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SENEGAL

SUCCESS STORY

Community Swaps Trash Dump for Park

Public and private sectors unite for better community conditions



Photo: USAID/Richard Nyberg

Local official Pape Mesta Anne, right, and area resident Marie Louise Diawara discuss the neighborhood's improvements.

“Young people used to take drugs here, but now with a business open and a park with benches, people can now meet in a clean environment to eat in peace and talk,” said Pape Mesta Anne, a local government official.

What was once a filthy, foul-smelling trash heap in Dakar frequented by drug users has become a green and airy park that people come out to enjoy each day. Residents in the central Dakar district of Sicap owe this transformation to a few clever businessmen and savvy local authorities who, with USAID assistance, quickly realized the benefits of working together.

“Before, you couldn’t even breathe here because of the trash,” said Pape Mesta Anne, general secretary of Sicap’s local development committee. For years, this area, the size of a city block, had little value and everyone avoided it.

This all started to change when USAID began working with local associations, elected officials, religious leaders, and residents to draw up a five-year development plan running through the year 2009. One of the recommendations was to make unused public spaces useful. Sicap’s government worked out a deal with a local butchery, *La Belle Viande*, in which the Sicap district provided land for its butcher and fast food shops. In exchange, the shops agreed to spruce up the public spaces surrounding their new establishments. This provided residents with easier access to butcher shops, as well as safer recreational areas for their families. The arrangement has worked well for *La Belle Viande*, its customers, and the community at large.

Another big draw has been the new basketball court — the only one for miles around — set up by *La Belle Viande*. “Kids are out here playing all the time, sometimes even at night because there are lights,” said Mame Ngone Seck, the short order cook at the shop, as a teenager strolled in with his orange ball. “Creating this park is good for the people who saw the garbage that was piled up here before. Now there are public benches, and the neighbors come out to buy their dinner.”

“This is a good example of partnership,” he added. “We have to approach the private sector because we need businesses here.”

As a testament to the project’s success, Pape Mesta Anne said that Prime Minister Macky Sall saw Sicap’s local development plan and suggested that other districts should follow Sicap’s lead and bring the private sector into their development plans.