
MISSION REPORT

SENEGAL AND THE GAMBIA

FEBRUARY 20 - 28, 2023

Planning for an orthopedic centre in Senegal and interregional orthopedic training in The Gambia



Swiss⁺ABILITY



THE MISSION

Executive Director of SwissABILITY, Roberto Agosta, undertook a successful exploratory mission to Senegal and The Gambia in February 2023.

The objective was to strengthen and formalize our collaboration with local partners and institutions in the region and create profitable synergies for a new SwissABILITY project; to build an orthopedic centre in Ziguinchor, located in the Casamance region. The centre will train local orthopedic technicians and provide a mobile clinic in a city with one of the highest concentration of amputees in the nation, yet where rehabilitation services are inefficient or even nonexistent. The project was initiated in January 2023 and will last 3 years.

Our main local partner for this project is **ISAD - Initiative Solidaire des Actions de Développement**, a Senegalese based association that for the past decade has promoted the rehabilitation and integration of landmine victims into society. The ISAD team is made up of 12 members, eight of whom have disabilities. The main activities of the association are advocacy and community awareness about explosive devices, educating landmine victims of their civil and political rights and aiding with their socio-economic reintegration, and community development amongst refugees who have fled civil war.



Roberto Agosta with Sarani Diatta, Director of ISAD, and his team



DAKAR

SwissABILITY's mission in Senegal began with a meeting between Roberto Agosta and **Her Excellency, Mrs. Arame Pop Sene, National Director of the Ministry of Social Services.**

The meeting was marked by her willingness and enthusiasm to collaborate towards the creation of a new orthopedic centre, which will serve the Senegalese population of the Casamance region. Madame Sene expressed the importance of creating partnerships between institutions and non-governmental associations, to maximize the efficiency of local activities. Madam Sene made an important promise: to support SwissABILITY with the importation of machinery and materials and take charge of the orthopedic centre staff at the end of the three-year project. The Ministry of Health and Social Services invited SwissABILITY and ISAD to draft the agreement for a Memorandum of Understanding.

Also attending the meeting were the **Director of Promotion and Protection of Disabled People, Mr. Mamadou Lamine Faty, Sarani Diatta, Director of ISAD, and Gueye Cheikh Ahmed Tidiane, President of Disability Pride Senegal,** an Italian association, which is also operational in the field of physical rehabilitation and disability in Senegal.



Far left, Gueye Cheikh Ahmed Tidiane, centre, the Director of the Ministry of Social Services, Mdme Sene. To her left, Roberto Agosta, Executive Director of SwissABILITY and Sarani Diatta, Director of ISAD.

Other heads of ministries we also present .



The Ministry of Health and Social Services (Ministère de la Santé et de l'Action Sociale) in Dakar

Roberto's next visit was to the [National Rehabilitation Centre of Dakar](#). Of the eight people employed, only two are trained orthopedic technicians, one of whom, [Mr. Coulon](#), came from Togo to strengthen the centre's staff. The Togolese training center is one of only three institutes in Africa that offer higher education in orthopedic technology.

The orthopedic centre of Dakar lacks affordable materials and the technicians are forced to manufacture prosthetic limbs using only the materials at their disposal, which are often expensive or unsuitable to produce quality prosthesis.



One of the technicians at his working station in the orthopedic centre



Roberto with Mr.Coulon at the orthopedic centre in Dakar

ZIGUINCHOR

After two days in Dakar, Roberto travelled to Ziguinchor, where the orthopedic centre will be established.

There, he met the [ISAD](#) team and had the opportunity to meet many other partners, who are enthusiastic to cooperate with SwissABILITY in this project.

Among them, the [American Jewish World Service \(AJWS\)](#), who have been supporting ISAD for several years and whose [Country Manager, Madame N'Dèye Marème Bodan](#), committed to make a financial contribution towards the project. On the same day, Roberto met [Massimo Chiaruttini, President of CEU – Ass. Cooperazione Esseri Umani](#), a non-profit association based in Lugano and active in Senegal for over 35 years.



Sarani Diatta with Madame N'Dèye Marème Bodan and Roberto. The American Jewish World Service has promised to financially support the project and to support ISAD in the bureaucratic process.

Remaining in Ziguinchor, Roberto met the team members of the [Regional Federation of People with Disabilities](#). This federation promotes awareness, advocacy, and the support of people with disabilities and assists them in bureaucratic procedures. Simultaneously they run small organic agricultural projects for the sustainable production of handcrafted soap and oils made from extracts of aloe vera, papaya, coconut and moringa. Women with disabilities have an essential role in this project, thus giving them an active role in society.



Sarani and Roberto with some of the members of the Regional Federation of People with Disabilities



The shop in Ziguinchor where disabled women who are employed in the Federation's programs, sell their products.

Until its closure in 2022, [Joãozinho Indri](#) was the orthopedic technician in charge of the ICRC program in Guinea Bissã. Together with Sarani, he contributed to the planning of the new orthopedic centre to be build in Ziguinchor.

In the photos below: Joãozinho and Sarani lay a first symbolic brick for the orthopedic centre.



HUMANITY & INCLUSION

Ousman Diallo heads the Humanity & Inclusion office in the Casamance region. He was instantly enthusiastic about the SwissABILITY project in Ziguinchor and promised to support the rehabilitation centre by subsidizing materials and offer financial aid to some of the patients who will be treated there.



USAID E CRS

The meeting between Roberto and the regional directors of USAID and CRS (Catholic Relief Service) was very fruitful. They offered a financial support to purchase materials and machineries for the orthopedic centre.



OMAR SAMBUO

Sarani and Roberto with Omar Sambuo, the architect who planned the orthopedic centre in Ziguinchor. We can't wait to see this project come to life!



REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Finally, Roberto and Omar met the Regional Director of Social Services, who was happy to meet representatives from SwissABILITY and ISAD, whose work benefits victims of landmine.



Another productive meeting was held at the provincial Orthopedic Centre of the District of Ziguinchor.

The director, Monsieur N'Diane shared the challenges they face due to their lack of materials and outdated machinery. They are grateful that the new centre will be able to assist them in this, as well as offer ongoing training of local technicians.



The International Committee of the Red Cross – ICRC also warmly welcomed SwissABILITY.

Previously, the ICRC subsidized 40 amputees a year, who had to travel to Bissau to be fitted with a prosthesis. Now that their program is closed, they welcomed the news that a new orthopedic centre will be built in Ziguinchor. Finally, a local solution!



FIRST STEPS TOWARD INTERREGIONAL TRAINING

BANJUL, THE GAMBIA

Banjul, in The Gambia, is just 3 hours drive away from Ziguinchor. SwissABILITY and ISAD visited the orthopedic centre there to organize the first interregional orthopedic training scheduled for August 2023, which will gather technicians from Guinea Bissau, Senegal and The Gambia.

This program was created in collaboration with the partner [Legs4Africa \(L4A\)](#) and provides continuous and regular training over several years to serve the needs of West Africa.

Colleagues from The Gambia, [Mr. Ebrima Krubally](#), [Gabu Ibrahim](#) and their team have a cohesive partnership with the L4A team, headed up by the dynamic [Bob Bubacarr](#), who is responsible for the maintenance of prosthetics. Bob drives around the country in his old 4x4 decorated with a prosthetic leg attached to the vehicle's bull bar. His work is fundamental in aiding amputees who are unable to travel to the city.



Roberto with Ebrima Krubally, Bob Bubacarr and Sarani



Ebrima Krubally, workshop manager, with his team: Oumie Jallow, Marrow Fofana and Gabu Jarjue.



On the left, Momodou N. Savage, the wheelchair mechanic of the orthopedic center of Banjul

On the right, Bob Bubacarr, Legs4Africa Prosthesis Maintenance Manager