

# Diola Woman, Seed Conservers



***Presented by  
Mariama Sonko, a farmer of the Diola tribe***

# CASAMANCE



# PRESENTATION

## Geography

- Casamance in the south of Sénégal,
- Between Gambia (to the north, enclave inside Sénégal) and Guinée Bissau (southern border of Senegal)
- Population about 1.200.000, 52% are younger than 20
- Rainfall : the wettest region with 1200mm/yr, against 300-400mm/yr in the north of Sénégal
- A cosmopolitan region, ethnic majority : Diola (61%)
- Humid tropical climate, with long warm rainy season and abundant vegetation

# AGRICULTURE

- Agriculture is the principal activity of the population of Casamance
- Subsistence agriculture
- Rice fields are the very soul & identity of the family, of the community
- Mostly, the women work in rice production
- They are not owners of the land
- They take pride in producing enough

# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CONSERVATION OF SEED IN DIOLA COUNTRY

- Considerable technical knowledge inherited from the ancestors
- Women honour-bound to produce enough and to conserve seed varieties
- Sacred status of the seed of certain rice varieties, used for sacrifice to the spirits
- A lack of seed = poverty, dishonour, degradation in the eyes of other members of the community

# WOMEN IN THE RICE FIELDS



# LOCAL SEED

- Loss of several local varieties
- Dependence on external supplies
- Loss of Diola identity
- Loss of peasant agriculture
- Destruction of natural environment
- Poor soils (poor people)

## **Testimony**

Women are now the actors of profound social change  
in Casamance

### **PROUD OF PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS**

- In my village we now have a storage facility for organic fertilisers
- Our Farmers are trained in composting technique
- A seed bank is established
- We have an ongoing programme of community subsidies



# Recommendations

- Interventions in the rural environment must always reinforce endogenous practices: this is the Participative Development of Innovation (Développement Participatif de l'Innovation: DPI)
- The training of young women farmers must be reinforced by using to advantage all the traditional expertise of the peasants
- Rural household incomes must be diversified ; the management of water resources must be facilitated by access to appropriate forms of credit.
- Farmers must be well informed about the advantages and disadvantages of new agricultural method & techniques, about climate change, about agricultural policy, etc., so that they can make well motivated and informed decisions.

**Support the Panafrican campaign: “We are the solution; Celebrate African Family Farming”**

My approach to development

**Thanks for your attention**

