

The Alstom Foundation will finance a project of the Biscayan NGO Creando Futuros

The project, promoted by an employee of the Alstom factory in Trápaga, consists of the construction of a garden in a nursery school in the Senegalese city of Mbour.

December 20th, 2021 – The Alstom Foundation has selected to finance The "School Orchard" project, presented by María del Mar Carmona, a quality technician at Alstom's industrial centre in Trápaga. This is one of 38 projects selected by the Alstom Foundation to receive funding in 2022. In collaboration with the NGO Creando Futuros, the Foundation will build a school garden in a district on the outskirts of the city of Mbour (Senegal). It will be used to teach agriculture and provide a healthy diet for the 104 pupils aged between three and five at the Euleuk Sibiiir school.

Every year, the Alstom Foundation invites all Alstom employees around the world to submit proposals for solidarity projects. Out of the 189 proposals received in this last edition, one is straight from the Trápaga site where María del Mar Carmona has been working for six years as a quality technician. The school garden project will serve to a dual purpose: to **teach agriculture to students** and to **improve the school canteen service** offered by the school.

"The students will learn from a very early age to grow food, and also to create social awareness of self-sufficiency within their families. The experience will allow them to observe and discover nature, identifying the different types of vegetables according to the crop planted and its growth," explains María del Mar Carmona.

Learning to cultivate

The city of Mbour is located near the coast, about 70 kilometres from Dakar, and has approximately one million inhabitants. The economic motor of the area is tourism, fishing, and groundnut processing, sectors that have been severely affected by the global pandemic of COVID-19. The Zonatel district, where the initiative is to be carried out, has a population of between 1,300 and 1,500 inhabitants, most of them under the age of 20. It is a peripheral neighborhood that has grown during the pandemic with the arrival of families from inland villages. The area is characterised by a high level of poverty, with limited access to basic resources such as food, water, health, and education.

Agriculture in Mbour is scarce due to its arid soil and the presence of termites, so the population's knowledge of agriculture is limited. To prevent malnutrition at an early age, the local school Euleuk Sibiiir (the only school canteen in the area) opened a free canteen to provide at least one meal a day to pupils between the ages of three and five who attend the school.

The garden will be built within the school grounds and will cover an area of 200 m². Once the garden has been prepared, the water supply guaranteed and harvested, the fresh produce grown will be used to improve the school canteen service, preparing varied menus with a rich, balanced, and nutritional diet, to which they do not have access in their daily diet.

The Creando Futuros team is already in the field making all the preparations for the initiative to begin in January 2022. Once the garden is operational and the first plantings have been made, the school children will be in charge of preparing it for the next harvests. The School Garden will remain alive as long as the school remains operational and its benefits will be enjoyed by all children who enroll in the coming years.

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Creando Futuros Creando Futuros is an association for Integration and International Cooperation, created in Vizcaya in 2011. Its main activity is education, especially promoting education for girls, enrolling them annually and helping to meet one of the objectives still pending: access to education and gender non-discrimination. It also sends school materials, implements, develops and manages school canteens and carries out plans for the extension, improvement and construction of schools in areas with few resources. The cooperation work is carried out in Senegal, specifically in the Zonatel and Tripano neighbourhoods (Mbour), in nearby villages and in Yayem, a rural area near the Sine Saloum delta. www.creandofuturos.org

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