Cooperative group members learn proper watering techniques, conserving water resources and maximizing crop production.

Transformation of Ouarkhokh Garden

CREATE!’s comprehensive, integrative programs in Ouarkhokh have taught beneficiaries to plan and manage cooperative market gardens, produce poultry for local consumption and sale, and to invest and save their earnings through Voluntary Savings and Lending Association (VSLA) techniques. Ouarkhokh’s agricultural cooperative groups transformed their garden site from barren sand to a green, thriving oasis. CREATE!’s financial assistance and technical training have been pivotal in empowering women in Ouarkhokh to plan and work for their future.

Ouarkhokh, located in the hot and dry Louga region of north-central Senegal, is a community of approximately 1,850 people. Most residents engage in seasonal, subsistence agricultural work but have struggled as rainfall has become increasingly unreliable and unpredictable. Before CREATE!’s programs began operating in Ouarkhokh in 2010, women in this community shouldered extra financial responsibilities as many of their husbands had migrated to urban areas to look for work. Now, CREATE!’s technical training programs provide skills and economic livelihoods for women in this community.

In addition to cooking, gathering firewood, and caring for children, the 35 women in Ouarkhokh’s agricultural cooperative groups also gather at their

continued on page 2
four-acre garden site twice daily to water their crops. Although time and labor intensive, their hard work has paid off. The cooperative grows a variety of crops, including eggplant, okra, peppers, tomatoes, and lettuce. Participants are able to bring produce home to their families and in 2014 members harvested and sold thousands of pounds of produce to local markets. As their skills have increased, women in Ouarkhokh have also focused on producing high-value crops like mint and lettuce, which are often difficult to find in rural Senegal. Focusing on these crops boosts the revenue brought in by cooperative members.

In 2015, CREATE! hopes to raise the money to install a drip irrigation system in a portion of the Ouarkhokh garden site thereby increasing the amount of irrigated land by 75%. The Ouarkhokh cooperative buys water from a commercial system, so the drip irrigation system will reduce input costs, ensuring efficient water use and save labor time.

In August, CREATE! field technicians helped community members in Ouarkhokh build their own poultry shed. Several women now cooperatively manage poultry production and recently sold their third batch of 100 chickens in local markets. This is very profitable for the Ouarkhokh cooperative. Women reinvest their earnings into the next round of poultry production. The Ouarkhokh cooperative hopes to capitalize on their location near a major highway to start a small restaurant using the chickens, produce, and nuts from their gardens. The poultry program has helped the cooperative envision (and plan for) an economically prosperous future.

Partnering with the Ouarkhokh cooperative, CREATE! has also invested in an exciting new biogas project, located at our Appropriate Technology Training and Demonstration Center. Once completed, this biodigester will convert animal dung into methane gas that can be used for cooking and to power lights in the Ouarkhokh poultry shed and adjacent Training and Demonstration Center. Women in the cooperative are thrilled to demonstrate this new method of sustainable and technologically-appropriate energy production. Women will also be able to use gas from the biodigester to cook meals at the garden site.

CREATE! Board Member Ron Taylor and his wife Pam recently visited Ouarkhokh and CREATE!’s other partner communities in Senegal. He remembers the Ouarkhokh cooperative garden site as a “barren wasteland” during his first visit to the community in 2007. Now, Ron says it is “like a park” and noted that much had changed since his initial visit and since CREATE! began operations there in 2010.

CREATE!’s programs in Ouarkhokh are helping the community move towards economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. The astounding transformation of the Ouarkhokh garden is a true testament to the efficacy of CREATE!’s methods, the dedication and competency of our field staff, and the enthusiasm and hard work of the Ouarkhokh cooperative.
Dear Friends,

Since our founding, CREATE! has strived to respond to the needs of communities in Senegal with empowering techniques and technologies that are appropriate to local conditions. Our overriding goal is to build the capacity of residents in our partner communities and help them gain the skills they need to be sustainable and self-sufficient. The community of Ouarkhokh exemplifies CREATE!’s goals of fostering economic resiliency and capacity building while helping them on the path towards true self-sufficiency.

The mission of CREATE! is to help rural populations in the developing world cope with water, food and fuel shortages resulting from the impact of climate change on their communities.

Each time I visit Ouarkhokh, I am amazed at the progress the village’s cooperative group has made. During my most recent trip in December, I toured the cooperative’s large garden site, where women are growing tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, onions, and other vegetables. I also visited their thriving poultry shed and enjoyed delicious yassa that cooperative members made from a chicken that they raised themselves. The Ouarkhokh cooperative is enthusiastic, empowered, and extremely capable. These women are working together with CREATE! staff to transform their lives. Cooperative members hope to soon expand their operations and improve their efficiency by installing a drip irrigation system and, eventually, by starting a small restaurant using chicken and produce from their garden. You can read more about the Ouarkhokh cooperative’s accomplishments and goals on page one of this newsletter.

Sustainability is at the heart of CREATE!’s mission and philosophy. We work with villages to develop methods and strategies of community self-development that are based on local knowledge, participation, and social mobilization to maximize self-reliance and self-sufficiency. CREATE!’s ultimate goal in Senegal is to “work ourselves out of a job.” With the training we provide, we work with our partner communities to reach a level of agricultural and economic competency so they no longer need ongoing financial and technical support from CREATE! We are very excited that our partner communities of Diender, Fass Kane, and Fass Koffe are very close to reaching this goal. These communities will soon be fully responsible for managing and expanding their garden, poultry, and other income-generating activities that improve their lives and those of their families.

Our communities’ success would not be possible without your generous support for CREATE!’s programs in Senegal. We are grateful for your ongoing commitment to these communities and hope that you continue to follow their progress with us. As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions and look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Barry R. Wheeler
Executive Director
barry@createaction.org

www.createaction.org
Meet Amadou Diouf – 

CREATE! Field Technician in Ouarkhokh

Amadou Diouf trains community members in Ouarkhokh in year-round, sustainable crop cultivation and improved cookstove construction. He appreciates working for a nonprofit organization that provides rural populations with skills and knowledge that will help them meet their needs and improve their lives. Amadou is originally from Dakar and now lives and works in Ouarkhokh.

Amadou holds a professional certificate in Horticulture from the Professional Horticulture Training Center in Camberene, Senegal. He was inspired to follow this career because of his life-long love of plants and animals. Amadou found during his training that rural populations really craved horticulture skills. He is thrilled to have the necessary training to meet this need. He says, “With CREATE!, I am now doing the work I have always wanted to do!”

In his free time, Amadou likes to watch or play soccer, visit friends, watch action films, and connect with long-distance friends on Facebook and Skype.

Ouarkhokh by the Numbers

Number of cooperative members: 35
Size of garden site: 4 acres
Average temperature range: 70 – 110 degrees F
Average annual rainfall: 13 inches
Pounds of vegetables harvested in 2014: 6,803
Chickens produced and sold in Ouarkhokh in 2013 (before start of poultry project): Zero!
Chickens produced and sold in Ouarkhokh in 2014: 300
Distance from Sahara Desert: Closer every year