

## The Unificationist Affiliated Yonent Mame Ibrahima School in Pikine, Senegal

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East of Dakar, the capital of Senegal, lies Pikine, the country's second largest city with over a million inhabitants, where in the Keur Massar District the Mbeubeuss open-air dump extends over several kilometers, releasing stench and toxic gases. Every day, more than two hundred trucks take turns unloading garbage cans there. Some observers have described the visual and olfactory impression as an image of hell on earth. For others, the place is a blessing. More than a thousand people live on and off this dump. Some young people spend their childhood and adolescence there, because their parents cannot afford to send them to school. They find whatever

they can and try to sell things.

In 2008, a Senegalese Unificationist family opened the Yonent Mame Ibrahima School not far from this dump, to educate dozens of children and offer them another future. In 2015, the school nearly closed because of lack of funding. Yet, it survived and celebrated its tenth anniversary this July. How could the school survive and keep growing?

Surprisingly, the terrorist attacks in Paris in January 2015 are among the factors that indirectly revived the project. But there is also the internet, networking among Unificationist families, crowdfunding techniques, the goodwill of the second-generation members of Europe... and sack gardening. This is the story behind the revival of a school.

### A dream come true

The Yonent Mame Ibrahima School is a dream come true, a dream involving the prophet Abraham. Ambroise Diagne is a Senegalese Unificationist from a Catholic background living in Dakar. He and his Filipino wife Delaila received the blessing among the 30,000 couple group. One night, Ambroise dreamed of a man in the desert carrying twelve branches and trying to give them out, but some people tried to stop him. Ambroise knew intuitively that he was looking at Abraham, ancestor of the three monotheistic religions. Though Senegal is 95 percent Muslim, it has an influential Catholic minority. Moreover, Jewish communities existed in Senegal and Mali in the past. After the dream, Ambroise thought of building a school that welcomes children of all religions.

In 2004, Ambroise and Delaila moved to Korea to raise the money needed to finance the school. For four years, Delaila gave English lessons while Ambroise learned Korean and sought support to buy the school grounds and erect the building. In 2008, the school opened and welcomed fifty pupils. A Korean NGO provided financial support for several years but suddenly stopped. Delaila then prayed and desperately started to look for financial support through Facebook. Her prayers were answered in an unusual way.

### Responding to terror

January 2015: For three days in a row, terrorist attacks shook Paris. On Sunday, January 11, more than 1.5 million people marched in Paris, with forty-four heads of state in the procession. This tragedy was a revelation for Bénédicte Suzuki. She and her husband, Unificationists from the 1,275-couple blessing, were living in Roubaix, in the north of France, a city plagued by socio-economic problems and tensions among communities. Bénédicte was active in her community and in the Women's Federation for World Peace, but the terror attacks in Paris prompted her to do something more. She launched an association project entitled *Femmes au Secours de la Paix* (Women Rescuing Peace). Her association honors the memory of victims of terrorism each year and provides comfort to bereaved families. A knitting club prepares specific clothes for premature children born into poor families. While Bénédicte was launching her association, she saw the call for donations from Delaila, in Senegal. Moved by the project, Bénédicte made an action plan, focusing on specific projects and funding. The financial and humanitarian help to the school in Keur Massar has become the international component of Femmes au Secours de la Paix's charity work. The money for which mostly comes from crowdfunding.

### Combining internal and external goals

Bénédicte Suzuki has an internal vision behind her actions. Besides fulfilling some traditional goals of

any other NGO, her NGO also serves providential goals. "In our church, we give much education through lectures and seminars," she said, "and when our volunteers work in the school, they receive internal guidance and do lecture practice, as in any other summer workshop. But we also need concrete projects that substantiate Cheon Il Guk. A school helps create a better environment for witnessing. Moreover, I want to help Ambroise and Delaila Diagne to accomplish their 430 couples. Through prayer, I understood that by laying this foundation away from home, I laid a foundation to accomplish my 430 myself in my city."

At the beginning of 2015, she and her husband Hideo talked about starting a twenty-one-year course. "It seemed realistic considering that, twenty-one years from then he would be eighty-one years old and I seventy-nine years old. This discussion with my husband was another seed for the creation of my association. Before we go to the spiritual world, we should leave a legacy, a project that can have positive consequences for the future."



*Bénédicte Suzuki (in the gray blouse) with her knitting club, which makes clothes to fit specific premature babies*

### **Financial autonomy and sack gardening**

Bénédicte wants the school to be autonomous in 2020. "We launched the project of sack gardening with the idea of sustainable growth for the school, because we can't always depend on crowdfunding. Last year, we gave sack gardens to poor families but without training, they did not manage to take care of them. This year I decided to put big gardens in the schoolyard and turn this into a community project. Vegetables are expensive in Dakar." (Regarding sack-gardening, see [www.goalglobal.org/stories/post/sustainable-gardening-sack-gardens](http://www.goalglobal.org/stories/post/sustainable-gardening-sack-gardens))

Another plan is to build a brick bread oven in the schoolyard, bake bread and sell it to make an income. Ambroise had a small store built on the ground floor of the school that generates some income through rent from a woman who sells fries and chicken. In 2017, the goal was to buy the land in front of the school for a playground. Ambroise borrowed the money from his brother who works in Canada and took a job to reimburse him (€12,000). He works hard at tuna processing in the port of Dakar for a Korean company. (He speaks Korean fluently). The director of the company, a Korean Christian, knows that Ambroise is a Unificationist and respects him. Last year, he donated 120 packs of canned tuna to the kids at the end of the school year. Delaila has had to take a leading role in the school's management. People in the neighborhood see her as a true Senegalese who invests her soul into the school.

### **The 2018 summer project**

From July 17 to August 1, for the fourth consecutive year, Bénédicte brought volunteers to work in the school. Ambroise took a week off from work. His wife Delaila, Bénédicte and Christopher Jones, the national messiah to Senegal from the UK, were the senior staff. Some second-generation European members came -- Victor Vanalderwelt, from the same community as Bénédicte in France, Harue Penham-André from Austria, Benedict Vitai, from the UK, and Melanie Komagata from Switzerland. Second generation Senegalese members also took part -- Monica, Emilio and Joseph, who are Ambroise and Delaila's children, and Seijin, Kathy and Gabriel. Two non-Unificationists, a different Ambroise (from France) and David, a guest of Christopher Jones, also helped. Those from Europe arrived earlier and prepared for the program. A beautiful ceremony to end the school term took place on July 20. The best students received prizes. At a Family Festival, eight couples received the blessing and four people became ambassadors for peace.

For two weeks, the volunteers focused mostly on two projects. One was the tiling the large meeting room floor of the primary school building. The more exciting project was learning about sack gardening. In

order to install the garden sacks, they had to collect pebbles from the sea for ten sacks; they installed three large ones in the school and seven miniature ones for salad and cabbage. They will install seven sacks next to the school on the property of a vegetable producer, who is inspired by this kind of culture and who helped them greatly with small plants for the sacks. They planted cabbage, salad, onions, okra, cucumbers and zucchini.



*Title page: One objective of Bénédicte's twenty-one-year-course is to make the school in Senegal self-sufficient. Part of that is sack gardening to produce vegetables that fetch high prices in Senegal*

### **Educational activities**

The participants were also involved in several educational activities, making them more familiar with some Senegalese issues or with some concepts of the culture of peace. On July 24, they received Mr. André Lambert, the president of the association Babacar and Bénita, which works in Dakar to help orphan *talibé* (child-students of the Quran) poorly treated by *darahs* (a term meaning "imams") and to help the *darahs*, who are generally good people but to whom the parents just give their children without giving the money to feed them. Mr. Lambert explained who the *talibé* children in Senegal are and why often they are sent to beg in the streets. Two months ago, a little boy died suddenly, after receiving a severe beating for not having brought back enough money. Bénédicte bought some products made by handicapped children and will sell them in France.

On July 26, they visited the ecopeace village of Pout ([international-sufi-school.org/en/content/iss-center-pout](http://international-sufi-school.org/en/content/iss-center-pout)). They learned about a peace village and peace citizenship. The International Sufi School has acquired ten hectares of land in the Village of Pout. The land is a space where the adherents to the school's philosophy of nonviolence are presently experiencing the conditions for the making of a global peace village in the twenty-first century based on Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba's teachings of non-violence and service.

On July 27, they visited Gorée Island, where True Mother offered a prayer for the liberation of Africa on January 19, 2018. There was also a cup-stacking competition for fifty-five students of Grand Yoff High School in Dakar. Cup stacking is an individual and team sport that involves stacking nine or twelve specially designed cups in pre-determined sequences as fast as you can. Participants in the sport stack cups in specific sequences, by aligning the inside left lateral adjunct of each cup with that of the next. Sequences are usually pyramids of three, six or ten cups. Proponents of the sport say participants learn cooperation, ambidexterity and hand-eye coordination. Koreans are excellent in this new sport. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sport\\_stacking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sport_stacking)) Femmes au Secours de la paix launched this sport in France, where it had not previously existed. It helps project a dynamic image of the association. They also visited Miss Aisha Deme, chairperson of the Music in Africa Foundation at a cultural music center, where she received them with great enthusiasm. [www.musicinafrica.net/about/board-members/aisha-deme-chairperson](http://www.musicinafrica.net/about/board-members/aisha-deme-chairperson).

Of course, they did not forget tourism and entertainment. Thanks to a generous donation of €2,000 from Christopher Jones, the whole party spent two days in Sobo Bade Resort. They also visited Pink Lake and the Monument to African Renaissance in Dakar.