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UN Community Volunteer Fatoumata Gaam (centre) visiting the women entrepreneurs she assists in developing their fishery products processing business in Bargny, Senegal.

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Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable groups in Senegal

COVID-19 has had major economic and financial repercussions on the populations, particularly on vulnerable groups. The United Nations System in Senegal, under the leadership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is collaborating on a COVID-19 Platform to Support the Productive Sector of Vulnerable Groups. Five UN Community Volunteers have been recruited to provide support in implementing the project in the communes of Ndiassate, Monrolland, Ndiob, Bargny and Sandiara.

The UN Community Volunteers represent the UNDP in these communities and are responsible for implementing the project at various levels. They assist in identifying small and medium enterprises with small initiatives and support them in organizing their projects. They also help in the preparation of local meetings held by UNDP and the Agence de Développement et d'Encadrement des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises and ensure that entrepreneurs receive all the information they need to operate. Each UN Community

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Volunteer is in charge of four SMEs

"In the commune of Bargny, people tend to forget about the vulnerable groups when it comes to access to financing. Most of the entrepreneurs are in the informal sector," says UN Community Volunteer Fatoumata Gaam. "Through my work, I presented them with opportunities, including those of the COVID-19 Platform Project, and encouraged them to become formalized. Thus, some women have organized themselves into economic interest groups."

“ I work with the entrepreneurs to develop their business in pastry, local cereal and fishery products processing. I monitor and ensure compliance with the fund utilization plans that have been established for each small and medium enterprise. --Fatoumata Gaam, one of the UN Community Volunteers

In addition to these activities, the UN Volunteers create awareness in communities about the pandemic and self-protection. They took part in the training of 250 youth from the five communes in how to communicate about the risks and community involvement, thereby allowing them to pass on the message to the populations on COVID-19 prevention measures. According to Baboucar Faye, operating in the Sandiara commune, their biggest challenge is to get through the pandemic with the fewest possible cases. "Thanks to the assessments we did within the communes, 35,000 vulnerable persons from the five communes received personal protective equipment from the project." He says

UNDP Resident Representative, Ms Amata Diabaté believes that the partnership with the UNV programme is very productive, as it helps to strengthen the UNDP work at the local level, while developing the spirit of volunteerism and civic engagement.

“ UN Community Volunteers are our "go-betweens" on the ground and help make it easier to interact directly with people we assist when we do regular follow-ups. Moreover, because they come from the very communities in which they serve, they have established a climate of trust that is so needed in this project. --Ms Amata Diabaté, UNDP Resident Representative, Senegal

Ten months after the pilot project launch, 2,085 people in the five communes have been directly served, and more than 65 per cent of these were women who benefitted from employment that was created or consolidated.

“ The challenge now is to make sure that the small businesses funded by the project are sustainable. The most sustainable development is the one the communities create for themselves. That’s why we are sensitizing communities to support the entrepreneurs’ initiatives. --Jérôme Nicolas Boissy, a UN Community Volunteer serving the Ndiob commune

The COVID-19 Platform Project increases the resilience of vulnerable communities through decentralization and local development. Already, 20 small and medium enterprises have received grants totalling 120 million CFA Francs. The project will continue until 2022.



• Senegal • COVID-19 • Coronavirus • UN Community Volunteers

Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 1: No poverty** **SDG 3: Good health and well-being** **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth** **SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**