



CREATE!

Center for Renewable Energy
& Appropriate Technology
for the Environment

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Spring Newsletter 2021

Senegal: A Tale of Hope Against Despair

Celebrating Senegal's 60 Years of Independence

By Samba Gadjigo, CREATE! Board Member

As legend has it, when the first European explorers “landed” on the mouth of a mighty river on the shores of a small fishing village, a place the native people called Ndar, they asked the first inhabitants they encountered what the name of their country was. The Wolof-speaking fishermen responded: “Sunugal” (our fishing boat). Taking the “boat” for the country”, the newcomers named the land Senegal; thus started a three century-long tradition of misunderstandings (1626-1959).

By 1959-1960, all French African colonies, except Algeria had gained their independence. For Senegal, official independence, with a national flag and a national anthem were granted on Monday, April 4th, 1960. On the dawn of that day, when the national flag with the vertical tricolor of green, yellow, and red with a five-point star at its center was lifted, and with it, the pride and hopes of the new nation, Leopold Sedar Senghor, our first president proclaimed, lyrical; “This is an hour of truth.” Amid the singing and dancing of overjoyed and jubilant crowds, our national anthem, also written by Senghor, was intoned by thousands:

“Everyone strum your Koras, strike the balafon”

The red lion (symbol of the nation) has roared

The tamer of the Savannah has leapt forward, dispelling the darkness.

Sunlight on our terror, sunlight on our hope

Stand up brother, here is Africa assembled

O Senegalese arise!

Join sea and spring,

Join steppe and forest!

Hail mother Africa, hail mother Africa!”

Continued on page 2

Senegal: A Tale of Hope Against Despair, Continued:

These words in our national anthem carried with them the hopes and dreams of a whole people yearning for freedom, political independence, and the harnessing of its national resources for its development within a reunited Africa. However, 60 years after the drumming, singing, and dancing of that Monday, April 4, 1960 morning have subsided, what has become of that "Sunlight of our hopes"? What has become of that call to "arise", "join seas and spring", "Join steppes and forest", that vision of a reborn and unified Africa?



Indeed, after one decade of hope, like many African countries in the Sahel region, in the 70s Senegal suffered a circle of droughts with everlasting environmental consequences (deforestation, destruction of arable lands, progression of the desert). As a result, famine killed millions of people and animals and left millions dependent on food aid from the international community. Mass migration to the cities in search of cash increased the demand for housing, infrastructure, education, and health. That exodus also denied agriculture (the main activity) of its labor forces, thus decreasing agriculture production. During that same period, Senegal like other countries in the world suffered from the world oil crisis which dashed any hopes for industrial development.

However, as the national anthem reminds us, there is hope. For the last 10 years, many projects have been underway, both internally and with the help of the international community, NGOs from the U.S. and Europe, to reduce the ordeal of the rural population. These organizations and many others, in addition to the Senegalese government PSE (Plan for an Emergent Senegal), are working to reduce poverty through rural electrification, using solar power, innovative agricultural techniques and technologies that reduce the destruction of the forests. I have the pleasure of working on the board of one of these organizations: **CREATE! Center for Renewable Energy and Appropriate Technology for the Environment**. **CREATE!** collaborates with rural communities to develop women-led sustainable solutions for generations to come.



Peace and Development in Senegal

An Interview with Mame Nogaye Diop from Fass Koffe

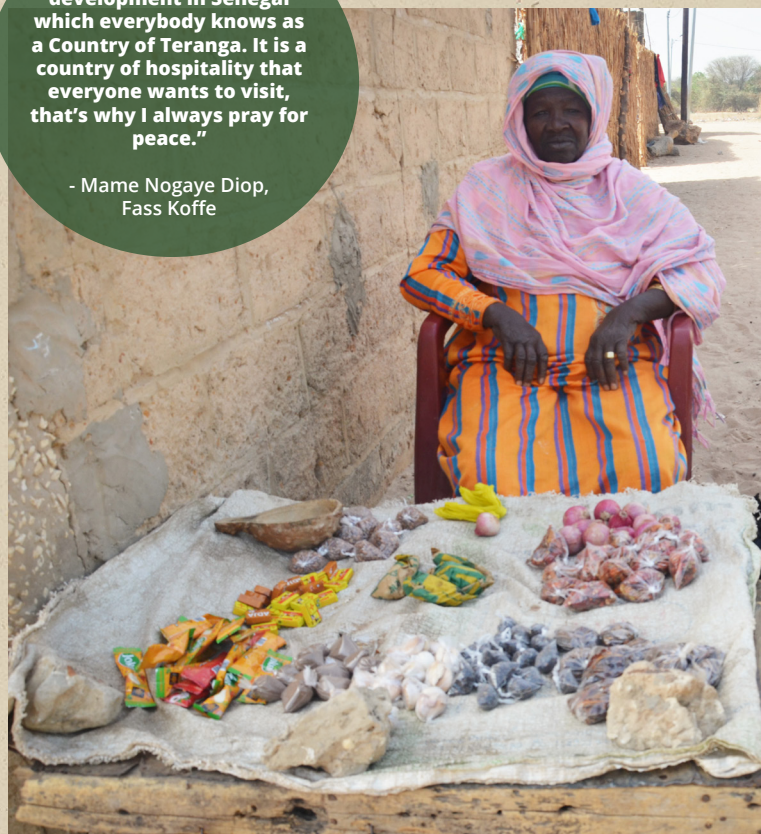
Mame Nogaye Diop enjoys sitting in the shade of her cooperative garden in Fass Koffe, Senegal, eating her lunch in between her work. CREATE!'s cooperative garden gave Mame an occupation to pursue in her own village. Whether she is working in the garden or not, Diop loves sitting there and breathing in the clean and fresh air since the garden is green and shady even during the dry summer months.

At 78 years-old, Diop is one of the oldest cooperative garden members and recalls what life was like in rural Senegal before the country gained independence. "Before our independence, Senegal was led by the French people. For rural communities like us, we were depending on what we grow to make a living, so why we tried to have a big family to have help with the harvest," she explained. The day that Senegal gained independence, Diop heard the news from the radio in her community. "All Senegalese were happy because it was time to have the country in our own hands again. Since we gained independence many things have changed because we have a Senegalese president and the country is led by Senegalese people. But since then people started moving away from their villages to cities for working."



"I hope for peace and development in Senegal which everybody knows as a Country of Teranga. It is a country of hospitality that everyone wants to visit, that's why I always pray for peace."

- Mame Nogaye Diop,
Fass Koffe



Growing Success at Home

Fass Koffe was one of the first communities to partner with CREATE!. Graduating from the program after five years, Diop and her fellow community members have been continuing with CREATE!'s projects which have improved their health, well-being, and decreased rural exodus. One of the projects includes maintaining a year-round community garden. The fresh organic vegetables that Diop and other women in the community grow year-round and the fruit trees that they tend for themselves all contribute to improving their food security, nutrition as well as income. Diop and her daughter-in-law both enjoy the financial independence this project has given them. As Diop herself says, she now earns and saves money to meet all her needs. "My priority for the future is the development of the community and I hope we will have more infrastructure," Diop tells us. "I wish people will have more activities and I want both men and women to stay in the community so there will no longer be a rural exodus."

Consider helping more communities reach the same success as Fass Koffe by [donating to CREATE!](#) today.

The Importance of Art in Senegalese Culture

Senegal's capital Dakar is the artistic center of Francophone West Africa. Senegal has embraced its artistic traditions since the country gained independence from France in 1960. Senegal's founding President Leopold Sedar Senghor, a poet and intellectual leader fostered the country's love and embracing of the visual and musical arts through creating an arts college in Dakar. Sixty years later, Senegalese cities like Dakar, Goree and St. Louis have a vibrant arts scene that encompasses many galleries and museums that feature Senegalese and other West African artists. The country also hosts many local and international arts festivals, most notably the Dakar Biennial Contemporary African Arts Festival, which brings artists from Senegal and across Africa to exhibit their wide variety of modern art.



Michael Carson (left), Community Garden President Ndeye Diop (center), CREATE! Agriculture Technician Ousmane Diallo (right)

CREATE!'s team in Senegal and our women's groups that we partner with exhibit the same creativity in our work that the late President Senghor first fostered sixty years ago. Our staff have developed innovative, appropriate drip irrigation solutions that have exponentially increased women's vegetable production. Many of our women's groups have adopted drip irrigation technology into their farms using their own resources. One of our technicians, Georges Nesta Mancabo has innovated by designing a tree nursery in Diabel Village with the names of species labeled for easy identification by our women's group and other technicians who receive these seedlings.

We would like to share a taste of Senegal's artistic creativity by introducing you to traditional Senegalese art. We are raffling a mixed media artwork designed in Dakar that depicts Senegalese village life. Proceeds from our Senegalese art raffle to go towards our women's climate action program in Senegal and will contribute toward supporting Senegalese women to improve their lives through clean water supply, improved cookstoves, regenerative agriculture and income generation projects. Please consider placing a bid on our art piece to support CREATE! to support the unique artistic prowess that exists throughout Senegalese society.

Michael Carson,
CREATE! Executive Director

Please Join CREATE!'s 10th Anniversary Art Raffle:

Enter to win a beautiful, hand-carved calabash wall-hanging from the Sandaga Market in Dakar, Senegal. This piece of art depicts village life in rural Senegal.

- Enter between April 26th and May 26th
- Donate a minimum of \$50
- Individuals will only be entered once
- Donate through our website platform:

- Enter Today -

