

## **Brief description of the project and its relation to overseas programs and/or international education at the college**

Lewis & Clark students have been going to Sokone, a rural village in Senegal, for 8 years, but we learned from our host that there is little to no carry over from year to year. We go, the program gives some money to the locals, and we leave like we were never there. We want to change this and leave something behind that Lewis & Clark students can work on each year. The idea is to start very small. We want to provide oyster farming material for locals who are invested in environmental protection, notably of the mangroves. In addition, a group of us will travel back to Sokone to conduct research on the effects of sustainable oyster farming on mangrove protection, as well as how this type of sustainable development affects the community. This project is relatively low cost, and will start to create a more permanent and visible relationship between Sokone and Lewis & Clark.

## **Objectives of the proposal**

Sokone is very interesting in several ways. On the environmental front, they are doing a tremendous amount to protect the mangroves, and promote sustainable fishing and oyster farming. They've done a huge amount to clean up the trash in the village and now the mayor even wants to convert the town to solar energy. On the social justice and women's rights front, they have many women's programs to keep girls in school and for older women to learn how to read, write and do basic math. One of the projects that the mayor is working on is to build a women's center. Many Lewis & Clark students are very interested in these topics and both Sokone and Lewis & Clark would benefit enormously from creating long-term projects that grow each year.

We want to begin this process of working towards a long-term relationship between Sokone and Lewis & Clark. Oyster farming is one of the main industries there, and is changing rapidly to become more sustainable to help protect the mangroves. In the past, oysters were harvested on mangrove roots, so harvesting oysters meant killing the tree. We want to use the Dinah Dodds Grant to work with the villagers that harvest oysters, help them grow and develop their business, research sustainable development in the village, and ultimately build a long-term relationship between Lewis & Clark and Sokone.

The amount of this grant will provide the funds to send 4-5 of our group to Sokone to research sustainable practices, their effects on the community, and mangrove protection. This group will also put in place a system for consistent, sustainable communication between Lewis & Clark students and the village. In addition, the grant will provide the funds to purchase material (see budget below) to ensure the safety of those who farm the oysters and help increase sustainable, environmentally friendly methods of oyster farming in the area.

We will present the results of our project and research online, as well as to the next group of Senegal study abroad students. Our hope is that upon their return to Sokone, they continue where we left off to increase environmental awareness in the area. In addition, we are working with the program here to increase the amount of time of the program in Sokone to work on these projects. We took two trips there for a total of 5 nights. We hope to increase this to 1-2 weeks.

Collaboration for these projects is key. First, we are working directly with a very prominent community leader in Sokone who has also hosted the Lewis & Clark trip for the past 8 years. He knows the community extremely well, helped us put together this budget, and will help find host families for those that return to Sokone. Second, we are collaborating with the women in Sokone to make sure that the material and aid we provide is useful to them. Third, we are collaborating with Professor Philippe Brand, the faculty director for the Senegal trip, to pass along information about these projects to each new year of the program. Finally, we are collaborating with all stakeholders (donors, Sokone community leaders, etc...) to ensure a consistent channel of communication. We want to make sure that we receive consistent updates on the project, not only to keep donors informed, but also to improve future projects in the area.

We think this project is very important for several reasons, as it intersects with larger areas of interest to the Lewis & Clark community.

### **Post-study-abroad reintegration**

There are often difficulties with student reintegration when they return from their study-abroad trips. These proposals would ensure meaningful and ongoing connections between being abroad and “life on the hill.” By creating strong partnerships between Lewis & Clark and some of the amazing organizations and people we’ve worked with here in Senegal, students from the program would have ways to remain connected with people from their overseas experience. In addition, returning students would help the next year’s students prepare to contribute and grow these projects.

### **Recruiting**

These programs could serve as a potential recruiting tool for the Senegal program that has in the past struggled with enrollment numbers. Most of the recruiting for each trip is done by word of mouth and returning students that feel more engaged and connected to their experience will be more likely and excited to help recruit their peers. In addition, it will provide additional ways to promote the program. Students that feel like they are part of more developed, long-term, and ongoing projects, that focus on issues very relevant to the Lewis & Clark student body, may be more likely to enroll.

### **Long-term, sustainable student engagement with local communities**

These projects will allow for more concrete, enduring and meaningful student engagement with local communities. Not only will this enhance the Senegal study-abroad program, it will also help engage students with their surroundings. One of the main criticisms of NGOs here is that they leave after 4-5 years and the next group to come in starts from scratch, wasting time, energy, and resources. We're hoping that with these projects we can prevent that from happening to Lewis & Clark students with long-term, sustainable projects that grow and develop with each new generation.

### **Mutually beneficial to students and communities**

This project was conceived with both local communities and future generations of Lewis & Clark study-abroad students in mind. The project aims to sustainably develop and build programs in Sokone, in ways that benefit the community. We are working with locals to ensure

that we deliver precisely what is most needed, and that we do this year after year. In addition, the projects help Lewis & Clark in three major ways:

1. The topics revolve around issues very relevant to the Lewis & Clark community.
2. The project reinforces the community by providing a way for returning students to remain connected to their experiences, and for future students to continue this project to create more knowledge sharing from year to year.
3. The project will create important, long-term relationships between Lewis & Clark and communities in Senegal to create a richer and more engaging experience for future study-abroad students.

### **Promote the values of Lewis & Clark**

This project focuses on environmental issues that resonate very strongly with Lewis & Clark's institutional priorities, as well as Lewis & Clark students' interests. These are:

- Sustainable development – the village now uses an oyster farming method that does not destroy the mangroves.
- Environmental protection.

### **Timeline for project completion**

- **(COMPLETE) March 2015** – Determine cost of materials for various projects in Sokone.
- **(COMPLETE) March 2015** – Based on budgetary considerations and discussions with contacts in Sokone, determine which project is most feasible and would be most beneficial to the community. We've decided to start with oyster farming because this is an important industry for the village, and has a very important impact on environmental protection. Oysters are raised in the mangroves, so it is a priority for the village to protect this natural resource.
- **April 2015** – Start process of purchasing material and delivering funds by end of trip.
- **April 20-23, 2015** – Send 4-5 students back to Sokone after our trip to research sustainable development in Sokone, put in place consistent channels of communication between Sokone and Lewis & Clark, build relationships with community members, and provide the foundation for long-term aid to Sokone.
- **Fall 2015** – Present findings and progress to following Senegal study-abroad program. Each year, the returning trip will present to the following year to ensure continued progress from year to year.