



Codou dreams of starting her own bakery in Ouarkhokh, using the management and financial skills she learned from CREATE!.

“CREATE! is a gem!”

In Ouarkhokh’s cool and shady poultry shed, Codou Faye feeds clucking chickens and gives them water. Confident and happy as she works, Codou is immensely proud of her achievements through **CREATE!’s** programs in Senegal.

CREATE!’s successful agricultural and economic programs are possible through the work and dedication of cooperative members in our partner communities. Codou Faye is an active member of the agricultural cooperative in Ouarkhokh, Senegal. She told us that participation in **CREATE!** programs has changed her life!

Codou lives with her husband, her seven children, and her extended family in a compound in Ouarkhokh. She works in the community’s cooperative garden daily, cultivating tomatoes, onions, lettuce, carrots, turnips, cabbage, and peppers. By participating in the Ouarkhokh agricultural cooperative, she is able to produce enough vegetables to feed her family while also saving money from the sale of vegetables in local markets. Codou is no longer dependent on her husband to support her needs and those of her children.

Codou dreams of owning and managing her own bakery and believes, thanks to the financial skills she learned from **CREATE!** through Voluntary Savings and Lending Training (VSLA), this goal is achievable. “**CREATE!**,” Codou says, “is a gem!”



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.



Voluntary Savings and Lending Associations (VSLAs) are self-managed and led by a board elected by association members.

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

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Ouarkhokh Garden, cont.



In 2014, Ouarkhokh cooperative groups harvested more than 6,800 pounds of produce from their gardens.

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



Reflecting on their recent visit Ron and Pam Taylor said, "At CREATE! we need to make sure that we don't lose the beauty of seeing success through the eyes of the beneficiaries"



Masons from the community of Ouarkhokh are working with CREATE! to build a biodigester that will provide methane gas for lighting and cooking.

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.

Letter from the Director

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



After enjoying the delicious chicken yassa prepared by Ouarkhokh cooperative members, Barry and staff expressed enthusiasm for the group's dream to establish their own restaurant at CREATE!'s Demonstration Center.



Voluntary Savings and Lending Association (VSLA) trainings provide the financial literacy skills that are necessary for cooperative groups to manage their affairs independently.



Ouarkhokh cooperative group members are already planning to build another chicken shed so they can meet the growing demand for poultry in their community.

Meet Amadou Diouf – **CREATE!** Field Technician in Ouarkhokh



Ouarkhokh CREATE! Field Technician, Amadou Diouf shares, "With CREATE! I am now doing the work I have always wanted to do."

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

