



**Belgium**  
partner in development

# THE STATE OF GIRLS' RIGHTS IN SENEGAL

March 2022



## GIRLS' RIGHTS AT A GLANCE<sup>1</sup>

In Senegal, a strong legal framework ensures the promotion of a gender-responsive environment, **gender equality principles and promotion of women and girls' empowerment**. However, girls and young women **experience daily various forms of violence and discrimination**, that are anchored in the **expectations on what entails being a girl and a woman**, that frame all aspects of their life.

Girls experience a **double sentence, because of their gender and their age**; they tend to be less valued by communities, and are expected to conform with domestic roles. With one woman in two not participating in decisions regarding themselves, **girls' and women's agency is hampered**. The limitation of girls' empowerment is linked with the strength of limiting norms, that shape the expectations communities have about what girls can and should do. Not abiding by gender and age-related expectations entails high and significant risks of marginalisation or exclusion from the community, as well as higher risk of violence against them. As a result, girls and young women accept suffering in order to preserve the community – one woman in two finds it justified for a man to beat his wife.

**Gender norms play a major role in girls' education and act as a significant driver of school drop-out, alongside material constraints of families**. The result of the various barriers for education is that for 100 young men who can read and write, only 84 young women can. Consequences of unequal status in society translate into a gendered division of labour that places domestic chores burden on girls and facilitates child, early and forced marriage and union (CEFMU), and early pregnancy, and in turn reinforces pre-existing vulnerabilities of girls and young women. Taboo around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), combined with limited infrastructures and lack of age and gender-responsive SRHR services, drive the lack of access to adequate SRHR services: more than one in five women currently in union have an unmet need for family planning.

**Discriminatory systems and the lack of agency of girls and young women confine them to stereotyped educational and professional pathways**, that are considered *suitable* for women. This has an impact on their future quality, decent, income-generating economic opportunities. Less than one woman in ten owns her land, owns a house and uses a bank account. Poverty is an additional exclusion factor for the realization of girls' rights. Girls and young women are more affected by violence and discrimination in rural areas and in households living in low economic conditions. One girl in ten goes to secondary school in lowest wealth quintile families, while six girls in ten do in the highest quintile households.

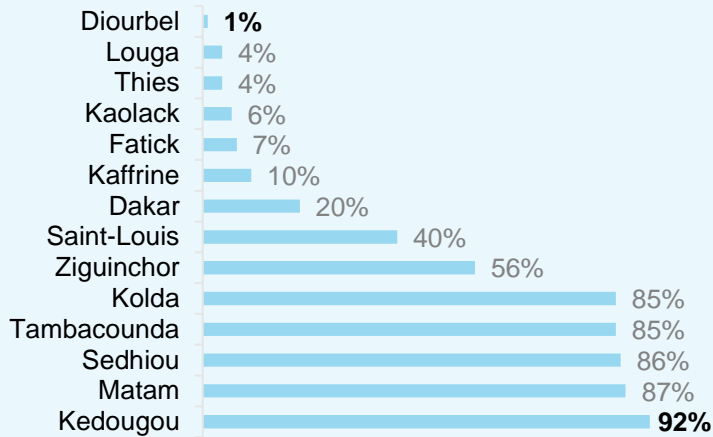
Major shocks, such as **climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbate gender inequalities** because of the mitigation measures adopted to prevent the spread of the virus failed to consider the specific needs of girls and the significant impacts they have on their rights, while, when hit by crises, negative coping mechanisms that are adopted by families highly affect girls and young women, who are more at risk of experiencing CEFMU, gender-based violence and of being denied their right to education.

Though an overall legal framework promoting gender equality has been put in place by the Government of Senegal, pitfalls remain. Girls' rights promotion depends on protective bodies of law, enforcement of the existing legislation, reinforced knowledge of rights and access to justice by all girls and young women, as well as an enhanced trust in institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> The executive summary contains references that are made available across the report

Share of women having undergone some form of **FGM**, by region

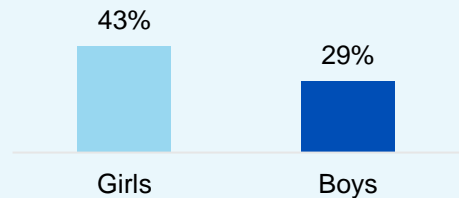


**1 WOMAN IN 2 RECEIVED NO EDUCATION**

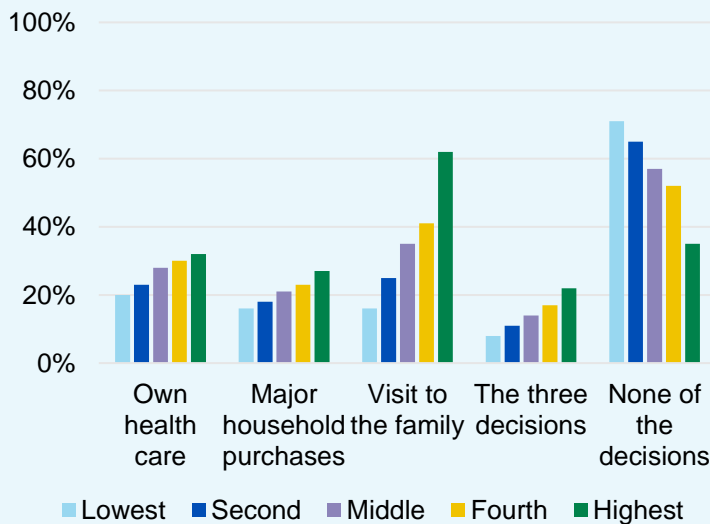
**78%**

**OF WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A LIFETIME**

Share of youth **not in employment, education or training**, by gender



Women's **participation in decision-making**, by wealth quintile



**93%** 

**OF WOMEN DO NOT OWN A LAND OR A HOUSE**

## HOW GIRLS SHOULD BEHAVE – GENDER NORMS AT WORK IN SENEGAL

In communities in Senegal where Plan International works, girls experience a **wide range of discriminations and violence, that are made possible by the strength of gender norms that define, through unwritten rules of behaviours, what is expected from girls.** There is a clear difference between what is expected from girls and boys. Plan International's study, undertaken in 2021, exploring the social expectations of communities have towards boys and girls<sup>2</sup> find out that gender norms are particularly strong and find their expressions in the daily lives of boys and girls. These commonly shared expectations about how girls and boys should behave, are part of a system where unequal power and privileges are so deeply entrenched that they are not questioned anymore by community members.

Globally, social norms around early marriage, son preference, domestic and unpaid care work, and women in the workforce and politics limit girls and young women's opportunities based on their gender.

### Clear expectations of what boys and girls should do

**Boys are expected to embrace a hegemonic masculinity and be raised as a future head of household, with the decision power and control of resources.** They are responsible for certain types of work, such as clearing land, building roofs, and cultivating fields.<sup>3</sup> **Girls, on the other hand, are less valued; they are attached to the domestic sphere, that is they are expected to be caregivers, mothers and wives.** They are responsible for domestic works such as cooking, water fetching, cleaning.

This translates into decisions that can **affect them in the long-run**: they have less access to inclusive quality education, to leisure and to mobility. As a result, being a boy usually means being prioritized over girls when decisions are taken on who will go to school, who will eat better, who will have access to technology, who will have more time for leisure.<sup>4</sup>

Gender norms, as they are unwritten rules of behaviours, include interpretations of cultural and religious references, that become intertwined with such gender norms. Participants to a focus group discussion conducted by Plan International stated that: "*Men and women, boys and girls, are not equal and it is God who has decided this*"<sup>5</sup>.

### The double sentence for girls

Girls experience a double sentence, because of their gender and because of their age. **Communities expect them to be docile and obedient first to their elders and second to their husband**, which are power-holders and often constitute the reference group of community members. Elders play a central role of social regulation and respect for the norms of conduct in family's mode of education and functioning, which is strongly hierarchical. A community member interviewed by Plan International staff sums it up: "*Young people, especially girls, often have no say in the matter and must obey*" and considers that this imbalance is a necessity to preserve the harmony of the family and the community.<sup>6</sup>

As provisioned in the *Family Code*, only men can be household heads. As a result of being less valued and heard, girls have **limited agency and limited decision-making power within the households and in relationships.**

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<sup>2</sup> Plan International, *Gender Analysis of Senegal*, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Ministère de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfance, *Stratégie Nationale pour l'Équité et l'Égalité de Genre 2016-2026 (SNEEG 2)*, Sénégal, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Plan International, *Gender Analysis of Senegal*, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## Agency, decision-making: everything that girls and young women do not decide for themselves

Community members interviewed by Plan International indicated that, though they may consult their wives sometimes, **men are the sole to have a final say on decisions.**<sup>7</sup> This is confirmed by quantitative analysis at country level, as only 2% of adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) and 4% of young women (aged 20 to 24), currently in union, reported that they took their own decisions regarding the three issues: their own healthcare, important purchase for the household and visit to the family or the parents.<sup>8</sup> In 91% of cases, men, aged 15 to 49, declared taking the decision on the use of their revenue, the woman being associated to the decision in only 8% of the cases.<sup>9</sup>

**This imbalanced power-decision structure trickles down to girls' agency.** During qualitative interviews, girls reported for instance, that they are ashamed of asking for money to take care of their personal needs.<sup>10</sup>

## Justified violence, limited agency: at age 24, one young woman in five has experienced physical or sexual violence

Girls are exposed early on to gender-based violence. **20% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 have experienced physical or sexual violence.** As they grow older, young women are particularly exposed to intimate partner violence: **by age 24 already, 17% of them have experienced violence committed by a partner, either physical, sexual or emotional.**<sup>11</sup>

Violence against women and girls is driven by gender norms that promote **men' superiority and dominance over women, and limited agency to challenge such norms.** Half of women, aged 15 to 49, consider it is justified for a man to beat his wife for any of the following reasons: burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, and refuses to have sexual relationships.<sup>12</sup> Community members interviewed by Plan International during their study justified again violence against girls and women as a way to safeguard the social cohesion of the community.<sup>13</sup> Such attitudes are internalized early on, as **40% of young women aged 15-24 already consider it is justified that a man beats his wife for at least one of these reasons.**<sup>14</sup>

More and more girls are being empowered and developing their leadership. However, the backside of the progress is increased risks for these girls as they are seen to be disrupting the pre-established gender norms that have maintained, so far, the functioning of the society.

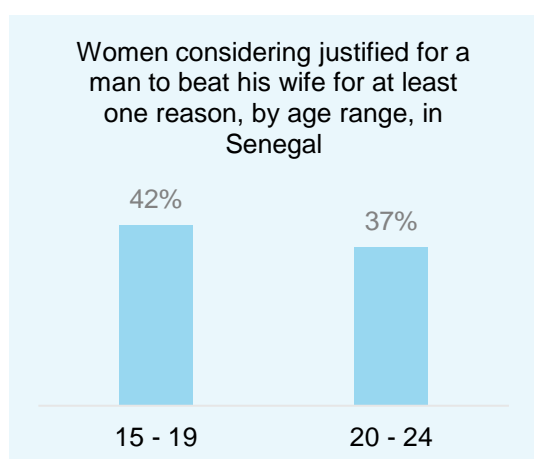


FIGURE 2: DHS, SENEGAL, 2017

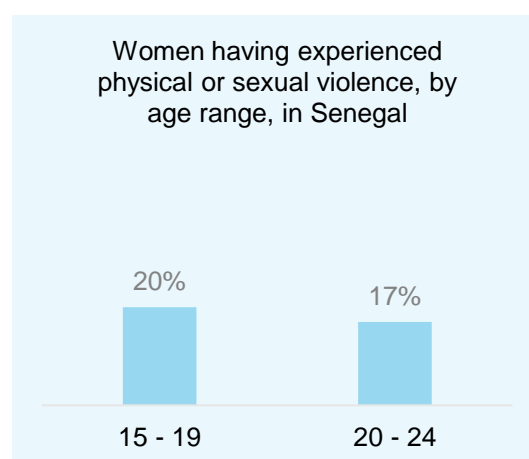


FIGURE 1: DHS, SENEGAL, 2019

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> DHS, *Senegal*, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Plan International Senegal, *Rapid Gender Assessment Report, Covid19 response*, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> DHS, *Senegal*, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> DHS, *Senegal*, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Plan International, *Gender Analysis of Senegal*, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> DHS, *Senegal*, 2017.



### Girls' access to inclusive and quality education is constrained

As a result, girls are more likely to drop out of school. Because of the differentiated positions in the society, whenever material constraints, poverty or shocks hit the families, removing girls from school, especially from secondary level, is considered justified, as **girls' education is less prioritized**.

Other constraints and pull factors include the time girls dedicate to domestic work, that compete with learning, preventing them from having time dedicated to study when they are in school. As a result, despite increased primary enrolment for girls, **their learning outcomes are lagging compared to boys** – the Gender Parity Index for youth literacy of 0.84<sup>15</sup> means that for 100 boys who can read and write, only 84 girls can. Yet, evidence shows that quality of learning is a much better predictor of women empowerment than school enrolment alone.<sup>16</sup>

**When reaching secondary school, girls are also facing increased risks of child, early and forced marriage and union (CEFMU), and early pregnancy**, as both a cause and a consequence of school drop-out. 54% of girls who become pregnant dropped out of school, while 39% repeated their grades. Only 6% continued their studies despite being pregnant.<sup>17</sup>

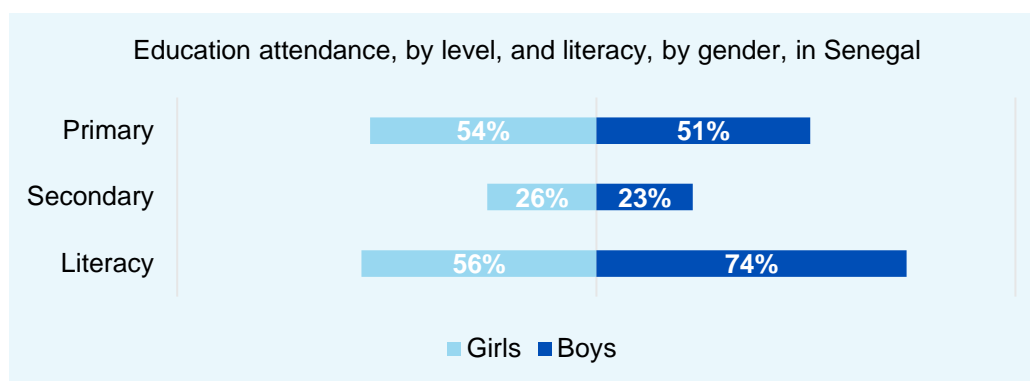


FIGURE 3: DHS, SENEGAL, 2019; UNICEF, DATA, 2008-2012

### Harmful practices anchored in taboo and limiting gender expectations

At the same time, girls experience **shame regarding their access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services**. This taboo is driving the **lack of access to relevant, quality services and is driving high rates of CEFMU and early pregnancy**. 31% of young women, aged 20-24, were married before age 18, and this rate is reaching above department, and 9% before age 15 in 2017.<sup>18</sup>

The lack of quality education that include comprehensive school-based SRHR information, coupled with decision-power in majority owned by men, and social stigma when accessing SRHR services, prevent girls from accessing information and effective use of SRHR services. As a result, **only 7% of women, aged 15 to 49, married or in a union, report that they are entitled to make decisions regarding sexual and reproductive rights**, that is on the following three selected areas: can say no to sexual intercourse with their husband or partner if they do not want, decide on use of contraception, and decide on their own healthcare decisions.<sup>19</sup>

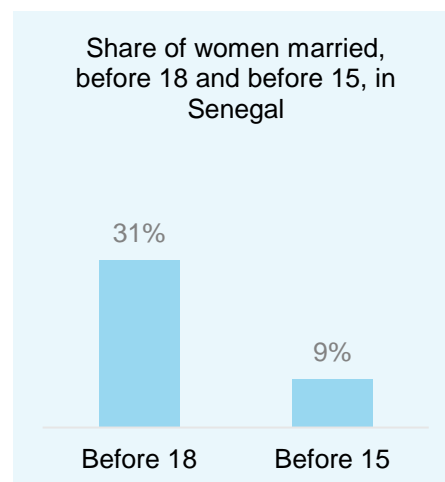


FIGURE 4: SAVE THE CHILDREN, CHILD MARRIAGE IN SENEGAL, 2017

<sup>15</sup> World Bank, *Senegal*, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> M. Kaffenberger, L. Pritchett, *Effective investment in women's futures: Schooling with learning*, International Journal of Educational Development, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> UNFPA, *GEEP*, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Save the Children, *Child Marriage in Senegal*, [Child Marriage in Senegal | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#), 2017

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, *Senegal*, 2017.

## The barriers to economic empowerment

This situation, in turn, **prevents women from accessing quality economic opportunities**<sup>20</sup>. In vocational training, girls are less represented than boys and their decisions in professional tracks are attached to stereotyped pathways such as cooking, tailoring, hairdressing, considered feminine tracks.

In the agricultural sector, that employs 70% of the Senegalese population, **women are required to contribute first to the exploitation of the men's or the family's lands before taking care of their property**.<sup>21</sup> This is associated with the fact that only 3% of women own their land alone compared to 97% for men.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, only 7% of women, aged 15 to 49, own their house - either jointly with a partner or family member, or on their own.<sup>23</sup> Girls and women also face barriers in accessing credit. Only 9% of women, aged 15 to 49, use a bank account, compared to 18% of men.<sup>24</sup>

Economic empowerment and limiting gender norms are strongly intertwined. Literature reviews regarding women's agency and empowerment highlight that gender norms surrounding women's agency moderate the impacts of many interventions that aim at alleviating material constraints. Access to financial resources alone, without addressing gender-specific constraints, is not a mechanism that consistently improves young women's agency. However, giving young women more direct control over resources, often by employing design or program features such as privacy or digital payment systems, appears to be a mechanism that consistently leads to improvements in women's agency.

### Yet, working with girls and young women as early as possible is a unique opportunity to strengthen their agency

Based on the literature review, programs show a greater impact when aiming to support young women in delaying marriage and childbearing, compared to programs that aimed to change household decision-making dynamics within a marriage, perhaps because women did not have good outside options.

Adolescence is a crucial time in the transition from childhood to adulthood, a time at which the expectations, opportunities, risks and needs for girls and boys diverge considerably.

## POVERTY TRAP, SHOCKS AND RESILIENCE: HOW POVERTY ACTS AS A BARRIER TO EMPOWERMENT IN SENEGAL

**Illiteracy, low school enrolment of girls, low involvement in income-generating activities, lack of professional qualifications, lack of knowledge of their rights, are among the obstacles that limit girls' autonomy and reinforce the poverty trap.**<sup>25,26</sup> In Senegal, poverty acts as an **additional exclusion factor for the realization of girls' rights**; girls in poorest situation have less opportunities, skills and agency for empowerment, including empowerment to challenge limiting gender norms.

Women in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) on average report less freedom of choice, control over one's life and life satisfaction compared to men in the same countries and women in wealthier countries. Globally, the average rate of respondents agreeing that wife beating is acceptable, that women have no say in decisions on large household purchases, or that agree that men make better business executives than women do, is strongly correlated with wealth of the country – the lower the GDP per capita, the more likely respondents will report negative attitudes towards gender equality and women and girls' empowerment.

<sup>20</sup> Wei Chang, Eleonora Guarnieri, Seema Jayachandran, Lucia Diaz-Martin, Akshara Gopalan, Claire Walsh. *Enhancing Women's Agency: Cross-Cutting Lessons From Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Studies in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, July 2020. J-Pal Working Paper

<sup>21</sup> Ministère de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfance, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> DHS, *Senegal*, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Plan International, *Gender Analysis of Senegal*, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Wei Chang et al., *op. cit.*

The situation of girls' rights in Senegal varies according to various factors linked to their living material conditions. Growing as a girl in Dakar is different from growing as a girl in Kédougou, and the less wealthy a family is, the more violations of girls' rights occur.

### Missed opportunities for poorest girls' empowerment and agency

In Senegal, poverty and associated lack of access to quality education services, economic opportunities, acquisition of soft and technical skills, is correlated with more limited agency, hence more adherence to limiting gender norms in place. In addition, **girls living in poor households will be more prone to negative coping mechanisms families tend to adopt in situation of crisis.** Research shows for instance that in families with limited resources, child marriage is often seen as a way to provide for their daughters' future – as a result, CEFMU are strongly correlated with poverty and low level of education.

**Access to education is also highly correlated with the wealth of the household, as girls' education is associated both with important costs, including opportunity costs for domestic work, and limited expected return on investment:** the net enrolment rate for primary education is 38% for the girls from the poorest quintile, while 75% for girls from the wealthiest quintile, more than double. **Poverty and gender do intersect, especially in secondary education:** for girls, the net enrolment rate is 12% for the poorest quintile, while 50% for the richest<sup>27</sup>, and this gap is more specific for girls. While among the poorest quintile, the gender parity index is below 1, meaning that girls are less enrolled than boys, this is not the case for wealthiest quintile, where girls are more enrolled than boys in secondary education.<sup>28</sup>

Rural and urban status are often correlated with poverty – as a result, **the net primary school enrolment is almost twice as high in urban area compared to rural areas, and the net secondary school enrolment is almost three times higher.**<sup>29</sup> Additionally, girls' access to education is worsened for the ones living in poor and remote villages as they do not have access to public transport and live further from secondary schools. **Girls can walk up to ten kilometres per day to go to school.** Traveling long distance every day to go to school can discourage them and their parents to support their education, as they are exposed to unsafe environment, where they may be subjected to abuse, harassment and violence along the way.<sup>30</sup>

### Complexity of future shocks & resilience

Senegal is known to be one of the most stable countries of the African continent. The country has seen three peaceful political transitions since independence in 1960. However, the major shocks the Senegalese population is facing, and will be facing more and more in the future comes from the **consequences of climate change, that include floods and droughts.** Economic consequences for the poorest will be significant, if no climate change adaptation or mitigation measures are

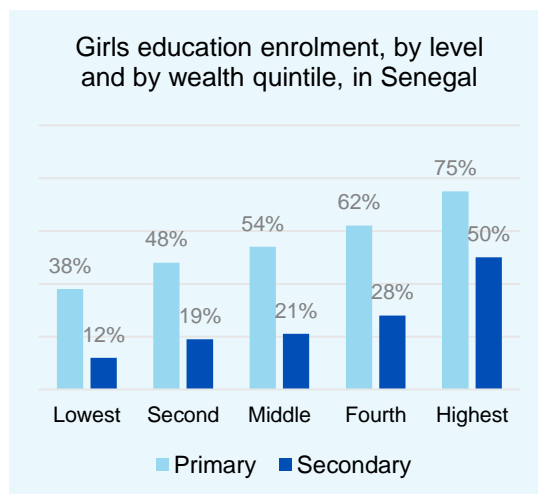


FIGURE 5: DHS, SENEGAL, 2019

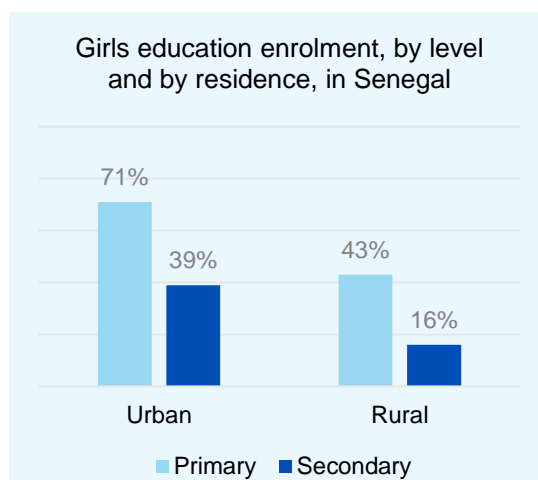


FIGURE 6: DHS, SENEGAL, 2017

<sup>27</sup> DHS, Senegal, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> DHS, Senegal, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Plan International, *Gender Analysis of Senegal*, op. cit.



implemented. Senegal's agriculture industry, that occupies 70% of the country's working population, is likely to undergo important transformations in the coming years; in the North, across the past 25 years, climatic shift has resulted in crop and livestock production becoming even more difficult.<sup>31</sup>

### How COVID-19 can be a setback for girls' right

The COVID-19 pandemic, and its associated consequences, also hit the resilience of households, especially the most vulnerable, and exacerbated gender inequalities. As a result of the crisis, more than half of households decreased the quality and quantity of meals, about 20% declared they had to sell their assets, and about 7% of households declared they married their daughter early as a negative coping strategy.<sup>32</sup> Job losses and reduced public spending on social infrastructures and services resulted in the intensification of girls' and women's domestic burden and unpaid work - half of women in Senegal reported an increase in domestic chores. For adolescents and young women, this limits their chances of completing their schooling, engage in income-generating activities, and slows down their economic empowerment.<sup>33</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a moment of significant setback for girls' rights. While parents and community members' attitudes towards girls' education may have been improving in the recent years, COVID-19 acted as an exacerbating factor of school drop-out, as during the pandemic, most Senegalese students were out-of-school for about eight months – and 30% of children were not engaged in any learning activity.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the measures taken by the government in response to the COVID-19, such as lockdowns and curfews, while essential to prevent the spread of the virus, exposed even more girls and young women to all forms of gender-based violence: intimate partner violence and spousal abuse, sexual harassment and violence against girls and women, harmful traditional practices such as CEFMU and female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C).<sup>35</sup> With girls' education interrupted, their mobility reduced drastically and the time spent on domestic chores increased, as well as gender stereotypes and limiting expectations for girls as they grow got reinforced.

Because of schools' closure and lockdown, the attention of health services to COVID-19 mitigation and the limited availability of protection services, social protection mechanisms normally at place were not able to function anymore. Such negative coping mechanisms in response to reduction of economic power of households were thus adopted more easily within private spheres while access to services decreased significantly.<sup>36</sup> It is likely that protection services disruptions impact on the long-run the lives of children, especially girls. Examples include that social and basic services were also affected, making processes of birth registration more complex.

## PROTECTING GIRLS' RIGHTS WITH STRONG LEGAL FRAMEWORKS: OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS

The Government of Senegal has adopted a legal framework promoting gender equality, as it ratified the major international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as the Maputo Protocol, and has set-up a roadmap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Nationally, efforts have been made in the recent years with the adoption of the *Plan Sénégal Emergent*, in which a specific axe is dedicated to the "integration of gender in policies and as a cross-cutting issue in programs; capacity-building of institutions and local authorities for the empowerment and promotion of women, harmonisation of legal promotion".

A *National Strategy on Equity and Equality of Gender (SNEEG 2)* has also been implemented focusing on harmonising interventions, promoting gender accountability and adopting gender-sensitive performance indicators. A National Observatory on Parity was established in 2011, and

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<sup>31</sup> UNDP, *Senegal Country Profile*.

<sup>32</sup> UN Women, *Senegal, 2020*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> A. Le Nestour, L. Moscoviz, *Five Findings from a New Phone Survey in Senegal Phone survey during COVID-19*

<sup>35</sup> Plan International Senegal, *Rapide Gender Assessment Report, Covid19 response, 2020*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

a number of national laws aiming to reduce gender inequalities have been enacted over the past decade: the 1999 law criminalizing FGM/C, the 2005 law on reproductive health that allows for a woman's free choice to decide on her reproductive health rights, the 2020 law criminalizing rape and paedo-criminality.

Nevertheless, the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index<sup>37</sup> scores Senegal as 'medium' (on a scale ranging from very low to very high) on its gender discrimination scale, given its **discriminatory family laws regarding ownership of assets, inheritance and other legal rights**.<sup>38</sup> Discriminatory provisions against girls and women persist in the *Family Code and the Social Security Code*. Article 111 of the Family Code still states that **the minimum age for marriage is 16 years old for girls, while 18 years old for boys, even though this is in contradiction with Senegal's international obligations through the ratification of the CRC**. Article 21 of the Social Security Code still states that child benefits are allocated only to the father, confirming at state level the patriarchal structure of society.<sup>39</sup> Regarding equality of opportunities and access to resources, while the 1972 Family Code grants men and women equal access to land, traditional custom prevents equality in practice, with women often unable to inherit land and husbands often opposing the acquisition of land by their wives.

**Enforcement of the legislation and access to justice remain also a concern, as legal frameworks remain unapplied, which result in girls' rights violations.** For instance, CEFMU, prohibited under article 108 of the Family Code<sup>40</sup>, are still widespread. This is due to lack of knowledge of their rights, limited agency to act and claim their rights, which is driven by the unequal access to education. On the duty-bearers side, limiting gender norms apply, as in case of violations of the law, there is a preference for settling the case internally through out-of-court settlements. As community members confirmed to Plan International during a focus group discussion, "*the society does not have a culture of denunciation but rather of negotiation and amicable settlement*", which limits the proper handling of violence against young people, including girls, by relying on unwritten norms.<sup>41</sup>

## YET, THERE IS HOPE.

Across Plan's areas of intervention, **girls challenge restrictive gender norms and promote gender equality, empowerment, protective environment.** They lead change to ensure that girls from their communities access inclusive quality education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, and that they live free from violence in their communities. With a strong attention to inclusion, gender-transformative and human-rights based approaches, programmes and influencing work focusing on education, agency, youth economic empowerment, protection from GBV, access to services, have the potential to equip girls with the relevant tools to challenge norms, claim their rights, thrive, empower themselves to be active drivers of change and lift themselves out of poverty.



Girls take part in football match in Thies, Senegal, 2019.  
Credits: Plan International

<sup>37</sup> Social Institutions & Gender Index, 2019 results, [2019 results | \(genderindex.org\)](https://genderindex.org), accessed on 10/12/2021.

<sup>38</sup> Equal Measure 2030, Senegal, [Senegal - Equal Measures 2030](https://www.equalmeasures2030.org), accessed on 10/12/2021.

<sup>39</sup> CRC, *Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of Senegal*, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Girls Not Brides, *Atlas, Senegal*, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Plan International, *Gender Analysis of Senegal*, op. cit.

# Methodological note

This report was written on the basis of a literature review, of both **Plan International documents and external sources** of information. Most of the statistical data is taken from [the Demographic and Health Surveys](#), [the World Bank Open Data](#), [Girls Not Brides Atlas](#), [UNICEF data](#), [International Labour Organization data](#), [the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys](#).

Information were specifically drawn from gender analysis conducted by Plan International Country Offices in Senegal in 2021, as well as desk reviews led by Plan International Belgium in 2021 to lay the ground of additional gender analyses.

The gender analyses were built on the framework provided by the [Women and Girls Empowerment Index](#) (WGEI) developed by Plan International Canada. The WGEI is a girl and woman centric index that aims to measure changes in the root causes of gender inequality and capture the breadth and scope of gender transformative change.<sup>42</sup> The consultation and analysis framework were structured around the same domains, subdomains and indicators, and included questions addressing inclusive quality education, protection from violence, youth economic empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health rights.

Plan International Belgium, in collaboration with the teams in Ecuador and Senegal, developed a two phased methodology. First, it included a desk review, set to identify the important recent trends in terms of gender equality and the available and missing **secondary data** at national level. Second, it comprised a set of **primary data** collection methods, adapted to the local context and target groups. The methods chosen were **qualitative**, through **in person** direct observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The data was collected through 24 focus group discussions with adolescent boys/adolescent girls (12), men/women (6), elderly men/elderly women (6), 10 key informant interviews and 8 transect walks that took place in both urban and rural areas in 3 different regions: Kedougou, Saint-Louis and Thies.

The work was supported by local consultants involved in different phases of the evaluation. After these gender analyses were completed, both teams took part in an evaluation and capitalisation exercise led by an external consultancy firm, Gender Insights, and supported by Plan International Belgium and the Fonds Qualité (Acodev/NGO federatie). Gender Insights collected and analysed the experience of staff and consultants involved, reviewed the methodology, tools and templates used and reflected with the teams on the process and how it could be improved in the future.

## Acknowledgements

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the DGD. All remaining errors and opinions expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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<sup>42</sup> [Gender equality and inclusion for girls - Plan International Canada \(plancanada.ca\)](#)

**Cover Photo:** girl member of a football team in Thies, Senegal, 2021. Credits: Plan International – Fatou Warkha

**Plan International strives to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world.** We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 75 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 70 countries.

## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL BELGIUM

Plan Belgium has been committed since 1983 to a fairer and more secure world for all children and young people, by addressing the root causes of challenges and obstacles encountered by girls and vulnerable children. All our projects seek to promote **gender equality, by analysing the root causes of unequal access to opportunities for girls and boys and of gender-based violence.** We are working alongside children, youth, our advocates and partners to address the root causes of the barriers that vulnerable girls and children face. Our programs contribute to Plan's overall ambition, that is by 2025, **100 million girls can learn, lead, decide and thrive.** Currently, Plan Belgium is working in Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Malawi, Bolivia, Ecuador, Vietnam. Plan Belgium implements programs and projects in the impact areas of: i) protection against abuse and violence; ii) youth participation and leadership; iii) inclusive and quality safe education, both formal and non-formal; iv) economic strengthening of young people through employment and entrepreneurship.

In Belgium, Plan is particularly involved in the fight against gender-based violence, in the School of Children's Rights, in order to help teachers and students to be aware of their rights and those of their peers in Belgium and around the world. Finally, Plan as a civil society organization carries the voice of girls in civic and political mobilizations, including within development cooperation.

## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL SÉNÉGAL

Plan International has been working in Senegal since 1982 to promote children's rights and equality for girls. To achieve this, we work alongside children, their communities, the Senegalese government and civil society organisations. In Senegal, patriarchal traditions, poor living conditions and ineffectively applied laws lead to the violation of children's rights, with girls being particularly vulnerable. In addition, there are high rates of child marriage and malnutrition, the standard of health care is low and there are a large number of unemployed women and young people.



Plan International priorities in Sénégal include protecting children, especially girls, from violence, including during emergencies, improving health services, providing children with access to quality, inclusive education, including during emergencies, supporting young people to gain key skills and get good jobs.

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