Tumani Tenda Project

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Executive Summary

Ecotourism within the Gambia has recently been promoted as an alternative to the sun, sex, and beach tourism. One of the noted examples of ecotourism in the Gambia is Tumani Tenda. A village-initiated ecotourist camp, Tumani Tenda may face several unintended impacts including social, economic, and environmental. The goal of this evaluation is to work with the NEA in assessing these impacts on the women in the village.

The community within Tumani Tenda initially appears highly cohesive. However, upon further study, it is apparent that it is largely heterogeneous. Culture, religion, and language differences between the families help separate the village in daily activities.

The establishment of the ecotourism camp has brought many changes throughout the village. The villagers are now able to pay for schooling of both boys and girls and are more aware of the different cultures of the tourists. They have also learned how to entertain through the camp and are highly open to change.

The camp has provided economic benefits on the community, compound, and individual level. Several community projects have been created or improved through the camp. These include the community forest, the community vegetable garden, the school, village store, and poultry shop. At the compound level, the camp has provided revenue for taxes, an emergency fund, and supplies for school. Although there are few benefits for individuals, this may change once the volunteers are paid.

Tumani Tenda has many unique characteristics that lend itself to successful development. It is a relatively new, small, and close-knit community. It also is willing to change for the future of the children.

There are, however, several characteristics that could lead to problems in the future. The majority of the volunteers are now from two families – this will lead to little economic benefits for the rest of the village if they are paid. It is also too soon to fully understand the full impact of the culture ramifications.

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Background: Ecotourism in The Gambia

The Gambia recognized tourism as an important means to economic development in the 1970s. Tourism during this time began to grow as an industry in the Gambia; it had been recently "discovered" in 1965 and rapidly became a popular beach resort for Scandinavians (Dieke, 1993). In 1971, the United Nations helped develop a tourism plan in the Gambia (Bah, 1996). Later in 1985, the government further promoted tourism under the Economic Recovery Program (Mowforth and Munt, 1998, 286). Throughout this period, the government was actively involved in developing the infrastructure necessary for tourism within the country – including paving roads, upgrading or adding sewage systems, establishing a power plant, and building hotels. Specific Tourist Development Areas (TDAs) were also formally established between the urban areas of Banjul and Bakau. Within these TDAs, *bengdulas*[i] were mapped out around the hotel areas; these included the craft market, taxi parks, and restaurant areas. Most of the *bengdulas* were (and continue to be) part of the informal sector of the economy. The goal of the *bengdulas* was to allow local Gambians the opportunity to benefit and participate in the tourism industry, thereby creating revenue within the country and promoting economic development (Bah, 2002).[ii]

While tourism has continued to grow within the country, most of the revenue generated from the industry has been by foreign-owned businesses; thus what is known as leakage has become a problem in the local tourism industry.[iii] One of the largest sources of leakage in the Gambia occurred within the hotel industry. Foreigners owned a majority of the hotels, and the supplies were almost all imported – including the bed sheets, furniture, and food. Given that hotels were one of the most profitable areas in tourism, this means that a large percentage of tourism revenue was not going back into the Gambia itself (Bah, 2002). Another major source of leakage was foreign-owned tour operators, as they received as much as 25% to 45% commission for any packaged tour (Bah, 2002; Dieke,1993).

There was also a fear that tourism was in danger of declining in the Gambia. The tourism industry had grown out of the attraction to the beaches, warm weather, and friendly people (Bah, 1996). The Gambia was limited to "the smiling coast," which meant limiting the potential market for other forms of tourists. By concentrating tourism to beach resorts, the Gambia was in danger of losing tourists to other destinations. Most tourists come from Europe – mainly the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries. It was feared that tourists from these countries would decide to vacation at beach resorts in other countries – a fear that was substantiated briefly in 1994 when the British government declared the Gambia unsafe for travel due to political unrest (Dieke, 1993; Betz, 2001). The reliance on beach tourism has also meant that the tourism is largely limited to the weather; thus, a tourist season from November to April has been created, with little opportunity for the rest of the months (Emms, 2002).

In order to expand the tourism market into the rest of the country and to increase the economic benefits for the people, ecotourism became the focus of new tourism projects. As part of the Vision 2020 initiative, developed by government with the assistance of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), ecotourism has been identified as a partial means to meet the objective:

> "to transform the Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading, export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population, and guaranteeing a well-balanced ecosystem and a decent standard for one and all, under a system of government based on the consent of citizenry" (UNDAF for the Gambia, 1-2)

A taskforce of three government agencies – the National Environmental Agency (NEA), the Ministry of Tourism, and the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) – has been established to create guidelines for ecotourism in the Gambia, as well as to provide assistance to ecotourism projects. This taskforce has defined ecotourism as "environmentally and socially responsible travel to natural or near natural areas that promotes conservation and cultural exchange, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people (Emms, 2002)." In order for ecotourism to be successful, the taskforce has identified areas in that need to be addressed; this includes developing small, community-owned and -operated projects, developing infrastructure in protected areas, and developing accommodation "upcountry" outside of the TDAs (Emms, 2002).[iv]

The Gambia's uniqueness is one of its strongest assets in developing ecotourism in the country. This includes the range and accessibility of the wildlife (especially the bird life); the diversity of people and cultures within the Gambia; the history and artifacts present of the slave trade; the Gambia River; and the cultural and religious harmony within the country (Emms, 2002). It is hoped that by promoting the uniqueness of the Gambia, a tourism industry will be created that promotes economic development within the country while creating a more enriching experience for tourists.

Tumani Tenda: A Case Study

One of the most noted examples of ecotourism in the Gambia is the Tumani Tenda Kacocorr Ecotourism Camp. In 2000, the German Institute for Tourism and Development awarded the camp for socially responsible tourism. In 2002, the national government acknowledged Tumani Tenda as a successful ecotourism initiative. Currently, it is serving as a model for another village developing an ecotourism camp in the Gambia – the hope is that the success of Tumani Tenda will be replicated in various villages throughout the country (Bah, 2002).

Since Tumani Tenda has received both national and international recognition, and is being developed as a "model" ecotourism project, it warrants further evaluation. The introduction of outsiders (tourists) to a community along with a new source of income often has a major impact on the members of the local community. At its worse, ecotourism can lead to environmental degradation and eradication of resources, the breakdown of community ties, and limited economic growth to a few key members. If successful, however, ecotourism can promote environmental conservation, strengthen the relationships within a community, and provide economic opportunities for the community at large. With any ecotourism project, there are three main areas that should be addressed: the cultural, economic, and environmental impacts.

Cultural Impact

Ecotourism often takes place in communities that previously had minimal contact or interaction with tourists. In the Gambia, the development of ecotourism upcountry is no exception. The introduction of ecotourism in this region means that villages that previously only had seen tourists passing through their town will now have the responsibility of hosting and interacting with them on a more personal level. The sudden introduction of foreigners to such communities can have an enormous impact on the lifestyles of the local people (Honeywell, 1999, 90).

One of the effects of ecotourism in these remote communities is often the revival of local customs and traditions. Culture is a valued commodity in the tourist industry, as one of the reasons for traveling is to "experience how other people live, [and] to experience their neighborhoods" (Steele-Prohaska, 1996). In an attempt to draw people to their community, there may be a "revival" of traditional customs - crafts that were once part of the culture may be relearned; customs and ceremonies practiced; history and practices of the traditional culture learned by once disinterested young adults and children (Wood, 2001, 41). The overall expectation with this revival is that tourists will be drawn to their community in order to experience an "authentic" village. However, the tourists are not the only ones experiencing a new culture in this interaction. The local hosts are also learning about the lifestyles and cultures of their guests. In impoverished areas, this can create a desire for economic wealth that is beyond any practical means for the locals. People may begin to leave their homes in pursuit of a better economic life – a step that fragments the community and can be seen as disruptive to other people in the community (Hitchcock, 1997, 102). Further tensions over the management of the ecotourism project may also serve to divide a community.

Economic Impact

The taskforce on ecotourism was established with the primary goal of creating a means to economic growth and development within the country. Since ecotourism generally relies on local resources and employment, there is generally little worry over leakage in the industry (Williams, 2001). Ecotourism projects are generally formed with the idea that they will lead to sustainable development; that is, communities will be able to "initiate and control development" over a period of time (Lyons et al, 2001, 1237). The economic impact on ecotourism, then, is local; the success of the impact largely depends on the level of participation of the community within the project (Chambers, R. 1998).

Community participation ideally takes place throughout all stages of ecotourist project – including initial development, implementation, management, and allocation of funds (Blackburn & Holland, 1998). The extent to which this actually happens varies, however, as communities often have to rely on financial and technical support of outside organizations in order to develop and maintain the project (Honeywell, 1999, 292).

The benefits of ecotourism often depend on exactly which people within the community participate in the project. Within a "community" there are social and political hierarchies that can influence who actually benefits economically from the ecotourism project (Guijut I., & Shah, M., 1998, 9-10). If a project is

not carefully managed, it may only benefit a few individuals within the community at the expense of others.

Environmental Impact

Environmental control becomes especially important in areas with fragile ecosystems. With an influx of tourists to a village or natural reserve, there is the potential of losing biodiversity and wildlife habitats through development of infrastructure. Simply introducing groups of people to the environment can often be detrimental as well. (Wight; Yonglong, 1996).

With careful management, however, the environmental impacts of tourists can be reduced. Such practices include limiting the number of visitors, using local resources, and educating visitors on the environment (Wight). If this is successful, the environmental impact of ecotourism is minimized.

In some areas, ecotourism also promotes environmental preservation. This occurs especially when local communities realize the attraction of tourists to the natural environment; once nature becomes a means to economic development, local efforts are generally made to preserve this resource (Brandon, K. & Margoluis, R. 1996).

Research Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the evaluation is work with the National Environmental Agency in order to understand the role of ecotourism as sustainable development in Tumani Tenda. The specific research objectives are to:

1) To assess the level of participation and roles women have in the ecotourism project
2) To identify the cultural and environmental impact ecotourism has on Tumani Tenda
3) To identify the economic benefits at the village, compound, and individual level

The National Environmental Agency

The National Environmental Agency (NEA) was established as a part of the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP) by The Gambian Parliament in 1993 (Grey-Johnson, 1997, 24). The agency is committed to carrying the goal established by GEAP, which is to maintain the environment in a "sound and sustainable manner" throughout The Gambia. The focus of the NEA is on policy development, coordination, monitoring, and regulatory activities (Njie). As a part of this focus, the NEA regularly evaluates local community development projects. Since 1994, the NEA has hosted an Environmental Award Scheme, which allows a variety of individuals, businesses, groups, and government and NGOs involved in some aspect of environmental activity to compete for national recognition (Allen, 1997, 8). The objectives of this awards scheme include the following:

- To increase environmental awareness among the public
- To promote and encourage public participation in environmental activities
- To promote environmentally friendly technology among relevant business groups

- To demonstrate government recognition and community efforts
- To reward individuals and groups taking positive environmental action

(Allen, 1997, 5)

Initially, eight award categories were established, including community sustainable development. Ecotourism was later introduced as the ninth category during the second award scheme. The experience of evaluating the various environmental projects has helped the NEA in other areas, "such as Participatory Rural Appraisals being carried out to develop regional and local action plans" (Allen, 1997, 21; cr. Bennett, 2002).

This award scheme provided the initial contact between the NEA and Tumani Tenda. In 1997, Tumani Tenda was presented with the "environmental initiative" award for its forestry program by the NEA. Tumani Tenda and the NEA worked together to use the $7000 award money to improve farm machinery throughout the village.

The relationship with Tumani Tenda continued in 2001, with funds from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Under the Debt Initiative for Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), the NEA received 820,000 dalasi (approximately $40,000) to spend on approximately community development projects. Tumani Tenda was chosen by the NEA to receive half of the relief fund based on the village's commitment to protecting the environment and the village-owned ecotourist camp. Since then, the NEA has actively been working with Tumani Tenda to allocate funds to essential development projects within the camp.

Research Methodology

My first experience with Tumani Tenda began as most others – as a tourist to their village. As part of the St. Mary's College Field Study Program in the Gambia, we visited the village on our tour upcountry. During our brief afternoon visit, the villagers entertained us with a wedding "ceremony," canoe rides, and a tour of the school and camp. A few weeks later, I returned to the camp by myself to show interest as well as to understand the camp better as a tourist. This time, I stayed overnight and had the opportunity to get a more intimate experience as a tourist. The day and a half I was there was packed with a guided tour of the forest, another visit to the primary school, and a canoe ride to the neighboring village to buy bread for breakfast the next day. During this visit, the villagers were unaware I was interested in staying with them for an extended period of time, and thus treated me as simply another tourist.

I approached the *alikalo* (chief) a week later to explain my mission to live with them for a month to evaluate the effects of the camp on the village. With the consultation of Boro Suso, a professor at the University of the Gambia, I had chosen the traditional way to ask permission to carry out my research rather than going through the camp manager. Accompanied by Bill Roberts, a professor at St. Mary's College, and with *kola* nuts in hand, I was received by the *alikalo* and welcomed into the village. It was arranged that I would return a week later to carry out the evaluation. The village then held a meeting in my absence to explain my future arrival.

Prior to conducting the evaluation, I spent two weeks working with the NEA in developing my research plans and gathering background information. There was extensive documentation on Tumani Tenda, including notes on village meetings and workshops with the NEA, previous research within the village, and the development of specific projects. Dodou Trawally also was an invaluable resource, as he worked directly with Tumani Tenda under the HIPC initiative and in developing the ecotourism taskforce. Several interviews were conducted with him for further clarification on the role of the NEA in Tumani Tenda, as well as to help develop my own research guide. Further interviews were later conducted with Adama Bah, the director of ASSET, and Dembo Badje, the former commissioner of Brikama.

The duration of my evaluation in Tumani Tenda was approximately four and a half weeks – from July to August 2002. During this time, I stayed at the camp and spent the days in the village conducting interviews and participating in the daily life of the women. The research focused primarily on the women in the village for several reasons.

On the practical end, it was easier to participate in the daily lives of the women as a 23-year-old female researcher. The same access was not available to the males in the village –as to try to engage in their work would disrupt the norms of the culture. The patrilineal family structure within the village also suggested that women have a secondary role in designing and implementing village projects; thus, by focusing on the women, it gave me the opportunity to evaluate the economic and social effects through a group that potentially had minimal impact on the decision to create the camp.

Throughout my stay in Tumani Tenda, I worked with the women in their daily activities – including cooking and gardening. I also helped with any village work projects, which included gathering sand and dirt for the floors in the community poultry house and the store. Often my efforts were little more than gestures of good will, as the skill of the villagers far succeeded my own meager attempts. However, by participating in the lives of the villagers and actively showing interest, I was able to establish rapport with the villagers. I also gained an understanding of the current cultural and economic conditions through this participation. While engaging in an activity, occasionally an opportunity to converse informally with some of the younger women who spoke English and were willing to answer my questions presented itself.

More formal interviews were conducted with nine of the women in the village. The experience and age range varied among the women. Since Tumani Tenda is a relatively new village, four of the women interviewed helped establish the village. Three other women had married into the village within the last five years, one of whom grew up in the neighboring village less than 2 km from Tumani Tenda. The remaining four women were born in Tumani Tenda and were unmarried. The length of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to over two hours, depending on the time and interest of the women.

Extensive interviews were also conducted with the *alikalo*. It was through these interviews, which often lasted up to two hours, that I was able to learn about the history and development within the village. He was considered the authority on the village; while talking to other women, they would refer me to him for specific information. His knowledge served to expand on the information given in the interviews with the women.

A research assistant, Isatou Cessay, often provided the translation during these interviews. She had worked previously with Action Aid and thus was familiar with conducting evaluations and working within different villages. Cessay also had experience as a cultural and agro-forestry trainer for the Peace Corps. She was accustomed to helping Americans adapt to the different culture in the Gambia and often helped explain different cultural customs within the village. However, Cessay was not fluent in Jola – the primary language in Tumani Tenda. This meant that some of the interviews were conducted in Mandinka and translated directly to English. Other interviews were conducted in Jola, translated into Mandinka by a local villager, Hatabou,[v] and then translated into English. Although this certainly is far from ideal, it was the best solution to the language barrier. Hatabou was fluent in English as well – just not to the same extent as Cessay. Since both translators were fluent in English, they were able to confer and agree on the correct translation.

Cessay also contracted malaria during the evaluation and was absent for two weeks. Although several attempts at interviews were made during her absence, many of these were unproductive. There was often confusion between the translation on both my part and that of Hatabou. Therefore, it was during this time that most of the participant observation took place.

Hatabou worked at the camp and was assigned by the village to be my host. This meant that he would work with me to create a daily schedule and then accompany throughout the day. While this was helpful in providing guidance, his presence meant that some of the interviews were not as open as they perhaps could have been in his absence.

One of the most enriching methods occurred on a day I did a mapping activity with a group of young women. I had previously asked one woman in the village to help me gather a group for the activity; she was able to enlist five women for the task. They were all within the same age set - in their late teens to early twenties and unmarried. After creating a map of the village, areas that needed the most improvement in the village, and the compounds of current and previous camp volunteers were then identified. Through this activity, I was able to gather information about the community that had not been mentioned in any of the previous interviews.

After leaving Tumani Tenda, I was able to identify themes throughout the various interviews; these were often triangulated with previous documentation, observations, and the information gathered through the mapping activity. The accumulation of all of these methods is the following evaluation of Tumani Tenda.

The Community of Tumani Tenda
History of Tumani Tenda

Tumani Tenda is unique in that it is a relatively young village; it was founded ago by Alhagi Oussman Sanyang in 1968. A previous family had lived on the land thirty years before Sanyang established the village; however, they left believing the land was cursed. The family had suffered from many hardships on the land, including several deaths. After leaving, their name *Tumani* stuck

when Sanyang arrived, despite his efforts to change the name to one recommended by his Marabout.[vi]

Oussman was born in the Cassamance, a region in southern Senegal. He first came to Gunjur in the Gambia; later he moved to Bakalarr Koto in Niumi to study the Koran. Although his family was Catholic at the time, he decided to learn the Koran and convert to Islam. After his studies were completed, Oussman consulted a Marabout to find a place to settle down. He had married by now and wanted to establish a good home for his family. The Marabout said he "dreamed of goodness" if he went to the site where Tumani Tenda is now and started a home; if he went there, things would be better in the future. Oussman's first wife recalled first hearing his decision to move to Tumani Tenda: he gathered the family together, telling them they were moving to a new place in order to find peace and to develop. At that time, she was not nervous because she knew that it would only lead to good things for the future.

When Oussman first arrived, Tumani Tenda was nothing but forest. A year before settling, he had come to the land to build a well for his two wives and seven sons. There was no access to the main road at the time, which made traveling to the nearby village, Faraba Sutu, difficult. Once Oussman's family moved to the land, they had to first clear land in order to begin farming. This took about three years, during which they had to live off of the food they brought with them from Bakalarr Koto.

This time was extraordinarily difficult for everyone. One woman described the fear the woman shared – they were all afraid at that time of what might happen to them. Since there were only forests around, there was a constant fear of having no food. Simply eating a mango meant that they had to go to Kafuta (a village nearby) and buy the smallest ones. Everyone had to rely on each other, as there was no one else. There were only seven women in the village at the time, and they were responsible for cooking, taking care of the children, and clearing the land. Since there were few women to share the daily activities, the women were constantly working. Another woman described this time as being "really, really, really hard." Even if she was pregnant, she would be working up to the last possible moment. Not having anyone else around made it extremely difficult – not only for working but also socially, as there were only a few people to converse with.

The houses during this time were initially grass huts. Gradually, these were replaced with the brick and corrugated houses present today. The village saved the money for the houses; each house was built according to age – with the eldest male receiving the first house. One woman recalled that after building the houses, money was saved to send the Oussman to Mecca. It was during this time, when the houses were built and the alikalo returned, that things were easier. "Life was finally easier."

After five years, the first family came to join the Sanyang – a husband and wife. By this time, farms were established, and the Sanyangs were able to give the Mendy kunda[vii] seeds to sow – they assisted them in this way for two years. Since the Mendy kunda was Catholic, a gap was established between their compound and the rest of the village. This separated them from the village in daily life; however, when decisions were made for the entire village, they would come together.

The Jarju kunda joined two years after the Mendy kunda. By this time, the road was being built and everything was pretty much settled. The Sonko kunda and Manga kunda arrived later; another family has since come for the land, but has not settled.

During Oussman's time, the village prospered. A mosque was built within the first year. He was also considered a great farmer, and was able to gain more, perhaps three times as much, from a smaller plot of land than they are today. During the first year, he planted the mango trees that are now prevalent throughout Tumani Tenda. There were also horses and donkeys, which later died and were unable to be replaced. The animals had been used to travel to Brikama, the nearest urban area.

Currently, there are about 300 people living in Tumani Tenda. It is primarily a Jola village –four of the families are Jola, while the remaining two are Manjago. Oussman's eldest son, Alhagi Momodou Sanyang, became the akilayoo after Oussman's death.

Village Administration

Tumani Tenda's structure is typical of other villages in the Gambia. The alikalo is the head of the village and is responsible for its day-to-day administration. The alikalo's position is filled through the lineage of the Sanyang kunda – the eldest son is given the position and it is continued down the line. When Momodou dies, the second eldest brother will become the alikalo.

The iman is the religious leader within the village; his position depends on education. When Oussman was alive, he was both the alikalo and iman. Now, however, Momodou's younger brother has that honor.

There is also a council of elders who are responsible for advising the village in the decision-making process as well as settling any disputes. The members of the council are men from each of the families in the village; women are not part of this council. They ultimately are responsible for making the decisions within the village.

Community Decision Making Process

During Oussman's time, he was responsible for making the decisions for Tumani Tenda. He would gather his sons together and tell them of his visions for the development of the village. The sons would then discuss amongst themselves ways to implement these visions; if Oussman agreed, they would follow through with the plan. However, if Oussman did not agree, he would tell them to think about the plan some more until they came up with a strategy that satisfied him.

Since then, the decision-making process within the village has grown more complex. The entire village now has the opportunity to participate and voice their concerns whenever a decision has to be made. The council of elders first discuss the issue and then hold a community meeting to open the matter to the village. During these meetings, everyone is given the opportunity to voice their views until the village can agree on one decision. The decision-

making process includes the younger generation, as without their input, things would not work as smoothly. Ultimately, however, the decision is made by the council of elders.

The level of participation of women in this process depends on the issue to be discussed. Women are only involved in some areas within the village, including clearing the environment, the garden, and the farms. Other issues, such as the decision to allow new families into the village, do not involve the women.

One village meeting I attended clearly showed the stratification within the village. Since the meeting was to decide what supplies should be bought for the new village store, the women were present and participating in the meeting. The village gathered under the *bantabaa* – the elder men sat at the head of the meeting, while the other men within the village surrounded the elders. The women sat to the side of the elders, behind the men and beside the young children. When the meeting began, the men were the primary ones discussing the supplies needed; the women were simply sitting and observing the meeting. However, once one of the men asked a woman her opinion on the matter, several women began to speak up and the meeting continued with participation from both genders.

The Heterogeneous Community

Although Tumani Tenda is a relatively small village, it is also a diverse one. There are several factors that add to its diversity, including the various languages, religions, and cultures between the families.

Within Tumani Tenda, there are two main ethnic groups: Jola and Manjago. The village was originally founded as a Jola community; currently four families are Jola. The Mendy kunda, who are Manjago, are separated from the rest of the village in their daily activities. There are differences between the two cultures in farming practices, including the type of crops grown. The Mendy kunda, therefore, have their own separate land in the neighboring village (which is Manjago) for farming and gardening. For this reason, they also do not participate in any village work regarding agriculture. The Mendy kunda are also excluded from certain *kafos*[viii] within the village. They participate in only two of the kafos: the Kachokor, which includes all members of the village, and Manchester United, which includes all youths twenty years or younger.

Religion further separates the Mendy kunda from the rest of the Muslim families. Since the Mendy kunda are Catholic, they do not participate in certain village activities. During the time that I was there, a charity was given at the camp and within the village. This was a time where the families came together to pray and eat together in the hope that it would lead to further development within the camp. It was uncertain whether this was due to a dream someone had or if a Marabout advised the charity; however, it was explained to me that for seven Sundays in a row, the village had to have a charity at the camp to make it more successful and bring more tourists. Since this practice is rooted in Islam, the Mendy kunda were not present for any of these charities. After one of these charities, one villager explained to me that he wished the Manjagos would come, but that they did not for religious reasons. Instead, they prayed for the development within their own religion.

The different religious practices also made it impossible for the rest of the village to eat with at the Mendy kunda. Since the Mendy kunda eat pork, the other families could not eat anything prepared from their kitchen lest it be tainted. Other cultural practices – such as meal times, marriage ceremonies, funerals, etc. – further created a cultural division between the two groups.

Marriage served as one of the biggest between the Jola and Manjago families. Although the Jola families intermarried frequently within Tumani Tenda, the same did not occur between the Jola and Manjago. However, this may change in the future, as the younger generation is open to the possibility of inter-marriages.

Language is perhaps one of the biggest factors in creating heterogeneity within the village. Within the elder generation, neither the Jolas nor Manjagos are fluent in the other's language; Mandinka is the common language between the two groups. However, not everyone in the elder generation is fluent in Mandinka either. During village meetings, most of the conversation is conducted in Jola – although translation or clarification is provided for the Manjagos. Language will most likely become less of an issue as the younger generation of Manjagos is becoming fluent in Jola.

There are also similar divisions of culture within the four Jola families. There are five distinct cultures within Jola; since the Sonko kunda and Sanyang kunda are originally from the same part of Senegal, they are Jola-Kasa. The Jarju kunda and Manga kunda are similarily Jola-Fogny. Although the two cultures are closely related, there are still notable differences. The language of the Jola-Kasa differs from the Jola-Fogny, and while the Jola-Kasa can understand Jola-Fogny, the reverse is not true. The common language between these families then is Jola-Fogny.

The cultural differences between the two groups of families also means that there are stronger ties between the Sonko kunda and Sanyang kunda (as well as the Jarju kunda and Manga kunda.) The two families work closely together in daily life – including farming. The Miyentendi is a kafo created only for the Sonko kunda and Sanyang kunda; likewise, the Jarju kunda and Manga kunda have their own kafo. Members from the two families also make it a point to eat together daily in order to maintain the bonds between the families.

The Development of Ecotourism in Tumani Tenda

Tumani Tenda is the only village within the Gambia to establish its own ecotourism camp. Although there are other camps within the country, they are all individually owned, generally by foreigners. According to the alikalo, the idea for the camp first came from seeing and hearing about other hotels and camps; while traveling in the country, some of the villagers saw other camps firsthand. The idea for the camp had been in the minds of the villagers long before it was built.

The camp was first established in 1998 with the help of a Norwegian couple, Helga Leeno and Grud Helman. They assisted the village in working with the government and organizations to establish the camp (Sanneh, 2002). The funds for the camp came from the village's own funds as well as a loan from Britain's Volunteer Services Overseas to buy materials to build the camp.

The camp is located on an estuary of the River Gambia and is separated from the rest of the village by farmland and mango trees. It is entirely owned and operated by Tumani Tenda. Initially, the camp provided basic accommodation in five grass huts, each built by a family in the village. The resources for the camp are largely from the village and surrounding areas. The palm trees provided the thatching necessary for the roofs, while the grass came from a nearby reserve. The bathroom facilities at this time were basic as well – with bucket baths and traditional holes for the toilet. A restaurant area was later added, providing a place to eat meals as well as to simply relax.

With the funding the NEA provided, the village was able to upgrade the facilities beginning in 2001 and continuing today. A village meeting established three main areas that needed to be addressed in the camp, including adding electricity and plumbing and upgrading the facilities. Previously, guests had complained that the accommodations were too "rustic." The accommodations have since been upgraded to mud brick round huts with thatched roofing in the traditional design. Like the previous huts, each one is built by a family in the village, giving each one a unique design. The bathroom facilities were also upgraded to include three flushing toilets and three showers. A generator now provides electricity to the rooms and restaurant area of the camp.

The camp is staffed entirely from the villagers. They currently work at the camp on a voluntary basis. Funding from the NEA provided training for nine members of the staff, including the manager, two cooks, two room attendants, two waitresses, one bar attendant, and one bookkeeper. For one month, these villagers had the opportunity to live and work at either the Safari Garden or the Bakadaji Hotel. The manager's training lasted an additional month and included other hotels and camps throughout the Gambia.

Visitors to Tumani Tenda have a variety of activities to choose from during their stay. They are able to join the villagers in their work – including gardening and cooking. The local forest also provides opportunities for guided walks and bird watching. There are also opportunities for canoe rides, batik workshops, dancing, oyster collecting, and visits to the local school.

Tourist Visits

Tumani Tenda attracts both national and international visitors. Based on those who signed the guestbook for the camp, the majority of the international visitors are from Europe – particularly the United Kingdom. Most of these seemed to be groups of tourists who visited the camp for one day and did not stay overnight. In 2001, the height of the tourist season for Tumani Tenda was in March through May; during these months, a total of thirty-seven people came to the camp. The slowest months appeared to be in February and September – where only one person signed the book in September and none in February.

Local school groups also were popular guests at Tumani Tenda, often coming for the day to learn about the camp. They were not the only locals enjoying the camp, however. Other Gambians come to Tumani Tenda as well. During my stay, a couple from Banjul came every two weeks for an afternoon to have lunch and relax. The neighboring village of Kafuta often hosts their own

parties at the camp – during my month there, two parties took place. However, the people of Kafuta bring their own food and music for entertainment; thus, there is no economic benefit for Tumani Tenda during these parties.

Cultural Changes

Before Tumani Tenda began welcoming tourists into their village, they first worked with ASSET to develop policies on managing the impact of the tourists. Through several workshops and meetings, the villagers were warned of the potential negative effects that tourism can bring to communities. A film projector was brought into Tumani Tenda and two films shown so everyone in the village could witness the potential impacts of tourism. The first film captured British tourists passing through a community in South America during a heavy rainfall. The impact these tourists had was great: the trucks the tourists were driving destroyed the roads; children were running after the tourists begging for money and other things. The second film was a documentary of a village in Senegal that was "community owned" in theory; however, in reality, very few actually benefited. This created tensions within the village and divided the community.

After each film, a discussion was held on what ways shown could help the village prevent the negative impacts to their community. Specific plans were decided upon, such as the ways children were to be exposed to tourists. It was agreed that the children had to be taught to stay at a respectful distance from the tourists or continue playing their own games rather than following the tourists while yelling *toubab.* Visitors also would be limited to visiting the school only when the children had a break, such as lunch. This not only allows the children's education to continue uninterrupted, but also gives the children an opportunity to interact with the visitors by playing games or singing songs. These were just a few of the policies Tumani Tenda worked with ASSET to develop.

Education

One of the most common cultural changes mentioned since the development of the camp was access to education. In the generations before, only the men in the village were provided with the opportunity for formal education in the Koran. There was no western education; now, however, most of the children in the village are going to western schools. The youth are divided between three forms of education: western, Koranic, and French. Some of them are sent to Senegal to learn French; some are sent to study the Koran; some stay within the village and attend western schools. It is hoped that by diversifying the education within the village, they will have the background to prepare and deal with a variety of problems.

The girls within in the village also now have the opportunity to attend school, whereas before it was not an option for them. However, this opportunity varies within the village; one of the young women told me that she did not go to school and that none of the girls in her compound did. The effect of those who are going to school is to delay marriage by several years – some girls who are twenty years old are still not married because they are attending school, a practice that would have been unusual a few years earlier.

The influence of western education also brings with it new ideas. One woman attributes this to the changing culture – the new knowledge gained by the youth has meant that some of their way of life has changed also. While they are away at school, the youth also have a life that is different from the one in the village. This was not the case in the previous generation – this freedom has also caused the culture to change.

Understanding Toubabs

Before the camp, the villagers had little contact with *toubabs*, or foreigners. There had been foreigners in Tumani Tenda before; there is a woman from Holland who lives part time as a second wife in the village. However, interaction with toubabs was limited and usually was confined to watching from afar.

Almost everyone interviewed said that they were surprised that toubabs would want to join them in their daily work. One woman said that she thought they were "too beautiful" and that they would be "too proud" to join the village. Now, however, everyone said that they have a better understanding of the culture and realize that they are equal – "black and white are all the same."

Since the tourists have come to the village, the women have had the opportunity to learn about their culture and customs. This is particularly true for the younger women who are able to speak English. Throughout my time with the village, I would often be asked questions about the American way of life. I often found myself answering as many questions as I had asked in the interviews – the topics ranged from marriage and dating to washing machines and fishing. The extent to which the villagers have direct contact to the tourists, however, seems to vary. While interviewing one woman, she mentioned that I was the first toubab she had a chance to talk to although she was a cook at the camp.

Willingness to Change

One of the most striking themes among interviews was the hope that the culture would change for the better. One woman said anything could change within the village – except for the religion. Anything beyond that, however, she hoped would change. This was a theme echoed in other interviews as well.

One woman expressed the hope that in the future, there will be intermarriage between the villagers and toubabs. This will allow them the opportunity to live in the US or Europe for a few years and save money. It will be up to the individual whether or not they come back to Tumani Tenda to start a family or continue life abroad. The youth will also have opportunities to make "friends" who will give them a chance to go to America or the UK. These friends will also be able to help their parents financially.

Although this sentiment was specifically addressed by one woman, it seemed prevalent in the young women I talked to. Once I was having a conversation about marriage with a woman who was not yet married – she was explaining to me that most likely her parents will arrange her marriage in a few years and she will have to leave the village. When I jokingly said that I'll have to look for

a husband for her when I get back, she looked at me in all earnest and said, " Would you? It doesn't matter who he is as long as he is nice." Although this was the most poignant example, there were often many other times when marriage to foreigners was discussed.

Learning to Entertain

One of the benefits listed by the women was learning how to entertain. The women are often called to the camp to put on performances – usually through dancing and "ceremonies" such as a mock wedding. Before the camp, they did not know how to entertain. Some of the women also learned the art of batik-making in order to teach the tourists.

Togetherness

One of the assets Tumani Tenda prides itself on is its strong sense of "togetherness." Several mentioned that since the camp has started, the community has only grown stronger together. The camp has served to strengthen the ties among the families by bringing people together for one common goal.

Economic Changes

The development within Tumani Tenda is attributed mostly to the togetherness within the village. This was a theme that was mentioned in every single interview; it was emphasized by Oussman Sanyang when he was alive. His wife explained togetherness as being "respect, hard work, and giving everyone their due." She also emphasized that the village is successful because they do not depend on anybody for support-another one of Oussman's themes that has carried into the present day.

Since the camp was started, all of the profits are placed into a community development fund. The profits from the camp and the aid from various organizations has allowed Tumani Tenda to grow significantly in the past years.

Community Projects

<u>The primary school</u>

Tumani Tenda recently built a primary school and daycare center within the village with funds provided from the camp. Prior to the school, the children had to go to the neighboring village of Kafuta. Now, however, they are able to stay within the village during the day, which provides security for the children if an emergency arises.

<u>Community Forest</u>

The community forest was developed before the camp began in 1985 as part of Oussman's vision for the village. The primary purpose of the forest is to provide a fire belt for the community; before, livestock and produce were lost due to bush fires. The Department of Forestry worked with Tumani Tenda in preserving the forest.

Since the camp began, the forest has became one of the primary attractions for visitors. They are able to walk through the forest with guides in order to view the wildlife, namely the birds. The NEA is currently working with Tumani Tenda to develop the forest further for this purpose. A guide was produced identifying the most common birds in the area, as well as the plants and their uses. The flora within the forest was also identified by both its Jola and scientific name. A photohide and watering hole was also built so tourists could have the opportunity to see the birds up close.

Community Vegetable Garden

Further developments have also taken place in the community garden with funds from the camp. The garden was established before the camp; however, it has flourished with building of the camp. With the aid of the Department of Forestry and the NEA, structural improvements have been made to the garden.

Each woman within the village is given a specific amount of land with which to grow her own garden. Although each woman is responsible for a specific plot of land, every woman helps during harvesting time. The men also have a small plot of land in which they grow banana trees. Before the camp, it was difficult to find a market large enough for the garden. Now however, half of the produce from the garden is sold to the camp, and half at Brikama. The proceeds go directly to the women, with 10% going back into the village development fund.

The Village Shop

During my time in Tumani Tenda, a village store was being built. The village was approached by the Komo Sutu Development Fund and asked if they would want a store. The organization provided the resources for the building of the store and will provide the goods for the village to sell. In order to promote economic growth with the village, the profit from the store will go back into the community development fund. The Komo Sutu Development initially will stock the store with supplies, after which Tumani Tenda will then be responsible for buying the items at cost.

Poultry

Another project in development while I was there was establishing a poultry house. Sponsored by the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM), Tumani Tenda was chosen because it is a “progressive” community. The village was responsible for building the house for the poultry, which was started and finished by the time I left. DPWM then provided the women and some of the staff at the camp with two days’ training on the proper care for the poultry. The camp will be the primary buyer of the poultry for the meals.

Benefits for the Compound School supplies

Through the generosity of the tourists, the village is able to provide the necessary school supplies for each student. This includes books, uniforms, pens, pencils, and paper. Funds from the donation box at the school go directly towards education. Tourists also often leave a donation of supplies,

especially pens and paper. Occasionally, they will also leave sports equipment, such as footballs, that are used by the youth.

Taxes

The village fund also goes towards paying the taxes for each compound. Previously, this had been the responsibility of each compound. However, the camp now provides the revenue for the taxes.

Village Emergency Fund

A village emergency fund was also established to help families in hard times. The money is loaned to the villagers and can be used towards such things as medical expenses, travel costs, or to buy food during hard times.

Individual Benefits

Volunteer

Initially, every family had at least one member that volunteered at the camp. However, the Jarju kunda decided that they were not going to work on a voluntary basis only and are no longer directly involved in the camp. There are now sixteen regular volunteers in the camp: twelve of these volunteers are from the Sanyang kunda; two are from the Sonko kunda (including the camp manager); and there is one each from the Mendy and Manga kundas. Currently, the staff works primarily on a voluntary basis. However, in the future, there are plans to pay the staff a regular salary. A small "allowance" is given to the staff to reward them for their efforts. One of the women mentioned that this allowance helps her buy cloth for her family.

Material Donations

Visitors occasionally give material donations to the camp or to individuals. These may include shoes, clothes, and food.

Future Development

The women all emphasized that the camp is for the future generations. They are working hard now so that their children can have an easier life. One woman expressed this sentiment:

> 'The younger generation when they grow up will have a different life. Things will be better. As for me, when I am old, I will be bitter. We are working, but will not get the better life. I only will be able to watch the younger people and watch them be happy. I cannot enjoy the benefits. But when that day comes, I will also be proud. We are the founders of the camp, the ones who established it. Everyone will talk about it. Say, "Look at Tumani Tenda." They will remember us.'

The women have high hopes for the camp. Two of them want it to become the "best hotel in the Gambia." They are disappointed in the development so far – they expected more from the camp. In the future, many hope that the village will improve in all areas, including these:

- Paving the main road

- Establishing a health clinic
- Providing more access to clean, running, water
- Continuing development of the camp, forest, garden, and school
- Providing electricity to the village

Limitations

While I attempted to provide an accurate account of the development within Tumani Tenda, it is important to note several limitations within the evaluation. The conclusions of the evaluation are based on the views of nine women in the village; this is hardly a representative sample. Although I would like to have had the opportunity to interview more women, the language barrier, time, and circumstances did not allow for it. Most of the women interviewed were happy to share their views when asked. There was only one woman who was not willing to participate in an interview. The consensus within the interviews, however, suggests that the women's views are within the range of the majority of the women in the village.

It was also often difficult to understand fully the cultural changes within the village. Intuitively, it seemed as though the culture had changed significantly between the generations. However, this may not have been something the villagers themselves were aware of or knew how to express. Culture is an abstract concept that is often difficult to evaluate, especially through the translation of multiple languages.

Conclusion

Tumani Tenda has many unique characteristics that lend itself to success in the development of the ecotourism camp and beyond. Since it is a relatively new village, it has continued to develop throughout the years in order to establish itself. The progressive nature of the village stems from constantly trying to improve for the future. The developments that have taken place in recent years are a continuation of the initial process of establishing the village. In villages that are older and more established, it seems unlikely that there would be as much growth occurring.

The size of Tumani Tenda also helps solidify the community in development projects. Because there are so few people, it is easier to come to a consensus on decisions. The smaller community also strengthens the "togetherness" within this village; in a larger village, it seems unlikely such a bond would exist throughout in the entire community.

The village's resolve to take on community projects also helps them develop. They are constantly looking for ways to progress for the future and are willing to take the risks associated with such projects. The recognition they have received so far also allows development organizations want to help them further. The DPWM tested the poultry project in Tumani Tenda first because it knew Tumani Tenda was a "progressive village,"

Although the camp has not had a significant impact on the culture so far, it is hard to say what will happen in the future. Adama Bah believes that there have not been major changes in the culture so far. They are just in the beginning stages of development, however, and not many people have come

to the village. Once the camp is fully renovated and more visitors come, then there might be a change.

The economic impact of the village has been positive so far. However, it also remains to be seen what will happen once the volunteers are paid. If they remain the same as now, the Sanyang kunda will by far have the most economic success in the village as there are 12 volunteers in the family. The Sonko kunda will be the second most profitable – the manager of the camp and the new store, as well as one other person, will be getting paid. The Jarju kunda stands to gain the least – since they stopped volunteering at the camp, it remains to be seen if they will have an opportunity to work at the camp as an employee.

It is also questionable to what extent Tumani Tenda's success will be transferred to other villages. There are several qualities that make the camp unique in the Gambia. The drive for the camp came from the inside – if the drive is from another investor, it remains to be seen if the camp will be as successful.

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Notes

[i] "bengdula" is a Mandinka word meaning "meeting place."

[ii] Adama Bah is currently the director of ASSET, and a founding member of Gambia Tourism Concern, as well as the manager of the Bungalow Beach Hotel. He is largely recognized as an authority on tourism in the Gambia.

[iii] Leakage refers to income generated by tourism that does not actually stay within the region, and has been identified as one of the most common problems in poor countries involved in tourism (Chambers, E. 2000).

[iv] *Upcountry* refers to the area beyond Brikama - this area is characterized by lessened development.

[v] All names of the villagers have been changed to protect their individual identity

[vi] *Marabout* is an Islamic leader often consulted for his advice.

[vii] *Kunda* means family

[viii] *Kafos* are "clubs" established within the village that come together for work. The Kachokor kafo, for example, would work on any project that requires members of the entire village.