



SUCCESS STORY

Selling Senegalese on Healthier Lives

First woman strikes out to promote condom sales and HIV prevention



Photo: Adolphe Biaye

Arame Ba (right) discusses healthy behavior and HIV/AIDS prevention in her restaurant in Mbour, Senegal.

“By helping fight HIV/AIDS through condom promotion, I am laying my stone to help build a society of development,” said Arame Ba, Senegal’s first female condom wholesaler.

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

Arame Ba, a mother of four children and a savvy businesswoman, knows a business opportunity when she sees one. And, unlike some businesses, hers saves lives. Supported by USAID’s health program, she is Senegal’s first female wholesaler of condoms, operating from her restaurant in the tourist-rich town of Mbour on the country’s popular Petit Cote, where 20% of sex workers are infected with HIV. “I’m proud to be the first woman to market condoms. I’m serving the population and making a tangible contribution in the fight against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS,” she said.

In 2002, she and a community health worker friend visited a woman living with HIV/AIDS. “I was moved deeply by this woman’s story, and I wasn’t able to continue the discussion. This contact gave a face to the disease, and from that moment on, I knew I had to do something. And I did.”

After leaving a leading telecommunications agency, Arame created a business selling art objects and distributing newspapers at her restaurant. Captivated by Arame’s dynamic personality and customer skills, a USAID implementing partner proposed that she become a wholesaler. She accepted, becoming the first female member of the network and supplying condoms to points of sale in Mbour and nearby towns.

She’s not only the first female wholesaler among the 36, she’s one of the best. From June to September 2007, the implementing partner distributed over 530,000 condoms, of which Arame alone sold 39,000, representing 7.3% of all sales.

She is also a counselor who speaks with others about HIV/AIDS. With her four-person team, she participates in community awareness-raising activities about the sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. “Talking with my customers and during discussion groups, I always stress the importance of condom use and its advantages to help lead a healthy lifestyle,” she said.