Summary

Environmental degradation in the bay of Hann is presently one of the most acute environmental concerns in the region of Dakar. This has been confirmed in 1994 when the African Institute for Urban, management (AIUM) and its partners like the commune of Dakar, the Urban Management Program and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements started the so-called "Dakar Sustainable City" project. Studies conducted in that project revealed that the degradation of the bay of Hann and industrial risks are the major environmental problems in Dakar. Then, several detailed studies (environmental profiles, sectarian studies, public consultations) were performed to better appreciate these problems.

The successful realisation of that process is an Action Plan (AP) that has been validated in a community forum with the participation of all stakeholders. One of the major recommendations of the forum was the setting up of a permanent ruling body in charge of the implementation of the AP. The realisation of such a recommendation led to the creation of the Cross Sectarian Committee (CSC). It is in the framework of such a committee that many activities oriented toward environmental remediation, improvement of environmental health and ecological improvement have been undertaken. Key actions include environmental education and support to local population to involve them in activities for the improvement of environmental conditions and support local authorities for better environmental management.

Narrative

SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN

The area of concern has about 42,000 inhabitants. It is characterised by a serious lack of sanitation facilities, hence, both liquid and solid wastes are discharged on the seaside or in the water body. The overall picture is that of an area made up of dirty neighbourhoods with high prevalence of infectious
and diarrhoea. To date actions that have been taken are insufficient, inappropriate or inefficient as the situation still prevails.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES

Given the importance of the ecological, social and economic consequences of the situation and the large implication on the population, it has been concluded that the active involvement of the community, when combined with support from local and central government may contribute to the reduction of the ongoing degradation. That idea is materialised through a project based upon the improvement of awareness among communities living in the area so as to stimulate their involvement in improving their own environment/living conditions. In order to facilitate the implementation of such an approach, other actors (government, local authorities) have participated in the process.

FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The main objective of the initiative is to reduce domestic pollution of the bay through practical solutions identified and implemented by the local population. Another objective is to reduce industrial pollution along the same line. The strategies consist of creating awareness among people through education and dissemination of information, letting people know of the solutions already identified. From a practical standpoint, the strategies include the organisation of a managerial body (Environmental Committees) which would be responsible for preventing further pollution of the area. Each Environmental Committee (EC) that works closely with all inhabitants of the neighbourhood prepares an operational plan, with the support of the project and its partners.

MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES

When the cross-sector committee had been set up, one of the first actions that we took was to contact, through a request of collaboration, key institutions (whether national or international with national representation) that may be interested in what we were doing. Some of them responded favourably and expressed their willingness in knowing the cross-sector committee or the action plan better. Also, as we closely collaborate with the commune, these institutions make some contacts for the profit of the cross sector committee. These are the main channels through which we have developed partnerships and they also helped in getting in touch with the Micro Finance Program of the Global Environment Facility and many other institutions.

When the Micro Finance Program of the Global Environment Facility learnt more about our action plan, its co-ordinator express the possibilities for collaboration and invited us to prepare and submit a project document. The ministry of environment, whose activities are closely associated with this development initiative, observed what we were developing in terms of approaches and strategy and decided to reinforce our initiative through financial aid. The commune, our strategic partner, contributes also to the financing of our activities. Other institutions give technical support.

PROCESS

One of the major constraints experienced in the implementation of the project is related to what the target population experienced in the past. In fact, prior to our project, many other projects or initiatives of that kind were developed in the area while those initiatives did not have the impact that the population expected. Also, as mentioned previously, the area is characterised by a serious lack of sanitation / waste disposal facilities and the local population has expressed the fear that processes of environmental remediation may not be successful because of this problem.

The strategies developed for overcoming this problem were (i) to intervene in several limited areas (neighbourhoods) and (ii) to make the population believe that together we are quite able to overcome the problems they mentioned. Concerning their discouragement in relation to previous attempts by others, our strategy consists of developing a participatory approach in which the views of the local population are taken into consideration.
As the problems facing us are enormous and our resources are limited, the key issue is the distribution of resources. We use the participatory approach by gathering all the environmental committees and explain that we all benefit from the results of our actions and we should think in terms of general interest. It is on this basis that we define what to do and where to do it.

Though the success of the participatory approach is largely dependent on mobilisation and dissemination of information, we also prepared and organised several meetings in each neighbourhood. By doing this we aimed to establish contact with persons and communities so as to make them adhere to the initiative from the word go. Moreover, the environmental committees (which were set up during those meetings) are representative of the neighbourhoods.

Local authorities are very involved in the initiative due to the fact that most of the work should be done by the commune. So the commune allocates part of its budget (resources for environmental management) to the initiative. We are also the advisors of the commune when it comes to environmental matters.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

We have eight environmental committees, one in every neighbourhood of the commune. The environmental committees possess the equipment necessary for waste collection and disposal. They have established rules governing the improvement of their immediate environment and daily clean up of their surroundings. The exchange of experiences reveals good relationships among committees. The commune and other institutions involved in environmental management support the committees throughout the initiative.

The commune has deeply changed its environmental orientation and is now more oriented toward the strategy of the initiative. Moreover, the co-ordination unit of the initiative is actively (but indirectly) involved in the decision-making processes on environmental issues. Indeed, in all environmental issues that it is involved in, the commune refers to the co-ordination of the initiative for advice so as to maintain harmony in the management of the local environment. It is along the same line that the central government (Direction de l'Environnement et des Etablissements Classees) has involved the managers of the initiative in its program in the area.

Through our activities, reports, publications, meetings and other articles published by national media, local and national authorities are more and more aware of the seriousness of the degradation of the Bay of Hann. The expression of this awareness was held in February 2002 by the inter ministerial council on the environmental degradation of the bay of Hann. The managers of the initiative had participated in the steering committee meeting for the implementation of the recommendations of the inter ministerial council.

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the major features of our initiative is that it is fundamentally based upon community commitment and involvement rather than on a financial basis. Indeed, previous initiatives have failed because they were formed on financial basis and thought money was the solution to their problems. Hence, owing to financial problems encountered, these initiatives could no longer perform. Though money is very important in any development initiative, we focus more on the people, who are key actors in the development process. As long as community participation subsists, the initiative will function for a long time.

This development initiative obtains financial resources (donations) from specialised institutions. By forming alliances with these institutions, we aimed to secure our sources of funds so as to avoid the stagnation of our development work, which may be caused by lack of funds. Such attempts have rendered our initiative sustainable.
From a socio-cultural point of view, we fully integrated the community in the process of project conceptualisation. Instead of using the top-down approach, we used a participatory approach in the formulation process. By so doing, we helped the local people identify their needs and formulate the appropriate solutions.

Economically speaking, we tried to exclude any constraint on the people. However, the beneficiaries pay a minimum fee. As far as environmental sustainability is concerned, the initiative is ensuring better living conditions for all.

LESSONS LEARNED

Through this initiative, we have learned that community commitment and involvement are key aspects in a community-based environmental initiative. During the preparation step, we learnt that effective communication is fundamental in order to keep the people informed. Indeed through a research that we carried out, we realised that people felt excluded from the development process because they were not informed on the activities. We have therefore realised that when people are involved in development activities, they respond very positively to such changes.

Another lesson learned is that, through using the right approach, development initiatives that failed earlier on can succeed. Though similar development initiatives have been tried out in this place and failed, this initiative sought to identify the reasons behind this problem. Since the problem has been brought about by the exclusion of the people from the development process, we have tried to involve the people in every step that we take, since they are the key actors in every development initiative.

Finally we have learnt that the best way to involve authorities into actions toward the rehabilitation of the environment of the Bay of Hann is to develop an in-field and pertinent demonstration. When the initiative took place, both local and national authorities appreciated it and are currently supporting it.

TRANSFERABILITY

A program of exchange with other projects and institutions is currently under way. This will involve the exchange of experiences between various development initiatives. To achieve this, we will organise workshops and seminars in which the exchange will take place. Such an exercise is important since it enables an initiative to improve on its performance. Four Community-Based Organisations in coastal zones in the region of Dakar are already following our footsteps.

Key Dates

March 1999: Starting date for CSC in the implementation of the action plan

December 2001: MFP/GEF finance project submitted by the committee

January 2002: Launching of the project by the minister of the environment

February 2002: each of the 8 neighbourhoods has an environmental committee

February 2002: Inter Ministerial council on the Bay of Hann

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de Hann.

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Type of Organization: cross-sector committee

Nominating Organization

The Cross-Sector Committee (CSC) for the Bay of Hann
(not supplied)

Partners

UNCHS via the African Institute for Urban Management (AIUM)
Mr Omar Cisse, Executive Secretary
AIUM
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Type of Organization: International Agency (Multilateral)
Type of Partner Support: Technical Support

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Type of Organization: Local Authority
Type of Partner Support: Political Support

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Type of Organization: Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
Type of Partner Support: Financial Support

Financial Profile

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