



AJWS'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN SENEGAL

ENDING CIVIL WAR IN CASAMANCE

EVALUATING OUR IMPACT

AJWS CASE STUDY #2

COVER PHOTO: A member of Usoforal, a women's peace
movement supported by AJWS.
Photograph by Stefanie Rubin



Seynabou Male Cissé (far left), founder of Usoforal, with women activists striving for peace. Photo by Stefanie Rubin

American Jewish World Service is the leading international Jewish organization dedicated solely to ending poverty and promoting human rights in the developing world. Through philanthropy and advocacy, we address some of the gravest global problems of our time—genocide, violence against women, girls and LGBT people, abuses of land rights and the horrific consequences of natural disasters. Our 550 grantees in 19 countries are tackling these issues by advocating for lasting change in their societies and by building social justice movements that will have the strategies, strength and endurance to build a better world.

Over the past five years in Senegal, AJWS has supported 17 grassroots organizations building a movement to bring lasting peace to the region of Casamance, which has been plagued by violent conflict for over 30 years. To achieve peace and better the lives of the people, these groups are creating a culture of reconciliation and healing deep wounds left by decades of fighting.

This report presents highlights from recent research that measures the contributions they have made with AJWS's support.

OUR HISTORY OF SUPPORTING PEACE IN SENEGAL¹

- ▶ **5 YEARS**
- ▶ **\$1,163,340**
- ▶ **17 GRANTEES**

CASAMANCE: A CHRONIC CONFLICT, A DEVASTATED REGION

The world sees Senegal as a model of peace and stability in West Africa. Yet the little-known southwestern region of Casamance enjoys neither. For more than 30 years, violent political conflict has afflicted Casamance, claiming thousands of lives and displacing up to 60,000 people.²

The roots of this conflict are complex: Casamance is separated from the rest of Senegal both politically and geographically. Ethnic Wolof Muslims dominate the

¹This data on AJWS's support of the Casamance peace movement is current as of August 2015. The study, which took place in 2014, included 11 of these partners. In addition to our work in Casamance, we have granted \$1,150,396 to 15 organizations working on other topics in Senegal during this period.

²"Senegal: Freedom in the World 2013," 2013.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

AJWS takes stock of our work in order to do it better. In 2014, we collaborated with local researchers in Kenya, Senegal, Bolivia, Haiti and Peru to investigate our contribution to social change in these countries over time.

In Senegal, a leading consultant to social change organizations called **Conseils en Gestion, Etudes et Management Des Projets et Programmes (COGEMAP)** conducted this research. **COGEMAP** interviewed dozens of local leaders, activists and the very people our work has sought to help. The researchers evaluated what

our grantees and others in the peace movement have accomplished, what they need from us next, and how we can improve our strategies in response to the lessons we have learned from this work. We then vetted and shared the findings with our grantees, who are now drawing on this knowledge to sharpen their strategies as they pursue greater social change.

The resulting data is allowing us to even more rigorously evaluate and refine AJWS's strategies, maximizing our future contribution to the human rights movements we are helping to build.

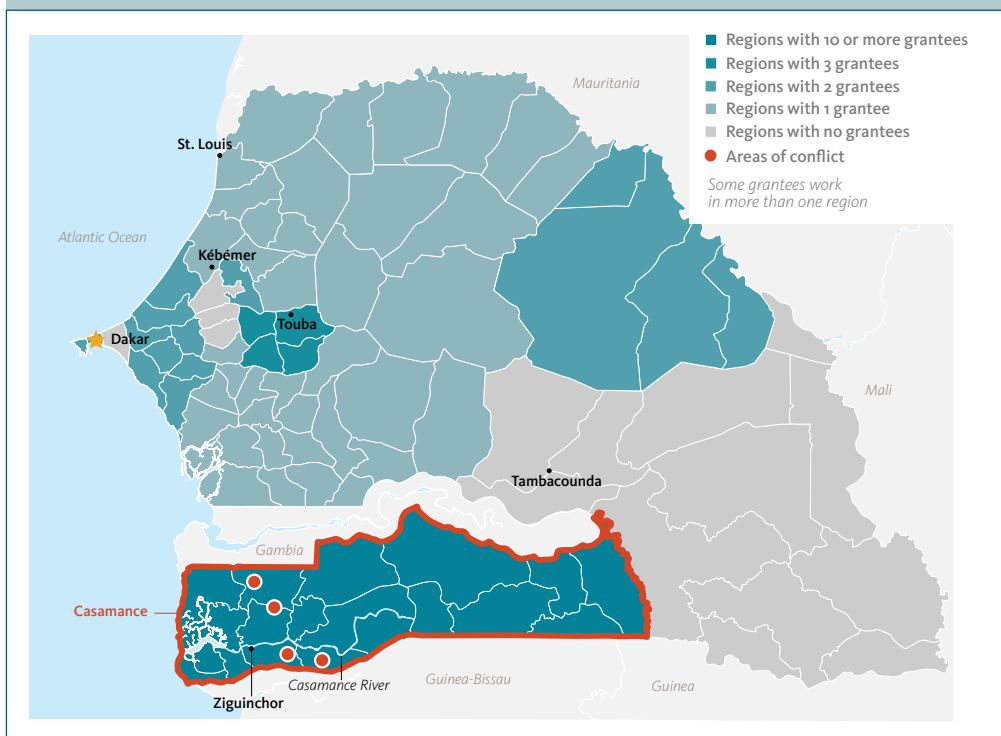
national government, while Casamance is home to numerous minorities: Diola Muslims, Christians and adherents of indigenous religions. In addition, the region is sliced off from the rest of Senegal by another country, the Gambia. As a result of these cultural and geographic differences, many people in Casamance felt isolated and excluded from Senegalese society, and over time, came to feel that the government did not represent their interests or meet their needs.

In 1982, tensions in Casamance reached a boiling point and a group of Diola rebels sought independence. They formed the Movement of Democratic Forces in Casamance (MFDC) and launched attacks on government forces and communities believed to be collaborating with them. In 1989, the conflict escalated: Tens of thousands of villagers fled, deserting their farms and livestock to take refuge in the Gambia and across the southern border in Guinea-Bissau.

In the years since, the combatants have signed at least four peace agreements, but hostilities have escalated following each one. A ceasefire was declared in April 2014 and President Macky Sall committed himself to negotiating with the MFDC. But these efforts have yet to show much progress. Although this is a relatively “quiet” war without heavy bombs or constant gunfire, years of intermittent fighting and

simmering tensions have taken a deep toll on the people. Leadership struggles within the MFDC and sporadic armed attacks between the government and the rebels have fractured and traumatized communities. Live land mines still litter rice fields and many farmers remain absent from their land, causing agriculture to languish. Disputes over land and livestock are common and the conflict has negatively impacted fishing, tourism and other businesses. Underpinning all of these problems is a deep lack of trust—village to village and neighbor to neighbor—left in the wake of the long war.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF AJWS'S PEACEMAKING GRANTEES IN SENEGAL



OVERVIEW: OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PEACE MOVEMENT

With funding from AJWS, our grantees have:

- Secured commitments from Senegal's leaders to prioritize peacemaking in Casamance
- Won a promised place at the negotiating table for representatives of the women's peace movement
- Multiplied the effectiveness of 210 small organizations representing 40,000 women under the umbrella of the PFPC, a women's coalition for peace
- Increased women's political power by training them in advocacy and electoral politics
- Freed hostages held by armed rebels
- Built cultures and institutions of nonviolence by promoting forgiveness and reconciliation and by training leaders, activists, teachers, youth and others in mediation and conflict resolution
- Used media, music, sports and social dialogue to restore community bonds and bring hostile parties together
- Drew alienated youth back into the community by promoting leadership, literacy and employment
- Rehabilitated war-ravaged farmland, fisheries and salt flats
- Distributed seed and livestock to farmers, especially women, and taught sustainable practices
- Jump-started environmentally sustainable businesses—both traditional and modern—by organizing collectives and providing equipment, training, and small grants and loans
- Worked to reintegrate displaced citizens and former combatants into their communities without reigniting conflict
- Created a coalition of nine peace organizations to provide strategy and leadership and ultimately represent civil society in the official peace process

AJWS: PAVING THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION AND RECOVERY

AJWS is supporting the peace movement in Casamance in every aspect of its struggle: pressing the government, the rebels and civil society groups to negotiate a lasting peace; creating a culture that relies on nonviolent conflict resolution and reconciliation; and rebuilding a vibrant economy based on traditional and new industries and trades that will improve families' standards of living, advance women's self-determination and sustain the region's natural resources long into the future.

SPOTLIGHT: POLITICAL SOLUTIONS POWERED BY WOMEN

CHALLENGE: While some women in Casamance initially joined the rebels or helped lay land mines, the majority of the fighters were—and continue to be—men. As these men fought, died and, in some cases, fled Casamance, their wives, mothers and sisters were left behind to feed their children back in the villages, struggle to survive in squalid refugee camps, and care for the sick and wounded. At the height of the conflict in the 1980s and '90s, many women

and girls endured rape and other brutality at the hands of warring parties.

At the start of the war, popular support for the separatists was high—including among women. But as the years passed by and it became clear that the fighting would not end anytime soon, a growing number of women began to decry the violence and prayed and advocated for peace. Unfortunately, widespread illiteracy and patriarchal traditions kept these female activists on the sidelines of major official attempts to end the fighting. They had the will to usher in an era of true and lasting peace, but they lacked the formal influence to achieve it.

ACTION: Seventeen years into the conflict, a former schoolteacher named Seynabou Male Cissé vowed to marshal Senegalese women's skills in mediation and nurturance to forge a peace movement. In 1999, she founded the grassroots organization **Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance** (known as **Usoforal**—which means “let's join hands” in the Diola language), which established local peace committees to resolve conflicts, direct reconciliation and negotiation, and engage women as community leaders.

Many women's groups sprouted throughout Casamance. But none alone could reach the ultimate goal: a politically negotiated, lasting peace. Then in 2010, Cissé and Diattou Diedhou, the leader of another group called **Kabonketoor**, decided to join forces. Two years later they launched **Plateforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (Women's Platform for Peace in Casamance, PFPC)**, a coalition that brings together groups working for peace. AJWS awarded **PFPC** one of its first grants, which enabled the coalition to draft a strategic plan, gain respect in the field and raise support from other international donors. Today **PFPC** includes 210 groups and represents more than 40,000 women. It trains women in communications, negotiation and advocacy; they regularly take to the streets in marches and prayer vigils; and they meet with rebels and government officials to negotiate peace.

During Senegal's 2012 elections, **PFPC** and its members led a campaign to urge candidates to commit to making peace in Casamance a priority. Frontrunner Macky Sall made this commitment. After he won the presidency, he reconfirmed his pledge and promised the women a seat at the official peace talks.

IMPACT: By 2013, this movement led by women was yielding dramatic results. When a rebel faction took hostage some individuals who were clearing fields of deadly land mines, **PFPC's** protest compelled the combatants to release them. In early 2014, PFPC gathered activists and politicians from across Senegal for a national symposium to build awareness and support for the peace movement in Casamance and keep pressure on the Diola rebels of the MFDC and government to put down their guns and talk. Senegal's first female prime minister, Aminata Touré—who has since left office—spoke at the symposium, lending gravitas to the gathering and the cause.

Through the political power they have gained, the women are moving the region toward real peace and a restoration of normal life. They are also challenging restrictive gender norms that formerly relegated women in Casamance to the sidelines.

LESSONS: There are many actors working for peace, but they don't always work together. **PFPC** has made a lot of progress since 2012, but to end the conflict once-and-for-all, it must build alliances with other civil society groups in Senegal to unite the country behind this goal.

Also, while women in Casamance have the potential to persuade enemies to break bread and heal rifts, they still have a ways to go to gain full equality inside the broader movement for social justice in Senegal. Fewer than one-fourth of the community-based groups our researchers surveyed make gender equity within their staff and in society overall an explicit goal. We know that women are powerful as both traditional mediators and modern political mobilizers, and it's essential for the Casamance peace movement to invest in making sure that more women can exercise this power.

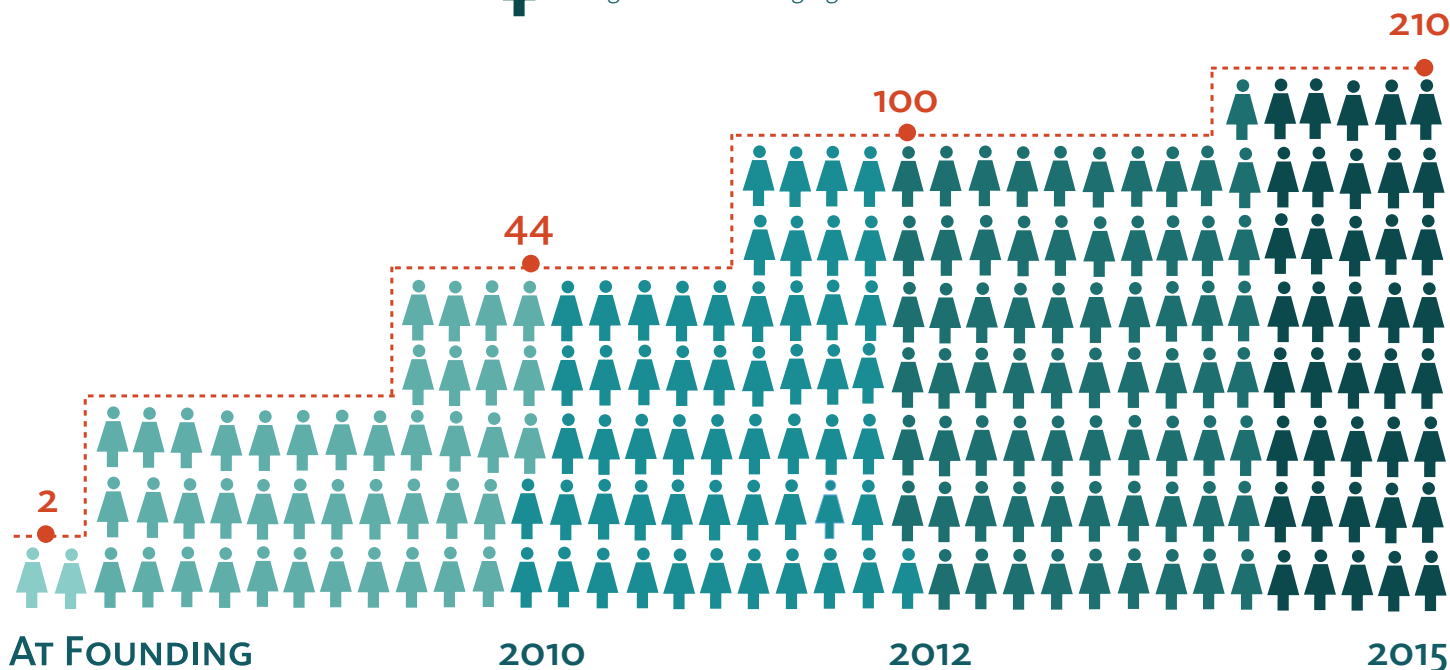
VISION: After this study was conducted, AJWS brought together AJWS grantees **PFPC**, **Dynamique de Paix en**



The first-ever women-led radio station in Casamance, founded by AJWS grantee UR Santa Yalla Photo courtesy of World Education.

GROWTH OF A WOMEN'S PEACE MOVEMENT: PFPC'S MEMBERSHIP

each  = 1 organization belonging to the coalition



Casamance (DPC), Enfance et Paix (EP) and a number of other local organizations to map out how they might unite their movement and kick-start negotiations while ensuring that women, youth and civil society groups are present to represent their important constituencies. These groups are pressuring the government and the rebels to resume the peace talks and they continue to agitate for an official seat at the negotiating table.

SPOTLIGHT: TEACHING RECONCILIATION, HEALING RELATIONSHIPS

CHALLENGE: The conflict in Casamance has splintered relationships—both intimate and communal. The years of fighting have frayed the social fabric and eroded trust and the cooperation that drew villages together. Youth have been alienated from their families. Today, though the hostilities have ebbed, serious challenges remain. People who joined the rebels now face accusations of having committed offenses and crimes and endure reprisals back at home. Communities with few resources are struggling to reabsorb refugees. And lingering antagonism and sporadic armed fighting continues to separate village from village, parent from child.

ACTION: AJWS supports organizations that are providing the salve to heal the war's interpersonal wounds. Grantees such as **Afrique Enjeux (AFEX)**, **Kabonketoor**, **Usoforal** and **World Education** are promoting dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation to mend the torn social fabric. They are training village leaders, advocates, teachers and students in communications and mediation skills that will enable them to address longstanding grievances without provoking flare-ups or vengeance.

Grassroots organizations are getting crucial conversations going over the airwaves through community radio stations. With the help of **World Education** and **UR Santa Yalla**, these stations are proliferating, many run by women or youth. Shows are produced in many languages to spread the reach of the programs in this diverse region. Early programming explored uncontroversial subjects like fishing. But soon, people were using the stations to exchange information about war-related problems like land mines, and now radio hosts broadcast open debates in which even rebel leaders express their views on air.

Other organizations promote activities that bond communities and foster goodwill between former enemies. The **Action Committee for the Development of the**

Palmiers/Narang Region (CADP) is reviving traditional social events like dances and wrestling matches and organizing Koran recitals where combatants pray together.

IMPACT: Little by little, life is returning to normal. People now speak openly about the conflict on the radio and with each other. Formerly dangerous zones are safe for travel. Students are befriending classmates from other villages whom they once refused to sit beside.

LESSON: In order to achieve a lasting peace, both the “big conflict” between the government and the separatist rebels and the myriad “smaller conflicts” between groups and communities harmed by the fighting must be resolved. The former demands a true commitment to peace by both the government and the rebel groups; the latter requires improved conflict resolution skills, a reopening of communications and a rekindling of trust between communities.

VISION: Casamance’s peace movement must increasingly reflect the unity slowly returning to this fractured society. In 2015, when AJWS convened our grantees and other peace groups to vet our research, this diverse group of women, youth and reconciliation-minded rebels all committed themselves to pursuing the common goal of peace together. They decided to create a coalition that will provide space for working out differences and will represent civil society in peace negotiations with a unified voice.

SPOTLIGHT: REVIVING LIVELIHOODS, RESTORING DAILY LIFE

CHALLENGE: Casamance is the bread basket of Senegal—an area rich in natural resources. But the ongoing conflict has severely affected its economy. Schools, homes and healthcare centers are damaged. Live land mines have kept farmers out of their fields. Due to the lack of safe grazing areas, farmers have allowed cattle to graze in other people’s land, destroying crops. Loggers have exploited the region’s vulnerability by illegally felling forests. And many returning refugees have found that their land was illegally purchased while they were gone. As a result, many people do not have reliable sources of food and frustrations over the theft and exploitation of resources continue to exacerbate the conflict.

ACTION: AJWS grantees have helped restore livelihoods and rebuild houses, schools and healthcare centers. **Construire la Paix par le Développement Économique et Social (COPI)** and its partners are helping women



ASAPID is restoring livelihoods disrupted by the conflict.
Photo by Lauren Di Silvio

rehabilitate communal market gardens and giving families goats, sheep and pigs to milk, eat and sell. **Association d’Appui aux Initiatives de Paix et de Développement (ASAPID)** is distributing seed to farmers and extending cheap credit to businesses. **Kabonketoor** and **Usoforal** are providing women equipment for manufacturing soap, dyes and vinegar.

These organizations are also rehabilitating businesses destroyed long ago. For example, in the Sindian district, **COPI** is recovering salt flats damaged or abandoned during the war, building hydraulic works and dams to keep salt out of fresh water and farmland, and training residents to manage these enterprises.

IMPACT: Economic development is helping to knit frayed communities back together and improve the overall quality of life. With a garden and livestock, widowed mothers can feed their children reliably. Wives don’t have to ask their husbands for money. Families can afford school supplies, expanding the prospects of both daughters and sons. Trade has encouraged travel and cooperation between once-hostile villages.

LESSON: Economic stability restores normalcy, abetting peace. As a leader of **Rural Development Action Group (GRDR)** put it, “There can be no peace without development.”

VISION: AJWS's grantees will continue to support stability and rebuild the region's economy, seed by seed and nail by nail. But their overarching goal goes beyond economic stability and peace. They seek equality and justice. One of our grantees summed up these aspirations when its staff told the researchers that they seek "to achieve a world without poverty or violence founded on transparent, fair and sustainable management and distribution of resources."

In the coming years, our grantees will take advantage of the recent relative calm in Casamance to deepen their efforts to address the social inequalities in the region. Their work will include ensuring fair distribution of land, addressing inequality for minorities and women and repairing the social fabric that holds this community together. They will also continue to demand negotiations and contribute to lasting peace.

BUILDING MOVEMENTS: A UNIQUE APPROACH

AJWS goes beyond grantmaking. To build movements, we:

- Offer multi-year grants, because sustainable change takes time
- Invest in nascent organizations and help them grow bigger and stronger
- Address the root causes of human rights abuses
- Bring clusters of similar and complementary groups together, enabling them to learn from experts and each other and build strong, united movements
- Promote our grantees in the media and foster their leadership on the international stage
- Ensure that women, indigenous people, LGBT people, religious and ethnic minorities and other groups remain at the center of all our social change efforts
- Conduct research and share our findings with grantees and fellow funders, strengthening the movements we're helping to build



ABOUT AJWS

Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, **American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS advances the health and rights of women, girls and LGBT people; promotes civil and political rights; defends access to food, land and water; and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. AJWS pursues lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and by mobilizing supporters in the U.S. to advocate for global justice. Working together, the AJWS community strives to build a more just and equitable world.



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