

PERSONAL STORIES

Souleymane Diouf: iodized salt entrepreneur

Aynsley Morris Micronutrient Initiative, Ottawa, Canada.



Souleymane Diouf, standing proudly in front of his iodized salt

Souleymane Diouf was struggling to make ends meet in Dakar, Senegal. He decided to return to his home community of Ndiémou to try his hand at salt harvesting. As an entrepreneur, he was chosen to be part of a joint Micronutrient Initiative (MI)-Cellule de la Lutte Contre la Malnutrition-Senegal Ministry of Health microenterprise project. He received guidance during the loan process to fund his idea to increase salt production and salt iodization. He underwent business training, developed a business plan and purchased equipment and land plots to expand and improve the management of his salt production field.

His hard work paid off, as he now employs over 60 people, mostly women,

and has a thriving salt production business with multiple plots. All the salt he produces is adequately iodized and is sold in Senegal and throughout West Africa. Senegal is the most important salt producing country in West Africa. Through its partnership, MI works primarily with smaller salt processors in Senegal, those who sell their salt at a lower price or barter and trade it for other goods, often to poorer families and communities who are the most vulnerable to micronutrient deficiencies.

Producers like Souleymane are organized into formal microenterprise groups, called “Groupements d’intérêt économique”, allowing them to share the costs of iodization equipment and potassium iodate. This helps producers reduce costs, ensure continued availability of crucial supplies such as potassium iodate, gives them access to a larger market and ensures that iodization is consistent. It also provides labour opportunities for hundreds of youth from surrounding villages so they can stay in their own communities where they have support networks, rather facing the uncertainty of moving to Dakar. It’s an economic development model that makes a significant impact on health.

Souleymane says that he is most proud of being able to employ the women who work for him and to see the benefits on their families and in his community as a whole. As the business grows, his employees can feed their families, buy schoolbooks and improve their quality of life.