

# SENEGAL REGION

Senegal, located on the West coast of Africa, is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau. Senegal enjoys a dry tropical climate.

## STATISTICS:

**Population** – 17.1 million

**Religions** - Islam: 94%; Christian (mainly Catholic): 4.9%; in country areas, still a strong influence of Traditional Religion.

**Languages** - French (official language) and Wolof; There are at least nine other officially recognized national languages.

**Literacy** – 59.1% (significantly less for women).



## RNDM IN SENEGAL

### History of RNDM presence in Senegal

Senegal region was founded by the province of France in September 1971. The first three sisters arrived in **Mboro**, a town near the coast to the north of Dakar. Marie Laurent from Switzerland, Myriam from Ireland and Marie Elizabeth, originally from Vietnam, came in response to the need expressed by the small Catholic community, many of whom had come to find work in the phosphate mine of Taiba. Within the first few months they had opened a dispensary and a kindergarten and were involved in the catechetical programme of the parish. The following year Sr. Marie Odile joined the community and plans were underway to start a primary school.



Maria Laurent, Myriam and Elizabeth



Back (left to right): Veronica Dunne, Sandra Stewart, Patricia Boyd; front: Marie Elizabeth

The mission continued to develop and in 1984 a second community was opened in the village of **Ndondol**, 100 km from Mboro. The first sisters were: Patricia Boyd from New Zealand, Veronica Dunne from Canada and M. Elizabeth.

## **Kounkane –**

From the year 2010 the sisters had the desire to open a third community in Senegal. Listening to the whispering graces, in 2011, at the occasion of forty years of celebration, during the annual gathering of sisters, it was decided that the region starts a new community in Kounkane in the south of Kolda. The Kolda region being the poorest area in Senegal the sisters responded to the invitation of Bishop Jean- Pierre Bassene to venture into the challenges of a new mission. Many sisters have contributed in pioneering the beginnings of the new house. Thus in 2015 the sisters' house was built, and sisters Marie Rose Sene and Silvy Kodiyan became the first members to live in this new house.

The Sisters living and working in Senegal have been from: Australia, France, Peru, India, New Zealand, Kenya, Vietnam Bangladesh and Philippines. Our first Senegalese Sister made her novitiate in Kenya and has been professed in Senegal in 2007 and is being missioned to France.



RNDMs present in the region



Marie Rose, our first Senegalese sister

Since the year 2000 we started to welcome some young Sisters who had made their first commitment in their own country, and for whom it is now time to experience an international mission in preparation for their act of final profession. At the moment there is one sister from Kenya is with us.

## **SENEGAL RNDM logo:**

### **the calabash**



To express what presence in Mission is for us RNDM in Senegal, what better symbol can we find than the "calabash" – a practical and beautiful vessel.

#### ***Calabash:***

***Fruit of the earth - Gift of the rain - Ripened by the sun***

Emptied to receive all, to resonate with the rhythms of celebration. The *calabash* is present in the life of the Senegalese people from birth until death .....in all the ceremonies of life. It is also simply there every day, for the life of each day. The calabash is open to receive, to listen; it is ready to pour out freely as gift all that it has received. A calabash circles in communion and has the depths of prayer. May we be calabashes for the people we have been missioned to here in Senegal.

## MISSION ACTIVITIES

### Health:

Dispensary and Vaccination program at Mboro and Kounkane; Mother/child health care groups; Nutritional program; Formation of health workers; Health education and animation in villages and schools at Ndongol

#### RNDM Dispensary, Mboro

Our dispensary at Mboro, founded in 1971, is the focus and base for a health care programme serving people in the numerous villages scattered throughout the Rural Community of Mboro and often beyond this. At present the staff includes 3 RNDM sisters, and 9 Senegalese.



The dispensary offers curative services as well as an important laboratory service, various preventive programmes [vaccinations, hygiene, nutrition] in outlying villages, and education/information programmes concentrating on Aids, sexually-transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and malaria prevention.



The people start arriving at the dispensary from early in the morning, having walked in the cool of the pre-dawn to wait patiently for their turn. Each day we welcome from 150 to 250 patients, depending on the time of the year. All types of care are provided including accidents and emergencies, infections and dressings. The dispensary has a 4WD vehicle to take the staff around to the villages for vaccinations and other health programmes.

The dispensary has its own laboratory and can do many basic analyses. Testing for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and for diabetes is increasingly important as a service for the whole region.

Our dedicated staff continue to offer the best services to the sick to ease their pain. The ongoing collaboration with the public hospital gives us great joy as we reach out to the far away villagers.



**The Mother –Child Health and Nutrition Programme, in Ndondol - SMI (Maternal and child health programme)** continues to help in the improvement of nutrition level. The mothers lack means to assure good health to their children. During the weighing sessions of babies, we provide health education for women and teach them how to prepare nutritious food. Children identified at the weighing session as being malnourished are brought to the Centre each week; here the mothers receive further advice and a small quantity of enriched food, milk, vitamins etc. The women and children are happy to get a meal ready for them when they arrive to satisfy their hunger. The women make a small financial contribution for each session – their families often have little or no cash income. At the village level the sisters continue to form groups of women who can assure the carrying out monthly weighing and keeping the necessary records.



We have good results from many mothers and children who are treated at the center. Some of them who are badly undernourished we have to help them to go to the hospital. At least a few of them come back alive.



## RNDM Dispensary, Kounkane

The Sisters in Kounkane are running the dispensary since 2020 where many patients are treated specially for malaria. They come from very far away villages, even from nearby countries, like Guinee Bissau, Guinee Conakry, Mali etc... some of them travel even 50 – 70 Kilometers, using mostly motorbike. The region of Kolda where we work is recognized as one of the red zones for malaria in the country, where people are mostly poor and need to be given awareness in fighting against malaria and other diseases.



The presence of the dispensary has brought hope to many people and has made difference to their lives. Many patients who have been treated at the dispensary later meet us and jump with joy to narrate their healing experiences. The dispensary is surrounded by greenery and trees, that calm the spirit of ailing patients. We hope that, as the years go by, people will come to know how to prevent illnesses and the dispensary continues to relieve their sufferings. Apart from treating the sick, the

sister in charge joins the team of the public dispensary for the programme of vaccination. She is very happy to be in the villages with the people vaccinating the children.



## ACTIVITIES TO EMPOWER WOMEN

We carry out many activities in Ndongol to empower women, children and the sick people. Through projects we reach out to many women to meet their basic needs. At present we work with 50 groups of women in different villages. We support, accompany and train many of them to be self-sufficient. Some of the main activities are microcredit, and around this microcredit, women not only buy and sell local products needed for their daily needs but also, we motivate the groups to clean the public places, and get them involved in environmental issues.

Over the years we have helped women's groups to run the millet grinding machines, and who manage the cereal bank-millet stock. This is to provide women to have sufficient food stored during the drought or to share with those who have nothing left in their granaries. Having sufficient food means girls can attend school and have time to study, instead of being busy in the household duties or go to the town to earn money.



## Activity of planting trees.

Now and then the rains are scarce and seeds for sowing like millet, beans and groundnuts are excessively expensive. When possible, through the help of generous donors we distribute seeds of beans for sowing. During the rainy season we also encourage women to take care of the environment by planting more trees. We continue to distribute plants for plantings to the groups of women who take care of them.



## Education:

We support the Government High School in Ndongol through the Library which provides invaluable resources. Most families in Ndongol area have no books at all in the home. The library has significantly helped improve the rate of success of many students who have progressed to higher education.



## Parish Programmes and Activities:

In Mboro, Ndongol and Koukane we continue to assist the Catholic communities through support for catechists, catechetical and sacramental programmes and youth organizations





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