

Transcript

Return to Senegal

Saint-Louis

ABDOU DIA: The city of Saint-Louis is situated between land and sea, and combined with the river and the marsh basins. This is a city of water. And as a city of water, the levels of the sea and the river make the city vulnerable if protection is not put in place by humans, to protect the city against the rising waters of the sea - and possibly the river too.

NARRATOR: Since 'My city, your city' was filmed, the mayor of Saint-Louis has been preparing his city for the effects of rising sea levels and climate change.

CHEIKH BAMBA DIEYE: Since then the city has initiated a major programme with UN Habitat. A project is underway to build houses in order to relocate some of the people who are exposed to flooding. What has changed is that now there is much more community involvement and people have been made much more aware of the problem. We have also trained over 333 people in strategies of resilience and adaptation.

NARRATOR: The problem of flooding in Saint-Louis had been exacerbated by a growing population setting in low-lying areas.

ABDOU DIA: Many people came to live in Saint-Louis, and as there wasn't enough living space they were forced to go and live in the lower-lying areas. But that was done in the years of drought. During those dry years there was hardly any flooding because there was low rainfall, so people went to live there. And when the situation changed and the rains came back to a normal level, those areas were once again flooded.

CHEIKH BAMBA DIEYE: There are low points prone to flooding. We have developed a set of motorised pumps so that when the waters come we can react.

OMAR DIOUF: During the rainy season, there are zones which get flooded, and so we have this pumping station, which removes rainwater. We have at least five stations in the city and it's here that rainwater is collected, which we can see here. Afterwards the water is piped into the river.

NARRATOR: But many residents of the city are still living in low-lying areas without pumping stations.
MARIAME: (Subtitles) We are still suffering from the floods, when it rains the rainwater mixes with the river water and floods. Whenever it rains our houses are flooded. In this district, we don't benefit from the pump, we have to bring our own pump and sometimes it doesn't work because of all the rubbish.

NARRATOR: Along the coastal edge of the city, some residents have already lost their homes as a result of rising sea levels.
BABA: (Subtitles) Living on the coastal side, a lot of houses have been destroyed by the water. There is no protection between these houses and the sea. I was born in 1967 and grew up here. I've never left here. When I was young we used to play on the sand at least a hundred metres out from here even more. So the sea has moved a lot in the last 45 years.

CHEIKH BAMBA DIEYE: When we talk about climate change, we are talking about a protected area of 330,000 hectares, which is in danger. Strictly speaking, in order to be really certain we can protect the 250,000 people living in St. Louis in the immediate future, we'll need at least CFA 100 billion [£125 million]. Justice in development is the idea that we must take care of people in the present, but we must also develop, protect, organise and preserve so that the generations to come can have the means and the ability to govern and to pass on something to them that they can continue. And as we

all only have the world on loan, it is extremely important that we manage it globally. I could finish by saying that sustainable development today requires something from everybody. Whether locally or regionally, at a sub-regional or on a planetary level, since the issue of climate change, the worldwide emission of greenhouse gases is a global issue. Even if it's Brazil, Russia, India and China and the Western countries that are all emitting carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases, it is us who suffer the effects here, we who have not caused them and do not have the means to cope with them. This is an international aspect of sustainable development – demanding international solidarity when dealing with global issues, which have not been caused by poorer nations.