

le mandat

Peace Corps Senegal ∴ Community Economic Development ∴ Winter / 2014





Greetings!

Sustainability is one of the challenges of Peace Corps work. Each of us hopes that our impact will outlast our time here. And for a community that's perpetually in transition, continuity is another challenge. It's difficult to achieve under continuously changing circumstances.

This issue of *Le Mandat* is the fourth since the current editorial team took the helm, and the next issue will likely begin the transition to a new editorial team. Happily, several of the most recent volunteers have expressed interest in continuing to produce the newsletter. Heck, we've already corralled one of the newbies into writing an article for this issue.

Thanks again to everyone who contributed articles and photos to this issue—Diane, Kelly, Tim, Joyce, and Lily and Anthony—as well as Connie Luthardt for telling us about her post-PC life.

If you want to help continue the *Le Mandat* tradition, let us hear from you. To those of you who are soon to finish your service and helped make Le Mandat a success during your time in Senegal, many thanks and best wishes for the future.

-Greg

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Managing Editor

Greg Porter

Assignment/Copy Editor

Anthony Scavone

Layout Editor

Lily Grabill

Contributors

Kelly Blodgett Joyce S. Lee
Diane Ferry Tim Johnson
Lily Grabill

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Front cover: Watermelons in Thies. photo by Joyce S. Lee

Inside cover: Lampoul, Senegal. photo by Lily Grabill

Back cover: Soap-making in Kounkané. photo by Diane Ferry

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Cash Cows

Every day, a round of women sit under a tree across from the market in Dahra. They hug their plastic tubs and make chitchat while waiting for passersby to buy the milk they collected earlier that morning. Their challenge is to sell all of it by the end of the day, or else it will sour under the unrelenting sun. Their supply does not always meet the demand. Meanwhile, a herd of cows strolls by, blocking traffic on the national highway.

Cows wander through just about anywhere in Senegal, past classrooms, through the market, under windows at dawn. Yet despite the abundance of cows, Senegal imports 80% of the milk it consumes. So where is Senegal's milk?

"It depends on the season," says Aminata Ka, one of the women in the informal milk cooperative who sell milk in Dahra. "After the rainy season, I often dump some of it out because there are not enough people who buy it. But the rest of the year, we never have enough to offer." They sell the lush, unsterilized milk in clear plastic bags at 300 CFA per liter.

The milk industry is not stable, Ka

comments, but it constitutes a rich tradition in Senegal. According to the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development, 30% of people herd cattle in Senegal. It's not just about the income earned from selling cows that attracts pastoralists; it's the culture behind the traditional lifestyle of leading and following the wandering cattle.

However, while beef is commonplace at many a dibiterie, Senegal's dairy industry faces a slurry of challenges that hinder it from producing,



commercializing and profiting from the cows' milk.

Glass half empty

The dairy industry suffers from a



ghastly production deficit: the cows do not produce as much milk as they could. For example, those belonging to the seven formal dairies in the Linguère Department currently produce at 6.29% of their capacity, reports La Maison du développement locale (MdL) in Linguère. They are undernourished since their nomadic lifestyle restricts them from gaining a reliable diet of nutrients. Lost in the Fouta, they are also often not vaccinated from disease. In France, cows produce 30 to 50 liters of milk a day. In Senegal, the average cow produces about three liters.

When there is milk, it is difficult to collect from the middle of the hot countryside, let alone to store it long

enough for it to reach the market. A batch of milk will only last so long on a charette or the back of a car before it sours. The milk industry needs refrigerators, refrigerated trucks and hence electricity to prolong the shelf life enough for the stock to reach urban demand. But those who traditionally milk cows live in the hottest most isolated parts of Senegal where the nearest electricity is beyond reach.

However, seeing Senegal's rich potential as a milk supplier, Nestle, the sweets conglomerate, sought to reconcile the collection problem and built a series of milk refrigeration centers in the Linguère department in the 1990s that line the national

highway. Everyday, pastoralists would sell their product to the refrigerated centers, where it would sit hygienically until a Nestle truck would swing over to buy it.

But Nestle has since abandoned the centers, buying its milk instead from Ghana, where it is cheaper. Djiby Ka still keeps the center up and running in Dahra, selling to travelers passing through Dahra on their way to Dakar. He says he still makes a profit, but not as much as he did when he had a huge buyer.

Which brings on another obstacle: fresh, Senegalese-made milk is much more expensive than the alternative in powder form. The market price of a liter of fresh, sterilized milk is 500 CFA, which is almost twice that of the imported, enriched milk at 289 CFA.

The future of milk?

To drive down the price of milk and boost the production, Senegal's milk industry will need to make a few changes. MdL recommends product diversification to reconcile the gap between the supply and the demand. During the rainy season, they encourage small dairy owners to transform the surplus milk into cheese and butter, which they can conserve and sell later when the flow of milk has dried up.

MdL also encourages stabilizing the cattle herds to remain in one place where there is access to healthier feed and a single milk-collection station. In fact, the Agence Régionale de Développement (ARD) of Louga and MdL plan to install a dairy factory in Dahra, where cows can live and be milked all in one place. The farm does not align with the pastoralists' lifestyle, but it is a start for those wanting to capitalize from their herds. In addition, a program through the government is also importing

new, healthy cows from Europe with whom they can breed a new generation of productive cattle.

Despite the efforts, will Senegal's milk reach mass consumption in the near future? It is "improbable", wrote Awa Diallo, the President du Directoire National des Femme en Elevage du Senegal, in a memo presented at the New Delhi Roundtable on Milk. However, she added, "it is possible to address the needs at the local level and thus contribute to improving rural incomes and the supply of food in both quantity and quality."

One veterinarian turned entrepreneur is determined to work against the odds to build a milk business that is both profitable and embraces the herding tradition. In 2006, Bagoré Bathily launched La Laiterie du Berger, a dairy company dedicated to the development of the milk produced in Senegal under the brand name, Dolima, meaning, "give me more" in Wolof. The business model commits to incorporating local pastoralists by setting up an efficient collection network.

They collect over 2,500 liters of milk from more than 900 dairy farmers each day. Today, about 4000 clients enjoy the yogurt and other milk-transformed products of Dolima, reports La Laiterie du Berger. Balancing profitability and the social benefit is difficult, but Bathily is committed to staying in Senegal. In October 2012 La Laiterie du Berger was recognized by the African Leadership Network in Accra, Ghana, with the Africa Award for Entrepreneurship.

Still, at the moment, most of Senegal's milk is less nutritious, on the brink of spoiling and expensive, so why buy it in the first place? The powdered stuff may be cheaper and more accessible, but when you drink the real stuff, says Djiby Ka, "you can taste the land." •

Ecotourism

Tim Johnson, Mboro

Tale of Two Campements

Mboro is well-known for its vegetables and some of the most scenic views Senegal has to offer. But if you're looking to enjoy any of this and stay a night, your options are wide and scattered. Among the best of them, besides crashing with a PCV, are campements. Along the sketchy, broken-down, one-lane road to the beach, there are two campements that stand out among the rest. Niayes Campement and WAOU Mboro offer two different experiences for two different types of tourists. Despite their proximity to each other and the relatively small size of Mboro's tourist base, it's focusing on these different types of tourists that has kept both campements in business. Senegal itself attracts different types of tourists. Places like Saint-Louis, Popenguine and Mbour attract vacationers with a taste for luxury. Mboro can accommodate luxury tastes as well, but it also attracts tourists with a taste for ecotourism.

International tourists

Campement de Niayes, aka 'Chez Nicholas,' is a well-groomed site where your rich French friend/relative will probably fit in better than you. On first arrival, one can see that very little of the place feels Senegalese. Ecotourism

Although the main bar and restaurant are decorated with local artisanal goods and art, the organized and neat scene of groomed palm trees and raked sand lies in stark contrast to the bustling Mboro market just one kilometer away. This escape and calm organization is certainly what attracts many European, Australian, and American guests. Campement de Niayes is "customer oriented," in striving to fill a vacationer's every need. The setup is deliberately western, with a sparkling pool and wide European liquor selection. Established only two years ago, Campement de Niayes has not had many opportunities to include the Mboro community in its tourist activities. Local cultural excursions are limited to the request and whim of guests, not many of whom are ecotourists. Nonetheless—and relying only on print and word-of-mouth promotion—the campement boasts consistent business in all but a few slow months before December.

Ecotourist destination

More secluded off the beach road, unsuspectingly sits WAOU Mboro. Again owned and operated by a French man, clientele are limited to those who can at least say "une nuit." With an outdoor bar, chalk

board menu, and simple thatch construction, it is immediately evident that the clientele of this establishment are after something more authentically Senegalese. Nicholas and his Coté d'Ivoirian wife operate the establishment and together they make locality a priority. Excursions and immersion experiences are offered to guests on a regular schedule. As campements go, WAOU Mboro is of the "locality oriented" persuasion. When CED APCD Amar Sall brought the CED trainees to WAOU in October 2013, Nicholas explained that it is not his objective to cater to every western taste and desire.

As we sat in his circular meeting place/restaurant he explained that life in Senegal is very unique and things happen at a different pace. He does not want tourists coming to his establishment looking to sit in their rooms, watch TV and shut out the culture. He wants people to experience this pace and find out about this country. His target demographic is mostly those travelling within Senegal and those looking to see *ci dëgg dëgg* "real" Senegal. This means his business has no distinct seasons for business and markets mainly through friends who have had great experiences staying at WAOU.

Cultural and economic exchange

Although nothing can compare to staying in a Senegalese home, campements that are managed with an eye to ecotourist principles have

the ability to bring tourists close to the culture in the same way a home-stay would. One of the attractions of ecotourism is the ability to learn about and experience aspects of the local culture.

Ecotourism draws vacationers and travellers to Senegal who want an experience. The financial incentive to draw those tourists is gigantic. Nicholas estimates that someone who comes to Mboro for eight days will spend about 300,000 francs on food, transportation, lodging, and artisan goods. There are numerous unfilled niches along the ecotourism value-chain representing opportunities for local entrepreneurs and small businesses. As seen by de Niayes and WAOU, both a customer orientation and locality orientation to campement operation bring in prized tourists to a developing Mboro industry. •



Left: WOUA Mboro
Above: Campement de Niayes
photos by Tim Johnson

Handicrafts

Diane Ferry, Kounkané

Soap Story



One of the many things that has baffled me during my time in Senegal is why my family is constantly out of soap. Every couple of days around evening shower time I hear “Where’s the soap???” yelled across the compound, to which somebody else replies “WHAT DO YOU

MEAN THERE’S NO SOAP????!! I JUST BOUGHT SOME!!!!” I’m fairly certain I will never understand how one family can go through soap so fast. I mean, I’ve been working on one (big) bar for two months. My counterpart, on the other hand, used this mystery to launch an incredibly successful business.

About six years ago, Mama Ndatu Diallo’s women’s group chose her to attend a soap-making formation in Dakar. At the formation the women learned how to make laundry soap and bath soap from shea butter and palm oil. Upon returning, Kounkané’s new trade school hired her to teach soap-making classes to young women. Mama Ndatu saw an opportunity to use her teaching salary to jump-start her own soap business. Each time she received her paycheck she bought a couple soap moulds or other necessary equipment until she had amassed enough materials to begin producing on a relatively large scale. She capitalized on the fact that nobody in Kounkané was making inexpensive, quality soap.

Since then, Mama Ndatu has become known as the soap woman in Kounkané and Diaobe. Her soap has become wildly popular and batches sometimes sell out in days. The popularity of her product is attributed to two main factors: affordability and the fact that it’s locally made. One big bar of soap is roughly the size of a bar of peanut soap, which is significantly larger than the more expensive bars of “toubab soap” sold in boutiques. One bar of soap costs 500 francs, which is more costly than peanut or yellow soap but, because locally-made shea butter soap is perceived to be better than other varieties, people don’t mind forking over the extra 200 or 300 francs.

How does she afford to sell quality, artisanal soap at such a low cost? Because it is relatively inexpensive to

produce: The raw materials in one mould of soap cost roughly FCFA 3,750. There 15 bars of soap cut from each mould, so the input into one bar is 250 francs. Mama Ndatu sells each bar at a 50% profit margin, which is nothing to sneeze at. NGOs also contract her occasionally to teach women’s groups how to make soap, which adds to her soap-making income.

Since November of last year, I have been working alongside Mama Ndatu and encouraging her to grow her business. My *anciennes* had worked with her and taught her the “4 P’s” of marketing and I picked up where they left off. Last year, for the second year in row, Mama Ndatu took her products to the annual Kolda Foire and made a killing. The previous year she sold out before the fair was over, so last year she doubled the amount of product she brought and sold the majority of it. Not long after the fair, though, Mama Ndatu began her usual complaints about how she had no money to buy more raw materials for another batch of soap. As far as I knew, she had only bought a new pot for cooking soap with the fair money. Confused, I asked her where the proceeds from the fair went. “I ate it,” she replied, as though that was the obvious answer.

After this incident, I began brainstorming ways to encourage Mama Ndatu to improve her cash flow and separate personal expenses from business expenses. After four months of wracking my brain for ideas, I finally wrote “Soap Money” on an empty pill bottle and gave it to her. I asked her if she thought it would be a good idea to keep all the proceeds from her soap sales in the bottle, and then use that money to buy raw materials every time she made a new batch of soap. She thought it was a great idea and took to it immediately. I, meanwhile, watched dumbfounded as her cash flow efficiency increased tenfold. After months of trying to think up

a grand scheme, all it took was a pill bottle.

Now that we have our cash flow problem managed, the next challenge is to work to change Mama Ndatu’s attitude towards her business. Mama Ndatu, despite her success, sees her soap making as a way to bring in a little extra cash, not as a business or as a job. Consequently, she has kept her operations small and frequently complains about not having work. Whenever I insist that making soap is her work, she gives me that, “Oh, honey...” look, as though I’m a little bit dense.

Despite this mentality, I’m convinced that one day she will view her operation as actual work, instead of a hobby that happens to turn a profit and eventually end up with a soap-making empire. In the meantime we’ve been

working together on product development. My literacy and computer skills trainings have turned out to be quite an advantage to product development. There is a plethora of soap making websites to glean ideas from. So far, we’ve created Moringa soap, thanks to PC Ghana’s recipe and whipped shea butter, thanks to CED volunteer Hattie Hill’s suggestion. Next on the list are soaps made from hibiscus, baobab, mint and honey.

If you, too, have noticed that soap disappears in your community at lightning speed, it’s worth pitching soap production to a women’s group or individual looking for a way to make some extra cash. Not only will you have squeaky-clean neighbors, but your work partners will have a few more francs under the mattress. •



A soap-making training in Kounkané.
photos by Diane Ferry

Waste Management

Kelly Blodgett, Velingara

The Good in Velingara: Trash-free Public Spaces

Trash in public spaces is nothing new. We see it in every city around the world and while it is present there are things that we can do besides looking the other way to minimize its presence. The real trick is figuring out which methods work better than others and how to get the public to tread the fine line between respecting the new social norms and just taking advantage of them.

My counterpart, Amadou Balde, has dedicated a majority of his time for the last four years to working with the Peace Corps and trying to find solutions to the ever-so-present waste problems in Velingara. Without any sort of waste pick-up service being offered in Velingara before Peace Corps involvement, a volunteer dedicated her service to starting one in her corner of the city which eventually grew to about 115 houses/businesses during my service. While houses are becoming more *propre* (clean) the streets, parks, and public-service buildings are left to fend for themselves. When I asked Amadou why he wanted to help clean up the public spaces of Velingara, he said, “What sense does it make to have

clean compounds and dirty streets? If Velingara is good, people will want to come.” (The name Velingara stems from the Pular words *veli*, meaning good, and *ga*, meaning here.) Having clean spaces for kids to play and the community to be proud of is an attainable goal and we don’t see why his GIE can’t be the forerunners in the movement.

The idea for public trashcans started in casual conversation when I asked Amadou what he thought the next step of the GIE would be. Expanding into more houses and businesses throughout Velingara was a given but cleaning up areas that people use to pray, gather on holidays, or merely pass on their daily walk to the market seemed more innovative and a challenge that we were willing to accept.

Amadou and I designed the trashcan units after some research that I did online of what public trashcans looked like in western countries. It was something that I didn’t think I would have had to research, but since the concept of public trashcans doesn’t really exist in Senegal it was

something that had to be done to determine which model would be the best for Velingara and why.

There were a few different design options that were considered before we settled on one style. We could do one large dumpster, though the actual act of retrieving the waste would have been difficult, determining that two large trashcans next to each other in one container worked better for our specific situation. We considered having the trashcans inside a wooden box because of the cleanliness of the design, with holes on the top to deposit waste, but we ruled this out as it would have been difficult to keep clean. That led us to metal. To keep costs down, we decided on cages versus a closed container using one padlock to secure the trashcans inside the cage and another to attach to a

fixed object, such as a tree, to prevent theft of the entire unit.

With the first couple of prices that were quoted to us, we left the meeting ‘agreeing to disagree.’ Once we did a little more homework and figured out a more reasonable quote (determined by the price of metal and the quantity that would be needed in each unit), we settled on price that was both reasonable for us and profitable for the local metal worker.

Since Amadou was born and raised in Velingara I trusted him with the task of determining where the trashcans would be located. There were the obvious sites along the main road of Velingara, which passes the city park, banks, the bakery, the Mayor’s Office, the Prefect’s Office, the Gendarmerie, the Post Office and a major hotel;

other sites include the main market road and the road along the basketball courts and soccer field. While the sites are temporarily under construction due to Velingara getting a paved road thanks to the Millennium Challenge project, the installation is being put off until the new road is complete. We are working with the Mayor’s Office and the US Embassy to receive funding to cover a portion of our costs; waste removal is supposed to be built into the city budget.

We are excited for the chance to improve the looks of Velingara, and with the support and cooperation of the community, we feel as though it is going to be a huge success. A community is a reflection of its people and we don’t want the trash in the streets to block out all the great things that this community has to offer. •



Streets of Velingara
photos by Kelly Blodgett



Crashing Markets Medieval-Style: The (In)famous Hajj of Mansa Musa

Anthony Scavone, Kedougou

With the world the way it is in 2014, it's hard to imagine that any of the perceived machinations of our modern financial system, such as market crashes, are actually as old as civilization itself. But it's true: market crashes didn't begin in the 1920s. Although the recent crashes are much more public and widespread, commodity markets have been booming and crashing for hundreds, even thousands of years. In fact, one of the most (in)famous market crashes of all history occurred in medieval Egypt, and was brought on by a Malinke king.

The Malian Empire of West Africa was formed in the early 13th century from the exploits of Sundiata Keita. The empire continued to grow and expand over the next century, eventually giving rise to its tenth king, Musa I. Musa I, better known as Mansa Musa ("Mansa" meaning "king of kings"), is argued by some to be one of the richest men to have ever lived. In addition to his material wealth, however, he was also a very devout Muslim and, like all devout Muslims with means, decided during his reign that it was time to embark on his pilgrimage to Mecca, his *hajj*.

It is safe to assume that one of the wealthiest men of all time would embark on his *hajj* in style, but accounts of the procession of Mansa Musa across the Sahara are astounding by any measure. His entourage is said to have numbered somewhere in the neighborhood of sixty thousand, around twelve thousand of whom were slaves. He also brought with him a large amount of currency to get him through the trip. In those days, in the kingdoms of West Africa, the currency was gold.

Accounts vary as to how liberal Mansa Musa was with the massive amount of gold concealed in his entourage, but regardless of the metric used the numbers are noteworthy. Sources claim that he gave alms (as a devout Muslim does) to the cities of Cairo, Mecca and Medina: twenty thousand gold pieces, each.

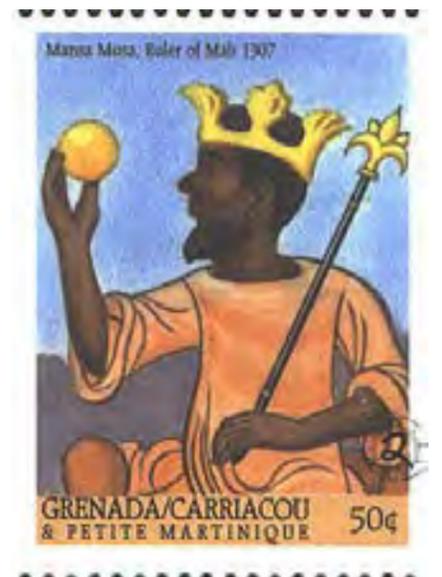
Mansa Musa's alms were well received at the time in the areas he visited, but his generosity had unforeseen and severe negative repercussions for all three of the cities. The Cairo gold market, one of the biggest gold markets in the world at the time, crashed. It had fallen victim to the same moral paradox experienced centuries later by many African countries in the early years of post-WWII international development projects: charity and free goods affect supply and demand, and can cause catastrophic price busts in the already existing market for those goods.

The shock from the alms was bad, but the markets recovered over time. Mecca and Medina returned to normal, but Cairo's problems were just beginning. Despite Mansa Musa's vast wealth, he hadn't correctly budgeted for his trip and by the time he came back through Cairo he was broke. In order to continue financing his journey home, he borrowed incredible amounts of gold at high interest rates from the Cairo gold traders, to be repaid once he returned

to his empire in West Africa. Upon his return home, Mansa Musa repaid his debt with interest... in one lump sum. When his repayment hit the Cairo gold markets, they crashed a second time. For the markets, it was an epic boom-and-bust cycle. For the residents of Cairo, it was just another of the inflationary episodes that followed in the wake of the Malian king.

The story is amusing, but also quite telling. For centuries those who have tried in earnest to assist others who were less fortunate have continued, on occasion, to fall victim to the unforeseen consequences of good intentions. Alms, charitable donations, free-spending tourists and the like are most often well intentioned, but don't always have the desired effect. Although the days when a single man and his entourage could *accidentally* bring down gold markets in three major cities are past us, the lesson must not be forgotten. Wealth, power and charitable assistance can do more harm than good, and so we must approach our charity with prudence, foresight and the knowledge that we need more than good intentions to help those who need it. •

photos courtesy of Anthony Scavone





Where are they now

Constance Luthardt, RPVC 2012-14

So what happens when an “older” PCV COSes? Well, if you are lucky enough to be retired, maybe you can end up on a Greek island like me! OK, so most of you aren’t ready to think about retirement yet. But it’s not too soon to dream about it and start planning for it. Coming home from Senegal to my husband Klaus (who spent 10 months with me in Senegal) and our cozy little home on the island of Kefalonia was a great joy for me!



Having a home in Greece had been a dream of mine since I first visited the country with my Greek father when I was 25. A piece of advice: hold onto your dreams and you may have a good chance of seeing them come true, as I have. In fact, serving in the Peace Corps was also one of my longtime dreams since the creation of our organization in 1951; fifty years later, I became a CED volunteer in Senegal.



Top: Luthardt at the beach in Greece. Center: View of Kefalonia from the homecoming ferry. Bottom: RPCV Joe Girard with Luthardt and Klaus.

On July 23, 2013, my COS date, I flew to Athens. Klaus met me with a big hug and a long-stemmed red rose. It took me weeks to shake off my jet-lag, fatigue, and the dust of Senegal—both physically and mentally. Luckily, summer was still in full swing. Living on a Greek island means you have plenty of amazing beaches to choose from, and it is our habit to go to one of them every day in the summer. This I did with great relish after living for almost 2 years in a coastal Senegalese town but never feeling comfortable going swimming as a woman alone.

In addition to our daily revitalizing beach outings, summertime life in Greece means lots of festivals, all

with good food, plenty of beer, local wines, bouzouki music, Greek dancing, and good company. (Despite the continuing economic crisis in my adopted country, when times get tough, the Greeks go dancing!) August is especially festive, as we celebrate the Virgin Mary’s dormition (passing away) on August 15. Our neighboring village of Markópoulos is famous for the “Church of the Virgin Mary of the Snakes.” A big festival revolves around the fact that for many years, “holy” snakes, small and harmless with a natural cross on their heads, are miraculously seen only on or about August 15; they allegedly bring good luck and are said to have healing powers.

After the summer waned, Klaus and I prepared for our annual trip back to the U.S. to visit our 6 kids, 9 grandkids, and as many good friends as we could fit into our schedule. We spent 2 months there and enjoyed Thanksgiving with some of our kids and grands. I arranged a Third-Goal event at my granddaughter’s high school French class, where Klaus and I gave a presentation and photo show of our life and work in Senegal; interestingly, several of the students asked afterward how they could apply to Peace Corps and what the requirements were. Needless to say, I appreciated their enthusiasm! All in all, it was a great trip, but a bit hectic.

A word of caution as you think about your own COS date: as I had heard from other RPCVs, almost no one wants to hear about your PC experience for more than about 5 minutes. Basically, most of our family and friends have no frame of reference when one starts talking about life in an African village. Amazingly, very few people asked us about the work we did in Senegal. Most people seem to think we are either very brave or quite crazy—perhaps they are right in both cases. Otherwise, being in the U.S. has lots of wonderful things to offer, including real showers, food without rice, toilets that actually flush, and most of all, reuniting with loved ones—priceless!

I wish all of you the best of luck with the rest of your service and especially with your readjustment to life in the good ol’ U.S. of A. (or wherever you choose to be) and whatever you choose to do once you get there! •

Calendar

Dates to keep in mind

February 13-14
All-Volunteer Conference

February 15-17
WAIST

February 17
Presidents’ Day—Peace Corps office closed

February 19 – March 4
Ag/AgFo/CED PST 2

March 5 – May 9
CED/Health PST

April 3-7
Village Visit

April 4
Senegalese Independence Day—Peace Corps office closed

April 21
Easter Monday—Peace Corps office closed

May 1
International Labor Day—Peace Corps office closed

May 26
Memorial Day—Peace Corps office closed

May 29
Ascension—Peace Corps office closed



Peace Corps Senegal
B.P. 2534
Dakar, Senegal