

## Senegal Study

By Oriane Boudinot

Senegal is a country in West Africa which borders Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and the Gambia. It is located in an area that has become seriously affected by desertification, with a dry and wet season. It is a country which was colonized by France until 1960, and has since, been struggling to get back on its feet. Corruption within the government has not helped. The current president Abdoulaye Wade created a fury within the people a few months ago, when he announced that he was changing the constitution to be able to run for a third term. Wade is known for never ending shortages of water and electricity, and the people became angry and violent, because they just want water and food.

### THE LAND

Water issues are crucial in a country like Senegal. Water is known to be the source of life, but most of Senegalese people depend on farming and agriculture to make a living. Most remote villages that I visited outside of Thies and Touba have a village as the center point of their daily lives, with their houses and livestock. The well of the village is usually located at least 500 yards away from the village, and it is the women who take part in fetching the daily water needs in buckets. Women go in groups, to avoid walking alone, fill up their buckets, and walk back in a line, with the bucket on their head.

Desertification is a major problem in Senegal, since most of the year is the dry season. During my stay in the winter 2010-2011, I organized the orphanage Tawa Fall to plant 26 fruit trees, one for each boy. These trees were planted in sand, and it was crucial for the people to take care of the plants at the beginning of their growth, otherwise it would never bear fruit.



Another problem is soil erosion, over cultivation, overgrazing and cutting down trees. This combination of habits that many of the people do, contributes severely to lack of water. Cutting down trees and overgrazing means that the soil is not able to keep its water within the top soils, taking away all nutrition. Over cultivation also limits the ability of the land to keep in the water it must store during the wet season to survive the dry season. However, through these practices, the soils of Senegal have become desert-like, and are unfavorable for growing rich nutritious crops.

## STAGNATION and DISEASE

These issues of lack of water are also dangerous in regards to diseases and viruses that can be acquired by the people who consume it or come in contact with parasites and insects. Polio is still a major problem in this country, and one of the teachers, Gaye, of Tawa Fall has had polio since he was four years old. He needs to walk with a device on his leg; otherwise he would be too weak to do so.



Another issue are parasites that come from water that is pulled from the wells. Most of Senegal do not have faucets and running water, like we do in Western countries, and most people lack an education. Once the water is pulled, it is not boiled to help combat parasites, which have made too many children at Tawa Fall sick. The photo below shows a well from a daraa (religious school) that I visited in Touba.



Yet another issue is of course, mosquitoes. Mosquitoes can bring malaria, and this can be the cause of great illness and pain. Since most of the population is uneducated, they do not realize that mosquitoes breed in stagnant water. In all the places that I visited, I saw tires and artificial ponds with stagnant water, which are asking for mosquitoes to breed and therefore, make people sick. The picture below was taken during one of numerous visits to the market in Mbacke.



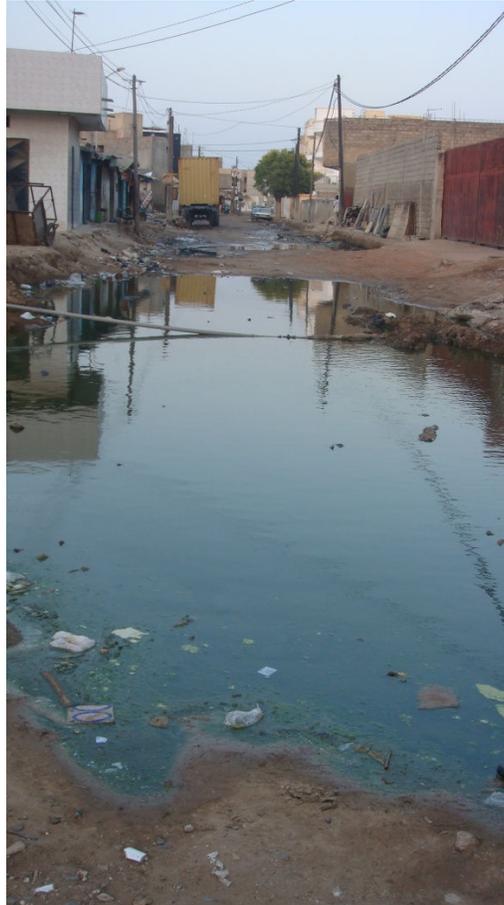
The boy in the picture below, his name is Saliou Sene. During my visit, I recognized that Saliou had a very bad fungus infection, which everyone carries on their skin. However, in hot weather, lots of sweat and no bathing, this fungus will overgrow, and cause very dry, itchy skin, which makes life very uncomfortable. I was able to advise the caretakers on what medicine he should receive, because he was diagnosed with an allergy. Since then, his skin has completely improved.



## THE CITIES

As I said, most of Senegal does not have faucets and running water. Even in major cities, and the capital Dakar, their capacity for dealing with floods during the wet season can be disastrous. In the dry season,

there are many big pools of water, which are filthy with household products, chemicals, fecal matter and who knows what. Many people walk barefoot, and coming into contact with this can bring sickness.



Since many people in cities do not have running water, there are always carts pulled by donkeys or horses, which will deliver water straight to your door. The problem is that many of the containers that are used to deliver water were previously used to carry chemicals like petrol. Lack of education adds to the fact that people do not know that these containers are not safe to be carrying water for people to consume.



Also, most of the washing of clothes and dishes are done in two or three different buckets. Each buckets is filled with water, and used to clean or rinse the items. The water at the end of this process is simply dumped in the alley behind the house, into the environment, since there are no adequate system to bring this water to a water processing site. The photo below was taken in Touba, after having washed dishes. Notice the buckets in the top left. This is the waste materials of blood, food and soap that will be dumped into the environment.

