

# New popular song promotes iodized salt in Senegal

**Isabel Pike** World Food Program, published on-line, 20 February 2012

DAKAR - Senegalese artist Ismael Lo is writing a song for World Food Program (WFP) Senegal on the importance of consuming iodized salt as part of a month-long campaign to combat iodine deficiency in the country.

“Despite the best efforts of WFP and its partners, only 36% of households are consuming adequately iodized salt in Senegal,” said WFP Senegal Program Officer Isabelle Dia.

Iodine deficiency has serious health consequences. It is the number one cause of goiter and increases a woman’s chances of having a child who is mentally or physically handicapped.

“We have decided to organize a one-month salt iodization campaign and thought that a song could be a powerful way to reach as many people as possible with our message,” said Dia.

During the campaign, the song will play several times a day on local radio stations and its lyrics will be in Wolof, the most widely spoken language in Senegal.

In order to understand WFP’s salt-iodization activities and write the song, Ismael Lo visited Lac Rose, a salt lake near Dakar named after its pink hue. In 2011, 4,000 tons of salt were produced at Lac Rose, then iodized with a WFP-supplied salt-iodization machine.



**Ismael Lo holds up a sack of WFP iodized salt**

“Before entering into this partnership, I didn’t know much about the benefits of iodized salt,” said Lo. “But now I know that it is essential to the health of everyone, especially young children and pregnant women.”

Those who work in the salt business at the lake were pleasantly surprised to receive a visit from the famous Lo.

“It motivates us to see him,” said Dame Gueye, who has been working at Lac Rose for 12 years.

“It is very good that he is telling people in Senegal to cook with iodized salt. Before there was iodized salt here, people here used to get many illnesses like goiter. Some couldn’t even swallow because of it,” he said as he dug for salt in the lake with a metal-tipped stick, the salt water keeping his body afloat.

Maguette Ndiour, the Secretary General of the Management Committee at Lac Rose, is sure the song will have an impact: “People will say, ‘If Ismael Lo says we should eat iodized salt, then we will eat it.’”



**Salt production in Senegal**