

**2025 Spring Newsletter**

## 15 Years of Action: Our Sustainable Development Journey

In many rural areas around the world, communities face major challenges, including limited access to clean water, food insecurity, lack of economic opportunities, and environmental degradation. In Senegal, these obstacles are often made worse by climate change, requiring innovative and sustainable solutions. For the last 15 years, CREATE! has been successfully transforming these challenges into opportunities.

### Community Growth Through Innovative Action

Working in rural areas that are often isolated and face numerous challenges is not an easy task. But CREATE!'s philosophy has always been rooted in the belief that solutions to challenges faced by rural villages should not come at an environmental cost. Instead, we have always advocated for responsible and long-lasting changes that benefit both local communities and the environment. Whether it be logistical or climatic constraints, what has thus worked for CREATE! is a participatory and focused approach that puts our partner communities front and center, focusing on their specific needs and finding solutions that are both creative and flexible.



Over 15 years, these solutions have become more holistic in nature, integrating renewable energy, efficient natural resource management, and skills transfer while emphasizing empowerment and resilience. Our programs empower women farmers to address the connections between food, poverty, health, and climate change.

In a decade and a half, CREATE! has supported hundreds of people, particularly women, who have seen their economic and social situation improve. In 2010 we started our program with three communities in one rural region; today that same program is helping twenty three communities that are spread over four regions of Senegal, Gossas (Fatick), Guinguinéo (Kaolack), Linguère (Louga) and Nioro (Kaolack), with the 23rd site (Loumbeul) currently being set up in the Linguère area. With your support, we can partner with more communities in more regions of the country.

*As CREATE! celebrates 15 years in Senegal, your donation can help us move forward on this path, pledging many more years to these communities.*

## Team testimonial: Abdou Ba



*Abdou Ba, lovingly known as Pape Ba by the CREATE! team, has been with us since the beginning. In this 15th year, Pape Ba shares what it means to be a part of the CREATE! family.*

I joined CREATE! in 2010 as a driver, but over the years, with Mr. Barry's help, I have been trained in solar techniques and have acquired technical skills in solar energy. Today, we have a young, dynamic team that achieves excellent results. CREATE! is a school where everyone learns and shares their knowledge. Donors continue to support us, and we have been able to overcome obstacles such as the state of the roads and the difficulties of successfully growing vegetables in

landlocked areas.

I'd like to thank all the board members for their constant support, and I'm proud to be part of this organization as we continue to bring sustainable solutions to rural communities.

## Keur Mandongo: A Community in Full Transformation Through Gardening

Located in the Niore department of the Kaolack region, the community of Keur Mandongo has undergone a remarkable transformation, embodying the true dynamics of CREATE!'s program.



Launched in Fall 2024, the community brings together 100 women engaged in the sustainable development program. In just a few months since they gained access to year-round water, they have successfully transformed their daily lives and their lived environment by not only producing, but harvesting and selling their produce of fresh organic vegetables at weekly markets. (Numbers from first harvest?) This major development not only highlights the success of the project but also underscores the key role of women in local economic development.

Despite its strong agricultural potential, the region had long faced challenges related to productivity and economic empowerment. The initiative led by CREATE! has marked a decisive turning point by introducing modern agricultural techniques and facilitating access to appropriate resources. With capacity building, their diet has become more diverse, and their economic situation has significantly improved.

Keur Mandongo perfectly illustrates the rise of gardening as a driver of growth and empowerment. Beyond its economic impact, this activity serves as a true shield against climate and social challenges, thus strengthening the resilience of an entire community.



## Evolution of the Cooperative Societies

In 2024, to affirm the sustainability of activities in our partner communities after graduation, CREATE! guided the community members to form their own cooperative societies (SCOOP) to foster strong connections and mutually beneficial collaborations. Three cooperatives were thus formed in the three regions of Gossas, Guinguinéo and Linguère. As these societies evolve, the hope is that they will remain a sustainable solution for all the community members.



Since their inception, the focus has been, first and foremost, on solidarity, with membership fees for each group generating funds on behalf of the regional SCOOP, while at the same time strengthening the financial capacities of the individual communities. We have also included training sessions between beneficiaries on related activities to make the most of the time spent at the monthly meetings. These training sessions provide an opportunity for communities that are

experiencing water-related difficulties or natural phenomena that prevent them from operating normally. For the second stage, which will be the creation of departmental stores, we will help with orientation and the steps to follow until they are up and running. It should be noted that all the products sold in these shops will come from the community garden and will promote the activities and efforts made in the districts where CREATE! operates. This stage will soon be possible in the Guinguinéo SCOOP, followed by Gossas and Linguère.

## On the Ground in Senegal: Rotary Club Bellevue Engages with Communities

It's inspiring to see organizations like the Rotary Club connect with CREATE! partner communities in Senegal. This kind of collaboration helps build stronger global partnerships and fosters sustainable development on the ground.



Members from the Rotary Club Bellevue, Washington, USA were in Senegal to visit the communities and projects they are supporting. Club members had the opportunity to meet with project participants, discuss the progress made, and plan the next steps to strengthen the program's impact. The community women were very proud to showcase their work and benefited greatly from this visit. The visit highlighted the Bellevue Rotary Club's commitment to sustainable development and international cooperation. Initiatives like this contribute to

significant progress and improve the quality of life for the local population.

*« The impact of Rotary's investment in CREATE! partner communities in Senegal cannot be overstated. We could visibly see how improved nutrition, hygiene, water quality, and especially economic empowerment is reflected in the increased self-confidence exuded by the women in these communities. »*

**Adam Pinsky, Rotarian, Bellevue Rotary**

## The 23rd Step: CREATE! Expands its Impact in Loumbeul

Located in the Linguère region, the community of Loumbeul is the symbol of a determination to meet the challenges of rural life. Here, women play a central role in economic and social development, despite the particular conditions - an arid climate, limited water resources and restricted economic opportunities.

Continuing its commitment to sustainable development and the empowerment of rural communities, CREATE! partnered with Loumbeul, its 23rd community, in Fall 2024. After the well rehabilitation a few months ago, the site is already installed with the fence, the solar water pumping system, the water basins, the platform and the drip irrigation system; and the activity is going on smoothly.

This new community marks another step forward for CREATE! in achieving long-term, inclusive development in rural areas.



***Please donate today to support our partner communities like Loumbeul move forward in their sustainable journey***

## Impact on the Ground

CREATE! grew as an organization in 2024, taking positive steps towards sustainable futures.



**3** cooperatives were formed in the 3 regions of Gossas, Guinguinéo and Linguère.



**2** new partner communities, Keur Mandongo and Loumbeul, embarked on their path towards resilience and empowerment.



More than **16,000** liters of water were available every day on an average to each partner community.



Active partner communities produced and harvested more than **11** tons of fresh fruits and vegetables in total.



Each project participant earned and saved **\$26** on an average every month.

## CREATE! Board of Directors

**Fred Raley**, Board President. Former Chairman and CEO of SpawGlass, a 100% employee-owned construction company.

**Mary-Kay Miller**, Board Secretary and Treasurer. Adjunct faculty in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, Salem State University.

**Ronald Taylor**, Retired CEO of construction company and a founding donor of CREATE!

**Susan Miller Briggs**, MD, MPH. Senior Surgeon and Endowed Chair of Global Surgery, Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, MA.

**Joyce E. Leader**, Retired ambassador of the United States. Worked in Africa for 15 years as a Foreign Service officer, Peace Corps staff, and volunteer teacher.

**Delanson Y. Hopkins**, BA, MBA. Retired health care and hospital executive in Brookline, MA.

**Samba Gadjigo**, Helen D. Gould professor of French and Francophone Studies at Mount Holyoke College.

**Binta Mamadou**, Multilingual Project Finance Attorney

**Aïda Sarr Lewis**, Educator and Trained Human Rights Advocate.