

Gureng gaha ubun

Botanical garden of Affiniam

1. Situation

The village of Affiniam is located in Casamance, the southern province of Senegal, between the neighbour states of Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Casamance is characterised by a tropical climate with about three months of rain and nine months of dry period. The most important agricultural product is rice; but numerous kinds of fruits and vegetables are also cultivated.

2. Project phases

The botanical garden of Affiniam will cover approximately 4 has in common land. Multiple botanical plants are already being situated there. Additional species are to be established later on. Especially the village doctors will look after the botanical garden and its plants that will provide on-site medical care. In the beginning the area has to be protected against game animals, grazing livestock and trespassing. Afterwards, a reception area will be set up where visitors can be received. At a later stage a small clinic similar to the one that existed successfully under the direction of J.B.F. Badji in former times will be constructed. In all project phases traditional and modern materials (clay, timber, local plants) and working methods (solar panels for pumps, lighting etc.) will be combined.



3. Background information

The village of Affiniam is situated on a peninsula between forest and river. In this position the village always had to rely on self-sufficiency and self-support. Therefore also medical care was in the hands of traditional healers. The treatment was performed on an outpatient basis or by in-patient care in the small clinic called 'Egunor' (Under this protection I will recover). Due to decades of rural exodus and repeated flare-ups of armed clashes and banditry self-sufficiency and self-support came under pressure. Persistent drought periods from 1982 on worsened the situation as well. Because of the lack of medicine these adverse events couldn't be compensated fundamentally by the work of Nuns who conduct the village infirmary. Sick people have to be transported by pirogues to the province capital Ziguinchor (the 25 kilometres of transition by land being quite bumpy). Medical care in state-run hospitals is quite rudimentary, however.

4. Objectives of the first phase

- Amelioration of the inexpensive medical on-site care on the basis of traditional plants

- Protection of endangered medical plants
- Planting of endemic medical plants (in co-operation with other villages)
- Amelioration of the co-operation between traditional healers beyond the boundaries of the village
- Co-operation with the infirmary run by the „Sœurs de la Présentation de Marie“
- Co-operation with the schools „École publique “ and „ Christian Pithon “
- Arousing the interest of tourists

5. Objectives of the second phase

- Co-operation with other botanical gardens and arboreta
- Co-operation with universities in Senegal (Ziguinchor and Dakar)
- International co-operation with universities
- Co-operation with NGOs (NRO, ONG)
- Guidance of tourists through the botanical garden, restaurant with dishes and drinks based on local plants, contact with traditional healers.

6. Framework

During all phases, the project will be supervised by „ Association Casa Cœur d’Ange “ (ACCA) in narrow co-operation with the chiefs of the quarters as well as the village doctors. ACCA aims at combining the intended annual Eco-festival at Affiniam with the development of the botanical garden. In this way nature and culture shall be mentioned in a single breath as it always has been the case in the ethnic groups of Casamance. Especially young people shall be led to connect traditions and progress.

7. The wide perspective

In the third phase the tradition of the village clinic with natural medicine shall be revived. The long-term prospect will be the conception of an „ ecological village “ as it existed in the centuries-old past of ethnic groups in Casamance and has been initiated in recent times by Greensburg (USA) for instance in a new way. (<http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/11/f5/53539.pdf>)

8. Costs

Costs for the first two phases are estimated at €10,000 each, those of the third phase at €25,000. In addition to that we have to consider performances of the village as the free provision of common ground and not reimbursed work performances. Incidental expenses for the purchase of plants, transport, authorities, communication, etc., amounts to €5,000 Throughout the entire term of the project we calculate with an amount of €50,000 beyond the performances of the village and the free provision of common ground.

9. Financing

At the moment we are checking several possible financing options:

- support from the German Embassy at Dakar,
- BMZ (minister of economic co-operation and development) or BENGGO (advice and project funding for private operators in co-operation for development, <https://bengo.engagement-global.de/start.html>),
- Crowdfunding via for example Ecofund (<http://www.ecofund.org/de/wer-sind-wir.html>),
- Diverse partnerships.