

# Youth Aspirations & Employment Opportunities Analysis

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## ACRONYMS

ANSD	Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie
BAD	Banque Africaine de Développement
EPS	Enquête sur les Priorités au Sénégal
ESPS	Enquête de Suivi de la Pauvreté au Sénégal
FGD	Focus group
MCF	Mastercard Foundation
PASGR	Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
PSE	Plan Sénégal Emergent
USD	Dollars des Etats-Unis

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is much attention on youth, even though they have been marginalized for long from economic and social policies in Africa. African governments are aware of the importance of supporting youth by ensuring that their aspirations and the motivations are translated in the national policies that govern their actions. These young people have multidimensional aspirations, economic, socio-cultural, educational and training, and their ambitions go beyond their current conditions. Young women and men are dynamic, inventive and creative in all sectors of society. They take a philosophical approach to their conditions as youth, and participate as social actors in the changes taking place in contemporary Africa.

Today, more than 50% of the population in South of Sub-Sahara Africa is between 15-35 age bracket. It is noted that idleness, unemployment, poverty, prolonged social dependence and social dispute are among other problems, characteristic of the living conditions of youth. However, they share a common determination to overcome their difficult situation, through coping strategies and by developing forms of resilience. The aim of this research is to understand young people's aspirations, their views on employment and employability, and their strategies for maintaining resilience in the face of political, socio-economic and cultural obstacles. As a result, Mastercard Foundation acts as an advocate for youth's opinions, incorporating their views into the formulation of recommendations.

This research is built around four themes: perception of young women and men on decent work; professional aspirations and their actions to advance their professional goals; awareness and use of technology. A total of 882 young women and men from rural and urban areas were surveyed in Senegal, to collect quantitative data on the mentioned themes.

### Key results

Aspirations for decent, dignified and fulfilling work were raised quite frequently by many focus group participants, to help improve their families' living conditions, and aspire for opportunities that can provide them with relevant training, guidance and support towards achieving decent jobs. More emphasis was put on aspirations of young women

in Senegal to achieving their personal goals of dignified and fulfilling jobs. Majority of young women and men reported that their main employment-related needs are coaching, financial and technical support, technical and vocational training, and project monitoring and evaluation skills, especially for youth related projects.

Additionally, agriculture was identified by both the youth and the stakeholders interviewed as an important sector of the economy that needs more support, development and funding to grow. The youth expressed great interest in working in this field if they received financial or technical support. The youth interviewed also indicated that the level of decent wages they earn, particularly in Dakar, is approximately 500 dollars a month to meet their needs. Organisation offering training and mentorship services to build their skills needed to enter the job market are limited, particularly in the regions of Kolda, Fatick and Ziguinchor.

### 1. The perception of decent job

The majority of young women and men consider a job to be decent if it provides a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. In this sample, a job is said to be satisfying if it provides a good salary/income, especially among unemployed youth (25.69%), as opposed to those with a job (16.02%). Consequently, youth consider a job to be satisfying if they are trusted and respected by society; these judgments are higher among employed youth (20.44%) as compared to those without a job (13.30%). Law, religion, culture, education, dignity or society in general are important in determining the decency of a job. In the focus groups, youth said they wanted a decent job in order to improve their families' living conditions. Solidarity is therefore a criterion for decent work. Any job that is not based on corruption is considered decent.

Moreover, a widespread view among youth is that satisfying work is measured in terms of satisfaction, purpose and personal fulfillment. For those who defined satisfying work as a sense of satisfaction, purpose and fulfillment, the number of employed youth (63.54%) was slightly higher than that of the unemployed (61.01%). Additionally, a decent job is one that enables people to live comfortably in terms of their health and environmental conditions. Exploiting one's own skills is

also highlighted as decent work, by seeking contracts to monetize one's skills. All immoral and unethical work like theft, lying, assault, prostitution, swindling, the sale of harmful products are considered as non-decent work, as it engenders contempt on the part of society.

## **2. Decent employment needs**

When it comes to decent jobs, you can't always count on the government. Nevertheless, it is ultimately up to society to appreciate and decide what the criteria are for assessing a job as decent or not. The main finding is that young women and men with disabilities have a perception that government cannot offer any help to them. But to do a decent job, youth say they need mentorship, financial and technical support, technical and vocational training, and monitoring on how their projects are performing. Some of the sectors targeted by young Senegalese are agriculture, agri-food, fishing, construction, infrastructure, transport, import-export, security services, education, tourism, crafts, textiles and clothing, and information and communication technologies.

The main challenge faced by the majority of youth we interviewed is opportunities available for formal employment are limited. In Senegal, the jobs that require little qualifications include security guards, drivers, waiters among others, justifying the huge number of women and men in the named sectors. In addition, education and training facilities are few and sparsely distributed, especially in regions such as Tambacounda, Kédougou and Ziguinchor. Finally, private sector players point out that the main constraint to hiring youth is their lack of practical skills, due to the fact that the education they receive does not match with job market needs.

## **3. Perception and expectations on an employer**

When asked what they expect from their employer, youth emphasized the importance of keeping commitments, paying wages regularly, recognizing employees' skills, being good and kind to employees. Humility is also a quality of the employer: he must be humble and treat his employees as if they were his own person. The profile of the ideal employer is that he must also be a good listener.

## **4. Education and perception of salary level**

The majority of young women and men with high level of education consider a job to be providing a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment when it is well-paying. This group includes youth with secondary level of education. A second group, characterized by respondents with primary and lower levels of education, considers a job to be self-fulfilling if they are respected, and trusted.

## **5. Perception of work and place of residence**

Among those who defined a satisfying job as being linked to a good salary, the number of youth living in rural areas (23.96%) is greater than that of youth living in urban areas (17.30%), despite the fact that the standard of living is more expensive in urban areas. This reflects the divide between the urban environment that hosts all institutions and amenities, and the rural environment, neglected by development policies. Ethical values in the workplace are the most frequently cited by youth from rural areas (17.92%), compared to those from urban areas (14.47%), as the most satisfying aspect of their work.

## **6. Perception of success and hard work**

The majority of youth associate success with hard work, whereby the percentage of young men who « agree » (77.55%) was slightly higher than women (74.95%). Among those who disagree that success is not due to hard work, women (21.17%) slightly outnumbered men (19.84%). For the question as to whether success due to hard work, young women and men aged (15-19) years scored the highest in agreeing (77.51%) as compared to their counterparts (30-35) years who scored 74.44%. Among those who « disagree », 20-24 year-olds (22.49%) are the most numerous and 15-19 year-olds the least (17.65%).

## **7. Perception of success and impact of social network**

The influence of family acquaintances in facilitating young women and men access to employment is important for success. However, those who disagree with this idea are mostly youth who already have a job (60.71%), while those unemployed support the statement by 50.54%.



## **8. Salary aspirations of youth**

Low wages for youth is a reality with majority of youth being paid 0-49 USD. In the 0-49 USD and 50-99 USD wage groups, women (37.5% and 25% respectively) outnumbered men (23.47% and 15.31% respectively). For wages over 99 USD, men were more than women, with majority of youth receiving wages less than 200 USD. From the findings, a majority of youth indicated that they would require between \$400 and \$550 to live decently while at the same time supporting their parents.

## **9. Income to live decently in a future job**

Many youth aren't looking for a very big salary, but just enough to live with dignity and cover the costs of renting a house, paying for water, electricity, food, health, education, parties among others.

## **10. Youth's professional aspirations**

Youth prefer to be self-employed and work for their own companies instead of being employed by either government or private sector. Many people want to be independent and run their own businesses, especially women. On the other hand, youth's professional aspirations are diverse, with majority revolving around being able to provide for everyone, going into business, having a job to compensate for lack of means, running a company or a bank, working in agriculture. Long-term professional goals (5 to 20 years) include working and earning more, joining politics, and handing over their businesses to their generations.

## **11. Professional aspirations and family constraints**

Many women aged between 15 and 35 in Senegal are housewives, as result of parents approval for early marriages, hence limiting them from completing their education. This is exacerbated by poverty and cultural norms where parents who are unable to provide for their children give their daughters away at an early age, to free themselves from responsibility. Culturally, a woman is only good for cooking, washing and breeding, but the young generation of women is more ambitious, and wants to work to cater for their many needs. In some incidences, lack of education and the means to start a business can lead to early marriage.

## **12. Differences between men's and women's professional aspirations**

From the community, there's no difference between women and men's aspirations because both are interested in employment. However, the study found that young women in Senegal are more ambitious than men, justifying why many of them are found in restaurants, NGOs and stores because they aspire to be self-independent, not waiting for their parents and husbands to provide. Majority of youth agree that there are many differences between the professional aspirations of men and women: women used to be mainly active in commerce, but today majority of them are working in the civil service. The difference can also be explained by the disparity in ambitions between men and women. Some argue that men are more motivated to work, which explains the difference between men's and women's professional aspirations.

## **13. The influence of family life on youth's professional aspirations**

Youth's professional aspirations, especially married women, can sometimes be influenced by marriage life. Indeed, some men have a negative influence on their wives' professional aspirations because they don't allow their wives to go and work. Household chores are also an obstacle for young women to progress in the career as Senegalese families are generally large. Nevertheless, most young women prefer a husband who will encourage them to go back to school and get employment, rather than staying at home. The family also has a strong influence on young women's professional aspirations. Indeed, parents play an important role in young women's aspirations. The family's economic situation is a determining factor, because when women are obliged to contribute to household expenses, this can be an obstacle to the realization of their professional aspirations. The immediate environment other than the family also influences women's aspirations especially society and culture through dictating their professional aspirations.

#### **14. Actions taken by youth to further their professional plans**

Youth are taking steps to advance their professional plans, while some admit that their connections with politicians open up various opportunities for them.

#### **15. Optimism or pessimism about the future of youth in Senegal**

Optimism prevails when it comes to the future of youth in Senegal because,

- Youth are essential to development of the country and therefore the government should set up opportunities for them.
- Senegal's youth are hardworking and are looking for ways to get employment therefore, there should be family and community solidarity to supporting them attain their aspirations of living decent to lives.

A certain pessimism nevertheless exists because of continuous unemployment among youth, despite their level of education. Additionally, there is lower representation of young women and men in the decision making tables in all country sectors including in youth related decisions.

#### **16. Awareness and use of technology**

Majority of young women and men are familiar with digital and communication technologies, such as cell phones, the Internet and computers. Youth are able to create employment opportunities for themselves through the use of digital technology. For instance, they use technology to market new products (e-commerce). Additionally, youth are able to create groups where they discuss how to fight against sexual violence, early marriage and pregnancy, how to prevent STIs, AIDS among others.

# INTRODUCTION

Youth, who have long been marginalized in national economic and social policies, are now the focus of renewed attention. African states are aware of the urgency for policies to support these youth, whose despair drives them to migrate illegally or to engage in criminal acts. It is imperative for African nations to think about youth, since their population is about 70% of the entire population, considering their potential to provide human resources with the spirit of openness, creativity and innovation needed for all development. At the international level, a number of resolutions have been passed, reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of youth for the continent's development. These include, United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/81 of December 14, 1995, which adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000. The African Union Summit, held in Khartoum in January 2006, stressed the need to restore hope and confidence to young Africans, and defined the conditions that will enable them to play a greater role in the continent's development; the new African Youth Charter adopted in July 2006 by the African Union Summit in Banjul, which is open for signature and ratification, the Plan of Action for the African Youth Decade 2009-2018 adopted by the African Union in Malabo in July 2011, the 2 Plan of Action for the African Youth Decade 2009-2018 adopted by the African Union in Malabo in July 2011, the resolution on «Youth participation in the democratic process» adopted by the 122nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Bangkok on April 1, 2010.

As a result, international and African organizations are increasingly concerned about youth. The discussed papers aimed at supporting African states to develop comprehensive policies to promote youth employment. Despite all these efforts, the reality is quite different as young people are still facing unemployment and underemployment globally, particularly in Africa. Below are some of the salient characteristics of African youth in general especially Senegalese youth. It is evident that considerations about youth have evolved over time- pessimism about youth dominated, before being replaced by optimism based on the idea that youth need to be empowered. To achieve this, job markets need to absorb as many youth as possible, and governments need to create the right conditions for access to employment.

## Youth: dominant pessimism versus optimism based on autonomy

Youth, one of the main social forces representing over 50% of the African population south of the Sub- Sahara, inherited the negative consequences of the economic and social crisis of the 1980s. Youth were victims of precariousness, underemployment, unemployment and social exclusion (Assogba et al., 2005). Views on youth have evolved over time. According to some authors (Bayart, 1985; Mbembe, 1985, Cruise O'Brien, 1996; Assogba, 2007), African youth is reduced to subordination and ineptitude, and is the seat of great human desolation. This pessimistic, negative view of youth is influenced above all by the state's governance model, a product of the post-colonial era. Indeed, youth were seen as subordinates, as burdens to be borne. This reductive vision does not take into account all the dimensions of African youth, and has been criticized by authors such as Toulabor, (1981), Ellis, (1993) and Enguéléguélé, (1998). But the latter do not see youth as an autonomous social group capable of influencing its own history.

Nevertheless, with the democratic impulses of the 1990s and the emergence of youth social movements, a body of literature emerged at the turn of the year 2000, focusing on the youth (De Boeck and Honwona, 2000). The merit of this trend is that it considers youth to be a transition to adulthood, which brings with it tensions and vacillations (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000, Becquet and de Linares, 2005; Honwana, 2012). Thus, African youth are exposed to precariousness (Diouf and Collignon, 2001; Calvès and Marcoux, 2004), which gives rise to **protest movements**, accompanied by a **search for an autonomous identity** (Argenti, 1998; Zoa, 1999; Mazzocchi, 2009; Morillas, 2015).

Youth also face **major life transitions** as they move from childhood dependence to independence. The later leads them to make decisions in the areas of education, employment, health, setting up a home and exercising citizenship. They go through transitional phases until they achieve autonomy (World Bank, 2007). This autonomy is fostered by a number of factors linked to the education system, the labor market, employment, pol-



itics, culture, among others. Antoine et al (2001) have asked whether youth in African cities have a similar profile to those in northern countries, since the conditions for achieving this autonomy differ between the two zones. While it **is often said that it is difficult to integrate youth in Africa, it is rare to find quantitative analyses based on genuine intergenerational comparisons**. In this study, the authors examine the evolution over a long period of time of the timing and modalities of the transition from «youth» to «adult» in three major cities: Dakar, Yaoundé and Antananarivo. To do this, the reseracherss used biographical surveys carried out in recent years in each of the cities analyzed.

**The main finding was that the timing of the stages of entry into adulthood lags behind in African cities.** The study has shown that there is a long waiting period for youth to enter «adulthood», i.e. to satisfy the following three conditions: getting married, finding housing and, above all, finding a job. Let's take a look at the employment challenges facing youth, before turning to the specific case of Senegal, where young people are mobilizing themselves violently to demand good living conditions and political governance.

## The challenge of youth employment in Africa

How can we cope with strong demographic growth coinciding with periods of sustained, moderate or high economic growth since the beginning of the new century, but unable to provide decent jobs for a youthful population ? This problem of growth without meaningful employment is the major challenge facing the African continent at a time when observers are waxing lyrical about the demographic dividend that would be capable of kick-starting Africa's development once and for all. This thorny issue, which affects all countries on the continent, raises legitimate questions about the nature of this growth without decisive social transformation. Today, African economies owe their survival in large part to the informal sector, to which African populations turn despite the precarious nature of their jobs. Estimates of the size of the informal sector range from 50% to 80% of GDP, 60% to 80% of employment (Benjamin and Mbaye, 2012), and up to 90% of new jobs.<sup>1</sup>

1 Definitions of what constitutes the informal sector vary, with criteria including business registration status, business size, tax status, compliance with social security legislation, availability of accounting statements and whether the business has a permanent physical address, among others (Fields, 2011; Benjamin and Mbaye, 2012; Oosthuizen et al., 2016 cited in ADB, 2018).

The employment challenge in Africa focuses primarily on youth employment, whose unemployment rate is two to three times higher than the national unemployment rate in individual countries. Of the 73 million jobs created between 2000 and 2008, only 22% were filled by youth (AfDB, 2017). The poor employment prospects for youth have been attributed to low growth rates, the fact that youth are ill-prepared for the job market and they lack networks. Nevertheless, young Africans, like those in Senegal, are developing strategies to meet the challenges of employment and difficult living conditions. Let's discuss the socio-demographic situation of youth in Senegal, before turning to their socio-economic characteristics. Over the past few decades, the situation of Senegal's young population has been marked by strong demographic growth. The country's population has doubled every quarter-century, with a growing proportion of youth. In 2020, this category of the population, aged under 35, will account for 12.7 million, or 76% of the total.

According to the Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie (ANSD), the population aged between 15 and 35 is estimated at 6,196,782 in 2022. These youth find it more difficult to enter the labor market: indeed, these youth, who represent more than 58.0% of the working-age population, made up only 50.4% of the national workforce in 2018 and 35.3% of the employed workforce in 2018 (ANSD). As a result, the unemployed workforce is predominantly made up of youth: six (6) out of ten (10) unemployed people, or 62.6%, are youth. Occupation and employment rates barely exceed 50% and 30% respectively throughout the country, with the Dakar-Thiès-Diourbel axis teeming with a preponderant proportion of youth. Between 2002 and 2010, the potentially active population (aged 15-64) rose from 5.7 million to 7.3 million, representing an annual average of 200,000 new potential jobseekers (SES, 2010,p.118). On average, almost 100,000 people enter the Senegalese job market every year. Just over two-thirds of them are aged between 15 and 34. According to the ESPS (Enquête de Suivi de la Pauvreté au Sénégal), 2.1 millions youth aged 15 to 34 were employed in

2011 (1.2 million in rural areas ; 498,000 in Dakar; 363,000 in other urban areas). This means that they accounted for 52% of total employment.

## Senegalese youth: between violent and peaceful mobilizations for better living conditions

The socio-political history of Senegal is littered with *periods when youth mobilized themselves*, through violence, art and peaceful protest against public authorities. Such was the case with the *Bul faale* (Don't care, in Wolof language) phenomenon in the 1990s, when urban youth used my Rap music to denounce the country's socio-political situation. In the early 2000s, youth violently challenged the regime of President Abdoulaye Wade, elected 10 years earlier. The "*Y'en a marre*" (I am fed up) movement played a crucial role in this protest, channeling the anger of youth. These two youth movements are part of a long tradition of citizen mobilization and political participation by youth in Senegal (Dimé, 2017).

### Youth: an asset for building peaceful societies, not a problem

Considering young people as a problem or a challenge is counterproductive for political authorities. Simpson (2018) shows that youth is more of an asset, an indispensable partner in building societies. We therefore need to encourage youth's capacity for action and spirit of initiative, via their networks and organizations, to facilitate their participation in decision-making bodies. Indeed, the exclusion of women and youth, who make up the vast majority of the population, from decision-making processes can create a gulf between elected leaders and their fellow citizens. This political, economic and social marginalization of youth can pose or exacerbate security problems, as was the case in Mali, which borders Senegal. In the latter country, women and youth have difficulty gaining access to the political sphere, as they often lack the necessary skills to participate in political life, (Mindzie, 2015). Moreover, especially for women, access to the public sphere is sometimes blocked by social norms, such as patriarchal attitudes, conservative religious beliefs, etc.

When young people feel marginalized, especially economically, such as when they are unemployed or underemployed, they are prone to ideas of revolt, as shown by Gasser (2001), who analyzed the life stories of youth in Ziguinchor (a region in the south of Senegal). Some of the latter support the armed struggle for independence in

the area. It's also worth noting that young Senegalese, in terms of their religious beliefs, are moving closer to religious movements (such as Dahiratoul Moustarchidina Wal Moustarchidati), which channel their demands into creating or defending political parties. These forms of political-religious commitment present themselves as an alternative to secular political parties (Samson, 2006).

In terms of the objectives, the study attempted to provide answers to the nagging question of youth unemployment, a well-known phenomenon in African economies marked by massive underemployment and high urban unemployment. This is a strong predominance of the informal economy, economic growth that creates few jobs, especially decent jobs, and finally a dynamic working population, a problem of employability. The report used results of surveys carried out among youth to understand their aspirations, effectiveness of vocational training that is ill-suited to employers' needs, the ineffective links between jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, their creativity and innovative spirit in the search for employment, self-entrepreneurship and their definitions of decent employment in quest for dignified and fulfilling jobs. Through Mastercard Foundation's Young Africa Works initiative, this project seeks to demonstrate that youth employment is the key to socio-economic progress. The initiative is committed to finding alternatives to these challenges, with a goal of creating 30 million jobs for Africa youth, particularly young women (70%)<sup>2</sup> by 2030. It aims to achieve this by creating and influencing change for youth, as well as for the systems, sectors and economies in which it is implemented.

<sup>2</sup> The MCF is conducting research in 10 African countries to understand how youth define dignified and fulfilling work. Youth face a diversity of employment opportunities ranging from highly vulnerable work to decent-paying jobs. We recognize that perceptions of dignified and fulfilling work are rooted in youth's lives and contexts, and may evolve over time.



# METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

## Methodology

The data sets focused on youth's aspirations and perceptions of work. Individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with and among different categories of youth. The aim was to understand youth's aspirations, their views on employment and employability, and their strategies for maintaining resilience in the face of political, socio-economic and cultural obstacles. The study provided a representative view of young people's attitudes and aspirations regarding: a) their profession and professional aspirations; b) the determinants of work/job satisfaction; and c) the match between job preferences and work/job realities, barriers to self-determination in working conditions. Preliminary analysis of the survey's quantitative data provided useful insights into youth's work aspirations and perceptions, and formed the basis for a further series of interviews and focus group discussions. This provided an opportunity to develop an in-depth qualitative understanding of young Africans' perceptions of work. Qualitative data explaining underlying aspirations, including the important dimensions of gender, status, livelihoods and pathways, were collected on the basis of individual interviews and group discussion.

## Sample

A total of 3286 youth were surveyed in the four countries, with women slightly outnumbering men (53% versus 47%). The ratio of rural to urban youth was also higher (57% vs. 43%). Age groups were roughly equally represented, although the 15-19 age group was slightly over-represented in the sample. The Senegal survey involved 882 young men and women, and questions focused on youth's aspirations and motivations; the youth employment landscape; the obstacles youth face; their entrepreneurial capacity in order to explore the extent to which they are entrepreneurs «of necessity» or «of opportunity». And finally how youth are faring in sectors considered more dynamic and transformative.

## Research questions

1. What are the aspirations of young women and men and how do they perceive work? Alongside this main research question, we also have secondary questions to better reflect the social reality surrounding employment.
2. What would you define as a dignified job? What would you define as a fulfilling job?
3. What do you need to earn each month to meet your needs and prepare for the future (Net income per month)?

## RESULTS

This report explores the employment prospects for African youth using survey data collected from youth in Senegal. In line with the questions raised regarding the challenges and strategies adopted to address the challenge of youth unemployment, **four key themes** emerge and will form the basis of the qualitative data analysis.

### The perception of a decent job

#### Decent job criteria

The majority of respondents consider a job to be decent if it provides a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. In this sample, a job is said to be satisfying if it provides a good salary/income, according to unemployed youth in particular (25.69%), as opposed to those with a job (16.02%).

A job is said to be satisfying if it upholds trustworthiness **and respect** by the society; these judgments are made much more by youth with a job (20.44%) than those without a job (13.30%).

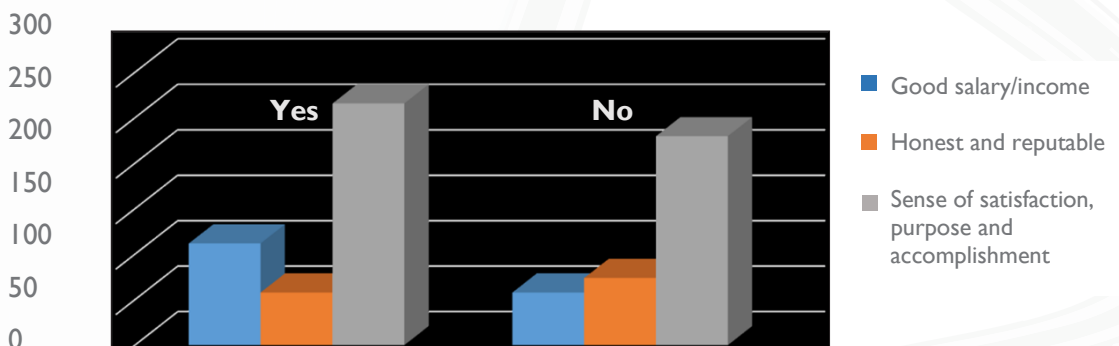
This is backed up by qualitative data showing that **law, religion, culture, education, dignity or society** in general are important in determining the decency of a job. In the focus groups, youth said they wanted **a decent job** in order to improve their families' living conditions. As one young person put it, "If you go to a mechanic to repair your car or motorcycle, he'll give you a good service without cheating. On the other hand, there are jobs that can be described as indecent, such as prostitution. But the mechanic or service manager is satisfied with what he does, and everyone knows that he has a decent job." So decency is based on social, not economic, criteria. Individual interviews

show that youth are in the same frame of mind. Indeed, one student considers a non-decent job to be «work you're forced to do, work you're not proud of, work you hide from doing». Social position can lead to a different vision of decent jobs. She considers that there are jobs that are decent but unsuitable and dangerous for women, such as mechanics and street vendors. For example, being a street vendor means "going from one neighborhood to another, from door to door. You meet different people or people with bad intentions». But another student in Dakar declares that she's ready to work as a cleaner because it's a decent job, "or if I do a small business because that's decent too."

There are differences of vision between young women and men when it comes to decent jobs. Religion, ethics and parental education can help to distinguish between decent and non-decent work.

Quantitative data provided additional information on decent employment. Indeed, a widespread view among young people is that satisfying work is measured in terms of satisfaction, purpose and personal fulfillment. For those who defined satisfying work as a sense of satisfaction, purpose and fulfillment, the number of employed youth (63.54%) was slightly higher than that of the unemployed (61.01%). The group discussions also revealed that participants defined decent work in terms of salary and benefits: "It's work that allows you to enjoy a good salary and the benefits conferred by the right to work." "In my opinion, a dignified job is one that is respected, given due consideration and taken very seriously."

Figure 1 : Perception of a decent job



The qualitative data reinforces the details of youth's perception of decent employment. One has to earn a living with satisfaction and dignity, even if you don't earn much.

### **1. *Earning a dignified living with little means***

A decent job is one that enables "people to live comfortably according to their health and environmental conditions, and to earn a decent living", as the young director of a company working in local development in Dakar puts it. There are many decent jobs out there, even if they don't pay very well. For example, youth are sometimes active in everything to do with cooking for christenings, where they receive a daily wage for washing and cooking. These are the kinds of activities we see, but they don't earn them a living. In the same region, an independent woman declares that trading is a decent job, "I sell perfumes, incense and at the same time I make braids". According to her, "any occupation you have and take seriously is a decent job, even if it's packing peanuts in little nylon bags to sell because that job is yours".

### **2. *Exploiting one's own skills***

The importance of skills is also underlined, as he points out, "I have a job in line with my experience and skills. Today, I work with dignity, looking for contracts to monetize my skills. I think it's a decent job."

### **3. *Avoid immoral work***

In Senegal, many young people with disabilities think they shouldn't be working, so they beg on the sidewalks, but this is not considered decent work. Any work that is immoral and unethical is considered not decent work. The same idea is expressed by a married woman from Fatick, who believes that "decent work means respecting yourself, working for a living, so that no one looks down on you". There are many types of decent work, such as clerical work, trading, farming or selling vegetables. A woman from Guédiawaye, a suburb of Dakar, cites the sale of fruit juices and ice creams, fishing, catering, sewing, hairdressing, etc. as decent jobs: "Apart from stealing, lying, assault, prostitution and swindling, all the other jobs are decent". This view of non-decent work is the same as that of another woman living in Fatick, "swindling, corruption, theft and assault

are non-decent jobs". A non-decent job provides «money that is not obtained by working hard, but by harming others and confiscating their property". Youth also consider that the consequences of jobs can be criteria that make them non-decent. According to one woman, prostitution and theft are indecent, as "you can even get sick" in the former case, or "be killed" in the latter.

### **4. *Independence and freedom from any employer***

A man working in agriculture asserts that independence and freedom from one's employer are crucial to defining a decent job, "A decent job, in my opinion, is an acquired job" that gives you "sources of income that can help you without depending on anyone. You are free, independent and autonomous". The other main criteria are jobs where "you work without hiding, without harming others, without taking other people's property and without fear of arrest". So even the woodcutter in the forest has a dignified job". The same types of non-decent jobs (that people hide), theft, assault, selling products unfit for consumption, selling products harmful to health, drugs.

#### **3.1.2 *Decent employment needs***

**It's worth noting that many youth believe that to get a decent job, you don't need to rely on the government.** A woman from the suburbs of the capital Dakar (Guediawaye) thinks that a decent job doesn't need government help, "It's a job you can create yourself". Solidarity is also a way to get a decent job. The same woman explains that she is disabled and didn't go to school, but fortunately, "I met a kind-hearted person to whom I shared my ambitions and who gave me some money to start my business. I took a training course in dyeing, a decent trade that you can do and earn a living from". In the same department, a man working as secretary general of the local council believes that a person who has committed "to finding his own job without waiting for the state has a decent job". Nevertheless, it is ultimately up to society to appreciate and decide what the criteria are for assessing a job as decent or not. The main lesson is that disabled youth don't think the government can really help them.

In Kolda, in the south of the country, one man insists on effort in freedom, to define decent work: "It's work based on your personal effort,



it's something you can manage without the help of anyone, not even the government. For example, market gardening, farming and animal husbandry are decent jobs." But he has his own criteria for non-decent work, as any job in which he has no interest, or which doesn't enable him to get on in life and fight poverty, is not decent: «Livestock farming, for example, is not decent for me», he asserts. But to do a decent job, youth say they need supervision, financial and technical support, technical and vocational training, and follow-up on the performance of their projects. They point out that agriculture is the most important sector of the economy, and needs more technical and financial support. Most of them would like to work in this sector. Other sectors targeted by young Senegalese, however, include agrifood, fishing, construction, infrastructure, transport, import-export, security services, education, tourism, crafts, textiles and clothing, and information and communication technologies.

The main challenge faced by the youth we interviewed are based on the fact that, formal jobs are limited. This is evident where majority of the youth in Senegal are security guards, drivers and waiters they, often require few qualifications etc.). Additionally, education and training facilities are sparsely distributed, especially in regions such as Tambacounda, Kédougou and Ziguinchor.

Finally, as private sector players point out, the main constraint to hiring youth is their lack of practical skills, due to the fact that the education they are taken through does not match with job market needs.

## Perception and expectations of an employer

This section presents the employer's expectations and profile, according to the youth. When asked what they want from an employer, youth prefer experience and money, and are keen to set up their own businesses.

The importance of respect, According to one youth with disability, "What I expect from my employer is that he respects my contract." A young woman continues: Respect for me and respect for his commitments, regular payment of wages because the employee lives on that». Another woman from Kolda insists even more on respect. She expects an employer to "respect me. Recognize my skills and respect the terms of the contract be-

tween us. I will respect my work and the terms of the contract." That's pretty much the same mindset as a married woman from Fatik, who believes that an employer should be a good, kind boss who earns a decent living and pays his employees regularly. Nevertheless, some youth prefer never to get into employment, because of a bad experience: another who lives with her in-laws, declares: "I'll never want to work for anyone else again, the next job I have to do will be self-employment. I'll work for myself.

**Humility** is also a quality of the employer, "The boss must also be humble and respectful and know that we are all human beings", says a woman from Niakhar who continues: "He must be humble and treat his employees as his own person and know it." The employee also has duties, "he must also do his job properly in the presence or absence of the boss." Bosses sometimes insist on the phrase, "I pay you my money, so you must do what I want." So this is a job where work is paid for, and employees are obliged to bend to their whims because they are the ones in need.

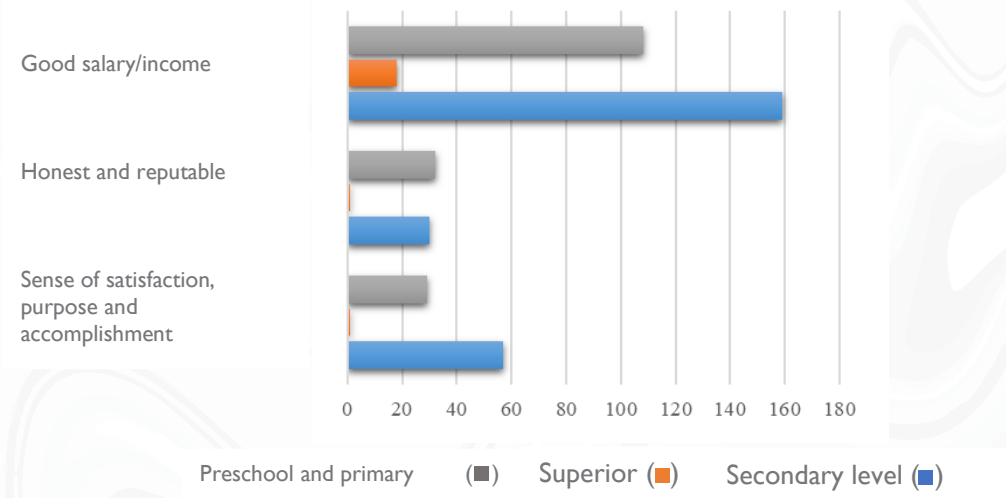
**Equality in labor rules:** For some, the problem is that it's the employer who sets the rules and this has its drawbacks. For example, a job has to be legal on both sides (employer and employee). As a young woman with disability from Dakar puts it: "Every time you sign an employment contract, you're warned to respect this, don't disrespect that, you have to do that, etc., but you're never told that, on the employer's side, if he doesn't follow the rules himself, where you have to go, what you have to do? That's what I deplore about employers." As a contract has to be negotiated between the two parties, youth expect civil society to intervene in supporting them to negotiate for solid and fair contracts, which protect them from the dictatorship and exploitation by employers: One man says: "Before hiring someone, there should be an intermediary person who belongs to civil society, because we meet to discuss this or that, and even the salary". According to him, the employer can be a dictator who imposes his views and conditions, and the employee will be forced to accept them, without having any choice.

The profile of the ideal employer is that he must be **attentive** to youth with higher education often want to be involved in political and economic decisions where they work. A person with a higher education doesn't go into a company to do a routine job, repeating the same things over

and over again. Such a person is expected to be listened to by the employerbe informed, according to some youth. «For me, the type of employer I'd like to see one day has to listen to me», says a young man from Dakar.

### Education and perception of salary level

Figure 2 : Level of education and sense of satisfaction and accomplishment

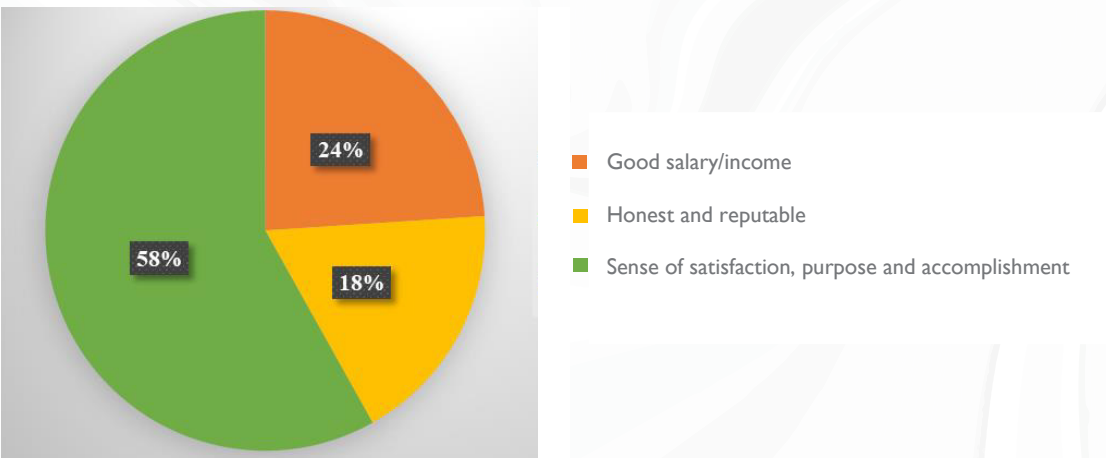


Sources: PASGR surveys (2021)

### Perception of job and environment of residence

For those who defined satisfying work as being linked to a good salary, the number of youth living in rural areas (23.96%) is greater than that of youth living in urban areas (17.30%), despite the fact that the standard of living is more expensive in urban areas. This reflects the divide between the urban environment, home to all institutions and amenities, and the rural environment, neglected by development policies. Ethical values in work are the most cited by youth from rural areas to qualify satisfying work with (17.92%) compared to youth living in urban areas (14.47%). For those who defined fulfilling work as a **sense of satisfaction, purpose and accomplishment**, the number of youth living in urban areas (68.24%) is higher than that of youth living in rural areas (58.12%).

Figure 3 : Zones of residence and perception of employment



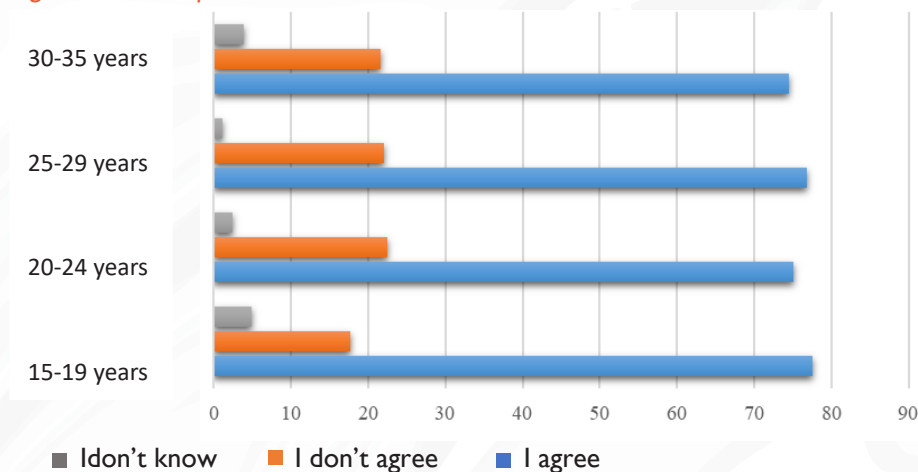
Sources: PASGR surveys (2021)



Socio-demographic variables such as place of residence, gender, level of education and professional status have an influence on perception of employment.

## Perception of success and hard work

Figure 4 : Perception of hard work and success

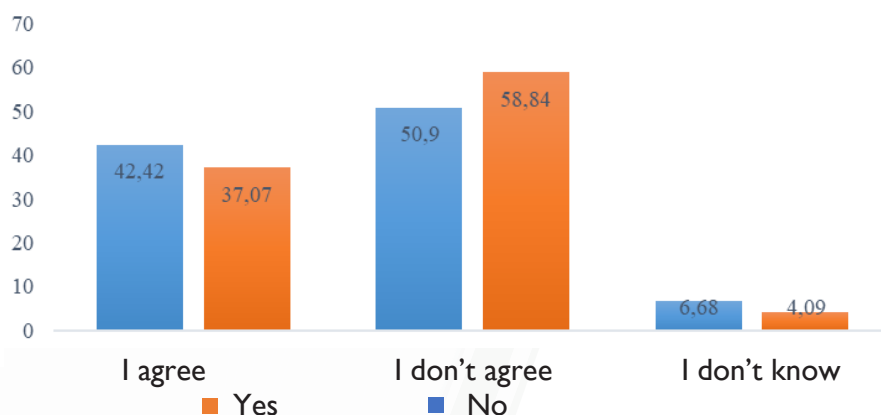


Sources: PASGR surveys (2021)

## Perception of success and impact of the social network

Lobbying, in the sense of influence exerted by family acquaintances to facilitate a family member's access to a job, is often cited by a fringe of youth as being important for success. Although some responses tend to confirm this hypothesis, it should be pointed out that those who disagree with this idea are more numerous, especially in the category of youth who already have a job with (60.71%). Those who are unemployed and support this idea represent 50.54%. The percentage of unemployed youth who « 'agree » was higher (42.95%) than that of employed (35.46%).

Figure 5 : Perception of success and influence of social network (in percentages)



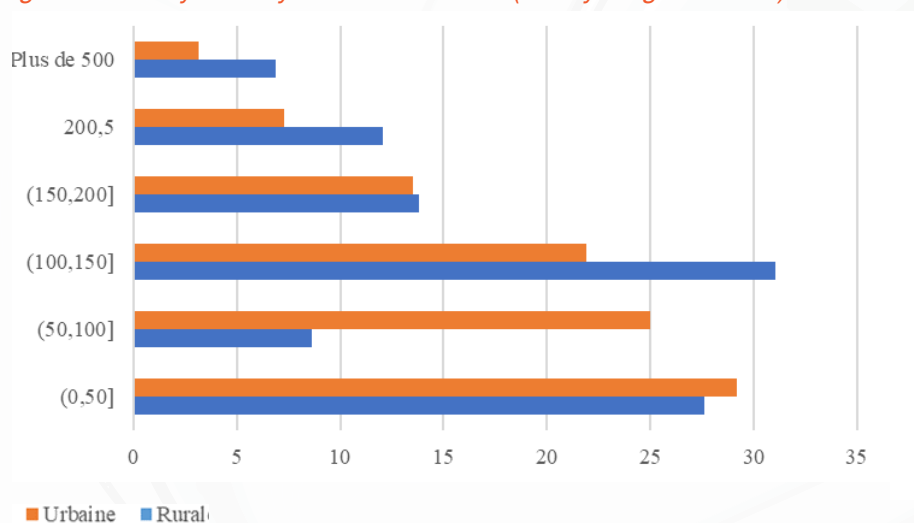
Sources: PASGR surveys (2021)

## Youth's salary aspirations

The wage gaps noted in the study by the low incomes of youth are nothing new, as surveys<sup>3</sup> by the ANSD (*Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie*) had shown that the ratio of average monthly income between youth and salaried adults stood at 50% in 2011. On the other hand, the median income ratio between youth and adults was around 37% in 2011. The usual explanation for the wage gap between adults and young employees is productivity. Adults have more experience, accumulating know-how and knowledge.

The Mastercard Foundation survey only confirms the low salaries of youth, with the following results: the most common salary paid to youth was from 0 to 49 USD. In the 0-49 and 50-99 wage groups, women (37.5% and 25% respectively) outnumbered men (23.47% and 15.31% respectively). For wages above 99 USD, men outnumbered women, except for wages in the 200-500 group. Majority of young men and women received wages below 200 USD, regardless of gender and above 500, the number of youth was lowest.

*Figure 6 : Salary level by area of residence (Salary ranges in USD)*



Sources: PASGR surveys (2021)

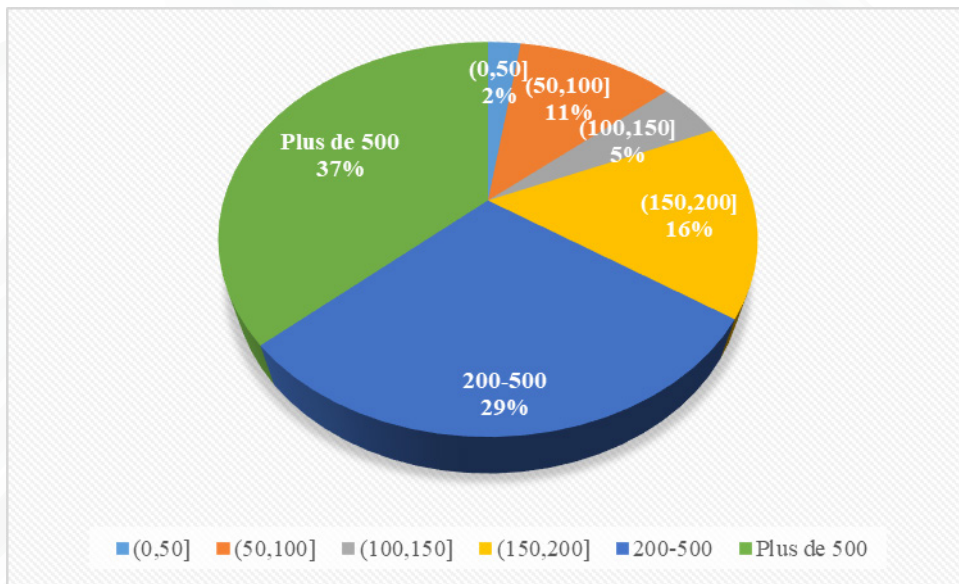
The discussions reported in the focus groups show that for the youth interviewed, it would take between **\$400 and \$550** to live decently while supporting their parents. This point will be further substantiated in the youth's salary aspirations during the survey.

### ***Income for a decent living in a future job***

When asked what income they would like to have to live better, youth of all educational backgrounds said that USD 500 a month would be enough to live a decent life, hence, the most popular salary to which youth with primary education aspire per month. Intermediate school graduates also say they want to earn an amount less than or equal to 500 (34.66%), while those whose highest level of education is high school or higher, want a salary that exceeds 500 USD (61.81%). In the salary groups above 500 USD, youth with at least secondary education are more numerous than those with no more than primary education.

<sup>3</sup> Senegal Priorities Survey (2011)

Figure 7: Wages and a decent standard of living (wage ranges in USD)



Sources: PASGR surveys (2021)

Individual qualitative data confirms the quantitative data, and shows that many youth are not looking for a very big salary, but just enough to support them in living a decent life. They'd rather stay unemployed than work for someone who isn't worth it, as one young man with disability from Dakar says: "Some young invalids, disabled like me, are not recruited by the government because of their lack of strength, because of their disability. That's why I prefer to work on my own as a tailor." Nevertheless, the amount needed to live decently varies widely among youth: "A salary of 250 USD is enough for me to support myself and my children" says a woman living with her in-laws. "If I'm paid, for example, 333 USD that's fine," says another, originally from Fatick. The same amount is good for a unmarried woman from the same region.

A young woman with disability, who has managed to get her own job in Dakar, defends the idea that it takes 1667 USD a month for a head of family, due to bills for renting a house, paying for water, electricity, food, health, education, parties. Some people don't like fixed salaries. An unemployed young man in Dakar hopes: "I don't want a fixed salary, but one that varies." This is because, as one entrepreneur puts it: "It's often said that having a salary, knowing that at the end of the month you earn so much, is the one who can be considered the real poor because his aspiration is limited." In fact, US\$125 to US\$250 is the

minimum rent in Senegal. Renting is expensive, as are water and electricity bills, and there are expenses that are not a priority for the individual and his or her family, but solidarity obliges one to bear these expenses. That's why many youth think it's necessary to get organized, set up their own business and earn a lot more money. They think that as long as they are civil servants, they risk not having a roof over their heads when they retire. So, their idols are those who work in the private sector and have set up their own businesses. Their role models are no longer civil servants, teachers or managers, but self-made men.

## Youth's professional aspirations

Young people want to work for their own company instead of working for the government or private sector. According to the global youth vision, not everyone can work in an office. Majority of young women and men want to be independent and run their own businesses, especially women.

### 1. Diversity of professional aspirations

The professional aspirations of youth are diverse and are mainly grouped around the following ideas : **To be able to meet everyone's needs**, as one young development worker puts it: "For example, here in Kolda, I'm in front of a young man who leads activities that bring in money for

the people. **Going into business**, a woman prefers: “My ambition is for my business to grow with many more items to sell. I’d also like to have my own house and live in better conditions, adapted to my physical abilities. Because of my disability, the older you get, the more your skills diminish.”

**Having a job to compensate for lack of means:** “I’d like to have a job that would enable me to earn a little money, build a house on the land my parents gave us, and build a good store because,” says a married woman from Fatick. **The youth dream of several other types of employment:** one of them prefers, because she can knit embroidery by hand, to open a sewing workshop and hire tailors. Another woman from Kolda, who is a student, would like to train as an accountant after graduating from high school. Others want to sell clothes, incense and so on.

**Running a company:** The most ambitious of them are thinking of becoming CEO of a company or head of an institution such as a bank, as they are trained for this. A manager’s job is also an ideal profession for youth, as one young man working in the commune of Guediawaye puts it: “My ideal job is to work in the banking sector, whether as a loan officer, then climb the ladder to become a manager.” **Working in agriculture:** Youth share a common vision of agriculture. “It’s the foundation of all development,” says a woman employed in Kolda. Most of the youth have already worked in this sector. “Once in the village, I help my uncles with gardening, sometimes I help them work in the fields,” says a man from Fatick. Another adds that «it’s an activity that works well in our locality. I also work in this sector because I grow the hibiscus myself and use it to make the juice I sell, instead of buying it. So it’s important. I have two fields and every year I also grow beans. Fortunately, there are national projects that help youth in agriculture, such as **Sama mbay (my agriculture)**, which provides them with the fertilizers used on their farms.

Our long-term professional goals (5 to 20 years) are as follows:

**Work and earn more.** That’s the plan of a woman from Dakar: “I’d like my business to do better so I can earn more.” A married woman from the Dakar suburbs plans to open her own sewing workshop. Another in Fatick, living with her parents-in-law, wants “to have a restaurant, deliver orders for juice and other things.” In the

same region, an unemployed woman dreams of setting up a business and earning a good living. It’s worth noting that disabled people do a lot of manual work, and want to maintain their jobs in the long term, as one woman from Dakar puts it: “We can do sewing, commerce, hairdressing, farming with table trucks, and even pottery with clay. I know disabled people who do that.”

**Getting involved in politics:** Some youth have political ambitions, and work for their communities by being actors in development: «One of my major challenges is to get on the town council; to be one of the people who will promote policies in the commune of Guediawaye» says one man. A woman from Dakar also has the same ambitions, notably by **working to reduce poverty:** “I want to try to reduce poverty to fight against scourges like prostitution, by helping people find jobs.”

**Passing on your business to your children:** Those with businesses dream of expanding them and leaving them to their children: “I’d like to have my own house and go to Mecca too, with the help of my business. Even as a person with disability, you can do it,” says a businesswoman from Guediawaye. An unemployed woman in Fatick would like to have a long-term business, with a significant turnover, and “pass it on to my children so that they too can be active.”

## 2. Professional aspirations and family constraints

Many women aged between 15 and 35 in Senegal are housewives, and youth explain what they think of this fact and what might justify it. Some of them condemn this situation and try to explain it. According to them, it’s the parents’ fault, because early marriage limits girls’ chances of going to school. Majority of the youth who participated in the study were of the idea that women should work instead of getting married at an early age. The highest percentage of early marriages in Senegal is found in the Kolda region. As one local young man puts it: “Here, girls aged 15 and under are given away in marriage, which pushes them out of school.”

**Poverty and cultural norms are key factors.** Indeed, parents unable to provide for their children give their daughters away at an early age to free themselves from responsibilities. Although the rate of unwanted pregnancies is very high in the same region of Kolda, other parents fear un-



wanted pregnancies among their daughters, as it is a great shame for them to see their daughters become pregnant out of wedlock. But according to one brave young woman with disability, they're simply lazy: "some women think that once they're married, only their husbands have to take care of all the burdens and needs of the wife too." This idea seems to be shared by many youth, and it's because they don't have a job, "If you're not in a good situation, you don't have anyone to help you work, you don't have a diploma to get a good job, nor the means to do business, you'll get married and look after your house. Whereas in Senegal, some people think that a woman is only good for cooking, washing and reproduction, the new generation of young women is very ambitious, as one married woman from Dakar puts it: "A woman has too many needs (such as fashionable clothes, body ointments, gold jewelry, artificial hair, luxury telephones, etc.) to be able to take care of herself.

Sometimes, the **lack of education and the means** to start a professional activity can lead to early marriages. In Niakhar, an unemployed young woman points out that "when you don't have a diploma, your chances of getting certain jobs are reduced." For others, lack of training is a cause of early marriage for women, as they have not learned about entrepreneurship. Dropping out of school is also a reality in the country, due to parents' lack of means. The progressive **scarcity of land**, mainly in rural areas, is also a factor that can justify this high percentage. Women know how to farm, but arable land is becoming increasingly scarce, and as towns expand, more houses are built, especially by foreign investors who are also acquiring land in rural areas. Women aged between 15 and 35 are also married off to respect culture in some ethnic groups, they can marry as young as 16. According to one participant, "girls are often told that if they're not educated, they'd better get married."

In conclusion, while training them on entrepreneurship skills, youth must be encouraged to take on their responsibilities, notably by setting up their own businesses and activities, while avoiding early marriages. **It's worth noting that** some families have a strong influence on women's professional aspirations, especially in-laws.

### 3. Differences between men's and women's professional aspirations

Today, more young women are interested in employment than men. That is why they're more likely to be found in restaurants, NGOs, stores and the like, because they can't always depend on their husbands and parents for provision. But majority of youth agree that there are many differences between the professional aspirations of men and women. According to one **young woman with disability**, there is a **slight difference**, especially in the field of sewing. The sewing trade is reserved for women, and there are a lot of women in this sector. She adds: «Men like to do mechanics, welding, they have to work as motorcycle cabs or mechanics, and so on.

Some point out that **there is a difference**: «in the morning, you see a lot of women on buses to work, but their jobs are unstable and don't bring in much money (selling fish or vegetables, cleaning offices, working in fish factories, etc.)." Men are more determined to get a good job than women. **The difference can be explained by the disparity in ambitions between men and women.** However, this opinion is not shared by everyone. One young woman acknowledges that there are ambitious women in her region, despite the scarcity of work: "I even know families who are looked after by women. Some of them even work in Kolda's administrative services, in companies, banks, etc. as secretaries, receptionists.

A man from Fatick confirms that women are very ambitious when it comes to work: "Women here are courageous. Most of the women leave Niakhar to look for work, particularly in Dakar, to become housekeepers, seamstresses or millet pounders. "So it's less a question of ambition than of dedication and love of work. Nevertheless, some defend the idea that men are more motivated for work, which explains the difference between women's and men's professional aspirations, "I'm convinced that men are much more professionally committed because, whatever the circumstances regarding professional aspirations, men are more professionally motivated," says a man from Kolda.

According to youth, women don't have the same professional goals as men. In other words, their objectives are of lesser magnitude than those of men. But one important fact to emphasize is



that the issue of gender parity has begun to be addressed in Senegal since 2000, and gender gaps are gradually being closed in certain professional and social sectors. The government is encouraging women to take up certain jobs, even in transport (such as cab drivers), and to start their own businesses. The example of the country's two former female prime ministers (Mame Madior Boye and Mimi Touré) is regularly cited. But some believe that the difference lies in women's lack of commitment, as one man in Kolda puts it, "I'm convinced that women are not very committed to competing with men, their objectives are very limited."

#### **4. The influence of family life on youth's professional aspirations**

Youth's professional aspirations, especially those of their wives, are sometimes influenced by married life. Indeed, some men have a negative influence on their wives' professional aspirations because they do not allow their wives to get employment. They marry students and don't encourage or help them to complete their studies mainly because of insecurity. Some consider that household chores are also an obstacle for women, as Senegalese families are generally large. In the general culture of the country where a woman who marries has the duty to manage all household tasks hinders young women from progressing in their aspirations for attaining dignified and fulfilling work. Nevertheless, most youth prefer a husband to encourage his wife to study and find a job, rather than stay at home. Some youth don't think that men have any influence on their wives' professionals or aspirations. As one young man in Dakar puts it, mentalities have changed a lot, as many men now understand that family expenses cannot be borne by one person alone. Emigration abroad has also opened many people's minds to the role of women in the household: "they shouldn't be obliged to stay at home without working."

**The family also has a strong influence on a young girl's professional aspirations.** Indeed, parents play an important role in a girl's aspirations. The family's economic situation is a determining factor, because when women are obliged to contribute to household expenses, this can be an obstacle to the realization of their professional aspirations. It can be a major obstacle. As one young woman from Dakar who worked as a cleaner put

it: «It's difficult to save money, as in my case. No woman can save money when her children are in need or her daily expenses are insufficient. Many women fail in their business because they spend all their profits in the house.» The immediate environment other than the family can influence women's aspirations. This is especially society and culture where majority youth believe it can also affect or condition women's professional aspirations. Some define the environment as the neighbourhood, street and locality where socialization is possible and where people respect each other.

#### **Actions taken to achieve professional or professional goals**

To achieve their professional goals, youth have made many efforts, such as training, applying for jobs with various organizations or companies, or setting up their own businesses. But the result is the same: nothing works and they lack the means, as a woman from Dakar puts it: «at the moment, apart from the training courses I've taken, I've applied for several jobs and so far there's been no favorable response». A man from Guédiawaye is in the same situation, "I tried to work for myself, but it didn't work out. I tried working for someone else and that didn't work either. I want to have a job." In addition, youth encounter challenges in achieving their professional goals, those living among people with disability and young people with disability find it difficult to progress towards their professional aspirations. As one young woman with disability put it: «I'm having difficulties. I once had an interview at a bank and they asked me to send in a photo. When they saw I was using a cane and so on, they didn't reply. » He regrets that people like him are not valued in the workplace. A young entrepreneur in Dakar confirms that the main problem among young people is lack of financial resources to grow their enterprises.

#### **Actions taken by youth to further their professional plans**

Nevertheless, youth are taking steps to advance their professional aspirations. To some extent, some youth admit that they are lucky, as their connections with politicians open up many opportunities for them. One young entrepreneur says that he is regularly informed about existing scholarships and financial aid at departmental (Guedi-

away) and national level. This confirms that it is necessary for a young person in Senegal to have a family member in or close to the government to succeed in life.

## Youth's role models

Youth look to various types of personalities as role models :

**Politicians** : Former US President Barack Obama is regularly cited as a reference by men. «I don't have many references in Senegal because the reference I like to have is the person who likes to work» says a man from Dakar. Former Prime Minister Aminata Touré also inspires young women, as a woman and political leader. According to a resident of Kolda, "she symbolizes the woman leader, and she exercises this role with dignity. Any woman who wants to move forward should take inspiration from her."

**Businessmen and women**: Some suggest women who work for development, who are courageous and who undertake projects for development. »She's in charge of the Wari (money transfer store) here in Niakhar. She's already opened three stores thanks to her business, and she even has a car that she drives with her husband». Another woman admires a great dressmaker, Diouma Dieng, who started out with a treadle sewing machine and today «even sews outfits for some of Africa's first ladies». This example inspires many women in Senegal.

**Relatives** : Some women prefer to follow the example of their relatives, like the one who wants to become an accountant like her father. A young unemployed man from Dakar says that his uncle is his role model because he involved him in community life : «I took him as a reference because I noticed that every time he stood up for the good of his community, without having a penny».

**Religious**: Sokhna Diarra, mother of Serigne Touba, founder of the Mouridist brotherhood, is regularly cited as an example by women in Dakar and other regions, thanks to her devotion to her husband.

## Optimism or pessimism about the future of youth in Senegal

**Optimism prevails** when it comes to the future of youth in Senegal. The reasons are as follows:

- Young people are essential to a country's development, and people think that development can be achieved simply by setting up activities for them.
- The government is helping youth, especially those with disabilities. According to the words of one young man : «It has already started to provide good social protection, especially for the poor and disabled like us. We receive a family security grant of 47 USD every 3 months». They also have equal opportunity cards, which enable them to receive free medical treatment with 100% health coverage, as well as coverage for two family members. Additionally, this card allows them to travel freely on public transport buses. These favors give them cause for optimism, as they are taken care of by the authorities.
- Senegal's youth are hardworking and are looking for ways to find employment.
- The quality of education is no longer as good as some think to support youth in accessing dignified and fulfilling jobs in order to live decent lives.
- They're not standing still, as one woman in Kolda puts it. «Youth are the future.
- They are rising up, forming associations and think tanks to develop their land. They're motivated, but «the problem is that they can't find work, but they get by just fine with odd jobs».

**A certain pessimism nevertheless exists**, because of the permanent existence of unemployment among youth, despite the diplomas they may have: «Sometimes I'm pessimistic, especially when I see the repeated strikes at university, the outrageous trade union demonstrations,» says a resident of Guediawaye. Another man adds: «A lot of youth don't work. You can even have a degree and not work. The fact that youth are not present in decision-making bodies also explains the pessimism of some.

## Awareness and use of technology

Majority of young women and men have access to digital technology, hoping that the government will adopt policies that enable them to have free Internet connections in certain public spaces. They confirm that these technologies help them to create job opportunities. For example, one young man says: «I can consult job offers and communicate with my friends about them, even from a distance. You can also take an online training course. Another adds: «I know someone in Gambia who met a Swiss woman on the Internet. Today, he goes to Switzerland and comes back whenever he wants without any problem. Now this man can take it easy. ». Overall, technology is helping young people to get the best information via social networks. Some young people create groups where they discuss how to fight against sexual violence, early marriages and pregnancy, how to prevent STIs, AIDS among others.

These technologies therefore have no negative impact on young people's employment prospects, even if some of them may be dependent on their cell phones and not use them solely for job hunting.

## CONCLUSION

The qualitative study on youth's aspirations for work questioned them on their motivations, the employment landscape, the obstacles they face, the level of income acceptable to enable them to live decently, their entrepreneurial capacity and their experiences in sectors considered more dynamic and promising for transformation.

The Senegalese context shows that the country has undergone periods of difficult development, and has sought through various programs to combat youth unemployment, with so far very mixed results. However, the Emerging Senegal Program (2014- 2023) has continued the efforts made by the previous regime in terms of creating support and advice agencies and financing structures for youth. Certain challenges, such as the lack of appropriate vocational training and job skills, are a major problem for these youth. Fewer than 10% of basic school leavers have access to technical and vocational training (RAC 2020), and over 80% of the total labor supply has, at most, primary education. Compared to adults, these youth are still much more likely to be unemployed, underemployed or employed in the informal sector. Particular attention needs to be paid to a group of youth who are neither in education, employment nor training («NEET»). This category of youth is more likely to be socially excluded, and finds fewer opportunities on the job market. Senegal, with 36.2% NEETs, is one of 19 countries where NEET rates among youth exceed 35%. In other words, more than one (1) in three (3) youth do not acquire skills and qualifications through education or work.

In spite of all the efforts made by the government, this situation marks the persistence of the problem of youth employment, which in certain circumstances creates a breeding ground for tensions and a search for meaning in life, to which urgent answers must be found immediately. Considerable efforts have been made in the employment sector, particularly for youth. Between 2010 and 2020, more than 544 billion CFA francs have been earmarked for the promotion of youth employment, for the implementation of a number of projects, support and financing structures. These support structures have made it possible to promote employment and entrepreneurship among youth and women.

The aim of this research was to take a closer look at the role of youth as potential and real carriers of solutions, to see their challenges and opportunities. This research work was built around several axes to capture the achievements and needs in terms of education, dignified and respectable employment, employability and self-employment, and professional and professional aspirations. Methodologically, a survey combined with interviews and group discussions were conducted with different categories of young men and women. The main findings were that many of the focus group participants had aspirations for decent, dignified and fulfilling jobs, in order to help improve their families' living conditions, and for opportunities that would provide them with relevant training, guidance and support. The youth reported that their main employment-related needs were coaching, financial and technical support, technical and vocational training, and monitoring and evaluation of their projects and/or businesses. The results also cover a number of specific themes.

### ***1. The perception of a decent job***

Youth's main concern is to find a decent job, with majority considering a job to be decent if it provides a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, and if it pays a good salary, according to 25.69% of unemployed youth and 16.02% of those in work. A job is said to be satisfying if it considers honesty and respect by society.

### ***2. Education levels and perceived salary levels***

The majority of youth with a high level of education, especially those who have completed secondary school, consider that a job provides a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment when it is well-paying

### ***3. Perception of work and residential environment***

For youth living in rural areas (23.96%), a satisfying job is more closely linked to a good salary than for those living in urban areas (17.30%).



#### **4. Perception of success and hard work**

There is a link between social success and hard work where the majority of young men (77.55%) and women (74.95%) recognize that success is due to hard work.

#### **5. Perception of success and impact of social network**

Lobbying by family acquaintances to facilitate a family member's access to employment is important for success.

### **Recommendations and policy measures**

This research yielded findings on youth's professional aspirations, the sectors in which they hope to find decent jobs, and the role of digital technologies in youth's lives. These findings lead us to the following specific recommendations:

#### **1. Help youth realize their aspirations for decent, dignified job.**

The government needs to train youth how to undertake economic activities, how to manage projects, and how to monitor and evaluate them to ensure profitability. The sectors that are of interest to youth include agriculture, agri-food, fishing, construction, infrastructure, transport, import-export, security services, education, tourism, crafts, textiles and clothing, information and communication technologies. Youth need financial support, technical supervision and technical and vocational training. At present, youth are investing massively in motorcycle cabs for delivery and transport. The government should provide a framework for this sector, to protect and support them with loan guarantees, insurance and social protection.

#### **2. Open vocational schools in the regions and support disabled people**

In addition to the capital Dakar, training schools should be constructed in other regions such as Tambacounda, Kédougou and Ziguinchor to enhance accessibility by young people who are interested in technical and vocational training. This will reduce rural urban migration by the young

people in search of training opportunities. The establishment of private vocational training schools should be encouraged in all parts of the country. This solves the main constraint to hiring youth, which is their lack of practical skills, due to the fact that the education they receive is too general.

The government needs to support youth with disabilities, most of whom think they can only rely on themselves, by enrolling them in training institutions where they can acquire skills to decent jobs.

#### **3. Combating nepotism to encourage effort and excellence**

The government must encourage hard work and discourage nepotism. To this end, civil service recruitment must be made as transparent as possible, by publishing calls for applications and recruiting through independent firms or organizations.

#### **4. Enhance youth's salary aspirations and improve their living standards**

Low wages for youth is a reality in Senegal and therefore raising the minimum wage and reducing the costs of establishing companies could result in the establishment of many private entities hence providing job opportunities for unemployed youth. A youth bonus in the form of positive discrimination cannot be ruled out, hence need for collective agreements between private-sector trade unions could be envisaged on this point. Assuming that the salary that youth want in order to live decently is known (500 USD per month), wage policies must be implemented to reach or come close to this salary, in the sectors that youth prefer.

#### **5. Limiting factors that negatively influence women's professional goals**

The government, with the support of NGOs, needs to raise parents' awareness of early marriage, as it limits girls' chances of going to school or getting a good job in the future. To achieve this, two approaches need to be combined: reducing parental poverty and gradually changing the cultural and social norms that explain the phenomenon of early marriage.



## **6. Reducing the barriers between professions and gender differences in professional aspirations**

If there are differences between men's and women's professional aspirations, it's because women are not encouraged to venture in certain professions, which are reserved for men. This reduces their employment opportunities as women. The government needs to support women's involvement in certain sectors and train them for this. There are no female cab, bus or truck drivers in Senegal, nor female bricklayers, and also few women mechanics. Government-supported training can break down cultural barriers in these economic sectors.

## **7. Helping youth achieve their professional and professional goals**

The fact that youth are not present in decision-making bodies explains why some people are pessimistic about their future. The government can apply positive discrimination towards youth, by introducing quotas for youth in the National Assembly, on the staffs of public companies and by subsidizing private companies that employ youth and give them a sense of responsibility.

## **8. Facilitating the use of digital technology**

The fact that youth are familiar with digital and communication technologies is a great asset. The government must make connections free and accessible to all, in public places frequented by youth (public transport, sports areas, schools and universities, etc.). Computer training and access must be encouraged from the earliest age. The job opportunities offered by these technologies need to be publicized and made accessible to all young people, on digital platforms created by the Government in collaboration with cell phone operators.

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