



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SENEGAL

SUCCESS STORY

From Being Trapped, to Being a Trainer

Role as outreach worker emboldens woman to live more healthfully



Photo: USAID/Senegal/Richard Nyberg

Through its programs, USAID/Senegal works with young people and other vulnerable groups to spread the word on the risks associated with HIV/AIDS.

“The training made me aware of the risks I ran with multiple partners, and I started using condoms to protect myself and remain in good health,” said Sata Ba, who is now an HIV/AIDS prevention outreach worker in Senegal.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Sata Ba is a woman in her thirties with the fine features and striking beauty of women of the Peul ethnic group. And she’s been a sex worker for much of her life. “I quit school in the 11th grade. My parents were poor. At a young age, I was confronted with the hardships of life and started going out with boys to earn money to meet my needs. I was caught in a trap that cost me the best years of my life,” she said.

While visiting a center specializing in sexually-transmitted illnesses, she heard about AWA, an association that educates and supports vulnerable groups like sex workers. “I bought a member’s card and participated regularly in discussions that provided a lot of information,” Sata said.

Sata is one of 208 peer-educators trained by AWA, a group supported by USAID since its creation in 1998. Through it, USAID seeks to increase awareness on risky behavior, and to provide support to vulnerable groups, especially through trained peer educators. In one year, AWA’s peer educators reached 7,550 Senegalese with life-saving sexual health messages.

When AWA offered Sata the opportunity to become a peer educator to conduct awareness activities in popular gathering places, she accepted. She received training to educate other sex workers and started her awareness work. Thanks to Sata’s relatively high level of education and dedication to her new activities, AWA included her in numerous meetings, workshops and international conferences, which helped improve her knowledge and skills. Eventually, she became one of the association’s three outreach persons who convey messages about sexually transmitted illnesses to a variety of target groups in addition to sex workers.

The moral support from AWA and the lessons learned from her experiences as a peer educator and outreach person prompted real behavior change in Sata. She now has a positive outlook on life and greater self-esteem. Abandoning sex work, she is now married with one child, and has sworn to remain faithful to her husband. Helping other sex workers find alternative livelihoods, she said, is crucial: “Many sex workers want to stop but do not have the will or means to do so.”