

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2019

SENEGAL, GAMBIA, CAMEROON & GUINEA BISSAU



Out of
poverty

United
Purpose 

A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

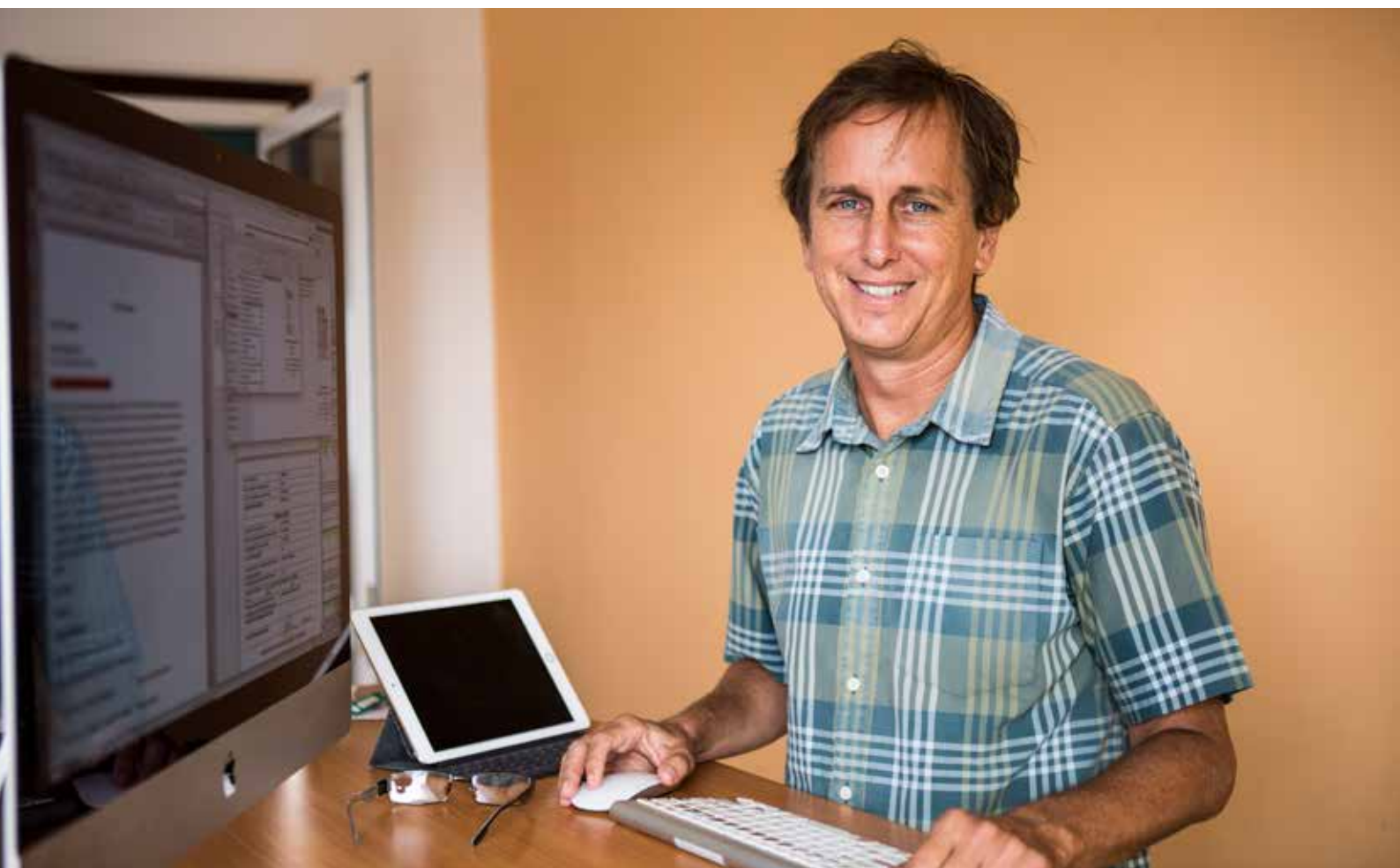
United Purpose (UP) has over 40 years' experience of working in partnerships to support communities living in poverty to secure prosperous, independent and sustainable futures. We take a holistic, collaborative approach to development and we are proud to reach 4 million people a year, in 14 countries, through our innovative, community-driven projects.

UP's programme in Gambia has been running for 25 years. UP has been an important player in development in Gambia for all these years – helping to strengthen civil society with a national network of NGO partners, pioneering the development of the horticulture industry and its value chain, and more recently on rice, waste reprocessing and non-timber forest product value chains. We have now expanded to have national reach in Senegal (from an initial 14-year focus in southern Casamance) and we hope to start our first project(s) in Guinea Bissau soon. In Cameroon, we work with a partner organisation, Mboscuda, on conflict resolution.

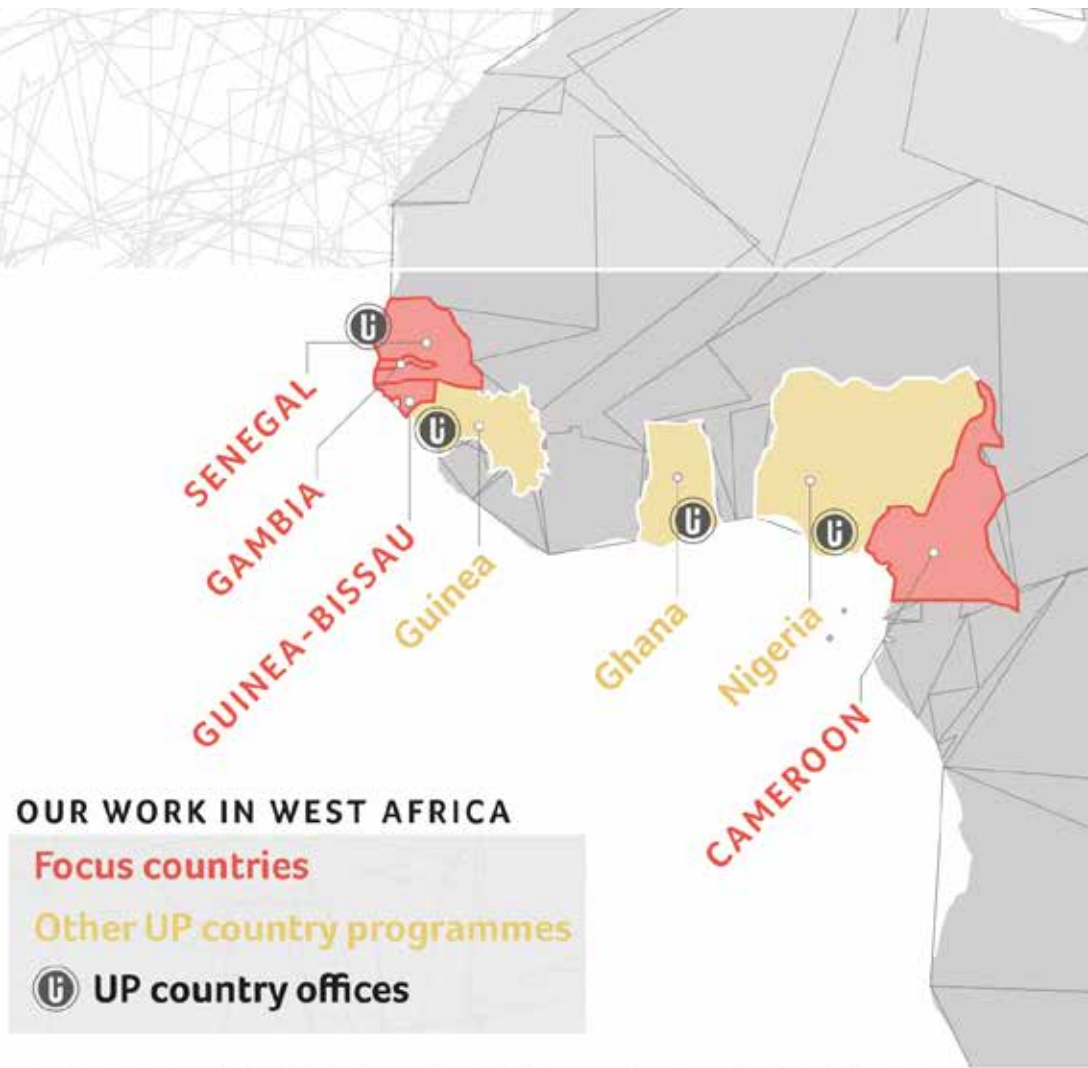
Our current strategic plan is for the period 2014-2019. During 2017, we undertook a strategic plan reflection process with our staff and some of our civil society and government partners in Gambia and Senegal. This fed into a global strategic planning process that culminated in the development of a new Global Strategy for United Purpose (2018-2023). We chose to update our own strategic plan to reflect on these changes, consolidate what we have learned and done since 2014 to 2017, and evaluate our plans for 2019 and beyond. We will develop a new country programme strategy in 2019 for the period 2020-2024.

We are proud of the successes our country programme has made so far. This strategy sets out the impact our projects have had to date and maps out the direction we see ourselves taking in the coming years. Building on our knowledge and expertise, we will continue striving to make effective use of our resources to bring about sustainable improvements for the communities we serve.

Tony Jansen, Country Director



WHERE WE WORK



OUR SUCCESS SO FAR

WE PIONEERED HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT by training thousands of (mostly women) farmers in Gambia and Casamance. This led to the increased productivity, availability, consistency and diversity of vegetables in markets, as well as increased employment and the establishment of Gambia Is Good — a social enterprise trading fresh produce, which has since spurred increased competition and a diversity of intermediaries supplying urban and tourist markets with Gambian produce. Urban horticulture methods have also been demonstrated.

COMMERCIAL LOANS AND BUSINESS PLANNING have great potential for farmers to access solar irrigation and best practice farming methods.

CAPPED WELLS FOR WATER have reduced mortality in villages and our WASH programmes have improved hygiene practices.

PEACEBUILDING – There has been some level of socioeconomic development in Casamance and our partners were able to contribute to growing peace efforts. This is evidenced by the return of many refugees to the Fogni in Senegal.

WE HAVE PIONEERED COMMUNITY PROTECTION OF FORESTS and brought forest management onto the agenda. Women have registered their lands.

WE SUPPORTED VICTIMS OF FLOODING IN GAMBIA and helped them set up structures that reduced the impact of subsequent floods on their lives. Our work in promoting Disaster Risk Reduction was recognised by the Gambian government and has been taken to scale.

HUMANITARIAN – Our partners form a humanitarian assessment and response network. We are competent with needs and, more recently, impact assessments.

We established and supported **COMMUNITY RADIO AND WATER DRILLING SERVICES** and **A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR ICT COMMUNICATIONS**.

WE FACILITATED A FARMERS' MARKETING FEDERATION that is now being replicated in five other regions.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF PARTNER NGOS — We have contributed to building a stronger, rural-based civil society. Our partners have better governance, strategies and management capacity and have been able to source their own funds. We demonstrated the potential of capacity building of local-level government and social dialogue.



WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED AND ACHIEVED SINCE 2014:

We have worked with our partner, Jokalante, to further develop ICT services and exploit their potential for a wide range of applications, including:

MARKET INFORMATION SERVICE – This allows farmers to access reliable price information for their chosen markets in local languages, empowering them to make better decisions about when to sell and for how much.

ICT FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITIES WE SUPPORT – With rapidly increasing mobile phone use, we are exploring how to share information on scale in local languages.

INTERACTIVE AND RADIO CAMPAIGNS WITH VOICE-BASED ALERTS – Our research tells us that radio is still the best way to reach rural people. We are making this into an effective two-way dialogue.

DATABASE MANAGEMENT – We are helping NGOs and enterprises to better manage profile information on their members or customers.

ENHANCING EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS FOR CROP FAILURE – For example, allowing farmers to call a hotline number to report crop failures.

OUR VISION

A world where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all.

OUR PURPOSE

UP's central goal is empowering communities to be independent – to live lives free from poverty, improve their life chances and take agency over their future.

OUR MISSION

To work in partnership to challenge poverty and inequality. We support practical actions that enable people to improve their lives and shape their own futures.

OUR GOAL...

...in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Cameroon —
We believe in sustainable and dignified lives in an environment of peace.



OUR APPROACH

TRANSFORMATIVE INNOVATION

We seek out and put to work fresh, creative ideas to empower the most disadvantaged communities to make bigger change, faster – and so put **transformative innovation** at the centre of our strategy. We aim to test one innovation per year and to take one innovation to scale during the remainder of the strategy period.

INTELLIGENT DEVELOPMENT

Combined with this is what we call **intelligent development**. For us, innovation is not about pursuing faddish ideas, but about finding creative ways to help communities solve the problems they face and bring tangible change to people's lives. It is innovation for impact. As part of this, we will continue to strengthen our approach to monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management.

ENABLE INDEPENDENCE

We **enable independence** at the community level and through our partnerships. We support communities to access systems and organisations that work for them, help them implement relevant and sustainable local solutions and ensure their voices are heard. We support further moves towards governmental decentralisation and we help people to build the skills and institutions they need to engage meaningfully with the government and the private sector. Partnerships linked to strong and long-term capacity building is our key strength and unique feature.

UP global strategies	Our country programme-specific strategies
Intelligent development	Community empowerment Networking Restoring and protecting the environment
Transformative innovation	Test and scale innovations around money, people and technology, including: Social dialogue for peace Use of ICTs for mobilisation and informing people
Enabling independence	Effective partnerships Capacity building A market approach Social enterprises for service delivery

THE CHALLENGES

TRADITIONAL RESILIENCE IS BEING UNDERMINED – by poverty, climate change and lack of knowledge (e.g. about nutrition). Society is changing rapidly and the majority of people want to exit subsistence farming. But many are left behind, remaining trapped in poverty and dependent on their own communities, natural resources and knowledge to survive. The poorest are extremely vulnerable and humanitarian crises have become the norm across the region. From soil erosion to deforestation, from the depletion of water supplies to growing conflict over scarce resources, the environmental crisis has multiple impacts and compounds poverty and inequality. Growing consumption of resources and urban development is causing problems with waste, and negatively impacting health and the environment.

RURAL PEOPLE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES. They lack access to finance and appropriate technologies to take up irrigation. They lack technical knowledge and sustainable connections with markets to enable them to exploit existing and growing demand for agriculture and other products. Many of the urban poor have emigrated out of rural areas and exited agriculture. They face new challenges in urban environments and there are few choices open to them. For many young men in particular, irregular migration to Europe is one of few options.

WEAK ORGANISATIONS WITH POOR GOVERNANCE ARE NOT ABLE TO RESPOND to the needs of the poor at the scale required. Services are scattered and unsustainable. Government is often weak and lacks strong engagement with, and accountability to, the people they are meant to serve. However, decentralisation aspirations are strong and civil society is growing.



OUR SOLUTION

We are determined to cut inequality and include left-behind communities in sustainable development. As an organisation, we are pioneering and creative, and we excel at delivering innovative, scalable solutions to the challenges faced by the poor. Our work falls under the following four categories:

SUPPORTING HEALTHIER LIVES AND WELLBEING

While some are stepping out of poverty, we make sure that those who are left behind are supported and have the ability to meet their basic needs – now and in the future. We protect and restore the natural resource base (soils, forests, biodiversity and water) and empower poor and rural communities to maintain control over these resources and manage them sustainably. We link nutritional health to agriculture and agro-biodiversity, and equip people with the knowledge and tools for a good diet, good hygiene and good health. We support communities to build their resilience, better prepare for shocks and disasters, and work with them to respond to disasters when they occur.

CREATING JOBS AND BETTER LIVELIHOODS

We support people to ‘step up’ and out of poverty. We take proven transition paths out of poverty to scale, which benefit small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs. Using a value chain approach, we provide solutions to enhance markets, and technical training for female and male farmers. Furthermore, recognising the shift towards urbanisation, we have identified a need to focus more on urban areas, urban livelihoods and resilience. We will also focus more on youth – in particular on alternatives to migration and supporting young people to see a positive future at home.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Community forest management, combating the trafficking of timber and enhancing non-timber forest product value chains are all key elements of our programme. These will expand further, given their importance to livelihoods, women, conflict resolution and environmental sustainability. We will also explore adding a renewable energy component to our programme – at present, we promote renewable energy for irrigation in dry season horticulture. Recycling and waste management are key areas of need and we have proven its potential as a tool for job creation and environmental protection in pilot studies in Gambia.

TACKLING VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND CONFLICT

Conflict and violence slow down and ultimately set back the gains and potential for development. We resolve long-running conflicts, often driven by poverty and declining natural resources, by bringing communities together for conflict resolution. People to people (P2P) peacebuilding linked to livelihood development is a strong focus. We also work on conflicts between herders/pastoralists and farmers – an issue of increasing tension in the region. Conflict is being exasperated by climate change and resource exploitation. There is a growing need for stronger social accountability and for supporting and maintaining democratic transitions and good governance. We will promote social accountability tools and seek to better position civil society to contribute to social dialogue, conflict resolution and holding the government accountable to the people. We will continue to work in the Fogni conflict zone in southern Senegal, on conflict resolution in the Anglophone area of Cameroon, and on good governance and social accountability in Gambia and later in Guinea Bissau.

STORIES FROM OUR WORK...



STORY 1: IMPROVING YIELDS

THE CHALLENGE

Most of Senegal lies within the drought-prone Sahel region, with irregular rainfall and generally poor soils. Only about 5% of the land is irrigated and the country relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture, which occupies about 75% of the workforce. The majority of farmers are subsistence farmers. Some 17% of people in Senegal are food insecure, and in some – mostly rural – parts of the country, acute malnutrition is critical (World Food Programme). Because there is only one crop per year in Senegal, farming is very vulnerable and there are typically between four and six 'hungry months' per year.

THE SOLUTION

United Purpose is working towards a more food secure future for Senegal. For example, a programme we ran from 2015-2017 worked closely with subsistence farmers to support them to increase their crop yields. We wanted to find out if new crop varieties – grown at research stations – would work in the field. As a result, we set up over 500 field trials, where farmers were trained to grow and compare the new seeds with the traditional seeds they usually grew. The farmers also tested the effects of different treatments on the seeds, such as chemical fertiliser, animal manure and millet husk (which is a waste product from the previous season and is normally burned). Interestingly, the new seed varieties performed well when more fertilisers were added – but when lower levels of fertiliser were added, the traditional varieties grew better. Another key finding was that using a combination of chemical fertiliser and organic matter (e.g. cow dung) produced the same yield as using a larger amount of chemical fertiliser alone.

THE OUTCOME

This project highlighted that subsistence farmers deal with multiple factors and that there is no single solution to improving their crop yields. It challenged the top-down development framework by equipping farmers with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions for themselves going forward. Farmers learnt that they could save money and improve their yields by using millet husk and spending less on chemical fertilisers. Multiple choices on yield increases mean that farmers and their families are less likely to go hungry, and there is greater food security for rural communities.

Right: Farmers saved money by using less chemical fertiliser and more organic fertiliser, such as cow dung.



STORY 2: PEACE AND PROSPERITY

THE CHALLENGE

The Fogni is a cross-border area in Senegal and Gambia within the Casamance region. This region has suffered from over 30 years of conflict, rooted in numerous complex issues – such as geographical separation, economic marginalisation and poor attempts to overcome or bridge differences in ethnicity and culture between the north and south. The long-running conflict, combined with high levels of poverty, has led to a breakdown in community life and estrangement between individuals, villages and communities in the region.

THE SOLUTION

Our project aimed to contribute to peacebuilding in Casamance by reducing the number of people in the Fogni who are living in poverty. It reached over 45,000 people in 262 villages through a people-to-people peacebuilding approach (i.e. relationship rebuilding and reconciliation) that involved bringing together individuals and communities to work together on small community-led livelihood projects. We worked with a local partner organisation, ASAPID, to support communities to establish community forests. These are forests that are managed by a group of communities to generate income through the sustainable harvesting of forest products, beekeeping and tree nurseries. These activities help maintain valuable ecosystem services by preventing deforestation and thus mitigating climate change – a major problem in the Sahel.

THE OUTCOME

People's incomes have increased and in many cases livelihoods have shifted from conflict-creating (e.g. forest destruction) to activities that build social capital. In 2017, through the project, government forestry officers were able to travel beyond the village of Sindian for the first time since conflict began in 1982. This provided an opportunity for project participants to meet the officers, benefit from their expertise and be educated on forest management.



Left: In May 2017, ASAPID organised the third annual Forest Festival in Kataba 1. Over 300 people took part in the festivities and the festival ended with a panel discussion about fighting bush fires.



MEET JAINABA: CHARCOAL MAKER EXTROADINAIRE

Traditionally, charcoal is made from cutting down trees in the forest, which contributes to deforestation and the degradation of natural resources. United Purpose trained Jainaba and her community in alternative charcoal production. To make this new type of charcoal, the villagers collect leaves and husks that have already fallen and then dry them out, ready for the production process.

Jainaba says: "We understand that the forest is being destroyed and the trees are perishing. We decided to sit together and think of a strategy that will help us keep away from harming the forest, so that it will be rejuvenated.

"The way we are producing charcoal now is very useful and protects the forest. This new type of charcoal is also better for burning – with the old type, you had to fan it into flames and sometimes the fire would go out as you were cooking. This charcoal burns very easily and it lasts longer too. The demand for this charcoal is very high – we cannot meet all the demand!

"Protecting our forest is so important. The forest has been destroyed and I am making sure it is rejuvenated. I urge other women and men to try this new charcoal production because it is really a way of protecting the forest."

STORY 3: SCARCITY TO SURPLUS

THE CHALLENGE

Approximately 10% of the Gambian population is food insecure and almost one in three Gambians are vulnerable to food insecurity (World Food Programme). Agriculture tends to be under-resourced and conducted at subsistence level. Rice is a staple food but it can only be grown in the rainy season as it needs a huge amount of water. The population therefore relies heavily on food imports – and the retail price of imported rice has almost doubled over the past decade (World Food Programme). Chronic food insecurity means that malnutrition and child stunting is a big problem across Gambia.

THE SOLUTION

United Purpose has run a series of rice irrigation projects in Gambia's Upper River region. We facilitate farmers to organise themselves and come together to set up and run irrigation schemes, where water is pumped and piped from the Gambia River. Through this access to water, farmers are no longer restricted to growing just one rice crop per year – now, they can grow a second or a third crop, which is transformative for communities. The grassroots approach to these projects puts power in the hands of the farmers themselves, and the groups are expanding their irrigation schemes by buying more pumps.

THE OUTCOME

Growing a second or third crop of rice means reduced 'hungry months' and increased food security for farmers and their families. Subsistence farming is being transformed into surplus farming – and the project shows the exciting potential for Gambia to become a rice-exporting country. Plans are now underway to diversify the project and add in sweet potato crops.



STORY 4: TECH FOR GOOD

THE CHALLENGE

In a world where information is increasingly the most valuable resource that drives human prosperity, poor communities are being left behind. The expansion of mobile networks to underserved communities, and the increasing affordability of services and device costs, are exciting opportunities for tackling information barriers. However, all too often existing solutions focus only on technology and do not enable people to share knowledge over the long term. Additionally, such solutions tend to be built on business models that charge individuals for information they can't afford or even deliver information in a way that individuals can't access.

THE SOLUTION

We have partnered with Jokalante, a social enterprise set up in 2015 to transmit useful and understandable information in local languages and voices (via mobile phones and community radio stations) to people living in hard-to-reach areas. By equipping farmers with vital information on weather, farming methods and market prices, Jokalante provides the means for farmers to grow more food to eat and increase their incomes. This is empowering and enables individuals to solve their own problems and forge their own futures.

THE OUTCOME

Jokalante delivers information that farmers need via communication channels they already use – at no additional cost to them. Voice messaging and the use of local languages overcome language barriers and problems with illiteracy. Moreover, building communities of service users that have the ability to interact as well as listen creates a valuable database. Information from this database streamlines the targeting of future campaigns and enables the programme to harness community as well as 'expert' knowledge.

Right: West Africa is currently home to more than 175 million unique mobile subscribers and is one of the world's fastest growing mobile regions.

Left: Farmers pump and pipe water from the river to their rice crops.





7 commitments:

- 1** We will build on our past and current experience to continue gathering credible evidence of the results and impact of our projects.
- 2** We will draw on our experience of peacebuilding to continue supporting local actors to implement their own conflict resolution solutions and we will better document our capacity to work in peacebuilding in areas experiencing conflict.
- 3** We will scale up our use of ICT for development across all parts of our programme.
- 4** We will develop our approach to making markets work for the poor and improving value chains to create bigger, more sustainable change.
- 5** We will focus more strongly on the environment and climate change adaptation, especially across our work on waste management, forest management, agriculture and livelihoods.
- 6** We will forge closer partnerships with the government and support civil society organisations to hold authorities to account.
- 7** We will continue to focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.

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www.united-purpose.org

BP 25488, Dakar-Fann, Senegal
PO Box 2164, Serrekunda, The Gambia
T: +221 77 099 8898

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