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SENEGAL

CASE STUDY

Improving the Quality of Education

Pété Ouarack promotes, honors educational achievement

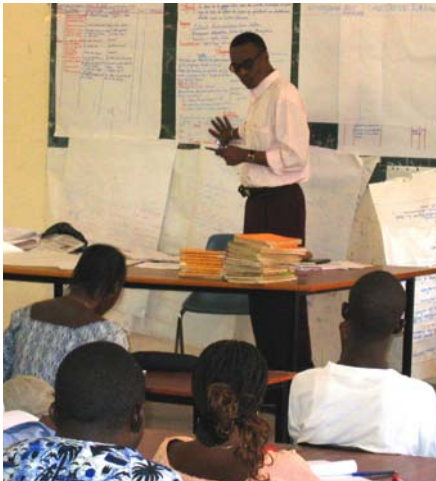


Photo: USAID/Heather Robinson

Ahmet Fall, Deputy Elementary School Inspector for Louga, Senegal, leads summer training for new teachers.

“This partnership with USAID has allowed us to better engage with teachers. We see a high enthusiasm among students and parents. There has been a change in the mentality of the population.”

—Djibril Seck, Deputy Inspector of Primary Schools, Louga

Challenge

In 2002, teacher Ahmet Fall asked students in the village of Pété Ouarack, a rural collective in northwestern Senegal, what they hoped to do when they grew up. “Most girls,” he said, “wanted to be maids, and most boys wanted to be vendors in the capital, Dakar.” Schools in Pété Ouarack do not go beyond the elementary level, and five of the seven schools are temporary shelters built with wood and millet stalks. Four children squeeze onto benches made for two, and all but one school have no potable water or latrines. Elders say that no one in Pété Ouarack ever earned a high school diploma.

Initiative

Local council and community leaders decided that their top priority was to improve the quality of education. USAID worked with school staff, parents, and community leaders to form an education corps that would identify, plan and implement a school charter. The corps’ main goals are to build new schools, improve facilities at existing schools, raise money for textbooks and school supplies, and promote adult literacy. They also developed a plan to improve schools and education by promoting parent involvement and public education campaigns. The education corps includes a vibrant teachers’ association and a parent-teachers’ association.

Results

The success of the project has changed the attitudes of Pété Ouarack’s residents. Parents and teachers now easily discuss children’s progress, and community organizations are donating funds to cover fees for students entering junior high school. In addition, the rural council’s office now helps students obtain identity papers that are needed to take exams.

In July 2004, the community celebrated academic achievements of its students, giving certificates to outstanding students. Students and parents recognize the value of school achievement, and they have begun to dream of previously unimaginable careers. Bator Diaw, a 10-year-old girl, wants to be a minister of the state, and Balle Dieng hopes her four-month-old daughter will one day be president.