

Local knowledge for sustainable climate adaptation



In West Africa, women and youth are most affected by climate change despite their minimal environmental footprint. Meanwhile, large corporations that are primarily responsible for pollution dictate climate policy and avoid the consequences of their actions. This bulletin is intended to highlight our counterparts' work in supporting the resilience and autonomy of local populations in the face of these environmental challenges. **Their initiatives, which are restoring ecosystems and building thriving ecological farms, are living proof that sustainable and inclusive solutions to the climate crisis are possible.**



Photo: Eric Chaurrette / Inter Pares

Benvinda C6 is part of the Boatai community, in which women use holistic and sustainable agricultural practices to develop community gardens and diversify their income sources.

Climate plans must include solutions by and for communities

“This is where we used to grow rice, before the sea swept our fields away,” Sanca Albino says, pointing to the beach, where the waves crash relentlessly. ►



Photo: Eric Chaurrette/Inter Pares

Sanca Albino, chief of the Boatai community on one of the Bijagos islands where Inter Pares works with our counterpart Tiniguena.

◀ The Bijagos Archipelago in Guinea-Bissau – once home to prosperous agricultural land that ensured its population’s survival – is experiencing the devastating effects of climate change, as the Atlantic Ocean swallows its fields. Sanca is chief of the Boatai community on one of the Bijagos islands, where Inter Pares works with Tiniguena, a local counterpart.

In the face of this crisis, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit fossil fuel consumption are simply not enough. At a time when scientists and civil society are calling for action, national decision-makers continue to do nothing. This is compounded by the promotion of false solutions that hide capitalist interests.

In Boatai, women are establishing community gardens using holistic and sustainable agricultural practices.

For example, the mangroves that cover 10% of Guinea-Bissau have attracted carbon commodification initiatives. Because they absorb carbon, mangrove preservation projects can be used to generate carbon credits that are then purchased by companies or countries trying to offset their own emissions.

For communities that are vulnerable to climate change, carbon credit systems may appear as a viable means to obtain sorely needed funds. But the agreements made between polluters and communities can leave the latter without authority over their own land – their means of subsistence and survival.

“What we need to do is leave fossil fuels in the ground and take part in concrete climate action that is based on equity and justice,” explains Miguel de Barros, Executive Director at Tiniguena.

Inter Pares collaborates with local counterparts like Tiniguena and people like Sanca, in Guinea-Bissau and elsewhere in West Africa, to try to find concrete, community-based solutions to climate change.

For example, in Boatai, women are establishing community gardens using holistic and sustainable agricultural practices. This initiative helps diversify their sources of income and food, as shellfish populations dwindle in response to rising ocean temperatures.

On the beach, Sanca points out a tree that is over one hundred years old, a silent witness to decades of his people’s history. “The water is rising so fast; soon it won’t be there anymore.”

Only a few weeks later, the tree was lost to the rising water – demonstrating the urgent need to develop local and sustainable climate actions.


In West Africa, it is the biggest polluters who have the most influence over climate adaptation policy today. We are determined to put the power into the hands of those who are most affected by climate change, especially women and youth, so as to create climate solutions that are based on their knowledge and reflect their needs. Only an inclusive approach can guarantee a sustainable future for us all. 



Photo: Eric Chaurrette/Inter Pares

A hundred-year-old tree was swept away by quickly rising ocean waters, a consequence of climate change.

Leading the change: Women and youth at the heart of climate action

In Senegal, rural women and youth play a crucial role in natural resource management and climate change adaptation. However, their participation in decision-making spaces remains limited. Social and patriarchal norms limit women to domestic and reproductive tasks, while adult men dominate decision-making spaces from which young people are excluded.

Our local counterpart in Senegal, Enda Pronat, is working to reverse this trend by offering tools and training that support the empowerment of women and girls in rural communities' decision-making spaces.

“Before, women weren’t allowed to speak. Their husbands had the control,” explains Ousmane Diouf, member of a group of “feminist champions.” These men attend Enda Pronat trainings on positive masculinity and gender inequality, and then share what they learned and raise awareness within their community.

“The training and knowledge-sharing are starting to change things. Women are going to school and participating more in discussions and decisions.”

Our work with Enda Pronat takes many different forms. The women’s association of Guédé Chantier, a village located in the Saint-Louis region of



Members of the women’s association of Guédé Chantier, a village located in the Saint-Louis region of Senegal. Aïssata Maï Dio, the association’s president, stands in the centre.


Senegal, is an inspiring example of that work. Established over twenty years ago, this group initially depended on seasonal agriculture in a flood plain. Today, with the help of Enda Pronat, the women sustainably manage several hectares of crops using agroecology that allows them to access healthy and nutritious food while caring for the land.

In the seaside village of Palmarin, an annual contest supported by Inter Pares called the Trophée Vert (“green trophy”) encourages youth to come up with creative climate change solutions.

Team leader Rosalie Ndour tells us how she mobilizes her peers. “I explain to them

that Palmarin belongs to us. One day our parents will die, and we will still be here. This is our responsibility.”

The youth participate in educational workshops as well as clean up and reforestation activities. Gradually, they realize that their participation is key to ensuring the long-term success of climate actions.

These initiatives show how, by supporting women and youth’s involvement in decision-making about land management and agriculture, communities can become more resilient to climate-related challenges. 

Mangrove restoration: Local solutions, global impacts

The often-misunderstood mangrove is an ecosystem at the centre of efforts to adapt to climate change in West African coastal and island communities. Mangroves protect communities from storms, filter pollutants from the water, shelter reproducing wildlife, and sequester carbon.

But climate change is a threat to mangroves as well.

Inter Pares is working with counterparts in Togo, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau to restore mangroves by organizing education and mobilization activities to help reduce human impact on these ecosystems.

Inades-Formation Togo planted no less than 10,210 mangrove trees and 850 coconut palms in local mangroves. In the Senegalese village of Palmarin, Enda Pronat restored two hectares of mangroves through training and community action. These efforts encourage fish reproduction, countering the loss of certain species, while slowing coastal erosion.

Women are largely responsible for these initiatives, which speaks to their crucial role in preserving these ecosystems. Located as they are on the front lines of mangrove deterioration, women can see the direct threat this poses to their natural resource-based subsistence activities of fishing, oyster cultivation, and shellfish harvesting, all of which take place within mangrove forests.

Climate change forces women to travel increasingly long distances to fish, reducing

the time they have available for other activities and worsening their financial circumstances.


By recognizing women's role in conserving mangrove forests, we are highlighting the importance of community engagement and including the most vulnerable people in climate change adaptation. Together, we can take action to preserve and restore these vital ecosystems for the planet. 



Photo: Hugues Allia/Inter Pares

Mamadou Sow, project manager with Enda Pronat, explains how climate change has forced women to travel longer and longer distances for supplies.

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