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Demographic Data for Development: Senegal

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DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

SENEGAL

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I. INTRODUCTION

Current global developmental frameworks, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), require recent and reliable data to measure achievement of targets. At the same time, increased decentralization and democratization have expanded the role that data play in informing development policies and evaluating development interventions at the national level. Increasingly, programs and policies are assessed by their ability to reach goals that have evidence-based indicators, placing a greater demand on countries to produce clear, timely, reliable, and relevant data.

The case study of Senegal, which forms the basis of this report, aimed to develop a general picture of the demand for data by policymakers and other data users. It also aimed to elicit views on barriers to data access, quality of available data, as well as potential interventions to improve the demand and supply of data. Similar case studies were conducted in three other countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda. These countries were chosen based on their upcoming censuses, identified statistical capacity within country, active engagement in the production of important data, and participation in international data initiatives.

Senegal has a population of 12.853 million (July 2008)¹ housed in a space of 196,190 square kilometers. The population is made up of 10 major ethnic groups, and several smaller groups, whom when combined, speak more than 30 different languages. Forty-seven² percent of the total population is urbanized, with one-fifth of them living in the capital city, Dakar. In 2007, Senegal was estimated to have achieved 4.6%³ growth in real GDP. However, with more than 48% (2007)⁴ of the population unemployed, income growth is unevenly distributed, and a large proportion of the population remains poor.

In Senegal, the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie -ANSD) is responsible for compiling and disseminating official statistics. Statistical units in line ministries are also responsible for collecting and providing sector specific data that are critical to monitoring national development. To strengthen the production and diffusion of statistics, Senegal recently elaborated its National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and restructured its national statistical system, which included establishing the semi-autonomous ANSD. In addition, Senegal is the beneficiary of a number of global and regional data systems strengthening initiatives such as the IMF-led General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), the International Comparison Program, Health Metrics Network, and AFRISTAT.

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/sg.html>

² <http://www.iss.co.za/AF/profiles/Senegal/Population.html>

³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/sg.html>

⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/sg.html>;
http://indexmundi.com/senegal/unemployment_rate.html

II. DEMAND

Demand for data to monitor social and economic outcomes in Senegal is perceived to be strong and growing. As programs have become more targeted and decentralized, and research more specialized, demand has turned to a search for finer grained data that are disaggregated geographically and across different socio-economic and demographic dimensions. There is also a growing interest in qualitative data to complement the more abundant quantitative data.

The market for data in Senegal is varied. Data producers and users include development partners, policymakers, private sector, government ministries, media, NGOs/civil society, local (elected and unelected) officials, local and foreign research institutions, and individual researchers. Demand for data is expressed most explicitly by government at the national level, and is primarily driven by development partners (including multi-donor funds such as GAVI and the Global Fund), which place an emphasis on accountability, results and good governance.

NGOs and other civil society organizations, in the meantime, are also feeling the effect of the stronger requirement by both public and private donors for program evaluation. In fact, the emphasis by donors on measurable results is putting pressure not only on government, but also on all donor-funded institutions. Other significant sources of demand for data are local and foreign research institutions and individual researchers. Now that several development partners are funding Senegal through a joint partnership agreement, there is even more urgency for government to demonstrate results or risk losing substantial funding altogether.

However, because many data users do not have the wherewithal to analyze raw data, the demand for raw data is limited to institutions and individuals that have the necessary analytical capacity. Thus, even within government, demand for raw data primarily exists in the better resourced, high profile departments: for example, the departments that monitor the PRSP, MDGs, and public finances within the Ministry of Economy and Finance; the national program for local development (Programme Nationale de Développement Local –PNDL); and the unit that monitors poverty reduction programs in the Ministry of Family, National Solidarity, Women's Entrepreneurship and Micro Finance. Outside of government, demand for raw data is found among research institutions and development partner organizations, such as the World Bank. Entities with limited data analysis capabilities, such as media organizations, tend to express a greater need for processed data.

The general perception among the individuals interviewed is that the endogenous demand for data among policymakers is weak. Several respondents believe that this has resulted in a failure to produce (or analyze existing data) on issues that are critical to the country, such as migration, unemployment, and non-infectious diseases that are perceived to be on the rise. Externally driven demand fails to consider the human and material capacity to collect and analyze data, leading donors to set up their own, often parallel, data collection systems. In theory, decentralization

should spur robust local demand, but as one respondent explained, "local authorities are still grappling with the issues and responsibilities that have been transferred to them in regards to population, health, etc. They do not yet understand all the dimensions of these issues, or realize the role of data in meeting their development objectives." Moreover, incomplete devolution of fiscal responsibilities and continued central planning and financial control undermine data demand and use by local authorities in the planning for and evaluation of programs.

The local research community is seen as a potential source of additional demand, but the demand is hindered by two factors. First, researchers lack the resources to initiate locally driven research. They often find themselves relegated to implementing externally driven research through contracts with donor institutions, UN agencies, and NGOs. Second, rather than use existing data to conduct secondary analysis, many researchers collect fresh primary data, as doing so is more financially lucrative. To enhance the demand for data among local researchers, the ANSD has established formal collaborative arrangements with some local research organizations, including the Consortium for Social and Economic Research (Consortium pour la Recherche Economique et Sociale-CRES) and the Center for Applied Economics Research (Centre de Recherches Economiques Appliquees-CREA). These arrangements provide the research institutions access to raw data from ANSD for further analysis.

Impediments to demand

Although the demand for data to monitor social and economic outcomes is viewed as increasing- it being donor-driven notwithstanding - there is wide recognition that demand has yet to reach its peak. Indeed, many respondents thought that policymakers do not make adequate use of data in undertaking policy and program planning, nor in allocating budgets. The following barriers were cited as the main reasons why demand for and use of data, especially among policymakers, remains weak.

1. *Lack of public accountability:* This means that government is not compelled to provide data to the public to demonstrate how it spends the national budget, or to demonstrate results on commitments made to the public.
2. *Supply side barriers:* These include lack of pertinent data, delayed data, mismatch between the timing of data collection and the planning cycle, poor data quality, etc (see section 3, below, for a detailed discussion of these issues).
3. *Lack of a culture of data use among policymakers:* Many respondents felt that policy decisions have become overwhelmingly politicized, with data, expert analysis and advice playing a much more diminished role. As one interviewee put it, "there is no shared conviction about the importance of data in development policy and planning.

Technocrats understand the importance of data; but there's less appreciation among the top tier decision-makers such as ministers of the need for data.”

4. *Lack of information about what data exist, where they are, and how to access them:* Lack of information about existing data, coupled with a pervasive institutional "culture of secrecy", leads potential users to believe that data do not exist, even when they do; this discourages people from looking. A respondent recalled spending months trying to obtain expenditure data only to discover that half the data he needed were already on the concerned ministry's website. But the ministry staff he had been dealing with obviously did not seem to know that the information existed on the website and kept giving him the data in dribs and drabs after making him jump a number of "official" hoops.
5. *Limited capacity for data analysis:* Even when good data are available, their use is limited to the few institutions and individuals with the capacity to analyze raw data. The dearth of sophisticated analytical capacity, particularly within the public sector, limits the policy options available to policy makers.
6. *Complicated data formats:* These include, for example, bulky, incomprehensible tables, and highly technical language with little explanation of terms. Such formats act as a major impediment, especially to non-expert data users such as journalists and policymakers who do not have access to data experts or may not have time to wait for analysis as they need data urgently.

III. SUPPLY

There is near universal concurrence that while demand could be stronger, it far outstrips the supply of good quality data. Most interviewees, in fact, felt that there are more serious problems on the supply side than on the demand side, and that improving supply (particularly making data widely available) would in itself drive up the demand and use of data. Following are the main supply issues raised in the interviews:

1. *Reliability/credibility:* Routine service statistics, particularly health statistics, are seen as the most unreliable and are widely criticized for being incomplete, poorly compiled, and poorly managed. Data collected by the ANSD, e.g. the household survey ESAM I & II and the population census are generally seen as reliable and credible; although the quality of the last census is questioned by many because of the financial, logistical and methodological problems that apparently marred its conduct.

2. *Comparability*: This problem mainly affects surveys and is mostly due to inconsistencies in approaches, samples, nomenclature, norms and standards. Several respondents gave the example of primary school enrolment rate where some surveys use gross enrolment rather than net enrolment, and sometimes include children enrolled in exclusively religious schools. Breaks in data series are common and weaken the analysis of changes over time. Inconsistent age breakdowns in different surveys further impede comparability. The proliferation of parallel data collection systems, especially in the health and education sectors, is also widely seen as worsening the problem and further weakening the national data system.
3. *Timeliness*: Timeliness is viewed as affecting all categories of data. Particular concerns include long delays between data collection and their availability; long intervals between surveys and censuses; mismatches between the planning calendar and the data collection cycle; and delays between when a user requests data and when s/he actually obtains the data.
4. *Accessibility*: Accessibility affects all data categories. Barriers to data access range from seemingly simple reasons like the lack of information about what data exist and where/how to obtain them, to complex problems having to do with entrenched institutional culture. Not all users experience these barriers, however. Influential departments in the Ministry of Economy and Finance and development partners have easy, if not entirely unfettered, access to all types of existing data. Seasoned and well connected researchers and journalists also have easier access because of their long experience and social/professional networks. Indeed, many interviewees reported that personal contacts are essential in the quest to obtain data.
5. *Relevance*: The most notable issue is a lack of data below the regional level. Yet, it is at this level where programs are implemented and the impact of national policies and programs is experienced. With decentralization, the district is the unit of planning, yet data are rarely disaggregated below the region.
6. *Weak capacity for data production and analysis*: The limited number of well-trained personnel is seen by some as perhaps the single most important underlying cause of the inadequate supply of good data. For example, there are only 2-3 statisticians produced in Senegal annually; there are even fewer demographers. Although the shortage of human resources is being addressed through the establishment of a school to train statisticians, (Enea), it is expected to remain a problem in the short to medium term. A number of

respondents on the other hand noted that while there may be a shortage of qualified staff within the public sector, as a whole Senegal is not entirely lacking in well trained and experienced people. The government has, however, been unable to attract and retain some of the best, who have left the public service to join NGOs, development partner organizations, or private consultancies.

7. *Underfunding of statistical development:* Government has demonstrated commitment to strengthening the statistical systems, for example through restructuring the national statistical system to make it more responsive to the data needs of the country, but the national strategy for statistical development remains severely underfunded. Underfunding expresses itself in the inability of ANSD to recruit/retain highly qualified staff, provide ongoing training and support, procure and develop tools, and process, store and disseminate data on time. It also manifests itself in the inability of government to finance production of crucial data with the necessary frequency and coverage.

IV. SUB-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Many of the data issues discussed in the preceding sections are often experienced more acutely at the sub-national level. Local authorities need to be able to determine the problems in their localities, the interventions needed, the target beneficiaries for interventions, and the impacts of the proposed solutions. In order to carry out these functions well, it is necessary for them to have locally relevant data. However, there is serious shortage of data that are disaggregated below the regional level, and institutions working at the community level are compelled to use regional benchmarks in assessing local needs and measuring the impact of their programs. While many social development responsibilities have been transferred to local authorities, incomplete devolution of decision-making powers and fiscal responsibilities minimize the ability of local authorities to set data priorities and to produce the data that they need.

Infrastructural barriers, including the lack of appropriate data collection, storage, and dissemination tools weaken the use of data. The few local data that are available, such as routine service data, are in manual form, rendering archiving and dissemination difficult. The lack of electricity in many rural communities would make data sharing difficult even if they were in an electronic format. Moreover, the formats in which data are presented also act as a barrier, especially for locally elected officials, many of whom are data illiterate, or cannot read French.

Weak institutional linkages between the national and sub-national level also pose difficulties in accessing data that exist at the national level, e.g. the census, which could be mined for local purposes. At the same time, the capacity to collect, manage and analyze data at the local level is very weak. Although the ANSD has offices at the regional level, the offices are scantily staffed and poorly equipped to carry out their mandates to compile and disseminate official data. It is

challenging for the 300 local jurisdictions to operate under common indicators, and data collection methodologies and tools.

V. INTERVENTIONS

Despite numerous obstacles, the perception among those interviewed is that Senegal is experiencing significant opportunities for increasing both the demand and supply of data to monitor social and economic outcomes. The formal mechanisms and framework for setting and collecting priority data, the PRSP, has proven to be an ideal starting point. The objectives of the PRSP are aligned with those of the MDGs as well as with National Statistical Development Strategies (NSDS), which is overseen by ANSD. The ANSD strategic framework provides clear direction for the production and dissemination of data. Although implementation of the strategy remains slow and underfunded, it offers a way forward. Finally, Senegal has demonstrated a commitment, at the highest political level, to being a part of the global information age. In line with this, Senegal is among the few countries in Africa with full Internet access, and abundant local dial-up facilities outside the capital city.

Building on existing opportunities, respondents proposed several interventions to improve the supply of and demand for data in Senegal.

1. *Make primary data widely available, especially over the internet:* Making data widely available allows for varied and deeper analysis that would enrich the policy options available to policy makers. Many respondents noted that Senegal has good data collectors but analysis in the public sector is not sophisticated, nor varied enough to provide policy makers with adequate policy options.

A complementary suggestion is to decentralize data access to increase the points of access. Data that are collected locally, in particular, ought to be available through local/regional sites. While emphasizing the use of the internet, respondents were also cognizant of the fact that many users outside the major towns may have only limited access because of electricity and other infrastructural problems. For this reason, they urged that data also continue to be made available through other formats, e.g. paper copies and CD-ROMs.

2. *Create a data directory and warehouse:* The directory would enable users to know what data exist in the country, where the data are found, and how to access them. The data warehouse would also be a first step in creating an active data market and should include data from other sources besides government.

3. *Make data formats user-friendly*: There ought to be better targeting of non-data expert users such as the media, policy-makers at the local level, community-based organizations, and the general public. The formats should portray data in short, attractive, and easy to understand, compelling formats. Maps are very important, for example, not only for the less savvy data users, but also for the busy top level officials who may not have time to read through several pages of a report.
4. *Produce small area/local data*: The principle of subsidiarity that underlies decentralization requires that the development actor closest to the ground be the primary executor of development activities, including monitoring. But since conducting the types of surveys necessary to produce local data would not be financially feasible, those interviewed suggested "creative" ways of generating the necessary data. These include strengthening already existing data collection systems, such as the vital registration, and establishing Community-Based Monitoring Systems that use existing community-based organizations to collect data.
5. *Make data a rights issue*: Some respondents suggested that access to data ought to be treated as a right. One interviewee went as far as to suggest the need for a data advocacy movement with publication of periodic classification/index of data sources ranked by credibility/reliability --analogous to the transparency index. Indeed, Senegal's commitment to good governance and transparency provides space to address the issue of data access from a rights perspective.
6. *Harmonize data priorities, collection, nomenclature, norms and standards*: In a resource constrained setting, such as Senegal, this is seen as necessary step in rationalizing and optimizing resource utilization. It would also minimize discrepancies among different data sources thus improving comparability. Currently, there are several household surveys conducted regularly, each with their own methodology, but all collecting some data on common indicators. Some respondents felt that it is desirable, and possible, to combine some of these surveys in order to have a common platform that can be financed through the national budget. Respondents mentioned an ongoing effort supported by government and major development partners to address these issues.
7. *Develop and disseminate tools to improve data collection, analysis, storage and sharing*: Sometimes all that is needed are simple tools, for example, to correct errors in data, or to make it possible to store data in a searchable data base like EXCEL or ACCESS. At the local level, the lack of an archival system for routine primary data, for example in the Ministry of Health, results in loss of data.

Likewise, storage of vital registration data in paper form poses data retention challenges, with older records said to be damaged or to have disappeared altogether.

8. *Linking data producers/users*: Linking data producers and users would increase relevance and use of data with potential spill-over benefits. The ANSD strategy recognizes the need for this, but periodic meetings between data producers and users are yet to be formalized.
9. *Training*: Training more statisticians and demographers was consistently mentioned as critical to improving the supply and quality of statistics in Senegal. The shortage of relevant expertise in line ministries, which are responsible for collecting sectoral data, is seen as a major reason why routine data are of such poor quality. However, it was also noted that in addition to training statisticians and demographers, tapping into the existing pool of other experts – sociologists, economists, anthropologists, etc. – would enrich the range of data collected (e.g. to include more qualitative data) and subsequent analysis.

At the sub-national level, in-service training in data collection and management is seen as an urgent need. Other targets for training are intermediate data users, e.g. journalists and civil society, who need to understand how to interpret and use data. Journalists who cover population and development issues need specialized training on how to report on these issues; it would help to develop a cadre of journalists who are experts on population and development.

10. *Financing data production and dissemination*: Senegal has done well in reforming its national statistical system and laying out the formal mechanisms and framework for setting and collecting priority data. The national statistics strategy, however, remains more conceptual than real. There is an urgent need for increased and predictable financial resources to ensure continuous, timely, and widely available high quality data.
11. *Strengthening the capacity for data production at the regional and district levels*: Decentralization by definition calls for the strengthening of capacity for data production and utilization at the local level. The national statistical system should adopt itself accordingly and devolve some of the decision-making authority, boost human and material capacity, and increase the regional statistical budget to enable regions to conduct surveys and other activities that may not be of national interest, but are a priority in a particular region.

VI. OTHER ISSUES

Two additional issues that may have relevance to the demand and supply of data emerged in the interviews:

1. *Data on chronic/non-communicable diseases*: Many respondents felt that because of the divergence between donor interests (that largely dictate what data are collected) and national priorities, some data that are of national interest are neglected. Data on non-infectious diseases, especially diabetes and cancer, which are anecdotally reported to be on the rise, and data on migration and unemployment, were highlighted as examples of missing priority data by several respondents.
2. *Urbanization and its environmental impact*: Despite the fact that almost 50% of the Senegalese population lives in urban settings, there are few data on urbanization and its environmental impacts. This issue highlights the urgency of locally disaggregated data, because even within the same urban area, there are many ethnicities with micro-differences that need to be captured among, within, and across different urban areas.