



# DOULOS COMMUNITY

For the poorest and their children  
An international NGO in Mauritania since 1987

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## Doulos Community Inc Review of Activities – 2010

### Introduction

November 2010 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mauritania's independence from France. Even though some stability has returned to the country, the celebrations were subdued, mainly as a result of the ongoing terrorist threat. During the year, the government enacted a number of progressive policies, including major infrastructure development in the capital, and policies designed to improve relations between the country's different peoples. There were good rains in the interior, although rising food and fuel prices are a major problem, particularly for the poorest.

Many of Doulos' programs faced a year of ongoing financial pressure, which necessitated a rethink of our approach, particularly in relation to our urban community development activities. As a consequence, we have increasingly focused on those projects which are sustainable, and which bring long term benefits to the community; and on the facilitation, as opposed to management, of our centers.

Doulos' activities during 2010 included:

- Community development programs in Nouakchott
- Microcredit programs in the Guidimaxa region
- Support of a school set up for children of some of the poorest families in Nouakchott
- Literacy and health programs undertaken in Nouakchott and the interior of the country
- Management of a center for 'Talibe' boys in Nouakchott
- Development and expansion of our neem tree research program
- Work in the Nouakchott prisons



More information on Doulos' activities can be found on our website [www.douloscommunity.org](http://www.douloscommunity.org).



# DOULOS COMMUNITY

## Nouakchott

During 2010 we significantly changed our approach to our community development activities. Instead of directly funding programs at our 8 community development centers, we focused on capacity building, based around 'self help groups'. This involved working closely with our national partners and the communities themselves to help them to develop and run their own programs, for example kindergartens and school support schemes. Although initially skeptical, our partners and staff have become strong advocates for this approach, as they have seen the communities respond to the challenge of self-development. As a team we are also very positive about the self help concept, as it encourages a sense of responsibility, and directly challenges the hand-out mentality prevalent throughout so much of Africa. Altogether more than 4,000 families were involved in these activities in 2010, including those who took part in the Saada community nutrition and health program.

By God's grace we were able to keep the Talibe program open throughout the year. Altogether some 100 boys received a daily lunch at the centers, and were involved in the various activities such as training in tailoring and haircutting, literacy classes and sport. Twenty five boys attended a local school which we sponsor, and after 3 years there they are doing well in their studies. The



time these boys spend at the centers not only gives them some education and life skills, but is also a part of each day when they are freed from begging on the streets for food and money for their 'marabout' (folk Islamic teacher).

We took some significant steps forward in our neem tree research program, with the planting of our first orchard in mid 2010, just before the start of the rainy season. This was done in partnership with a local village, which has loaned the project a large plot of previously unused land. Three types of tree are being grown in the orchard: neem, mango and jatropha (used in biofuel production); and because the trees will take several years to mature, we are also growing vegetables on part of the land, for sale in local markets. Together with our project partner, Justneem, we are considering ways we can encourage local communities to exploit the many health and other benefits of the neem tree.

Our final activity in Nouakchott is our work in the prisons, which we oversee for the NGO Noura. The staff work in the civil, youth and women's prisons, overseeing health and hygiene matters in the facilities, running training courses, for example in sport and computing, advocating with the authorities on behalf of individual prisoners, and acting as a liaison with the prisoners' families. They also help to rehabilitate prisoners once they are released, for example through regular visits and arranging apprenticeships. This work is much needed in our country.



# DOULOS COMMUNITY

## Rural programs

The aim of the AMIES program, which is based in Selibaby in the south of the country, is to use micro-credit loans to promote better agricultural practice, health and economic wellbeing. Loans are given to poor farmers to buy equipment and materials (for example donkey carts, barbed wire, ploughs, and fencing); and for investment (for example in community stores). The demand for such loans is well in excess of the ability to supply, and therefore in 2010 the focus has been on a narrower geographical area. Repayment rates have improved greatly in the recent past.

A second aspect of the program is to provide water for households and garden projects through building boreholes and wells. The fruits of this are already being seen.

PNS Doulos, also operating out of Selibaby, continued its health education program in 2010. The principal goal of this program is the teaching of good primary healthcare practices to mothers, so that they can oversee the basic health of their own children. The program involves training healthcare agents, who then travel to the villages to train the mothers. During the year, the agents trained and followed up a further 48 women in 6 different villages. The project also carries out training in dental hygiene, and operates a mobile dental clinic, which treated 235 villagers in 2010.



## Conclusion

In the words of Paul in the Bible, it has always been the desire of Doulos Community to build with 'silver, gold and precious stones' rather than 'wood, hay and straw'. 2010 was a year in which our work was tested, and we needed to face up to several challenges, and change our approach accordingly. We believe the solutions we have implemented, for example in our community development and micro-credit activities, will actually enhance our future work greatly. Already we are experiencing the benefits of this new approach in the early months of 2011.

Once again we wish to put on record our appreciation and gratitude to all those who have supported us in any way during the past year. We value your involvement with us.

**Doulos Community**  
**May 2011**