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SENEGAL

SUCCESS STORY

Making An Honest Day's Wage Possible

By bypassing traders, local producers can now earn more profit per bag



A worker loads sacks of charcoal onto a truck in Missirah, Senegal.

Photo: USAID/Senegal/Richard Nyberg

“The three months producing for myself were better than all of the last two years contracting with traders,” said Hassana Ba, who is now earning more for his work through a USAID program.

Telling Our Story
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Charcoal accounts for 26% of the energy Senegalese households consume nationwide. Annually, mostly migrant workers called “sourgas” produce 300,000 metric tons of charcoal in Senegal’s poorest regions of Tambacounda and Kolda. But those getting their hands dirty typically do not see much profit.

Hassana Ba, who had been making charcoal for more than half of his life, has barely managed to feed his three wives and seven children in the village of Sitaolé Isaac. Once, he had worked from January to June to produce 300 50-kilogram (110-pound) sacks of charcoal. He was given a sack of rice and of millet for each of the six months. However, he didn’t receive payment for his charcoal until the October of the following year. Factoring in food costs, he earned the equivalent of \$225 over a two-year period. In cash alone, he earned \$75.

Typically, non-local traders hire sourgas to chop the wood and make charcoal. A sourga receives an advance of rice and goods; three months later, the charcoal is collected and the account settled. Yet sourgas often end up in debt due to interest on cash advanced and the overpricing of goods provided.

In response, USAID has begun working with the Senegalese Forest Service in the Tambacounda region to increase producers’ share of revenues, and also to promote conservation measures to improve forest regeneration. By developing sustainable forest management plans with USAID support, communities gain the right to harvest their own charcoal.

The program assisted 122 former sourgas to organize, and to produce and market the charcoal themselves, bypassing traders. In the three months since production started, six charcoal producer groups from the program have sold 135 metric tons of charcoal in Dakar, earning a profit of \$4.64 per sack (compared to the \$1.20 per sack they would have earned through non-local traders). Hassana and the other 12 members of his group produced, transported, and marketed 300 sacks of charcoal in Dakar. Netting \$148 in just three months, he earned more than half the money in a seventh of the time compared to the previous two years.