







YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN'S ASPIRATIONS AND RESILIENCE BEFORE, DURING AND BEYOND COVID-19

THE CASE OF SENEGAL

Prepared by: Mbaye DIENE, Mamadou Alhadji LY, Mamadou Abdoulaye DIALLO **Edited by:** Joel Otieno, Jim Kaketch, Racheal Makokha, Daniel Doh

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic had shown the fragility of Senegal's young people, as it not only amplified the challenges they had faced long before, but also brought new problems. What's more, the pandemic had affected young people's aspirations and their outlook on the future. Governments were obliged to adopt drastic measures, with far-reaching consequences for young people, including job losses, disrupted studies, curtailed personal freedoms and so on. This explains why Senegal's youth organizations were so concerned about the effects of COVID-19, and called on the government to provide effective support for young people.

All stakeholders need to get to know young people better, to find out how COVID-19 had affected them, by giving them a voice, listening to them and identifying the solutions they themselves propose for their own issues. That is why, this research aimed to understand the aspirations and resilience of young Senegalese women and men from their own perspectives. Specifically, the study sought to understand their aspirations, the adaptability and resilience strategies they employ, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ensuing policy implications. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, were collected through surveys targeting youth, complemented by interviews with decision-makers and resource persons.

In Senegal, young women and men perceive their youth similarly, viewing themselves as capable adults due to their social and professional responsibilities. The pandemic had shifted their understanding of youth, emphasizing the importance of family ties and fostering positive mentalities. However, these young women and men encountered a number of challenges such as confinement, leading to school dropouts, reduced wages, increased living costs, and job losses, with men generally facing more difficulties. Despite adversities, both genders believe in the possibility of achieving their aspirations amid the pandemic. Women, in particular, seized more opportunities, notably in adaptability.

Many youth also leveraged their social networks for online sales, learning, and skill development. Women exhibited higher adaptability levels, evident in their proactive approach to seeking information, devising innovative solutions, and adjusting to new circumstances. Both the young men and women aspire primarily to secure employment, gain respect, and achieve independence. Success through work, study, or travel is a shared aspiration. While women prioritize securing a good job and becoming the family breadwinner, men lean towards financial stability or wealth. Both genders aim for a better future through training for workforce entry.

By and large, the pandemic posed challenges and vulnerabilities to achieving aspirations, emphasizing the importance of self-sufficiency through education, training, and entrepreneurship. How then can these young women and men be supported? Youth involvement is crucial in defining their aspirations and guiding public policy. This entails listening to their proposals, raising awareness about government initiatives, and fostering communication through tools like the Youth Guide. In addition, efforts should focus on youth training, promoting entrepreneurship, and ensuring representation in decision-making bodies. Positive discrimination for youth should be a continuous consideration in public policy.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "youth" is a social and demographic category grouping individuals of a particular age and characterizing their transition from adolescence to adulthood. The age stratifications used to define youth vary depending on each population's socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political specificities. There is, therefore, no universal consensus on the age range of a person defined as young. In Senegalese social representations, youth lasts a long time and does not often translate into rapid transitions to Success. This is why the adage, Yonou ndaw du gaw (the paths of youth are not fast), is common in the country. However, it is likely that young Senegalese no longer believe in this adage, and want to move on to another stage of their social life, characterized by Success, as quickly as possible. This explains why the Senegalese youth context is attracting worldwide attention due to clandestine migration to Europe via Spain and Italy, and then to the United States and Canada via Nicaragua.

The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the challenges youth face and altered their aspirations and visions of their future. While the trajectory of the pandemic had varied from country to country, governments had implemented measures of social distancing, containment and social isolation to limit the spread of the virus. Against this backdrop, youth organizations in Senegal expressed their deepest concern about the effects of COVID-19 on employment or loss of income, disruption of education and social relations, and limitation of personal freedoms.

Studying youth often boils down to studying the social conditions of transition from one age status, adolescence, to another, adulthood (Galland, 2009). The contours of youth then vary according to social context and historical circumstances. "Youth is just a word", wrote Bourdieu, cited by Mauger (2001). It covers diverse, even antagonistic situations that are difficult to analyze together: "It's a tremendous misuse of language to subsume under the same concept social universes that have virtually nothing in common."

For the purposes of this study, youth refer to the population aged between 18 and 35. Nevertheless, by letting youth speak for themselves, we will see that they themselves have a broader vision of their youth, which goes beyond the mere criterion of age. In this research, whose overall aim is to understand the aspirations and resilience of young women and men from their own perspectives, we will see that youth can mean many things, such as responsibility, solidarity, community involvement and so on.

Rationale for Studying Youth Aspirations and Resilience in Senegal

The key issue of youth is the inability of political actors to meet the aspirations of youth, particularly in terms of employment. For example, in 2012, the government promised to create 500,000 jobs for youth, but the target was never reached. A large number of government programs and structures for young people, generously endowed with financial resources, exist, but the problem of youth employment still remains. Full of ambition, Senegal's youth are involved in numerous sectors of activity, but they suffer not only from a lack of skills, knowledge and adequate training, but also from a lack of opportunities and prospects. The more recent initiative of the government towards youth is the Emergency Program for Youth Employment ant Integration, which aims to improve responses to the needs of youth in terms of training, employment and support for entrepreneurship. But the advent of Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation for youth, affecting their ambitions, aspirations and opportunities. That is why this research is timely, and it holds twofold significance. Firstly, the subject of youth's aspirations has received little or no attention in Senegal. Yet, understanding the aspirations of young men and women means understanding their destinies, their life trajectories, their training and skills choices, their work choices and their future outcomes, both in terms of socio-economic and political involvement in strengthening their livelihoods and those of their societies. Secondly, the fact that Senegal's population is predominantly young, makes this research all the more crucial, as these youth are exposed to several types of vulnerability, which can affect their aspirations and life choices. The fact that young Senegalese men and women embark on migration under the slogan "migrate or perish" shows the urgency of understanding their life trajectories. They are also exposed to economic and social difficulties that demand a certain resilience.

Aspirations

This research revolves around a number of concepts, the meanings of which we will explain. Let us start with the term aspirations, which refers to what people are trying to achieve or obtain in their work or life, "[People's] aspirations describe what [people] are trying to achieve in their professional fields and in their lives, as they express it" (Osterwalder, Pigneur et al., 2015). Aspirations thus signify expectations, projections into the future, which mark out a trajectory we seek to follow. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted youth's aspirations, as we shall see throughout this study. But they have also shown resilience and adaptability.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a person or group to develop well, to continue projecting themselves into the future, in the face of destabilizing events, difficult living conditions and sometimes severe trauma. It is also the capacity of an individual, a group or a system to adapt to a situation of adversity (Cyrulnik, 2001). This attitude in the face of misfortune depends on pre-existing mechanisms (social, structural, institutional), forged by past experience. Resilience is also the ability to bounce back, to go back, to absorb a disturbance, to reorganize and continue to function in the same way as before. It is the ability of a flexible system to continue to exist after a major shock, even if it means transforming itself to adapt.

Research questions

The following two broad questions guided the study:

- 1. What are the aspirations of young men and women, and what strategies of adaptability and resilience are employed in pursuit of those aspirations, particularly in the face of activist politics, pandemics and other challenging environments?
- What are the policy implications for the aspirations of young men and women in Africa?

Specific questions included:

1. What aspirations do young women and men have for their future, and how have their aspirations and experiences changed over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- 2. What obstacles do young men and women encounter in pursuing these aspirations?
- 3. What roles can the various political players, the private sector, governments and organizations led by young women and men, play in supporting the realization of young men's and women's aspirations?
- What social and gender norms and barriers do young men and women face in their lives and livelihoods in a COVID-19 world in Senegal
- 5. What can we learn about the adaptability and resilience of young women's and men's aspirations, and how can this inform Mastercard Foundation programs and approaches?
- 6. How can lessons learned from the experiences of young men and women inform political action?

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims to understand the aspirations and resilience of youth, women and men, from their own perspective. The target population for this research is the entire population aged between 18 and 35 in Senegal. We collect quantitative and qualitative data on youth.

Approach

For the collection of the quantitative data, we make a representative survey, using 'region' and 'area of residence' i.e. urban and rural, as stratification variables. At the first level of stratification, we select nine from the14 regions, the densest in terms of the 18–35-year-old population. Then, we distribute 65 Enumeration areas (EA) among the nine regions according to the following way: Dakar (19), Diourbel (8), Fatick (4), Kaolack (6), Kolda (4), Louga (5), Saint Louis (6), Tambacounda (4) and Thies (10). The number of EAs is determined by the estimated sample size and an estimated 24 households per EA.

Through debates we gather qualitative data from youth through Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and individual interviews that allow us to know their aspirations, their expectations, in addition to their adaptation and resilience strategies. We also conduct interviews persons such as decision makers and experts.

Sample Technique and Sample Size

According to the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (ANSD), youth population in Senegal is projected to be is 5,057, 883.

Survey design

The objective of the design is to give every young citizen an equal and known chance of being selected to participate in the sample. This allows the survey results to provide unbiased estimates of the opinions of the youth population. To achieve this, we aim to apply random selection methods at all stages of sampling and a draw with probability proportional to the population size.

The sample size is calculated using the RAO soft sample size calculator, where the confidence level is 95%, a margin of error of 2.5% with a population size of 5,057,883 according to the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (NASD) projection for 2022. The RAO soft sample size calculator is based on the following formula:

$$n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2 N}}$$

Where:

z is the z score

 $oldsymbol{arepsilon}$ is the margin of error

N is the population size

 \hat{p} is the population proportion

The estimated sample size for the study will therefore be 1,537 distributed proportionally among the selected regions. We added 1% on the actual sample size to take care of attrition. Thus, the sample size will be 1,552.

Sampling Approach

The territorial organization of Senegal includes the following levels of administration: 14 regions, 45 departments, 123 districts, 126 municipalities including 5 towns, 46 district municipalities and 385 rural communities. The sample construction will be carried out on the basis of a stratified and proportional draw. The stratification variables used to control the results of the survey are 'region' and 'area of residence', i.e., urban and rural. At the first level of stratification, we selected nine regions, the densest in terms of the 18–35-year-old population. Then, we distribute the 65 Enumeration areas (EA) among the nine regions of Senegal. The number of EAs was determined by the estimated sample size and an estimated 24 households per EA.

The main research questions are presented in the following section.

RESULTS

Understanding of Youthhood

In this section, we analyze the main findings concerning youth and aspirations.

The methodological approach employed involved conducting a survey of youth in Senegal, with a representative sample comprising an equal number of men and women aged between 18 and 35 years. Notably, the age group of 21 to 25 was the most prevalent within the sample. The data revealed that almost 60% of the surveyed population falls under the age of 25, with 55% being men and 63% women. This distribution aligns closely with the national demographic profile of Senegal, where youth under the age of 25 constitute a significant portion of the total population, estimated at 18,032,473 inhabitants. It also reflects the prevalent situation wherein most youth are either engaged in studies or employment but have not yet established their own families.

This section explores how young men and women perceive their youth, highlighting both commonalities and gendered differences. While aspirations and goal planning are common threads in youth, commitment to society shows a gender divide. Young men often emphasize local community involvement, whereas young women tend to prioritize achieving their personal ambitions.

What is youth?

In the defining youth, there is general consensus that it encompasses the age range from 18 to 35, signifying a stage in which a young person has not yet reached adulthood. According to a young man in charge of a political youth organization, "I consider myself young because, according to the definition of the African Youth Charter, the age of youth is between 18 and 35. I'm 35, so I consider myself young today". A young woman also noted, "I consider myself young, because given my age, I have ambitions and there are many things I'd like to achieve". However, a widespread idea in Senegal, especially in rural areas, is that you don't stop being young no matter how old you are, because as one young boy says, "you always have elders to respect." But considerations differ. Youth is therefore as much a demographic situation as a psychological state of mind, and takes many forms.

In terms of responsibilities in the future, "a young person is someone who prepares his future

in such a way that once he's an adult, he won't have many difficulties, but you do it as a young person", states a young man from a suburb of Dakar.

A young person is preparing his future and the future of his country. Behaviorally and physically, youth is defined "in terms of age, but also physical condition. You feel you're in the prime of life and physically capable of doing a lot of activities", as a young female journalist and student defends. A young man adds that "you're young if you behave like your peers, engaging in activities like all youth, sports, commercial activities (trading in fish products, livestock, etc.). You're young if you have the courage to move forward, either through studies or through work."

Youth is then the age of ambition and aspirations, as one young woman adds, "I'm an independent young woman, I consider myself young, because I haven't yet realized my aspirations". Youth is synonymous with awareness and the will to build something interesting for one's future. It also me ans "working for the development of your community in particular and your country in general". The young person is someone "who prepares his future in such a way that, once he's an adult, he won't have many difficulties. What's more, youth are preparing their country's future.

Within the realm of community solidarity, one young man says: "Youth is a state of mind, but it's also about having the will, the perseverance, to keep moving forward, to create new things, to bring something back to your community".

In both urban and rural contexts, the conception of youth remains the same. For some youth in Ziguinchor, there is no define age limit for youth. One young man mentions that in his village, there are "youth associations that bring together both youth and adults". Another asserts that "youth is the group of people in an age bracket on which the community bases its future. Youth don't yet have responsibilities, but they are supported by adults and by society". The young women echo the same sentiments, with one adding, "Throughout their youth, youth need to be guided and advised if they don't want to fail in life. Because it's when you're young that you're exposed to bad company". She emphasizes the importance of accompanying youth, particularly women, throughout their journey into adulthood.

Being aware of tomorrow's uncertainties is

also a shared understanding among both women and men, who agree that youth also entail being conscious of the future: "You need to have a good goal, so you can earn a good living later on", says one young man.

From the discussion above, young men and women share common perspectives on youth with regards to age, sense of responsibility, social commitment, and aspirations. However, men emphasize commitment while women place greater emphasis on independence and freedom. Of note, women feel much more constrained by social, religious, and economic norms than the young men. While young women face expectations to marry and start families, their economic circumstances are often no better than those of young men, as they are also affected by unemployment. Unemployment affects more women (37.4%) than men (10.2%), according to the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (2023).¹

Suitable youth

There is a lot to learn from Senegalese youth about their definition of an 'ideal youth'. While perspectives on who an ideal youth are virtually similar, women insist on respecting societal norms. One young woman says during a focus group discussion:

A suitable young person must succeed by respecting the norms of society. These include standards in terms of civicmindedness, civic engagement, but also being a responsible young person by respecting "values and cultures (Young Woman).

According to one young man, you need to have "a decent lifestyle and embody the positive values of society, behave well in love relationships, etc. Young men also acknowledge their heightened exposure to life's expectations, which is why they insist on a healthy lifestyle, away from drugs and other banned substances. According to a young man, a decent young person is

One who tries to do everything to prepare for the future so that he can move forward with serenity, who has a sense of duty and knows how to fight to succeed in life and secure his future (Young man). Similarly, a young woman underscores the need for guidance:

In times of distress or unforeseen events, the right young person needs to be able to stand up and lean on outstretched hands. A young person needs to be guided, because without guidance, he or she embarks on paths that don't guarantee a good future (Young Woman).

Both men and women concur that having an ideal youth means living with decorum and respect for societal norms. It also means earning an honest and dignified living.

In the eyes of some, a suitable youth is the one "succeeds in life, work, marry, have children and manage their families," according one young man. Another young man adds:

The community perceives what is decent in a young person if he manages to study to a certain level and succeed. In our society, a young person who embarks on a course of study or a trade of some kind and doesn't manage to fit in socially is not considered. But if someone succeeds, the community's view changes (Young man).

This sentiment resonates similarly in rural areas, where the focus shifts towards employment: a respectable young person is described as "someone who engages in a trade and perseveres in that field until they establish a family." This underscores the significance attributed to education, employment, and marriage in delineating the characteristics of suitable youth.

An exemplary figure in society is someone who demonstrates dedication, hard work, and stead-fastness. As expressed by a young man:

If we look at two people in the same neighborhood, one is working and the other is not. The latter is seen as decent and the former is not. In a society, you have to forge an image, be an example, a role model for other youth (Young man).

Another young man emphasizes that "the community considers a decent young person to be one who manages to help his parents and society".

¹ National Agency for Statistics and Demography (ANSD): Enquête nationale sur l'emploi au Sénégal, Quatrième trimestre 2022 ; Note d'informations (2023)

Positive assessment of youth experience

When asked about the value they place on youth, the young men responded by asserting that youth represent the future of a nation and serve as the foundation for development. According to some, it is an experience "that opens up many opportunities and allows you to set goals". One young man defends the idea that "youth is an experience that is appreciated because it allows you to learn, to make free choices in life, but also to follow the path you set out for yourself as a young person".

Youthhood: time for learning and making the right life choices

There is a need for experiential learning and practical training outside of formal education. A young man notes:

We need to learn and experience many things, particularly through the associative movements. Leaving school is therefore not a bad thing, as it opens the door to other practical training (Young man).

For another young man, in a focus group discussion:

This will lead you to take your first steps in Koranic school to learn about your obligations towards religion, then you go to school to learn the basics...but it is possible to leave the apprenticeship early, to find a small job (bread delivery boy, for example) that will grow (coffee sales company) (Young man).

A young student during the same focus group asserts that the youth are full of ambitions, "You have to be an exemplary and ambitious young person, achieve things and not limit yourself to small and narrow visions. You have to make the most of your life, because once you're young, you can't go back." While, on the question of responsibility, one young man points out that "you can make unavoidable mistakes and learn to correct them. That's why the role of parents is important, because they inculcate values with which we grow, to become a good man".

At this age, as one woman observes, "youth are faced with obstacles that either foster greater responsibility or steer them astray." Regrettably, one man shared during an interview that he witnessed "friends abandon their studies due to drug use." He stressed the importance of utilizing youth as a period to prepare for the future, aspiring to establish families that contribute to the betterment of the nation.

Look for knowledge and entrepreneurship

Form the interviews, Senegalese youth prioritize acquiring knowledge across diverse fields, including official and religious languages, believing that delaying this pursuit until adulthood may be too late. In the era of globalization, a broad knowledge base is essential. Specifically, it entails possessing practical expertise, gaining recognition in one's profession nationally and internationally, establishing a household, constructing a home, initiating business ventures, and providing employment opportunities for fellow youth. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored youth unemployment and job insecurity, exacerbated by disruptions in transportation systems. Thus, many are contemplating entrepreneurship as a solution.

With numerous companies downsizing, the entrepreneurial drive transcends rural and urban areas. Some youths aspire not only to own social success but also to fostering numerous start-ups and aiding others in realizing their professional aspirations. This support extends to establishing consultancies for entrepreneurship and project management. While predominantly championed by higher education graduates, particularly Master's and PhD students, they often face resource constraints. Nonetheless, they are cognizant of government initiatives designed to bolster youth entrepreneurship.

Freedom and economic independence are integral aspects of young women's decision-making processes. While some may not possess a fixed goal or dream, they navigate their paths based on their evolving passions. For example, one young woman shares:

My passion for legal activities led me to pursue a career in law and become a legal professional (Young woman)

Social commitment is also significant for many young women and men who strive to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Engaging in activities organized for the betterment of society, often with the support of organizations like the Red

Cross, underscores their altruistic dedication. As articulated by a young man:

In youth, it's imperative to engage in social, economic, or educational endeavours for the benefit of one's community, locality, and nation (Young man)

For emphasis, women prioritize personal fulfilment and pursuing their aspirations, while men emphasize social and educational engagement, revealing the multifaceted nature of youth experiences.

Youth aspirations

Social and economic aspirations

This study sought to understand the youths' aspirations, starting with their vision of what Success or the good life is all about. Table 1 below shows the success criteria for youth in Senegal.

Table 1: Success model

	Male	Female	Overall
Good work	57%	66%	62%
Supporting my family	57%	62%	60%
Be financially stable/rich	50%	44%	47%
Starting a family	33%	34%	33%
Building a good business	27%	22%	25%
Supporting my community	18%	15%	17%
Good education (from high education)	16%	17%	17%
Be independent to travel the world	15%	9%	12%
Owning property	12%	10%	11%
Peace of mind	8%	11%	9%
Independence and freedom from parents	4%	4%	4%
Other	3%	3%	3%
Having power, authority and control	1%	1%	1%

Source: PASGR Survey, (2023).

Women attribute greater importance than men to concepts such as a "good job" (meaning a job with high and stable earnings) and "supporting the family," with 66% and 62% respectively, compared to 57% for each among men. This trend is substantiated by qualitative data. For instance, when discussing the notion of Success, a young student from Ziguinchor remarks, "Success is the wish of every young person who feels responsible for the well-being of their parents and siblings". Another woman elaborates stating that, "It's about succeeding in life, carrying out one's activities until one succeeds in what one does. It also means striving to reach your goals and achieving them". This diversity of perspectives underscores the multifaceted nature of Success.

Women prioritize supporting their families, with 44% valuing "being financially stable or wealthy," compared to 50% of men. A young man

echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the significance of progress, business development, and job creation for the youth:

When you work somewhere, you want to progress from one month or year to the next. It's about developing your business and expanding it so that others can benefit, but also about creating job opportunities for youth (Young man)

Success represents the ultimate objective for many. One young woman emphasizes the diversity of aspirations:

Some dream of going to Europe, others want to study here, get their diplomas and work here. I aspire to continue studying and succeed here (Young woman)

A young man adds:

Success begins with financial fulfillment, but that's not an end in itself, it's not enough to have cars, houses and land to succeed. You also have to start a family, run your own business and provide for yourself and those around you (Young man)

This aspect extends to rural areas, where financial stability is fundamental to fostering community solidarity. On the concept of leadership, some aspire to become leaders in their communities, which means succeeding, as one young woman notes:

Having independence and freedom from parents (4% of youth) is quite important....
Success means being well surrounded, realizing your dreams and being independent (Young woman)

However, "Having power, authority and control" is not a priority for young men (1%) and women (1%). Men prioritize the notion of establishing a successful business (27%) or supporting their community (18%) more than women, who prioritize these concepts at rates of 22% and 15%, respectively.

Indeed, these indicators are significant markers of Success. This sentiment is reinforced by qualitative data, as articulated by a young man from Louga, who emphasizes that Success entails: "fulfilling your life plans and satisfying your needs and those of your family and friends". It also means, adds a woman: "setting principles and sticking to them, setting goals and achieving them through hard work".

Other equally vital aspects of the vision of Success emerge among youth: good health, upward mobility, and social stability, as expressed by one young woman:

You have to have a stable life. You can support yourself without having a stable life or being in good health. Social mobility is also a criterion for Success (Young woman)

According to a young man in Dakar, the concept of Success is closely tied to marriage. They explain that marriage is often perceived as an ultimate goal, representing fulfillment in having a wife and children. Despite financial status, the mere act of being married and having a family is considered a significant achievement.

A successful individual, according to a young man from Louga, is someone who possesses the freedom to travel wherever they desire and engage in activities of their choosing, within the bounds of the law, "is someone who can travel wherever they want and do whatever they want, within the law."

A culture of solidarity is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Tataguine, a rural village, as articulated by a young man:

In our village, everyone knows everyone else. This village is mainly populated by Muslims, from the same ethnic group, but we are never united...those who have made a success of their lives leave the village to live in apartments in Mbour or Dakar, even though this is where it all began. We see people who started from nothing, but when they become rich; they immediately leave the village to develop other localities, forgetting their origins. Those who have succeeded hide because they don't want others to squander their wealth (Young man)

Politicians need to actively aid the local populace, he asserts. On meeting the challenge of access to employment, one woman insists on the fact that:

We need to rebuild the consequences of COVID-19, provide solutions and reestablish the situation of youth so that they can easily access employment. For them, this requires the commitment of youth (Young woman)

In the words of a young man from Kanel:

The aspiration of the youth is to be able to have a job. So, wherever you are, young man or woman, you have to work to make a success of your life. Because that's what makes people respect you. The most important thing is to work. So, in the urban environment, the concepts of Success are diverse, economic, social and financial in nature. You have to persevere to succeed, study until you get a good job in the future to be able to realize your dreams, work well and not be financially dependent on anyone (Young man)

Being able to support one's parents is also deemed a success. Young women are particularly attuned to the notion that success "means being well surrounded, having a home and being financially independent", as one of the youths adds. In rural areas, youth aspirations, from what we observe, revolve around securing employment, achieving Success in life, earning respect, avoiding constant dependency, and contributing meaningfully to others. One young woman expresses her desire to "develop her business and expand it for the benefit of others." A young man agrees, "my wish is to succeed for my parents, my brothers and sisters, and to be responsible for their well-being".

Priorities and needs for a successful life

Table 2 illustrates the priorities of youth for a successful life. All youth prioritize "having a good job" and "providing support" for their families.

Table 2: Priority for a successful life

	Male	Female	Overall
Good work	26%	32%	29%
Supporting my family	22%	20%	21%
Be financially stable/rich	16%	14%	15%
Building a good business	11%	10%	10%
Starting a family	6%	8%	7%
Good education	6%	6%	6%
Being independent to travel the world	5%	2%	3%
Supporting my community	4%	2%	3%
Peace of mind	2%	2%	2%
Owning property	2%	1%	2%
Other	2%	3%	2%

Source: PASGR Survey, (2023).

Women prioritize "having a good job" at a rate of 32%, compared to 26% for men. Additionally, women show a higher inclination towards "starting a family" at 8%, whereas men rate it at 6%.

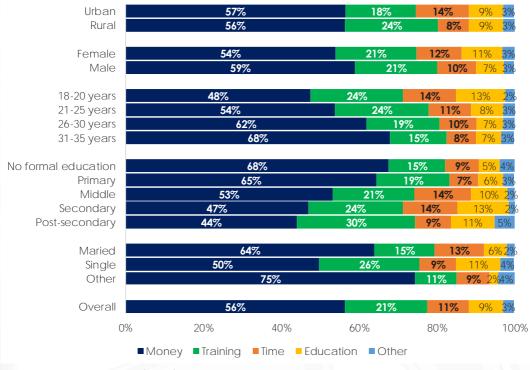
Men on the other hand prioritize "providing support for family" (22% vs. 20%), "attaining wealth and financial stability" (16% vs. 14%), and "gaining independence to travel the world". Table 3 delineates the primary needs of youth to achieve Success in life.

Table 3: Main needs of youth to succeed in life

	Male	Female	Overall
Time	10%	12%	11%
More edu- cation	7%	11%	9%
Training	21%	21%	21%
Money	59%	54%	56%
Other	3%	3%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Overall, the majority of youth (56%) assert that money is essential for Success in life, followed by training (21%), time (9%), and education (9%). However, there are disparities based on socio-demographic categories. Money ranks as the primary need for 59% of men, compared to 54% of women. Conversely, women express a greater need for time (12%) compared to men (10%). Additionally, women prioritize education more (11%) than men (7%).

Figure 1: Main needs of youth to succeed in life by sociodemographic characteristics



Source: PASGR Survey, (2023).

While urban (57%) and rural (56%) youth seem to concur on the importance of money, rural youth exhibit a greater demand for training (24%) (Figure 1). This discrepancy stems from the fewer schools and training centers naturally available in rural areas compared to urban hubs like Dakar. Investments in education and training tend to favor denser urban areas with higher educational requirements. National education statistics reveal that 21.7% of youth are located in Dakar, 19.7% in the urban region of Thiès, whereas only 7.0% and 4.6% are situated in Ziguinchor and Louga, respectively. As age advances, the need for money escalates, while the demands for training, time, and education naturally wane. The necessity for money diminishes with educational attainment levels. The least educated (68%) are more inclined to perceive a need for money compared to those with at least primary education (44%-65%), underscoring education's pivotal role in Senegal's social mobility.

On the other hand, educated individuals are inclined to seek further training and education to prosper in life. This is because training and education equip individuals for specific occupations, and if the job market saturates relative to these occupations, achieving social Success through acquired skills becomes challenging. Concerning marital status, married individuals (64%) emphasize the need for money more than singles (50%). However, singles express a keener interest in training (26%) than married individuals (15%) to achieve Success. Regarding professional status, sole proprietors exhibit the highest demand for money (66%) to succeed in life. Nonetheless, trainees (34%), unpaid family workers (24%), and full-time employees (22%) display the highest training needs.

Proximity for a successful life

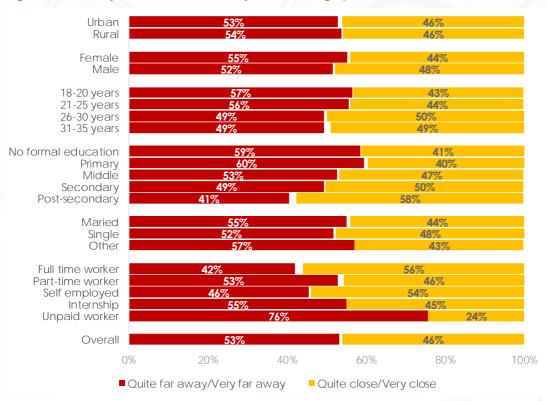
Men perceive themselves as closer to achieving a successful life (40%) compared to women (37%), as depicted in Table 4. This perception is supported by the fact that a larger proportion of women (21%) feel they are distant from a successful life, in contrast to 15% of men. Naturally, a minimal percentage of youths (1%) believe they have already attained a successful life.

Table 4: Close to living a successful life, by sociodemographic characteristics

	Male	Female	Overall
Very far away	15%	21%	18%
Far enough	37%	34%	35%
Quite close	40%	37%	39%
Very close	8%	7%	7%
Already reached	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: PASGR Survey, (2023).

Figure 2: Proximity to a successful life, by socio-demographic characteristics



Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Overall, the majority of youth (53%) perceive themselves as distant from achieving Success in life (Figure 2). There is no significant discrepancy between urban dwellers (53%) and rural dwellers (54%). Women (55%) are less likely to feel close to a successful life compared to men (52%). Younger individuals (57%) appear to be further from achieving Success than those in the 31-35 age bracket (49%). Additionally, the most educated youth (58%) are closer to Success than those with no formal education (41%), emphasizing the significance of education.

Young married men and women (55%) feel more distant from Success compared to young singles (52%). In terms of professional status, full-time workers (56%) and sole proprietors (54%) are closer to achieving Success. Conversely, the majority of part-time workers (53%), trainees (55%), and unpaid family workers (79%) perceive themselves as far from Success.

Education and training aspirations

In terms of educational aspirations, over a third of youth (35%) aspire to pursue vocational and technical training (Table 5). Nearly one in five (17%) aim to receive training in a religious or spiritual field. Just over one in ten (13%) intend to pursue academic training. A small percentage of youth express interest in training in the fields of technology and information (9%) and agro-industry (7%). Nonetheless, a significant proportion of youth express no desire to train in any field.

Table 5: Desired areas of training

	Male	Female	Overall
Technical and professional	36%	33%	35%
Spiritual/Religious Formation	15%	20%	17%
Formal education	12%	14%	13%
Technology and information	11%	7%	9%
Agro-industrial training	9%	6%	7%
Traditional apprenticeship	1%	2%	2%
Other	4%	5%	5%
None	12%	14%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

areas (40%), among young men (36%), individuals aged 26 to 30 (37%), middle and high school students (41%), and single individuals (40%) (Figure 3). While most youth express a preference for technical and vocational training, there are more urban aspirants (40%) than rural counterparts (29%). In rural areas, a greater proportion of youth aspire to religious training (22%) or express no interest in training at all (17%), compared to urban areas (13% and 9%, respectively). Conversely, some youth aspire to formal training (13%) or training in agro-industry (7%). Traditional education no longer guarantees employment as it lacks the competitive skills demanded by the job market, explaining the subdued demand for formal training in both areas. Additionally, religious centers predominantly exist in rural areas, contributing to the popularity of religious studies therein.

It is noteworthy that youth, regardless of urban or rural residency, share an aspiration to study agribusiness, indicating a recognition of the limitations in government employment. Agriculture employs over 60% of the country's workforce, making

Disaggregated analysis reveals that the desire for technical and vocational training is highest in urban as (40%), among young men (36%), individuals investment in such training a means to fulfill youth aspirations. The government had indeed made strides in this direction through initiatives like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NE-PAD), the Great Offensive for Food and Abundance (GOFA), the Plan Senegal Emergent (PSE), and its agricultural policy directives.

Although demand for technology and information training, as well as agribusiness training, is modest, it peaks among youth in higher education (19%). Conversely, the inclination towards spiritual formation is more pronounced among rural residents (22%), women (20%), married individuals (24%), and older individuals (22%). While the desire for religious and spiritual formation increases with age, it diminishes progressively with educational attainment, dropping from 29% among the uneducated to just 6% among those with higher education. The rejection of any form of training is most prevalent in rural areas (17%), among the elderly (19%), and among those with no formal education (23%).

Urban 13% 40% **1%** 7% **5% 9**% Rural 13% 29% 4% Female 14% 20% 33% Male 12% 36% 18-20 years 17% 16% 35% %6% 6% 10% 21-25 years 14% 36% **2**% 6% 4% 12% 17% 26-30 years 11% 37% 12% 31-35 years 7% 30% No formal education 8% 29% 22% **6%** 23% 12% 35% **Primary** 5% 6% 21% 16% Middle 12% 41% **2**% 6% **5**% **12**% Secondary 17% 41% Post-secondary 18% Maried 24% 9% 28% Single 15% 40% 4% Other 20% 18% 30% 13% Overall 17% 35% 13% 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100% ■ Formal education ■ Spiritual/Religious Formation ■ Technical and professional

Figure 3: Desired training areas, by socio-demographic characteristics

■ Other

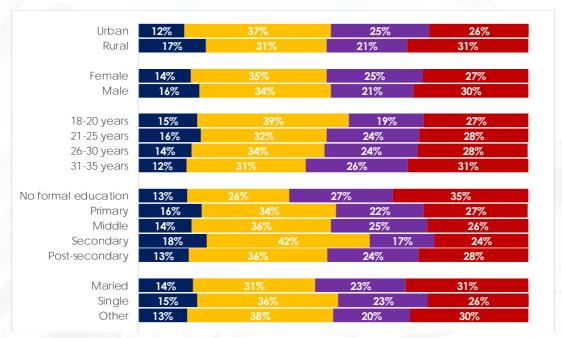
Civic aspirations

In terms of civic engagement, a third of youth (34%) aspire to become model citizens (Figure 4). Nearly three out of ten (28%) want to play an active part in the local development process. Just over one in five (23%) hope to live in harmony with laws and rules, and to be responsible for their actions. Finally, 15% of youth want to become leaders in national or local development policies.

■ Technology and information ■ Traditional apprenticeship
■ Agro-industrial training

■ None

Figure 4: Civic aspirations, by socio-demographic characteristics



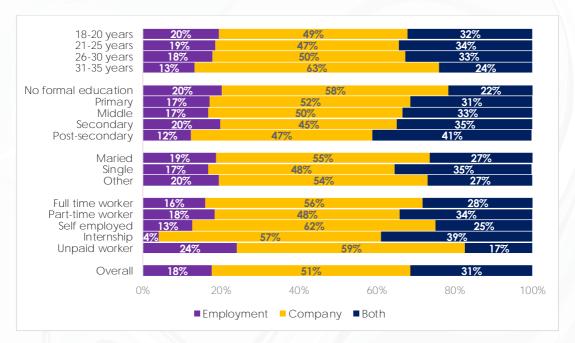
Urban dwellers (37%) want to be model citizens, while rural dwellers want to participate more in local development activities (31%) and become leaders (17%).

Women are more encouraged to live and respect morals and standards than men. The latter prefer to participate in local development activities. Paradoxically, the aspiration to be a model citizen diminishes with age, while respect for laws and regulations increases with maturity.

Employment aspiration

Youth increasingly aspire to entrepreneurship (51%) rather than salaried employment (18%). However, three out of ten youth (31%) do not rule out combining entrepreneurship and salaried employment. The aspiration to be an entrepreneur is more pronounced among urban dwellers (53%), men (53%), youth aged 31 to 35 (63%), the less educated (53%) and married youth (55%). The aspiration to work only is more evident among young women (20%), rural people (19%), the youngest (20%), the least educated (10%) or those with secondary education (20%). In contrast, four out of ten youth (41%) with higher education aspire to both entrepreneurship and employment. Regarding employment status, most workers, trainees and unpaid family workers aspire to self-employment. When it comes to aspiring to employment or entrepreneurship, we find that men are more likely to aspire to setting up a business (53%) than women (49%). Nevertheless, both groups do not place too high a priority on employment (15% and 20% respectively), as figure 5 shows.

Figure 5: Employment aspiration, by socio-demographic characteristics



Youth's Perspectives on Dignified and Fulfilling Work

The concept of dignified work

Youth's definition of a dignified job: at the national level, we can see several aspects characterize dignified employment. Firstly, it's a job where the employer respects youth and pays them properly. Secondly, the job must respect ethnic origin and religion and be morally approved by society. Youth's vision of dignified employment confirms this. Overall, youth consider that any job for which

youth are respected is dignified (39%). Most youth (41% of men and 37% of women) consider "a job where the employer respects youth" dignified. Similarly, for a job to be dignified, youth need to be paid properly (40% of men and 37% of women). A secure job that respects ethnic origin and religion is also put forward by youth: a third (33%) of youth consider any secure job dignified (35% among men versus 31% among women). Next come jobs that respect youth's convictions (27%). For 17% of young women and men, a dignified job is one that society does not disapprove of, as shown in table 6.

Table 6: Youth's definition of a dignified job

	Male	Female	Overall
A job where the employer respects youth	41%	37%	39%
A job that does not expose you to risk or harm	20%	20%	20%
A job where youth are paid appropriately	40%	37%	38%
A job that society does not disapprove of	17%	17%	17%
Secure employment	35%	31%	33%
A job where mothers can work conveniently	3%	10%	7%
A job where you are not treated according to your gender	9%	19%	14%
A job that respects your ethnicity and religion	28%	26%	27%
A job where disadvantaged people can work with confidence Source: PASGR survey, 2023.	11%	11%	11%

Disaggregation of data by area of residence reveals that rural and urban dwellers, in sequence, hold similar perceptions of dignified employment (Table 17 in the appendix). Chief among these are employers' respect for youth, adequate remuneration, job security, and respect for youth's cultures and beliefs. However, rural residents (20%) are more inclined than urban counterparts (13%) to view dignified employment as work that society does not disapprove of. They also exhibit a stronger attachment to culture and religion in their conception of dignified employment.

When considering educational level, the least educated, namely youth with no formal education (38%) and those with primary education (37%), prioritize remuneration, followed by respect, safety, and beliefs. Conversely, the most educated prioritize respect, safety, remuneration, and beliefs (Table 18 in the appendix). In terms of age, youth under 30 tend to prioritize job roles where youth are respected, while those aged 31 to 35 consider adequate remuneration to be paramount (Table 19 in the appendix), followed by security and convictions.

Youth aspiring to external migration (42%) place greater emphasis on respect for youth (Table 20 in the appendix), followed by appropriate remuneration (38%). However, those desiring internal migration prioritize well-paid positions for youth, followed by respect and security. This trend remains consistent among youth wishing to remain in the country.

Probability of getting your dream job

Figure 5 illustrates the probability of attaining one's dream job. Optimism prevails among both women (47%) and men (45%). Nonetheless, women exhibit slightly less optimism than men. Eight percent of women believe it's very unlikely that they will secure their dream job, compared to 6% of men. Overall, 72% of men, in contrast to 64% of women, consider it likely or very likely that they will attain their dream job.

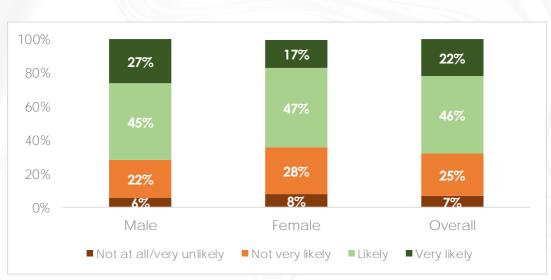
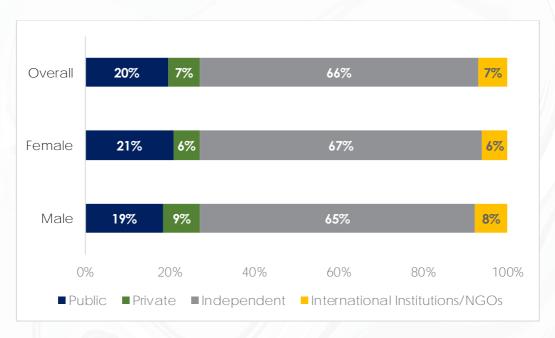


Figure 6: Probability of getting your dream job

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

According to their job preferences (Figure 7), the majority express a preference for self-employment (65% for men and 67% for women) or working in the public sector (21% and 19%, respectively). Conversely, they show little interest in working for international institutions or NGOs. Qualitative data from interviews reveal preferred sectors where they seek assistance from authorities. When queried on how the state can aid in achieving their aspirations, they highlight the need for funding to create jobs in sectors such as agriculture (rice, vegetables, etc.), hospitality, hotels, livestock breeding, and more.

Figure 7: Type of job desired



Source: PASGR survey, 2023 PASGR survey, 2023.

Most youth are employed in the trade sector (26% of men and 49% of women) (Table 7). Men predominantly occupy roles in agriculture, automotive, transportation, and construction (36%). Conversely, women outnumber men in the beauty, fashion, and cosmetics sector (16% compared to 3% for men). Women are less represented in the ICT/Cyber sector than men (10%).

Table 7: Desired sector activities

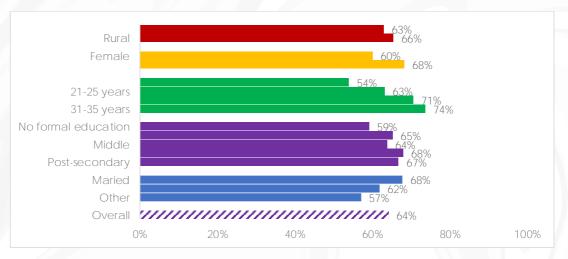
	Male	Female	Overall
Trade	26%	49%	38%
Beauty/fashion/cosmetics	3%	16%	9%
Agriculture	13%	5%	9%
Automotive/Transport	14%	1%	8%
Construction	9%	2%	5%
Food & Beverage	5%	4%	5%
Financial Services	4%	5%	5%
ICT/Cyber	5%	2%	4%
Crafts	5%	2%	3%
Other	12%	8%	10%
None	4%	7%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Impact of Covid-19 on Aspirations

The majority of youth (64%) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly affected their aspirations (figure 8). The aspects most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic are shown in graph 9. The COVID-19 pandemic mainly impacted the economic aspect of youth's lives (65%), followed by education and training (23%) and, to a lesser extent, the social aspect (8%). The aspirations of young men (68%) were more affected by the pandemic than those of women (60%). Youth living in rural areas (66%) were more affected than city dwellers (63%). The aspirations of the less educated (59%) were less affected by COVID-19 than those of youth with at least primary education (64%-68%). The aspirations of married people (62%) were more affected by Covid-19 than those of single people (62%). The impact of the pandemic on youth's aspirations also increases with age. The majority of youth aged 18 to 20 (54%) said their aspirations had been affected by Covid-19. This proportion rises to 63% among 21–25-year-olds and 71% among 26–30-year-olds. Three quarters (74%) of 31-35-year-olds said Covid-19 had impacted their aspirations.

Figure 8: Effect of Covid-19 on aspirations





Analysis by socio-demographic category also reveals that, in economic terms, men (71%) were more affected than women (59%). The latter were more affected by the pandemic in terms of education (27%) and social (12%). Rural dwellers (69%) were more confronted with the economic problem than city dwellers (61%). The social impact of the pandemic was felt more in rural areas (11%) than in urban areas (5%). Urban dwellers (30%) suffered more from the pandemic's effects in education and training than rural dwellers (17%). By age group, the economic impact appears to increase with age, ranging from 46% for the youngest to 88% for those aged 31 to 35. On the other hand, the trend is the opposite when it comes to education and training. Younger people (42%) are more likely to be affected by the closure of schools and universities than their elders in the 31-35 age bracket (4%). Paradoxically, the youngest (9%-10%) put more emphasis on social problems than their elders (5%). While educated youth are more affected by school and university closures, the less educated suffer more from the economic consequences of the pandemic.

Urban 61% Rural 69% Female Male 20% 18-20 years 46% 21-25 years 58% 26-30 years 71% 31-35 years 88% 83% No formal education Primary 82% Middle 64% 47% Secondary 42% Post-secondary 42% Maried Sinale 52% Other Foreign migration 60% 28% internal migration 57% No desire Overall 65% 23% 0% 20% 40% 80% 100% ■ Economic aspect - employment/company Socio-cultural aspects - family, marriage, etc. Education and training Others

Figure 9: Aspects most affected by the pandemic, by socio-demographic characteristics

Challenges of Covid-19 pandemic on Youth

Half of the youth reported significant income loss (48%) and customer loss (48%) (Table 8). The impact of income and customer loss was more pronounced among men and those residing in rural areas. A quarter of youth (24%) have suspended or entirely ceased their activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A higher percentage of women (29%) compared to men (21%) have halted their business operations. This discrepancy can be attributed, in part, to the greater presence of women in markets, which were temporarily closed by the Senegalese government along with other public places.

Table 8: COVID-19 and challenges of youth activity by gender and residential area

	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Total
I closed my business completely / stopped operations	21%	29%	24%	25%	24%
I have lost significant revenue	55%	37%	54%	42%	48%
I lost opportunities and clients	58%	35%	50%	48%	49%
My business options have been reduced	37%	23%	39%	24%	31%

The qualitative data also confirm youth's main challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Confinement was already a major obstacle for youth. At school, studies were interrupted, exams postponed and so on. Some youth lost their jobs, as the economy came to a complete standstill. A young chicken supplier in a rural area declared "he could no longer buy or sell."

In northern Senegal, particularly in Louga and Saint Louis, the difficulties encountered by youth during the pandemic were as follows:

- The high cost of living and the restrictions imposed on them;
- School closures;
- Promiscuity within the family;
- Declining school results and dropping out;

Not only are there many challenges, but the consequences are disastrous. Youth are forced to go home early to comply with curfews, resulting in lower wages and job losses. Those who study see their hours cut back, and others drop out.

Sharpening awareness of future uncertainties: The onset of COVID-19 had prompted youth to

become more cognizant of the uncertainties that lie ahead. A young person who lacks direction risks being stranded at home without resources. In these challenging times, it becomes evident that having aspirations and goals is essential for progress.

"Many youth are uncertain about what tomorrow holds for them," remarks a thoughtful young student. Another young man shares,

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, I returned to my village to cultivate vegetables such as peppers and turnips, and I managed to sustain myself." Similarly, another young man, initially interested in animal husbandry, pivoted to planting in response to the pandemic, stating, "I have adapted and diversified my work, thanks to the pandemic."

Obstacles to ambition: In Fatick, a young girl said, "Youth must work and believe in their abilities, acquire knowledge and participate in national development". But a young man from Ziguinchor sees his abilities blocked because working in poultry farming was his aspiration, and he even started out in it. But with the pandemic, he says:

My customers ran out of money, and many of them didn't pay back their loans. As a result, I couldn't continue selling chickens, and my business was in danger of collapsing. So, the pandemic put a bit of a brake on my ambitions (Young man)

Quantitative data, categorized by level of education (Table 21 in the appendix), reveal that individuals without formal education lament the loss of income (57%), customers (56%), and diminished business opportunities (49%). Notably, closure or cessation of business is more prevalent among those with primary education (31%). Among the most educated youth, three out of five (61%) report lost opportunities and/or customers. For youth with post-secondary education, lost opportunities are linked to border and university closures, resulting in the suspension or cancellation of study trips abroad for some.

Examining age groups (Table 22 in the appendix), it becomes apparent that youth aged 31 to 35 bore the brunt of the negative repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally (Table 23 in the appendix), potential migrants abroad felt the effects of the pandemic through income loss (58%) and diminished opportunities (38%). Conversely, potential migrants within the country experienced the consequences of COVID-19 in terms of dwindling clientele and business cessation.

COVID-19 and opportunities for youth

Despite its adverse effects, the COVID-19 pandemic had also generated opportunities for youth. Indeed, 26% of youth reported not being affected by the pandemic (Table 9). Nonetheless, the majority of youth have felt its impact, as expressed by one young girl who stated, "there were no opportunities, all activities were blocked." Another youth mentioned having no opportunities at all except for the unity and togetherness of family members.

However, women were less affected than men (38% of women versus 17% of men). Additionally, 5% of youth experienced an increase in their business activities during the pandemic. Only 2% expanded their business, while 4% diversified their activities. Those who found opportunities during the pandemic were primarily engaged in sectors such as e-commerce. It is noteworthy that the pandemic had also brought about positive changes, including closer family ties, new learning expe-

riences (such as computer skills and online courses), food assistance from the government, improved security due to the increased presence of law enforcement in neighbourhood, and a decrease in attacks and crime.

Analysis by level of education reveals that better-educated individuals found more opportunities during the pandemic (Table 24 in the appendix). Nearly one in five (17%) youth with higher education experienced a peak in their activity during the pandemic. This is attributed to their greater flexibility in leveraging information and communication technology (ICT) benefits. In terms of age, there was little variation in the opportunities presented by the pandemic (Table 25 in the appendix). However, younger individuals were less affected (48%) than their older counterparts (14%-29%) by the pandemic. Conversely, potential migrants to the interior of the country (9%) experienced increased activity during the pandemic compared to those wishing to migrate abroad (1%) or remain in the country (2%) (Table 26 in the appendix).

Table 9: Covid-19 and activity opportunities for youth, by gender

	Male	Female	Overall
My business was at its best- making more money	7%	1%	5%
My business options expanded	2%	2%	2%
I diversified my business- into another line of work	5%	2%	4%
No effect at all	17%	38%	26%
Other	2%	1%	1%

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

A resource person, in an interview, says that he believes that the strategies employed before, during, and after Covid-19 remain consistent. However, there is a recognized need for change by reorganizing certain sectors:

Box: Organising the transport sector and e-commerce

He says, "Let's take, for example the transport sector of the "thiak thiak" (motorcycles transporters). It is exploding without control, with many accidents, many youth with irremediable after-effects, and up to now there has been no action to take charge of it, no organisation, no insurance, no redefinition of traffic corridors, no relations with the police. There is nothing, even though it was an economic opportunity used in the difficult conditions of the pandemic. It could be a catalyst, a well-organised employment sector, but there is nothing and people are surviving. You can't informalize the informal, it's impossible, but you have to encourage people to go in the direction you want because the informal is born out of the repression of the formal.

Those who want to evolve in the sector can be organised into MSEs, and motorbike transport companies and subsidised through programmes.

The Post Office should contact these youth to manage its mail. It could be an umbrella structure and contract with some of them. These are deliveries that can be secured. For example, in Luxembourg, a Reserarcher said that the health centres take approved taxis to transport the sample. The Pasteur Institute cannot be everywhere but the health centres can take physiologic samples; some "thiak thiak" (motorcycles transporters) with well-organised and suitable boxes with licences could transport them."

The evolution of aspirations following COVID-19: changes in youth's aspirations

Opportunity for youth to succeed or lead a good life

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, youth can still strive for a good life and success. Some express confidence in their ability to persevere, like a young man who asserts, "I can work until 8 p.m., even with the curfew in place." However, others acknowledge the difficulties, particularly with companies

reducing staff due to the economic crisis. Another young man reflects, during a focus group discussion "In Ziguinchor, seeking success or a good life during the pandemic is really hard." Meanwhile, in Fatick, concerns are raised about the temporary nature of government assistance during the pandemic and the subsequent cessation of aid.

The changes brought about by the pandemic, such as rising food and transport prices, have made life increasingly challenging. However, this had also fostered a sense of solidarity among youth, with many advocating for mutual support. In rural areas like Tataguine, where opportunities are scarce, there is widespread skepticism about youth's prospects for success. Residents question whether youth can succeed in such environments, citing the lack of employment opportunities and the necessity for migration to other regions for livelihoods. Despite these hardships, there remains a collective hope for a brighter future, especially for the next generation.

Lack of solidarity: "Success is impossible because the people of Tataguine don't help each other. Today, you can walk into a company and find a resident, but he pretends not to know you; in hospitals, you're ignored too. And this attitude doesn't rhyme with development. Nobody wants the progress of others. It's all about selfishness" a young man states during a discussion.

Rural exodus: Jobs are not created so that youth can work during vacations. On the contrary, all the youth are elsewhere. In Kanel, Kolda, and Sédhiou, it's true that COVID-19 had a negative impact. But that shouldn't be an obstacle; it should be overcome. "A young person, whatever the circumstances, must always try to work," admits a young man from Kanel, "it's a question of honor," he continues. While recognizing that fathers suffered greatly during the COVID-19 period, the youth agree to prepare themselves so as not to relive the same difficulties later on.

Opportunity for youth to review their employment ambitions

COVID-19 enabled youth, in a particular way, to exhibit resilience and find ways to navigate the difficulties posed by the pandemic, ultimately forging paths to livelihoods. From this perspective, it served as an opportunity for youth to remain prepared and recognize that circumstances can change unpredictably. This sentiment is echoed by both city dwellers and rural residents alike. While the pandemic pre-

sented significant challenges, the youth of Louga assert, "we were able to overcome them."

COVID-19 also served as a lesson for youth, revealing alternative pathways and possibilities for success in their lives. Some seized the opportunity to engage in online sales, particularly young girls who bought and resold goods, including masks and hand sanitizers, to sustain themselves. Those involved in weekly market trading adapted by selling their wares within neighborhoods and at home.

The pandemic fostered an emphasis on solidarity, with initiatives such as training workshops for disabled children in sewing aimed at reducing their reliance on begging outside mosques and markets. Without COVID-19, such training opportunities might not have arisen.

COVID-19 also prompted a shift from the formal to the informal sector, as some businesses closed, leading youth to explore new avenues. For example, a sales agent transitioned to poultry farming, citing its profitability and lack of pressure compared to his previous role.

Overall, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the visions and aspirations of youth, prompting a shift in their aspirations and facilitating transitions from the formal to the informal sector for some..

Youth's Resilience and Adaptability Strategies

Resilience

Resilience is the ability of an individual, group or system to adapt to adversity. The pandemic enabled youth, in a particular way, to be resilient, to find ways around the difficulties COVID-19 posed, and to find ways of making a living. From that point of view, it was an opportunity for youth to be ready and to know that everything can change at any time. City dwellers and rural dwellers alike share this view. The pandemic was very difficult, and there were many obstacles, according to the youth of Louga, but "we were able to overcome them", says one young man. It was also a lesson for youth, showing them that they can adopt alternatives and other possibilities to make their lives successful. Some seized the opportunity to sell goods online, especially young girls. They bought supplies and resold them at weekly markets. Some sold masks and hydro-alcohol gels and made a living from it. So, the youth bore the pandemic bravely.

Perseverance and commitment

Most young women and men agree that they can achieve their goals, even if they are difficult, but men dominate this feeling of confidence, 98% versus 96% (Table 10). Youth's perseverance is reflected in their determination to see any action they undertake through to a successful conclusion. Youth believe that by persevering, they can achieve results (96% of men vs. 94% of women). What's more, many youths (63%) think they might be asked to do things they do not like, especially men (65% vs. 62% of women). Young women (97%) and men (96%) believe that difficult times are opportunities to learn and grow as a person. Almost all youth (91%) say they are not afraid of challenges, and 97% say they are fully committed when they take action.

Table 10: Perseverance and commitment

	Male	Female	Overall
I believe that I can achieve my goals, even if they are difficult.	98	96	97
I believe that if I try hard, things can be different.	96	94	95
When I start doing something, I try to finish	97	97	97
I know that sometimes I have to force myself to do things that I don't like.	65	62	63
The hard times are an opportunity for me to learn and grow as a person.	96	97	97
I can make a decision even if I don't have the facts.	50	50	50
I am not afraid of challenges	92	90	91
I give my best, no matter what the outcome.	98	96	97

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Positive self-image and optimism

Self-confidence allows for a realistic vision that enables better management of emotions, success, decision-making and resilience. However, almost all youth have good self-esteem and accept themselves as they are. The majority are optimistic about their future and say they are in harmony with themselves. Moreover, more than women, men emphasize a strong resilience capacity following illness or injury. Finally, 93% of young men and women are proud of what they have achieved in their lives (Table 11).

Table 11: Positive self-image/Optimism

	Male	Female	Overall
I am not satisfied with myself	33	31	32
l accept myself, as I am	98	99	98
I feel in harmony with myself	94	96	95
I am optimistic about my future	96	96	96
I usually recover quickly after an ordinary illness or injury	91	87	89
I am proud of the things I have accomplished in life.	93	93	93

Relationships and regulation of feelings

Openness to others enables youth to receive assistance in times of need (Table 12). Women exhibit a higher willingness to accept help compared to men, with 94% of women expressing openness to assistance, compared to 91% of men. Additionally, a larger proportion of women, compared to men, identify someone close to them who could provide support (88% of women versus 85% of men). However, men feel that their family understands their emotions and frustrations better, and perceive collaboration with others as easier. This is also understandable since women are exposed, especially in the workplace. This is supported by the discovery that men, in greater numbers than women, report having reliable friends they can rely on (91% of men compared to 80% of women). Humor and a positive outlook assist young Senegalese in finding amusement in various situations. They often find humor in challenging circumstances (85%) and are occasionally able to laugh at themselves.

Table 12: Relationship/regulation

	Male	Female	Overall
I allow others to help me when I need it	91	94	92
In difficult times, I have at least one person close to me to I can turn to for help	85	88	86
My family understands how I feel	80	80	80
I think others find me easy to work with	93	90	91
I have good friends I can trust	91	80	85

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Emotional regulation

Overall, youth can control their emotions, even in difficult circumstances (Table 13). More than women, men say they can handle unpleasant emotions such as sadness, fear and anger. The majority of youth, both men and women, can remain calm in difficult situations, manage their frustration and contain their worries. But young men are much more likely than women to be able to recover emotionally from loss and failure. Spirituality and faith are important to youth.

Table 13: Emotional regulation

	Male	Female	Overall
I am able to handle unpleasant emotions such as sadness, fear and anger.	95	91	93
I remain calm in difficult circumstances	96	91	93
I can handle my frustration	94	92	93
I am able to manage my worries	95	91	93
I am able to recover emotionally from losses and failures	95	90	93

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

All youth find strength in their religious and moral convictions (Table 14). They believe that everything that happens to them is due to fate, and that their lives have meaning and purpose. They find strength in a higher sense of purpose when faced with problems. Their convictions help them overcome difficult times, and life's lessons can bring out the best in them.

Table 14: Spirituality / Faith

	Male	Female	Overall
My religious or moral convictions give me strength and courage for my life.	99	99	99
Good or bad, I believe that most things happen for a reason.	97	99	98
I find strength in a higher sense when I face problems	95	95	95
My personal beliefs get me through the tough times	97	99	98
I believe my life has meaning and purpose	100	99	99
Life's lessons can bring out the best in me	99	99	99

Adaptability Stratégies

The ability of youth to adapt to difficulties is assessed through a series of questions (table 16). Almost all youth believe they can develop various strategies to deal with new situations. The average score was 4.29, with a significant difference between young men (4.33) and young women (4.29). They agree that they can rethink their way of thinking to cope with a new situation (4.34 vs 4.27).

In addition, they can adjust their thoughts or expectations to help them in each new situation (4.31 vs 4.23). Others agree that, when faced with uncertainty, they can develop new ways of doing things. In addition, youth affirm that they can change how they do things to adapt to new situations (4.25 vs 4.19, p<0.1). Furthermore, youth claim to be able to reduce negative emotions (4.26 vs 4.15) or minimize frustration or irritation (4.23 vs 4.16) to cope better with uncertain situations. A gender analysis shows that women are less adaptable than men. However, a fundamental lesson to be drawn from this picture is that while men have a greater overall capacity to adapt than women, the latter have a very strong propensity to adapt.

Table 15: Average rating of youth adaptability index

	Male	Female	Diff	Overall
I am able to think through a number of possible options to assist me in a new situation	4,33	4,24	0,09***	4,29
I am able to devise a new way of getting out of challenges	4,34	4,27	0,06**	4,30
I am able to adjust my thinking or expectations to assist me in a new situation	4,31	4,23	0,08**	4,27
I am able to seek out new information, helpful people, or useful resources to effectively deal with new situations.	4,26	4,16	0,11***	4,21
In uncertain situations, I am able to develop new ways of going about things (e.g., a different way of asking questions or finding information) to help me	4,25	4,19	0,06*	4,22
To assist me in a new situation, I am able to change the way I do things	4,27	4,17	0,11***	4,22
I am able to reduce negative emotions (e.g., fear) to help me deal with uncertain situations	4,26	4,15	0,11***	4,21
When uncertainty arises, I am able to minimize frustration or irritation so I can deal with it best	4,23	4,16	0,07**	4,19
All items	4,28	4,20	0,08***	4,24

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to understand the aspirations and resilience of young women and men from their own perspectives. Through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from youth, along with interviews conducted with decision-makers and resource persons, significant insights have been gleaned.

The key lessons learned from the research

Both young men and women perceive their youth similarly. They view themselves as individuals capable of assuming adult-like responsibilities, influenced by social and professional obligations. The pandemic had notably shaped their understanding of youth, fostering a heightened appreciation for strengthening familial bonds. It had also instigated a positive shift in mindset, particularly evident in rural areas, and had motivated youth to better equip themselves for future uncertainties. They exhibit a forward-thinking outlook and express readiness to participate in communal solidarity endeavors.

However, with the onset of the pandemic, they encountered various challenges, including lockdown measures leading to school discontinuations, salary reductions, increased living expenses, and employment loss. For instance, a young poultry supplier in a rural locale lamented his inability to conduct business. Nevertheless, men encountered more obstacles compared to women. Despite the adversities, opportunities emerged for youth, with women seemingly benefiting more: confinement facilitated the exploration of new academic interests, strengthened familial bonds, and provided heightened security.

Women's efforts within the household have become increasingly apparent, underscoring the precarious nature of men's employment. Despite these challenges, youth are believed to have the potential to attain a fulfilling life and achieve their aspirations, a sentiment embraced by both men and women. Besides, data indicates that women exhibit greater adaptability than men in several respects.

 Generally, as demonstrated in this research, both young women and men in Senegal have demonstrated that they have the ability to:

- Seek out new information, valuable contacts, or resources to effectively address novel situations. Qualitative data validates this approach, as many youth have embraced utilizing the benefits of social networks. Some have ventured into online sales, apprenticeships, and research endeavors to enhance their skills;
- Adapt their methods of operation in uncertain circumstances, such as employing different approaches to problem-solving or information acquisition to aid themselves;
- Adjust their strategies when confronted with unfamiliar situations;
- The economic, social, educational, and professional aspirations of young women and men concerning their future were scrutinized. Primarily, youth aspire to secure employment, earn respect, and reduce dependency. Attaining success through work, education, or travel is the ultimate aspiration. Women predominantly aspire to secure stable employment and contribute as breadwinners for their families, whereas men lean towards financial stability or wealth;
- All youth strive for a brighter future, anticipating that training will facilitate entry into the workforce. Men, more so than women, aspire to assume leadership roles within their communities, establish successful businesses, or support fellow youth locally, often necessitating financial resources for their endeavors. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had influenced the aspirations of both young women and men, introducing obstacles and vulnerabilities in their pursuit of aspirations; and
- The essential skill required by young women and men to pursue their aspirations is the ability to generate income through education, training, and entrepreneurship. Recognizing this, most youth are gravitating towards self-employment with hopes for a brighter future.

Recommendations

The recommendations revolve around the key principles of **Communication**, **Information**, **Training**, **Promotion** and **Support**.

Communication with youth: the first step of the State must be to listen youth by the mean of regular popular consultations

- Consult youth to ensure that State support is effective. Popular consultations in all regions are needed to gather youth's expectations of these programs and projects In addition, it is essential to raise youth's awareness of state initiatives and their relevance to their future
- 2. Facilitate dialogue and engagement between youth and policy-makers to ensure that state interventions align with youth's aspirations and contribute to their well-being This need for information should be relayed more concretely by the National Youth Council
- 3. Support communication between the state and youth organizations and associations, in response to changing needs

Information for youth: informing them on all the opportunities created by the government and the development partners

- 1. Develop a Youth Guide to provide youth with comprehensive information on government projects and programs It is essential that youth have a clear understanding of what the state offers them, beyond mere protocol or official rhetoric
- Relay information to youth about state initiatives, through the channels of territorial administration, local civil servants, religious and political leaders This helps disseminate information about agencies that support youth entrepreneurship and offer funding and follow-up for their projects

Training youth : set up free trainings for youth

- 1. Set up projects and training programs that are accessible and free of charge
- 2. Create a youth academy and forums for youth participation in decision-making

- processes.
- 3. Offer online sales, apprenticeship and research opportunities to improve their skills.

Promotion of youth presence people in national and local decision-making entities

- 1. Introduce youth quotas in elected assemblies
- 2. Introduce positive discrimination in favor of youth, to encourage business start-ups.
- 3. Promote women's leadership roles

Promotion of the specific economic sectors where youth is greatly involved

1. Intensify policies in sectors such as agrifood and transport, where there are many opportunities for youth.

Support youth economic and social initiatives or organizations

- Strengthen local organizations to support youth in their community solidarity activities
- 2. Support self-employment initiatives, in parallel with legally supervised migration.
- 3. Strengthen the human and financial resources of the National Youth Council
- 4. Support young women involved in import-export and e-trade.

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APPENDIX

Table 16: Dignified job definition according to youth, by residential area

	Rural	Urban
A job where the employer respects youth	39%	38%
A job that does not expose you to risk or harm	20%	20%
A job where youth are paid appropriately	39%	37%
A job that society does not disapprove of	20%	13%
Secure employment	32%	34%
A job where mothers can work conveniently	8%	6%
A job where you are not treated according to your gender	14%	14%
A job that respects your ethnicity and religion	29%	25%
A job where disadvantaged people can work with confidence	10%	12%

Table 17: Dignified job definition according to youth, by education level

	No formal education	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Post- secondary	Overall
A job where the employer respects youth	38%	37%	40%	39%	42%	39%
A job that does not expose you to risk or harm	20%	22%	18%	22%	19%	20%
A job where youth are paid appropriately	43%	42%	39%	30%	34%	38%
A job that society does not disapprove of	20%	18%	19%	12%	10%	17%
Secure employment	28%	36%	30%	35%	37%	33%
A job where mothers can work conveniently	10%	6%	9%	3%	4%	7%
A job where you are not treated according to your gender	15%	12%	12%	14%	17%	14%
A job that respects your ethnicity and religion	28%	22%	28%	27%	29%	27%
A job where disadvantaged people can work with confidence	12%	10%	10%	11%	15%	11%

Table 18: Dignified job definition according to youth, by age

	18-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years
A job where the employer respects youth	39%	41%	39%	35%
A job that does not expose you to risk or harm	21%	21%	17%	22%
A job where youth are paid appropriately	38%	38%	39%	39%
A job that society does not disapprove of	18%	15%	18%	16%
Secure employment	32%	32%	34%	34%
A job where mothers can work conveniently	7%	6%	7%	9%
A job where you are not treated according to your gender	12%	17%	14%	12%
A job that respects your ethnicity and religion	27%	29%	28%	22%
A job where disadvantaged people can work with confidence	12%	10%	11%	12%

Table 19: Dignified job definition according to youth, by migration intention

	No desire	Internal migration	Foreign migration
A job where the employer respects youth	35%	42%	42%
A job that does not expose you to risk or harm	19%	21%	21%
A job where youth are paid appropriately	37%	44%	38%
A job that society does not disapprove of	17%	12%	18%
Secure employment	34%	29%	33%
A job where mothers can work conveniently	9%	8%	4%
A job where you are not treated according to your gender	14%	17%	13%
A job that respects your ethnicity and religion	26%	25%	28%
A job where disadvantaged people can work with confidence	12%	12%	10%

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Table 20: Covid-19 and challenges of youth activity, by education

	No formal education	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Post- secondary
I closed my business completely / stopped operations	26%	31%	24%	16%	17%
I have lost significant revenue	57%	48%	45%	45%	30%
I lost opportunities and clients	56%	38%	48%	47%	61%
My business options have been reduced	49%	26%	21%	26%	22%

Table 21: Covid-19 and challenges of youth activity, by age group

	18-20	21-25	26-30	31-35
	years	years	years	years
I closed my business completely / stopped operations	12%	25%	23%	30%
I have lost significant revenue	36%	44%	51%	52%
I lost opportunities and clients	36%	49%	42%	59%
My business options have been reduced	24%	34%	23%	38%

Table 22: Covid-19 and challenges of youth activity, by migration intention

	No desire	internal migration	Foreign migration
I closed my business completely / stopped operations	20%	43%	24%
I have lost significant revenue	41%	43%	58%
I lost opportunities and clients	42%	57%	55%
My business options have been reduced	28%	17%	38%

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Table 23: Covid-19 and activity opportunities for youth, by education

	No formal education	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Post- secondary
My business was at its best- making more money	3%	3%	2%	3%	17%
My business options expanded	2%	3%	2%	0%	4%
I diversified my business- into another line of work	2%	3%	5%	5%	4%
No effect at all	21%	21%	36%	29%	26%
Other	2%	0%	0%	5%	0%

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Table 24: Covid-19 and activity opportunities for youth, by age group

	18-20	21-25	26-30	31-35
	years	years	years	years
My business was at its best- making more money	4%	5%	3%	6%
My business options expanded	0%	2%	3%	3%
I diversified my business- into another line of work	0%	3%	0%	8%
No effect at all	48%	26%	29%	14%
Other	0%	0%	2%	3%

Table 25: Covid-19 and activity opportunities for youth, by migration intention

	No desire	Internal migration	Foreign migration
My business was at its best- making more money	4%	4%	5%
My business options expanded	2%	9%	1%
I diversified my business- into another line of work	4%	4%	3%
No effect at all	33%	17%	19%
Other	2%	0%	1%

Table 26: List of the surveyed districts in the regions of Dakar

Region	Department	Community	District
Dakar	Dakar	Biscuiterie	Ouagou niaye 1
Dakar	Dakar	Hann/ bel air	1 hann yene
Dakar	Dakar	Hann/ bel air	1 hlm hann mariste 1 extension
Dakar	Dakar	Sicap liberte	Liberte 3
Dakar	Dakar	Yoff	Cite bara mboup (ouest foire)
Dakar	Dakar	Grand yoff	Scat urbam 2/h
Dakar	Dakar	Grand yoff	Hlm patte d'oie
Dakar	Dakar	Grand yoff	Arafat
Dakar	Dakar	Grand yoff	Hlm grand yoff
Dakar	Dakar	Grand yoff	Arafat
Dakar	Dakar	Grand yoff	Kour kerekou
Dakar	Pikine	Yeumbeul nord	Darou salam 5c
Dakar	Pikine	Keur massar	Montage ii
Dakar	Pikine	Keur massar	1 parcelles assainies
Dakar	Pikine	Pikine est	Cite stagt
Dakar	Pikine	Diamaguene/sicap m'bao	Sam sam 3(a)
Dakar	Pikine	M'bao	Daal diam
Dakar	Rufisque	Bargny	Nianguene
Dakar	Rufisque	Bambilor	1 keur daouda sarr et extension; 2 cite sapem isenco; 3 cite soccocim

Table 27: List of the surveyed district in the region of Diourbel

Region	Department	Community	District
Diourbel	Diourbel	Diourbel	Medinatoul (k.goumack)
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Touba hlm
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Madiyana
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Touba al azar
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Gouye mbind
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Touba al azar
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Darou khoudoss
Diourbel	Mbacke	Touba mosquee	Touba mosquee

Table 28: List of the surveyed districts in the region of Tambacounda

Region	Department	Community	District
Tambacounda	Tambacounda	Tambacounda	Depot
Tambacounda	Tambacounda	Sinthiou malem	Botou
Tambacounda	Tambacounda	Makacoulibatang	1 dialassaba dioute, 2 medina wouly, 3 nadol keba, autres
Tambacounda	Koumpentoum	Kouthiaba wolof	1 sare hamady 2 darou ndiayene

Source: PASGR survey, 2023.

Table 29: List of the surveyed districts in the region of Kaolack

Region	Department	Community	District
Kaolack	Kaolack	Kaolack	Parcelles assainies unité 1
Kaolack	Kaolack	Kaolack	Hlm bongré
Kaolack	Kaolack	Keur socé	Keur socé (keur socé saga)
Kaolack	Nioro	Porokhane	1 same keur abdou boury sow 2 same keur toubèye et same keur sacoumba autres
Kaolack	Nioro	Taïba niassène	Santhie thiamène

Table 30: List of the surveyed districts in the region of Thies

Region	Department	Community	District
Thies	Mbour	Joal-fadiouth	Santhie2
Thies	Mbour	Mbour	Mbour serere kaw
Thies	Mbour	Mbour	Medine
Thies	Mbour	Mbour	Oncad
Thies	Mbour	Mbour	Diamaguene 1(beye deuk)
Thies	Mbour	Sessene	1 tataguine bambara
Thies	Mbour	Malicounda	1 falokh wolof (keur ma mbaye)
Thies	Thies	Tassette	Sessene diack
Thies	Thies	Touba toul	Bokh
Thies	Tivaouane	Ngandiouf	1 ndob gadiaga, 2 mbague, 3 nekhedj diama

Table 31: List of the surveyed districts in the regions of Louga, Fatick, Kolda

Region	Departement	Commune	Quartier/village
Louga	Kebemer	Sagatta gueth	1 gade panghar ; 2 kharagne; 3 ndiolfou diao; autres
Louga	Linguere	Dahra	Nguenene (loumbal)
Louga	Linguere	Boulal	1 wendou mbapp, 2 samboudou i, bocky samboudou ii, autres
Louga	Louga	Guet ardo	1 thialene ii + thieyene iii, dionabe
Louga	Louga	Nguidile	1 bakhdar diop, 2 oulingara ndiaye
Fatick	Fatick	Fatick	Peulgha
Fatick	Fatick	Niakhar	Niakhar
Fatick	Gossas	Mbar	1 teourou boulal, 2 thingue, 3 dekhaye
Fatick	Gossas	Ouadiour	1: barkael 2: k khaly mboup3: thisse
Kolda	Kolda	Dioulacolon	1 sinthiang samba coulibaly
Kolda	Kolda	Dialambere	1 sare ansou fasagna, 2 thiewal lao, 3 sare demba foreah, autres
Kolda	Velingara	Diaobe kabendou	1 sinthiang diaobe (1er partie)
Kolda	Medina yoro foulah	Kerewane	1 medina alpha ; 2sare dello ; 3 sinthiou

Region	Department	Community	District
Saint louis	Dagana	Mbane	
Saint louis	Podor	Médina ndiathbes	Dounguel
Saint louis	Podor	Doumga lao	1 ould mboyrick (mbelcoume)
Saint louis	Saint louis	Saint louis	Gokhou mbathie
Saint louis	Saint louis	Saint louis	Darou route de khor
Saint louis	Saint louis	Saint louis	Ndioloffène nord (sor)

Region	Department	Community	District
Louga	Kebemer	Sagatta gueth	1 gade panghar ; 2 kharagne; 3 ndiolfou diao; autres
Louga	Linguere	Dahra	Nguenene (loumbal)
Louga	Linguere	Boulal	1 wendou mbapp, 2 samboudou i, bocky samboudou ii, autres
Louga	Louga	Guet ardo	1 thialene ii + thieyene iii, dionabe
Louga	Louga	Nguidile	1 bakhdar diop, 2 oulingara ndiaye
Fatick	Fatick	Fatick	Peulgha
Fatick	Fatick	Niakhar	Niakhar
Fatick	Gossas	Mbar	1 teourou boulal, 2 thingue, 3 dekhaye
Fatick	Gossas	Ouadiour	1: barkael 2: k khaly mboup3: thisse
Kolda	Kolda	Dioulacolon	1 sinthiang samba coulibaly
Kolda	Kolda	Dialambere	1 sare ansou fasagna, 2 thiewal lao, 3 sare demba foreah, autres
Kolda	Velingara	Diaobe kabendou	1 sinthiang diaobe (1er partie)
Kolda	Medina yoro foulah	Kerewane	1 medina alpha ; 2sare dello ; 3 sinthiou



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6th Floor, I & M Building 2nd Ngong Avenue, Upper Hill P.O. Box 76418-00508 Nairobi, Kenya

Website: www.pasgr.org Email: info@pasgr.org **Tel:** +254 (0)20 2985000 +254 (0)729 111031 +254 (0)731 000065