



IN THE WAKE OF CONFLICT

An integrated approach to funding peace and vibrant rural communities

Senegal 2004-2014



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RESPONSIVE FUNDING

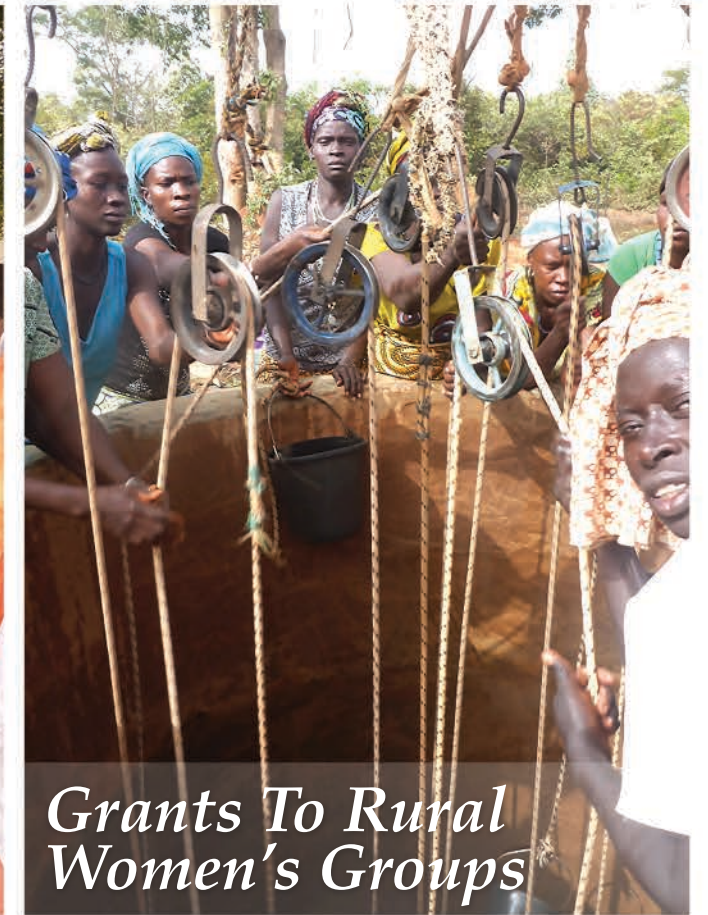
This publication traces the evolution of New Field Foundation's efforts to support peace and vibrant rural communities in southern Senegal as it emerged from twenty years of conflict. Between 2004 and 2014, New Field's grantmaking program evolved organically to support the emergence of rural women's organizations as drivers of development. Making grants in a post-conflict environment to women's organizations that have historically been passed over by other development efforts was challenging. It required creativity, flexibility and a multi-dimensional approach that included:

- Creating a local presence by appointing program consultants and advisors with firsthand knowledge of Casamance and its realities;
- Forming strong partnerships, developed over a number of years, with local organizations serving rural communities;
- Establishing a grantmaking infrastructure that delivered grants and technical support directly to groups of rural women with low levels of literacy;
- Investing in training for rural women leaders to build their knowledge and skills in financial management, women's rights advocacy, and governance;
- Strengthening community farming systems to increase food production while protecting the earth and maintaining crop biodiversity;
- Supporting community ownership of local media;
- Enabling rural women to participate in forums affecting policy and resource allocation at local, national and international levels;
- Scaling out successful initiatives through replication and learning exchanges.

It is New Field's hope that this publication will help other funders effect transformational change by investing in rural women's community organizations. When done well, the impact of such funding is significant, tangible, and inspiring.



*Broadcasting
For Peace*



*Grants To Rural
Women's Groups*



Building Knowledge & Skills



Rural Women's Rights



Local Food Systems



Agroecology

RESULTS

Over a ten-year period, New Field provided \$5,130,184 to benefit rural women and their communities in the region of Casamance. Its integrated and evolving approach has yielded widespread and long-lasting results..

When New Field began its grantmaking in the region, it was clear that women wanted peace and stability first. Projects to expand community radio and involve women in the peacebuilding process contributed meaningfully towards these goals.

As women who had been displaced by the conflict returned to their villages, they came together to revive their community organizations and rebuild what had been lost. They needed financial and technical support to restart agricultural production, establish food systems, and create economic opportunities for members who had lost everything. Grants for agricultural and labor saving equipment were a meaningful step for dozens of women's community organizations. When they began to benefit from information and training on income-generating activities, their income and status rose within their communities. Assets in the hands of group members translated to improved access to education and health for their families.

In subsequent agricultural seasons, rural women's groups wished to expand their knowledge of agricultural techniques that would preserve their land, expand crop diversity, and improve the value of their livestock. With community grants and technical support, they installed wells, irrigation systems, fencing, and animal housing. They controlled these assets and continued to manage them for the benefit of group members and their families.

Rural women's community organizations emerged as powerful agents of change in their villages, earning the respect of both traditional and local government leaders. Many charismatic women came forward to provide leadership for their groups as well as to take part in decision-making about local resources and development initiatives. Some were elected to rural district councils while others became members of committees advising on internationally funded development projects. New Field also supported the participation of women leaders in many regional and international forums so they could contribute their valuable expertise.

Additionally, New Field has responded to requests from its Casamance local partners for financial services, health education, improved awareness of women's rights, and organizational development. Drawing on the specialist knowledge of national and international NGOs, investment in these areas has enabled local partners to develop their institutions and improve the quality of life in their communities.

With a sustained commitment by New Field, rural women in Casamance have experienced tangible improvements in their standard of living and their quality of life, even in remote villages. With trust and careful planning, a funder can enable rural women and their organizations to realize their own creative solutions, successfully manage their assets, and lead the way towards a more peaceful and equitable world.

Related New Field publications:

[*Changes in Asset Management*](#)

[*Changes in Family Health and Education*](#)

[*Changes in Rural Women's Leadership*](#)

Strategic Focus

EARLY DECISIONS

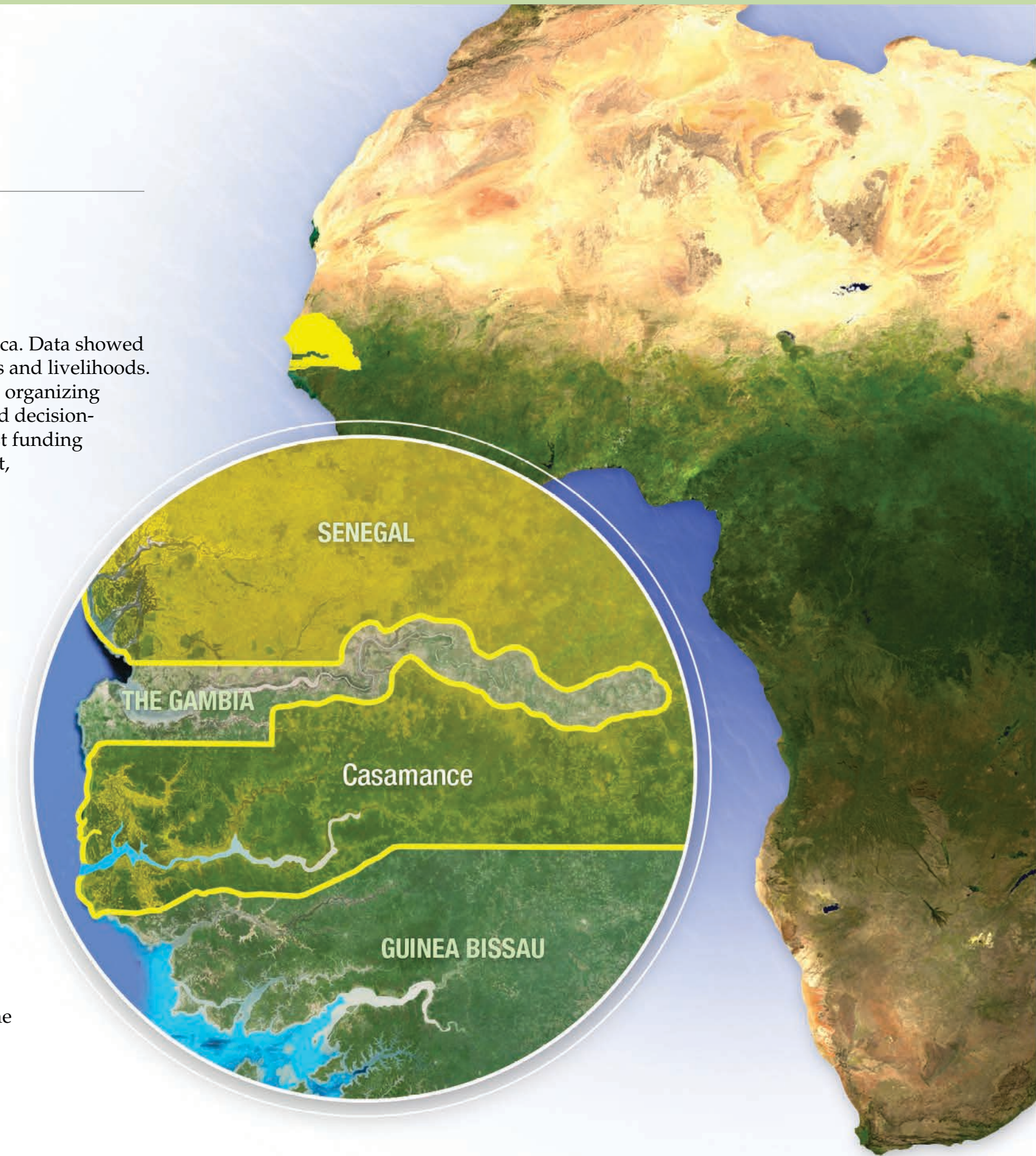
In 2004 New Field Foundation made the strategic decision to focus its funding on women and children in Africa. Data showed women and girls faced disadvantages in many spheres, including education, health, rights, access to resources and livelihoods. Research also showed that women played a vital role in the production and processing of food in Africa, were organizing to improve their status and resources, and were interested in systemic change at various levels from household decision-making to national policy. Guided by its values and the intention to fund where there was “greatest need, least funding and most potential,” New Field chose to concentrate on West Africa in places that were emerging from conflict, including Casamance in southern Senegal.

RICH HERITAGE

With its rich natural resources and fertile land, the Casamance region of Senegal has supplied the rest of the country with an abundance of food for centuries. However, during colonial rule and into the years following independence in 1960, Casamance was overlooked and the population experienced economic disadvantage, relative to the rest of the nation. This sense of marginalization was felt particularly by Casamance’s Diola majority, who differ from the rest of the country in their cultural and religious practices, with a highly decentralized and egalitarian social system that gives women a central position as spiritual leaders, guardians of the forests, and a respected role in rice production. A growing movement for independence in Casamance was forcefully subdued by the Senegalese government and in 1982, the emergence of an armed rebel movement resulted in twenty years of bitter conflict and brutal acts of violence on both sides.

THE BEGINNINGS OF PEACE

In December 2004, after lengthy negotiations and pressure from civil society, the Senegalese government signed a peace treaty with rebel forces that opened the door for political and economic change. International resources became available for post-conflict reconstruction, mine clearance, and economic recovery. With a reputation as the “bread basket of Senegal” and its potential for significant agricultural development, investors and investment agencies looked once more to Casamance. The adoption of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by Senegal signaled the possibility of new resources for the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, the promotion of gender equality, and the empowerment of women.



MUCH TO HEAL

While the changing political environment brought hope, the day-to-day realities in Casamance were daunting. An estimated 64,000 people had fled the area. The local economy was at a standstill. The fields contained landmines. Family and community members had been killed and injured; homes were abandoned and destroyed; livestock, grains and seeds were lost; children had missed years of education; schools and health clinics were closed. The fabric of society had been ruptured and longstanding stability had been replaced by hostility and suspicion. How could communities heal the wounds of violence and rebuild a way of life that, in the long-term, would be peaceful, healthy, and food secure?

THE LONG ROAD

Within this context, New Field decided to fund organizations in Casamance for at least eight years, on the basis that transformative and long-lasting change in conflict-afflicted areas takes time. Strategically, New Field decided to direct its funding to reach rural women and their organizations for the reason that, when rural women have the opportunity to manage and increase their resources collectively, they consistently use those assets to benefit the health and well-being of their families and communities. Since more than 1,000,000 women live in Casamance, predominantly in rural areas, New Field developed an integrated approach to help build peace, strengthen local food systems, increase economic stability, and advance community rights.

OPERATIONAL CHOICES

Given its office location in California, New Field wrestled with the question of how best to get funds to local organizations more than 6,500 miles away in post-conflict Casamance. Essential to New Field's grantmaking effectiveness was the establishment of a local team that supported New Field's vision and values. Accordingly, New Field appointed a program consultant from Casamance who was knowledgeable about the realities of rural women and their organizations; a national advisor who was helping to mediate the peace process; a Casamance-based monitoring consultant with expertise in the functioning and development of peasant farmer organizations and networks; and a program administrator with strong financial skills. To support the consultants in their long-term work with grantees, New Field officially registered in Senegal, established a small office in the capital city Dakar, opened a local bank account, and developed a streamlined process for renewing grants.

COMBINING PATHS

While the relationships across two continents were complex to manage, they connected different worlds, supported a collaborative process for assessing organizations to receive grants, and enabled a better understanding of the impact of community grants being managed by rural women's groups. Over time, New Field staff developed direct relationships with local women leaders, who played an important role in providing guidance, feedback, and recommendations for New Field's grantmaking.





Senegal

QUICK FACTS / 2013 CENSUS

POPULATION

13,508,715 with 1,664,600 living in Casamance

MEDIAN AGE

18 Years

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

16,632* of which, 2,917 are located in Casamance

*Organizations registered with the Ministry of Family, representing an estimated one third of active women's organizations in Senegal

LIFE EXPECTANCY

65 Years

GENDER

51% Female
49% Male

LITERACY

39% Female
61% Male

LOCATION

55% Rural
45% Urban

Broadcasting for Peace

AN UNCERTAIN SITUATION

As New Field evaluated potential partners in Casamance, it became clear that the political situation was fragile and unpredictable, despite the peace accord. Some rebel leaders refused to participate in the peace negotiations; there were sporadic armed clashes between rebels and the military; de-mining was delayed, so that many areas were still unsafe. If women and their families were to return to their communities and resume farming, a more secure peace was needed.

ENABLING COMMUNICATION

A key organization involved in the peace process at the community level in Casamance was World Education Senegal. It was working to bridge the cultural, political and religious divides by improving communication between the authorities, rebels, and citizens. Central to its work were community radio stations that were owned and run by village associations and peasant farmer organizations, many of which had high levels of female membership. By providing equipment, installation, training, as well as a policy framework based on equal access, World Education Senegal was enabling communities in the areas most impacted by conflict to create radio programs that served their diverse and unique needs.

RADIO NETWORK FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Between 2005 and 2010, New Field made eight grants to World Education Senegal totaling \$494,136 to strengthen what became known as the Community Radio Network for Peace and Development in Casamance, which comprises twelve radio stations (see Map 1). With the addition of each new station, the quantity and quality of locally produced programs increased and allowed more content to be shared across the network of stations. Throughout this expansion process, World Education Senegal ensured that programming represented the diversity of the region, with broadcasting in many local languages on a wide array of topics from agricultural practices to vital health knowledge.





COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Central to the Community Radio Network's mission were peacebuilding programs that encouraged rebels to lay down their arms and rejoin their villages. Community meetings to discuss peace were broadcast with the blessing of the rebels, who guaranteed the safety of the participants. The radio stations began with subtle peace messaging, but soon had programs that discussed the peacebuilding process in a frank and straightforward manner. Radio stations such as those in Sindian and Diouloulou reached rebel fighters in the forest who would call in to express their regret at having taken up arms and to communicate with estranged family and friends. Communities in these two areas saw large numbers of fighters give up their arms and reintegrate into society.

LOCAL CELEBRITIES CALL FOR PEACE

Rural women were important contributors to the success of the community radios. They participated at every level, as technicians, journalists and decision makers on the board of directors. Women broadcasters in particular became local celebrities and were greatly admired and respected by their communities. They used this clout to encourage their villages to push for peace negotiations, accept rebel fighters back into their communities and to forgive them for the disruption caused by the conflict. They were quick to comment on any outburst of violence, so that it was quickly quelled. They also encouraged women listeners to reach out to other women in their community and put aside their differences.



“ I have become more tolerant. I have learned to respect and accept others' opinions. I feel more engaged, more able to speak my truth and I no longer fear anything. I know that we can obtain anything with conflict-free negotiation. I do everything the men do, and my husband supports me very much.” - Diatou Cissé, Director, FOGNY FM

HEALTHY CHANGES

Women's radio programs also focused on useful knowledge about improving agricultural yields, deterring livestock theft, caring for the health of family members, and augmenting income through small business activities and savings groups. After just a few years of broadcasting, there was a noticeable drop in the number of cases of malaria in communities with a radio station because of the health awareness programs.

SHARING RESULTS

The anecdotal outcomes of supporting community radio were so impressive that New Field supported World Education Senegal to commission a formal evaluation of its work. The results showed that not only had the network contributed to peace, it was also improving the well-being of rural women. In order to share these findings, World Education Senegal produced an hour-long documentary about the community radio network which was then broadcast on television across Africa and Europe, as well as distributed on DVDs to hundreds of NGOs and embassies supporting development work in West Africa.

Grants to Rural Women's Groups

THE POWER OF RURAL WOMEN

When New Field began making grants in Casamance, it was already funding rural women's organizations in Sierra Leone, a country that was also emerging from twenty years of conflict. With community grants, 19 rural women's organizations in 14 chiefdoms in Sierra Leone were gaining access to land, increasing food security, preventing community violence, revitalizing their local economies, and gaining the support of local officials for a new way forward to benefit tens of thousands of rural people. Many rural women leaders were also stepping forward to serve as advisors for development projects in their communities. Encouraged by these results in Sierra Leone in a very challenging post-conflict environment, New Field decided to offer community grants to rural women's groups in Casamance.

FUNDING RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS

In Casamance, thousands of village-level women's groups already existed as the region entered the new phase of peace. They faced major constraints, including isolation, low status, lack of recognition, and limited capacity to handle grants. They typically did not have bank accounts and had few written documents, since most of their members could not read or write. At the same time, they were self-organizing, had well-established decision-making processes, a commitment to work together, and a strong motivation to improve their situation. Because of this potential, New Field developed a local community grantmaking program to provide direct support to rural women's groups.

RELYING ON LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Just as there were thousands of rural women's groups already in Casamance, so there were many larger, more established, local NGOs with a mission to support rural development. While these organizations were more structured, with staff, financial and administrative systems and legal recognition, many were limited to providing technical support to rural women's groups and faced many constraints in the post-conflict environment. New Field's community grantmaking program identified and supported some of the most promising of these NGOs not only to continue their valuable technical support but also to make community grants to the rural women's groups that they served. With New Field's support, NGOs had more resources for their work, while rural women's groups gained a higher degree of agency in identifying and addressing their own priorities.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

New Field's Senegal-based program consultant and advisors identified six local NGOs in Casamance that had well-established relationships with rural women's groups, along with the capacity to receive and manage larger grants. From 2006-2014, New Field invested \$2,414,965 in AJAC-Lukaal, AJAEDO, CASADES, DIRFEL-Kolda, FODDE and USOFORAL. In turn, they awarded \$1,799,384 to 133 rural women's groups that successfully presented proposals and budgets for activities their members identified as important. The application process for a community grant was often completed orally, with the help of NGO technical staff, and the strongest proposals were funded. The average size of a grant to a rural women's group was \$5,000 for 12 months. The recipient groups had an average membership of 76 rural women, with some as small as 15 and others as large as 550. Many groups received funding over two or three years. In all, the six NGOs awarded 366 community grants.

What is a Rural Women's Organization?

As far back as can be traced, women in villages across West Africa have gathered in groups to support each other and overcome common obstacles. These groups are becoming increasingly well organized: they are electing leadership, formalizing membership, developing annual plans and priorities, and often seeking official recognition. In Senegal alone more than 16,000 women's organizations are registered nationally with the Ministry of Family. Tens of thousands of others are active at provincial and community level. While these groups vary in their focus and level of activity, they are a powerful force for change. Motivated by a strong desire to improve life for their families and communities, rural women's organizations demonstrate impressive accomplishments despite having very few resources at their disposal. When given additional opportunities and financing, many such groups provide strong leadership and collaboration for the benefit of all.

Effects of Community Grantmaking

Rural women's organizations face many constraints that prevent or limit their opportunity to receive and manage funds. Some of these constraints are due to their own limited capacity and skills, but many are due to external factors, such as discriminatory attitudes towards rural women, an unwillingness to support the development of women's organizations, and limited rural infrastructure, particularly in post-conflict environments. If funders are willing to take account of these challenges in their funding strategies, they are likely to see deep and long-lasting beneficial change for rural women, their families, organizations, and communities.

FOOD FOR THE FAMILY

Food insecurity was a major issue in Casamance during the conflict. As a result, rural women's groups receiving community grants placed a priority on improving and increasing the production of a variety of foods to be eaten by their own families and communities. They purchased farming tools and materials, put in fencing to protect cultivated areas, introduced irrigation, and increased crop diversity. Under new land laws, several groups secured official land titles, ensuring long-term food production.

FOOD TO SELL

As rural women's groups receiving community grants grew more food for their families, they also became interested in producing more to sell. This required equipment and storage facilities, training in processing techniques, and transportation for finished goods. Some of these emerging needs were funded by community grants. The NGOs acting as community grantmakers also responded by establishing revolving credit funds that offered low-interest loans to rural women's groups interested in commercial activities. These included poultry rearing, market gardening, and value-added preserved fruit products with a longer shelf life than fresh products. As one loan was repaid, another women's group received the next low-interest loan.

THE BEST USE OF FUNDING

In order to help the groups manage their grants effectively, the six NGO community grantmakers provided support to the rural women's groups in a variety of ways, depending on the specific needs of each group. This included help with opening bank accounts, trainings in financial record-keeping and report writing, leadership workshops on governance, support for the installation and operation of equipment, and technical advice on market gardening. Though essential, this assistance varied in its level and quality due to the high level of demand among groups and the different skill sets and capacity of each NGO community grantmaker to provide it on a consistent basis.

CHANGES IN FAMILY HEALTH AND EDUCATION

New Field's 2013 evaluation of the effects of community grants in Casamance showed that women who belonged to the funded women's groups were becoming significant contributors to their household income. They consistently used additional income to send their children to school and ensure that they had books, clothes, and supplies, as well as bicycles to reach secondary schools farther from home. More money was used for healthcare, for purchasing extra foods, and to make improvements to their homes. In addition, rural women's status within their families and communities began to rise significantly. Wives reported being more regularly consulted by their husbands on important family decisions. Testimony also pointed to lower levels of domestic violence and greater harmony within many families.

CHANGES IN RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Another positive trend for rural women was their emerging leadership. In a Casamance case study of 35 women's groups receiving grants, rural women's responses pointed to important changes in leadership in a number of spheres as a direct result of the impetus created by community grants. Most notably, women leaders acquired new skills in managing their organizations effectively, had greater confidence in speaking publicly, and gained more influence in the community. Of the 379 rural women interviewed, 65 had been elected to district councils, giving them increased influence over local government budgets and a range of community issues. Many others had been appointed to committees advising on internationally funded development projects relating to health, financial services, environmental and natural resource management, and peace building.

CHANGES IN ASSET MANAGEMENT

In order to explore more deeply the effects of community grants, in 2014 New Field funded a detailed study of eight of the women's community organizations that had received grants. Membership of the eight organizations totaled 723 individuals, nearly all of whom were women, who collectively cared for more than 5,000 people. The study examined the growth in organizational assets, the degree to which the organizations were in charge of their assets, and whether all members of the organization benefited from those assets. The findings provide evidence of improvements in revenues, savings, and capital equipment at organizational and membership level, with an increase in democratic decision-making processes. They also revealed that, while the women's community organizations had ownership of significant assets, not all had full authority over the use of those assets.

Overall, the study revealed the importance of supporting rural women's organizations to implement their own development solutions and the necessity of providing sufficient funding to help them achieve their goals.

For detailed reports, please visit www.newfieldfound.org/publications

CHANGES IN FAMILY HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The Effects Of Funding Women's Community Organizations In Senegal



CHANGES IN RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The Effects Of Funding Women's Community Organizations In Senegal



CHANGES IN ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Impact of Funding Women's Community Organizations in Senegal



For detailed reports visit www.newfieldfound.org/publications

Building Knowledge & Skills

STRENGTHENING LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

A major consequence of the conflict was the weakened state of local organizations that had previously provided services for communities in Casamance. Due to loss of funding and staff, as well as unsafe working conditions, many community-based organizations had closed or were operating on a limited scale with insufficient resources to carry out their programs. This was true for the six NGOs that were selected to develop the community grantmaking program; they were operating with limited capacity and resources. To address this, New Field provided additional funding to support their organizational development, with improvements in staff and board effectiveness, administration and communication systems, and strategic planning. All six NGOs emphasized the need to improve their knowledge and skills in financial management and to improve their financial systems. New Field therefore identified regional organizations that had successfully worked with small NGOs in French-speaking West Africa to improve their financial management, and funded them to work directly with the six NGOs in Casamance.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TRAININGS

New Field developed a long-term partnership with the non-profit organization, Mango, whose mission is to improve financial management and accountability among NGOs worldwide. With New Field funding, Mango carried out trainings for all New Field's partners in eight West African countries, including the community grantmaking NGOs in Casamance. Selected staff and board members of each organization traveled to a central location to participate in the trainings: they brought with them their own knowledge and experience, and returned with additional knowledge and skills. During the trainings, they learned to improve their accounting and organizational management practices, produce clear financial reports, and develop ways to make their organizations financially sustainable. They also learned how to monitor "actual versus budget" figures in order to take stock of their organization's financial situation and make informed decisions about the use of their resources. Mango regularly assessed the progress of participants and reported a significant increase in knowledge and skills.

IMPROVED FINANCIAL REPORTING

Community grantmakers in Casamance and Guinea received additional New Field support to create systems to handle the financial complexities of tracking community grants over several years. As a result, they made grant payments in a more timely way, were better able to report to stakeholders, and were able to present their work to other funders. New Field noticed a significant improvement in the quality of application budgets and financial reports relative to grants.

SHARING FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE

Feedback from those participating in the Mango trainings was very positive. In the case of USOFORAL, a women's peacebuilding network in Casamance, staff commented: "The financial management training in Dakar enabled us to exchange experiences with other partner organizations and to understand the importance of financial management for all our organizations." The impact of the training grew as USOFORAL staff actively shared their knowledge not only with other staff and board members of their organization, but with rural women's organizations that were members of USOFORAL.

FINANCIAL TRAINING FOR RURAL WOMEN'S GROUPS

As the community grantmaking NGOs in Casamance improved their financial management skills with ongoing support from Mango, they recognized the need for the many rural women's groups receiving community grants to similarly improve. They therefore organized trainings on financial management and reporting for executive members of the women's groups, particularly the treasurers and presidents. The trainings focused on financial record-keeping, reporting and the use of protocols. The trainings became important opportunities for the groups' leaders to share information and ideas, to compare notes and problem-solve together. When feasible as a follow-up, the trainers subsequently visited some women's groups to review the groups' accounts and assess progress on grant activities.

ECONOMIC STABILITY FOR RURAL WOMEN

As rural women began to see returns on their collective projects, and as they began generating income from a range of activities, the need for financial services grew. Individual members had cash in hand, unlike in the past, but no secure way to keep it, nor the means to invest it and earn interest. They requested some better way of saving, access to credit at the village level, and financial education. Given the remoteness and insecurity of many of the villages, and the lack of commercial interests to provide these services, New Field looked to the non-profit sector to help out.



“ We transmitted what we learned to leaders of rural women’s federations in Enampore, Nyassia, Oulampane and Adéane. For each federation, we focused on training the president, the secretary and the treasurer.” - USOFORAL

FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR RURAL WOMEN

Over a five-year period, New Field provided \$160,000 to U.S.-based Freedom from Hunger and its Mali partner Avançons to design and implement a program that would establish integrated micro-finance services for women in rural areas of Casamance. The program aimed to establish a village banking system, financial management services, leadership development, and health education reaching more than 10,000 rural women. The program strengthened the capacity of two local organizations, USOFORAL and TOSTAN, to expand their micro-finance and educational services to rural women in Casamance. It also provided training to rural women leaders who in turn trained rural women’s groups to set up and operate “self-help savings groups.” The trainers also disseminated health information and materials in French and Diola on malaria prevention, prenatal and child care, nutrition, and hygiene to prevent illness.



SAVING FOR CHANGE

Rural women rapidly took advantage of the self-help savings groups to save money and take out small loans to invest in their own micro-enterprises. The savings groups relied on community ties of loyalty, each woman trusting her neighbor to repay her loan taken from a collective savings box with a very low rate of interest. Members of the savings groups enjoyed getting together, managing their own banking, and seeing their money grow. Repayment rates were very high (100% for most groups). At the end of a loan cycle, the profits from interest were equitably distributed between the members. Thousands of members benefitted from this new access to credit and the accompanying health information. One indication of the success of this program was that, of their own accord, group leaders visited neighboring villages to help other women set up their own savings groups.



Anta Yade is the president of a savings group in the village of Darou Mouride. Anta is a good example of how saving for change provides a platform for women to exercise leadership in the community. So far, Anta has taken two loans which she invested in her poultry-raising business.

Rural Women's Rights

ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

While New Field was establishing its grantmaking program in Casamance, important advances in women's rights were happening at the national and regional level. Senegal was among the first African nations to sign (2003) and ratify (2004) the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Protocol, which was fully enacted by signing members of the African Union (2005), represents significant advances in the rights of African women. This includes the elimination of discrimination, equal protection under the law, equal rights in marriage, divorce, and inheritance, and the right to participate in political and decision-making processes. Senegal again took the lead by bringing into force its gender parity law (2010), which requires political parties to ensure that at least half their candidates in local and national elections are women. In addition, the Senegal Parliament passed two land reform laws (2011), intended to enhance security of tenure and enable permanent title deeds for men and women equally.

REACHING RURAL WOMEN

Changes in law at national level were slow to reach rural women in Casamance, especially those in remote areas whose lives were predominantly bound by customary and religious laws. Rural women had limited information about new laws and how to exercise their rights; they lacked the resources to take action or to have access to legal advice if their rights were violated. One of several organizations addressing these limitations for rural women in other parts of Senegal was Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré (RADI). Created in 1985 to fight poverty, injustice and ignorance, RADI provided rights education among rural communities using a participatory approach so that communities could address their situation and build long-term independence. New Field invited RADI to extend its work to rural Casamance, with a focus on women's rights. From 2008-2014, RADI received seven grants totaling \$325,104 for this work.

RAISING AWARENESS OF RIGHTS

RADI introduced several approaches for advancing rural women's rights in Casamance. Its team carried out a major campaign using plays, community radio programs, and large meetings to inform communities in Casamance of their rights. More than 25,000 rural men and women learned about women's human rights, social and economic rights, land rights, family law, citizenship and democracy. RADI also trained 42 rural women as paralegals to improve rural women's civic engagement in

Casamance. The paralegals provided information and advice to groups and individuals on a range of issues, including their rights to land, property, divorce, and child custody. Where necessary, they referred people to a legal advice center in the nearest large town, even if it would take more than a day to get there. To address the gap in services for women, RADI and the paralegals created community committees in rural areas throughout Casamance that act as a frontline resource in addressing women's rights violations.

CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION

In order to strengthen its work with paralegals in Casamance, RADI joined up with two organizations supported by New Field that promote rural women's rights in Guinea and Guinea Bissau. The Association pour la Défense des Droits des Enfants et des Femmes en Guinée (ADDEF-G) coordinates a network of more than 500 paralegals who are working in rural areas across Guinea. Fédération Kafo is a peasant farmer organization with 25,000 members in Guinea Bissau that works to ensure peasant rights, including women's rights. The three organizations formed an alliance to capitalize on each other's experience and design a joint plan to advance the rights of rural women through paralegals.

INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE

With a grant of \$51,528, the alliance concentrated on strengthening the knowledge and actions of paralegals in three project areas that included Casamance. Selected paralegals led a series of workshops for local government officials which resulted in the recognition of women's rights to natural resources and their inclusion in decision-making processes, such as forest resource management committees in Guinea Bissau. The alliance also created materials for paralegals to educate rural communities about their rights according to the legal and policy framework of their country. The materials included 500 copies of a guide for paralegals; a set of five brochures illustrating different aspects of women's rights; and 300 copies of a collection of legal texts on women's rights in Guinea Bissau. The paralegals shared the content with thousands of rural women, awakening interest and hope for a more equitable future.

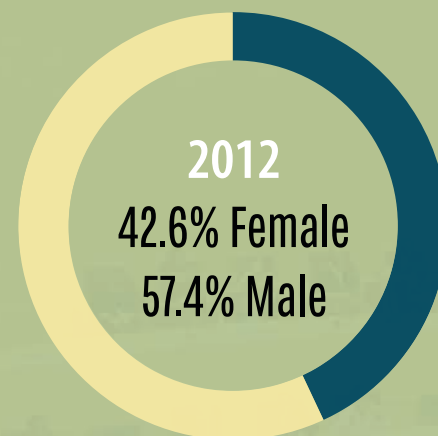
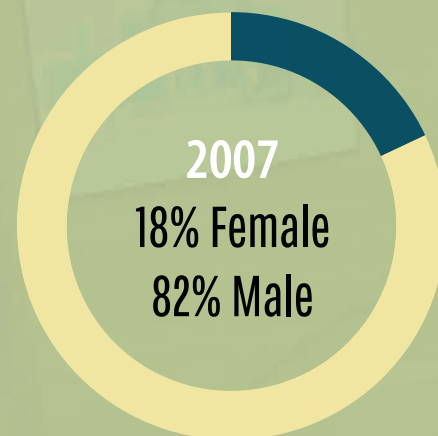
Elections

QUICK FACTS

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

National Assembly

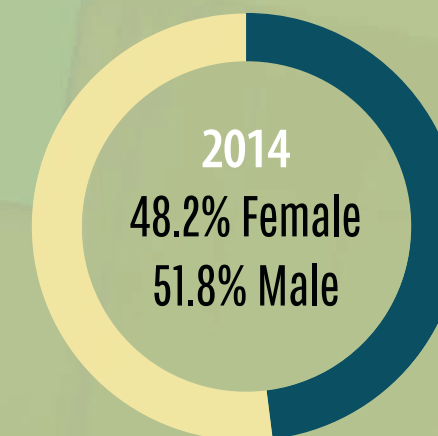
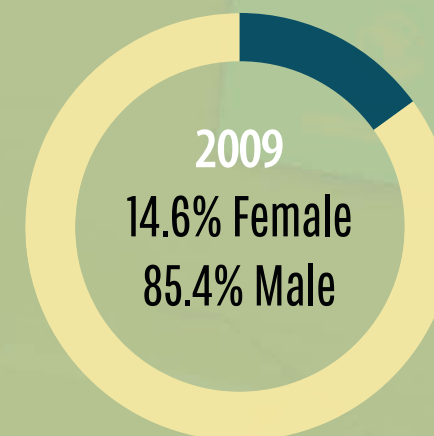
150 Seats



LOCAL ELECTIONS

Casamance District Councils

1672 Councilors



The Impact of Policy Change

When Senegal introduced a gender parity law in 2010, women across the country took advantage of the opportunity in both national and local elections. The balance of representation shifted significantly so that women now make up nearly half of all elected representatives. Rural women leaders in Casamance were particularly successful in achieving equity.

Strength in Numbers

Rural women in Senegal organize in groups, organizations and federations to improve their rights and resources.



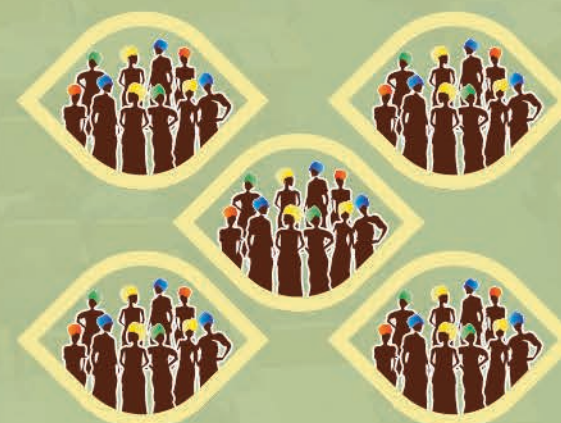
RURAL WOMAN
/ FARMER



RURAL WOMEN'S GROUP
Informal



WOMEN'S COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION
Officially Recognized



DISTRICT LEVEL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION,
FEDERATION, OR UNION



WOMEN'S NATIONAL/REGIONAL
ORGANIZATION, NETWORK

Local Food Systems & Agroecology

FARMING CHOICES

Rural women and their organizations were clear that farming and food production was a major concern as their communities emerged from conflict. Food security was also a national and regional priority. With different interests and factors at play, an important question emerged. What *type* of farming and food systems did rural women want?

ECOLOGICAL PRACTICES

In Casamance, women had a long tradition of growing many different varieties of rice from their own seeds. They also grew cereals and vegetables, gathered fruits from the forests, and harvested oysters from the mangrove swamps, all of which contributed to a nutritious and diverse diet that was ecologically viable. However, this tradition was threatened. Many rural farmers had lost their rice seeds during the conflict. They faced increasing pressure from private enterprise and government authorities to use modified seeds and chemical inputs to increase production. While this was tempting, many rural women's groups were more interested in rebuilding their own food systems using ecological practices.

SEED AUTONOMY

Responding to rural women's interest in local seeds, New Field Foundation reached out to the Association Sénégalaise de Producteurs de Semences Paysannes (ASPSP). Founded in 2003, with its main office in Mbour, Senegal, ASPSP's membership is made up of 15 farmer organizations with some 63,000 members. Its purpose is to contribute to seed autonomy by safeguarding local traditional varieties. Its hypothesis is that technologically improved seeds are not better and do not necessarily produce bigger yields over the long-term. Patented genetically modified seeds also lock smallholder farmers in a perennial cycle of purchasing commercial seed and chemical fertilizers. ASPSP's activities include collecting local seed varieties, creating seed production gardens, training women to create traditional seed banks, and holding annual and bi-annual seed fairs during which farmers from the region exchange and share seeds – a time-tested way to ensure biological diversity.





TRAINING IN AGROECOLOGY

From 2009-2014, New Field funded ASPSP for a total of \$152,718 to provide technical assistance to rural women's groups that wanted to integrate agroecology and seed-saving practices in Casamance. The results over six years showed an increase in interest, knowledge, and practice.

- Leaders of 15 rural women's groups in Kolda district, Casamance, learned to produce biological insecticides and compost, improve planting techniques that would significantly reduce water waste, and build granaries to keep harvests safe from insects and disease (2009);
- Five of the rural women leaders went on to showcase their seed varieties and trained other West African women farmers at the seed fair in Kayes, Mali. The demand for trainings outstripped the capacity to deliver them (2010);
- An additional 851 women from 26 rural women's groups in Casamance received training in agroecological methods and diversified their farming (2011);
- Another New Field partner, DIRFEL-Kolda, combined crop cultivation and animal rearing, leading to increased yields and nutritional values without damage to the soil or local landscapes (2012);
- 1,100 members of two women's rice farming associations introduced five varieties of local rice that traditionally had been cultivated exclusively by women (2012);
- Three NGO community grantmakers (AJAC-Lukaal, CASADES, and FODDE) adopted agroecology as the only agricultural practice that their organizations would support (2013);
- More than 200 farmers from five West African countries exchanged seeds and knowledge at ASPSP's Fourth Regional Peasant Farmers' Seed Fair in Casamance (2014)

PEASANT FARMER PRIORITIES

ASPSP's work was part of a larger movement in which national and regional peasant farmer networks were calling for greater recognition and increased resources from policy makers and funders. As the main food producers in West Africa, smallholder farmers and their organizations have the means to feed the majority of the region's population in a healthy and sustainable way. They do so in spite of climate change, large-scale commercial agriculture with chemical inputs, land acquisitions that override community interests, and the privatization of seeds. ASPSP filled a critical need in promoting agroecological practices, and has great potential to expand its work and develop its trainings to reach more farmers and their organizations. Along with the Casamance community grantmakers, ASPSP engaged in national and regional fora to communicate the message that agroecology and local food systems provide long-term solutions for stability and well-being.

Bringing to Scale

NEW INITIATIVES

For ten years, New Field focused its strategy on supporting 133 rural women's organizations in areas of Casamance that were stricken by conflict. Monitoring and evaluation showed that this funding enabled many thousands of rural women to create peace, stability, and equitable change in their families and communities on a sustainable basis. It also revealed that rural women's organizations, with support from NGO partners, were taking the initiative to expand their efforts, build networks for greater impact, and develop strategies and plans to bring about change on a larger scale. In order to have greater momentum, they formed associations and federations for joint action and advocacy. This provided New Field with the opportunity to support initiatives on a larger scale.

“ Women want organic farming without chemical inputs. In order to succeed, we need more financial and human resources. We would like to build relationships with other local, regional and national organizations in order to advocate for access to funding and the means of production. This includes land, agricultural equipment and good quality seeds.” - Aissatou Ba, President, ROPROCAS

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S FEDERATIONS

In the Ziguinchor district of Casamance, New Field supported the development of four women's federations over seven years. By 2014, their total membership was more than 6,000 rural women from the communities of Adéane, Enampore, Nyassia, and Oulampane. Together with their NGO partner USOFORAL, the four federations identified the need to increase their production and reach new markets. Their local products are good quality, but are more expensive than industrial products because they are produced on a small scale. Recognizing common challenges of refrigeration, packaging, and marketing, as well as transport, the federations now plan to establish six cereal banks and purchase two trucks, one of which would be refrigerated, to transport fresh fish and shrimp. Addressing the issue from all angles, the federations are also lobbying local government officials to take gender into account when preparing district budgets.

WOMEN PRODUCERS BUILD A NETWORK

In 2014, 37 rural women's groups in the Kolda and Sedhiou districts came together to create ROPROCAS, a network of women agricultural producers in Casamance. They defined its mission, values, governance structure, membership criteria and areas of intervention. Within six months, it had 70 member organizations comprising 2,967 rural women. It developed strategic priorities for 2015-2019 that include women's access to land for sustainable agriculture, improved agricultural equipment, increased knowledge and skills of women in the commercialization of products, access to micro-finance, and improved advocacy.

EXPANDED REACH

ROPROCAS aims to benefit more than 20,000 people with increased livelihoods, knowledge and income, as well as better quality and quantity of food. While the network is relatively new, the need for this type of local organization is clear. Its member organizations are enthusiastic and dedicated to its success. As ROPROCAS breaks new ground for locally-based development efforts, it continues to learn and evolve to meet the needs of its members. ROPROCAS is a shining example of what is possible when rural women are given the power and resources to sustainably improve their lives.

ROPROCAS 2015-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision *ROPROCAS is a trustworthy organization of women producers which influences the implementation of development policies and strategies in favor of a sustainable empowerment of women.*

Mission *To contribute to the promotion of women's empowerment by strengthening the technical, material and financial capacities, and the institutional development of organizations, in an endogenous development approach which is mindful of the environment.*



PLAN STRATEGIQUE DU RESEAU DES
ORGANISATIONS DES FEMMES
PRODUCTRICES DE KOLDA ET SEDHIOU

ROPROCAS

Rédigé avec l'appui méthodologique et financier de l'ONG FIDH et New Field Foundation

Décembre 2014



EXTENDING THE COMMUNITY GRANTS MODEL

Inspired by the effectiveness of supporting rural women's groups with community grants in Casamance, New Field decided to expand the program and include rural women's groups across the border in Guinea Bissau. It identified Fédération Paysanne KAFO as an NGO partner. KAFO is a federation of indigenous peoples who are active in agriculture, forestry, fishing, animal breeding, beekeeping, and traditional medicine. It has some 25,000 members forming 1,000 groups that make up 10 peasant associations. KAFO also manages a training and production center for its members, and a community radio called "The Voice of the Peasant."

INCREASED RESOURCES

From 2012-2014, KAFO received \$428,573 and awarded 44 grants to 22 rural women's groups. After three years of investment, results reported in 2014 included 852 rural women who had received hands-on training in the financial management of their production and marketing work; 701 women who had gained access to land and claimed ownership of more than 350 hectares for their crop production needs; and 16 of the rural women's groups that had advised local government officials on how best

"The most important is financial assistance followed by trainings in agricultural techniques and processing. The markets for our products exist, but we need financial support to access them."

- Justine Manga, Secretary General, Fédération des Femmes de Nyassia

to support rural women and girls. These investments in local knowledge and skills will continue to benefit the women in the region for months and years to come.

MOVING FORWARD

From the destruction of conflict has emerged a movement of dynamic and creative women who are working strategically to improve their lives and communities. While they still face many obstacles, they are joining together to articulate their plans, mobilize resources and amplify their voices. With a modest investment, these well-organized networks and federations have the potential to make substantial improvements to the food security and local economies of the Casamance region.

Reaching Rural Women's Groups



- Rural Women's Groups
- Community Grantmakers
- Technical Providers
- Advisors
- Program Consultants
- Funders

Community Grantmaker	# of Rural Women's Groups
AJAC	32
AJAEDO	12
CASADES	25
DIRFEL-Kolda	14
FODDE	36
USOFORAL	14

The Flow of Funding

In order to get its funds directly to rural women's organizations in post-conflict Casamance, New Field traversed two continents, 6,500 miles, four languages, differences in race, class, wealth and culture, an urban-rural divide, and widely varying financial and operating systems. New Field was able to do this because of reliable, ongoing relationships with people and organizations that had a shared vision, knowledge and experience in West Africa, and the willingness to work together for the benefit of rural communities.

Conclusions & Recommendations

VIBRANT RURAL COMMUNITIES

New Field Foundation set out to support peace and vibrant rural communities in southern Senegal following twenty years of conflict. It provided \$5,130,184 from 2004-2014, for a range of integrated initiatives that responded to the changing realities of the population. New Field's approach began with supporting rural women's groups with community grants for local food production and evolved to include support for community radio, knowledge exchange and skills for a region that had lost much of its organizational capacity. By 2014, it had enabled the emergence of rural women's cooperatives and federations that advocated for increased recognition, rights and resources, including access to land, water, and seeds, which in turn improved family income from farming.

CHALLENGES

Making grants in a post-conflict environment to women's organizations that have historically been passed over by other development efforts is challenging. To bridge the gap, New Field developed an operational infrastructure that ensured a flow of funding and technical support, including a full-time program consultant based in Dakar with administrative support. This enabled New Field to receive continuous information and insights from those organizations, resulting in a very high success rate in the implementation of grants benefiting rural women. While this approach required higher operational costs, New Field's board carefully monitored these expenditures and intentionally approved them as part of its effective grantmaking model.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An important aspect of New Field's grantmaking was its ongoing assessment of impact. New Field was concerned that its funding should do no harm. It also recognized the difficulty of gaining accurate and meaningful insights into the effects of its grants, given the limited monitoring capacity of its partners, the significant language and cultural barriers, and people's hesitation to speak openly following the conflict. Nevertheless, by working with Casamance-based monitoring and evaluation consultants trusted by their communities, New Field was able to track the effects of its grantmaking. Over ten years, the quality of documentation and financial reporting by partners improved significantly, creating a fuller picture of change.

KEY LEARNINGS

Rural women in Senegal, as in other parts of Africa, are often portrayed and perceived as victims, not drivers of change. They experience discrimination, low status, and lack of resources. Their community organizations receive minimal recognition and little or no funding, although thousands operate across the country. New Field's investment clearly demonstrates that rural women's organizations have the motivation, leadership and vision to make effective use of grants and technical assistance to create sustainable change. Improvements in income, food production, health and education are typically realized, combined with more equitable decision-making, leadership and governance. Notably, New Field's experience working in a post-conflict environment has shown that it can yield a faster pace of social change – in part because the old social order has been disrupted and the community is seeking new solutions to local challenges. For rural women who have been devalued, very modest investments can open up new possibilities in work, family life and community leadership. With trust and careful planning, a funder can enable rural women and their organizations to realize their own creative solutions, successfully manage their assets, and lead the way towards a more peaceful and equitable world.

COLLABORATION

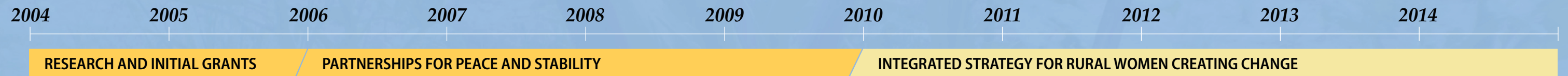
In addition to building strong collaborations with NGO partners in Senegal, New Field established strong relationships with organizations in Europe and the USA to provide technical services to its NGO partners. New Field also reached out to other funders to collaborate on funding. Allies included American Jewish World Service, CS Fund, Foundation for a Just Society, Global Fund for Women, Grassroots International, and The Christensen Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The story told in this publication is in itself the primary recommendation: rural women's organizations in West Africa deserve more funding and support. When a funder trusts rural African women to determine their own approaches and priorities, they can reach deep into their communities and lead long-lasting change, provided they have sufficient funding to realize their vision. It is important also to recognize the extent of the constraints and marginalization that rural women face, from low literacy and lack of access to bank accounts, to bouts of debilitating illness or difficulty of transport on poor roads. For this reason, local advisors and consultants are key to gaining insight and perspective. Given the many interconnected issues being tackled by rural women's organizations, funding strategies that take an integrated approach are likely to be more effective. A sense of shared values, a common understanding of the issues, an openness of information, and recognition of power relations also contribute to a shared success. New Field believes the results are truly worthwhile.

2004-2014 Grant Allocation | Senegal

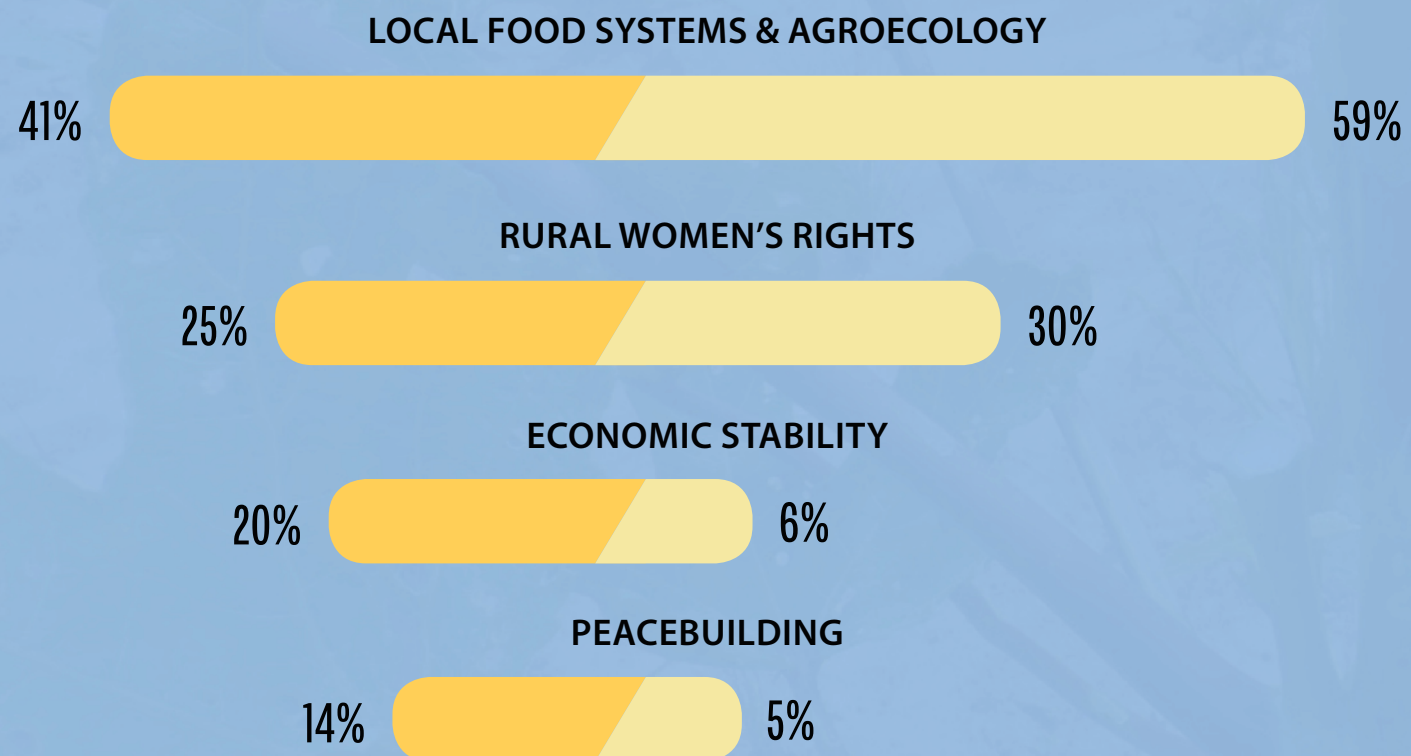
\$5,130,184 IN FUNDING **113** GRANTS



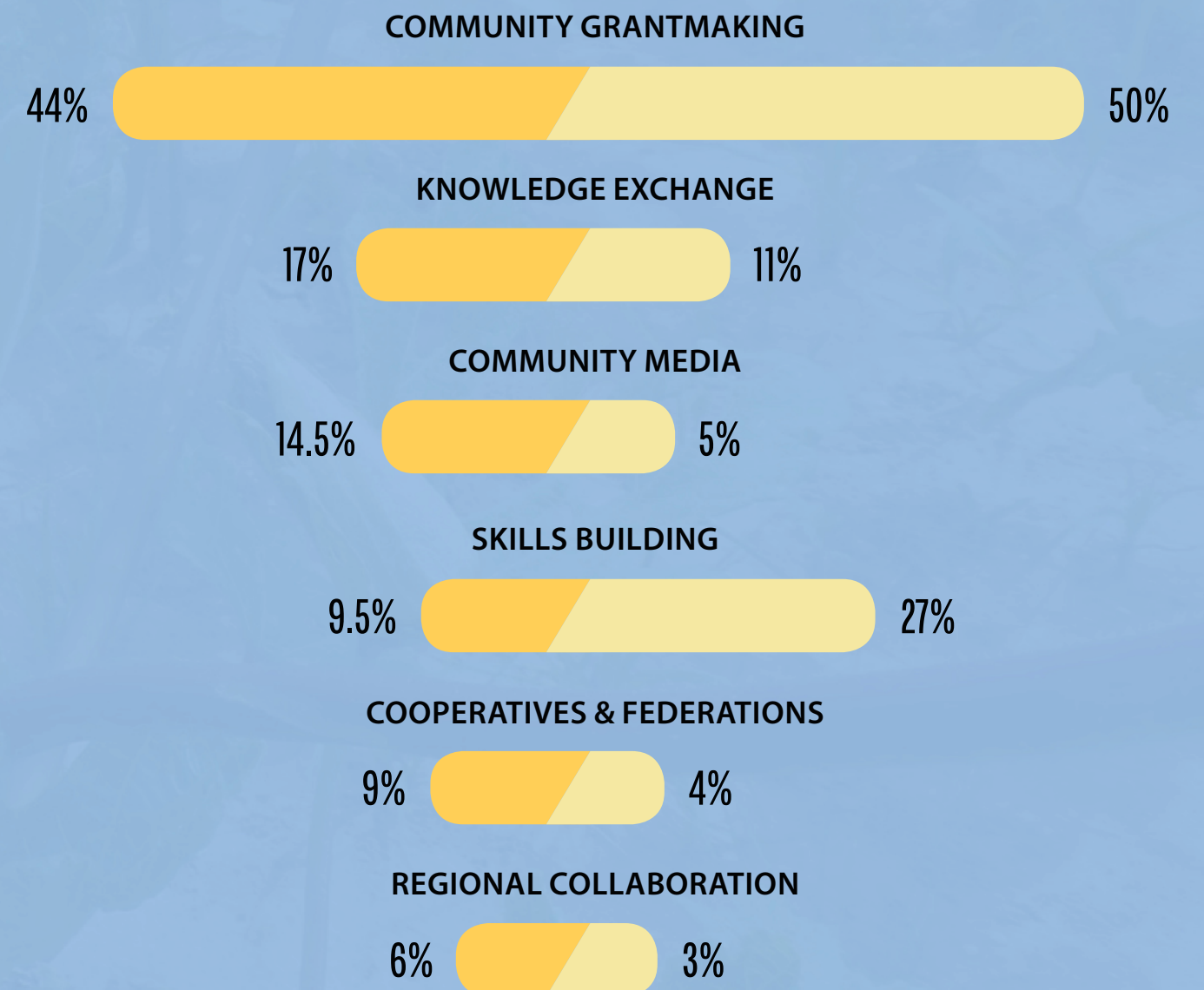
2004-2009 FUNDING \$2,502,116

2010-2014 FUNDING \$2,628,068

ISSUE AREAS



APPROACHES





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