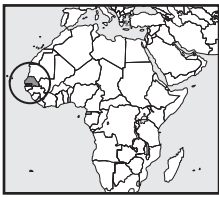


## ■ SENEGAL

# Basic social services still inaccessible



The government's goal of reducing poverty by 30% by 2015 will not be achieved without profound structural changes. The country needs to achieve real and sustained economic growth which will allow such vital aspects as the universalization of education and decent health services to be attained in order to reduce high maternal and child mortality rates.

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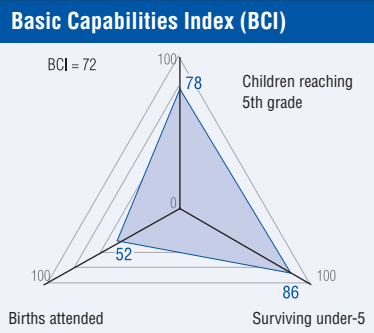
At the start of the First African Conference on Human Development (Rabat, Morocco, 6 and 7 April 2007), the government of Senegal – a country of over 12 million inhabitants composed mainly of young people and women – reiterated once again that its goal to reduce poverty to below 30% by 2015 is based on an anticipated annual growth of 7% to 8% in real terms between 2006 and 2010.

The government added that the growth of wealth "will be sustained by an increase in public and private investment as well as by improvements in the effectiveness of public expenditure and an increase of the agricultural sector's contribution to growth by means of the diversification and modernization of agricultural establishments."

On a more general scale and with a view to facing the challenges of poverty and human development, the government decided to revise its Poverty Reduction Strategy (DERPII, 2006-2010), based on the priorities established by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the strategy for accelerated growth. These priorities include: creation of wealth, development of greater access to basic services and social security, as well as the prevention and management of risks and disasters, and decentralized and participative growth.

However, the government's evaluation is at odds with the 2007 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the African Economic Outlook. Bearing the OECD report in mind raises serious questions as to how the government will be able to achieve the outcomes it seeks in the face of existing difficulties.

The OECD report highlights the serious obstacles which prevent the achievement of the poverty reduction goals established by the government, due to a conjunction of unfavourable factors. Those factors, in addition to their current impact, are linked to the vulnerability and structural defects which continue to exist in the country, such as the difficulties regarding the expansion of exports – for example, in the fields of peanut production, fisheries and phosphates. According to the OECD, they are also a reflection of the problems which beset the country in 2006.



Whereas growth in 2005 was 5.5%, in 2006 it barely reached 3%. Other sources, however, show a greater increase of the gross domestic product (GDP). Such is the case of World Development Indicators (WDI), whose 2006 report placed the country's economic growth at 6.2%.

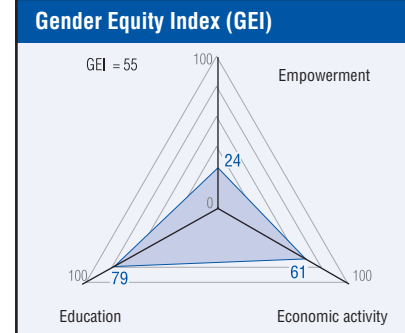
One of the problems pointed out in different reports in order to explain the changes in the rate of economic growth is the possible impact of insufficient economic diversification, particularly in a climate "which is still unfavourable to investment, especially foreign direct investment."

It is no surprise, therefore, that results in the area of human development should be insufficient and place the country among those with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) worldwide (157th place out of 175), although a slight improvement with respect to 2002 has been recorded.

### Massive clandestine emigration

In the face of the failure of agricultural policies, the young see no other way to escape the inferno of poverty than clandestine emigration. Thus, the country has become one of the starting points for massive clandestine emigration towards Spain. In 2006, over 31,000 undocumented immigrants, mostly from Sub-Saharan African countries, reached the Canary Islands aboard improvised craft, at the risk of their lives. This trend will continue to worsen due to the lack of unemployment insurance and social welfare benefits.

Meanwhile, the prices of articles of prime necessity (oil, rice, bread, sugar, etc.) have soared, which makes the situation even worse. The population also faces serious shortages in access to basic services such as water, education and health care,



sectors which should have been firmly developed in order to lessen the burden of poverty.

### Water, a resource in short supply

The lack of drinking water and adequate sanitation constitute two of the primary causes of illness and death and also contribute to the country's lack of economic development. The government has drawn up an ambitious programme with the aim of implementing improvements in this sector: the Millennium Drinking Water and Sanitation Programme (PEPAM), a unified intervention plan for the supply of water and sanitation in urban and rural areas. This programme covers the years 2005-2015 and attempts to ensure and increase access to drinking water for rural and urban households and equip them with adequate independent sanitation systems (waste and sewage disposal), particularly in rural environments. Its main objective is to reduce poverty by helping disadvantaged local populations to obtain sustainable access to these basic social services. However, the government's main concern is to find the financing for investment in rural hydraulic systems and sanitation for urban and rural environments. This would mean setting aside, in part, the MDGs.

### Health: insufficient infrastructure and personnel

In the health area, the report presented at the African Conference on Human Development points out that indicators are unsatisfactory and that, sadly, the infant mortality rate is 61 deaths per 1,000 lives births and the child mortality rate is 121 per 1,000.

Other data supplied by UNICEF (2005) show even more distressing figures: the mortality rate for children under one year of age is 78 per 1,000 live

births, whereas among children under five years of age it is 137 deaths per 1,000 live births.

This situation is explained to a large extent by the fact that, in terms of infrastructure and personnel dedicated to health care, the country is far from complying with the norms established by the World Health Organization (WHO). For example:

- The Fatick region in the interior of the country still has no hospital, although construction began before 2000, which means that for over seven years, nothing has been done for the region as regards improving the health conditions of the population.
- The maternity wing of Aristide Le Dantec Hospital in Dakar, the largest in the country, has been closed for almost three years, and no date has been set for its reopening.
- Only a small number of specialist doctors and midwives are trained each year.

Although significant progress in the struggle against maternal mortality has been recorded, there is undoubtedly a long way to go in order to achieve the MDGs. Maternal mortality rates should be reduced by 75% between 1990 and 2015. Surveys carried out in 2004 revealed that 690 women still die for every 100,000 live births (UNICEF, 2005). It was because of this that Dr. Soukeyanatou Fall Kaba sounded the alarm when she revealed this dramatic situation, in which 48% of women give birth without the attendance of qualified medical personnel. Home births due to sociocultural factors, difficult access to health care infrastructure and limited financial resources are some of the many reasons which, according to the doctor, explain why nobody assumes responsibility for pregnant women.

The MDGs related to health issues will be no more than a dream if the following measures are not adopted:

- Good quality health care infrastructure, sufficient in quantity and accessible to the population.
- A real policy for human resources management with definite plans for professionalization and an incentive system to train an adequate number of personnel to work immediately and efficiently at all levels of medical care.
- A medicine and medical equipment supply system within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to guarantee permanent availability and a significant reduction in purchase costs for member states, with the support of entities such as the West African Health Organization (WAHO) with strengthened powers and authority.
- A flexible and adaptable medical coverage system to enable the greatest possible number of families to gain access to health care with-

out having to pay ever-increasing costs (with relation to membership in private healthcare schemes); free medical care for children under five years of age, as well as for women during childbirth.

- The development of mechanisms to reinforce the power and means of local communities and the population in general, through their participation in the follow-up and control of medical centres, in order to encourage good management.
- Reduction of disparity between the different areas of the country by means of a suitable policy for the distribution of health infrastructure.

### Education: putting the Bamako Statement into practice

In the field of education, the aim of making primary education universal has not yet been achieved, in spite of an increasing gross rate of enrolment in primary education, from 62% in 1998 to 75.8% in 2003 and 79.9% in 2004. In fact, although adult illiteracy is declining, it still affects 62.2% of the population. In this field, problems are related to a lack of material resources (educational facilities, text books) and can be solved by means of budgetary allocations.

Although UNESCO, in its 2005 report, situated Senegal, together with two other African states, among 10 countries in the world with ambitious plans regarding education, there are still great efforts which must be made in order to achieve real progress in education. In this sense, putting the 2007 Bamako Statement on the Abolition of School Fees into practice will have a positive impact on the educational system in Africa and in Senegal in particular.

At the conclusion of the Bamako Conference (19 to 22 June 2007) organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), UNICEF and the World Bank to address "School Fee Abolition: Planning for Quality and Sustainable Financing", 200 delegates from 23 countries concluded that in the current situation "a considerable number of countries will not reach the targeted goal" as long as universal access to the first year of primary education cannot be achieved within the next two years. In a formal statement, the ministers of education and finance of the 23 countries participating in the international conference reiterated their commitment to improving strategic planning in order to comply with the demand for universal primary education by 2015. As the report shows, the ministers' commitment is aimed at "doing whatever is necessary so that no child is kept away from school because his family does not have the financial resources to send him there." The Bamako Statement also called on participating governments "to increase resources on the national level as well as the effectiveness of their use," "to establish optimal policies," and to plan activities that can "guarantee the success of the initiative to abolish school fees."

The signatories of the Bamako Statement acknowledge the fact that "our countries, while sharing the same commitment, are at different stages of achieving this goal." They recognize that each country "faces differing realities, differing challenges, and each will find its own path." On the other hand, and aware of "the role of civil society in development," they stated that "we pledge to work together to mobilize the support of our citizens whose children's futures depend on the opportunities that free schooling will provide." It is within the framework of these actions that the ministers intend to "establish effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure the commitment to these goals achieves results." They also request that the World Bank and the Group of Eight leading industrialized nations (G8) should fulfil their 2005 promise to ensure that "all children have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality." They also invite sponsors to "provide financing that is predictable, that is available over the long term, and that is consistent with our national education plans." ■

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