Senegal is one of Africa’s most successful democracies and enjoys a stable and investor-friendly social and political environment. While Senegal is a developing country, it has made substantial progress in combating poverty, improving social infrastructure and advancing its economic emergence.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Senegal, continental Africa’s westernmost country, is bounded by Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, and Guinea as well as Guinea-Bissau to the South. Bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, Senegal covers an area of 196,722 square kilometres. Contained within Senegal is the enclave Republic of Gambia, a former British colony that surrounds a river by the same name, which acts to nearly divide the southern third of the country from the northern two-thirds. The climate in Senegal is characterised by three distinct zones: coastal, Sahelian and Sudanic.

Senegal’s population is estimated to be almost 13 million, with 43% of the population aged under-15 years and almost 60% living in rural areas (CIA 2012). In 2011, Senegal ranked 155 out of 187 countries and territories on the United Nation’s Human Development Index, a measure that rates life expectancy, education and gross national income (UNDP 2011). This ranking places Senegal in the ‘low human development category’. However, the United Nations reports that Senegal has made improvements across all three measures over the last thirty years.

**Senegal (Le Sénégal) officially the Republic of Senegal (République du Sénégal)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location: Area of 196,722km²</th>
<th>Senegal is located on Africa’s west coast between Mauritania (north), Mali (east), Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (south) and the Atlantic Ocean (west).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 12,969,606 (July 2012 est)</td>
<td>Dakar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Structure: Democracy</td>
<td>Language: French (official), Wolof, Pulaar, Jola, Mandinka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic Groups: Wolof 43.3%, Pulaar (Peuhl and Toucouleur) 23.8%, Serer 14.7%, Diola (Jola) 3.7%, Mandinka 3%, Soninké 1.1%, European and Lebanese 1%, other 9.4%</td>
<td>Religion: Islam 94%, Christianity 5% (mostly Roman Catholic), indigenous/traditional beliefs 1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Currency: CFA franc (XOF)</td>
<td>GDP: US$14.29 billion (World Bank estimate for 2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head of State: President HE Macky Sall</td>
<td>Head of Government: Prime Minister HE Mr Abdoul Mbaye</td>
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</table>
HISTORY

Senegal has a rich history of occupation. Archaeological studies suggest that the country was inhabited in Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods. Part of the Ghana Empire in the eight century and the Djolof kingdom during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, European occupation began during the mid-1400s. The trading of ivory and gold, but particularly slaves, has played a significant role in the history of Portuguese, Dutch, French and British occupation. By the end of the nineteenth century Senegal was firmly controlled by the French. France established Dakar, which is now the capital, as the commercial centre of the French territories (‘French West Africa’) (Giles et al. 1995). Senegal sought independence from France in 1960 and in the lead-up to gaining independence Senegal and French Sudan formed the Federation of Mali, a short-lived federation, wherein Senegal subsequently became a republic.

POLITICS

Politically, Senegal is widely considered one of the most stable democracies in Africa. Having avoided coups and military dictatorships, the country has an established tradition of civilian rule (Casey 2011). The governance system is a multi-party Republic with two legislative houses: the Senate and the National Assembly. The head of state and government is the president, assisted by the prime minister whom the president appoints. The president is elected by Senegalese citizens aged 18 and over. Senegal is subdivided into fourteen administrative regions: Dakar, Zinguinchor, Diourbel, Saint-Louis, Tambacounda, Kaolack, Thiès, Louga, Fatick, Kolda, Matam, Kaffrine, Kédougou, and Sédhiou.

From its independence until the start of the twenty first century, Senegal was ruled by The Parti Socialiste, followed by more than a decade of rule by the Parti Democratique Senegalais, headed by Abdoulaye Wade (Casey 2011). At the beginning of 2012, Macky Sall became Senegal’s new President, representing the Alliance for the Republic. Sall had previously served as Prime Minister and Speaker under President Wade, but was ousted from the Democratic Party in 2007. Media reports indicate that Sall and Wade came into conflict over the political role of Wade’s son, Karim. The World Bank (2012) notes that the newly appointed government includes ‘prominent and well respected private sector members [such] as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Amadou Kane, another Bank and private sector specialist’.

Due to its relative economic and political stability in the region, over the years Senegal has become the desired location of foreign embassies and consulates. As a consequence of its sound relationship with its neighbours, Senegal has played an active role in regional mediation. The country has also engaged in international peacekeeping activities and has a strong profile in many international organisations. Senegal became a member of the United Nations shortly after independence, is a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and has been elected to the Human Rights Council (see the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations website for details http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/senegal/lang/en/pid/3404).

The Senegalese government, with the support of numerous development partners, is strongly committed to economic growth and social improvement. In the context of its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2000, Senegal has identified the following four areas as the country’s most pressing needs (see IMF 2010):

- Macroeconomic stability, poverty reduction and wealth creation;
- Access to basic social services;
- Social protection and disaster risk management; and
- Good governance and decentralised participatory development.
ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Economy

Despite relatively widespread poverty and high un-/underemployment, Senegal is considered one of Africa’s more stable economies (IMF 2010). The World Bank (2007a) also reports that by historical and regional standards Senegal has achieved relatively good economic results. Senegal’s economy is, however, vulnerable to rainfall variation and fluctuations in world commodity prices (particularly food and petroleum products). The country’s economy is currently based on agriculture, being the primary source of employment and revenue for approximately 60 per cent of the population (IMF 2010). Senegal’s informal sector is also significant, with the World Bank (2012) estimating that it accounts for 60 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). In 2011, Senegal’s GDP was US$14.29 billion (World Bank 2012). Senegal’s main exports are fish, peanuts, cotton and phosphates. Extractive activities in the secondary sector contributed an average 1.1% of real GDP in the period 2005 to 2009, with a low of 0.8% in 2008 and a high of 1.6% in 2009 (IMF 2010).

Illustrating its regional ties, Senegal is a member of the West African Economic Monetary Union (UEMOA). The national currency of Senegal, as with other members of the UEMOA, is the Communauté Financière d’Afrique franc (CFA franc). The exchange rate of this currency is fixed to the Euro. Stamer (2010) suggests that membership in the CFA franc zone provides for low exchange rate and transfer risk.

Senegal’s ambition is to become an ‘emerging country’ through an accelerated growth strategy that is primarily underpinned by public and private investment (WTO 2009). Specifically, Senegal aims to increase the country’s investment rate to 30%, wherein Senegal’s Agency for the Promotion of Investment (APIX) plays an important role. Currently, Senegal’s main source of economic assistance comes from France, The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the United States. As at April 2012, for example, the World Bank had approved 164 million projects in Senegal amounting to a total investment of US$3.7 billion (World Bank 2012).

Senegal has asserted its ambition of becoming an emerging economy by promoting a world-class economic environment, developing infrastructure and achieving accelerated growth.

In general terms, Senegal’s investment code encourages domestic and foreign private investment in a range of sectors. In a 2007 paper examining foreign direct investment competitiveness in six sub-Saharan African countries, the World Bank (2007b, 6) characterised Senegal as follows:

“Senegal is expected to become a primary trade hub for West Africa due to its long-term political stability, positive economic outlook, high level of safety and government commitment to empowering the private sector. One of the most industrialized countries in the region, Senegal was the first West African country to receive a Standard & Poor’s rating (B+/stable/B). Senegal aims to develop its trade potential through improving infrastructure (it already has one of the better road networks in the region) and developing value added industries and services. […] France remains Senegal’s most important economic partner and invests in a range of industries. Other foreign investors include the US (petroleum, manufacturing), Switzerland (food processing), Germany, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan (fish and canning), and India (phosphates). Senegal has a booming tourism industry particularly as a European tourist destination, and looks to profit from its shared services sector due to its advanced telecommunications network.”

Further, the Work Bank identifies a number of other factors such as real estate structures, crime rates, labour arrangements, as well as import and export procedures, which are important in attracting foreign investment. The report suggests that, by contrast to surrounding countries, investors in Senegal can establish and own businesses and buy as well as hold land. Senegal is also comparatively safe in terms of crime and employee turnover is considered low. The World Bank (2007b) also rates the country’s import and export procedures by sea as competitive to those of China and argues that container transport costs by air and sea are competitive.
In the period 1995 to 2007, Senegal’s GDP averaged a growth of over 5% annually. However, the global financial crisis of 2008/9 had a significantly adverse impact on this trend, with the country’s GDP growth falling to 3.2% in 2008 and 2.2% in 2009. The following year Senegal’s GDP increased to 4.1% but again declined to 2.6% in 2011 due to a decline in cereal and groundnut production arising from drought in the Sahel. The IMF has estimated 2012 GDP growth at 3.9% with a projected steady increase to 5.5% by 2017. In the medium term, the IMF estimates that Senegal’s output growth will be driven by services and the energy and construction sectors as a consequence of large investment projects. In its review of Senegal’s macroeconomic context for 2012, the IMF (2012: 31) notes that:

“The world economic slowdown, particularly in Europe, the increase in petroleum product prices, socio-political tensions in the sub-region (in Mali and Guinea-Bissau), and the impact of the drought, are all factors affecting the economic activity, the external accounts, and the public finances of Senegal.”

In the period 2001 and 2005, the percentage of people living below the poverty line in Senegal decreased from 57.1 per cent to 50.8 per cent; however, the IMF suggests that greater attention is required to trends associated with non-monetary poverty, particularly in relation to access to food, clean water, adequate housing and basic social services.

**Infrastructure**

While Senegal’s economy is hampered to some extent by infrastructure deficits, the historical strategic positioning of French occupation in Dakar left a legacy of substantial transportation and communication infrastructure in and around Senegal’s capital. The IMF (2010) has recently identified Senegal as a ‘leading player’ in Africa in terms of the promotion and implementation of information and communication technologies. The continued modernisation and maintenance of the country’s transportation infrastructure is also identified as a government priority, the development of which has been assisted by IMF and World Bank funding programmes.

In the areas of drinking water and sanitation infrastructure, Senegal continues to make significant improvements. However, much of this progress is concentrated in urban areas. Notable advances have also been made in terms of education and literacy. Developments in health care infrastructure have also led to reductions in maternal, child and infant mortality rates.

There is considerable potential for improvement regarding energy infrastructure and energy security in Senegal. The country is vulnerable to the volatility of the global oil market due to its dependence on oil imports. Moreover, greater than 50 per cent of the country’s export generated income is used to pay for petroleum product supplies. In terms of infrastructure, household electrification is limited (particularly in rural areas), and supply is frequently disrupted due to fuel supply chain breakdowns, the unavailability of generators and network incidents. In recent years, significant urban protests have emerged in response to frequent power cuts. More broadly, household energy consumption in Senegal is dominated by wood fuels. This biomass dependence is estimated to result in a deforestation rate of four million cubic metres annually (Diop 2009, 11).

**SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANISATION**

Senegal is characterised by considerable socio-cultural diversity. The Senegalese diaspora community is estimated at two million, with the majority of these migrants aged between 18 and 35 years. Most accounts of Senegal report that religious and ethnic tensions in the country are rare (Stamer 2010). The collective sentiment of the country is evident in Senegal’s national motto: ‘One People – One Goal – One Faith.’

Over 40% of the Senegalese population identifies as Wolof, the dominant ethnic group. While the official language in Senegal is French, Wolof is the country’s lingua franca, spoken by over 90% of the population (Casey 2011). Geographically concentrated along the northern coast, the majority religion amongst the Wolof is Islam. Other ethnic groups include the Serer, the Pulaar-speaking Peuhl (Fulani) and...
Toucouleur, the Diola (also known as Jola), the Soninké, Mande groups (Mandinka), and a particularly small ethnic group known as the Bassari, amongst others. Less than one per cent of Senegal’s population is French, owing largely to the country’s history of colonisation, and Lebanese. The wide range of ethnic groups in Senegal accounts for the country’s considerable linguistic diversity. Table 1 below provides a brief overview of the geographic, linguistic, religious and occupational characteristics of these ethnic groups. Relations between these ethnic groups are generally characterised as sound and intermarriage is common. The main area of conflict, which is largely political in nature, is confined to the Casamance region, wherein a separatist movement has been active since 1982.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>% of popn</th>
<th>Basic Characteristics</th>
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| Wolof                             | 44        | • Sedentary farmers.  
• Concentrated along the coast in the northern part of Senegal.  
• Primarily Muslim.                                                                  |
| Serer                             | 14.7      | • Concentrated in western Senegal.  
• Traditionally farmed millet, rice and other agricultural products.  
• Predominantly Wolof speakers.  
• Large proportion of Roman Catholics.                                                |
| Pulaar Speakers (Peuhl and Toucouleur) | 23.8      | • The Peuhl are concentrated in the arid north and traditionally are pastoralists.  
• The Toucouleur are settled agriculturalists concentrated in the northern Senegal River.  
• Predominantly Muslim.                                                               |
| Diola (Jola)                      | 3.7       | • Concentrated in the southern, Senegalese region of Casamance.                                                                                     |
| Bassari                           | 8,800 individuals | • Concentrated in south-eastern Senegal, in addition to populations across the border in north-eastern Guinea.  
• Primarily hunters and gatherers.  
• Traditional religious beliefs dominate.                                             |
| Mande Groups                      | 3         | • Primarily subsistence farmers, planting peanuts, millet, corn and rice in the rainy season and fishing along the Casamance and Gambia rivers. |
| Soninke                           | 1.1       | • Primarily live along the upper Senegal River from Matam to Bakel, with some migrating to the city of Dakar.  
• Predominantly farmers and herdsmen.  
• Primarily Muslim.  
• Speak a Mandingo language called Sarakole (or Soninke).                              |
| European and Lebanese             | 1         | • Migrants from Lebanon and Syria (both locally called Lebanese) began arriving in West Africa in the late nineteenth century.  
• Further influx occurred between WWI and WWII, and then after 1975.  
• Typically merchants with later diversification into real estate, transportation and light industry. |

(Source: Minority Rights Group International 2007; Casey 2011; Britannica Encyclopaedia 2012; Joshua Project 2012)

The African Development Bank reports that Senegal will likely achieve the Millennium Development Goals of combating malaria, HIV and other diseases by 2015.
SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANISATION cont.

Islam is the dominant religion in Senegal. Less than 5 per cent of the population identifies as Christian, with the majority of this group identifying as Roman Catholic (Casey 2011; CIA 2012). The spread of Islam in Senegal during the sixteenth and seventeenth century is associated with the emergence and influence of a number of different Sufi orders or brotherhoods, including the Tijaniyya, the Mursidic (or Mourides), the Qadiriyya and the Layenne. While Tijaniyya is the largest, the Mursidiyya is the most centrally organised and is, consequently, considered the most politically influential. Traditionally, leadership status in these brotherhoods was based on religious knowledge and piety, however, leadership status is now largely inherited. The Sufi orders assumed greater socio-political and economic control during the unrest associated with the advent of French colonialism, becoming brokers between the government and rural populations. While the Sufi brotherhoods have exerted significant influence on the lives of the Senegalese, for a range of factors including increasing urbanisation, competition for power amongst heirs, and increasing corruption amongst brotherhood leadership, the political influence of Sufi orders has been declining (Casey 2011).

In the traditional Wolof social structure, individuals were divided into three categories: ‘freeborn’ (including nobles, clerics and peasants), ‘caste’ and ‘slave’ (Britannica Encyclopaedia 2012). In Senegal, castes largely relate to select categories of labour such as oral historians (griots or guewul), blacksmiths and goldsmiths (gnegno or tegg), leatherworkers (uude), woodworkers (lawbe), and weavers (rabb). In Senegal, membership to these castes is generally identified through surnames (Casey 2011). The caste system is a social structure that while recognised does not carry its previous force; however, some taboos and beliefs remain.

In general, the extended family is an important part of Senegal’s social structure, with marriage systems and kinship organisation drawing on both traditional and modern norms. A Senegalese household consists, on average, of 9.3 members. Most households are headed by men and children under 15 comprise almost half of the household. Early marriage and polygyny are relatively common. The fertility rate in Senegal, while declining, is high, with recent surveys reporting that women will bear an average of 5 children over their lifetime. This rate differs between urban and rural populations, with higher fertility rates evident in rural areas (ANSD & ICF 2012). Resources are commonly shared by extended family households; an interdependency that strengthens individual resource security.

REFERENCES


