

Interview

Sidi Si: “Young people in Senegal have taken a step forward to change things in our country”



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Sidi Si, at the center of the image. Photo: YAA

Youth in Action Association is a non-profit established in the community of Kédougou, which works on projects relating to children, health and community development.

Sidi was born in the city of Kédougou, Senegal. At the age of 25, he is of Malinke ethnicity and soon dropped out of school because his family did not have the resources to pay for it. In spite of everything, he speaks Spanish fluently after having studied it for 3 years in a public school in his city. Before founding the [Youth in Action Association](#), he worked as a guide at a French camp, arranging trips for tourists. Today, he is the coordinator of the volunteer project and wants it to succeed.

The association offers volunteer vacancies to anyone who wants to collaborate in the project. In addition, the volunteer will be able to get to know the Senegalese culture and traditions through the discovery of native lifestyle in **Kédougou**. Volunteer projects are held Monday through

Friday, and weekends are free to volunteers so they can explore the area, rest or go on trips.

Sidi explains in the interview how to collaborate in the project and talks about the tasks they carry out in different areas: **childhood, health and community development**.

1. How would you define the Youth in Action Association?

We are a small association created by a group of young Senegalese people. Our aim is to improve conditions in Senegal. We work in the area of Kédougou in particular, in the southeast of the country, about 702 km. away from Dakar, the capital.

2. What kind of activities do you do at the association?

Our association is focused on different projects, including education, health, community development and sports. As for the project with children, we have an orphanage / school where we help the children with the hygiene tasks, cooking, doing laundry or just leisure activities. We also have lectures and we teach them how to write, read, add and subtract, sing songs, etc. Besides, we organize sport activities and we have a dance activity that consists in teaching traditional European dances to the children. At the moment we are only two people but surely with time we will see more people coming. The two people who form the association are 25 years old.

3. As for volunteering, how can people collaborate with you?

Our volunteer programs are opened to any healthy person who is eager to collaborate and is at least 18 years old. We also offer the possibility of being picked up at the airport by a member of the association, one night in a hotel in Dakar and transport to Kédougou, in addition to accommodation and food at the house of a Senegalese family, all included for €300 to cover costs. The minimum stay period is 3 weeks and our programs are open all year round. We do not have a specific volunteer profile, except for our health project, where volunteers need to be students or professionals in the field of medicine. But it is important to be open to new experiences, smells, tastes and to always maintain a proactive and collaborative spirit.

4. How can people start collaborating with you?

Work camps are open throughout the year and there is no specific date for receiving volunteers. Stays can last from one week to six months and can be done individually or in groups. The cost for three weeks is €300, to be paid upon arrival; this price does not include international flights, the meals you have while travelling from Dakar to Kédougou and return to Dakar.

5. How did the idea of creating the association come about?

This idea arose because we realized that the Senegalese Government didn't get to do, or perhaps didn't want to get done everything it should be done. Another reason that brought forth the association is that young people voluntarily have found the moment of stepping forward and fighting to change things that governments cannot change.

6. What do you mean when you say that the Senegalese Government does not get done what should be done?

I'm talking about improving the conditions in which the communities live in Senegal. Governments should ensure equal education for all, both for the rich and the poor, as well as health service access or in the case of our country, to provide safe drinking water in areas where there is none.

7. You've been doing this for some time.

Three years to be precise. We started this project in February 2014.

8. What would you highlight about this project?

I'm glad that we are doing our bit; I am making a lot of people happy, especially those who need it the most.

9. What ties do you have with Catalonia?

None at the moment, but we want to build bridges of dialogue with Barcelona and do interesting things that last. Anyone who wants to collaborate is welcome, friends, families or companies that want to get rid of things they don't need. If they send them to us, it will be very useful.

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