

## More challenges than progress



Senegal faces a number of problems that are reducing its chances of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Poverty is increasing, with over 60% of the population currently living in poverty or extreme poverty. The health and education systems are inadequate and water and sanitation services cannot meet people's needs. Despite some progress towards gender equality, the country is still a long way from reaching the relevant targets, including: education, employment, reproductive health or political representation, which requires far-reaching structural changes.

Social Watch Senegal!  
Seydou Ndiaye

Senegal has not escaped the impact of the current crisis in the world economy. Poverty is increasing: according to UNDP some 60.3% of the population were poor in 2009,<sup>2</sup> up from 52.5% in 2005.<sup>3</sup> Other pressing problems include the effects of climate change, the food security situation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and governance concerns, all of which are impeding progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); unless the country can implement a new development model, based on economic effectiveness, social equity and environmental sustainability, these goals will not be reached.

### Aid and public finances

According to the annual review for 2009, implementation of the second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-2) has yielded only moderate results.<sup>4</sup> This is the overarching scheme for all of the Government's economic and social investments and the basis on which it is trying to obtain assistance from donors. The country has also implemented various policies and programs such as the Accelerated Growth Strategy to create suitable conditions for greater productivity and provide a solid economic and social base with a growth rate of between 7 and 8%. Another initiative is the National Strategy for Equity and Gender Equality.

In spite of some reforms however there is still an uncontrolled internal debt that continues to hamper economic activity, and economic agents are nervous about the State's financial capacity to honour its commitments.

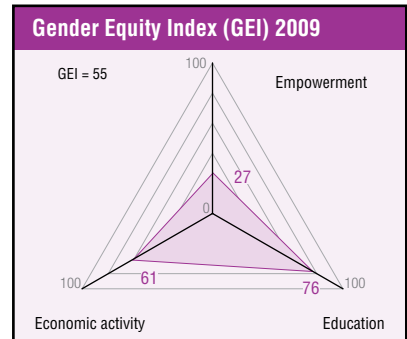
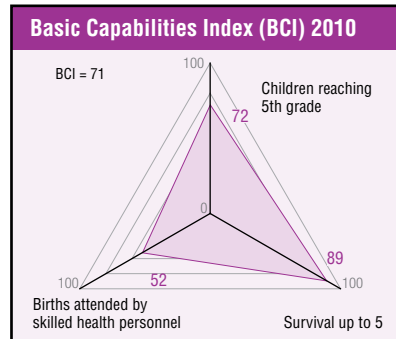
The State has adopted a series of measures as part of PRSP-2, including setting up an institutional

1 Member organizations: Cultural Association for Educational and Social Self-Promotion (ACAPES), Youth and Environment Action (AJE), Enda Graf Sahel, African Youth Coalition against Hunger (AYCAH) Senegal, National Associations for the Disabled of Senegal (ANHMS), Democratic Union of Teachers (UDEN) and Syndicate of Professors of Senegal (SYPROS). Seydou Ndiaye is the network coordinator.

2 UNDP, *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, New York, 2009. Available from: <hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/>.

3 Mohamed Ould Maouloud, *Case Study Senegal: Evaluation of the National Human Development Report System*, New York: UNDP Evaluation Office, 2006. Available from: <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/documents/thematic/nhdr/SENEGAL.pdf>.

4 Available from: <www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2007/cr07316.pdf>.



follow-up mechanism with its technical and financial partners and with civil society organizations, so as to comply with its international commitments and improve the ways in which official development assistance (ODA) resources are managed.

According to the April 2010 follow-up report on the MDGs, external financing for development projects (excluding budget support) was over XOF 258.000 million (some USD 489 million). In addition USD 35 million was committed as part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative with an additional USD 47 million to follow. The amount of sector budget support was USD 107 million in 2009, a decrease of nearly 30% from the 2008 figure. In 2007 remittances came to around USD 865 million (three times more than foreign direct investment) and this increased again in 2008 by 7.2%. Overall remittances have increased more than 20% in the last 30 years and made a strong contribution to the fight against poverty.<sup>5</sup>

Of the 2009 USD 489 million in gross ODA, USD 256 million was in the form of loans and USD 233 million in subsidies. This aid was distributed to the social sectors: education, health and nutrition, the rural and urban water supply and sanitation systems.<sup>6</sup>

### Agriculture and dependence

More than 60% of the population is directly supported by the agricultural sector, 90% of which consists of family farms.<sup>7</sup> The sector is afflicted by numerous

problems including low prices for export products, difficulties in accessing land—specially for women—and agricultural inputs, the increasing indebtedness of the rural population and soil degradation. To make matters worse there are also repeated commercialization campaigns that place a large part of the crop and also many of the producers in the hands of speculators and other intermediaries. This makes the rational, sustainable management of natural resources very difficult. Incomes keep falling and farmers are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, indebtedness and hunger that is hard to break out of.

Poverty is spreading, and is also becoming feminized and is mostly rural.<sup>8</sup> The vast majority of working women are in agriculture, with women comprising only 11% of workers in other sectors.<sup>9</sup> Between 78 and 80% of the rural population are poor.<sup>10</sup> This poverty makes itself felt in many spheres of life as it means privation, reduced internal consumption, greater difficulty in accessing credit and less coverage by basic services. Moreover, despite low incomes and food insecurity in urban areas, the capital city of Dakar ranks number 32 on a list of the most expensive cities in the world.<sup>11</sup>

The ways in which local development is financed are fraught with structural weaknesses, which affect the quality of the services provided, in particular public lighting, sanitation systems and the collection and

5 Government of Senegal, *2010 Follow-up Report on the MDGs*, Dakar, 2010.

6 NGO Council for Support for Development (CONGAD), "Water, life and human development: national report on access to water and sanitation services," Dakar, 2009.

7 "Follow-up Call for the fight against Poverty Program," *People Survey 2009*.

8 Government of Senegal, *op. cit.*

9 Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, *Global Gender Gap Report 2009*, Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2009. Available from: <www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2009.pdf>.

10 *Ibid.*

11 See: <www.citymayors.com/features/cost\_survey.html#Anchor-Mercer%27s-47857>.

treatment of household waste. Another very negative factor is climate risk: flooding and erosion on the coast affect thousands of people and cause deaths, the displacement of local populations, the destruction of houses and other infrastructure, the loss of crops and health problems.

### Education: numerous challenges

When the second phase (2005-2008) of the 10-year education and training program came to an end and the third phase began, the sector was seen to have progressed in terms of access to education but it was still plagued with difficulties regarding the quality of the system and how it was managed.

There are continual delays in the construction of new classrooms and the provision of equipment, and this means that teachers have to do the best they can in precarious "provisional" shelters. In 2009, more than 15% of primary education was in this situation and around 49% of schools do not have running water. Moreover the drop-out and repetition rates are very high, 11.5% and 7.7% respectively at the primary level, and less than 60% of children complete their primary schooling.<sup>12</sup> Vocational training is limited because of problems of integrating trainees into the labour force, low levels of internal and external effectiveness and overcrowded teaching premises.

Another cause for concern is the country's literacy level and education in this area for young people over 15 years of age. According to the Government, some 3.5 million people are illiterate but in 2009 the literacy programs reached only 77,000 out of a target population of 92,000. Even if literacy education could be provided for 100,000 people a year it would still take 35 years to cover the 3.5 million who need help.<sup>13</sup>

Spending on education from the four main sources of finance – the State, households, local communities and foreign agents – more than doubled in the 2003-2008 period (from USD 344 million to USD 793 million), which is an increase from 3.6% to 4.8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However the household share increased from 22.7% in 2003 to 24.2% in 2009 while the State share fell from 73.5% to 69.2%. This shows a trend towards the commercialization of education, which will inevitably lead to greater inequalities in the population.

### Access to water and sanitation facilities

The main obstacles to access to water have to do with the costs of connection and of the service (billed every two months), with the lack of networks in poor neighbourhoods (especially on the outskirts of urban areas) and with insufficient information about the connection programs.

Significant progress has been made in the sanitation network but this is still not satisfactory. Only 6 of the 21 urban centres have a collective network, 31.3% of people in rural areas do not have access to a sanitation system and access to improved latrines remains expensive.<sup>14</sup>

Changes to the institutional framework for water services and sanitation in urban areas is under consideration, but it is feared that the cost of water will rise if the opinions of workers' unions and consumers are not taken into account in the reform process.

### Health

According to UNICEF, maternal mortality decreased in the 2005–2008 period (from 980 to 400 per 100,000 live births) but it is still very high.<sup>15</sup> Two of the most serious problems are the very low rate of births attended by skilled health personnel (52%, according to UNICEF) and the large number of deaths caused by malaria.<sup>16</sup> There are only 125 gynaecologists – mostly in the cities – in a country where 49% of women are of childbearing age.<sup>17</sup>

The incidence of HIV/AIDS is low among the general population (0.7%) but the illness has become feminized; in 1996 four times as many men as women were infected but in 2005 there were twice as many women as men.

### The situation of women

There has been some progress towards gender equality insofar as women now have improved access to education and increased participation in the armed forces and police. However, their access to power, land and jobs is still limited; they form an important part of the informal sector (41%) but make up only 17% of the formal sector.<sup>18</sup>

Women constitute 52% of the population but are under-represented in politics: they account for only 23% of the seats in the National Assembly, 10% in central Government, 13% in regional councils, 20% in municipal councils and 27% in rural councils. The country has had one woman prime minister. With the announcement of a proposed bill to establish gender parity in elected positions the State seems to be starting to implement legal and regulatory reforms in the spirit of the principles laid down in the new Constitution of 2001.

### Slow progress towards the MDGs

There is little chance of Senegal achieving progress on the various dimensions of MDG 3—to promote gender equality and empower women—by 2015 unless structural changes are made, strong programs implemented and resources allocated in line with the economic and social policy reference framework for 2011–15 (PRSP-3). It is also very unlikely that the MDGs in the health area (goals 4, 5 and 6) will be achieved.

According to the World Bank Senegal is on track to meet two goals: MDG 2 on education for all and MDG 7 on protecting the environment.<sup>19</sup> To improve the education sector civil society organizations are promoting the following:

- Far-reaching reforms and a change in focus to better adapt to the needs of the community and the economy.
- Urgent implementation of good governance and management geared to results that will institutionalize accountability in schools, in school administration and in the education system in general.
- Pacification of the social climate and atmosphere in the education system through the Government honouring its commitment to the actors involved (pupils, students and teachers), especially those concerning ending violence against girls.
- Improving the Government's contribution to public education.
- Developing a dynamic association that can achieve a consensus and mobilize people to improve the situation in education.
- Working for a nation-wide consensus about the measures and inputs needed to improve the quality of education and training (including aspects of human resources management, learners completing their study programs at all levels and the introduction of teaching in various national languages).
- Strengthening the synergy between the different actors (NGOs, unions, students' associations, parents' associations, grassroots community associations, etc.) to improve their contribution to follow-up on State policies through well-argued proposals. ■

<sup>12</sup> Department of Educational Planning and Reform (DPRE), "National Report on the Situation of Education," Ministry of Education, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> CONGAD, 2009, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> See: <[www.unicef.org/infobycountry/senegal\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/senegal_statistics.html)>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> US Agency for International Development, "Family Planning: Senegal has only 125 gynaecologists". Available from: <[senegal.usaid.gov/en/node/44](http://senegal.usaid.gov/en/node/44)>.

<sup>18</sup> Sigrid Colnerud Granström, "The Informal Sector and Formal Competitiveness in Senegal," *Minor Field Studies* No. 194, University of Lund, 2009. Available from: <[www.nek.lu.se/Publ/mfs/194.pdf](http://www.nek.lu.se/Publ/mfs/194.pdf)>.

<sup>19</sup> International Development Association and International Monetary Fund, "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) – Status of Implementation," 15 September 2009, 34. Available from: <[www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2009/091509.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2009/091509.pdf)>.