

Dune Fixation in Mali

Empowering communities, improving natural resource management



Mali's Dogon Country (Pays Dogon) is a unique wonder of the world. It is one of the few places in the world where tourists can see ancient community dwellings carved into cliffs, preserved almost exactly as they were 400 years ago. These ancient cliff dwellings provide a glimpse of a heritage, culture, and physical environment, whose preservation will enrich the world.

However, moving around this area by vehicle is often inhibited by sand blown onto the Kanikombole-Bankass road, which was regularly cleared by villagers with shovels and donkey carts. This is a problem that impedes sustainable tourism development and economic growth. With funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Global Sustainable Tourism Alliance (GSTA) has conducted targeted outreach to engage communities in dune fixation to correct this problem over the course of the past year. Efforts have focused on collecting and planting euphorbia cuttings to stabilize the dunes and reduce the sand from blowing onto the road. The value of these activities and program goals have been supported and reinforced by radio broadcasts. They provide information on the causes and negative ramifications of deteriorating dunes and practical solutions to stabilizing them.

Since dune fixation activities began, sand no longer blocks the road and villagers now plan to do the same with other long stretches of



dunes that line travel routes. The interest generated by this initiative has increased involvement from one village to four, while other communities are replicating these initiatives independently. As the value of this project has gained recognition, women's associations are increasingly involved in sand dune restoration.

Ensuring the unique harmony between the natural environment and culture of Mali's Dogon Country will offer tourists a rare and distinct experience. Whether it is dune fixation or other natural resources management activities, the GSTA is committed to preventing increased environmental degradation and over-exploitation of resources that imperils both the livelihoods of its people and natural assets. Efforts such as dune fixation facilitate easier transportation in the Dogon area and reduce threats to the region's key tourism sites, villages and natural landscapes. This results in protecting the cultural patrimony and potential revenue streams for local businesses and communities.

