

Senegal

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Community Economic Development



Since 1961.

Program: Community Economic Development

Job Title: Community Economic Development Volunteer

Dates of Service: May 9, 2015 – May 9, 2017

Staging Dates: March 3, 2015
(in the USA)

Pre-Service Training : March 5, 2015 – May 9, 2015

*dates subject to change



This document is intended to give an overview of the project you are invited to work on in the Peace Corps. For more detailed information about Senegal and living there, please read the Welcome Book via the link included with your invitation and check out the related Web sites referenced in the welcome book.

For further information about serving as a Community Health Agent in Senegal, call the Country Desk Officer for Senegal at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., (9AM to 5PM, EST):

Toll-free: 1-855-855-1961, press 1, then extension 2307;

or directly at (202) 692-2307

or via email at Senegaldesk@peacecorps.gov

A NOTE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Dear Invitee:

I hope you choose to join the Peace Corps/Senegal family. You are needed and welcomed by our community economic development project team, -- Peace Corps staff, Volunteers, and Senegalese partners alike.

We understand the importance of your decision in today's dynamic work environment. You may pass up other opportunities to join our team. You applied to the Peace Corps because you are a risk taker who wants to help other people. You care about the world and you understand the way it works. You see the inequalities. You understand that handouts are not the answer and ask yourself: "How can I help constructively? How can I give without creating dependency?"

If you decide to accept this challenge, you will never forget the relationships you forge. After your service, you will think back on the farmer who, with your assistance, learned how to plan further ahead than next week. You will remember the small shop owner with whom you worked to develop a simple, effective accounting system. You will show pictures of the signs your local carpenter made after attending your marketing seminar. You will remember, fondly, walking with a friend to a local savings and credit cooperative to open a savings account for the first time. And you may remember with pride the tourist circuits and other ecotourism products and services that you helped your community develop.

Experiences like these are what will keep you here. Here are stories of real people who will become your future "family" and friends. You are about to start an incredible experience of learning, adaptation, exchange, and friendship. I urge you to accept this invitation and hope to be working with you soon.

Sincerely,

Amar Yaya Sall

Associate Peace Corps Director
Community Economic Development Program

PEACE CORPS SENEGAL HISTORY

Peace Corps began its long and productive history of collaboration with the Senegalese people when the first group of 15 English teachers arrived in 1963. Since then, some 3,000 Volunteers have worked in Senegal in various fields of social and economic development.

Senegal's best known program was Rural Animation, a cross-sector project that lasted 24 years. The project's objective was to assist and encourage villagers to organize themselves, so that they might better solve local problems through their own grassroots actions. Peace Corps' involvement in the health sector began through the Animation program, with activities focused on nutrition and health education conducted in conjunction with primary school teachers.

In 1990, Peace Corps/Senegal decided to divide its activities into sector-specific projects. A need was expressed by the government of Senegal to organize and support rural producer groups with business skills. This sparked the start-up of the "Rural Enterprise Development" project. Volunteers were recruited as extension agents and posted in Centre d'Expansion Rurale Polyvalent (CERP) teams to compliment the work of agriculture, forestry and rural animation extension agents. Initially, the project's purpose was to develop production in rural areas through the creation of Groupements d'Intérêt Economique (GIE). Volunteers would help farmers gain business skills to manage rural production and develop distribution links in nearby towns and cities. In 1995, a mid-term analysis of the project showed a migration of the Volunteers to towns where there was more market activity and a larger client base. The project went through an internal review process in 1997 that refocused Volunteer interventions on larger towns and put more emphasis on a business linkage approach between urban and semi-urban areas and rural villages.

In March 2000, an evaluation of the impact of the project over the previous ten years was conducted. During the first months of work, it was clear that all project participants sought a continuation of the project activities in some form. To clarify the purpose of such a continuation and formulate a plan, a focus group was organized including Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, community members, artisans, CERP representatives, NGO representatives, and other local project partners. Focus group recommendations included improving collaboration with local partners and third-party organizations, placing special emphasis on business education and Information Technology in the project framework. This work culminated in a new project framework .

In March 2002, Peace Corps staff began discussions about expanding the CED project through ecotourism development activities, in collaboration with the Ministère du Tourisme (MT) and the Direction des Parcs Nationaux (DPN). Several Volunteer-initiated activities in this area had proven successful, which led us to believe Volunteers could be effective as advisors to communities interested in generating revenue from tourism to conserve their environment. Both government agencies were enthusiastic about the idea of using Volunteers to help communities organize ecotourism activities. They felt Volunteers could help communities through specific technical skills and knowledge transference and with their inherent understanding of the needs of ecotourists. Volunteers can relate to ecotourists, so they can help local communities develop products and services that meet the expectations and needs of ecotourists.

The MT and the DPN had designed a plan together to promote ecotourism in Senegal. The plan sets forth goals, objectives and tasks to be accomplished over the next several years to spur the development of ecotourism. In May 2003, Peace Corps staff organized another focus group workshop, bringing together representatives of all stakeholders working in ecotourism development: MT and DPN officials, NGOs, private tour operators, local guides, and community representatives. During the workshop, participants outlined the activities that Volunteers could do to help the DPN and MT reach their goals. On the basis of this information, a fourth goal was added to

Peace Corps/Senegal's CED project plan to focus on ecotourism development. A steering committee was then established to monitor the initiative.

Reviews of the CED Project, involving project stakeholders (including CED Volunteers, their community counterparts and work partners, and representatives from collaborating government agencies at both the national and local levels) took place in August 2004 and July 2007. All project stakeholders agreed that the existing goals and objectives of the project were still relevant and important, but that the plan should be revised to place more emphasis on strengthening the management of groups and associations, as well as encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation among youth in schools. Taking into account the feedback from project stakeholders, a new project plan, labeled community economic development (CED) was developed for the period 2008 - 2014.

Peace Corps/Senegal is now moving towards significantly focusing their efforts, on two core goals:

- Enhancing business growth and job creation through business advising aimed at the formalization of economic activities and enhancing business productivity
- Enabling a new generation of Senegalese entrepreneurs, through youth business education as aligned with Senegal-specific Junior Achievement curricula

Our specific goals will be further focused through an emphasis on four strategic sectors that meet the criteria of:

- high economic growth potential;
- important priorities for the Government of Senegal;
- clear partnership opportunities;
- with focused training for primarily generalist Volunteers.

These four niches are:

- Transforming agricultural and forestry products
- Developing ecotourism
- Manufacturing and exporting artisanal goods
- Administering private sector-led solid waste management and composting tactics

Peace Corps Volunteers have important advantages in supporting these goals, documented successes, and clear government and private sector partners. Every one of our CED Volunteers moving forward will be involved in business formalization and productivity consulting, and in youth entrepreneurship education, with a Senegal-specific Junior Achievement curriculum. Each Volunteer's site will provide clear opportunities to support private sector and government-supported initiatives in one or more of the four above industries. All training and volunteer performance support will be aligned with the two goals, and focus on the four strategic industries.

YOUR PRIMARY DUTIES

The challenge for micro and small businesses is to be able to utilize locally available resources to make money. Large top-down government programs and NGO handouts have fostered dependency on the part of many individuals and groups seeking to start businesses. This has produced a “wait and see” attitude that does not encourage individual initiative, risk taking or “a spirit of entrepreneurship.” Interestingly, the individuals and groups that do take the time to analyze their environment gather local resources and plan business activities often succeed in Senegal. CED volunteers act as catalysts to promote this type of entrepreneurial activity.

You will be grassroots counselors for these types of entrepreneurs and groups who need business advice and skills. Although the specific nature of your work will vary based on your individual business skills and interests, the business environment you are working in, and the needs of the people in your community, you will build capacity in three basic areas: planning, management, and other basic business skills; networking and information and communication technology.

Entrepreneurs and groups often lack vision and long-term goals, which stunts the expansion of their activities. Through counseling and training in business planning, marketing and record keeping, you can be an invaluable resource for businesses that primarily need direction.

You will not only advise business owners, but also help guide partners in support of private sector interventions. You can be effective as an intermediary, helping to bridge the gap between “those who need” and “those who have” information and services.

You also will serve as coaches and mentors for youth and women in the areas of business education and information technology. The latter is an area you likely have been immersed in throughout your life - personal, academic and professional. Although you may not consider yourself an expert in information and communication technology, in Senegal you will find that you can serve as an important source of knowledge and can conduct training in basic computer literacy and various types of software. You also may provide business education to youth and women. It is important, especially for youth and women, to understand their local business environment and the means by which one may compete to earn a living in a free market.

Some of you will help organize your community and provide assistance in the development of ecotourism-related activities at your site (if located near a national park or protected area). You will provide training to guides and community groups that will help them increase their income potential by marketing ecotourism products and services, while at the same time becoming advocates of conservation and sustainable natural resource management. You will extend organizational and technical skills to your community, and also share invaluable knowledge about Western tourist needs, habits, and expectations. Tourism is the fastest growing sector of the Senegalese economy, but few Senegalese benefit from the revenues generated by tourist activities. The Government of Senegal believes that ecotourism can help diversify the tourism market and funnel more revenues to communities for local development and conservation activities.

In summary, you will facilitate a process through which micro and small business owners, Senegalese men and women, learn to recognize and value opportunities and resources that surround them, analyze how they can make money, and organize themselves to function competitively.

The work of Peace Corps/Senegal Community Economic Development Volunteers is guided by the project framework which was designed to allow PC/Senegal to have a significant impact in improving livelihoods. You will

be responsible for reporting your work in this framework. A snapshot of the framework is included below. We will send additional details as your departure date gets closer.

Community Economic Development Project

Purpose: Senegalese Community members will enjoy sustainable livelihoods in vibrant local economies.

Goal 1: Enhance business growth and job creation

Entrepreneurs will cultivate new business opportunities.

Objective 1.1: Business Advising

By March 2018, 225 individuals, especially youth and females, will improve business management skills to create or expand business activities.

Activities:

Each year, 30 Volunteers and their community partners will train and coach 450 individuals and 60 MSMEs in market surveys and feasibility studies, business management skills including: cost control, financial management, record keeping, bookkeeping/accounting, business Planning, and marketing

Goal 2: Individuals participating in empowerment groups and producer associations increase their productivity and income

Objective 2.1: Income generating activities: By March 2018, 2,813 individuals who work in woman-empowerment groups or producers associations will increase overall income by adding or enhancing at least one income generating activity.

Activities:

Each year, (30) Volunteers and their community partners will train and coach (2,750) individuals to conduct an IGA feasibility/viability study, employ basic business management skills, write a basic business plan, employ basic marketing skills, complete an application for financial assistance (e.g., micro-credit, small grant, etc.).

Goal 3: Individuals manage their own finances to increase their household economic security

Objective 2.1: Financial Literacy

By March 2018, 5250 individuals will demonstrate improved financial literacy skills to better manage their finances

Activities:

Each year, (20) Volunteers and their community partners will work with (2,100) individuals in trainings, workshops, classes, or one-on-one mentoring on topics such as basic money management, personal budgeting, savings schemes and/or bank accounts, financial services, and other topics related to achieving personal financial goals.

Objective 2.2: Youth Entrepreneurship

By March 2018, 2,100 youth will demonstrate improved entrepreneurship skills to increase their readiness for the business world.

Activities:

Each year, (20) Volunteers and their community partners will work with 700 youth in trainings, workshops, classes, or one-on-one mentoring on topics such as feasibility studies, business planning, experiential business models or simulations, or other methods to increase revenue for income through business activities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SECONDARY/ COMMUNITY PROJECTS

You also may initiate your own secondary activities based on your interests and an exploration of your community with its members. These activities may be in sectors outside of your primary assignment, which is to promote preventive health education. Examples of such activities are numerous, but to give you an idea, Volunteers are currently engaged in beekeeping, chicken raising, tie dye-ing, community infrastructure building, literacy/numeracy training, income generation activities and field research among others.

These activities should be authorized by your Program Manager who will ensure that they will not conflict with your primary assignment or other duties as a Volunteer. Your APCD also will advise you about potential problems and pitfalls commonly associated with secondary projects.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Available Resources:

You will be assigned through a Senegalese government agency to a counterpart who will supervise your work at the local level. You will be expected to develop a professional relationship with your supervisor and submit monthly reports. It is important to be aware that Senegalese government agencies tend to have very few resources; therefore, you should expect little in the way of material support. Further, since few field agents have sufficient understanding of the issues surrounding enterprise development, Volunteers often may find themselves with little guidance in their work from their local supervisor. Beneficially, local government agencies provide an excellent reference point from which to learn more about your community, and the field agents can serve effectively as cultural guides, which is especially important during the first several months at post. You will only be in Senegal for two years, and time does seem to move swiftly here. It is extremely important to work closely with the local government agency to which you are assigned to so they can follow through on your activities after you leave.

Location of Job

The program is currently implemented in twelve of Senegal's fourteen regions. You will be posted in either a district capital, where a majority of market activity takes place, or a smaller market town. Volunteers are posted throughout the country to increase the potential of market linkages and to promote the sharing of resources and experiences.

Work Hours

You will be assigned to a Senegalese government office. You will be expected to report to this office regularly to inform your colleagues about your work and to get feedback from them regarding the activities you are undertaking. You will be expected to develop a professional relationship with this government office throughout your two years of service. Your primary focus, however, will be the individual entrepreneurs with whom you work. Consequently, depending on the nature of your partners' businesses, your work hours will vary considerably. Volunteers are considered to be "on duty" seven days a week, while at site. You, your partners and your supervisor will need to develop appropriate work expectations instead of schedules? schedules.

Cultural Attitudes and Customs in the Workplace

As a community economic development Volunteer, you will become a part of a larger project - one that focuses on helping Senegalese take ownership of and responsibility for their business environment. In order to build trust with the people you are trying to help, you must respect cultural norms and practices. Certain gestures, such as

greeting everyone in the office every morning, are essential to gaining the respect of your co-workers and community members.

Dress Code

Senegalese pride themselves on being well dressed, and clothing is very important in this society. You will enjoy trying out local styles. A neat and dignified appearance will say a lot about your desire to be accepted as a colleague. Certain training events also require more than casual dress. Ties are not required for men, nor is the standard business suit worn in the U.S. necessary. Though most villagers will accept Western women wearing modest pants (nothing tight-fitting), many female Volunteers prefer dresses because they are cooler than pants. Women typically do not wear shorts even while exercising, while Senegalese men rarely if ever wear shorts except for exercising or fieldwork. Wearing shorts outside of those contexts may be viewed as inappropriate. Body piercings (with the exception of pierced ears for earrings for women), uncovered tattoos, and dreadlocks are also considered inappropriate in many work-related contexts. Living in a traditional culture means you will need to adapt yourself to local standards if you want to be an effective and respected worker. Your overall good grooming will show your respect for others. Extravagance is not necessary, but dressing appropriately, cleanly and neatly are important.

TRAINING FOR YOUR JOB

Initial training for Peace Corps service is broken up into three phases. Prior to going to live at your site, you will attend pre-service training (PST), a 9-week training during which you will be placed with a family in a small village near the Peace Corps training center in Thiès. Approximately 80% of the PST program will take place in your village, 15% at the Peace Corps training center in Thiès, and 5% in a current PCV site.

The PST program will focus on building your capacity to speak the local language, understanding the Senegalese culture, adapting to your community, and basic technical activities.

During this initial training phase, you will receive some technical training to introduce you to the Senegalese government system, an overview of basic business advising and income generation topics and community needs assessment techniques.

A significant portion of your time during this training period will be devoted to language study, and you will be expected to achieve a specified language goal. As a rural health Volunteer, you will learn one of Senegal's local languages.

You will be sworn in as a Volunteer only if you reach the Intermediate local language level and meet learning objectives in your Trainee Assessment Portfolio (TAP) that you will receive on your first day of training.

The second phase of training will be a 2-3 month practicum at your site. You will live in your host community and deepen your language and cross-cultural learning and being the community entry process. It is crucial that you integrate first into your community and understand their problems and needs before starting any projects. To this effect, during your first three months at site, you will conduct an assessment to better understand the needs in your community as well as gain the knowledge and skills you will need to help address the problems identified.

After your first three months at site, you will return to the Thiès training center to attend a 2 week in-service training that will allow you to process your first three months at site and gain the core technical skills related to your community economic development assignment.



Training for this program is very intense and will require your full participation. During your 24 months of service, training will continue with special workshops, sector summits and seminars organized for you and your community partners

We remind you that your 24 months of service does not include time spent in pre-service training.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Volunteers are placed with host families. Essentially, this living situation is set up to promote your use of local language, increase your awareness of your community's culture, needs, and issues, and guarantee your security in urban areas, where you can be a target for theft or harassment.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES & REWARDS

Please reference the Welcome Book for more detailed information regarding diversity and cross-cultural issues, and safety and security in the Peace Corps.

The specific activities you undertake depend largely on the opportunities that present themselves at your site, the size and type of your community, and your personal skills and business interests. In more rural posts, Volunteers will focus on agricultural activities, small-scale agricultural transformation and production, farmer and women's groups, and perhaps ecotourism-related activities. In market and urban centers, interventions include working with a variety of artisans, processors, retailers and the service sector, as well as students.

The tasks that you are about to undertake will not be easy, and in many ways will be the most challenging you have ever faced. They will also be the most rewarding. One of the most difficult aspects of this experience is understanding with whom to begin working. There are no sure-fire techniques that can be taught to overcome this obstacle. Knowledge of business practices helps, patience is a must, but in many cases, your creativity, your flexibility, and your sense of humor will be your strongest assets.

Working in Africa, especially within a government bureaucracy, can be a frustrating experience. You must remember that things happen more slowly here than in the U.S. Realistic expectations in dealing with nearly all aspects of personal and professional life are essential.

Throughout your service, you will spend a great deal of time observing the way businesses operate in Senegal. You will help entrepreneurs identify opportunities and better understand their local business climate. You will help them accomplish the goals they have set for themselves.

Your role is that of a facilitator and catalyst for dynamic change. The direction and content of change will remain with the women and men, individually or in groups, who will benefit from it for years to come. You should be prepared to commit yourself to two years of difficult yet highly rewarding work, and take part in a unique and challenging experience.

You will be required to be a self-starter. An apparent lack of direction or encouragement from colleagues can be discouraging. Basic supplies deemed essential by U.S. standards are lacking. Your ability to work successfully with your counterpart and community partners will be critical to your success.

Peace Corps has learned over the years that change in a traditional system is a long-term process and requires a long-term commitment by individuals, communities, the Senegalese government, and development assistance

organizations. Therefore, you will be building upon previous efforts and will be expected to lay further foundations for those who will come after you.

Your background and training will prepare you for the job, yet you will be required to transfer and interpret your knowledge to the local situation, conditions, relationships and available resources. Heavy demands will be placed on your awareness, sensitivity to others, and ability to communicate -- all of which are central factors in job satisfaction and success. You will be expected to emphasize local participation over Western efficiency and speed, encouraging your work partners to use local resources as much as possible.

You can anticipate hard work and plenty of frustrations, but if you are interested in working with people, and are willing to explore and accept different values and customs, you will find your service to be a unique and rewarding experience.

COMMENTS FROM VOLUNTEERS

I started to understand pretty early in my service that if I could have a fraction of the impact on people that they have had on me, my time in Senegal will have been a success. Being a CED Volunteer for the Peace Corps has meant many things: gaining experience working with entrepreneurs in a developing country, being challenged to bridge cultural differences for a common goal, and using information to empower people to manage their businesses and their lives. Through my work with Peace Corps, in trying to help people, I know I am a changed, and better, person. I believe that my two years in Senegal have given me direction in my life, helped me to become more patient, and of course, given me a perspective on the world and on life in general that I couldn't have realized anywhere else.

Rebecca Schwartz, Kaolack

My two years as a CED Volunteer in Senegal have meant the world to me. Looking back, I feel like I have accomplished much more than I had anticipated, and that is because our expertise as Peace Corps CED Volunteers goes a long way. Due to the nature of my work, I was able to see significant results in some instances, and little seedlings of long-term success in others. From advising the small neighborhood grocery shop to the large fruit processing cooperative, my work has been centered on teaching business owners the arts of planning, record keeping, and marketing, all in the hope of increasing efficiency and expanding their markets. Concomitantly, I've taught business planning classes and helped potential entrepreneurs get loans to start their businesses. I would not trade this experience for anything in the world. I sometimes wonder if it was me or the members of my community who learned more. Nonetheless, it was a very productive two years. I've learned to live and work in a culture that's very different from mine. I've gained personal satisfaction from helping small business owners and making a difference in their lives, and I have made a lot of friends with whom I will maintain contact for a very long time.

Charles Caldi, Kolda

Personally, I found it rewarding to work together with people on this brand new concept of ecotourism. What is it? And how can we make it work in our community? People are excited about all the possibilities this opens to them: eco-guides, welcome centers, environmental education for their children, and initiatives to make their

community cleaner. Encouraging people to be innovative! I found all these new ideas inspiring. The beautiful visions that came out of simple conversations and the steps taken to make these visions real -- these are the opportunities afforded by the CED program.

Jane Mitsch, Sokone

I see my job quite simply as helping people to rationalize their economic activities so that they get the most out of them. Whether it be helping a business association to analyze its target market or teaching an accounting/marketing class to youth, my task here is to help people think systematically about how to best use what they already have and already do and then to imagine the possibilities for improving that. Therein are the most challenging parts of the work: the job description is wide open and you are your only real resource; this is an opportunity. It is hard to believe that I have actually become accustomed to the Peace Corps lingo, but the real reward is to witness people's "empowerment." I have seen it happen.

Jose Rodriguez, Bakel

I consider myself one of the lucky volunteers. During my service, I've seen lots of the fruits of my labor -- the consulting business that an entrepreneur I worked with opened after attending a Peace Corps training; a new restaurant, where I taught business skills and trained them to use Excel for their financial records, which is turning hefty profits after only five months; a participant in one of my business classes who recently received a loan to improve his fish for peanut butter trade business. Sometimes results like these can take years. And for everything that I do where the results are immediate, there are plenty of other areas where I have invested large amounts of time that haven't resulted in anything. Yet. But I try to remember every day that the only one with a 2-year timeline is me. I'm not here to accomplish my own agenda. The projects I've been involved in haven't been initiated by me. I'm just a helper. A cheerleader. Someone with a different perspective. These aren't my accomplishments, they're the successes of the people with whom I work. And if the successes come during my 2 years or 5, 10 or even 20 years later, it's OK, because they're coming from the people themselves. I will never truly know the impact of my work here -- and that's OK. The more I remember this, the happier I am.

Jennifer Hawkins, Kaolack

When I talk to people in the States about working in Africa, I tend to give them the resume version: I taught a business class; I worked with women's groups to set up microfinance savings clubs; and I helped an association set up an accounting system. What I never manage to express to them is the feeling of camaraderie the half hour before my business class starts, having a glass of tea with my students. They can't understand the expression on one woman's face when she realized she doubled her own savings. They won't know how excited I felt when one of my students explained to his association how proper accounting should be kept. These are the things that won't go on my resume but that I will consider some of my life's greatest accomplishments and remember with deep pride.

Shannon Gordon, Tambacounda