

Ziguinchor, Senegal, June 25 (Infosplusgabon) - Residents of over 50 villages in Djibidione area of southern Senegal have started paying government taxes after decades of reluctance that has been softened through an awareness campaign undertaken by a civil society.

The campaign by Civil Forum, Bignona branch, has apparently gained public support against threats by fighters of the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) to retaliate against anyone who would risk paying taxes.

In 1985 MFDC fighters abducted and killed the deputy prefect of Sindian who had gone to collect taxes in villages bordering Gambia. Since then, no one dared to pay tax in the villages where the separatists spread terror.

According to the Mayor of Djibidione, Ansoumana Sagna, the determination of the people to pay taxes again comes at the right time, because his commune needs it to get out of the abyss in which it has been plunged for decades.

"Taxation used to be a taboo issue in this area because of the armed conflict, but we were able to solve this problem and encourage people to take ownership of local development.

"And for that, citizens need to know what they need to do and what they should demand", he said, welcoming the positive attitude of the people who have joined the project.

"People have understood the issues of local taxation, people are aware that there can be no development without the participation of the people," he added, expressing gratitude to the Bignona Civil Forum and its partner NGO Usoforal, that works for the return of peace in Casamance.

The two groups are partners of the municipality of Djibidione and Mr. Sagna noted that they

would make enormous impact on the development of the commune.

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