



AS IT IS

Island in Senegal Fights Loss of Coastal Land

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On Diogue Island in southern Senegal, local people are using simple wooden structures with coconut tree **fronds** to save coastal land.

They are trying to prevent **erosion** that threatens parts of West Africa's Atlantic coast.

In West Africa, the coast is home to more than half of the economic activity. And about one third of the population lives along the coast. In some areas, half-covered trees and flooded buildings show what erosion has done.

Angele Diatta is head of the women's group in the village of Diogue Diola. She said, "The ocean was so far away that we used to hear it without seeing it." Now, high **tides** sometimes move through homes in the village.

Many rivers feed into the ocean along the West African coast. The United Nations says this makes it among the areas most affected by rising sea levels, increasing saltwater, and flooding.

On Diogue Island, a method of driving groups of wooden sticks into the wet sand is helping to protect some areas on the island. The project's organizers say these areas have expanded by around 30 meters since 2019.

Gilbert Bassene is a primary school teacher who has been helping build the defenses against the sea. He described the process of expansion. "Whenever we gain ground, we can extend the structure, add more sticks, as they say little by little the bird makes its nest."

These barriers are based on a model created in Canada. A study by scientists at the University of Quebec said the method protects coasts without causing the loss of sediment in other places. The coconut fronds trap sand on the beach, preventing it from washing away.

"With the little that we have, we can **achieve** extraordinary work," Bassene said on the coast, where children had gathered to watch him work.

A 2020 study published in the *Journal of Coastal Conservation* found that efforts like those by the people of Diogue are not enough. Coasts in West Africa are still shrinking.

Some people on Diogue do not believe they can beat this problem. The village chief, Cherif Diatta, said: "It's not easy to admit, but one day the village will have to move."

I'm Mario Ritter, Jr.

Ngouda Dione reported this story for Reuters. Matthew Caputo adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

frond - *n.* a large, long leaf

erosion - *n.* the slow destruction of something by natural forces

tide - *n.* the regular upward and downward movement of the level of the ocean that is caused by the pull of the Sun and the Moon on the Earth

achieve - *v.* to get or reach (something) by working hard

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