



# TRAINING MISSION

## Management support



By Catherine Rioux, General Manager (in collaboration with Mr. André Racine)

### EMPOWERMENT, AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Empowerment and sustainability of eye care services in developing countries are two very important aspects and are part of IRIS Mundial values. The organization aligns its management with local partners in order to make them accessible all year to the population. With this in mind, support missions in organizational capacity building are carried out within the Programs for Prevention and Fight against Blindness (PPFB) supported by IRIS Mundial.

In this context, from January 27 to February 14, Mr. André Racine was in Senegal to work in close collaboration with the PPFB Saint-Louis employees, but also with all the members of the project implementing partner, the "Association St-Louisienne pour la Vue" (ASV). Mr. Racine has expertise in organizational management, a master's degree in public and international administration and more than 20 years of experience in international cooperation in Africa. His participation in this project is part of a collaboration with "Développement, Expertise et Solidarité internationale" (DESI) which has a large pool of experienced professional volunteers with different areas of expertise. This partnership fuses together the distinctive features of DESI and IRIS Mundial to respond more effectively to the needs of local partners.



## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE SUPPORT MISSION

Mr. Racine's first mandate was to observe the work of the team and the unfolding of the activities at the clinic and in mobile clinics, in addition to organizing meetings with the employees. The purpose was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program and to diagnose the financial, administrative, logistical and human resource levels. Following his observations, the volunteers explored with the partner various solutions concerning operations to ensure a viable structure and made several recommendations for improvement. He then offered support to the employees with regard to the implementation of new management procedures in accordance with his recommendations. Interesting perspectives have been highlighted for the future of the program!

According to Mr. Racine: *"The three weeks of work with the organization allowed me to gather enough information to make recommendations. If implemented, these recommendations should result in an increase of the ASV management efficiency. At this point, we can remain optimistic [about the maintenance of current services after the end of the QIDP funding<sup>1</sup>]. The result of the discussions is encouraging, considering their willingness and desire to make several changes in management procedures."*

## PPFB NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

The official launch of the Program for the Prevention and Fight against Blindness, funded by the "Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie" (Quebec Ministry of International Relations), was also organized during Mr. Racine's mission. Despite the fact that the project started in January 2019, our partner wanted to combine the public inauguration of the newly built and functional centre with the official launch of the PPFB. Therefore, Mr. Racine participated as a representative of IRIS Mondial. Nearly 100 people attended the ceremony, including the representatives of some neighboring villages, regional and national media and service users.

<sup>1</sup> Québec International Development Program from the « Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie » from Quebec, which funded the implementation of the project during an two-year initial phase, up to \$ 200,000 CAD



Official speeches to the press, a guided tour of the community ophthalmological centre and a welcome cocktail offered by the ASV, were part of the event, which was greatly appreciated by all participants! Mr. Racine explained that this event was an opportunity to see and hear many representatives of the civil society express their satisfaction and gratitude towards IRIS Mundial.

Considering that the centre became fully functional only last October, IRIS Mundial is proud of the number of people helped so far by the team. Here are the statistics as during the first year:

- 478 children and 1,611 adults benefited from a visual screening in mobile clinics or at the centre.
- 130 ophthalmology examinations performed at the centre
- 23 eye surgeries performed at the Saint-Louis partner hospital

## HUMAN WEALTH ON MISSION

It is important to mention that beyond the pre-established mission mandate of a volunteer, these experiences abroad are also very enriching on a human level, allow us to discover and share such different realities. After his return, Mr. Racine testified: *"This trip in a Franco-Senegalese family allowed me to share very beautiful moments, during typically Senegalese meals with skillfully prepared tea, or even in a cabinet-making workshop where I met a young Senegalese who chose to return to his country after a stay in France. I also had the opportunity almost every morning to meet young people whose routine consisted in coming to shake my hand with a huge smile before going to school, located very close to where I lived. Here is a photo of a very young girl, about 5 years old, waiting for her teacher's signal to enter in one of the classrooms, which are actually jute shelters, with only one opening and a window hole. The aim here isn't to compare or even less of feeling sorry for these young people, but rather to recognize their reality and better understanding the differences experienced by this other population. In conclusion, this intervention on Senegalese soil allowed me to discover the region of Saint-Louis, a region where dugout canoes, fishermen, sand and heat merge, but also to discover people whose words, smiles or clothes reflected pride, resilience and the desire to share their way of life! "*

