



CREATE!

Center for Renewable Energy and
Appropriate Technology for the Environment

NEWSLETTER

132 East Broadway
Suite 416
Eugene, OR 97401

Fall 2016

CREATE! Honored at UN Climate Change Conference

In December 2015, **CREATE!** was honored to receive a *Gender Just Climate Solutions Award* at the UN climate talks in Paris. The Women and Gender Constituency, a UN stakeholder group, recognized **CREATE!** for the positive impacts of our community-based climate change adaptation programs in rural Senegal. The challenges of climate change in Senegal, including drought, poverty, and unemployment, compel thousands of young men and women to migrate to Europe

each month to seek better lives. Our programs empower rural women and men to reduce deforestation, promote alternative energy technologies, and adapt to the impacts of climate change through training in sustainable agriculture and other income generating opportunities. **CREATE!** is honored to receive this world-recognized distinction and is committed to furthering this critical work in the years ahead.

Creating Economic Opportunity in Senegal

In the first five months of 2016, over 3,000 people lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The majority were West Africans, searching for better lives and more economic opportunity in Europe. Many of these West Africans were from rural Senegal. This global humanitarian crisis might seem far removed from **CREATE!'s** community-based sustainable development programs, but we believe that part of our mission is to address the economic challenges faced by those living in rural regions of Senegal. In this newsletter we will address why young men and women are leaving Senegal to seek opportunity in Europe and show how **CREATE!'s** programs provide solutions to the challenges of life in rural areas.

The impacts of global climate change limit economic possibilities in rural Senegal. Over the past 50 years, higher temperatures and more frequent, severe droughts have limited crop yields. Farmers, reliant on unpredictable rainy seasons, struggle to support their families. Because over 42 percent of Senegal's population is under the age of 14, subsistence farming will become increasingly untenable.

The unemployment rate in Senegal is nearly 50 percent and many Senegalese men and women lack the education needed to seek employment in the private sector. The promise of economic security through farming is declining due to ongoing drought and desertification. Young men especially feel pressure from their families to find work elsewhere. Saying "beugue tekki" – "I want to succeed" - young men are increasingly making the perilous journey to Europe as migrants.

For decades, young men and women have traveled to the capital for seasonal work and returned to their villages to farm in the rainy season. In the last ten years, however, migration has accelerated. Each month, between 9,000 and 10,000
continued on page 2



Many young men have returned from Dakar and other cities to support their families through participation in CREATE!'s cooperative gardening and income generation programs.



Many cooperative groups are now producing enough vegetables to supply not just their community, but also regional markets in larger towns.

Creating Economic Opportunity in Senegal, cont.

young men leave Senegal and attempt to reach Europe. Migrants from across West Africa gather in Niger, then travel through the Sahara Desert to the Libyan coast. Reliant on ruthless smugglers, hundreds of men have lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean on flimsy rafts. In some regions of rural Senegal, there are now entire communities without young men.

One solution to the migration crisis in Senegal is to build sustainable economic opportunities for young men and women at home. Rural residents need training in income generating activities so they can continue to support their families while remaining in their communities. **CREATE!**'s programs slow migration from rural Senegal by empowering men and women to take charge of their economic futures. Through intensive training from our field technicians, our cooperative members gain the skills they need to support themselves through sustainable agriculture and other income generating opportunities. They also have the opportunity to cooperatively raise chickens for sale and for home consumption. Cooperative members can then save and reinvest their profits through Voluntary Savings and Lending Associations (VSLAs).

Men and women are now returning home from the capital to participate in **CREATE!** programs. Djiby Top returned to Ouarkhokh after many years spent working in the city. The possibility of earning money through **CREATE!**'s cooperative gardening program was one of his primary motivations for returning to Ouarkhokh. Djiby had gardened professionally in the past but decided it was "better to work for my community's development instead of working for the profit of others."

Can young Senegalese build economic sustainability at home? The government wants young people to stay in Senegal and work as subsistence farmers. For many, this is not possible without specialized training and support to meet the challenges of high temperatures and unpredictable rainfall. **CREATE!** is proud to be part of the solution to help young Senegalese men and women learn to support themselves, their families, and their country – all without leaving home. **CREATE!** Field Technician Codou Gadji encapsulates our collective dreams by saying, "I am very optimistic about the future of Senegal. The future holds many possibilities. Men and women know that they can help the development of their country."



For the first time ever, women are able to raise chickens to produce a fresh, local source of protein and a reliable form of household income.



Djiby Top is proud that his village is now able to cultivate vegetables and raise chickens. "When I lived in Ouarkhokh ten years ago, we ate vegetables very rarely. Now, my young children are able to eat vegetables every day."
Photo by Patricia Andersson

References and Resources

Season Two of "Years of Living Dangerously" (National Geographic Channel) premieres on October 30 and will focus on the links between climate change and migration from West Africa.

Read more about climate change and migration:

- The Climate Reality Project. "The Link Between Climate Change and Drought." *EcoWatch*. 24 June 2016.
- Friedman, Thomas. "Out of Africa." *New York Times*, 13 April 2016, "Out of Africa, Part II." *New York Times*, 20 April 2016, "Out of Africa, Part III." *New York Times*, 27 April 2016.
- Quist-Arcton, Ofeibe. "In Senegal, They're Dreaming of Europe." *NPR*, 1 June 2016, "Why the Villages Are Losing Their Young Men." *NPR*, 5 May 2016.
- Searcey, Dionne. "Desperation Rising at Home, Africans Increasingly Turn to Risky Seas." *New York Times*, 16 June 2016.
- Sengupta, Somini. "Reports Tell of a Trail of Migrant Deaths Across Deserts and Seas." *New York Times*, 14 June 2016.



By participating in VSLA, women are able to save their earnings from their cooperative gardens and poultry projects to feed and support their families during times of need.

Letters from the Founder and the Executive Director



CREATE! Founder, Barry Wheeler, inspects some of the nearly 2,000 seedlings in Darou Diadji's tree nursery. Each community planted thousands of trees during this year's rainy season.

Our Mission: **CREATE!** collaborates with rural villagers in Senegal to help them build a sustainable future for their families as they cope with water, food, and fuel shortages resulting from the impacts of climate change on their communities.

Dear Friends,

I just returned from Senegal and have so much exciting news to share with you! Thanks to guidance and training from our field technicians, **CREATE!'s** programs in our partner communities continue to thrive. In each village that I visited, people shared with me their great appreciation and gratitude for **CREATE!'s** work.

Nearly 40 communities in rural Senegal have approached **CREATE!** seeking training and support. In 2017, we will continue to expand our partnerships with additional communities to aid them in combating the increased local effects of climate change and to foster economic resiliency and capacity building while helping villages become self-sufficient. During my visit, **CREATE!** formalized our new partnerships with the communities of Bac Sambadior, Ndéguélère, and Keur Daouda. Developing and nurturing the trust and confidence of villagers is essential to effective and sustainable partnerships. These three communities are committed to working with **CREATE!** field staff to ensure the success of our programs. As more villages seek training and assistance, **CREATE!** will strive to expand our programs to meet these needs.

CREATE!'s dynamic and skilled Senegalese field staff are crucial to the success of this program expansion. During my visit, I worked with the field team to plan the implementation of **CREATE!'s** programs for the next three years. They are excited to facilitate the expansion of **CREATE!** programs to communities in need.

Our future success in rural Senegal depends on your sustaining support for **CREATE!** We are grateful for your ongoing commitment to these communities. As always I look forward to hearing your comments, questions, and suggestions.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry'.

Barry R. Wheeler, Founder
barry@createaction.org

CREATE! Supporters,

"I wish that we could go back to the beginning, so that **CREATE!** would still be with us." These words, spoken by Binta Fall, cooperative group Secretary in Diender, touched me deeply. They reveal the deep connections and affection that evolve between the communities that we serve and the caring and capable staff who work alongside them on a daily basis.

Since 2010, **CREATE!** programs have served eight communities in rural Senegal, touching the lives of nearly 6,000 people. In 2016, three of our original communities, including Diender, "graduated" from our program, having demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to sustain the project on their own. Our bonds with these communities continue. We care deeply about them and our team of young Senegalese technicians remains available to provide support and guidance when needed.

When you support **CREATE!** you make it possible for women like Binta Fall to imagine a better future for their communities, and for this we are most grateful. So to Binta Fall and all of the other women whose names and faces I know in each of our communities, let me say that **CREATE!** is always with you, in the knowledge that you have gained, in your commitment to your community, and in the hope that we share with you in our hearts for a brighter future for you and your children.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise'.

Louise Ruhr, Executive Director
louise@createaction.org



Louise Ruhr, CREATE! Executive Director Photo by Patricia Andersson



Binta Fall, Diender Cooperative Secretary Photo by Patricia Andersson

Meet Ndeye Fatou Thiam — **CREATE!** Communication Assistant



Fatou shares, "I wish **CREATE! could implement projects across Senegal. I really like **CREATE!**'s mission to help people become independent and meet their needs forever."**

Photo by Patricia Andersson

As **CREATE!**'s Communications Assistant, Ndeye Fatou Thiam conducts monthly interviews with men and women in each of our partner communities. Fatou also documents **CREATE!**'s programs through photography and film. As our Senegal team's sole English speaker, Fatou also serves as a translator for English-speaking visitors.

Fatou, who is from Dakar, enjoys working with rural communities to help residents meet their needs and build self-sufficiency. She says, "I've always wanted to help people in need. Working with **CREATE!** gives me the opportunity and means to do so." Fatou also appreciates the additional knowledge that she has gained by working with **CREATE!** She says, "For me, **CREATE!** is like a school. I'm always learning new skills from my colleagues."

Fatou earned a BA in English from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. She also holds an Advanced English Level from the Dakar-based English Resource Center. In her free time, Fatou enjoys reading books in English to practice her language skills. She says, "I studied English because it is my favorite language."

Migration by the Numbers

Senegal's average temperature has increased by nearly five degrees Fahrenheit since 1950.

In 2015, Senegal had a 48% unemployment rate.

In 2015, 46.7% of Senegalese lived below the international poverty line.

Each month, between 9,000 and 10,000 young men attempt to leave Senegal to migrate to Europe.

3,100 migrants died crossing the Mediterranean during the first five months of 2016.

About one-third of those who died crossing the Mediterranean were children.

