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From February 2008, a new global communication campaign in favour of micro-credit in Senegal

AFRICA WORKS

Benetton supports and promotes Africa for Africans.

In partnership with Youssou N'Dour

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.



Dakar, 13th February 2008. Benetton puts the spotlight on entrepreneurial Africa. Its global communication campaign for 2008 promotes the Birima micro-credit programme in Senegal, a co-operative credit society founded by the Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour. The programme will also receive financial support from Benetton Group.

Africa Works – the slogan of the campaign developed by Fabrice – will appear on billboards and in the press throughout the world, from February 2008. It features Senegalese workers who have used micro loans to start small, productive businesses. Photographer James Mollison portrays them with the tools of their trade against a neutral background. They include, amongst others, a fisherman, a decorator, a musician, a jewellery-maker, a farmer, a tailor, two textile sellers and a boxer. These everyday people become tangible symbols of an Africa that uses the dignity of work to fight poverty, promote equitable development, maximise its resources and take back responsibility for creating its future.

Alessandro Benetton, Executive Deputy Chairman of Benetton Group explains the conviction with which Benetton has backed the project: "We chose to support and promote this important project because, unlike traditional acts of solidarity, it offers tangible support to small local entrepreneurs through the efficient use of micro-credit. Precisely because it is based on entrepreneurial talent, hard work, optimism and interest for the future, this project effectively promotes the new face of Africa."

Youssou N'Dour, one of Africa's best-known singers and a man committed to humanitarian projects, comments: "my personal experience led me to realise that when a loan, however small, is used to develop an idea or realise a project, it is an effective way of fighting poverty. This is why everybody must understand the value of micro-credit. Africa doesn't want charity, it wants repayable subsidised loans."

In addition to outdoor and press advertising, the new Benetton campaign, officially presented today in Dakar, includes a series of projects and events: a special supplement distributed with *Colors* 73 about money in its myriad forms and substances; a new version of Birima, song recorded by Youssou N'Dour in 2000 and re-arranged by him in 2008 with the extraordinary participation of Patti Smith,

Simphiwe Dana, Irene Grandi and Francesco Renga; a videoclip of the song; a cartoon about micro-credit produced specifically for the Senegalese community and African TV channels; a Benetton website devoted to the campaign and its related events and the www.birima.org portal, both devised and developed by Fabrica. The Africa Works campaign will also be on stage during the Senegalese singer's world tour, in particular during his concert at Paris Bercy on 5 April 2008.

Birima, N'Dour's co-operative credit society, offers financial services for SMEs, craftspeople, professionals and artists to help them start and independently develop their business. Apart from being the title of one of the singer's international successes, Birima is the name of a legendary king of Senegal who, speaking to his people only once a year, became a symbol of the value of keeping one's word, of a moral code reflected in the credit society's key tenet: those who ask for a loan need offer no other security than their word and the good name of their family.

Confidently based on Africa's traditional, deep-rooted principles of honour and dignity, Birima looks to the future of the continent and responds to its increasing need for funding. Compared to normal micro-crediting, Birima grants higher loans for a longer period of time provided the submitted project has a positive effect on the community and can guarantee profits and development. Senegal was chosen for the pilot project because it is one of the most stable African countries, albeit with significant differences in income among the population. From Senegal, Birima's style of advanced credit will be gradually exported to other African nations.

Core concepts of Benetton's advertising are reiterated in this new campaign. By supporting and promoting a fund to finance work in Senegal, Benetton underlines the importance of co-operating with organisations dedicated to solidarity. At the same time, the campaign emphasises how the commitment of a single person can put the wheels in motion to generate change in society as a whole. These ideas were highlighted in the *Volunteers in Colors* campaign in 2001, produced with United Nations Volunteers for the International Year of Volunteers, in 2003 in the *Food for Life* campaign with the World Food Programme, and again in 2004 in the campaign for the protection of the great primates, *James & Other Apes*.

For more information:

Tel. +39.0422.519036