
FROM AFRICA/Sénégal**Saint Louis women organize**

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Today, in the context of the 'decentralisation' policies being implemented in Sénégal since January 1998, many local elected representatives are taking over the lands of fishing communities in order to develop infrastructure, such as city halls, houses and industries.

This process has aggravated the problems of local people, in particular, those of fishery-dependent coastal populations. Despite their prominent economic and social role and their vital contribution to food security, fishworkers are still confronted by serious difficulties, and women are the most affected. The absence of a social status for women explains their marginalization but does not justify it.

The development of an anti-social tourism, as a consequence of which women fish processors have to leave their workplaces on the beach, is a challenge for fishing communities and particularly for women fish processors who need this space for their activity. There are several cases where such displacement has already taken place. For example, in Hann village, 15 km from Dakar, what was formerly a fish processing site is now used for housing rich people. In Mbour village, development of tourism in the Petite Côte region has affected women fish processors.

A similar problem is threatening to erupt in Saint Louis, which public authorities are eager to develop into a tourist town. The development of tourist infrastructure along this coast will imply that women fish processors are evicted because, in the eyes of authorities, cohabitation between the two sectors is not possible.

This has been actively and fiercely opposed by members of CNPS' Saint Louis women's cell, and its leader, Ndeye Sène. The members of the women's group have highlighted the fact that the land legally belongs to them. So far, they have been able to successfully prevent the takeover of their land by the local authorities. They are aware that to continue as fish processors, they must not give up their right to access the land. They must also be aware that this is only the first step in a long struggle for recognition.