



SUCCESS STORY

Island Welcomes Safe Drinking Water

A remote island builds a pump, gets safe water



Photo: USAID/Richard Nyberg

Binta Seck, right, fills her water container at the end of a day in the rice fields.

“I’m very proud of this pump. Before, my family couldn’t afford to buy water from the mainland, but now we have good, clean water – for free. My family comes here to fill up every day, and we’ve never had a stomach ache drinking this water,” said Binta Seck, a mother of six.

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Abdou Diatta has a new task on Senegal’s remote island of Carabane. He guards the pump that brings safe drinking water to inhabitants of the Casamance region’s former colonial capital. From morning to night, he opens the gate and unlocks the pump to allow people to fill their buckets and bottles. Some stop by just for a drink. It’s hard for people here to believe, but this water doesn’t make them sick.

For decades, the 500 people living on Carabane Island — an old stopover along a slave trade route to the Americas — have bought drinking water from the mainland. Motorized canoes, called *pirogues*, hauled it in from Elinkine, a small town about a half hour away. Elinkine’s water supply was also a result of USAID assistance, which helped rehabilitate its two wells. In Carabane, water costs 60 cents for 20 liters — or about \$35 a month for family of 10. Rice farmers and fishermen could not afford this, so they chose to risk getting intestinal diseases and other illnesses from contaminated water. And many did.

Village chief Ibrahima Gueye was one of them. He had searched for solutions for a long time, when he learned of a USAID project to train local pump manufacturers. After raising some funds, he hired the pump technicians and the craftsmen trained through USAID. They installed a pump

from an old motor scooter wheel, plastic pipes, and other locally-available parts a month later. “Since we’ve had this pump, diseases related to contaminated water have disappeared and potable water is available for all,” noted Gueye, who said the pump has been his greatest success as a village chief.

But you don’t have to take his word for it. Water samples were sent to Dakar and France for testing — the results confirmed its safety. Also, the pump is so popular that the good news has traveled swiftly by pirogue to the nearby islands of Diogu , Kassel, Saloulou, and Niomoune, which have sent in requests for the locally-produced pumps. With USAID-financed technical training, local craftsmen have constructed and sold 90 pumps and 100 tube wells since 2004, benefiting over 7,000 people. With their new know-how, local manufacturers are helping every day to deliver potable water supply for Senegalese villages.