

A partnership with high potential

The Union des Jeunesses Rurales Catholiques du Senegal (UJRCS) and the Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth of Bavaria (KLJB) have a history of partnership of over 50 years. Not only have the members of the KLJB and the UJRCS changed over the years, but also the political and social situation in both countries is no longer the same as before.

With great foresightedness, after World War II Catholic Church authorities started focusing on Catholic youth movements as an aid in training new managers and decision-makers. On the basis of Catholic social doctrine, the KJLB saw it as their mission to promote young persons of authority in rural areas for the building of a new society. Today there are still many persons of authority in business, politics, and the church who have roots in the KJLB. The situation in Senegal was similar. Here as well, the idea was to foster rural development by promoting the Catholic rural and agricultural youth movement. Impressed and enthusiastic, the leaders of the KLJB of Bavaria arranged their future cooperation with *Jeunesse Agricole Catholique* chairman Casimir Sambou after his visit to Bavaria in 1958. Ernst Pietsch and Alois Berner went to Senegal as rural youth counsellors to aid in the development of *Jeunesse Agricole*. Their educational efforts soon bore fruit. Members of *Jeunesse Agricole Catholique* such as Juliet

Cisse and Pascal Manga, as members of the national parliament, were instrumental in the establishment of the new Senegalese democracy.

■ Agriculture and education

Time marches on, and with the economic development in Germany the situation changed for rural areas. Influenced by EU agricultural policy and the increasing mechanisation in agriculture, the importance of the agroalimentary sector changed, and along with it the thematic priorities of the KLJB. Stewardship of creation and environment became an important concern to the youth association early on. The goal in Senegal was to develop traditional agriculture and ensure food security. Financial support from Bavaria enabled the startup of rural development projects focusing on: well construction,

planting vegetable gardens, integration of small livestock husbandry, marketing, reforestation, soil conservation and improvement, and also intensive counselling. These measures further involved the promotion of female labour through means such as courses in hygiene, nutrition and literacy, and microcredit programmes.

The youths became adults as time went by, hence the Catholic Rural and Agricultural Population Movement (*Katholische Landvolk Bewegung, KLB*) was soon founded in Bavaria. This process took a little longer in Senegal, which led to a serious crisis within the local agricultural and rural youth movement. Women and men 50 years old and older were still setting the tone, and as a result young people had very little influence on the work of the association. But thanks to KLB support and after years of discussions, MARCS (*Mouvement des Adultes Ruraux Catholiques du Sénégal*) was founded.

MARCS played a decisive role in nationwide discourse and in raising the awareness of Senegalese society during the debt relief campaign. From the vil-

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Women's groups are generally more reliable than men, particularly when it comes to paying back loans.

Photo: privat



Nowadays, the partnerships focus on personal contacts and exchanges. Work camps in Senegal and in Bavaria bring young people of both countries together to work in special projects.

lage to the national level, events were organised with the aim of educating as many people as possible about the new possibilities for the country that debt relief would bring. Even though MARCS is a Christian movement, many Muslims became actively involved in implementing the educational and association work in the villages.

A successful partnership requires personal contact. In light of this, KLB members often travel from Bavaria to Senegal for a few days, and persons of authority in MARCS are invited to Bavaria. Partners becoming acquainted with each other's way of life is key to long-term cooperation. In recent years priests from Senegal have been filling in for vacationing priests in Bavarian parishes, thereby enriching life in the Bavarian Catholic Church. It would be nice if priests from Bavarian parishes would reciprocate.

■ Partnership today

Personal contacts and exchanges among professionals have continued since 2000. The KLJB no longer provides financial sponsorship and now devotes its efforts to obtaining third-party funds for the work of the UJRCS. The partnership should not



Photo: Monika Algrner

be characterised by financial dependency. Getting to know one another by working together is what it is all about. In 2002 a working camp was held in Senegal to plant a partnership field, and in 2006 Senegalese and Bavarian youths worked together to renovate an agricultural and rural youth centre in Bavaria.

In 2008 the UJRCS and the KLJB celebrated the 50th anniversary of their partnership. In September 2009 the KLJB invited six rural youths from Senegal to a working camp in Bavaria. Among other things, German and Senegalese youths lived and worked together on three Bavarian farms. The UJRCS is actively involved in all aspects of the partnership field project, which was started in Thiès in 2002. Fruit and

vegetables are grown on this field as a means to secure income for funding the work of the association.

The partners face many challenges. The UJRCS is worried about future membership because of rural exodus, and many local groups are no longer active. The vast distances in the country make holding meetings on a national level difficult. Maintaining a viable partnership requires continuous personal contact and interaction, as well as awareness of political issues. Furthermore, the cultural exchange journeys and the educational work in Bavaria obviously require considerable financial input. But as common history shows, difficulties can be overcome, and hence the partners are hopeful that their future together will endure.

Zusammenfassung

Die ländliche und landwirtschaftliche katholische Jugend im Senegal und in Bayern pflegt seit mehr als fünfzig Jahren eine fruchtbare Partnerschaft. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg wurde die Ausbildung junger Entscheidungsträger als wichtigste Aufgabe der katholischen Jugendbewegung betrachtet. In Senegal gab es eine vergleichbare Vision für die Zeit nach der Unabhängigkeit von Frankreich. So kam es 1958 zur Partnerschaft zwischen der bayrischen katholischen Landjugendbe-

wegung – KJLB – und dem katholischen Landjugendverband Senegals, UJRCS. Auf bayrischer Seite stand zunächst die Hilfe im Vordergrund. Heute steht jedoch fest, dass echte Partnerschaft vor allem durch persönliche Begegnungen entsteht.

Resumen

Los jóvenes católicos rurales dedicados a labores agrícolas en Senegal y en Bavaria han venido compartiendo una historia de cooperación que se remonta a más de cincuenta años. Después de la Segunda Guerra

Mundial, el movimiento católico juvenil consideró que era una misión importante el educar a jóvenes líderes responsables de la toma de decisiones. En Senegal prevaleció una visión similar heredada desde los tiempos anteriores a su independencia de Francia. Por tal motivo, los movimientos KJLB de Bavaria y UJRCS de Senegal se vincularon en 1958. Del lado bávaro, el concepto predominante fue inicialmente el de ofrecer ayuda. Sin embargo, hoy en día ha quedado claro que una cooperación verdadera sólo surge de un encuentro personal.