

A man with short, dark, curly hair is the central figure. He is wearing a bright orange, long-sleeved traditional garment with a decorative vertical line down the center. He is holding a black microphone to his mouth with his right hand and a smartphone in his left hand, which is raised high. The background shows a multi-story building with a balcony where several other people are standing, some looking towards the man. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting it is daytime.

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN SENEGAL

OUR MISSION

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is the leading Jewish organization working to fight poverty and pursue justice in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. By supporting hundreds of social change organizations in 17 countries and advocating for U.S. and international policies for human rights, we respond to the most pressing issues of our time—from disasters, genocide and hunger, to the persecution of women and minorities worldwide. With Jewish values and a global reach, AJWS is making a difference in millions of lives and bringing a more just and equitable world closer for all.



COVER AJWS grantee Y'en a Marre has built a powerful movement of youth speaking out against corruption and defending democracy. Founded by rappers and activists, they use hip-hop to fuel political engagement and encourage young people like Rim Ji to express themselves.

THIS PAGE With support from AJWS, women farmers in Casamance plant “peace gardens”—collective garden plots that generate income and help bring neighbors together to resolve tensions from the country’s longstanding civil war.

ALL PHOTOS BY JONATHAN TORGONNIK UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN SENEGAL

AJWS has worked in Senegal since 1993. Today, we fund 12 social change organizations—largely concentrated in the southwestern Casamance region, where communities are struggling to repair the deep wounds caused by over 40 years of violent conflict. As these grassroots organizations work toward achieving a just and equitable peace, AJWS is by their side, providing financial support, technical assistance, solidarity and an unwavering commitment to human rights.



ABOVE Gorée Island, a former hub of the Atlantic slave trade. Photo courtesy of Stefanie Rubin.

OUR GRANTEES IN 2023

Afrikki

Association de Développement le Gabou

Association des Juristes Sénégalaises

Ben Communication ZIG FM

Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la
Paix en Casamance /USOFORAL

Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes

Construire la Paix par le Développement
Économique et Social

Forum Civil

Initiative Solidaire des Actions de Développement

La Coordination sous Régionale des Organisations
de la Société Civile pour la Paix Casamance

Vision Citoyenne

Y'en a Marre



ABOVE: Fatou Diouf (right) is a Bajenu Gox—a "community godmother" in Dakar that works with the local government to handle family disputes, provide sexual and reproductive education, help women access medical services and much more. Through AJWS grantee Association des Juristes Sénégalaises, Fatou and other Bajenu Gox have trained as paralegals, so they can serve as a bridge between survivors of violence and AJS's legal services. *Photo by Maroussia Mbaye*



BACKGROUND: A Brief Political History of the Casamance Conflict

A MODEL OF PEACE AND STABILITY

In the 21st century, Senegal has built a reputation as a model of peace and stability in West Africa. A former French colony that served as a hub for the global slave trade for centuries, the country famously established a peaceful and democratic government in 1960, upon gaining independence from France.

Yet despite this peaceful façade, a bitter conflict has simmered and raged in Senegal's southwestern Casamance region for the last 40 years. This unending hot and cold war has ended thousands of lives and displaced more than 60,000 people, creating a longstanding human rights crisis in Senegal that remains unaddressed to this day. The conflict has gone largely unnoticed by the world at large, and it's been habitually ignored by Senegalese citizens who live in other regions, where issues of national concern like corruption, poverty and unemployment continue to take precedence.

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

Geographically and culturally, Casamance stands apart from the rest of Senegal. The Casamance region is a strip of fertile farmland—dubbed the breadbasket of Senegal—cut off from the remainder of the country by another nation, The Gambia. This break began in the 1850s, when French colonists settled in the north and

faced resistance from the people of Casamance in the south. To create a buffer from the struggle, they gave away the land in between to the British.

This divide led to a radical disparity in wealth and power. The French-ruled North prospered, while Casamance, the distant South, was abandoned. Despite long years of governmental neglect, the people of Casamance were able to live off of the richness of their land. And still, being deprived of infrastructure, health and education systems blocked Casamance from opportunities for greater economic development. These effects are still felt today: People in Casamance are significantly poorer than their fellow citizens. Over 66 percent live in poverty,¹ compared to 37 percent of Senegal's overall population (and even fewer in the urban capital, Dakar).² Casamance is, by far, the most economically underserved region in the country.

In addition to these physical and economic barriers, an ethnic and political divide separates the people of Casamance from other Senegalese. Senegal is a predominantly Muslim country, where 43 percent of the population is of Wolof ethnicity. Ethnic Wolof Muslims control the national government, and although the official language of the country is French, Wolof is the primary spoken language across all regions and between different ethnic groups. In Casamance, by contrast, roughly 60 percent of the population

ABOVE AJWS grantee COPI runs a school for youth who fled during the conflict in Casamance. Now that fighting has ebbed, COPI is ensuring that this generation can resume their studies.

¹ "Casamance Regional Development Pole." World Bank, 2013.

² "Poverty & Equity Brief, Senegal." World Bank, 2019.

belongs to a minority ethnic group called Diola, who either practice Christianity or subscribe to traditional Indigenous beliefs.³ This community is extremely underrepresented in the halls of power, and the entire region is often ignored by the central government.

Over the course of the last century, friction stemming from these great divides has escalated. Many in Casamance feel isolated and excluded from Senegalese society, and the central government has exacerbated this isolation by failing to provide adequate funds for public education, healthcare, infrastructure and more. Their neglect reinforces the idea that Casamance's well-being is not part of the national agenda.

GROWING TENSIONS LEAD TO VIOLENCE

In 1982, tensions stemming from the lack of proper representation and governance in Casamance boiled over. In a forceful bid for independence, members of the Diola community formed a rebel group, the Movement of Democratic Forces in Casamance (MDFC), that launched repeated attacks on government forces and any community they believed to be collaborating with the government.

Throughout the 1980s, the conflict spiraled: Rebel groups splintered and proliferated, and each flare-up of violence further devastated communities in Casamance. During the height of the fighting, rebels held entire villages hostage, pillaged homes, stole land and committed untold acts of violence against civilians. Tens of thousands of villagers fled across the borders, deserting their farms and livestock to take refuge in the

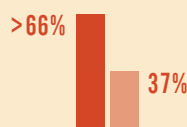
neighboring countries of Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. During the 1990s and 2000s, combatants agreed upon multiple ceasefires and peace agreements, but hostilities have resurfaced again and again.



An ethnic conflict has seethed in the Casamance region of Senegal for **40 years**, claiming thousands of lives and displacing **60,000 people**.



Live land mines scattered throughout rice fields have killed **more than 800 people** in the area, causing whole communities to abandon their lands and flee to neighboring countries.⁴



Casamance has the highest rate of poverty in the country—**over 66%**—compared to Senegal's nationwide **37%** poverty rate.⁵

LANGUISHING LAND, FRACTURED COMMUNITIES

The people of Casamance rely on farming, fishing and animal husbandry for their livelihoods, but the persistent unrest has fractured and traumatized communities. Because so many farmers fled, died or were robbed of their lands, countless plots in the region remain vacant or neglected, causing agricultural production to languish. Making matters worse, live land mines placed during the climax of the fighting still litter rice fields throughout the region, forcing farmers to risk their lives on a daily basis. Households in Casamance struggle to make ends meet, and many young people who lack stable job opportunities have resorted to smuggling arms and drugs or joining up with the rebel movements.

WOMEN FACE ADDITIONAL OBSTACLES

The conflict in Casamance has been especially hard on women, who have endured physical, sexual and psychological violence during the many flare-ups of fighting. In addition to these abuses, many women

lost their male relatives and became the heads of their households as a result of the conflict. With little education or training, women have faced enormous difficulties feeding their families, educating their children, owning and maintaining land and property and ensuring the security of their communities (a role managed by men prior to the conflict). These burdens became heavier as the volatility in the region increased.

³ "Country of Origin Information Report—Senegal." Refworld, 2010.

⁴ "No End in Sight to Casamance Conflict." The New Humanitarian, 2015.

⁵ "Poverty & Equity Brief, Senegal." World Bank, 2022.



MODERN CHALLENGES IN CASAMANCE: AJWS grantees take a stand

Today in Casamance, AJWS's grantees are working on three key issues central to healing the deep rifts in this region:

1 Addressing the Root of the Conflict: Representation

The most recent cease-fire in Casamance was declared in April 2014, which led to a period of relative calm. However, victims of the conflict have yet to see justice for the crimes committed against them by rebel groups and Senegal's military—including forced displacement, arbitrary arrest, disappearances and sexual and gender-based violence. To date, rebels and soldiers that perpetrated human rights violations during the war have enjoyed complete impunity.

All the while, the root cause of the conflict remains unaddressed: The people of Casamance continue to experience grave social and political exclusion in comparison with the rest the country, lacking access to power and proper representation. In fact, the cessation of active fighting has allowed the central government to abandon the region even more completely. Without violence to subdue, the government has taken to

ignoring Casamance altogether, absolving itself of responsibility for the existence of the conflict in the first place.

In 2013, a window of hope opened for the struggle for good governance in Casamance. Senegal's government instituted a reform to its governing structure—called “Act III of Decentralization”⁶—that effectively redistributed power from a central federal government to 45 regional departments. This has enabled communities in Casamance to elect candidates that represent their own interests, govern themselves and finally have access to power at the national level.

2 Establishing a Local Peacebuilding Movement Led by Women

To bring an end to the conflict in Casamance, many AJWS grantees—particularly women's groups—have taken peace negotiations into their own hands. Organizations like **Construire la Paix par le Développement Économique et Social (COPÉ)**, **Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (USOFORAL)** and **Association**

ABOVE Women from AJWS grantee USOFORAL are working to ensure that women's voices are prominent in the Casamance peace process.

⁶ “L'acte III de la Décentralisation: Ministère de la Gouvernance Locale.” Accueil, 2013.

Régionale des Femmes pour la Recherche de la Paix en Casamance (Kabonketoor) have capitalized on women's roles as traditional mediators and modern political mobilizers in Senegal. They've established local peace committees to resolve conflicts among rebel groups, pushed for progressive and inclusive peace toward and integrated these strides towards peace with programs to support women's economic and social empowerment.

In the last decade, two of these AJWS grantees, **USOFORAL** and **Kabonketoor**, recognized the need to foster partnership and organization among the women's peacebuilding groups that had proliferated in Casamance. Together they launched **Plateforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (PFPC)**, a coalition that brings together groups working for peace. Since its launch, PFPC has grown to include 210 groups that represent more than 40,000 women. They train women in communications, negotiation and advocacy; regularly take to the streets in marches and prayer vigils; and they bring rebels and government officials to the table to negotiate peace.

3 Achieving Gender Parity in Government and Civic Life

While women were leading the way to peace in Casamance, they were still drastically underrepresented in both local government and the national parliament. To rectify this, several AJWS grantees began advocating for a law that would guarantee a place for women in the halls of power. And in 2010, Senegal finally passed a Gender Parity Law requiring political parties to guarantee that at least half of their candidates are women. **Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF)** and **Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS)**, played instrumental

roles in advocating for the passing of this pivotal legislation, and they are now defending adherence to the law and calling for sanctions against parties that refuse to abide by it.

Yet even with this revolutionary ruling, the barriers to women's political participation remain staggering. In Casamance, women have faced disproportionate exclusion from education, economic opportunity and recognition in society. The majority of women in the region are illiterate; most struggle to make a living and feed their families; and many do not have government-issued identification, which makes it impossible for them to vote—let alone run for

office. And as is often the case, unequal divisions of household duties and societal expectations create additional hurdles for women hoping to take on leadership roles.

Thus, in order to successfully participate in local governance, women must overcome high rates of illiteracy, learn budgeting skills and civic education and have the means and training to launch effective campaigns.

Fortunately, AJWS grantee partners, including **CASADES (The Council on African Security and Development)**, **Enfance et Paix** and more, are bridging gaps in women's education and access to opportunities to earn a living, vote and lead. They are teaching courses on financial literacy and establishing

community lending programs to jumpstart small women-led businesses. They are ensuring women's access to proper identification, running voter registration drives and teaching courses in civics. And they're educating women about the Gender Parity Law and preparing them to run for office. These organizations are also training newly elected women and young people so that they may be more effective leaders.



Only **40%** of adult women in Senegal are literate, compared with **65%** of men.⁷



As a result of the Gender Parity Law, the percentage of parliamentary seats held by women jumped from **23%** in 2010 to **43%** in 2012—and that rate has remained steady since.⁸

⁷“UNESCO Global Partnership for Girls’ and Women’s Education: Senegal.” United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017.

⁸“Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments.” World Bank, 2018.



4 Overcoming Barriers to Peace and Democracy

For the conflict to end once and for all, peace must become a national priority. But significant barriers exist, despite the powerful strides being made by local women's groups in Casamance. National Senegalese NGOs have done little to support their counterparts in Casamance—remaining, at best, indifferent to the issue. Corruption, poverty and unemployment also plague the country, and so most Senegalese living outside Casamance don't view the conflict there as a high priority.

Additionally, the government has created an environment that strongly discourages activism and political organizing—both of which are prerequisites for bringing peace or effecting any other significant change in Senegal. Over the last five years, Senegalese authorities have banned several peaceful demonstrations and arrested protestors and activists,⁹ and the state has repeatedly intimidated and harassed journalists and artists in attempts to silence their criticisms and stifle opposition.

Legislators have amended the Criminal Code, making it illegal to distribute content on the internet that the state defines as “contrary to good morals”—for instance, in 2017 a well-known journalist was arrested and held for weeks simply for sharing a political cartoon critical of President Macky Sall¹⁰—and they've lengthened the number of days a person can be held without trial.¹¹ To truly squash dissent, they've broadened the definition of “terrorism” to include speaking out against the government.

Activists who publicly call for change have been labeled as terrorists in the media by government officials—a tactic designed to threaten and deter those who publicly criticize the government. And still, civil society groups and social movements are refusing to back down. Members of AJWS grantee **Y'en a Marre**, a national pro-democracy youth movement, has run extensive “get out the vote” campaigns and ensured that voters are not turned away at the polls. They are committed to fighting for justice in Senegal so that their generation can someday enjoy the full promise of democracy, peace and prosperity—in Casamance and throughout the nation.

ABOVE Activists across Casamance work to bring about peace, build trust among communities and revitalize the land.

⁹ “Senegal 2017/2018.” Amnesty International, 2018.

¹⁰ “Freedom in the World 2018—Senegal.” Refworld, 2018.

¹¹ “Senegal 2017/2018.” Amnesty International, 2018.



ABOVE After decades of civil war in Senegal's Casamance region, AJWS grantees are working tirelessly to promote peace and help people rebuild their damaged homes and lives. Here, plastic bottles become a new house and a fresh start.

OUR COMMITMENT IN SENEGAL

AJWS is committed to supporting the growth of strong Senegalese grassroots movements to build a more just and equitable society for all. Our grantees are:



Working to secure the safe return of refugees from neighboring countries and reintegrate displaced citizens and former combatants into their communities



Using radio, music and sports to restore community bonds and bring hostile parties together



Collaborating across borders to advocate for sustainable peace in West Africa



Facilitating dialogues between communities of different ethnic backgrounds to build trust and create a shared agenda for achieving peace



Mobilizing communities in Casamance to join local peacemaking efforts, particularly those led by women, and advocating for the inclusion of women in national peace talks



Building alliances between groups led by women to create a strong, unified women's movement



Adama Mbengue—seen here in her office and speaking with constituents and AJWS staff on the previous page—is the third Deputy Mayor of the Gueule Tapée District in Dakar. She is the first-ever woman in this post. A graduate of AJS's "Feminization of Politics" initiative, which offers trainings for women interested in leadership positions, Adama is now working to bring gender parity to voter rolls. *Photos by Maroussia Mbaye*



Empowering women to vote and gain leadership positions in local and regional government



Advocating for greater representation of Casamance in the Senegalese government and lobbying the government to ensure that a just resolution of the conflict is a national priority



Organizing women's agricultural collectives and providing them with equipment, training and small loans to help them achieve economic stability



Fostering democracy by supporting voting and civic engagement, particularly among youth



Overcoming the government's suppression of dissent and defending activists who are arrested or harassed for speaking out

**\$11.6 million invested
in Senegal since 1993**

AJWS GRANTEES IN SENEGAL: A Closer Look

The social change organizations we support in Senegal are making progress against tremendous odds. Their stories show how grassroots activists are empowering local people to bring about change and achieve justice—in Casamance and for the entire nation.



Neighbors Awa Djiba (right) and Mama Jamma resolve conflicts in their community by bringing people together to plant and harvest vegetables.

Planting seeds for reconciliation in Casamance

COPI

Construire la Paix par le Développement Économique et Social (Building Peace through Economic and Social Development)

In a garden in Casamance, sprouts poke hopefully out of the soil. They are the simple beginnings of carrots, onions and radishes. But they represent so much more than food. The women who planted and nurtured them—like Awa Djiba, pictured here—are recovering from 35 years of fear and violence.

RETURNING TO LAND RAVAGED BY WAR AND MISTRUST

The long conflict between rebel groups and government forces that killed thousands and forced more than 60,000 people to flee their homes also severely impacted the area's economy. Though Casamance is the bread basket of Senegal—an area rich in natural resources and primed for agricultural production—fields were abandoned and crops neglected during the conflict. As a result, many people do not have reliable sources of food, which has continued to exacerbate tensions.

“We left because we feared for our lives. The gunshots would go all night. We didn’t know if the rebels would kill us or not.”

— AWA DJIBA

After a ceasefire in 2014, residents of Casamance began to return to the lands and villages they had fled. Yet a deep distrust lingers among neighbors, borne of differing loyalties during the war.

GARDENING FOR PEACE

To advance peace, an organization supported by AJWS called **Construire la Paix par le Développement Économique et Social (COPI)** has started to help women rehabilitate “peace gardens”—communal plots of land where women can grow vegetables together. They’ve also given families goats, sheep and pigs to milk, eat and sell. As they sow, tend and harvest, the women connect. And they finally begin to heal. Awa Djiba is from the village of Janje in Casamance. During the war, she fled her home to bring her nine children to safety in a neighboring country, The Gambia.

“We left because we feared for our lives,” she said. “The gunshots would go all night. We didn’t know if the rebels would kill us or not.”

When Awa returned five years later, she had to continue to live side by side with people who supported the rebels during the war. Thanks to the peace gardens, she and her neighbors have been able to begin to put aside their suspicions and fears. Their conversations over soil and seedlings nurture connection and understanding. And the income they make selling their crops has improved life in the village, reducing some of the tensions that sparked war in the first place.

LOCATION: Casamance

WEBSITE: www.copifogny.org

AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: \$205,000 since 2012



Seynabou Male Cisse, Director of
USOFORAL and cofounder of PFPC.

Women join forces to build a movement for peace in Casamance

PFPC

Plateforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (Platform of Women for Peace in Casamance)

TWO LEADERS SPARK A MOVEMENT

In September 2010, two influential women leaders joined together to bring peace to Casamance. Seynabou Male Cissé, president of **USOFORAL**, and Diattou Diedhou, director of AJWS grantee **KABONKETOOR**, spoke at a United Nations meeting in Dakar about women and peace. At the meeting, they realized that their organizations could make a significantly stronger impact if they worked together. They decided to create a coalition to unite the many women's peacemaking groups that had sprung up throughout Casamance.

The new coalition, Plateforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (PFPC), has since grown to include 14 coalitions representing more than 25,000 women who have mobilized to take action.

WIELDING STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Since their founding, PFPC members have organized thousands of women to hold prayer vigils and marches through a grassroots protest campaign that they hope will finally bring an end to this conflict. They have conducted trainings on communication, negotiation and advocacy skills throughout the region, and they've put pressure on warring parties to engage in dialogue.

"Through solidarity, we can improve [the situation in Casamance] because we are more organized and in touch," said one of PFPC's activists. "We can bridge the gap."

RESPECTED BY COMMUNITIES AND REBEL GROUPS ALIKE

In just a short time, PFPC's actions have caught the attention of communities in Casamance, elected officials and even rebel forces. In May 2013, when a rebel faction

took several hostages, PFPC organized a silent protest walk that drew thousands. Later that week, the rebels released three of the hostages.

PUTTING THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT ON CASAMANCE

Their approach has already started fueling change. During Senegal's 2012 elections, PFPC persuaded the presidential candidates to promise to prioritize peace in Casamance if they were elected. In June 2012, then newly elected President Macky Sall met with the coalition members and reaffirmed his support for peace, and he even invited women from Casamance to participate in the negotiation talks. Although the peace talks have since stalled and Sall's promises appear to have been empty, PFPC has not given up.

"Through solidarity, we can improve
[the situation in Casamance]
because we are more organized and
in touch. We can bridge the gap."

— PFPC ACTIVIST

During the 2019 presidential elections, PFPC was able to persuade four of the five candidates to gather at a forum and discuss peace in Casamance. Missing from the table was Macky Sall, who ultimately won reelection. Yet despite Sall's absence, the forum was still a success—PFPC was able to draw national attention to the situation in Casamance, marking an important step in the struggle to bring visibility to the conflict. Only with public awareness and national support will an equitable peace process take root and flourish—PFPC is laying the groundwork for this dream to become a reality.

LOCATION: Casamance

WEBSITE: www.sunupfpc.org

AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: \$441,400 since 2012



COUNTER-CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Elizabeth Sagna, the first woman elected to her village council in Brim; women meet as part of USOFORAL's credit-sharing program to help start small businesses; Maram Sambou, president of this women's credit federation.

Cultivating women's leadership

USOFORAL

Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (Regional Solidarity Committee of Women for Peace in Casamance)

Big things are happening in the small dusty village of Brim in southern Casamance. In 2014, Elizabeth Sagna, 49, won a seat on her village council, where men had been making the decisions for decades.

Elizabeth has called Casamance home for more than 20 years. She has witnessed the conflict firsthand—seen it uproot entire families and ravage the land and livelihoods of local people. Most of all, she's seen the decades of fighting take a drastic toll on women. Elizabeth witnessed widespread domestic violence and child abuse in her community, and when many men fled during the fighting, women were left behind to care and provide for their children alone. Troubled by the suffering of women around her, Elizabeth decided to fight for their rights.

FOSTERING LEADERSHIP

In 2009, Elizabeth was invited to a meeting organized by AJWS grantee **USOFORAL**, a grassroots organization that has forged a peace movement in Casamance by training women to understand their rights and become leaders in their communities. Founded in 1999, USOFORAL (meaning “Let’s join hands”), believes that rural women—who are traditionally seen as mediators in Senegalese society—can be catalysts for peace and long-term prosperity in Casamance and beyond.

Since getting involved, Elizabeth has turned to USOFORAL for mentorship, financial support and leadership opportunities. In 2011, the organization supported Elizabeth to participate in the World Social Forum in Dakar, where she was able to meet and learn

from delegates from all over the world.

“USOFORAL opened many doors for me,” said Elizabeth. “They paved the way for me and showed me the way.” Most importantly, USOFORAL helped Elizabeth build her confidence. As a single mother of two, Elizabeth said USOFORAL acted as her family. “They taught me to look a person in the eyes.”

CHANGING THE REALITY FOR WOMEN

When Senegal’s parliament passed a landmark law in 2010 that requires all political parties to ensure gender parity in electoral lists for all elected representation at the local and national levels, USOFORAL staff encouraged Elizabeth to run for a seat on her village council.

With USOFORAL’s backing, Elizabeth emerged victorious, along with many other women across the country. Following the 2012 national election, women’s representation in parliament almost doubled—from 23 to 43 percent—and, following the 2014 local elections, the number of women in local legislatures nearly tripled, from 16 to 47 percent.¹²

After winning, Elizabeth quickly rolled up her sleeves and used her new platform to advocate for the needs of women in her community. Men on the council opposed her and made sexist remarks, but this only emboldened Elizabeth to double down on her efforts. Her tenacity eventually convinced the council to allocate funding so women in the community could acquire a plot of land and build a mill grinder there, which will save them hours of labor each day.

Elizabeth continues to work hard to unite women in her community and ensure their concerns are heard. But she also has her sights set higher. One day, she hopes to become the head of her village council, so she can deliver even more change for women in her community and country.

LOCATION: Casamance

WEBSITE: www.usoforal.sn

AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: \$754,580 since 2010

¹² Tørraasen, Marianne. “Gender Parity in Senegal—A Continuing Struggle.” Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2017.

Enough Is Enough: Youth rise up for social justice in Senegal

Y'EN A MARRE

FED UP WITH INJUSTICE

In the summer of 2011, the streets of Dakar filled with young protesters who could no longer stand the economic and social problems they had witnessed throughout the country. Many young people were outraged about rampant government corruption, frequent power outages, strikes that closed down schools and the escalating prices of basic commodities. They called for new leaders and joined others in accusing then-President Abdoulaye Wade of mismanaging their country.

Many of the protests were led by a group of young, influential rappers and journalists. All in their 20s and 30s, this group came together to transform the rage and desperation they felt into action. They aimed to fix the problems they saw in their country, using hip-hop as a way to involve youth in social change. Capturing their mood and stance, they called themselves **Y'en a Marre** (YAM)— French for “Fed Up.”

TAKING MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS

“We repeated the words ‘Y'en a marre’ to keep from feeling that we were sealed in by the futility of our lives ... as a mantra for bringing a mass movement into being,” wrote Fadel Barro, a founding member of the organization. “Within it, individuals would become more conscious of their own personal power, be willing to unite with others and then take bold grassroots action for the good of the whole community.”

The group ran voter registration drives that mobilized over 300,000 young people to vote. Their dynamic campaign of music and public art is credited with

unleashing a surge of support that ousted President Wade from office—and made YAM a household name representing youth’s hopeful vision for the future. Today, as widespread corruption, authoritarianism and economic inequality persist in Senegal, YAM continues to speak truth to power. “The more they try to shut our mouths, the more people want us to speak,” says Aliou Sané, Coordinator of Y'en a Marre.

“All we have to get us where we want to go is our words. Our words will move us forward.”

— **AROO**, *Founding member and mentor, Y'en a Marre*

FINDING THEIR VOICE

Pioneers in using hip-hop to engage young people in activism, YAM’s leaders are some of the most beloved rappers and political activists in Senegal—and now, they’re training the next generation to speak out. AROO, a founding member and an acclaimed Senegalese rapper, is helping young people find their voice. At YAM’s youth center, he and his team mentor young adults from one of Dakar’s poorest neighborhoods to use hip-hop to channel their frustrations into art.

“We’re not interested in rapping about money or fame,” says AROO. “We rap about politics and rights.” Over the last decade, YAM has inspired the creation of many other movements in Africa, bringing its powerful model to an even larger scale. One of these is **Afrikki**, a pan-African platform where social movements led by young people can come together to exchange ideas and advocate for change. AJWS now funds Afrikki’s efforts to mentor new youth-led social movements to defend democracy across the continent.

LOCATION: Dakar & Nationwide

WEBSITE: www.yenamarre.sn

AJWS FUNDING HISTORY: \$543,346 since 2011



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Y'en a Marre (YAM) founding members AROO (left) and Pabou Gate use hip-hop and rap to engage young people in politics and social responsibility; Mira, a female rapper in a male-dominated industry, says YAM has given her a voice and the confidence to express herself; ADNE, a famous Senegalese rapper, participates in YAM's monthly Cypher rap freestyle competition. *Photos by Maroussia Mbaye*





BEYOND GRANTMAKING: How Does AJWS Make a Difference?

AJWS provides financial support and more to strengthen social change organizations and larger movements. To accomplish this, we:

- Support grantees for multiple years, 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 each other and from experts in order to build strong, united movements
- Promote our grantees in the media and foster their leadership on the international stage
- Ensure that women, Indigenous people, LGBTQI+ people, ethnic and religious 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, advancing the field of human rights and development

ABOVE A large group of people disabled by land mines convened at a government agency to receive birth certificates—a critical document that many people in Casamance lost during the war or were denied due to discrimination. AJWS grantee Initiative Solidaire des Actions de Développement helps survivors of the mines defend their rights and access critical services they need to recover and thrive.

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ABOVE Dakar, Senegal.
Photo courtesy of Joshua Fried



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