



SUCCESS STORY

MCGOVERN-DOLE FOOD FOR EDUCATION AND CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM

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THE PÉTÉ COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN SENEGAL MOBILIZES AROUND THEIR READING CLUBS

Although the Senegalese government has been steadily addressing the issue of basic education access, it still faces the challenge of improving the quality of learning, especially reading.

The various assessments carried out at the national level (EGRA LPT -, 2018, SNERS -, 2010, etc.) show that Senegal is far below the international standards. Out of 100 primary school students in preparatory courses, only 26% read with understanding.

To address this challenge, the government of Senegal has introduced local languages to facilitate reading skills acquisition by students, such as Pulaar, which is spoken mainly in the areas where *Sukaabe Janngo* project, meaning “Children of Tomorrow,” is intervening. However, this introduction of local languages, in coordination with the USAID-funded *Lecture pour Tous* (LPT), (Reading for All) project, only targets grades 1 to 3, leaving grades 4 to 6 to continue reading activities only in French within the basic education curriculum.

To fill this void, Counterpart International, in partnership with Save the Children through its USDA funded *Sukaabe Janngo* project, organized 204 Literacy Boost Reading Clubs, which are book borrowing programs and include community materials workshops, to support improved literacy and community understanding of the benefits of education.

To date, 45 book clubs benefiting 11,823 students (7711 girls and 4112 boys) have been established in the department of Pété in part due to the strong engagement of leaders in the community, including village chiefs, school management committee presidents, school

directors, and mayors. Aware of the low reading levels of their children, the community of Pété mobilized and identified 156 volunteers to run the clubs. Two key extracurricular activities in the reading clubs give children more time to practice and apply their reading skills -- weekly community-based reading clubs and a parent and community engagement tool. Once organized, these clubs become not only places of play and learning for children but also refuges against potential dangers, including sexual abuse and exploitation and child labor, to which they could be exposed.



The success of these book clubs is largely due to volunteers such as Dieynaba Oumar Diallo, a book club volunteer in the village of Diamy Galo in the Education and Training department of Pété. When asked why she decided to volunteer, she remarked, “I signed up for these book clubs because I love my village very much and I feel concerned about the future of its children. In addition, book clubs are greatly helping parents bring up their children. They also allow students to practice reading while playing which gives them joy and motivation.” Dieynaba Oumar Diallo has been a volunteer since January 2020. She does not have kids yet but she has her little brothers and sisters attending the reading club. She continued, “At the club, children are valued, and they help each other.”

Bineta Abou Diallo, a fourth grader in Diamy Galo elementary school, is one such student who feels valued and loves attending her local club. She remarks, “I am one of the members of Diamy Galo’s book club. The book club is very interesting, and we are shown how to read while enjoying ourselves, listening good stories. I like it.” Local community actors like Ibrahima Balde, member of Doumguel Dadé School Management Committee, continues to rally around the book clubs given their positive contribution for children, parents, and the community at large. The community engagement in Pété has been so visible that neighboring community leaders like Mr. Aliou Gaye, the mayor of Fanaye in Podor, want to follow suit and support the efforts by local reading clubs volunteers in its municipality. The community of Pété has shown that community engagement can make a difference in the success of intra and extra school activities like reading clubs established by the *Sukaabe Janngo* project.

McGovern-Dole Food for Education is a four-year project funded by USDA and implemented by Counterpart International in partnership with Save the Children and ARED.



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