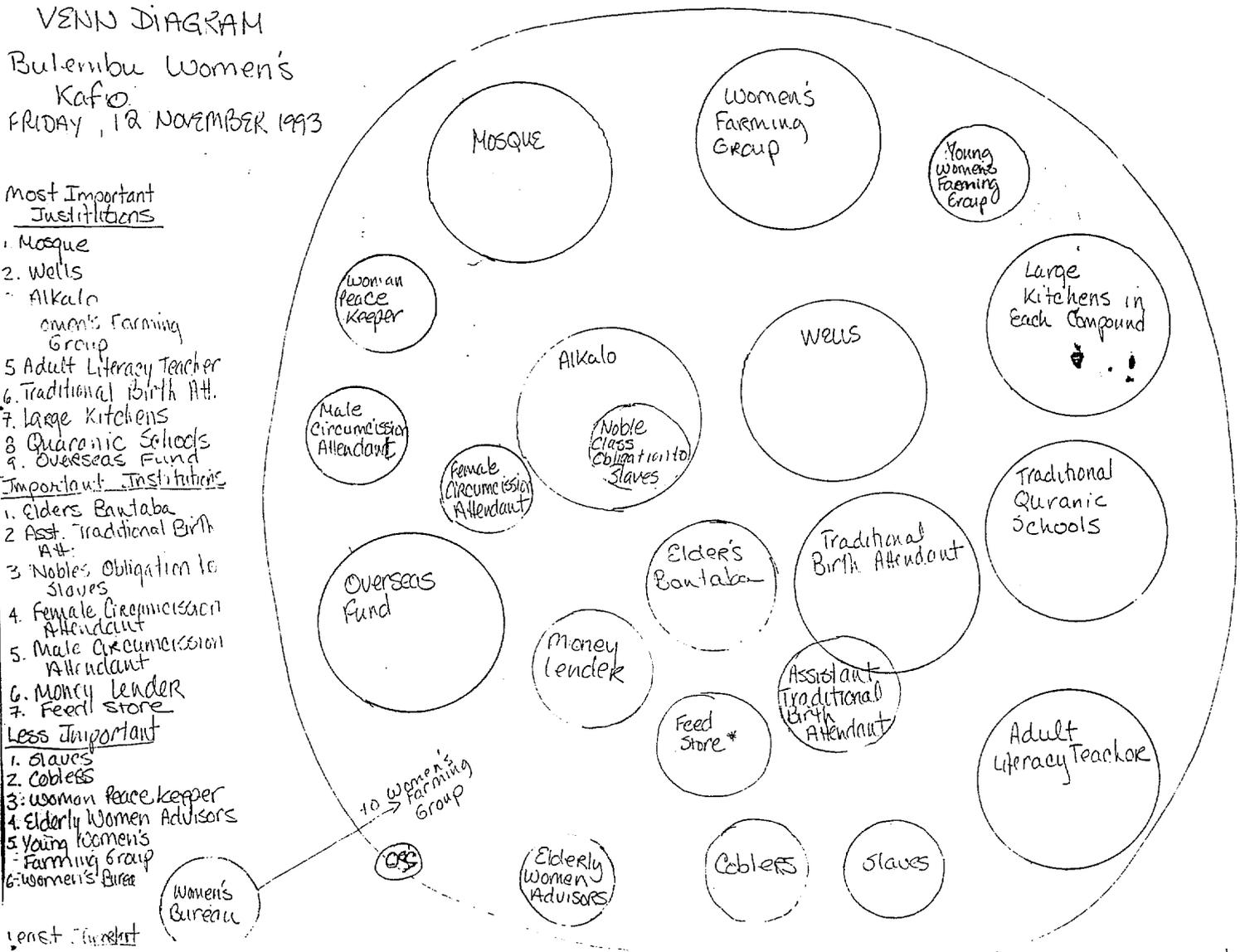
Money Lenders: There is one man in Bulembu who is an important institution unto himself. Because he has been "lucky" to have many sons overseas who have sent him remittances, he has been able to amass savings from which he gives out loans to Bulembu's *kafos* and individual citizens. He charges no interest.

Government and Non-Governmental Organizations: According to residents of Bulembu and Taxotala, few government and NGO organizations offer services in their neighborhoods. For example, several Bulembu women knew of no Forestry Officer visiting their village. As the women stated, "An Agricultural Officer came once and promised he was going to help us but then he never came back." However, Bulembu women *kafos* members spoke highly of the government Adult Literacy and Numeracy Trainer. Indeed, they recommended that more of these trainers should be provided to their community, especially for the women who are increasingly interested in undertaking petty trading enterprises. Bulembu and Taxotala women also mentioned that Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provides food supplements to pregnant and lactating mothers. However, the Bulembu women with whom we spoke said that the CRS center is located in the Sandu Darsilami part of town, and thus they felt that there was some discrimination in the services provided, with the Mandinka women receiving twice their deserved proportion of food supplements. In contrast to the statements made by Serahuli residents, Mandinka residents of Sandu Darsilami depicted the Public Health Center and the agricultural seed store as important institutions.

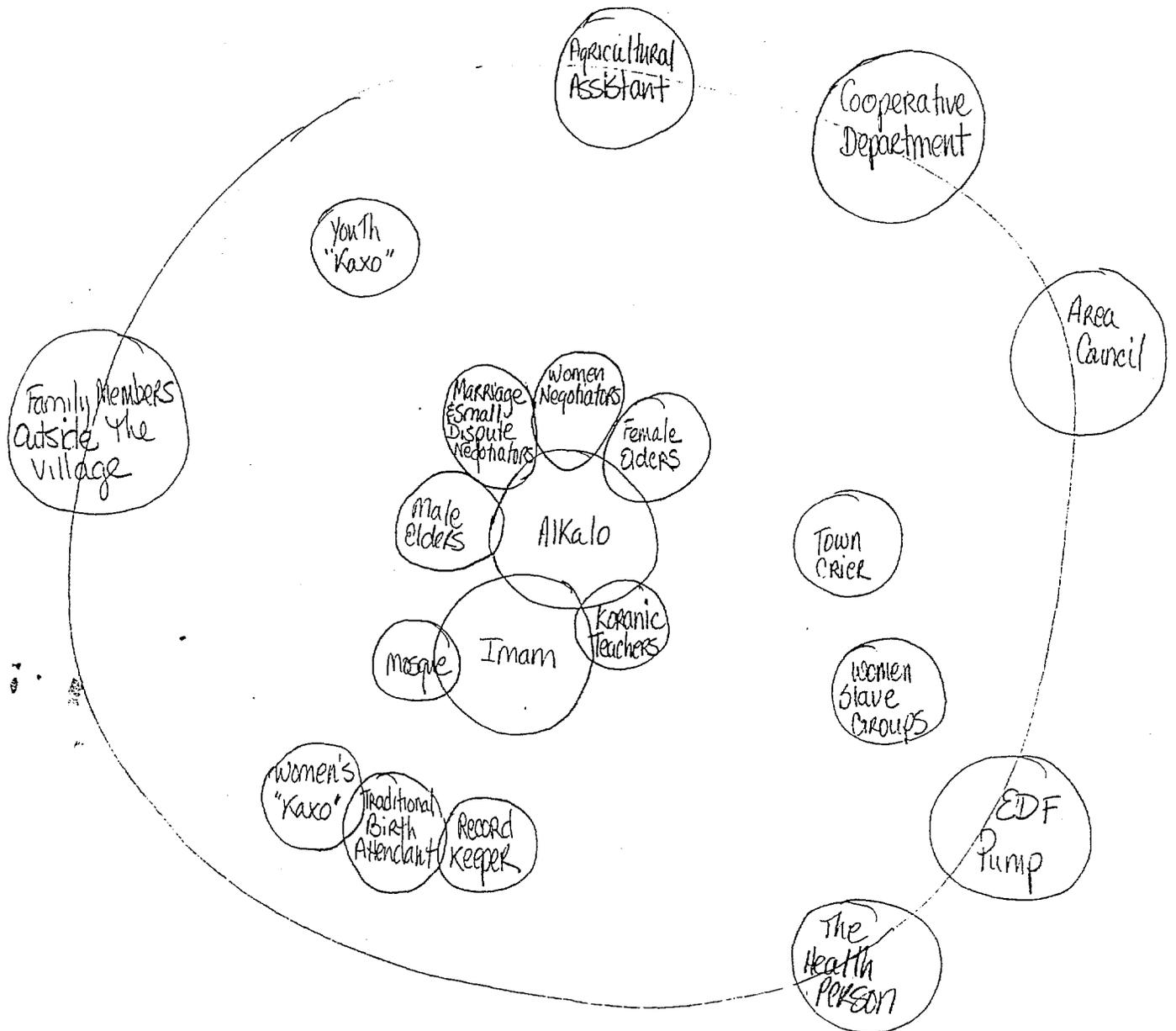
Male Youth Group: The main activity of the male youth group in Bulembu and Taxotala is the hiring-out of their labour to work in the fields of farmers during the rainy season (e.g., clearing fields). For example, Bulembu youth receive about 60 dalasis per day of work. Another activity undertaken by the male youths of Bulembu and Taxotala is the tethering of small ruminants during the rainy season. Young boys are responsible for tethering the small ruminants owned by either their mothers or their fathers. During the rains, these small ruminants are usually tethered in backyards or small unused spaces located between fields. Likewise, in preparation for the rains, cattle herders rotate the

cattle from one field to the next upon the request of individual farmers. This rotation occurs every Wednesday. The cattle are tethered at no expense to the farmer. The farmer has complete access and use of the manure. In Sandu Darsilami, the male youth group has assumed an additional responsibility. These youths enforce any *tonge* placed on resources by the village *alkalo*. They police the area and collect any fines. The fines they collect are pooled and help fund village development activities.

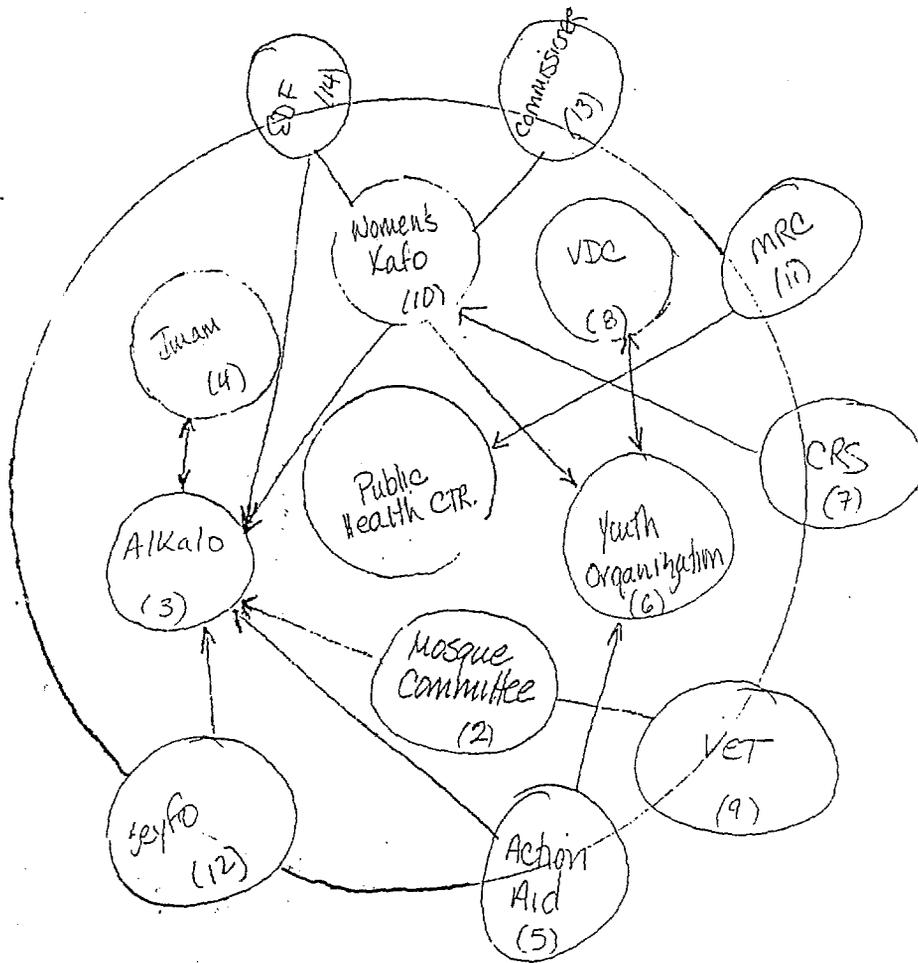
**FIGURE 27: VENN DIAGRAM WITH WOMEN KAFO MEMBERS:
BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**



**FIGURE 28: VENN DIAGRAM WITH A GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN:
TAXOTALA, DARSILAMI**



**FIGURE 29: VENN DIAGRAM WITH A GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN:
SANDU DARSILAMI**



Ranking of Internal Organizations

1. Mosque
2. Alkalo
3. Juwam
4. P.H.C.
5. VDC
- 6: Women's kafo
7. Youth's kafo

Ranking of External Organizations

1. Commissioner
2. Chief
3. Action Aid
4. CRS
5. MRC
6. Vet
7. EDF

D. DISTRICT AND DIVISIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. THE *SEYFO* AND DISTRICT TRIBUNAL

The RRA team interviewed the *seyfo* and district tribunal members of Sandu District. During this interview, these district authorities discussed their main roles and responsibilities concerning land administration and natural resource management, their knowledge of the State Lands Act, and their opinions concerning women's rights to own land.

Roles and Responsibilities

The main role of the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members is that of mediator. If there are problems, disputes, or quarrels within the district, the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members intercede to maintain the peace. The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members will try first to divert a dispute away from the courts. Through informal arbitration and negotiation the *seyfo* and district tribunal members will try to solve a dispute amicably. They try to do this so that the issue will be solved with dispatch. If a matter comes to court, it can take some time before the case is resolved. (See section V.B. for more information of dispute resolution by the district tribunal.)

Another role of the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members is to ensure that taxes are paid and collected properly. In this role, the *seyfo* will meet periodically with the *alkalolu* of his district to insist that the *alkalolu* encourage yard owners and livestock owners to pay their taxes.

The *seyfo* also acts as the district's official representative to other districts, the central government, and non-governmental organizations. In this capacity, the *seyfo* is to ensure that district needs are met by development projects.

The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members also call periodic meetings with *alkalolu* in their district to discuss the problem of bush fires. They encourage the *alkalolu* to establish bush fire committees and to construct fire belts around their villages.

The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members stressed that although Sandu District has a population made up of Fula, Serahuli, and Mandinka, the *seyfo* and district tribunal members all operate under the principle of ethnic equality, i.e., a person is treated fairly regardless of his or her ethnic affiliation. Also, the *seyfo* and district tribunal members are guided by three different sources of law: customary law, Sharia, and statutes.

Knowledge of State Lands Act

The RRA team asked the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members if they had heard of the State Lands Act. Only one of district tribunal members had heard of the Act. The

seyfo and the remaining members of his district tribunal had not heard of it. The one member who had heard of the Act made the following remarks:

The Government now owns all the land. If a structure is to be built, like a mosque, and the person upon whose land the structure is to be built does not agree, then the commissioner can step in to seize the land. But the Act will not really help us... Unused land should be given freely to those in need without having to pay a rent...the *seyfo* should still retain the right to take unused land from land owners and lend this land to those in need.

Women and Land Ownership

The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members said that women do not, nor should they be able to, own land because this would go against tradition.

2. THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

The RRA team also interviewed the commissioner of the Upper River Division (URD). During this interview, the commissioner discussed his main roles and responsibilities concerning land administration and natural resource management, his opinions concerning women and land ownership, and his knowledge of the State Lands Act.

Roles and Responsibilities

The commissioner's role in the administration of land in URD differs from urban to rural areas. The Basse urban area has been "designated" as State land under the Physical Planning Development and Control Act. At the point of "designation," the *alkalolu* and *kabilo* heads of Basse lost their powers and responsibilities as land administrators which they held under the customary tenure system of this area. Designation makes it illegal for the *alkalolu* and *kabilo* heads to allocate (e.g., lend, sell, etc.) land. Two concomitant activities occurred during the designation process. One, the Physical Planning Department of the Ministry of Local Government and Lands designed an urban plan (or "lay-out") for Basse. The plan lays out different zones for residential, agricultural, and public use in Basse. Two, a Divisional Planning Authority was established. The Divisional Planning Authority is to oversee the implementation of the urban plan. For example, the Divisional Planning Authority will oversee the application for grants of residential plots. While the traditional authorities (e.g., *alkalo* and *kabilo* heads) can no longer legally allocate land as they had been doing under customary tenure, they do have a role on this new Divisional Planning Authority (DPA). As the commissioner stated, "The *alkalolu* have become coopted into the Divisional Planning Authority Boards." The commissioner is the chairman of this Board and the *alkalolu*, the various *kabilo* heads, and the Physical Planning Officer are members.

The commissioner felt strongly that, if the government appropriates land for a lay-out area, customary owners of this area should be compensated. Under his direction, the DPA of Basse will provide a "golden handshake" as compensation to the customary owners of land converted to a residential development area. This "golden handshake" will take various forms. The DPA intends to allocate a certain number of plots in the lay-out area to the customary owners. The DPA will allow the traditional owners to continue cultivating the area until the new owner (the lessee) begins to develop the area. Finally, the DPA intends to use application fees to compensate the customary owners' loss of their land.

The commissioner has less of a role to play in the administration of land and management of resources in the rural villages of the division. In the rural areas the commissioner relies on the powers and judgements of the district and village authorities in matters pertaining to land and resource disputes. From time to time, the commissioner and assistant commissioner become involved, as arbitrators, in such disputes. The commissioner's role as arbitrator is discussed in section V.C.1.

The commissioner stated that only upon the request of a representative from the Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife Department will he become involved in the management of other natural resources in his division. While he approves (or disapproves) the applications for tree cutting, selling, and transporting permits directed to his office from the various *seyfos* in his division, the commissioner stated that he relies mainly on the *seyfos* to determine the validity of these applications. The commissioner also recently learned that he has the authority to prevent a leaseholder from felling a tree on leased land. The commissioner proceeded to tell the RRA team of a case in which a leaseholder wanted to cut down two silk cottonwood (*Ceiba pentandra*) trees on his land. This leaseholder had heard that a bridge is to be built across the River Gambia in Basse. His land was located in the path of the planned bridge construction area. Thus, the land owner thought he would need to build a permanent structure on this land in order to receive just compensation from the GOTG. Otherwise, the leaseholder feared he would receive nothing for his property. The Forestry Department, however, forbade him from cutting the trees. The leaseholder protested. The disputants, i.e., the leaseholder and the Forestry Department, both appealed to the commissioner. Lacking complete knowledge of the Forestry Regulations, the commissioner deemed that a leaseholder was completely free to do as s/he wishes on his or her property. He, therefore, gave his consent for the trees to be cut. It was only after discussing the case with the magistrate (and after the trees were felled) that the commissioner learned that it is within his purview to prevent a leaseholder from felling trees on his or her property.

Women and Land Ownership in Rural Areas

As the commissioner stated, women traditionally have had only "a minor role in the allocation and management of land, except perhaps rice lands." He went on to state that it is very rare for women to inherit land under customary tenure; land is usually inherited by the eldest son of a family.

Women and Land Ownership in Urban "Designated" Areas

The commissioner stated that men are granted land parcels at a higher percentage than women because those men on the Divisional Planning Authority Boards are of the opinion that women will be less able to develop a parcel of land. The commissioner stated:

while I believe in equality of rights, I also believe in equality of responsibilities. Women should therefore be required to develop a parcel of land just as men do. And because of this I would have to be convinced that a woman applicant was in the position to develop the land...(Indeed) I know many of these women (applicants) and I know that they don't even have the means to build a hut. I just laugh even though they come in sophisticatedly dressed.

The State Lands Act

The commissioner stated that he had not received any documentation on the State Lands Act from the appropriate ministerial office. As the commissioner stated, he only recently was appointed to his position. This commissioner said that perhaps the previous commissioner knew about the Act but that he knew nothing of it. He lamented the fact that there was no information sharing between the previous commissioner and himself.

V. RESOURCE USE CONFLICTS AND RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

A. VILLAGERS AND VILLAGE AUTHORITIES, CONFLICTS AND RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

The three RRA teams interviewed several key individuals and groups to obtain information about the nature of disputes and resolution mechanisms pursued at the village level. As in other parts of The Gambia, Darsilami participants indicated that *alkalolu*, imams, and designated women play important roles in the resolution of disputes, conflicts and quarrels at the village level. This section describes the types of disputes these "village institutions" try to settle. However, separating village institutions from district and divisional institutions is primarily an heuristic tool. The various institutions at all these levels interact. The teams' conversations with the imams and the *alkalolu* of Darsilami, and the *seyfos* and his district tribunal of Sandu District, and with the commissioners and magistrates of URD all point to the fact that different actors are drawn into disputes and all can exert influence at different times to resolve disputes. However, a pattern is discernable. According to several village participants, in the past, problems were solved at the village level. Now problems frequently escalate to a point where it is necessary for outsiders (e.g., the commissioner) to intercede. According to some village residents, this trend results from either residents "feeling more free" about taking their grievances and disputes to the *seyfo* and the commissioner, or because the youth of today "are more reluctant to follow the directives of their elders."

1. THE IMAM OF BULEMBU

The Bulembu RRA sub-team interviewed the imam of Bulembu to ascertain his role and responsibilities in the community, and to discuss what type of disputes he mediates. The Bulembu imam mentioned that his first role is to preside over marriages, births, and deaths. Second, he leads prayers at the mosque. Third, he arbitrates disputes. Fourth, he holds Arabic schooling in his compound. In addition to these official duties, the imam remains a farmer. However, as he stated several times in our discussion, his responsibilities as an imam hinder his farming activities. Because the position of the imam is an unpaid position, the imam stated that while he is busy all the time he is a very poor farmer.²³

The Bulembu RRA sub-team also constructed a dispute matrix with the imam. During this RRA exercise, the imam indicated that he becomes involved in nine different types of disputes. The RRA sub-team asked the imam to describe these disputes—this

²³ The imam's assessment of his economic position was substantiated by the RRA Wealth Ranking exercise. The imam was consistently rated among the poorest of the poor. The position of the imam also was not included in the Venn Diagram constructed by women *kafo* members (see figure 27).

description is presented below and closely parallels figure 30. (Note that the team has included a description of all the types of disputes heard by the imam and other institutions. Nonresource disputes, especially those pertaining to divorce and marriage, indicate the potential vulnerability of certain members of the Darsilami population. In particular, women who are divorced or widowed may have difficulties obtaining access to, and maintaining control of, resources.)

(1) Intra-Village Field Boundary Disputes: As the imam described, these types of disputes arise when one farmer declares a particular line between fields to be the correct border while another farmer denies the validity of this declaration. The majority of these disputes are resolved by the *alkalo*. The imam becomes involved only as a witness who can attest to the correct location of the boundary in dispute.

The imam estimated that these types of disputes have been on the increase over the last five years. On average three boundary disputes arise per year (over the past five years). In the period between 1964 to 1979, these disputes were almost non-existent. (The imam placed only 3 beans in this category.) In explaining this trend, the imam stated, "In the past our elders used only their hands. Now farmers are using machines...In the past what ten people could cultivate, now one person can cultivate with machines." Increased use of mechanized farming equipment has contributed to the scarcity of land for the Bulembu farmers and, thus, according to the imam, to the increased frequency of field boundary disputes.

(2) Inter-Village Field Ownership Disputes: As the imam discussed, farmers from Bulembu have been borrowing fields from families in Touba (a neighboring village to the east of Bulembu Darsilami). The imam could remember one case, which occurred in the past five years, in which a Bulembu farmer had been borrowing land from a family from Touba for nearly 40 years. Over this period of time, the Bulembu farmer began to consider himself to be the rightful owner of the land. The Touba family contested his claim of ownership. The two parties were unable to come to a compromise at the village level. As a result, the family from Touba went directly to the commissioner in Basse and requested him to intercede. The commissioner summoned the two parties to Basse in order to hear their testimonies. He also sent a delegation to visit the field. After deliberation, the commissioner stated that the field belonged to the people of Touba and that the farmer from Bulembu should return the field to its rightful owner.

The imam estimated that inter-village land ownership disputes are more frequent today than in the past. Approximately three such disputes arose per year over the period from 1989 to 1993. In the period between 1964 to 1979, these disputes were non-existent. (The imam placed no beans in this category.) Reasons for this trend were similar to those given for the increase in intra-village field boundary disputes (see above).

(3) Crop Damage: Disputes arise when a farmer's cattle or small ruminants enter into another farmer's field or food stocks. These types of disputes can arise among farmers in Bulembu, or among farmers in Bulembu, Taxotala, Sandu Darsilami and

neighboring villages. As the imam stated, the *alkalo* of Bulembu has placed a *tonge* on cattle and small ruminants, i.e., livestock owners are responsible for preventing their livestock from damaging crops and food stocks. If this prohibition is violated, the livestock owners must pay compensation to those who have suffered the damage. Although the *alkalo* imposes the fine, damage still occurs and, in fact, the imam has seen an increase in the number of these types of disputes. Every year there are approximately 3 major disputes which need arbitration by the *alkalo*. In the past 55 years, however, the imam estimated that there were only 8 disputes due to livestock damaging crops and food stocks. The imam attributed the increased incidence of these disputes to two factors: the general lack of discipline and the shortage of land.

(4) Marriage: There are cases when two men want to marry one woman. The parents may not agree upon which man should marry the woman. The woman herself may not agree to marry either one of the men. The imam intervenes so that the individuals involved in these types of marriage disputes will not need to go to the *seyfo*. The imam will just talk to the individuals until there is a compromise.

(5) Marriage: A marriage dispute may arise when a wife's request to visit her parents is denied by her husband. The wife may be discontented and harbor ill feelings bred by the husband's denial, while the husband may resort to wife-beating. Eventually the wife may "run away" to her parents home. The imam stated that he will intercede to convince the wife to return to her husband's home. The imam, however, will not get involved in the actual decision of the husband to prevent his wife from visiting her parents.

(6) Divorce: There are two types of divorce cases that the imam mediates; one in which the wife wants a divorce and the other in which the husband wants a divorce. The imam mentioned three reasons for divorce: lack of maintenance from the husband, lack of love in the marriage, and/or ill health of one of the spouses. With all types of divorce, the imam will intercede to ask each party to persevere. The imam will make a special effort with divorce cases in which the husband and wife are of some "blood relation." As the imam stated, divorce among those who are related will adversely affect the extended family. The imam will only grant a divorce after his repeated entreaties fail to convince the married couple to stay married. The imam will grant the parties a divorce under Sharia law.²⁴

²⁴ Under Sharia, the divorced wife is forbidden to re-marry until four (4) months have past after the granting of the divorce. This is a law set down by Sharia called *aido*.

(7) Divorce: After a divorce, a husband may also seek to recover the *huteh*, or pre-marriage dowry²⁵ given by a husband to his wife's family. In all cases, as the imam stated, the dowry must be returned to the husband (even in cases of wife beating).²⁶

In the last five years, the imam has only had to grant five divorces. Even though this is a small number, these cases still represent an increase from the previous 55 years. The imam could only remember one divorce in the past. He attributed the increase in divorce to "women being less disciplined."

(8) Custody of Children: After a divorce, there may arise disagreements over who should have custody of the children. In the last five years, the imam could remember no custody cases. In the past 55 years, however, the imam estimated that there were ten custody cases. He attributed the decrease in custody cases to contemporary sentiments toward children in general. As the imam put it, "In the past all human beings were valued. Now, even your own children you don't care about."

(9) Quarrels at Wells: Quarrels also erupt at the wells while women are drawing water. These quarrels can be of two types: disagreements over who should draw water first, or disagreements over issues unrelated to the queue for water.

Over the last 5 years, women have quarrelled rather infrequently at the wells. As the imam assessed, there have been approximately 5 such quarrels. Even when these quarrels erupt, most are solved by the parties themselves with the assistance of their respective family members. In the past, the imam stated that there were even fewer such quarrels. (He placed only 10 beans to represent all such quarrels from 1964 to 1979.) He also commented that people were more respectful in the past.

We concluded our interview with the imam of Bulembu by asking him if women can own land. According to the imam of Bulembu, women farmers living in Bulembu do not and cannot own land because, "this is not our tradition."

2. BULEMBU WOMEN INVOLVED IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Bulembu RRA team also interviewed a prominent woman from Bulembu who is instrumental in settling disputes in the village. She is called upon to settle disputes arising among women *kafo* members concerning membership fees, administration of *kafo* activities, quarrels that occur between two married people, quarrels that occur at wells, and disputes that arise when a woman's goat or sheep cause damage to food stocks or crops (see figure 32). Through intermittent discussions, the Bulembu peacemaker strives

²⁵ In Bulembu, an average dowry price is three cattle or Dalasis 1500.

²⁶ The husband, however, has no rights over the *nabureh* (or the post-marriage gifts given by the husband to the wife's family) upon divorce.

to negotiate a settlement between the disaffected parties. If she does not succeed in resolving the dispute, she will refer the matter to the *alkalo*.

FIGURE 30: DISPUTE MATRIX WITH THE IMAM: BULEMBU, DARSILAMI

TIME\TYPE OF DISPUTE	PAST (1964-1988)	PRESENT (1989-1993)
Bulembu neighbors fighting over farmland borders	3 . . .	15
Bulembu citizens quarreling over farmland borders with people from other villages (including Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami)	0	15
Marriage—parents arguing over who their daughter should marry	5	0
Marriage—divorces called for by either the husband or the wife	1 .	4
Marriage—custody of children	10	0
Marriage—husband prevents his wife from visiting her parents (may lead to wife beating)	5	3
Land dispute over the cemetery	N/A	1 .
Fighting among two brothers	3 . . .	1 .
Crop damage by cattle and small ruminants	8	15
Women quarreling at the well	5	5

Note: The imam insisted on trying to recall the exact number of cases which he has helped to resolve. Thus the numbers above reflect his recollections of actual numbers of cases rather than proportions.

FIGURE 31: LEVELS OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Present (Period from 1989 to 1993)

	— 60 Decided at village level
100 bean	— 30 Decided by <i>seyfo</i>
(total case)	— 10 Decided by the commissioner

Past (Period from 1964 to 1988)

	— 75 Decided at village level
100 beans	— 20 Decided by <i>seyfo</i>
(total case)	— 5 Decided by the commissioner

**FIGURE 32: DISPUTE MATRIX WITH THE WOMAN PEACE KEEPER:
BULEMBU, DARSILAMI**

TYPE OF DISPUTE	PRESENT	PAST
<i>Kafo</i> membership - haste in benefiting from membership	20/50	
Lack of love in marriages - people who are married but not in love	9/50	
Disagreements among <i>kafo</i> members concerning meeting attendance	10/50	
Quarrels at the well - queuing	7/50	
Quarrels at the well - washing things at well site	5/50	
Quarrels over boundaries	3/50	5/50
Divorce	8/50	
Livestock damage to food stocks and fighting among small ruminants (mostly during dry season)	15/50	15/50

Note: Because of time limitations, we did not compare each category of dispute across time. Rather we asked this participant to assess the change in frequency of quarrels over boundaries and quarrels due to food stock and crop damage by small ruminants.

3. THE IMAM OF TAXOTALA AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The RRA team interviewed and constructed two dispute matrices with the imam of Taxotala. This interview provided an insight into the types of disputes arising in Taxotala. The matrices shown in figures 33 and 34 illustrate the following important points.

Crop Damage: While disputes over crop damage by cattle are rare within Taxotala, they are common between Taxotala and people of other villages such as Darsilami Mandinka. In the past, disputes arising over crop damage by livestock were few. In the past, people owned fewer livestock, and any such disputes involving a conflict between livestock and farmers were solved interpersonally. Now these types of disputes are the most frequent and no longer solved interpersonally. The *alkalo*, the imam, and group of elders must intercede if these types of disputes are to be resolved.

Land Disputes: Land disputes are more common now than they were in the past. In the past²⁷, the elders of Taxotala were able to resolve land disputes involving Taxotala residents. Now, most land disputes are only resolved with the intercession of the government.

FIGURE 33: DISPUTE MATRIX WITH THE IMAM OF TAXOTALA

TYPE OF DISPUTE	PRESENT ¹	PAST ¹
Marriage	11 -->	7
Disputes among household members	27 -->	12
Land	30 -->	7
Crop damage by livestock	32 -->	10

1/ proportional frequency out of 100

²⁷ about fifteen (15) years ago

FIGURE 34: DISPUTE MATRIX WITH THE IMAM OF TAXOTALA

DISPUTE/ RESOLUTION		Amicably settled	Settled by the <i>alkalo</i> or the imam	Settled by the <i>seyfo</i> and district tribunal	Settled by a formal court of law
Marriage disputes	Past	X	X	X	
	Present	X	X	X	
Disputes among household members	Past	X	X		
	Present	X	X	X	
Land disputes	Past	X	X		
	Present		X	X	X
Crop damage by livestock	Past	X	X	X	
	Present		X	X	

4. INTERVIEW WITH, AND EXPLANATION OF DISPUTE MATRICES CONSTRUCTED BY, TWO GROUPS IN SANDU DARSILAMI

The Sandu Darsilami RRA team found it difficult to discuss disputes with the village participants. The RRA team surmised that the *alkalo* and the imam were reluctant to discuss potentially sensitive issues given their recent experience with the ill-feelings bred by the cemetery dispute. The RRA team did, however, talk with two groups, one composed of men and the other composed of women. The results from these interviews are shown in the dispute matrices, presented in figures 35 and 36. The types of disputes arising in Sandu Darsilami are similar in nature to those arising in Taxotala and Bulembu, with the exception of disputes arising over the *alkaloship*.

A group of men with whom the RRA team spoke assessed that the most frequent disputes arising in Sandu Darsilami were those relating to farmland boundary disputes, crops damage by livestock, and quarrels arising among women at the wells. Disputes arising from crop damage by cattle are frequent among the land users of the rice, backyard and inner fields agro-ecological zones. Bush fires arising in the outer field ecological zone can also be a source of disputes, especially when the identity of the person who has started a bush fire is contested. Most of these three types of disputes are resolved at the village level either within the home or by a group of elders in the community. The matrix also reveals that the post of the *alkaloship*, as it has become more politicized, has been the source of disputes. This type of dispute and that of "land use" are settled with the intercession of the district *seyfo* and the commissioner.

The most frequent disputes involving the women of Sandu Darsilami are those pertaining to the allocation of garden beds in the women's *kafo* garden, quarrels pertaining to the queue at the well, and "other" types of disputes. It is interesting to note that all the disputes in which women are involved are settled at the village level. Women are also less likely to plant trees, thus, tree planting on borrowed land does not arise as a source of potential dispute for women farmers in Sandu Darsilami.

FIGURE 35: DISPUTE MATRIX WITH A GROUP OF MEN: SANDU DARSILAMI

TYPE OF DISPUTE	FREQUENCY ¹	ELDERS, HOME, INDIVIDUALS	ALKALO	SEYFO	COMMISSIONER
<i>Alkaloship</i>	2 			X	X
Marriage	10 	X			
Farmland boundaries	20 	X			
Control of animals	10 	X			
Crop damage by animals	18 	X			
Settlement areas: intra-family B/T <i>kabilos</i>	5 	X			
Membership of village youth <i>kafo</i>	10 	X			
Women's quarrels at wells	15 	X	X		
Caste distinction	0				
Tree planting on borrowed land	10 	X			
Land use dispute	0				

1/ Out of 100

B. DISTRICT AUTHORITIES, CONFLICTS, AND RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

The whole RRA team traveled to the village of Diabugu to interview the *seyfo* and district tribunal members of Sandu District. Seven district tribunal court members were present including the *seyfo*. Two members were "absent."²⁸ Three additional *alkalolu* from Diabugu and two other villages were present along with the imam of Diabugu. The court's interpreter and several badge messengers were also present. In total, we had about 25 people present during this session. With the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members the RRA team constructed a dispute matrix with which the team learned of the types of disputes mediated by the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members. In the course of constructing the dispute matrix, the team asked the district tribunal members to provide examples of each of the disputes. Their examples are described below and follow closely figure 37.

(1) Compound Settlement Disputes: These arise when two members of the same extended family join one compound. One of the members may decide that he or she wants his or her own house within the compound perimeters. The compound head may then decide not to allow the individual to build another house. A dispute may ensue. These types of disputes arise "once in a while," and thus the district tribunal only placed 3 beans within this category.

(2) Protection of Livestock Drinking Pools: Farmers are often asked not to plant their agricultural crops near livestock drinking pools in an effort to prevent disputes arising out of cattle damaging crops.

(3) Passage by Carts and Other Transport Vehicles Along Streets in Villages and Roadways in Farmlands: Streets and roadways in villages and farmlands are often too narrow to permit the passage of ox carts. Disputes may arise when these carts knock down a compound fence or damage crops.

(4) Housing Disputes Due to Migration: As the district tribunal members described, often when a member of a family travels abroad, s/he will return with the funds to modernize his/her family's compound. The returned Gambian will instruct his/her family to tear down the old structure and to erect a new one with a corrugated roof and wooden doors. After this construction has finished and some time passes, a quarrel may occur and the returned Gambian may decide to leave his/her family compound. At this point, s/he may want to dismantle the house and take such items as the corrugated sheets. The quarrel will turn into a dispute that the district tribunal will need to help resolve.

(5) Recovery Suits Over Marriage Gifts: The district tribunal members provided an example of such a suit. Often a man may marry a woman who owns cattle. During the course of the marriage, he may borrow the cattle. If a divorce occurs while the man is still

²⁸ These two members had died and their positions had never been filled—a policy pursued by the Ministry of Local Government and Lands to reduce the number of DT members.

borrowing the cattle, he may be reluctant to return the cattle. The woman will seek the assistance of the district tribunal to recover her cattle.

(6) Recovery of Property Given for Safe Keeping: One person may give another person money or other property such as jewelry for safe keeping. The other person may end up using the property ("squandering it") and the owner of the property may enlist the assistance of the district tribunal to recovery the value of the property.

(7) Disputes Over Cattle Ownership: Theft of small ruminants and cattle are quite prevalent in Sandu District. Often what may happen is that a livestock owner may find that his or her livestock has been claimed by some else. The owner may ask the district tribunal to ascertain the rightful ownership of the livestock in question.

(8) Quarrels at Water Sources: Often quarrels may erupt at hand pump wells as one woman may jump her position in line.

(9) Inter-Village Boundary Disputes: The *seyfo* will usually try to resolve these types of disputes through informal arbitration. The *seyfo* will first refer the matter back to the *alkalolu* of the villages in which the land dispute erupted. If the *alkalolu* are unable to resolve the dispute, the *seyfo* will send one of his district tribunal members to the field in question. The member will informally investigate the dispute primarily to ascertain the history of the field from witnesses who saw or know of how the field was cleared. If through this informal negotiation process, the dispute remains unresolved then the case will be formally brought to the district tribunal. In court, the *seyfo* is empowered to request that the disputants and witnesses swear on the Koran when presenting testimony. The district tribunal members seemed to feel that this procedure helps to solve disputes.

(10) Intra-Village Boundary Disputes: A similar procedure will be pursued by the *seyfo* if an intra-village boundary dispute arises.

(11) Crop Damage By Cattle: If these types of cases come to court, the *seyfo* and district tribunal members again rely on expert witnesses who can confirm or refute the claim of the plaintiff. If the claim is affirmed then the *seyfo* will send a badge messenger to the field in question to assess the damage. The assessment of the badge messenger will be accepted, and not the assessments presented by the individual farmer whose crops were damaged. If the plaintiff is not satisfied with the assessed value of damage then s/he can take the matter to a higher court.

(12) Agricultural Encroachment onto Cattle Tracks: The *alkalolu*, the *seyfo*, and district tribunal members will advise farmers not to extend their farms onto cattle tracks. As the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members stated, the *alkalolu*, in consultation with their village members, will designate the location, number, and size of cattle tracks. When the tracks cross territory boundaries, the *alkalolu* of the two territories will liaise to share information. If stranger-cattle owners come into the area, they usually ask the *alkalolu* where

they should pass. If a farmer does encroach on a track, a conflict may erupt and a case may be brought before the district tribunal. In these cases, the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members will advise the farmer to cease farming in the cattle track. If the farmer does not agree, the *seyfo* will request that the commissioner summon the farmer to his office.

(13) Bush Fires: Bush fire cases are brought before the district tribunal when the identity of the arsonist is in question or when a fine needs to be imposed. The Forestry Department personnel may bring these cases before the district tribunal. Through a process of investigation and a hearing, the district tribunal decides these cases and imposes a fine on the guilty parties.

FIGURE 37: DISPUTE MATRIX WITH SANDU DISTRICT TRIBUNAL

DISPUTE TYPE	PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF FREQUENCY
Marriage	30 
Child custody	10 
Inter-village farmland	1 
Farmland boundaries	10 
Debts	2 
Theft	6 
Fighting	5 
Crop damage by cattle	7 
Disputes over cattle ownership	2 
Use of cattle tracks	3 
Protection of livestock drinking pools	1 
Inheritance of property	1 
Use of insulting language	3 
Adultery	1 
Compound settlement disputes	3 
Passage by carts along village streets	1 
Passage by carts along roadways in farmlands	1 
Housing disputes due to migration	1 
Bush fires	3 
Forests	4 
Recovery suits over marriage gifts	(infrequent)
Recovery of property given for safe-keeping	2 
Quarrels at water sources	2 

Note: The *seyfo* and district tribunal were asked to divide a pile of 200 beans across the different types of disputes in order to show the frequency with which they hear the particular type of dispute.

C. DIVISIONAL AUTHORITIES, CONFLICTS, AND RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

1. THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

The RRA team spoke with the commissioner of Upper River Division (URD) about his role in settling land and other resource disputes in URD. The commissioner said that his main role in rural land administration is that of arbitrator. Disputants will either come to him directly before going to a district tribunal, or they will come to him on appeal from a district tribunal court. The most frequent disputes the commissioner becomes involved in arise from questions of ownership. Disputes in URD also often arise because of friction between farmers and cattle owners and herders. There is not enough grazing land in URD. As a consequence, herders must take their cattle to MacArthur Island Division (MID).

Disputants Who Come Directly to the Commissioner: In this instance, the commissioner will try to refer the parties back to the district tribunal because, as the commissioner stated, he feels the district tribunal are in a better position to settle disputes. If he personally knows the disputants, or if the dispute is "politically motivated," then he may get involved immediately. The commissioner gave one example of such a dispute which was politically motivated and personally known to him. Recently, a prominent marabout wished to build a mosque in the Basse area. The traditional authorities (e.g., the *alkalo* and group of elders) in Basse claimed that the land upon which the marabout wanted to build his mosque was owned by one *kabilo* in Basse. Likewise, the traditional authorities of Manneh Kunda (a small town located adjacent to Basse) claimed ownership of the land. The commissioner attributed the occurrence of this dual claim to the potential of the land parcel to generate tax revenues for a particular town once the land was developed with a mosque. As the commissioner stated, he fortunately was from this area and, therefore, was able to resolve the dispute amicably by talking to the disputing parties.

Disputants Who Come on Appeal: The commissioner oversees the applications of customary laws in the tribunals by reviewing decisions taken by the various district tribunals in his division. He will also consider the appeals of any disputant who contests a decision of the district tribunal. He will either up-hold the decision of the district tribunal or refer the case to the Supreme Court for a retrial. He will not refer cases to the group tribunal as he feels that the group tribunal only encourages people to appeal. As the commissioner stated, it is rather easy for obstinent individuals to appeal to the group tribunal. However, because it is costly, in terms of time and money, to appeal to the Supreme Court individuals, however obstinate, may be more likely to accept the decision of a district tribunal. Thus, dispute resolution would be kept at its lowest level.

2. THE MAGISTRATE OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE FOR BASSE, URD

The magistrate has few responsibilities dealing with land tenure conflicts in URD. Most land conflicts are referred to the district tribunals. Occasionally, however, the commissioner or other individuals seek the magistrate's advise on legal rulings. The

magistrate also has litigate powers but he chooses not to use these powers; he defers to the district authorities in land matters. The magistrate, however, has no appellate powers since district tribunals and magistrate courts are parallel courts. The magistrate presides over criminal cases. Sometimes these criminal cases can involve natural resource matters such as illegal logging, bush fires, cruelty to animals (poisoning, etc.), and illegal hunting. A land dispute may also be the cause of criminal action, e.g., two land owners may begin to fight if there is a disagreement. The magistrate also becomes involved in cases of cattle theft. As the law stands now, the district tribunals can only impose a maximum fine of D1000. This is an inappropriate fine for cattle theft because one cow can cost anywhere from D1500 to D2500. To circumvent this limit on fines, a district tribunal may establish a ruling and then refer the case over to the magistrate court for the imposition of a more appropriate fine. Any fines imposed by his court are deposited into a central revenue fund.

The magistrate also guards the rights of ownership conferred to an individual by a lease, e.g., the right to farm, develop, and enjoy the benefits of a parcel of leased land. In terms of the right of a leaseholder to cut down trees on his/her property, the magistrate stated, "A leaseholder may enjoy them (the trees) but it is an understanding that one has usufructory rights to the trees..." However, whether the leaseholder can cut the trees or not, is "a policy matter not a legal matter."

The RRA team asked the magistrate if he knew of the State Lands Act. He had heard of it and had the following comments. He said the Act has a provision which recognizes customary ownership and ensures compensation if the State acquires land held under customary tenure.

VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. POLICY CONCERNS RAISED BY THE RESOURCE USERS

Throughout the RRA team members' stay in Bulembu, Taxotala, and Sandu Darsilami, villagers expressed their concerns and made several policy recommendations. These concerns and recommendations came out during semi-structured interviews, mapping exercises and in casual conversations during meal time. In most instances, these concerns and recommendations were expressed with a great deal of frustration; many residents felt that they have talked and talked over the years to various "outsiders" without seeing much change. The RRA team members' thus felt it necessary, at the very least, to document these concerns. What follows is a list of these concerns and recommendations.

LAND AND FARMING SYSTEM PROBLEMS	SANDU DARSILAMI	TAXOTALA	BULEMBU
	Land abundance but lack of mechnization.	Land scarcity.	Land scarcity.
	Declining soil fertility.	Declining soil fertility.	Declining soil fertility.
	Land left unused; lack of farming implements.	No fallowing because of land scarcity; fertilizer-use more necessary.	No fallowing because of land scarcity; fertilizer-use more necessary.
	Lack of access to chemical fertilizers.	Fertilizers not easily available or expensive.	Lack of access to chemical fertilizers.
	High striga infestation.	Striga infestation.	Striga infestation.
	Fear that their status as original settlers and therefore land owners is threatened.	Unequal distribution of land among compounds; poorest compounds have no backyard fields and no means to travel to Senegal to rent land.	Inefficient use of mechanical agricultural implements. Unequal distribution of land among compounds; poorest compounds have no backyard fields and no means to travel to Senegal to rent land.
	No access to markets for vegetable production.	The poor use the unproductive Koche land.	The poor use the unproductive Koche land.
		Disputes are more common now than in the past.	

LIVESTOCK	SANDU DARSILAMI	TAXOTALA	BULEMBU
	<p data-bbox="451 327 730 389">Inadequate grazing areas for small ruminants.</p> <p data-bbox="451 741 755 803">Crop damage by cattle and small ruminants.</p> <p data-bbox="451 963 690 1025">No livestock services extentionist.</p> <p data-bbox="451 1218 730 1249">Disease among chickens.</p>	<p data-bbox="792 327 1101 389">Inadequate grazing land for cattle and small ruminants.</p> <p data-bbox="792 486 1101 549">Inadequate amount of cattle tracks.</p> <p data-bbox="792 741 1047 803">High incidents of crop damage disputes.</p> <p data-bbox="792 839 1101 901">Inadequate watering points for cattle in the dry season.</p>	<p data-bbox="1135 327 1396 420">Inadequate dry season grazing areas for cattle and small ruminants.</p> <p data-bbox="1135 486 1356 549">No cattle tracks for Bulembu herds.</p> <p data-bbox="1135 584 1421 708">Inadequate penning space for small ruminants both within and outside the settlement area.</p> <p data-bbox="1135 839 1437 870">Inadequate watering holes.</p> <p data-bbox="1135 963 1429 1056">Lack of extension services, especially pertaining to vaccinations.</p>

TREES AND FOREST RELATED PROBLEMS	SANDU DARSILAMI	TAXOTALA	BULEMBU
	<p>Lack of access to tree seedlings.</p> <p>Forestry laws can create bush fires—need early burning policy.</p> <p>Knowledge of various Forestry Regulations is limited—they know only about what species not to cut.</p> <p>Bush fires.</p>	<p>Borrowers have difficulty in planting trees.</p> <p>Women want to plant fruit trees but are not allowed to do so on borrowed land.</p> <p>No well for the youth's orchard.</p> <p>Improper harvesting of wild fruits, especially "nette."</p> <p>Bush fires.</p>	<p>Borrowers have difficulty in planting trees.</p> <p>Lack of extension services, especially pertaining to sale of tree seedlings.</p> <p>Sabotage of tree planting activities of Bulembu youth by the Sandu Darsilami youth.</p> <p>Bush fires.</p>

PROBLEMS RELATING TO SPECIFIC USER GROUPS	SANDU DARSILAMI	TAXOTALA	BULEMBU
	<p>Neither income generating activities nor skills training for youth and women.</p> <p>Women farmers recommend that the swamp lands should be reclaimed for rice production.</p> <p>Women lack equal access to markets for agricultural crops; only male farmers can be members of the Cooperative Union.</p>	<p>No land is available for an orchard or garden for either men or women.</p> <p>Women receive little recognition by NGOs for project development.</p> <p>Women farmers would like to receive skills and numeracy and literacy training.</p> <p>Women lack equal access to markets for agricultural crops; only male farmers can be members of the Cooperative Union.</p> <p>Women have no access to credit or small loans.</p> <p>Women do not own farm machinery but must rely on good will of male relatives to gain access to implements owned by male farmers.</p> <p>Women lack permanent ownership of land and therefore have problems planting trees.</p> <p>Poorer farmers are forced to farm on less fertile soils.</p>	<p>No land is available for an orchard or garden for either men or women.</p> <p>Women receive little recognition by NGOs for project development.</p> <p>Women farmers would like to receive skills and numeracy and literacy training.</p> <p>Women lack equal access to markets for agricultural crops. Only male farmers can be members of the Cooperative Union.</p> <p>Women have no access to credit or small loans.</p> <p>Women do not own farm machinery but must rely on good will of male relatives to gain access to implements owned by male farmers.</p> <p>Women lack permanent ownership of land and therefore have problems planting trees.</p> <p>Poorer farmers are forced to farm on less fertile soils.</p> <p>Women lack of access to labour-saving devices such as milling machines.</p> <p>Little access to public services.</p>

B. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE *SEYFO* AND THE DISTRICT TRIBUNAL

(1) State Lands Act: The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members stated that they do not need any changes in land tenure in their district. They stated that it would be a problem if the government were to say that it owns all of the land. This policy would directly contradict the precepts of their customary tenure system.

(2) Forests: The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members suggested that the *seyfo* be given the power to issue licenses permitting tree cutting. As they reasoned, the *seyfo* and his district tribunal members intimately know the people in their district and will be able to assess better who will and who will not destroy the forests in their district.

(3) Protocol Procedures: Government and non-government organization should inform the *seyfo* of any development activities planned for his district. In that way, he can assist in the coordination of development activities.

(4) Discipline and Security Measures: Frequently, the district tribunal is not able to enforce a decision because the guilty party becomes unruly, commits contempt of court, or escapes outright before being taken to the police station in Basse. The district tribunal suggested that their badge messengers be supplied with handcuffs, a baton, and a cell.

(5) Transportation: The salaries of the *seyfo* and the district tribunal members are insufficient to cover their transportation to tribunal hearings and meetings in Basse. They are not given any allowance for transportation. The district tribunal members also mentioned that transportation is a difficulty for their badge messengers who often need to travel far distances to deliver summons, investigate cases, and assess damages. The district tribunal members suggested that the badge messengers be given bicycles.

C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE COMMISSIONER

(1) The commissioner stated that he needs a strategy for preserving grazing land while also encouraging agricultural development. Disputes arising over crop damage by cattle are too frequent in Upper River Division.

D. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE MAGISTRATE

The magistrate of the Ministry of Justice (Basse, URD) suggested the following policy recommendations to the RRA team.

(1) State Lands Act: The magistrate was of the opinion that individual leases would be inappropriate for the rural areas. He suggested that government officials should consider group leases.

(2) Group and District Tribunals: The magistrate was of the opinion that group tribunals should be re-activated because, as he stated, most of the time disputants are dissatisfied with the decision of the district tribunals. These disputants, therefore, should have some means of appeal. The group could act as a check on the decisions of the district tribunals.

(3) Review of District Tribunal Court Cases: The magistrate was critical of the district tribunals. From his informal review of tribunal decisions, he felt that the tribunals frequently violated the "natural justice" clause of the constitution as well as violated various Islamic laws in terms of divorce, custody of children, marriage and inheritance. The magistrate gave several examples in which women had been denied their right to land under Islamic law by tribunals. Because of these legal deviations, the magistrate suggested that someone with legal training, such as the magistrate, should review tribunal cases. magistrates could therefore act as legal advisors to commissioners.

(4) Amelioration of Land Tenure Disputes: Usually, land tenure disputes arise from misunderstandings between land owners and long-term land borrowers. The magistrate was of the opinion that there should be some legislated length of time at which a long-term land borrower can become an owner (except perhaps in the case of squatters). The magistrate stated that such legislation would have to be founded upon social equity concerns.

(5) Islamic Jurisprudence: Cadi courts should be established in Provinces because district tribunals do not always apply Islamic law properly, for example in the area of women's inheritance rights.

E. FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

Finding:

Villagers implement different tenure rules tailored to the particular resource and agro-ecological zone. Some of these rules have direct historical antecedents, while others have evolved or have been constructed more recently to meet changing environmental, economic, and social realities.

An example of a tenure rule that is strongly rooted in historical antecedents is the *tonge*. Local leaders such as *alkalolu* and women *kafo* presidents continue to establish and enforce *tonge*, or prohibitions against the cutting of unripened fruit from selected tree species. There also are instances of "evolved" tenure rules. For example, Gambian farmers have had a long tradition of lending land to each other without

exacting a usury price. Recently, the terms of these lending arrangements have changed. In Darsilami, some farmers still lend land, however, they are now more likely to charge a monetary rent for the use of the land. Some farmers may also lend out land for a shorter period of time in order to ensure that their ownership of the land is not questioned. A relatively new tenure rule reflects the commoditization of land. A few Serahuli land owners have used their land holdings as a form of collateral to receive loans from local money lenders.

Recommendation:

RRA tools such as participatory mapping are useful in discovering these different tenure rules as they pertain to different agro-ecological zones, resources, and land users.

Finding:

Some natural resources tenure rules are constraints to sustainable resource management or cause tension among land users while other rules are opportunities for the sustainable use and conservation of resources.

One example of a resource tenure opportunity is the existence of village rules designed to maintain sanitary conditions around drinking wells. Women impose a prohibition against the washing of cooking pots and clothes in close proximity to these wells. Such rules and the ability to enforce them are crucial since both villagers and livestock share these wells. In the rice and outer agricultural fields, women farmers cultivate sorrel and okra bushes along the boundaries of the fields they are using for the season. This strategy reduces the risk of disputes and could also form the basis for agroforestry research. Among some farmers, flexible borrowing arrangements exist. These arrangements are opportunities in the sense that borrowing allows farmers to practice rotational agriculture regardless of their original land holdings.

Recommendation:

RRA tools and focus group interviews are useful in uncovering tenure constraints and opportunities. Tenure opportunities could form the foundation for extension activities. Policies and specific laws could also be drafted around these opportunities.

Finding:

The majority of women gain access to land by borrowing land from their husbands or other members of their husbands' families, from their own families, or from female and male friends and neighbors. These borrowing arrangements confer seasonal usufructory rights to land parcels. Women have individual ownership over the crops they plant on these borrowed parcels. They are discouraged from planting trees.

Finding:

There are instances when women inherit land from their parents. These women possess individual ownership to these land parcels and can bequeath them to their children.

Finding:

Increasingly, women are expressing frustration over the tenure insecurity they are experiencing as land borrowers. They have stated that this insecurity is not commensurate with their responsibilities—responsibilities which have increased due to male out-migration in recent years.

Recommendation:

Through a participatory planning process, greater security of tenure for women needs to be created perhaps by writing contracts, recording verbal testimonies of land borrowing arrangements, and/or taking out leases.

Finding:

The team found that the cemetery land crisis in Darsilami has caused serious ill-feelings among the residents of Darsilami. This crisis poses a serious impediment to any present or future natural resource development in the area.

Recommendation:

Before any developmental programs are to be initiated in this area, the RRA team recommends that government officials, religious leaders, and others make every effort to assist Taxotala, Bulembu, and Sandu Darsilami residents settle the cemetery land dispute.

Finding:

The cemetery land dispute in Darsilami sadly illustrated that customary tenure principles can be revised, reversed, and even abrogated given changing economic and ecological conditions. Reversal of these customary tenets have created a number of tenure pressure points for the Serahuli farmers. For example, one tenet is that if a farmer owns a large amount of agricultural land, it is his/her obligation as a neighbor and community member to lend this land out if s/he is not in need of this land. In Darsilami, however, Sandu Darsilami farmers no longer lend or rent land to their Serahuli neighbors even though the land lies "unused." Serahulis feel bitter about this situation; they must go to other villages to seek land for both their agricultural activities and cattle tracks.

There is yet another example of a reversal of a customary tenet. By custom, trees planted by an individual are owned by that individual regardless of whether s/he owns the land and provided that s/he obtained permission from the land owner to plant trees. In Darsilami, however, trees planted by Serahuli farmers on land borrowed from Sandu Darsilami farmers have been appropriated by their Mandinka land owners even though the Serahuli farmers state that they had received planting permission. (Free roaming cattle and bush fires probably play a greater role in hindering tree planting in fields surrounding Darsilami.)

Finding:

The reversal of the tenet—if a farmer is not using a piece of land then it is incumbent upon him or her to lend out the land to another farmer who has the means and desire to farm the land—stands to illustrate the contradictions in current government policies operating in many urban areas. On the one hand, for plots of land falling in "development planning zones" or that have been transferred from one individual owner to another, Land Allocation Committees²⁹ often threaten to take back these plots if a person does not "develop" the land. On the other hand, in rural areas where customary tenure regimes operate, government officials uphold the principle that land belongs to the original settlers regardless of whether these original settlers can "develop" the land or not.

Finding:

Because they are more likely to possess farming equipment, Serahuli farmers state that they do not have enough land to farm. They need to borrow land from farmers in neighboring villages because they cannot borrow from Sandu Darsilami families. This high demand for land along with a rather reliable source of non-agriculture income (i.e., remittances) has resulted in a certain amount of land transactions being monetized. For example, Bulembu and Taxotala farmers have rented land from Sandu Darsilami farmers. Bulembu and Taxotala farmers also presently rent land from Senegalese farmers. In addition, Taxotala farmers may use their land as collateral when seeking a loan from local money lenders.

Finding:

There is a high degree of tenure insecurity concerning access to and control of agricultural lands. Sandu Darsilami residents feel that their ownership rights to the land surrounding Darsilami are being threatened. These residents attest to their absolute right to these lands because of the fact that they are descendants from the

²⁹ Land Allocation Committees have been established under the new lands acts of 1990. These Committees, with both citizen and government members, are empowered to make allocations of land parcels in State designated developmental zones.

first settlers to Darsilami. However, they feel that Bulembu and Taxotala residents are attempting to squeeze them out by virtue of their greater population and economic endowments. Bulembu and Taxotala residents have expressed insecurity over the land which they have been either given or lent from their Mandinka neighbors. These insecurities have been accentuated by the cemetery dispute.

Finding:

Within particular families, members possess a strong sense of their usufructory rights over family-held agricultural land. There is also a strong sense of individual ownership of agricultural land that is "self-acquired" and that can be subsequently given as a gift or inherited.

Finding:

There is wariness on the part of some residents in Darsilami over government acquisition of land. Some residents stated that having leases to land will protect them from uncompensated government seizure of land.

Recommendation:

Residents must receive greater tenure security before undertaking development activities in Darsilami. Rent agreements or contracts may be useful for some farmers in this area. Family leases which list usufructory rights may be applicable in Darsilami environs. Individual leases may also be applicable in particular cases.

Recommendation:

Focus group discussions could also be held to assuage the fears of these two ethnic groups.

Finding:

At the village-level, the traditional authorities of the *alkalo*, his group of advisors, the imam, women *kafo* presidents, and individuals noted for their peace-making skills all play important and over-lapping roles. These roles include resolving disputes, authorizing wood cutting permits, enforcing *tonge*, fulfilling requests of new immigrants to the area who may wish to settle, organizing community members for various development activities, galvanizing community members into action in order to fight bush fires, and, last but not least, hosting the numerous government and NGO visitors who visit the area. In addition to these institutions, the *seyfo* and the district tribunal play important roles in the management of resources and the resolution of disputes. However, the government has paid little attention to the administrative requirements of these diverse institutions.

Finding:

The *seyfo* and the district tribunal members were found to lack the necessary depth of knowledge about recent resource legislation. The team also found that none of the village residents knew about the new land laws of 1990. However, many residents were aware of certain forestry regulations, e.g., the need for timber cutting permits and the prohibition on the burning of agricultural residues and grasses in the bush.

Recommendation:

The RRA team recommends that the GOTG address the administrative concerns raised by village and district institutions. The GOTG could help to sponsor a legal education process for local leaders and district tribunal members—a process aimed at informing citizens about the different laws of The Gambia while also listening to the suggestions of citizens in reforming these laws to make them more applicable to, and thus more enforceable by, a diversity of resource users.

Finding:

Other governmental agencies intervene at various times and at various levels to settle disputes. Their interventions may or may not be necessary at the given time.

Recommendation:

Policy makers must devise ways to facilitate the coordination of individuals and institutions involved in dispute resolution.

Finding:

The three communities are keenly aware of their own problems. Some problems voiced during the RRA include:

- o land scarcity for Serahuli farmers;
- o lack of credit and farming equipment for Mandinka men and women farmers and Serahuli women farmers;
- o high cost of fertilizer;
- o *Striga* spp infestation;
- o rice cultivation no longer economically viable option for women farmers because of the drought conditions. There is a need for barrages and drought tolerant seed varieties;
- o inadequate cattle tracks for Serahuli farmers;
- o lack of ownership of land for women farmers;
- o tree planting restriction on land borrowers; and,
- o threat of bush fires.

However, some residents may lack the sufficient skills to prioritize these problems or to recognize where solutions may lie.

Recommendation:

There is a need for NGOs along with government extensionists to facilitate development planning with the three communities. After a peaceful solution to the cemetery land dispute is found, the team recommends that GOTG should facilitate a development planning process with the villagers in Darsilami. This process should be designed to assist villagers in the creation of a resource management plan. Our RRA work indicates that pressing agricultural and ecological problems exist in the area which could be addressed in this plan by:

- o helping villagers establish a deferred grazing scheme;
- o facilitating access to fertilizers and farming implements (e.g., through credit system);
- o demarcating grazing areas for cattle and small ruminants;
- o encouraging Serahuli youth to attend the primary school in Darsilami;
- o facilitating access to improved vegetable and some agricultural crops;
- o facilitating access to tree seedlings;
- o helping villagers to secure funding for cattle watering holes;
- o facilitating access to markets for vegetables;
- o providing skills training for women;
- o linking women farmers with the Soil and Water Management Unit of the GOTG so that soil conservation services can be provided in rice growing areas; and,
- o facilitating a legal education process.

Finding:

Government officials have taken land administration actions based upon inadequate knowledge of what powers these acts confer upon them as government officials. The following quotes help to illustrate some of the misconceptions expressed by government officials:

- o "The new lands act increases the land administration powers of the commissioner to acquire land."
- o "The commissioner can acquire land whenever it is in dispute."
- o "All land is owned by the State."
- o "Land in dispute is owned by the State."

These misconceptions on the part of government officials and citizens alike have led to problematic government actions and fear among residents of losing customary inheritance rights to the land of their forefathers.

Recommendation:

The RRA team recommends that the MLG&L undertake an awareness building campaign in order to inform both divisional and district authorities about the implications of the State Lands, the Physical Planning and Development Control, and the Compensation Acts, along with the Forestry, and Wildlife Acts, etc. There is also a need for a legal education process to be initiated which will include not just the distribution of written pamphlets (because of the high illiteracy rates) but also radio broadcasts and focus group meetings (especially among women who have the most to lose from not knowing about new land laws and much to gain from this knowledge).

APPENDIX I

Comment on the Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Two strengths were identified by the RRA team members. One strength was the research methodology's emphasis on collecting settlement histories of Sandu Darsilami, Bulembu, and Taxotala. These histories provided an opportunity for village participants to tell their own stories as they wished. These histories also provided invaluable insights into how tenure arrangements came to be configured as they are today. The second strength was the research methodology's emphasis on flexibility which enabled the nine-member research team to adapt to the unique situation in Darsilami and divide itself into three sub-teams.

Several limitations were also enumerated by various team members and by village participants.

Report Writing: One limitation concerned the writing of the report. The author was a participant of only one of the three RRA sub-teams (i.e., the Bulembu team). As a consequence, the author has been able to describe the resource use and tenure arrangements of Bulembu with greater detail than she could for the resource use and tenure arrangements of Taxotala and Sandu Darsilami. This limitation might have been averted if each sub-team could have contributed to the writing of this report.

Insufficient Time: Many on the RRA team members felt that two weeks was not a sufficient time period to obtain enough in-depth information and to verify the information collected on resource use patterns and tenure arrangements. It is worth mentioning that a land dispute, which recently erupted in Darsilami, initially contributed to some time delays. The dispute led to tense feelings among the residents of Darsilami over the RRA team's research visit. The first days of the team's visit to Darsilami were spent explaining the team's purposes and dispelling the notion that the team was there to investigate the land dispute.

RRA Focus: Many team members expressed frustration that the RRA was only an information-gathering exercise rather than a participatory research process. Many team members felt that an opportunity was missed to assist in the development of a resource management plan with village participants. This frustration was echoed during several of the meetings the teams held with villagers. As one man stated, "We are tired with the way things have happened over the past years. Outsiders come and do research, they ask questions, we participate, they write reports—but nothing ever comes from this talk."

Harvest Season: The RRA was scheduled during November which is one of the busiest times of the year for farmers. November is the harvest season and the season when bush fires threaten forested parklands, fields, and villages. When farmers are unable to harvest their crops in a timely fashion, they risk having their entire harvest destroyed by wild

fires. Village participants, therefore, found it difficult to take time away from their field work to enter into lengthy discussions with RRA teams.

Particular RRA Exercises: In several instances, some members of the RRA team felt that too many probing questions were posed during RRA exercises. For example, some members felt that district tribunal members only offered more types of dispute for the dispute matrix because the RRA team kept asking them for more types of disputes. These probes in essence acted as leading questions for which interviewees were offering answers only to please the interviewers.

In addition, night interviews, while necessary, were sometimes difficult to carry-out because both the interviewees and the interviewers were fatigued. Night interviews also cut into the time that would have been used for the three RRA groups to exchange information.

APPENDIX II

Oral History with the Eldest Woman of Bulembu

I am Asa Gaku. My mother's name was Agena Saho and my father's name was Hakura Gaku, whom they called Masair Gaku. I was born in old Diabugu. I don't know my age. I can recall when we came from Bulembu. When we came from Bulembu my father was the chief. When my father was chief, one day the gendarmes came and said that the people of Bulembu are leaving and my father is the chief and if he left no one would stay in Bulembu. When they came to catch my father, the male youth heard of it. They caught the gendarmes. The male youth told the whole village to escape and leave Bulembu. The village did so settling in Missara, Gambissara. Some went to Diabugu that night also. By then I was married and my husband was called Sahu Jawara. I don't know the date but I can remember that we found the Mandinka here. The Mandinka host of my family was called Madina Tourey. Other Mandinka families hosted the rest of the families in my village. Slowly we made our compound area. The first baby born here was called Bollo, the daughter of Bara Katu Manda. She was of the slave caste. Her father was called KaKuta Sussoho Keita. Because we found the Mandinkas here they gave us space to build our compounds. We found a *kolongba* (large well) in the Mandinka settlement area which was supposedly built by Serahulis called Sillah. We did not find any members of the Sillah family from Sabi...and I have not heard anything about them.

In the past, we used to farm, weave, and tie and dye cloth. I used to do all these things with my daughter. We also did pounding and drawing water from the well. We used to sell the harvested groundnuts to the "toubabs" back then. When we weaved material, we used to keep it for our daughters' marriage chests. After our daughters were married, any remaining cloth we would sell. The fulas used to grow the cotton and we would buy it from them. When we bought it we would spin it and then weave it....In the past, women bought gold for savings. If women had a lot of money, some would buy cattle...so cattle was a form of wealth for women...some even had whole herds. We didn't do anything with these herds, we just let them multiply. We would milk the cows though. If our daughters were getting married, her husband would give cattle as the form of dowry. The mothers of new brides used to give their daughters calabashes. Now mothers give imported bowls. We used to have many cattle, so many that when more than one died at a time we would not eat them but just bury them.

In the past, we used to cultivate a lot of "findo." We would broadcast the seed then take a hand hoe and work the seeds into the soil. We did not have to weed "findo." We would just wait till it was ready and harvest it. We did not sell any "findo." Rather we processed and consumed all of our "findo" harvest. We would thresh the seed by first crushing it with our feet and then pounding it. "Findo" was very difficult to pound. We would then steam it by putting 2 to 3 parts water to 1 part pounded "findo." After steaming it, we would cook it to prepare fish meals such as "darehcumbaleh" and "hoyo." We would buy the fish from the Mandinkas who used to catch fish on their lands located near the river.

We used to cultivate rice also. We used to do all the farming ourselves. Women would plow, sow, weed, and harvest from our own fields. Men didn't help us sow seeds. Men cultivated their own millet and groundnut fields. Men cultivated more groundnut fields than women in the past because they had to pay the *netitanka* (or rates and taxes). The men help women now because they have the machines. Even the men now don't have to work hard because they have machines...and women don't need to go look for leaves and fruits (e.g., "cassa dari" and "tiga dari") in the bush as they did in the past. Now we all eat polished rice and life is a little easier.

Before we migrated from Bulembu, both sons and daughters had land to work. Now women must rely on their male relatives to give them land to farm. This was because when we came here we met the Mandinka so we only have what the Mandinka gave our men.

In the past, members of the cobbler and slave castes would arrange the marriages of female nobles. The cobblers and the slaves, with the consent of the woman's parents, would choose a suitable day for the marriage. Thursday was usually the day chosen. At that point the woman would be told she was to be a bride. Only the father of a woman could decide whom his daughter could marry; the daughter had no choice. If the daughter's husband did not have enough land then the daughter's father would give her land.