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## **Improving the Lives of Women and Girls in Diender, Senegal**

Diender, Senegal, is one of six rural villages where **CREATE!** has had a presence since May of 2010. As is typical in rural villages throughout Senegal, the women of Diender must do nearly all of the physical labor that is required to sustain their households. Due to the enormity of the work they must accomplish each day, most women in Diender work continually from the time they wake up until the time they go to bed, enjoying almost no leisure time.

When we ask the women of Diender if life is better now than it was before **CREATE!** arrived in their village, their answer is a resounding, "Yes!", adding that their lives have improved in many ways.

Before **CREATE!'s** arrival, one of the tasks women and girls had to spend an inordinate amount of time on each day was gathering fuel for cooking meals on an open fire. Since learning to build and use fuel-efficient cook stoves, their fuel-wood gathering time has been reduced by more than half, and food cooks more quickly too, giving them much needed time for other activities. Also, the safety of cooking on an enclosed fire means that women no longer have to closely attend open cooking fires to prevent children from being burned.

Procuring water for household needs has also become a much easier task. Instead of laboriously pulling water bucket by bucket from the village well — or using some of their scarce income to purchase expensive water from a regional water service — women can now go to the well and simply turn on a tap to fill their containers with free, potable water, thanks to the solar-powered pump installed by **CREATE!**

With the establishment of a gardening cooperative and gardening site (and access to abundant, free water!) women now have the opportunity for the first time to not only grow and sell a variety of vegetables on a year-round basis, but to earn and save money for their household needs. Participating in trainings for this project — and working in a cooperative group — has also helped women develop their leadership skills, resulting in increased confidence and self-esteem.

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***Diender cooperative group members weighing eggplant harvest.***



***Woman using the tap to get water from the Diender well.***



***Diender woman preparing a meal using her improved cookstove.***

## Improving Lives in Diender, cont.

Men have also benefited from **CREATE!**'s programs. Along with the women, men participated in solar, irrigation, and agricultural trainings taught by **CREATE!** field staff. Using the knowledge and skills they gained from the trainings, men helped install the solar pumping system and construct the gravity-fed irrigation system for the community garden, systems which they now maintain. Additionally, men support the gardening cooperative by working as watchmen for the gardening and infrastructure sites and often assist the women with vegetable cultivation.

In sum, **CREATE!**'s program in Diender has created meaningful opportunities for women and men to work together to improve their lives and their community, demonstrating the positive impact of appropriate, sustainable technologies for rural villages.

*Elizabeth Larson, then a senior at Lawrence University in Wisconsin, spent her winter break doing a month-long internship with CREATE! in Diender. She lived in the village, worked alongside the women, and communicated with them in their local language. The articles about Diender and Binta Fall are based on Elizabeth's account of her experiences in the village.*



**Diender cooperative members participating in an agricultural training taught by CREATE! Agricultural Technician Malick Sow.**



**CREATE! Intern Elizabeth Larson teaching cooperative group members about monitoring water levels in Diender gardens.**

## Binta's Reflections

Binta Fall is a 26-year-old mother of two whose husband lives in Dakar. Though she had little opportunity to attend school, she is able to read and write a little in her local language (Wolof), and she is very curious and eager to learn new things. She is a leader among her friends and is currently one of the secretaries in Diender's Gardening Cooperative. Following are Binta's reflections about the impact of **CREATE!**'s programs on her life:



**Binta Fall preparing couscous at home in Diender.**

**"CREATE!** has given me the opportunity to become more self-sufficient. I no longer have to walk five kilometers to Gossas to buy vegetables for my family. Now I grow them with my friends at the gardening site and am able to get them at a much lower price; and the money the cooperative gets from selling vegetables stays in our village and is put back into our cooperative fund.

**"Now that we have vegetables from the garden to sell, I am making my own money and am less dependent on my husband in Dakar for support. It feels good to be able to make better lives for me and my family and that is what CREATE! is helping me do.**

**"Before I built the improved cookstove, I had to search for fuelwood at least 10 times each month; now I only search for fuelwood once per week. Also, I no longer have to buy as much firewood — only one third as much as I used to buy. So I am saving money too.**

**"Before we had the solar pump for our community well we had to buy water to drink, and we did not have enough water to grow vegetables. Now we have free drinking water in large quantities, and we have plenty of water for our vegetable garden."**

# Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

People sometimes ask me how **CREATE!** is different from other organizations doing similar work in Africa. As I firmly believe that community empowerment is essential for sustainable social and economic change, **CREATE!'s** approach to working with rural villages is fundamentally grounded on strategies of community self-development that are based on local organization, local participation, and social mobilization to maximize self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Rather than giving gifts or handouts, **CREATE!** uses a participatory approach to implement projects that help community members to do something for themselves that they are unable to do on their own.

Before planning or implementing projects, **CREATE!** staff meets with local and traditional authorities and community members to identify their community's felt needs. We then work in partnership with community members to respond to those needs with programs, techniques and technologies that build community members' capacity and are appropriate to the local area. Additionally, **CREATE!'s** approach is to meet each community's needs through the use of small-scale, appropriate technologies that do not rely on the use of fossil fuels, ensuring that these technologies can be sustained over the long term in a resource constrained world.

As **CREATE!'s** ultimate goal is for communities to become self-sufficient, our approach also includes an exit strategy for each community where we work. Community leaders are asked to sign a *Memorandum of Understanding* that lays out a plan to transition to self-reliance over an agreed period of time. In the beginning, **CREATE!** provides the majority of the resources needed for project implementation, with the community providing a much smaller contribution, based on their particular resources. Over the next three to five years, however, **CREATE!'s** contribution gradually diminishes, until the community is able to provide 100% of the financial support needed to sustain its projects. However, even as **CREATE!'s** financial support diminishes our field staff will continue to provide guidance and training as needed for a period of time, to ensure that each community is able to stand on its own.

With your generous support, we have been able to make significant progress in each of the six communities where we currently work. (See "**CREATE!** By the Numbers" on the next page.) On behalf of the people we work with, as well as our entire **CREATE!** staff, I want to thank you for your support and ongoing commitment to these communities. As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions and look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,



Barry R. Wheeler  
Executive Director  
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[www.createaction.org](http://www.createaction.org)

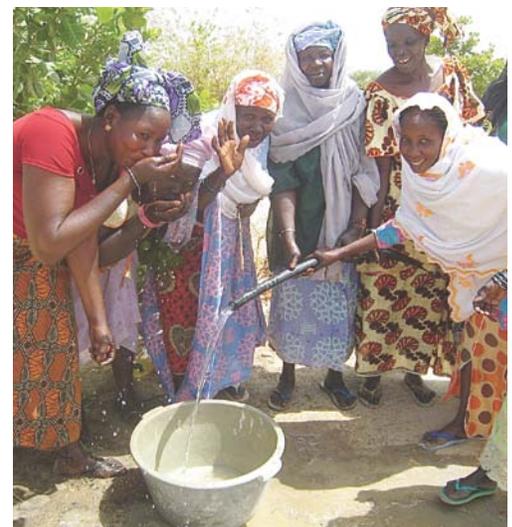
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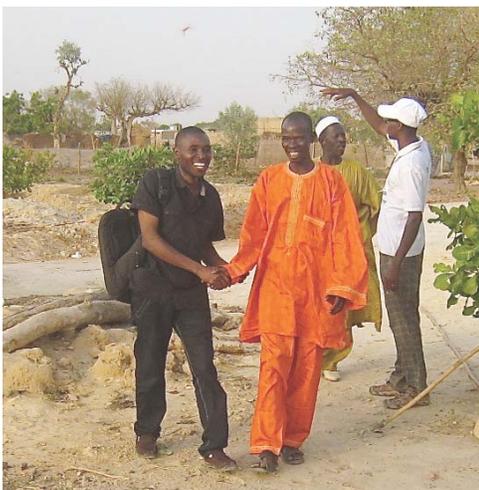
**One of 100 cashew trees flourishing in the Diender community garden.**



**CREATE! team and community members installing the solar array for the new well and pump in Fass Koffe.**



**Fass Koffe women celebrating their new hand dug well and solar pump. Alhamdulillah!**



**New Country Director, Sidiki Kanneh (on left), greets community leader, Adama Gaye.**



**Outgoing County Director Ibrahima Kebe holding a recently harvested cabbage in Ouadiour.**

## Welcome, Sidiki Kanneh — *CREATE!*'s New Country Director!

As *CREATE!*'s new Country Director, Sidiki Kanneh is now responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring all aspects of *CREATE!*'s work in rural Senegal. Sidiki specializes in community mobilization and training and has held professional leadership positions for more than 10 years with various international NGOs serving rural and refugee populations in Guinea-Conakry, Ivory Coast, Rwanda and his home country of Liberia. Sidiki is a dynamic and skillful social mobilizer and is dedicated to helping vulnerable people improve their lives. As Country Director, Sidiki will manage field and administrative staff and will oversee their work training local village populations and community leaders to rehabilitate and build wells for water, install solar pumping systems, develop community gardens and construct improved cookstoves.

Sidiki is especially excited about working alongside *CREATE!* field staff to train community members and build their capacity for self-reliance. With respect to the improved cookstove project, he notes that: "In addition to reducing firewood use by more than half, the methodology and technology for building and using improved cookstoves is so simple that anyone in the community can not only learn to build and use the stoves, they can teach others to build and use them as well. In fact, many women are now serving as trainers of trainers to those who did not participate in improved cookstove training provided by project staff; these women are continuing to transfer the improved cookstove knowledge to other women in the community. The ease of learning to build and use improved cookstoves is a very encouraging aspect of this program, and it has an immediate and satisfying impact on the project beneficiaries."

## Thank You, Kebe!

After more than 33 years serving the people of Senegal, as well as refugees, displaced persons and the rural poor in Rwanda, our friend, colleague and Country Director, Ibrahima Kebe, has taken a well-deserved retirement. Thank you, Kebe, for your commitment and dedication to helping vulnerable people improve their lives and for helping to successfully launch *CREATE!*'s work in Senegal. We wish you all the best!

## *CREATE!* By The Numbers

### 3 Principle Sectors of Intervention:

- Water Acquisition, Storage and Distribution
- Local Food Production
- Renewable Energy and the Environment

### 6 Program Sites established in 2 Regions:

### 2 Appropriate Technology Demonstration and Training Centers Constructed

### 20+ Acres of Land Donated by Participating Communities for Community Gardens and Demonstration Centers

### 41 Cooperative Groups Formed

### 881 Cooperative Group Members

### 2 Community Wells Rehabilitated

### 1 New Well Completed and

### 2 New Wells Under Construction

### 3 Solar Powered Pumps Installed Providing a Total of **15,000** Liters/Day of Potable Water

### 5 Gravity Fed Networks Constructed for Irrigating Community Gardens

### **20,000** lbs of Produce Harvested and Sold

### **11,000** Fruit, Nut and Protection Trees Planted

### **327** Improved Fuel Efficient Cook Stoves Built

### 1 Prototype Solar Food Dryer Built for Testing

### 1 Prototype Solar Oven Built for Testing