



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Enriching Nutrition in Senegal

Despite being a major producer of cereal in Senegal, Seno Palel, a region of about 425,000 people in the country's extreme north, also has high rates of undernutrition—22 percent of the children are underweight and nearly 18 percent suffer from stunted growth.

The problem: Apart from staple grains, there's not much else to eat. Due to the harsh climate, the few vitamin-rich fruits and vegetables that are cultivated locally are expensive and rarely become a regular part of villagers' diets.

One solution: vitamin-enriched flour. In 2012, staff from USAID's Yaajeende Food Security Project, part of **Feed the Future**, the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, began to test the market for fortified food products and iodized salt to gauge the level of interest in Seno Palel and its surrounding villages. Surprisingly, demand was much stronger than anticipated.

Enriched flour—which essentially blends regular corn flour with other pulverized, vitamin-rich ingredients like black-eyed peas, peanuts, millet, jujube and baobab, can be found in larger urban areas, but not in rural areas where the high cost of transportation makes regular use by villagers too expensive.

In response, USAID began engaging community nutrition volunteers (CNVs) to train women's groups to enrich their own flour. USAID's Feed the Future agro-nutrition project trains CNVs like 43-year-old Raky Mamadou Niane, who works with 15 women's groups in the villages around Seno Palel in the Matam region.

Together, 225 women of Seno Palel have established an enterprise known as *Jab Gollade* (The Working Women) to produce a nutritious, and reasonably priced, enriched flour mix.

"From the outset, we found that we couldn't keep enriched flour in stock and customers were buying up everything that we could get our hands on," said Adrien Ndour, a USAID staffer in Seno Palel who trains nutrition volunteers like Niane. "Sales went up so drastically, we began to have problems maintaining the stock."

Using enriched flours to combat moderate and chronic malnutrition is not a new phenomenon. However, typically these flours have been provided by humanitarian agencies like the World Food Program. This is the first instance in Senegal where USAID has supported a local group undertaking commercial production of enriched flour as a revenue-generating enterprise.

Local demand for the flour mixes is strong because the activity is being conducted in concert with a package of activities aimed at changing the nutritional habits of women and young children in the village. USAID has organized 15 mother-t-to-mother groups, groups of 10 to 15 women who get together and share key information about maternal and child health and nutrition.

CNVs have also held a series of community meals in the villages during which people sample new foods, practice preparing nutritious recipes, and learn about nutritional issues such as the importance of ensuring that salt is iodized.

After two years of working together, these groups are now launching a range of income-generating activities like vegetable gardening, livestock raising, and the commercial production of enriched flour.

Fabricated using a range of formulas developed by USAID nutritionists, the enriched flours are mixes of locally available ingredients. Although the most popular flour is used to create porridge that is fed to infants and young kids, adults are now modifying it for use in their own morning *lakh*, a local cereal made of yogurt, cereal flour and sugar.

"The people are finding that it is more filling, better tasting and easier to digest than their traditional porridge," Niane said. "They feel better after they eat it."

"We are noticing that children who are eating the enriched porridge are having fewer problems with diarrhea," said Bineta Bocoum, one of *Jab Gollade's* founding members. "And it's not only good for them, it tastes better too. They like it so much

the children are refusing to eat traditional porridge. And they're getting fatter."

Binta Diafara Daff, a local mother, has been using the flour since December 2012 when she took her 15-month-old son, Dewel Boucoum, to the local clinic and found out that, at 13 pounds, he was malnourished and at risk for long-term health problems. Daff began feeding Dewel 100 grams of the flour mixes three times a day. Within three months, Dewel had gained more than five pounds, bringing him up to the normal weight for his age.

"I don't have to take him to the hospital so often," Daff said. "He isn't sick as much as he was, and that means I'm spending less than half of what I used to in doctor's fees."

Dewel's case is part of a larger trend.

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