

Food Enterprise Solutions Creates Opportunities for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

In Senegal, disabled food entrepreneurs face many challenges in the marketplace, including limited access to formal training and technical assistance allowing them to scale up their businesses. Despite progressive Senegalese policies and laws to promote the rights of people with disabilities, this constituency remains underrepresented in the business community and decision-making bodies. Food Enterprise Solutions, through Feed the Future project Business Drivers for Food Safety (BD4FS), actively promotes inclusion in local food systems by partnering with disabled food entrepreneurs. By holding food safety trainings, offering technical assistance, and providing business advice, BD4FS is creating opportunities in the agrifood sector for historically marginalized groups.

BD4FS Senegal has built a strong partnership with the Senegalese Federation of Associations of Disabled Persons, especially the Women's Committee. Founded in 1999, the Women's Committee works toward the effective socio-economic integration of women with different types of disabilities. BD4FS and the Women's Committee organized four training sessions for over 200 disabled women entrepreneurs in the Senegalese food sector. The trainings helped the women entrepreneurs better understand food safety, hygiene and product quality, microorganisms and how they proliferate, and how to add value to local foods through more appropriate processing and preservation. Technical experts enriched the training with visual aids, role plays and practical exercises to convey the messages. BD4FS adapts training curricula to be accessible to all professionals, including non-readers. Sign language is used by trainers where appropriate, and training venues are wheelchair accessible.



“The training session really met our expectations as some of our colleagues, as soon as they returned home, called me to attest to the interest and the great value of the training which allowed us to learn a lot of things, especially on hygiene practices.”

- Ms. Fatou Mbaye, Entrepreneur and President of the Derklé-Dieuppeul-Castors' Section of the Women's Committee of the Senegalese Federation of Associations of Disabled Persons

The technical information and business orientation BD4FS provided allowed members of the Women's Committee to improve the hygiene, labeling, and quality management of their products, which will improve their access to markets. Most participants reported they were able to measure the knowledge gap between their handling practices before and after the training. With the knowledge gained, some Women's Committee members are already planning to develop new food products using the skills they learned in the training to increase their income.

The Women's Committee has continued to request trainings for members in Dakar and the surrounding regions. In addition to providing technical assistance, BD4FS will advise the marketing strategies of the entrepreneur's businesses to gain larger market access. The resiliency of the Women's Committee members shows that agrifood business in Western Africa holds opportunities for a diverse range of entrepreneurs.

Learn more about FES and BD4FS activities at <https://www.foodsolutions.global/> and follow us at:

