Kathleen Wendt

**Location:** Dakar, Senegal  
**Term:** Spring Semester  
**ESPM Track:** Environmental Science  
Fulfilled 4 credits towards my ESPM contract courses  
Fulfilled 6 credits towards French minor

**MSID Senegal (Minnesota Studies in International Development)**

The phrase “culture shock” might be an understatement when describing what it feels like to step off a plane into the capital city of Dakar. Located along the coast of West Africa, the country of Senegal is different from Minnesota in nearly every aspect—culturally, linguistically, demographically, religiously, and economically. Through these differences, the beautiful people of Senegal gave me an entirely new world perspective.

MSID programs are split into two segments: half the semester taking classes and the other half working at an internship. My internship was located in the small village Toubacouta—a place known for its mangrove forests, tropical birds, monkeys, and eco-lodges. I interned for a NGO that taught local women how to make and sell environmentally friendly products to tourists. Between shifts, I stopped by the local high school to help with English lessons. My final research paper examined the success and failures of local ecotourism businesses, as well as their overall effects on the local community of Toubacouta.

The MSID program is often described as a “mini-Peace Corps.” During my 3-month long internship, I lived without running water, electricity, and yes, even toilet paper. If you’re up for the challenge, I highly recommend it! Your experiences will be the most thought-provoking, eye-opening, and unforgettable adventure of a lifetime.