



## Fall Newsletter 2024

### **Building Cooperative Societies: A Path to Sustainable Development in CREATE! Communities**

A cooperative society is a self-governing, collectively owned organization where individuals unite to address shared economic, social, and cultural needs. Based on solidarity and mutual aid, members have equal decision-making power, and profits are reinvested for the everyone's benefit. Cooperatives strengthen rural communities, promote social inclusion, and support sustainable development. They operate with variable capital, allowing flexible resource management without formal registration

#### **How can Cooperative Societies help CREATE! Partner Communities?**

CREATE! partners with rural Senegalese communities for four years, training women in sustainable development and self-sufficiency. However, maintaining these efforts can be challenging, particularly when unforeseen issues, like the breakdown of solar pumps, arise. These pumps are vital to CREATE!'s regenerative agriculture, and their failure can halt activities due to high replacement costs.

As CREATE! operates in 22 communities across different regions, fostering stronger connections between them can help address shared challenges. Cooperative societies offer a framework for collaboration and collective problem-solving.

#### **How Regional Cooperatives Manage Funds and Foster Collaboration:**

To foster mutually beneficial partnerships, CREATE! communities in Gossas, Guinguinéo, and Linguère have completed administrative steps and formed cooperatives. These cooperatives provide access to state funds, training, and external support for sustainable development.

Both active and graduated communities now collaborate at the regional level, having a general assembly every month at a different regional community site, rotating based on seniority.



During these meetings, communities contribute a portion of their earnings from the sale of produce grown in CREATE!'s community gardens. For example, in Guinguinéo, where the first cooperative was founded, 11 communities contribute 20,000 CFA (\$34) each month, totaling 220,000 CFA (\$375). Most of those funds support host site needs and the rest goes into the cooperative's bank account.

Future plans include product branding, establishing regional stores, and forming a national cooperative federation, with expansion into the Niore region.

**These Cooperative Societies can help the CREATE! communities remain sustainable. Your support can make that happen.**

## Community Voices on the Cooperatives

After establishing cooperatives in the three regions, the CREATE! team interviewed members from various communities to discuss the process and its impact. Here's what we learned from those driving the change:

### **Ndèye Sarr: Community of Keur Birane**

Setting up the cooperative in our community was a collaborative and enriching experience. It began with meetings about the benefits and importance of cooperatives with other CREATE! communities in the Guinguinéo area. We brought together members of the community to discuss shared needs and interests and then we developed a participatory management plan.



### **Khady Kandji: Community of Santhie**

This cooperative is important to our community because it represents a step towards development. It provides us economic autonomy since the profits stay within the community. It also promotes solidarity among members and strengthens social bonds. The cooperative is a place for meeting and exchange, where everyone can contribute and benefit from collective resources.

### **Kéne Niang: Community of Mboss**

For the future, we plan to diversify our activities and strengthen partnerships with other cooperatives and organizations. We want to develop new projects, create processing and marketing chains, and promote fair trade. We also aim to strengthen the capacities of our members and invest in initiatives that contribute to the socio-economic development of our region



## From Manual Labor to Efficient Farming: How Drip Irrigation Changed Wereyane



The community of Wereyane in Linguère, one of Senegal's driest regions, has embraced sustainable agriculture using a well, solar-powered pumps, and a gravity-fed irrigation network. Managed by a cooperative of 42 women, including older members who struggled physically with manual watering, only 40% of the land was previously utilized. This year, with funding from GroundBreaker, the community installed a drip irrigation system, allowing older women to grow vegetables efficiently without risking their health, a significant turning point.

This system not only reduces the time and effort needed for watering, but by delivering water directly to the plants, it cuts overall water consumption, essential in this arid region. Now, 85% of the land is in use, and the women report significant water savings. The drip system also reduces plant diseases related to over-irrigation, improves crop quality, limits weed growth, and prevents soil erosion, benefiting both the environment and the community's productivity.



**Arame Diop, Wereyane President**

### CREATE!'s Advisory Board

CREATE! is proud to announce the formation of its new advisory board, the CREATE! Action Advisors. This diverse group of professionals will provide strategic support to enhance our organization's impact and growth. These individuals will offer their expertise on specific projects, help expand our network, and drive long-term sustainable innovation within CREATE!. The advisory board's contributions will allow us to connect with new partners, funders, and resources, ensuring CREATE!'s continued success in empowering rural communities in Senegal.

#### Here's a quick look at the talented individuals who make up the CREATE! Action Advisors:

- Alyssa Wright (U.S.): Executive Director, Wright Collective. Nonprofit consultant specializing in fundraising and donor strategy.
- Ann Prestipino (U.S.): Healthcare executive with expertise in strategic planning and fundraising at Massachusetts General Hospital.
- Bernard Henry (France, U.S.): Business and accounting expert consulting CREATE! on financial systems and operations.
- Corey Southworth (U.S.): RN and Registered Nurse Anesthetist, Mass General-Brigham, Danvers. Long-Time Donor And Fundraiser, Connected through The Rotary Club.
- Ibrahima Badiane (Senegal): Entrepreneur With Experience In Renewable Energy And Agricultural And Industrial Machinery.
- Natalie Deehan-Clark (U.S.): Nonprofit Communications Coordinator And Former CREATE! Staff Member.
- Oumar Diong (Senegal): Education Specialist With NGO Program Implementation Experience in Senegal.

## Solar Water, Stronger Gardens: Transforming Keur Mandongo's Future

The community of Keur Mandongo, in Senegal's Wack Ngouna district, is home to 100 women who joined the CREATE! program this year. Previously engaged in gardening, their efforts were limited by a lack of resources. Although a well existed, it was abandoned after the availability of a commercial water source, forcing the women to fetch water manually or pay high water bills, making gardening unsustainable. As a result, they primarily relied on short rainy-season farming and small businesses.

*"As CREATE!'s new partner community, we will not only develop skills and knowledge in agriculture, but we will also strengthen our autonomy and our ability to generate income."*

Dieye Konteye, President of the Keur Mandongo Group

Now CREATE!'s 22nd partner site, Keur Mandongo faces similar challenges as other partner sites in the region, with a nine-month dry season and limited water access. In August, with support from the Addax and Oryx Foundation, the community began rehabilitating the abandoned well. Once equipped with a solar water pump, this well will provide a reliable water source. CREATE! will train the women in organic gardening, empowering them to grow nutritious vegetables year-round. The broader community of Keur Mandongo will also gain better access to clean water and fresh produce.



Rehabilitated well in Keur Mondango

**Please consider donating today to support the success of the women from Keur Mandongo**

### 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 Dept 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.