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## **The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Policy Reform in Senegal**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASBEF	Senegalese Association for the Family Welfare
CIJ	Center for Judicial Information
CBCR	National Committee for Rural Dialogue
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CILSS	Intergovernmental Committee to Combat Desertification in the Sahel
CONGAD	NGO Support Council for Development
CONSERE	High Council for Natural Resources and Environment
DCD	Department for Community Development
DRE	Department for Rural Expansion
EFRP	Economic and Financial Restructuring Plan
EN	Environmental Network
FAO	United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization
FAVDO	Federation of African Voluntary Development Organizations
FONGS	Federation of Senegalese NGOs
IUCN	World Union for Nature Conservation
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NESDP	New Economic and Social Development Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
NPA	New Agricultural Policy

## Acronyms and Abbreviations (Con'td)

<b>NIP</b>	<b>New Industrial Policy</b>
<b>PS</b>	<b>Senegalese Socialist Party</b>
<b>PDS</b>	<b>Senegalese Democratic Party</b>
<b>PAI</b>	<b>African Party for Independence</b>
<b>PES</b>	<b>Senegalese Ecological Party</b>
<b>PFSP</b>	<b>Public Finance Stabilization Plan</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children Fund</b>
<b>UNSO</b>	<b>United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Fund</b>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>
<b>SAB</b>	<b>Senegalese Alliance for Biodiversity</b>
<b>RND</b>	<b>National Coalition for Democracy</b>
<b>RADI</b>	<b>African Network for Integrated Development</b>
<b>RADHO</b>	<b>African Network for Human Rights</b>
<b>WARF</b>	<b>West African Rural Foundation</b>
<b>WG</b>	<b>Working Groups</b>
<b>WRI</b>	<b>World Resources Institute</b>

# NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND POLICY REFORM IN SENEGAL

## I. INTRODUCTION

This report is part of the project of the Regional Program for Africa, Center for International Development and Environment, World Resources Institute, on the "Role of African Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Policy Reform." The primary goal of the project is to improve natural resource management in Africa through a more participatory policy-making process. The report presents an overview of the political landscape of Senegal since independence and an in-depth analysis of NGO and the policy formation process in Senegal, taking into account existing institutions, NGO experiences, and government incentives. It concludes with recommendations for future advocacy within the country to NGOs, the government, donors and the development assistance community.

### A. Opportunities For Pluralism Presented By the Government

Since 1974, when the then President took the first steps toward creating a limited multi-party system, Senegal has been involved in an on-going democratic experience whose aim is political and press pluralism. Pluralism was first institutionalized in 1976 when President Leopold Senghor modified restrictions on the number of political parties allowed by law. This atmosphere of pluralism has given rise in Senegalese society to a rivalry which has profoundly transformed the political and socio-economic landscape. The opportunities offered by this pluralism exist at different levels:

#### 1. Politics and Trade Unions.

The move toward pluralism intensified at the beginning of the 1980s when restrictions on political parties were abolished by the constitutional amendment of May 6, 1981. Thus ushered in the legalization of more than 10 political parties, hitherto forced to go underground. At the same time, the State allowed the formation of independent and autonomous trade unions opposing those affiliated to the party in power. Today, the legislative and regulatory framework allows the free formation of political parties and trade unions, without any constraint other than compliance with the laws and regulations in force.

#### 2. Freedom of Press.

Political pluralism has heightened press activity. Freedom of opinion has become a reality. In fact, over ten publications of opinion and analysis are printed in the country, including newspapers and magazines. Since last year, private radio stations have been broadcasting

on modulation frequency waves, and a proposal by private businessmen for a television network has been gradually gathering momentum.

### **3. Grassroots Democracy.**

Grassroots democracy experienced a breakthrough in 1972, when the government created governing units for rural communities. Each was endowed with a juridical personality and financial autonomy. Ruling bodies, called Assemblies, were created by universal suffrage by the local population. Each Assembly then appointed an executive arm. Parallel to this process of decentralization, an increasingly important association movement evolved out of the need to closely and efficiently cater to the interests of the local population, especially those in the rural areas. All kinds of associations running the full spectrum of activities -- including education, agriculture, health, enhancement of women, environmental protection, etc. -- were spawned. At the same time, these movements helped create a civil society where the public was able to increasingly make its voice heard. In particular, the creation of local government bodies offered opportunities for popular participation.

#### **B. Expressed Interest in Greater Participation from Government, Private Sector and Civil Society**

Broader participation in politics and policy formation is not only beneficial to the government but also to the private sector and civil society.

For the government, a broader participation affords a more accurate understanding of the realities and problems faced by the country's citizens. The participation of local people constitutes an important source of information to help conceive and apply policies, or to reorient them. Moreover, this participatory process enables the government to put to practical use the know-how, the experience and the genius of the general populace whose virtues are often underestimated or ignored by political decision makers. In Senegal, the government recognizes these incentives but has yet to define an adequate framework (decree, law, or regulation) that enables participation to take place on a permanent basis and not only when there is a major crisis.

With regard to the private sector, a broader participation offers the possibility to deepen its understanding of the problems experienced at the grassroots level and consequently to take them into account in its activities. The private sector in Senegal has, through its numerous representatives (Chambers of Commerce, Association of Senegalese Businessmen, etc), expressed a strong desire to participate in the making of policies that affect them. Policies such as the Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP), the New Industrial Policy (NIP), the New Agricultural Policy (NAP), the tax reform policy are of great interest for the private sector.

Finally, as far as the civil society is concerned, a more significant participation gives voice to its vitality and its role in the country's socio-economic, political and cultural life. In Senegal, NGOs and Trade Unions are the most active and visible groups of the civil society. NGOs in Senegal

have consistently manifested their strong desire for popular participation which is their main slogan. Trade Unions are particularly interested in participating in labor policy, economic policy and health policy. There is also a growing number of independent groups such as "Forum Civil" that are not linked to any political party or NGO. These groups, mostly created by elites or academics, often issue statements or initiate press conferences on questions of national interest (environment, economic, democracy, and freedom of press).

## **C. Description of NGO Capacity**

### **1. Planning Capacity.**

Generally speaking, NGOs have managed to effectively plan activities and programs individually and collectively. This ability can be explained by the similarity between their areas of influence and their goals.

By way of illustration, one needs only to look at how the NGO Support Council for Development (CONGAD) -- the coalition of NGOs working in Senegal-- defines its objective. It aims to participate in grassroots development in order to satisfy the needs of the people through partnership. CONGAD holds every three-year an "Ordinary General Assembly (OGA)" which enables its members to decide the organizations' orientation and program, and elect an executive committee. It also holds every year an "Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA)" to review the progress made in implementing the decisions issued by the OGA and regular information sessions to discuss current issues that affect the NGO community in Senegal. CONGAD's progress is based on mobilizing all financial and human resources and acting as a the NGO community leader.

The remarkable results of NGO initiatives are an eloquent testimony to their ability to conceive and execute their programs. Nevertheless, these successes should not mask shortcomings in this area -- on account of which a good number of NGOs have failed.

### **2. Organizational Ability.**

As individual units, the organizational structure of each NGO is generally flexible. Such a structure is imposed by the desire for efficiency, and for short-and medium-term results. In fact, this organizational approach, which is distinct from the bureaucratic government approach, has withstood the test of efficiency in the field.

Working at the grassroots level is the mandate of most NGOs. They are therefore anxious to have their opinions and suggestions considered in the elaboration of policies. To this effect, many initiatives have been undertaken by them. They have grouped themselves under three loosely-knit structures, namely: the Federation of Senegalese NGOs (FONGS), the NGO Support Council for Development (CONGAD), and the National Committee for Rural Dialogue (CBCR). They have also sought to establish an efficient and transparent coordinating framework between NGOs and the government. As a result, the first meeting

between the CONGAD representative and the President of the Republic took place at the beginning of January 1995.

These three structures --CONGAD- FONGS - CBCR--coordinate the actions of over two hundred NGOs, which lead to greater efficiency, and thus is a testimony to their remarkable organizational ability.

### **3. Capacity in Human, Material and Financial Means:**

The human resources of local NGOs operating in Senegal may be described under various headings:

**Number of Staff:** This number varies according to the nature and financial resources of the NGO. As a general rule, the more diverse the sectors in which they operate and the farther away they are from their zones of operation, the greater the number of staff. Such is the case with the African Network for Integrated Development (RADI), which operates in Senegal, Mali, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. On the other hand, those NGOs which operate in a geographically small zone make do with a small staff.

**Background:** The majority of NGO personnel come from rural areas. They are generally the sons of farmers, shepherds and hunters. Rarely do they come from middle- to high-income, urban backgrounds.

**Level of Training and Quality of Staff:** On average, the majority of NGO workers possess a rudimentary education. Most have a level of education below 3rd grade at the secondary level. Others have never even been to school. However, at the management level, most NGOs hold employees with intermediate to higher-level education. They are often experts in rural development with specializations in engineering, economics, sociology, and technology. In addition, many come from administrative positions in the government or private sector. The low level of technical experience in the staff is often compensated for by experience in the field, combined with a staunch commitment.

NGO material and financial resources vary. Figures are unavailable for lack of statistical data because most NGOs are reluctant to disclose their financial situation. However there is no gainsaying that some NGOs have substantial material and financial resources at their disposal, such as vehicles, comfortable offices, fax machines, and photocopiers.

### **4. Ability to Influence and Exert Pressure.**

Due to the increasing involvement of NGOs in grassroots communities, the potential to influence policy making exists. However, it is yet to be translated into a decisive force of influence and pressure in the corridors of power. Nonetheless, knowledge of the terrain

and people which NGOs possess and their loosely-knit coalitions, make them highly capable of mobilizing the people they serve.

**D. Government Policies that Promote Local Concerns, Including Natural Resources Management**

Policies that promote local concerns may be put into three categories:

**1. Policy for Grassroots Democratization.**

This concept is based on the principle that grassroots development cannot be achieved without the optimum usage and participation of the physical and intellectual resources of the people concerned. The 1972 move by the government to create local governing bodies laid the foundation for this grassroots democracy. In fact, through delegates in their rural communities, the people now have an institutional framework within which to make decisions, formulate opinion and express their wishes to the administrative authorities.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this arrangement is the responsibility given to the rural Assembly (the ruling body of the community) in matters relating to managing land owned by the government in their jurisdiction. This arrangement offers excellent opportunities for a better use of agricultural land, pastures and water sources. Without doubt, this constitutes a significant prerogative in natural resource management. In addition, numerous local structures for water management and overseeing the health of the people, such as well-drilling management committees and health committees, were created.

**2. Policy for Community Development.**

This type of policy evolved in response to the increasingly expressed need to boost and structure the movement of associations (youth groups, NGOs, women's associations) which, as mentioned earlier took off in the 1980s.

To meet this need, a Department for Community Development (DCD) was created in the Ministry for Women, Family and Children's Affairs and a Department for Rural Expansion (DRE) was organized within the Ministry of Interior. These departments, through their representatives at the regional, district and local levels, have helped forge links with the associations to facilitate their programs.

**3. Policy for Nature Protection.**

This policy seeks to instill attitudes and behavior in the people, which are favorable to respecting and preserving the environment and is associated with some programs, which, for instance, combat bush-fires, protect natural reserves, or reforest degraded land. People are able to participate in these programs through local organizations -- such as rural

committees, youth associations and NGOs -- with the help of state services, including the Forest and Water Services, Plant Protection Service and multi-purpose centers for rural expansion.

## **II. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT**

### **A. Overview of the Political Landscape Since Independence**

Senegal's political evolution is inextricably bound to its main constitutional amendments.

#### **1. The Parliamentary Regime.**

The Constitution the country adopted upon independence on August 25, 1960 established a parliamentary regime in which the President of the Republic, also the Head of State, coexisted with the President of the Council, who was also the Head of the Government. The President of the Republic was elected for seven years through indirect universal suffrage by a college comprising deputies of the National Assembly (parliament) and a representative from each regional assembly and municipal council. The President of the Republic appointed the President of the Council who was vested with important powers by the National Assembly. In effect, Article 23 of the Constitution confers on the President of the Council the sole prerogative to appoint the Ministers of the government who are then ratified by the President of the Republic. The National Assembly is elected by direct universal suffrage. It approves legislation on issues defined in Article 39 of the Constitution.

#### **2. The Presidential Regime.**

In 1963, a new Constitution went into effect following a battle for power between the President of the Republic and the President of the Council, which began in December 1962. Under the new Constitution the President of the Republic gained new powers while those of the President of the Council were weakened.

The principal innovation of the 1963 Constitution was that the President of the Republic became the arm of the executive branch and was elected for the first time through direct universal suffrage for a 4-year term. Because the President was no longer responsible to the Assembly, he thereby wielded total executive power. The President determined and conducted the nation's policy, executed its laws, headed the army, and oversaw international relations.

#### **3. The Regime of Multi-Party Politics.**

On March 19, 1976, President Senghor abolished the one-party state by instituting a regime of limited multi-party politics. Law 76-01 modified Article 3, which declared the allegiance of the state to one political party, to allow three political parties. They were

the Socialist Party (formerly Senghor's Senegalese Progressive Union, UPS), the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), and the African Party of Independence (PAI). These parties represented three schools of thought: socialist and democratic, liberal and democratic, marxist-leninist or communist respectively. In the next presidential election, Senghor won the presidency, but the opposition party, the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), won 18 seats in the National Assembly.

On January 1, 1981, President Senghor resigned and transferred power to Abdou Diouf who became the second President of the Republic of Independent Senegal.

Under his rule, all limitations to political parties were abolished on May 6, 1981, by Law 81-16. It ushered in total democracy which led immediately to the formation of more than 10 legal political parties. The freedom of the press was also greatly enhanced as a result of this new political evolution, and spawned several journals of opposition and opinion.

In 1982, the electoral code was thoroughly revised. It brought together for the first time all the texts on different elections and modified the method of scrutiny: "half of the 120 deputies to the National Assembly are elected by majority vote for a four year term in their districts, and the other half by proportional vote from a national list" (article LO 117).

In 1983, general elections (presidential and legislative) were held, with the participation of eight political parties. The PS won, its candidate became the President of the Republic and it obtained one hundred and eleven seats in the Assembly, while the PDS and the RND obtained respectively eight and one. The elections were keenly contested, because of subtle interpretations of the dispositions on the identification of the voter and the secrecy of the ballot. Relatively serious political disturbances followed.

#### **4. Return to Regime of Concentrated Presidential Powers.**

On May 1, 1983, the office of Prime Minister was abolished and the powers of the President of the Republic were strongly reinforced through the intervention of the Minister of State, General Secretary of the President of the Republic, who essentially assumed the attributes of Prime Minister. The National Assembly could no longer vote on a motion of no confidence, and the President of the Republic could no longer dissolve the Assembly.

In 1988, general elections were organized (four contestants for the Presidency and seven lists for the legislature ) amid tension and upheavals which continued well after the elections, with the arrest and imprisonment of opposition leaders.

In December 1990, under the auspices of the President of the Republic, the national commission for reforming the electoral code was created. Participants included 14 political parties, and prominent university and judiciary personalities. The constitution was

amended, the office of Prime Minister restored and the institution of government broadened.

These different decisions were later concretized; one of the most important of these was the formation of a broader presidential executive, with the entry of two opposition parties, PDS and PIT into government, as well as the adoption by consensus of an electoral code which signified great democratic progress.

In 1993, general elections were held, with five presidential candidates and nine parties aspiring to occupy the legislature. As a result of PS victory, an union and open government was formed, with a four-party majority in government, and a national Assembly seating eight parties.

In conclusion, one can affirm that from 1960 to 1994, the political life of Senegal has been quite agitated, as a result of which it has accumulated different experiences. Senegal and its citizens now seem determined and irreversibly committed to pursuing democracy.

## **B. The Institutional, Political and Legal Framework as it Pertains to NGOs, Popular Participation and Natural Resources Management**

### **I. The institutional and legal context.**

Decree 89-775 of June 30, 1989 governs the operations of NGOs working in Senegal, delineates principles under which they work, and specifies the nature of state institutional support for their actions. Prior to this Decree, there were no stipulations guiding the operations of NGOs working in the country.

The Decree is comprised of six components dedicated principally to the regulation of NGO activities. These are the essential points:

- a. The Decree stipulates that an NGO is a non-lucrative organization whose objective is to contribute to the economic development of Senegal. By virtue of the foregoing, NGOs that wish to operate in the country must have the permission of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Family which is in charge of overseeing NGOs. Article 6 of the Decree provides that the government may terminate any institutional agreement with the NGO in order to clarify or renew its commitments.
- b. Article 8 defines the conditions of the agreement. It seeks to encourage NGOs to sign technical execution orders with the Ministries or other interested organizations, but that doing so is optional.

- c. NGOs are obliged to organize and promote Senegalese citizens and submit reports every six months to the ministerial departments on the current status of their activities, including financial statements.
- d. Salaries and payment are exempt from taxes and levies.
- e. The state is obligated to ease the registration of NGO expatriate staff.
- f. NGO imports of goods, for example staff vehicles, will be exempt from taxes for the first six months.

Overall, the nature of the Decree conceives NGOs as genuine partners in grassroots development by attempting to create a friendly operating environment for them while at the same time expecting them to play a responsible and important role in the economic development of the nation.

While Decree 89-775 of 30/06/89 stipulates that NGOs are partners in development, actual cooperation between government authorities and NGOs is lacking. An authentic partnership requires reciprocal consultation and regular coordination between the two parties, but NGOs feel the government is suspicious of their motives and therefore often overlooks their point of view. To illustrate this feeling, they point to the elaboration of the decree on NGOs itself, in which they were neither consulted nor involved.

Rarely are they invited to participate, and then often only as observers, in the deliberations on legislative and political reforms. The solicitation of NGO views on issues concerning them should be the rule. However, in reality, it is the exception. In view of the role they have set for themselves, NGOs would very much like to contribute to the economic and social development of the country. After careful analysis, it is evident that their concerns can only be adequately solved through the elaboration of an institutional framework, which is transparent and efficient not only in its conception but also in its execution.

## **2. Popular Participation and the Management of Natural Resources.**

The relationship between popular participation and natural resources management presents several interesting benefits for policy making. The participation of the people sensitizes policy makers to their problems while at the same time heightening the effective and sustainable management of natural resources. It enhances the information-sharing which can lead to the development of a culture of natural resource preservation. Ultimately, sensitive and involved people become a rapid and efficient medium to reach others.

In Senegal, thanks to the combined efforts of the state, NGO community and the people, several reforestation projects, which have a strong component of popular participation, have been carried out. For example, the NGO, CARITAS, has established more than 40 boreholes and wells in the Kaolack and Fatick regions, all of which are administered by

committees whose members are chosen exclusively by the local citizens. Despite these successes, the country is just beginning to develop an awareness about environmental issues.

### **3. Policies that Support Natural Resources Management and Local Concerns in General.**

The policies existing at present in Senegal have important ramifications on natural resources management. The forest resources management program, which focuses on protecting and replenishing forests, remains essentially in the hands of the government. However, as noted above, local communities have begun to play a significant role in reforestation projects. A second example is provided by the case of the Peanut Basin Reforestation Project (PRECOBA). A local nursery supplies community groups with seedlings for re-planting. Timber from the project is managed and sold by the project's forest agents and the state. Some of the money raised returns to the local community to be used at their own discretion. The rest is invested in reforestation. Another area of policy with an emphasis on management at the local level includes the country's water resources management program. For example, under a 1977 directive by the Ministry of Hydraulics, local community committees who elect their own members oversee the drilling of wells and control water allocation for human and cattle consumption. In contrast, local participation is practically non-existent in the maritime and mineral resources management sector.

### **C. The Hierarchy of Institutions and Key Individuals Responsible for Natural Resources Management**

Institutions can operate at the state, multilateral, bilateral and NGO level.

#### **1. State Level.**

Natural resources management (NRM) policies are defined, under the proposition of the various ministries involved in natural resources protection, by the President of the Republic. In order to be effective, these policies must be voted for and adopted by the National Assembly. The Ministry of the Environment and Nature Conservation, which is comprised of the Departments of National Parks, Environment, Forestry, and Land Conservation is the chief coordinator of the government's policies on NRM.

Other government institutions involved in NRM include:

- ◆ The Ministry of Fishing and Maritime Transport, which consists of the Departments of Merchant Marines, and Oceanography and Marine Fishing;
- ◆ The Ministry of Energy, Mines and Industry, which is principally comprised of the Department of Energy and the Department of Mines and Geology;

- ◆ The Ministry of Hydraulics which has made "environmental impact studies" one of the main components of its water resources projects;
- ◆ The Department of Territorial Administration of the Ministry of Interior;
- ◆ The Ministry of Urban Works and Housing, which incorporates environmental concerns into urban management;
- ◆ The Higher Council for Natural Resources and the Environment, which is an inter-ministry structure; and,
- ◆ The Ministry of Agriculture which heavily promotes sustainable agriculture with the use of organic elements.

It is worth noting here that in each of these departments, a director is appointed to work specifically on natural resource issues in cooperation with each respective Minister as well as regional and local representatives.

## **2. Multilateral and Bilateral Level.**

At this level, multilateral organizations involved in NRM include various United Nations field offices such as the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). Bilateral agencies field missions involved in NRM include the United States Agency for International Development, the Canadian International Development Agency and other developed countries development agencies. These organizations give direct financial and technical assistance for NRM to the government and the NGOs and can significantly influence the government's NRM policies.

## **3. National NGOs Level.**

NGO's involvement in NRM in Senegal is primarily at the project implementation level. Their participation is often considered by government's agencies as so rather than in the decision making process. Individually, NGOs can directly collaborate with ministries that deal with the NRM of their interest. Collectively, CONGAD, through its Environmental Network (EN) composed of national and international NGOs, is often invited by the Ministry of Environment to represent the NGO community at meetings on environmental policy matters. CONGAD also takes many initiatives to stimulate reforms and urge the government to implement them. For example, when an influential religious leader was authorized by the government in 1991 to deforest 45,000 hectares of the classified forest, "Khelcom" in the Diourbel region and move away surrounding indigenous populations in order to use the land for agricultural purposes, the EN of CONGAD helped mobilize the local communities to pressure the government. This has resulted to the stop of the

deforestation of the 25,000 remaining hectares of the classified forest and to the support of the communities to develop income-generating and educational activities.

Other NGOs and PVO involved in NRM, include:

- ◆ West African Rural Foundation (WARF). WARF was created in 1993. It is an entirely Senegalese-run Foundation and provides financial and technical assistance for agricultural and policy-oriented projects in the rural area.
- ◆ Enda-Third World. It exists since 1972 and is known for its extensive research on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and biodiversity and its involvement in the government working groups (WG) for the elaboration of the National Environmental Action Plan.
- ◆ World Vision and Rodale International. They are both U.S PVO and focus respectively on water resources management and research on sustainable agriculture and appropriate technology. Both institutions are not based in the Capital, Dakar. That makes them very accessible to many grassroots organizations working on NRM projects.

### **III. POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POLICY FORMATION**

#### **A. The Actual Policy Making Process, with Special Regard to Natural Resources Management**

In Senegal, the President of the Republic defines national policies, and the government carries them out. In this area as in others, the formulation of the policy to be implemented is generally based on a compromise between the President's political will, the pressure from religious groups, the socio-political movements and concerns expressed by the international community. The mechanisms established by the political authorities to encourage people to participate directly or indirectly in the political decision-making process consist of consulting groups -- such as the Economic and Social Council, and the Regional, District and Local Councils -- whose opinions may be sought by the government or its representatives, or be volunteered by the councils on their own initiative. In addition, administrative authorities inform the government of difficulties encountered in the implementation of policies and often make suggestions and recommendations for policy corrections. Moreover, the civil society, could make its voice heard through a number of channels including associations, NGOs, trade unions, and the medias. These ideas are passed on in the form of reports, memoranda, hearings, media accounts, and demonstrations and are in very few situations capable of influencing the decision-making process.

A major reform took place on August 4, 1993 when an inter-ministry organ called the Higher Council for Natural Resources and Environment (CONSERE) was formed. CONSERE, under the supervision of Prime Ministry and the Ministry of Environment, orients, supervises and coordinates the government's environmental policies. The goals of this institution are to:

- ◆ Promote the development of mining, industry, agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry, which is compatible with the preservation of natural ecosystems;
- ◆ Improve, conserve and safeguard the natural resources potential and means of production by land, pasture, subsoil, river, and territorial waters;
- ◆ Define coherent regional and global policies on natural resources management and environmental protection; and,
- ◆ Monitor and consolidate the country's land development.

One of the criticisms of CONSERE so far is that it often misses opportunities to consult with experts from the NGOs before deliberating on issues of national concern.

Current policy reforms on natural resources management focus on institutional decentralization. Thus far, authorities have emphasized more significant participation of the people in natural resources management policy. For instance, the legislative part of the Forestry Code provides for decentralizing management to the benefit of the people. However, there are difficulties in effecting this new approach. At the grassroots level, the populace still lacks a clear vision of their role. At the state level, some agents are resistant to reform.

#### **B. Influences which Move Policy-Makers to Address Certain Issues**

In Senegal decision-makers are sensitive to the following factors:

**International opinion:** The perceptions of the international community have a profound effect, especially when expressed by the European or North American governments, or by bi- or multilateral organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, or the United Nations organizations such as UNDP or FAO. International funding agencies have used policy reform as a conditionality for funding and can easily continue to do so.

**Pressure from religious groups:** Religious groups, especially strong sub-sects, such as the Mourides, can exert heavy influence on political decision because of their capacity to mobilize the Senegalese population which is very religious (about 80% of population is muslim).

**Socio-political movements:** Policy makers are sensitive to demonstrations, sometimes violent strikes, and the actions of political groups, trade unions and civil groups. These actions are mostly initiated by political parties and not by the general public to change a specific government policy

#### **IV. CURRENT GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN POLICY REFORM**

##### **A. Political Statements, New Policies, On-Going, Planned and Proposed Activities to Promote and Facilitate More Participation in Government Decision-Making in General, and Natural Resources Management in Particular**

###### **1. Examples.**

The following are examples of policy reforms or processes in which the government had tried to encourage participation of the civil society:

**The local and territorial administrative reform of 1972:** This reform created rural governing units, one of the major achievements of grassroots democracy since independence. In fact, these governing bodies, in addition to their administrative and financial responsibilities, are competent on many issues such as managing national property, watering troughs, pastures, and cattle grazing fields. Today, there are 317 independent rural communities with administrative purposes, which rely on popular participation.

**The local reform of 1990:** In this year, the government turned over control of local budgets to the governing bodies of the rural community (Rural Council, Mayors, etc..). Previously, the Deputy Prefect or the Municipal Administrator were responsible for the budget.

**The current electoral code (1992):** The new code allows political parties to participate in the different phases of the electoral process. This was the result of the work of more than fourteen political parties, aided by judicial and university officials, under the auspices of a national commission for the reform of the electoral code. They made more than 30 recommendations to the government, all of which were adopted.

**University reform (1992):** Recommendations for university reform ranging from the curriculum change to the hiring of Senegalese to replace the expatriate professors were devised by those affected including faculty, students, university authorities and scholars. Their main conclusions were adopted and implemented by the government.

**The regionalization process (1993):** At this time, the government sought to decentralize power by expanding the mandate of the country's ten regions. The development of this proposal included administrative authorities, elected officers, ministerial departments, consulting groups. With the ultimate goal of decentralizing government, this effort will break down some of the country's ten large regions into smaller, more manageable governing units, known as administrative constituencies. They will be designed to retain their respective individual identity and will be vested with financial autonomy and control over economic development, health, education, territorial management, environment and nature conservation etc.

**The review of codes (1993):** The proposal to review various codes on water, forest, fishing, the environment, etc. offers the chance for increased grassroots participation. In order to be efficient, these reform projects should be supported by sustained environmental education at the grassroots. For example, the inclusion of NGOs in the development of the Forest Code demonstrated a real willingness on the part of the government to encourage participation.

## **2. Analysis**

Despite the above examples in which other members of the civil society-- academics - consulting groups- researchers are more involved than NGOs, one can easily argue participation of grassroots organizations and NGOs is not as extensive as it could be. In some instances, policies designed to improve the living conditions of the local population are still almost exclusively formulated and implemented by central regional and district authorities, excluding the grassroots communities.

This state of affairs is attributable to several factors:

- a. The need after independence to rapidly fill the vacuum on issues of economic and social development.
- b. The government is burdened with a legacy of non-participation of the civil society following years of a centralized one-party rule system (from 1960 to 1991).
- c. The absence in rural organizations of a designated spokesperson to lobby for their interests. The dominant structures in the rural areas existed to facilitate commercial management, such as cooperatives, rather than decision-making.
- d. With particular regard to natural resources management, it is helpful to note that the concept of resources management is a recent one. Current policy has only been spurred by the misuse and degradation of Senegal's natural resources. At the moment, Senegal is only beginning to conceive a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP).

### **B. Government Attitudes Toward NGOs, Particularly with Regard to Policy Reform**

The attitude of the government toward NGOs has changed recently. It can most effectively be examined in three stages:

**Before 1989:** The government, upon recognizing the rapidity with which the NGO activity grew, tried to grasp the methods and nature of this new movement. While acknowledging the generally satisfactory results of their activities, the state disapproved the publicly stated intent of NGOs to remain outside its control. The government also criticized the lack of coordination between NGOs and the State, often accusing them of

failing to take its local development plans into account. The government also complained that local communities were often disoriented by the language of different NGOs. These perceived problems led the government to devise an institutional framework regulating the operation of NGOs in Decree 89-775 of June 30, 1989.

**After 1989:** Since the decree went into effect, NGOs have had time to test its relevance. While NGOs welcomed this decisive step, they have not failed to point out inadequacies in the wording and limitations which they say prevent the optimal realization of their goals. According to CONGAD, "the hopes built on the establishment of regulation on NGO activities were very quickly dashed. This disappointment has arisen from lack of respect for the letter and spirit of the regulatory dispositions, on the part of the agents of the state who are charged with the responsibility of dealing with NGO or giving them the institutional support to achieve more efficiency and synergy in their activities towards the people."

**In 1995:** Having made an exhaustive evaluation of their relations with the government, NGO have filed certain complaints against it. They have decried the:

- ◆ Denial for approval of projects in which the NGO has specified that it would like to work without government supervision, such as projects financed and initiated by grassroots communities;
- ◆ Failure to timely renew tax exoneration extensions, which can delay the execution of NGO activities;
- ◆ General administrative foot dragging, which compromises the speed and efficiency of NGO projects
- ◆ Poor monitoring of the Decree 89-775 of June 30, 1989 by the Ministry of Women, Children and Family that oversees NGO activities
- ◆ Lack of transparency in the administration of privileges to NGOs.

These complaints led NGOs to advocate a revision of the regulations. At the same time, the Ministry of Economy and Financial Planning unilaterally introduced a new protocol without consulting with the NGO community, which responded with a Memorandum through CONGAD, dated December 31, 1994. In it, they said that the draft protocol imposed draconian obligations on NGOs and increased restrictions on the fiscal and tariff privileges granted to NGO by the 1989 decree. They then formulated their own recommendations for defining a functional and transparent institutional framework capable of effecting sincere collaboration between the government and NGO community through a stable, strong, responsible and competent tutelage.

### **C. Donors Actions in Support of Pluralism**

Donors have demonstrated support for pluralism on two levels:

#### **1. At the Government level to open up political space.**

For fear of being accused with interfering in the internal affairs of the state, donors remain reluctant to address the issue of pluralism. However, in practice, donors demonstrate a bias for democratically-designed projects initiated at grassroots level and not imposed by the government. In this way, they campaign indirectly in favor of pluralism.

#### **2. At NGO Level to Facilitate their Participation in Reforms and Political Debates.**

Donors manifest their confidence in NGOs and encourage government-NGO consultation. They are equally sensitive to NGO proposals for policy reform and citizens' rights. While they openly support NGOs, their actions are limited due to the political sensitivity of policy issues and their reluctance to finance NGO policy-oriented projects.

### **V. NGO EXPERIENCES IN POLICY MAKING AT THE LOCAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON LOCAL AND NATIONAL EFFORTS**

#### **A. Brief History of NGO Participation**

NGO activity in Senegal, mainly by foreign organizations, dates back to the 1970s. During this period, Senegal experienced a grave economic crisis which was worsened by persistent drought and international economic malaise. In response to the worsening domestic situation, NGOs, initially based in Dakar, began spreading to the rural areas of the country. This strategy of rural expansion was based on three principles:

- ◆ A non-profit orientation;
- ◆ Direct involvement at the grassroots for the benefit of the people;
- ◆ Freedom of action based on the individual liberty of their targeted communities, and the recognition of NGOs by government authorities as partners in development.

Since then, NGOs have been warmly received by the people, who appreciated the new approach of these organizations which focuses on participation. They quickly gained the sympathy of the people by putting the participatory approach into practice, often with quick results. The phenomena has only increased its momentum, with the result that today, the NGO movement is unstoppable. National, as well as foreign NGOs, irrespective of their sources of finance,

affiliation, service or efficiency, have proliferated across the country, operating in all the areas of concern to the people -- agriculture, health, natural resources management, human rights, etc.

The success of foreign NGOs in Senegal spawned multiple associations and groups of all sorts, such as youth, women, and professional groups, whose goals were social enhancement and development. This common objective created a desire to act in concert in order to bring their concerns to the attention of the public authorities through their coordinating bodies, such as CONGAD and FONGS, which are the two main NGO coalition groups.

## **B. Examples of NGO Participation in Legislative/Policy Reform**

Examples of NGO participation in policy reform at the national level in Senegal are few. However, significant examples include:

**The elaboration of the Forest Code:** One of the greatest innovations in the new code is the inclusion of grassroots communities in forest management. This development would not have been possible without the attempts of NGOs grouped under CONGAD to influence the making of the code. They effectively took a stance in this debate. Their views with regard to giving the opportunity to grassroots communities through their governing bodies to say the ways and which their forest should be managed were taken into account in the formulation of the new code.

**Launching the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP):** Having decided to devise a National Action Plan for the Environment, the government invited NGOs organized under CONGAD to participate in the on-going formulation of this document. Also participating were the Federation of Senegalese NGOs (FONGS), the Senegalese Alliance for Biodiversity (SAB) and the World Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN). To this end, NGOs made quality contributions that matched those of other participants. NGOs have also been invited to participate in a national strategy for communicating environmental concerns to the public, taking Senegal's various languages into account.

**Elaborating the national policy on literacy:** NGOs also played an important role in the elaboration of Senegal's National Policy on Literacy by drawing on personal experience with their own literacy programs. Most NGOs in Senegal have a literacy branch which complements and supports the rest their work. Their existence is based on the belief that illiteracy must be eliminated to better enable people to participate in and affect the policies which touch their lives. The African Network for Integrated Development (RADI) has assumed an especially active role in this regard by participating in a collaborative work committee with UNICEF and the government which produced a literacy manual.

## **C. Observations and Lessons Learned**

### **1. Observations**

Policy making is often a very long process and requires at all stages a full participation of all players including affected communities, NGOs, public and private organizations, etc. In Senegal, as far as the method of NGO in the participation of policy making is concerned, two points are worth noting. First, NGOs should operate under the same conditions as any other participant. For example, NGOs, which participated in launching the National Action Plan for the Environment, were included in specialized group discussions as well as the plenary sessions. Second, the analysis of NGO participation in these efforts shows that the value of their contributions was based on their knowledge of the country and their experience from daily contact with the people rather than on technical expertise. This often leads to the government criticism that NGOs rely on broad impressions, based on which they consistently advocate grassroots participation, rather than making specific recommendations about how to reform policy.

### **2. Lessons Learned.**

The examples of NGO participation in the above-mentioned political and legislative reforms lead to the following lessons:

- ◆ It is often up to the government to decide whether or not to involve NGOs in the policy-making process.
- ◆ The quality of NGO participation in such reforms, however good it may be, often falls short of its potential. This can be attributed primarily to lack of preparation compounded by their lack of expertise in specific areas of reformed policies. They also tend not to communicate well their ideas.
- ◆ The proposals and suggestions of NGOs often carry less weight than those of official departments and other actors. This situation may be explained by the sense that outside points of view are usually deemed less pertinent than that of the inside specialists.
- ◆ NGOs, on account of their focus on the grassroots, often lack a global vision of state political strategies.

## **VI. CURRENT NGO INTEREST IN AND CAPACITY TO PARTICIPATE IN POLICY REFORM (EXCLUDING FUNDING CONSTRAINTS)**

### **A. Which NGOs Have Policy Reform in their Mandate/Constitution?**

A close examination of the constitutions of Senegalese NGOs, reveals that only rarely are political reforms incorporated into the objectives of the organization. Those that do link their mandate to political objective usually exist to champion specific causes, such as human rights or freedom of speech. For example, the NGO African Network for Human Rights (RADHO) states in its mandate that its purpose is to lobby government in order to promote respect for human rights and the NGO, the Civil Forum, promotes social justice and liberty in Senegal through lobbying and campaigning. By the same token, the Center for Judicial Information of RADI (CIJ) assists detainees and prisoners by informing them of their rights.

Although most NGOs may not forthrightly claim to have a legislative agenda, most share the desire to participate in political and legislative reform by proposing solutions to the problems they are fighting against. Whether political reforms are incorporated into their goals or not, the majority of NGOs consciously or unconsciously wage a fundamentally political fight in their daily activities, by denouncing certain policies, by opposing the negative effects of such policies at the grassroots level, and by lobbying to make significant changes in the status quo. What seems to be lacking is a permanent "policy group" within CONGAD or other NGO consortiums that could stimulate policy reform and direct NGO policy proposals to the relevant government agencies.

#### **B. Description of Networks and Cross-Cutting Alliances that Have Formed To Impact Policy Formation**

Several networks have been created among NGOs to better coordinate their activities through more effective organization. In addition, these networks and alliances aim to strengthen NGO influence on government authorities. The most well-known networks in this area are:

- ◆ The Federation of Senegalese NGOs (FONGS), which is headquartered in the Thies region ( 70 km from the capital Dakar) and brings together 150 grassroots organizations involved in the agriculture sector. Their actions focus on land and agricultural policy reform. One the achievements of FONGS is the building of a strong and well respected coalition of indigenous organizations outside of the Capital. This is quite a challenge considering the fact that most NGOs offices and government agencies are in the Capital.
- ◆ The NGO Support Council for Development (CONGAD), headquartered in Dakar, which includes national and international NGOs (over 200) working in Senegal. Every two years CONGAD holds a General Assembly to change its Board Members and assess its activities. As the chief organ of negotiation with the government and many international development and financing organizations, CONGAD has created many committees and networks, including "Forest Committee", "Women Affairs Committee", and "Environmental Network", to help carry out lobbying strategies for policy reform. These committees or networks have yet to develop solid expertise in policy issues.

- ◆ The Forum for African Voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO), also headquartered in Dakar, is a coalition of 350 African NGOs. FAVDO is primarily focusing on issues that affect African NGOs as whole but it has however a national chapter in Senegal, called FAVDO/Senegal. The chapter has over 50 local NGOs as members and is a platform for meeting, deliberation and consultation among NGOs.

### **C. NGO Attitudes Toward the Government**

The principal concern of NGOs in Senegal is the establishment of an institutional and legal framework for adequate NGO activity, which guarantees independence of action, removal of administrative bottlenecks, coordination and participation. The attitudes of NGO toward the government may be divided into three categories:

#### **1. Attitude of Independence.**

NGOs feel the need for a situation in which they can work without administrative, political, religious or other obstacles throughout the nation. The only restrictions placed on NGOs operating in Senegal are contained in Decree 89-775 of 30/06/89, which places conditions on NGO activities in Senegal, but does not, in theory, raise any major obstacles to their activities. In practice, however, many NGOs feel their activities are sometimes circumscribed by the government's failure to protect their rights granted by the Decree. For this reason, NGOs demand a greater application of the spirit and letter of this text.

It is important to note that NGOs are free to chose where they work in the country. In this sense, they are absolutely sovereign and independent. However, once they begin planning a project, government bureaucracy may slow down the actual implementation of it. They may face several administrative bottlenecks such as a delay in obtaining a letter of authorization to begin the project or deliberate refusal by government officials to follow the rules of the Decree. For example, tax and international tariff exemptions on NGO purchases are often disregarded.

Faced with this situation, NGOs have demanded that the government tries to put an end to attitudes that harm their activities. They have done so by presenting a Memorandum to the government through CONGAD and by meeting in January 1995 with the President of the Republic to discuss these concerns.

NGOs guard their independence from the government for several reasons. Their desire for independence is based on their philosophy of direct and participatory action at the grassroots level for the benefit of disadvantaged people. Thus, NGOs seek to distance themselves from all administrative or political tutelage which might compromise their mission. Perceiving the government as a formal, bureaucratic institution characterized by inertia and inefficiency, NGOs seek to escape its control and influence on their activities -- a fact for which the government reproaches them, accusing them of disregard for national and local goals.

## **2. Attitude of Suspicion.**

NGOs often feel that officials in charge of their activities, seek to use them for goals contrary to their mandate and when they refuse to serve them, many obstacles are put in their path. This creates a situation of mistrust and comprises any possible collaboration between NGOs and government officials.

## **3. Attitude of Readiness and Openness.**

In spite of these complaints, NGOs realize that the government's support of their activities is necessary. It is for this reason that NGOs, sensitive to criticisms leveled against them by the government, are becoming more and more disposed to the establishment of an appropriate framework of cooperation. Thus, they have launched several initiatives to work with the government in establishing open channels of communication. The National Committee for Rural Dialogue (CBCR) has been actively working in this direction.

## **C. Relative Influence of Environmental NGOs Compared to the Private For-profit, Non-environmental NGO, Journalists/Media, Private Individuals, and Others Concerned With Policies Regulating Natural Resource Use**

The influence of various organizations which are concerned with the regulation of the use of natural resources, varies depending on how they are organized and how they define their objectives and activities.

The private sector has little concern with environmental issues, except when they directly affect their activities. For example, private tourism promoters denounce the destruction of the fauna of the Niokolo-Koba national park by poachers, but only because it is bad for business. It is worth noting here that private industry is often reluctant to initiate programs that could help limit the negative environmental impact of their activities. This is often due to the lack of enforcement of environmental laws and regulations by the government and the desire of private industry to maximize their profits without having to bear the environmental cost. Given this situation, the private sector wields little influence on environmental policy.

The media exerts more influence on grassroots communities and NGOs than it does on the government because most radio, TV and newspapers are government or ruling party (PS) run. The general tendency of the media is to show concern only when environmental issues have reached a crisis point. For example, the media seized the issue of pollution in the Hann Bay only after scientists connected the pollution to deteriorating health among Bay residents. However with the increasing number of independent media in the country (radio, newspapers, TV) one can hope that the situation will change.

Individuals, groups and associations carry out specific and isolated activities on issues related to the protection of natural resources, such as reforestation and anti-brushfire campaigns, and also wield little influence on the government's policies. There is however a growing number of

independent groups that work to influence the government's environmental policies. "Forum Civil", for example, which was created in 1993 by a group of Senegalese elites who are not involved in politics, has an "Environmental Watch Group" that tries to develop environmental awareness among the public and presents its concerns to the government. An other example is a newly created "Senegalese Association of Consumers" which focuses on water and electricity uses and environmental degradation. It is to soon to decide how the public and the government are reacting to their campaigns.

Environmental political parties do not abound in Senegal. At present, only one exists. It's called the Senegalese Ecological Party (SEP). So far it has not generated much interest mainly because of the lack of charisma of its leader and the little attention the general public gives to environmental problems compared to developmental ones.

Environmental NGOs are not very influential in comparison with non-environmental NGOs. In effect, those which are involved in environmental issues are only recognized by their direct partners and the people they serve, with the exception perhaps of Enda-Third World which is internationally known. Otherwise, they are less well-known than NGOs involved in development. This can be partially explained by the less perceptible effects of their activities while developmental NGOs offer short and medium-term goods and services. In addition, the lack of popular awareness about the environment has made it difficult for NGOs to overcome the inertia of their target groups.

## **VII. WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR NGO AND OTHER PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN NATURAL RESOURCE POLICY REFORM**

### **A. NGO Potential to Influence Policy Making at the Sub-National Versus National Level**

In Senegal, policy formulation is the prerogative of the executive branch, which also defines the conditions for implementation at the local and national level. Local assemblies, however, are free to formulate area policies within the framework of national goals.

At the national level, NGOs possess the potential in the following areas to influence policy:

**The making of National Development Plans:** These plans are defined by the government with the assistance of various national and international actors, including multilateral and bilateral organizations, academics, consultants, and sometimes NGOs. They are usually a compilation of the different ministries' short and long term development goals. In order to be effective their budget must be adopted by the National Assembly. Because of the government's lack of sufficient financial resources to implement these plans, many areas such as village water supply, earth dams, small scale irrigated agriculture, renewable energy, etc. are left open to NGOs who are uniquely positioned to take over. They thus possess the opportunity to influence policy formulation at the national level in those areas.

**Financing, technical and human potential:** In 1992, NGOs working in Senegal used \$40 millions U.S. dollars to finance their projects. NGOs receive funding from multilateral and bilateral organizations such as UNDP, USAID, and CIDA, individual donations, Northern PVOs and most recently from their own national fund raising initiatives. These opportunities justify the growing capability of NGOs to attract financial resources and the gaining of respect from the government.

On the technical level, NGOs have acquired many field experiences on issues relating mainly to rural development that could be used to influence rural policies. Thus the technical capital of thousands of agents at the service of NGOs is additional credit to NGO activity, and reinforces their capacity to influence political decisions.

**Potential arising from the prestige they hold among the donor community:** Multilateral and bilateral aid is increasingly supporting NGOs, which signifies a growing credibility that NGOs will properly use the funds to the benefit of the people. The credibility they enjoy among donors constitutes a bargaining chip, which may be used to attract government attention.

**Potential to mobilize people:** NGOs have without doubt acquired a presence in the rural areas in Senegal because that's where 80 to 90% of their activities take place. Their participatory and action-oriented approach and the diverse effects of their activities on the lives of many grassroots communities have convinced the general public of the usefulness of NGOs. For this reason, they've gained respect from the people. It is this trust that links them to the people and enables them to mobilize more rapidly than the government. That is a major asset which can help to influence political decisions, at the national and local level.

In addition to the potentials enumerated above, NGOs also possess potentials to influence policy at the local level. NGOs profit from a knowledge of the country's environmental and socio-economic problems. The almost permanent presence of NGOs in the field as well as their work with the people have enabled them to fully understand reality of lives of Senegalese citizens. Thanks to this, NGO are able to greatly influence the decisions of local communities.

## **B. NGO Opportunities to Stimulate Policy Reform**

Several opportunities exist for NGOs to stimulate political reforms. They all depend very much on how NGOs take advantage of two elements:

**The most opportune moments:** History has shown that most political reforms in Senegal follow crisis situations, for which the government tries to provide rapid solutions. The dissatisfaction of the general public with the government contributes to political tension, which may also lead to reforms.

**After the crises:** Once calm has returned, the government is more receptive to suggestions that might prevent a repetition of political crises. In the past few years, major political reforms in Senegal have followed serious socio-political disturbances. Such was the case with the reforms, carried out since the end of the 1970s, which include Public Finance Stabilization Plan (PFSP), Economic and Financial Restructuring Plan (EFRP), Short and long-term Adjustment Plan (SLAP). Other national policies that were conceived following political disturbances include: the New Agricultural Policy (NPA), the New Industrial Policy (NIP), the New Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP).

**Institutions and organizations which offer opportunities for reform:** The National Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should be recognized as important vehicles for pushing political reforms. These two institutions are respectively in charge of voting laws and adopting government's policies, and orienting the public reform. In addition, international forums -- such as the Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Beijing International Conference on Women, and the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development -- offer opportunities for NGOs to suggest political reforms to the government which happens to be more receptive to NGOs concerns in international conferences.

In conclusion, the opportunities of NGOs to promote political reforms are many. They need only to organize themselves better by putting together an adequate strategy to lobby the government for policy reform.

### **C. Means to Better Inform NGOs About the Timing of Policy Reform**

The following sources of information may be especially useful:

**Official information:** These channels include national radio and television as well as the national daily newspaper, "Le Soleil." Official speeches and administrative correspondence also fall within this category. Lastly, information from U.N. agencies, such as UNDP Human Development Report which has specific development indicators on African countries, including Senegal and regional organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Committee to Combat Desertification in the Sahel (CILSS) which focuses on natural resources protection, may prove helpful. A systematic exploitation of this source of information sheds light on the existing political, social and economic atmosphere, and can help NGOs to identify and seize the best moments for pushing political reforms.

**Private information sources:** These sources include private radio stations, the independent press, the newspapers of political parties, etc. These can be used to supplement information given by the official press and add more credibility to it. The private media can also help the NGO community increase their credibility by presenting more the positive results of their work and facilitating debates on civil society involvement in policy issues.

**NGO sources of information:** NGOs realize more and more that good information is of prime importance in any decision-making process. It has therefore become imperative for them to have their own means of collecting, processing and disseminating information. ENDA-Third World constitutes so far the best source of information for NGOs because of its involvement in many researches and its numerous documentation centers on policy areas such as energy, habitat and urbanization, water, climate change, biodiversity. CONGAD has yet to develop an effective information center that could help its members to influence policies.

**D. Areas in the Policy-Making Process Where NGO Input Can Have the Most Impact**

During the political reform process, the areas in which NGO contributions could have a sure impact are:

**Rural development policies:** Without doubt, this is the area where NGOs have the most experience; Thus, it is in this sector that they are most capable of making relevant proposals on issues relating to agricultural policy, rural water supply or the environment.

**Environmental protection policies:** Following the involvement of NGOs in elaborating Senegal's National Action Plan for the Environment (NAPE), government authorities have been more inclined to recognize the potential role which NGOs can play in decision making. For example, Enda-Third World is a member of the NAPE working groups on energy, on climate change and biodiversity which provide an opportunity to present the views of NGOs.

**Health policies:** The potential for NGOs to participate in the orientation of health policy is enormous. NGOs have demonstrated this ability through their participation in the Bamako Initiative, which is a program developed by African governments to promote access to basic medicine such as aspirin or malaria contraception. Again, Enda-Health has done remarkable work in this area by recently publishing a brochure on medicinal plants.

**Policies for promoting women, the family and children:** If NGOs have greatly contributed to any area in Senegal, it is in the area of the promotion of women. For example, the NGO, the Association for Family Welfare (ASBEF), has done remarkably well on disseminating information and providing education on family planning and health issues. The same applies to the Association of SOS Children's Villages, which has distinguished itself in protecting disinherited children. The "Yewu Yewwi" Association (Awake to Emancipate) which demands liberty for women has been pivotal in empowering women.

## VIII. MAJOR CONSTRAINTS TO POPULAR PARTICIPATION

The main constraints to popular participation may be categorized in the following:

**The state of the law:** Despite the creation of consultative structures at the regional, district and local level, which is a good starting point to promote popular participation, the government has yet to include the views of those institutions in its the decision-making process. Nevertheless, since the inception of the democratic process, some efforts have been made by the government to encourage popular participation. The government has moved to:

- ◆ Reinforce decentralization through the creation of rural communities and the division of rural areas into smaller governing units; and,
- ◆ Transfer the management of certain collective goods, such as the construction of wells, drinking water for cattle, basic health care, to elected local committees;

However, a lot remains to be done. For instance, the government should modify the regulations of natural resources to permit greater grassroots participation in the areas of fund management, protection of the fauna, management of surface water sources etc.

**Level of political awareness:** The Senegalese history of one-party rule did not encourage widespread public participation. Today, the situation has changed, but vestiges of the single-party culture remain and constitute an impediment to developing the level of awareness of the people.

**Illiteracy:** The fact that almost 70% of the country's population are illiterate (i.e. people who can't read or write any language) constitutes a major obstacle to popular participation. For example, all the government's plans and policies are published in French. Most public policy debates and National Assembly meetings are also conducted in French. Those two factors explain partly the exclusion of a vast majority of the general public from the policy making process.

**The influence of customs and traditions:** Some aspects of tradition have a negative effect on popular participation. For instance, some social groups, such as casts or sects, feel obliged to vote for or support those to whom they owe a "debt of recognition or allegiance" for political, religious or cultural reasons. In democratic elections, factors, such as family ties, religious or political affiliations, often take precedence over those of commitment, honesty and competence.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. To Government to Further Open Up the Policy-Making Process

In this era, the greatest possible participation in the policy-making process has become a necessity for all governments committed to democracy. In Senegal, important steps have been taken in this direction. Nevertheless, there are still improvement to be made, notably in the inclusion of NGOs

in the policy-making process. To this effect, the following recommendations may be made. The government should:

- ◆ Reaffirm in a solemn act, such as a presidential directive, that NGOs are partners in development. This directive should be circulated among all ministerial departments, local communities and decentralized authorities in order to encourage more NGO participation.
- ◆ Take monitoring measures to ensure that NGO participation in the legislative and political reform process is not left to the discretion of government officials, but rather adopted as a rule for general application with the understanding that the observations and suggestions of NGOs will only be considered as contributions and not as directives. These could include conferring on each ministerial department responsible for NGO supervision the necessary power to aid NGOs. This would mean appointing liaisons who are sensitive to NGO problems and capable of significantly influencing government policy.
- ◆ Define an adequate institutional framework for NGO activity, which confers on them the necessary privileges to enable them fulfill correctly and fully their genuine role as partners in development. As a starting point, a committee comprised of NGO leaders, National Assembly's representatives and government's officials could be set up to review the Decree 89-775 of June 89 that governs the operation of NGOs.
- ◆ Create a mechanism which brings together regional and district government officials with local NGO and grassroots communities to discuss policy reform and its implementation at the local level.
- ◆ Improve its policy on freedom of information in order to facilitate to the civil society, including the NGOs, the access to policy documents. A law or regulation that guarantees information access to the general public may be one way of getting there.

**B. To NGOs and Other Independent Groups to More Effectively Participate in the Policy-Making Process**

These structures should:

- ◆ Elaborate a code of conduct for NGOs, emphasizing ethics and proper moral conducts. In order to portray a credible image to the public authorities and the general public, bind themselves by certain obligations and conduct themselves responsibly and seriously.

- ◆ **Make their activity reports accessible to the government, local communities and the general public in order to make themselves more "marketable" and increase their credibility. These reports should detail the progress of their project, evaluate the NGO's performance and redirect the NGO's plans if necessary.**
- ◆ **Reinforce their knowledge of the laws and acquaint themselves with the state's macro policies in order to better understand the relationship between strategic policies and the specific actions which they desire to take to the grassroots level. They should also be more aggressive by not waiting to be called by the government, but whenever the situation arises, strongly express their desire to participate in the deliberations for policy reform. In other words, NGOs should initiate reforms.**
- ◆ **Build their capacity on analysis, conceptualization and implementation of developmental and environmental activities in order to prepare relevant and credible policy-related proposals to the to the government. CONGAD or other consortiums could help identify the NGO's needs for capacity building on policy matters.**
- ◆ **Establish, under the supervision of CONGAD, a permanent "NGO Policy Group" composed of NGOs interested in policy issues with the aim of developing a policy awareness within the NGO community, reviewing on-going policy reform and preparing joint policy recommendations to the government.**

**C. To Donors and International PVOs in Support of Government and NGO Efforts**

Despite the fact that they are known to be less interested in supporting local NGO policy oriented projects, donors and international PVOs could play a major role in promoting NGO participation in policy reform in Senegal. They should focus on areas as:

- ◆ **Capacity building for NGO consortiums and committees that bring together NGOs and government officials such as the High Council for Natural Resources and Environment by providing the needed financial and technical assistance. One way of doing that could be assisting CONGAD to establish an "NGO Policy Group" that could coordinate the work of NGOs on policy reform and provide on a permanent basis an opportunity to the government to take greater advantage of NGO input.**
- ◆ **Funding and facilitating policy research projects on environmental issues such as "NGOs and land policy," and "Civil Society and Environmental Regulations" that are of NGOs and government interest but difficult to raise funds for.**

## **X. CONCLUSIONS**

Policy reform requires not only a commitment from the government to cooperate with and involve the civil society, including the NGO community, but the legal and institutional instruments that facilitate its process. But reform is a two-way street. It also demands that NGOs adopt a positive attitude toward the government and that donors and international PVOs lend strong, long-term support to both the government and NGOs. In Senegal, instruments that bring together the government and NGOs exist. The Decree 89-775 of June 30, 1989 defines the mode of operation of NGOs by specifying the nature of state institutional support for their actions. In addition, the Ministry of Women, Family and Children oversees the work of NGOs. Yet the participation of NGOs in policy reform is not as extensive as it could be. Though NGOs have played major roles in the elaboration of the Forest Code, the launching of the National Action Plan for the Environment, and the development of the National Policy on Literacy, many lessons are still to be learned from the above-mentioned policy reform processes. To play their part in this new era, NGOs need to better prepare themselves through capacity building and knowledge of the laws and policies in order to constructively contribute to policy reform. They also need to coordinate their efforts in order to effectively influence the policy reform process. One way of doing that is to establish an "NGO Policy Group" composed of NGOs interested in policy reform. As the Secretary General of CONGAD puts it so rightly in his June 16, 1995 letter to WRI with regard to this report, " With the democratic process that is taking place in Africa, NGOs should consider themselves as part of the civil society and avoid to limit their actions only on field projects, but also try to influence development policies. To do so, NGOs need to develop lobbying strategies on issues and policy reform that do not take into account the concerns of the grassroots. They should also undertake serious and extensive studies on current policy issues in order to make their contributions carry more weight."

Recommendations to the government of Senegal, to NGOs working in Senegal, and to PVOs and the donor community on how to make the policy reform process more participatory are made in this report. Thus, a meeting in Senegal that brings together all of the representatives of these parties that are interested in policy reform would be a useful next step. This meeting would not only create an opportunity to comment this report, but also to define a strategy to implement some of its recommendations. CONGAD, the coalition of NGOs working in Senegal, could help facilitate the meeting.

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## **APPENDIX: PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS CONTACTED**

### **A. Persons**

This report was based upon a literature review, interviews of government officials, NGO and grassroots leaders in Senegal, and experiences and insights I gathered as Coordinator of the Water and Environment Section of the African Network for Integrated Development (RADI) for four years. Special thanks to the following individuals for their contribution to the preparation of the report:

1. Samba Diop, Expert in Management.
2. Maleye Diop, Expert in Management.
3. Saliou Diouf, Economist.
4. Abdoulaye Sankare, Economist.
5. Kelly David, Master of International Affairs.

### **B. Organizations**

1. Office of Public Management, Dakar, Senegal.
2. African Network for Integrated Development, Dakar, Senegal.
3. NGO Support Council for Development (CONGAD), Dakar, Senegal
4. Forum of African Voluntary Development Organizations (FADVO), Dakar, Senegal
5. Federation of Senegalese NGOs (FONGS), Thies, Senegal,
6. Senegal Ministry of Environment
7. High Council for Natural Resources and Environment(CONSERE), Dakar, Senegal.