Ancestral know-how and innovative technologies help women producers of salt and rice preserve the mangroves

Description of the project: The DEDURAM project aims to improve the livelihoods of women and communities in the mangroves of Guinea-Bissau, through sustainable management of space, energy and natural resources. North-South knowledge exchange and capacity-building of women producers contribute to structure and develop the salt and rice value chain in the mangroves. 2000 family farms, 75% of which are managed by women, have adopted sustainable production methods (solar energy, reduced water consumption), thanks to the sharing of ancestral know-how and innovative techniques. 1500 women and 500 men have gained autonomy through increased revenues and their integration into the local economy, while adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Climate impact: The traditional salt production technique - by heating brine - uses 3 tons of firewood for each ton of salt. By introducing the ancestral solar method used in the salt marshes of Brittany, Universsel has enabled women in Guinea to produce 4000 t. of salt while protecting 24 ha. of mangrove forests. Efficient water management in rice-growing areas has favoured the rehabilitation of abandoned rice paddies while increasing rice yield. This innovation, combined with geo-referenced monitoring, helps to preserve the biodiversity of a fragile ecosystem, and prevents further deforestation of the mangrove.

Gender impact: Salt is exclusively produced by women in Guinea-Bissau. 1500 of them have gained skills in a new solar technique, but also in sales, financial management, microcredit and the structuring into cooperatives. They enjoy better living and working conditions and greater recognition within a patriarchal society. They have become actively involved in the protection of their ecosystem as their cultural horizons have been broadened through exchange visits to France and Senegal, and they have been empowered within organized associations of women salt producers.

Scalability / replicability: DEDURAM promotes two innovative techniques which are affordable and easy to adopt by women producers in Guinea Conakry, Guinea-Bissau and soon in Senegal. The beneficiaries cooperate with local professional organisations and Government agencies. In order to ensure the sustainability and scaling up of the adopted technologies, rice areas management committees and women producers associations have worked together to draw up a capacity-building plan including the preservation of the mangrove and climate resilience measures.

Empowered women ensure community-based forest preservation

Description of the project: Three organizations in the central districts of Nepal - Kathmandu, Makwanpur, and Sarlahi - are promoting aromatic herb plantation and essential oil production, ecotourism, and handicraft development in 13 community forests over 1,375 hectares. More than 4000 households benefit from the project, contributing to surveying the trees, revising forest management plans, and establishing plant nurseries in conjunction with economic activities. Community based ecotourism policies were strengthened, and three women-led forestry enterprises were successfully registered. They now operate, producing market-recognized forest products to improve local livelihoods.

Climate impact: These nepalese districts suffer from deforestation due to rapid population growth, overuse of fuelwood, and clear felling under electric lines. Participatory development of new plans demonstrating sustainable forest management (SFM) practices, alongside capacity-building through SFM training, effectively counters the deforestation. Nurseries have supported the planting of 175,000 trees. The distribution of improved cook-stoves, including biogas units, reduces future fuelwood demand. Ecotourism policy-strengthening has also provided a foundation for SFM to continue.

Gender impact: 551 women have directly benefited from trainings, economic opportunities, and received appliances. Basic and advanced handicraft training led to two profitable enterprises. Along with an aromatic herb plantation, these enterprises are generating income and giving women greater autonomy over their daily spending. SFM training has supported the equal involvement of women in community forest monitoring and management. The additional distribution of solar panels for lighting and improved cookstoves has enabled more time flexibility, reduced fuel-gathering labor, and improved health.

Scalability / replicability: This work is able to be replicated to support women's economic upliftment in Nepal. The plantation of aromatic herbs is particularly identified as a model for replication. The Government of Nepal's emphasis on ecotourism promotion, forest based enterprises and SFM will contribute to the sustainability and scalability of this approach. To reach policy makers and other audiences in Nepal, a wide range of communication tools were employed, including local media coverage, brochures and documentary filmmaking.