



An emerging leader in rural Senegal joins thousands in governance training

Information Days Equip New Community Officials

In May 2002, Mor Mbaye Samb stepped into his new role as locally elected Rural Collectivity President of Pété Ouarack. A rural, northern Senegalese collectivity spanning 187 square kilometers, fourteen villages and a population of around 4,000, Pété Ouarack had known only one other president since 1976 and had seen very little change in that time. National decentralization reforms had accorded a broad spectrum of new governing powers to collectivities beginning in 1996. Samb and his supporters hoped that his leadership would help bring roads, electricity, new health clinics and other crucial improvements to Pété Ouarack.

Samb was not encouraged by what he found - a crumbling government building lacking closeable doors and windows, few archives or even basic records on past activities, and a handful of returning council members without institutional memory because they had never been included in the decision-making process. The national government had seen to it that each collectivity now had a newly elected president and council, an array of council committees, and printed versions of decentralization laws, which alluded to the budget process and the rural tax.

But what role were the council and committees intended to play? Shortly after Samb and his council embarked on their uncertain path, USAID provided assistance to the elected officials of Pété Ouarack in the form of “Journées d’Information,” or Information Days.

These two-day, on-site sessions were designed by USAID to jumpstart fledgling collectivity governments in Senegal by supplying new local officials with a road map of the specific actors, processes and responsibilities associated with local government administration under new national decentralization laws. Information Days bring together all the local actors concerned with the collectivity’s administration – including council members, women’s and youth groups, and non-governmental organizations – as well as key representatives of central government administrative and technical services.

Mor Mbaye Samb and the collectivity of Pété Ouarack participated in one of USAID’s Information Days. The sessions impart practical information and effective management techniques via colorful illustrations, interactive skits, and project planning and implementation exercises. Information Day “graduates” leave with a package of concise governance manuals, in local languages, for ongoing reference.

“Through these Information Days, all of the participants have gained a better understanding of the laws and the functioning of the community, and that reassures us in the road we have chosen.”

– President of a rural collectivity and Information Days Participant

Samb found the Information Days vital. In addition to gaining practical information on topics such as the budget process, record-keeping, council committees and promoting popular participation, Samb explained that merely bringing people together to meet face-to-face was invaluable. Samb has continued to tap USAID for assistance and training, which he has leveraged to provide leadership in reviving the collectivity’s civil registry and facilitating the renewal of national identity cards. Since the local elections in 2002, USAID has held Information Days in fifty collectivities attended by more than 3,250 participants and reaching indirectly at least 6,000 more in over 100 neighboring collectivities.



Photo: DGL Felo

Attendees of an Information Day session showing images of community projects used in the workshop.

Success Story



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