

Senegal

The participation of young people and children for a better respect of their rights

Senegal is one of the most stable countries in Africa, both politically and economically. It ranks fourth among West African countries in terms of economic growth, at 6.8%. Despite this, unemployment, the cost of living, the poor quality of public services, infrastructure and water supply remain major concerns for many Senegalese.

The primary sector, particularly agriculture, employs 70% of the population, but accounts for only 16% of GDP. The low rainfall in recent years has made agricultural production fragile and constantly decreasing. The lack of water and food leads to rural exodus. The country's economy is mainly based on the service sector (transport and telecommunications), which accounts for nearly 60% of GDP.

The poverty rate was 46.7% in 2017, but this average figure masks a wide disparity. In urban areas, one in four people live below the poverty line, while in rural areas, nearly two in three live below the poverty line.

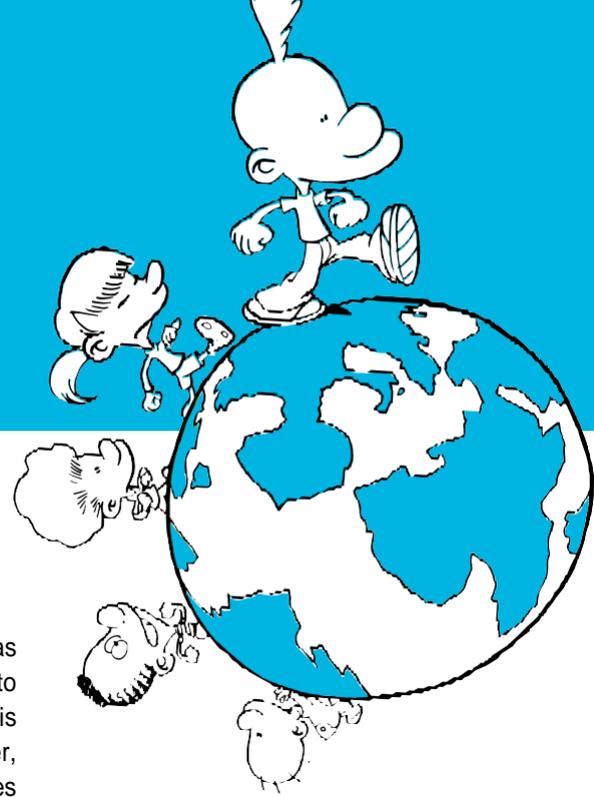
In the field of education, progress has been made. Among children aged 6 to 12, the rate of girls in school (81%) is higher than that of boys (76%). However, in disadvantaged areas, Terre des Hommes Suisse observes a higher dropout rate among girls than among boys during the school year. This is explained by various factors: early marriage, work, more investment in boys because girls will leave the household at the time of their marriage, school fees, etc. In addition to the public system, Koranic schools offer strict education to about 200,000 children. Most of these come from precarious families who entrust them entirely to these schools. They are often exposed to several forms of violence. Many of them are forced to beg in the main cities of Senegal.

In the Dakar region, Terre des Hommes Suisse acts to protect children and promote their voices.

On the outskirts of Dakar, children are particularly exposed to different forms of violence. Because they do not have a birth

certificate, some of them cannot attend school. And they often find themselves entering the labour market early.

In this context, EDEN, a leading association in the promotion and protection of children's rights and a partner of Terre des Hommes Suisse, acts on a daily basis and puts children at the heart of its actions. Thanks to the training provided by the Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child (composed of young people), children are made aware of their rights. With the support of adult leaders, the children then organize themselves into clubs and carry out activities such as forum theatres, neighbourhood festivals and awareness-raising activities for adults and children. They cover the subjects that concern them, such as violence, dropping out of school, child begging or malaria.





EDEN thus protects children in vulnerable situations by improving their immediate environment: families, schools, community actors, children's services, especially in the areas of education and inclusion.

The project is also in line with the implementation of the main objectives of the child protection strategy developed by the Senegalese government.

3575 young people and children from 0 to 14 years old benefit from the actions of the EDEN association throughout the year.

Terre des Hommes Suisse promotes the rights of the child and supports EDEN in three areas:

1. Quality and appropriate education

For various reasons, children have had

to interrupt their schooling or have never had the opportunity to access school. The EDEN socio-educational centre offers 600 children, more than 50% of whom are girls, the opportunity to continue their education. The centre offers a protective space that takes into account their needs. Teachers are specially trained in inclusive pedagogies. On average, the classes have 30 students compared to about 100 in formal schools.

The majority of children who attend this "second chance school" pass their elementary school leaving certificate.

2. Protection of children in vulnerable situations

Under the guidance of a network of "godmothers" and the Committee of Experts, young people and children are becoming aware of their rights. Through awareness workshops, they learn to recognize the situations in which these rights are threatened. They also develop reflexes that can protect them, themselves and their peers. They are taught to flag cases, as well as report or denounce them. Child victims of violence are cared for by the Office for the reception, listening, guidance and support of children and women victims of violence and are accompanied by competent adults.

3. Youth and children's participation

EDEN is particularly well known for training and encouraging children and young people to participate actively in decisions that affect them. For this purpose, EDEN has created the EDEN Clubs in schools or neighbourhoods. There are about 80 of them, each grouping between 50 and 75 children, who meet once or twice a week. During these meetings, supervised by a referent adult, they decide either to talk about a theme that concerns them, or to set up an activity or carry out a social mobilization in order to raise awareness of a theme among the inhabitants. Thanks to their actions, children and young people are helping to change attitudes. They raise public awareness of common problems, such as obtaining a birth certificate, which is a document that allows children to go to school. They also assist families in administrative procedures. The children of the EDEN Clubs are thus real agents of change and actively participate in improving the living conditions of other children and their families.

The educational sheets and complements can be downloaded from:

www.marchedelespoir.ch

Facts and figures about Senegal*

Capital : Dakar (3 630 000 inhabitants in the region)

Surface area : 196 712 km² (5 times the size of Switzerland)

Population : 15 850 567

Urban population: 44 % (in constant growth)

Official languages: 25 languages including Wolof, Peul, Serer and Mandinka.

French is the national language spoken by 37% of the population and used in schools and administrations.

Main religions: Muslim (94 %), Catholic (5 %)

Currency : Franc CFA

Unemployment rate: 15,7 %

Poverty rate: 46 % (57 % in rural areas)

Primary school enrolment: 84 %

Net primary school attendance rate: 55 %

Literacy rate: 15-24 ans = 69 % ; over 15 years old = 52 %

HDI: 164/188

Sources : ONU, PNUD, UNICEF * Depending on the sources, figures may vary significantly.

