

## CASE STUDY: Sédhiou Region, Senegal

# Encourage Returning Migrants to Invest in Rural Development to Improve Community Livelihoods and Empower Women

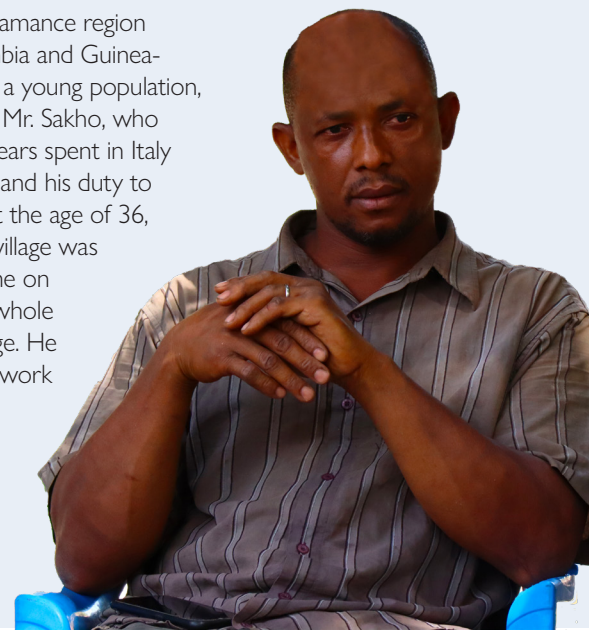
### Global Programme on Making Migration Work for Sustainable Development (M4SD)

**KEY WORDS:** entrepreneurship, business investment, women's empowerment, youth, returning migrants, rural areas, local development, community cohesion, food security

## MEET SÉCKO SAKHO

Sécko Sakho grew up in the village of Malifara (Bambali municipality), located in the Casamance region of southern Senegal, in the Sédhiou region – a small strip of land nestled between Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Though the Sédhiou region has a wealth of under-utilized agricultural assets and a young population, unemployment is high and people often move in search of work. This was the case for Mr. Sakho, who decided to leave his village in the hope of finding a better paying job abroad. After 10 years spent in Italy perfecting his agricultural techniques, he realized the potential of his home village's land and his duty to use his knowledge to improve the living conditions of his community. Back in Malifara at the age of 36, he observed the inhabitants with fresh eyes. Mr. Sakho found that every woman in his village was cultivating a plot of land in front of her hut and only generating small amounts of income on her own, while buying water in cans from the village's only well. He then gathered the whole community to tell them about his experience in Europe and his new vision for the village. He explained his plan to set up a banana plantation, and encouraged the village women to work together to develop their activities around an agro-ecological farm.

Despite a difficult start, his determination led to the planting of 1,500 banana trees and the creation of the "Fang Soutoutoo" Economic Interest Group (EIG), made up of 40 women and 5 men. The EIG has been granted a hectare of market-garden land close to the village. Nevertheless, access to water is still a major challenge to make the most of this land and extend the agro-ecological farm's activities.



## THE SOLUTION?

While some people who have left in search of higher-paying work choose to return to their home village with new skills, returning migrants are often confronted with challenges like accessing resources, a lack of information or opportunities to support the creation or development of their business. To meet this challenge, the Regional Development Agency (ARD) of Sédhiou acts as a business incubator or accelerator, supporting initiatives led by women, young people or returning migrants with strong potential for local growth and job creation.

The aim is to improve employment opportunities and livelihoods for migrants and local communities by encouraging investment in local improvement projects. By creating the conditions for inclusive growth, the ARD enables everyone, including young people, women and returning migrants, to become active players in local development and the well-being of their communities.



*“We want migrants returning to their villages to be able to pass on the knowledge they have acquired to members of the local community, and to become successful role models, highlighting the potential of our region.”*

**Mr. Nfaly BADJI – Director of the Sédhiou ARD**

# HOW IS IT DONE?

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

TARGET 17-16



ENHANCE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This is a whole-of-government approach involving multiple partners: **regional and local authorities** ([Sédhiou ARD](#), including the Help Office for Migrants, Office of Reception, Orientation, and Follow-up for Senegalese Living Abroad (BAOS) and the Sédhiou Departmental Council), **national authorities** ([Directorate General of Support for Senegalese Abroad](#)), **civil society** ([Grdr Migration-Citizenship-Development](#)), various **institutions involved in promoting employment** ([ANPEJ](#), [DER](#), [3FPT](#), [ADEPME](#), etc.) and the support of **UN agencies** ([International Organization for Migration](#) and [United Nations Development Programme](#)) to serve **local businesses**.

## 2 ZERO HUNGER

TARGET 2-3



DOUBLE THE PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOMES OF SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS

By supporting local economic co-development<sup>1</sup> initiatives, the incomes of small-scale food producers are increased, and local food production capacity is strengthened. As a result, the project promotes **food security for local communities through crop diversification and increased food supply**.

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY

TARGET 5-A



EQUAL RIGHTS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES, PROPERTY OWNERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

The approach aims to promote **women's economic empowerment**. 50% of businesses supported in the Sédhiou region are either run by women or employ a majority of women. While women already occupy a central place in the private sphere, their economic contribution is often perceived as marginal, despite the fact that they are essential players generating real income for the household and also promoting the economic well-being of communities, particularly in rural areas.

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

TARGET 8-3



PROMOTE POLICIES TO SUPPORT JOB CREATION AND GROWING ENTERPRISES

**29 individual businesses or economic interest groups** (27 men and 2 women, including 24 returning migrants) in the fields of crafts, industry, market gardening, fish farming or livestock breeding have benefited from equipment to strengthen their activities. This equipment helps to boost the productivity and income of these small businesses located in rural areas, stimulating their growth and their ability to create decent jobs in the region.

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

TARGET 10-2



PROMOTE UNIVERSAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INCLUSION

This project strengthens and consolidates **the role of returning migrants and the diaspora**, enhancing **their commitment to local development in their home regions**. Sharing migrants' knowledge and creating conditions conducive to their sustainable investment in the region contribute to the social and economic integration of the whole community.

<sup>1</sup> Co-development refers to any development aid action, whatever its nature and whatever the sector in which it takes place, in which migrants participate. Co-development can involve returning migrants or those who wish to return to their country of origin to set up a business, as well as those who wish to share their skills, know-how and networks with their country of origin.

# SUCCESS FACTORS

**TIP 1: Promote the creation of decent jobs in rural areas by targeting small and medium-sized businesses with high growth potential.** With one in every four people unemployed in Sédhiou in 2021, small and medium-sized enterprises represent an opportunity to create decent jobs in the region's priority areas: agriculture, livestock breeding and crafts. After identifying businesses with strong growth potential, this project provides financial support through the provision of equipment and technical support through training to these promising businesses. This support helps strengthen their potential and ensure the lasting success of these companies, as well as combat unemployment and poverty in the most remote areas of the country. Supporting these businesses helps to highlight local success stories and demonstrate the opportunities of sustainable local development.

**TIP 2: Establish clear and inclusive selection criteria and communicate them to local communities and returning migrants.** Through the implementation of predefined and inclusive selection criteria, the support provided by ARDs can ensure prosperity while avoiding potential conflicts over the choice of beneficiary companies. In fact, this support is offered to both returning migrants and local communities, provided that they have an active business in the Sédhiou region and a profitable, environmentally friendly business model. The transparency of these criteria and a communication plan supported by all the players involved help to win trust and community cohesion.

**TIP 3: Support the economic empowerment of women in rural areas.** This project has demonstrated that actions taken to promote women's economic empowerment and income diversification have an impact far beyond the achievement of gender equality. Women's economic empowerment, particularly in rural areas, contributes to poverty reduction, inclusive economic growth and community well-being. Women make an essential contribution to the economy, whether in business, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or through their unpaid work at home, caring for their families. By empowering women, this project reinforces the positive and lasting impact of their contribution to the community as a whole.

**TIP 4: Capitalize on the skills and knowledge acquired by returnees to benefit the community.** The technical and professional skills acquired by returning migrants in countries abroad represent significant potential for the countries from which migrants come. Their positive impact on local communities can be multiplied if the local government and their neighbours support them. It is therefore important not only to support their initiatives, but also to establish a relationship of trust with migrants who want to contribute to the development of their country of origin. To build this bond of trust, the Sédhiou Region has set up and recently updated the [HOM \(Help Office for Migrants\) interactive platform](#). This platform helps diaspora members and returning migrants to invest securely and sustainably in local development in the Sédhiou region, whether they live there or not.

## These activities have made life better for Mr. Sakho, the members of the EIG “Fang Soutoutoo” and their neighbours in Sédhiou



One morning while working among the banana trees, Mr. Sécko Sakho heard about this project on the radio. The very next day, he went to the ARD's office to get more information and submit his application (SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions).



With the support, he has created a mini-drill and purchased a tap and pipes to connect the new market gardens and banana plantation (SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure).

This new equipment purchased by the Sédhiou ARD benefits both Mr. Sakho and the EIG “Fang Soutoutoo” members by facilitating their activities, saving time and substantially reducing the arduous task of accessing water. (SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth).



Since then, the new equipment has brought many changes to the village. Mr. Sakho and the members of the EIG have decided to give free access to drinking water to the whole village, both to people and animals (SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation).



This support allowed the EIG to diversify their activities. Even if the EIG members continue to work on the banana plantations and the market gardens, the ARD's support has also enabled the development of new income-generating activities such as the manufacture of mango juice, soap and even honey. For every franc generated, half is deposited in a solidarity fund managed by the EIG members for future investments (SDG 5 – Gender equality).



Strengthened by the recognition of his work by his community, Mr. Sakho decided to organize a forum attended by 300 to 500 people from neighbouring villages to raise awareness of the difference between regular and irregular migration. The women members of the EIG Fang Soutoutoo contribute to this by testifying about the difficulties that their husbands or children faced when crossing borders in search of income for their families (SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities).

Together, the village of Malifara proves every day that a peaceful future is possible.

[Watch the video about M4SD in Senegal](#)

These activities are made possible by the IOM-UNDP Global Programme on “[Migration for Sustainable Development \(M4SD\)](#)”, which has been implemented in 11 countries between 2019 and 2023. The programme is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). To find out more about the work in Senegal, click [here](#).

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