

# **Migration Profile**

## SENEGAL

#### A. Executive Summary

Though located in a region that is affected by conflict and violence, Senegal remains one of the most stable countries in Africa, having gone through three peaceful political transitions since obtaining its independence from France. Senegal is also known as the land of the "Teranga" - a word in Wolof (one of the national languages) that encompasses the Senegalese spirit of warmth, friendliness to visitors, and community. In Senegal, migration, especially international migration, is perceived positively, given the economic contributions that it brings to the country. In recent years, Senegal has shifted from a destination country for migrants in Africa to a transit and origin country for many migrants in Africa, and particularly in West Africa. Recently, there has been an increasing aspiration from Senegalese people to migrate to Europe, and a simultaneous decline in the economic and political situation in neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, Senegal remains one of the top countries in West Africa, sending migrants to Spain.<sup>i</sup> The combined rate of unemployment and underemployment (due to limited working hours) is around 31.5%: 42.4% among women and 23.4% among men.<sup>ii</sup> In Senegal, migration is mostly seen as a way of escaping poverty, as is the case of economic migrants who migrate to better their life, and most migrants use irregular migration routes.iii

Between 2014 and 2018, Senegal recorded among the highest levels of economic growth in Africa, consistently above 6% per year.<sup>iv</sup> GDP growth rose from 6.5% in 2015 to 6.7% in 2016, positioning Senegal amongst the fastest-growing economies in Africa.<sup>v</sup> Senegal's main economic drivers during this period were the service sector, investment, and exports. These gains were stymied by the twin effects of droughts and the low commodity prices, which were further compounded by the worsening consequences of COVID-19. Net GDP growth stood at 0.87% in 2020, down from 4.4% in 2019, and 6.2% in 2018.<sup>vi</sup> The pandemic has significantly changed the economic gains of the country, adversely affecting the services and export sectors. Inflation rose to 1.9% in 2020 from 0.9% in 2019.<sup>vii</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) for Senegal stood at 0.512 in 2020, ranking 168<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries.<sup>viii</sup>

#### **B.** Country Profile

#### **I. Basic Information**

Senegal is situated in the westernmost region of Africa. It is bordered by Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, Guinea and Guinea Bissau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. It has a total surface area of 196,722 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 16.7 million inhabitants.<sup>ix</sup> Approximately 49% of the population lives in urban areas, with a heavy concentration in the

Migrants & Refugees Section | Integral Human Development | Palazzo San Calisto | 00120 Vatican City Tel. +39 06 698 87376 | info@migrants-refugees.va | www.migrants-refugees.va capital city of Dakar. The country is divided into 14 regions, each administered by a regional council. The official language of Senegal is French. Senegal is a multi-ethnic nation predominantly made of the Wolof (37.1%), Pular (26.2%), Serer (17%), Mandinka (5.6%), Jola (4.5%), Soninke (1.4%), and others (8.3%), including Europeans and persons of Lebanese descent.<sup>x</sup> Senegal is a predominantly Muslim nation. A total of 95.9% of the population is Muslim (mostly belonging to one of the four main brotherhoods of Sufism), while 4.1% is Christian (mostly Roman Catholic).<sup>xi</sup>

#### II. International and Internal Migrants

Nearly 2 million individuals or 14.6% of the general population in Senegal are internal migrants.<sup>xii</sup> The growing urbanization drive is one of the key factors that encourage internal migration. In Senegal, 70% of internal migrants are moving to urban settings. Urban-to-urban migration accounts for 77% of internal migration, and moving to Dakar accounts for 41% of internal migration.<sup>xiii</sup> Because of the growing economic activities and infrastructural development in Dakar, it remains the main centre of attraction for most Senegalese. For example, of the 22 hospitals in the country, 8 are located in Dakar.<sup>xiv</sup> In Senegal, women are more likely to migrate than men. However, they move less far away and are more likely to migrate to rural areas, especially when they originate from rural areas. While women's mobility is more linked to marriage, men's mobility is more connected to labour.<sup>xv</sup> Youth migration is affected by the father's educational level, and over half of them are temporary migrants. Access to primary school from one's childhood residence decreases the likelihood of migrating to urban areas for both men and women.<sup>xvi</sup>

In recent years, Senegal has shifted from a destination country for migrants in Africa to a transit and origin country for many migrants in Africa, and especially West Africa. Many migrants within the region use Senegal to start their journey from Africa to Europe through a complex web of hubs spread along the Atlantic coastline.<sup>xvii</sup> In 2015, the international migrant population in Senegal stood at 263,242 (1.74% of the total population),<sup>xviii</sup> while in 2020 it had increased to 274,900<sup>xix</sup>. Mauritanians, Malians, and Guineans account for more than half of the immigrant population in Senegal, and most of them work in the low-skilled sector.<sup>xx</sup> The migration corridor between Senegal and the Gambia is among the top 10 migration corridors in Western Africa, with an estimated population of 154,739 people migrating between the two countries.<sup>xxi</sup>

### III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

Emigration from Senegal is mostly driven by labour demand in Europe, and economic insecurity and labour income in Senegal. Migration is seen as a strategy for income diversification, as well as improved well-being and social standing. According to the European Commission's study "Imagining Europe from Outside," three in four Senegalese nationals want to emigrate – with Europe being the most coveted destination.<sup>xxii</sup> Approximately 4-5% of the country's population lives abroad, and about half of that demographic resides in Europe.<sup>xxiii</sup> The main European destinations for Senegalese emigrants are France (110,000), Italy (80,000), and Spain (60,000).<sup>xxiv</sup> Most of the irregular Senegalese migrants in Europe use the Mediterranean route. For example, in 2018, the Western

Mediterranean route from West Africa towards Spain accounted for over 58,000 arrivals, predominantly young male with an average age of 31 years old.<sup>xxv</sup> Senegal was ranked the 10th largest country of origin in terms of irregular sea-border crossing and was one of the top West African nationalities among arrivals to Europe in 2018.<sup>xxvi</sup> It is important to note that intra-regional migration accounts for roughly 46% of migration flow from Senegal, mainly to the Gambia (100,000), Mauritania (40,000), Ivory Coast (20,000), Mali, and Niger.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Together with national and international partners, the government of Senegal has implemented three programs that draw on the expertise of skilled Senegalese abroad. These programs are MIDA-Senegal, TOKTEN, and Co-Development. Through these programs, the government can benefit from Senegalese expertise abroad in the social, economic, scientific, and technological development of Senegal.

# IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced People)

By August 2021, there were an estimated 14,512 refugees and 2,052 asylum seekers in Senegal.<sup>xxviii</sup> Senegal does not have an encampment policy with regard to refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>xxix</sup> They are allowed to integrate themselves within Senegalese communities. As a result of this policy, refugees and asylum seekers are located all over the country. The refugees in Senegal are from Mauritania (14,196), Central African Republic (205), and unspecified (111)<sup>xxx</sup>. Following UNHCR advocacy, authorities are increasingly in favour of local integration, including naturalization, long-term residence permits, and the inclusion of locally integrated Mauritanian refugees into the national social service program.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Internal displacement in Senegal is mostly caused by violence. According to IDMC, there were 8,400 people who were displaced because of conflict and violence, and 3,300 new displaced because of natural disasters in 2020.xxxii Violence in the Southern Region of Casamance (Kolda, Sedhiou, and Ziguinchor), caused by a movement against the government that began as far back as 1982, is still on-going. The conflict is one of the sources of internal displacement in the region, which has led to the displacement of over 60,000 people in total.xxiii The on-going violence also poses a challenge for returnees to their communities, as recent attempts to relocate IDPs in the vicinity of Bassine in the Ziguinchor region, for instance, sparked renewed violence.xxiv

Apart from violence, floods have also contributed to internal displacement. On September 7, 2020, all regions of Senegal recorded excess rainfall compared to normal levels, with rainfall ranging from 100mm to 1,900mm. The regions of Dakar and Thies recorded 800mm of rainfall.xxv The floods affected 11 regions, including 25 departments, destroying 102 houses, and causing the displacement of nearly 3,285 people, including 365 families in the suburbs of Dakar and the department of Thies.xxvi The most affected were women, including particularly vulnerable groups like pregnant women, as well as children under the age of five.xxvii Other areas affected by the flood included the departments of Matam, Kanel, Ranerou, Saint-Louis, Podor, Dagana, Kaolack, Nioro, Mbacke, Sedhiou, Tambacounda, Kolda, Velingara, Bambey, Diourbel, Tivaouane, Mbour, Kaffrine, Mbirkelane, Fatick, and Foundiougne.xxxviii

#### V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Senegal was ranked Tier 2 in the Trafficking in Person Report 2021, as Senegal does not meet the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking activities. Poverty remains one of the key drivers of human trafficking in the country. In Senegal, 39% of the population lives in poverty, exposing women and children to human trafficking.xxiix Forced begging is the most prevalent form of trafficking in Senegal as it is seen as an alternative source of income, wherein criminal elements prey on children to make money for them. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), children's forced begging in Senegal generates 5 billion CFA (\$8 million USD) annually.xl Many begging children in Senegal are victims of human trafficking.xli Over 100,000 young children were forced to beg on the streets of Senegal in 2017 and 2018.xlii Traffickers also subject Senegalese children and women to sex trafficking, as well as forced labour in domestic servitude and gold mines.xliii Internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking, although there are instances of traffickers exploiting boys from the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali in forced begging in Senegalese cities, as well as forced labour in the artisanal gold mines.xliv Child sex tourism is prevalent in the cities of Dakar, Saint-Louis, Cap Skirring, and La Petit Côte, which are traditionally known as tourist areas.xlv The government of Senegal maintained efforts to identify and protect trafficking victims in 2020 and 2021.xlvi Through the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender, and Child Protection, the government has referred 598 children to its shelter at the Ginddi Centre for care in 2021, until they are able to return to their families or be placed in a foster family. During this process, each child under their care received medical care, clothing, food, and psycho-social support<sup>xlvii</sup>.

#### VI. National Legal Framework

At the national level, Law No. 71-10 of January 25, 1971 sets the conditions of admission, residence, and establishment of foreigners in Senegal, while Law No. 2005-06 of May 10, 2005 sets out rules on combating trafficking in persons and related practices and protecting victims.<sup>xlviii</sup> The Senegalese government also has a policy in place that allows 15 members of parliament to be elected by the diaspora community overseas to represent their interests.<sup>xlix</sup> Moreover, the government has a public and private fund that members of the diaspora can access in the form of loans for investment purposes.<sup>1</sup>

At the regional level, Senegal is a party to the Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its protocols, as well as the Treaty of the West African Economic Monetary Unit (WAEMU). Both treaties establish the freedom of movement of persons, goods, services, and capital for citizens for Member States, as well as the right to residence and establishment.<sup>II</sup>

At the international level, Senegal is a signatory to: the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; the 1969 AU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Right of All Migrants Workers and Their Families; the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons; and the 2000 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.<sup>lii</sup>

#### VII. Main Actors

#### The State

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad is in charge of relations with Senegalese migrants, assistance abroad, and their return home.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for immigration management, and specifically for asylum seekers' requests. Each application needs to be approved by Senegal's President.

The Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Planning is in charge of in-depth studies and research on migration issues.

#### International Organisations

Some of the international organisations dealing with migration-related issues in Senegal include the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which is a key stakeholder in linking migration and development efforts in Senegal. Likewise, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) guides and coordinates international action to protect refugees. Finally, the International Labour Organisation supports the Senegalese government in improving youth employability and provides social protection, especially to those working in the informal economy.

Other migration-related United Nations agencies in Senegal include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which supports the government in its drive for poverty reduction in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

There is also the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), which assists refugees and internally displaced persons, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI), which assists victims of armed conflict through advocacy.

#### Other Organisations

*Rencontre Africaine Pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme* (RADDHO) operates counselling and legal services for refugees and IDPs. The centre also provides orientation for asylum seekers upon their arrival to Senegal and provides legal guidance throughout the asylum-seeking process.

*Office Africaine pour le Développement et la Coopération* (OFADEC) works in the areas of management of refugee camps, education, health, micro-projects for women, and agricultural projects, and also deals with issues pertaining to repatriation. The West African Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Network (WARIPENT) is a coalition of NGOs in Africa who have come together to advocate for the rights of refugees and IDPs, and they are also based in Senegal.

#### The Catholic Church

Senegal is a predominantly Muslim country. However, the Catholic Church also has a presence in the country. There are six dioceses – Kaolack, Kolda, Saint-Louis du Senegal, Tambacounda, Thies and Ziguinchor – in addition to the Archdiocese of Dakar. The Catholic Church in Senegal has a series of projects and organisations that assist migrants and refugees, including the Salesian Missionaries, Caritas, and CRS.

The Salesian Missionaries are involved in several programs, including tackling youth migration by improving educational and employment opportunities in their home countries, as well as programs that educate young people and help them to find employment in order to decrease the risk of trafficking. They also offer programs that provide access to education through scholarships and work grants.<sup>1iii</sup> The project likewise provides kits that allow participants to start micro-enterprises in strategic sectors.<sup>1iv</sup> Furthermore, the Salesian Missionaries are involved in strengthening psycho-social care services that young returnee migrants receive to help them reintegrate into their communities.<sup>1v</sup>

In a move to mitigate the devastating effects of droughts in the Senegal region of Diourbel, CRS – in alliance with its partners, Start Network, the government of Senegal, African Risk Network, and the German Development Bank – implements an innovative prevention humanitarian operation.<sup>1</sup>V<sup>i</sup> Through this operation, they donate food supplies to families that will help them endure long droughts and cover basic needs.<sup>1</sup>V<sup>ii</sup> As the Salesian Missionaries strive to reduce irregular migration and its subsequent risk, CRS seeks to provide an alternative to migration in Senegal and provides support to the *Association des jeunes rapatriés* (AJRAP), which collaborates with Action for the Protection and Integration of Migrants in West Africa (APIMA) to provide training to Senegalese youth, in order to empower them to be able to find a job in Senegal.<sup>1</sup>V<sup>iii</sup> They offer vocational training courses in food processing, information technology, auto repair, metalwork, and tailoring.<sup>1</sup>Ix

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic placed enormous hardship on the lives of many Senegalese and migrant communities, as they struggled to buy essential commodities. In a move to provide some safety measures to migrants and locals, Caritas and CRS distributed hygiene kits to 50 beneficiaries in the Thiaroye-Sur-Mer suburb of Darkar, in collaboration with APIMA.<sup>1x</sup>

Caritas Senegal has been operating in the country since 1966, with projects related to disaster risk management, capacity building, food security, nutrition, and human mobility. The organisation has been also engaging with migration and climate change. Caritas Senegal has undertaken several projects that aim to strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in the country and increase their access to food, as well as introducing agro-ecological techniques as a possible alternative to migration.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>ii</sup> International Labour Organisation, 2018.

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<sup>liv</sup> Ibid.

<sup></sup> Ibid.

<sup>Ivi</sup> Catholic Relief Services, 2020a.

<sup>Ivii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>Iviii</sup> Catholic Relief Services, 2020b.

<sup>lix</sup> Ibid.

∣× Ibid.