

# Paradise under threat

## Impressions from Basse-Casamance



Hans Georg Tangemann, 2016 & 2021

**D**ioque is a fishing village at the mouth of the Casamance River (12° 34' 27.8" N, 16° 45' 9" W). Actually a wonderful spot, rich in fish, surrounded by water on three sides, so that the fishermen can choose between different fishing grounds. They simply live in huts and bravely venture into the floods. Their concern, however, is that the sea level has been rising regularly for years. Their fishing village used to be surrounded by water, now it is in danger of being consumed by the floods. On the southern bank of the river on the opposite side, the worries are no less: in some places, the sea has already eroded tree graveyards.



*Ceiba pentandra* (L.) Gaertn., Kapokbaum, Écoparc Jembereng

**T**here, near Jembereng, we visited Augustin Diatta. With international help, he has built an ECOPARC: a traditional biotope, over 30 ha in size, where many plants are pro-

tected in typical original density. A Dorado for plants and animals, an instructive piece of forest for biologists, students and tourists.



**T**he forest is also close to Keba Aïdara's heart. In a beautiful, natural park, the experienced gardener raises plants from all over the world with Belgian adoptive parents. But his commitment goes even further. He wants to build a "forest conservatory" on a huge area at the outskirts of the southern capital Ziguinchor. "If you want to protect the forest successfully, you have to take as much land as you can get," is his motto. Indeed, those who are familiar with substantiated media reports and with confirmed witnesses on the development of tropical forests know about political pressures that lead to the exploitation of the African continent. So the counter-movement must also be strong.

**O**n the occasion of an event at the French Cultural Institute "Alliance", students listen attentively to the geographer Dr. Sane from the University of Ziguinchor, the political scientist Jean-Claude Marut and the former Minister of Environment Haïdar El Ali. They have understood that saving the tropical forests with their rich plant habitat will be their assignment, an extraordinary challenge.



**A**drien Manga from Enampor is a shrewd connoisseur of the traditions of the former kingdom of Bandial on the peninsula of the same name. With the Belgian Constant Vanden Berghen, he wrote the reference work on traditional rice cultivation in Basse-Casamance. Under his leadership, the village is pursuing an ambitious plan: each year a successful project,



2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012-13
Aide Alimentaire	Rénovation TOUTE L'ÉCOLE	Rénovation de 2 puits	Clôture Jardin	La boutique de la solidarité	Prise en charge 2680 élèves
Frais Médicaux	Prise en charge 423 élèves	Prise en charge 1195 élèves	Prise en charge 2330 Tentative de réhabilitation de la grande école du village d'ENAMPORÉ	Prise en charge 2555 élèves	Projet de puits en cours. Poste de santé du village de ENAMPORÉ
Frais scolaires	Frais scolaires cantine	Frais scolaires	adduction d'eau école de BANGDIALE	Frais scolaires	
Parrainages 6 élèves	Parrainages 13 élèves	Parrainages 18 élèves	03 nouveaux puits du village scolaire	Frais scolaires	
			Facture d'eau village Elouboine	Parrainages 27 élèves	
			Parrainages 25 élèves		

with sponsorships for schoolchildren at the forefront. The "Duck Festival" (Fête aux Canards) attracts many European tourists every year, not least partners (Serge Pajot †, Initiative pour le développement durable, IDD) from Narbonne. Enampore offers tourists accommodation in a newly renovated Impluvium-style campement, of which there are only a few left in Basse-Casamance.

Our "Association Casa Cœur d'Ange, ACCA" (allusion to Ezekiel 11:19 and the peace initiatives after the war-like conflict in Casamance) has been able to convince the home village of ACCA member Françoise Badji that the way forward must also be a way back to the good traditions of the village. Her father ran the "Egunor" clinic there half a century ago, loosely translated: "Here I get well!" The traditional doctor Jean Baptiste François Badji had the entire natural pharmacy in and

around Affiniam at his fingertips, and with this medicine he achieved great successes that made him famous far beyond the borders of the village. But medicinal plants are on the decline and the knowledge of traditional healers is also decreasing. That is why ACCA has proposed to the village to enclose a few hectares of forest to establish a "botanical garden with medicinal plants". The village leaders, doctors and the village assembly have agreed. What is to be done has been listed in a plan by the village officials. The financing could be done in a first phase in cooperation with the parish of St. Lukas in Düren (Germany) as joint financing. For a new "Egunor", the costs would subsequently amount to at least € 30,000. So this is how "rich" the village once was, a richness in the form of medical infrastructure that benefited everyone almost free of charge. Hence the paradox of "back to the future". *(Translated with the support of DeepL)*

