

Migration and small urbanisation: the case of Senegal

Migration is a well-known phenomenon in Senegal closely linked to the rhythm of the agricultural seasons. With drought periods becoming more frequent and prolonged, increasing numbers of people have left their rural homes to settle permanently in the urban centres. Most of these permanent migrants belong to the young generation. New national policies are needed to adapt the urban agglomerations to their increasing population.

Senegal, a former French colony that gained independence 50 years ago, has recently started restructuring its territorial settlement and challenging the urbanisation patterns inherited from its settlers, which have become unfit for large urban centres. Indeed, the major urban restructuring work undertaken over the past two or three years aims at relieving the nation's capital, Dakar, by improving the traffic system and modernising the urban infrastructure of some of the regional cities, such as Thies, Ziguinchor, Mbour, and Touba.

Between 1976 and 2002, the population of Senegal doubled from 4,958,085 inhabitants to 9,855,338. According to the 2002 National Census, 72 percent of the population are under 30 years of age.

Most of the young people in urban and suburban settlements seek knowledge, skills and know-how. Much research is needed to give an answer to the following questions: How does migration of the youth affect the development of small towns? What are the positive and negative impacts that mobile people have on the settlement of territories, on the provision of basic services, on local resources, and on job creation? What are the risks these

Today, almost 40 percent of Senegal's population live in urban centres, most of them in the capital Dakar.

populations face while migrating from the rural to the urban areas? What are the challenges, and what are the appropriate policy options?

In 1993, as Minister of Social Development, I commissioned a multi-disciplinary study on the prospective analysis "Senegalese Women by 2015", which was part of a more comprehensive survey entitled "Senegal by 2025". The study revealed that by 2025, 75 percent of the current rural population will live in cities, highlighting the need for adequate planning for cities and settlement in rural areas, taking into consideration socio-economic indicators and key data such as the impact on the education system and the adoption of new technologies, and management of rural migration. The phenomenon of urbanisation was then seen as a variable of control of these population movements and should now be considered a strategic issue with long-term implications.

In view of these benchmarks, and looking at urban areas these days, it is interesting to note how migration



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changed the urban fabric. In Senegal, different but simultaneous types of migration between rural and urban areas are observed.

A large part of the Senegalese population move from the countryside to the cities and back following the rhythm of the seasons. In the dry season, for instance, many farmers are not needed in rural areas, but at the same time, the towns offer opportunities to work and build up a pension for the lean seasons. This seasonal labour migration has been observed for immemorial times, long before it was identified by the international community.

Professor Ndioro Ndiaye
Deputy Director-General
International Organization for
Migration – IOM
Dakar, Senegal
nndiaye@iom.int

People moving to the central and western parts of the country

In 2002, one inhabitant out of five lived in the Dakar region. Up to 50 percent of the Senegalese live in one of the country's three central regions: Dakar, Kaolack and Thiès. The urban population is close to 41 percent of the total population. The region of Dakar remains the most urbanised one, with a 97.2 percent of urban population, whereas the regions of Fatick and Kolda accounted for, respectively, 12.6 and 13.3 percent of urban population in 2002.

All in all, the distribution of the population shows dramatic inter-regional discrepancies which seem to have been boosted between 1988 and 2002.

Internal migration

Traditionally, we distinguish two types of voluntary migration linked to the nature of the two agricultural seasons, the rainy season and the dry season. These migrations are known by the name of "navétanes" (seasonal activities). Some of those traditional movements have taken a more permanent form, leading to a significant rural depopulation.

Migration during the rainy season was an urban-to-rural-area movement as agricultural production systems needed a larger labour force than in other times of the year. The national agricultural policy foresees two types of agricultural production: "cash crops", such as peanuts, and food production. In the rainy season, farmers regularly hire agricultural labourers to replace them in the peanuts fields and allowing them to take care of the food-producing harvests.

Migration in the so-called "dead season" was generated by the need to transport and sell the peanut harvest in the large urban centres, such as Dakar and Kaolack. This migration was an opportunity for farmers to undertake all sorts of commercial and non-agricultural activities. This navétanat during the dry season appeared at the beginning of

The situation of youth

The population of the 2002 census revealed that 51 percent of the population in Senegal are below 30 years of age. Young people also make up for 52 percent of the unemployed population. Most of these young people have been denied access to education and have hardly any opportunity to develop their skills and to enter the labour market.

The inadequate education system has also led to internal migration, especially with Senegal having only one university, in Dakar. From the country's interior, a population of students are drawn to the city for the nine-month period of the academic year. These students still constitute a population of voluntary migrants and should be considered by policies aiming to expand access to basic services in urban areas such as health, education, social and economic services, as well as in terms of human resources the country might need.

The situation of youth calls for a new approach towards youth promotion and innovative orientations for development policies and programmes. In particular, such measures should aim at reducing discrepancies between regions and generations as well as gender inequalities.

the 20th century. Indeed, agricultural activities are limited to the time of the rainy season, from June to October. For the rest of the year, agrarian production lies dormant, while in the towns, the opposite happens, with intense activity during the dry season, a massive flow of settlers and a dramatic depopulation as the rainy season approaches.

This kind of migration remained a temporary phenomenon and was regulated by the seasonal rhythm. The winters were then characterised by a depopulation of cities as farmers were busy with farm work until they had to return to town to trade the peanuts, generating a growing flow as the dry season progressed.

This situation has dramatically changed due to an increase of drought periods, with distorting impacts on agriculture and the rural world. Drought has strongly disrupted the economic bal-

ance that used to exist in the rural world and changed the traditional migration patterns leading to a permanent exodus or long-term migration from rural to urban areas. This rural depopulation is now a reality for a large part of Senegal's rural areas. According to the last census estimates in 2002, more than 13 percent of the population have left their birthplaces. These internal migrants live mostly in the regions of Dakar (46.6%), Diourbel (13.4%) and Thiès (12.4%), mainly in the urban centres.

This permanent internal labour migration also raises the question how to expand and modernise agricultural production in order to ensure enough food to meet the needs of the popula-

Seasonal labour migration has been practiced in Senegal for immemorial times.



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Zusammenfassung

Migration ist im Senegal ein wohl-bekanntes Phänomen, das eng mit dem saisonalen Zyklus der Landwirtschaft verbunden ist. Bedingt durch die häufiger auftretenden und länger andauernden Dürreperioden verlassen mittlerweile immer mehr Menschen ihre Dörfer, um sich dauerhaft in den Städten niederzulassen. Die meisten dieser dauerhaften Migranten sind jun-

ge Menschen. Gefragt sind jetzt neue Konzepte der nationalen Politik, um die städtischen Ballungszentren an die Bedürfnisse der wachsenden Einwohnerzahlen anzupassen.

Resumen

La migración es un fenómeno muy conocido en Senegal, que se asocia estrechamente con el ritmo de las estaciones agrícolas. Sin embargo,

como los períodos de sequía se vienen haciendo más frecuentes y prolongados, un creciente número de personas han abandonado sus hogares rurales para establecerse permanentemente en los centros urbanos. La mayoría de estos migrantes permanentes pertenecen a la generación joven. Se requieren nuevas políticas nacionales para preparar a las aglomeraciones urbanas para este incremento de su población.

tion. In other words, rural depopulation deprives the rural world of the visibility that is necessary for it to be taken into account in policy-making.

The changing migration patterns are resulting in other forms of money transfer from urban centres to rural areas. There is a need for more research on their impact on local development. More research is also required on the effect that the distribution of, and access to, land has on mitigating rural depopulation.

The proliferation of small urban occupations

For the rural people the town offers manifold small informal occupations such as food trade, domestic service, clothing industry, hair-dressing, catering, transport as well as craft industries. Women in particular are engaged in cleaning or in millet pounding. This informal sector is a source of important financial resources for the rural migrants that allows them to provide for the basic needs of their families left behind in the countryside. Maids for instance, working for a very small salary in urban households, are still able to support their families.

This kind of migration can be seen as the consequence of the strong discrepancies between rural and urban regions.

Children – an important labour force in agriculture

In Senegal, the productive population represent 39 percent of the

total population. However, data from the 2002 national census (RGPH 3) indicate a significant contingent of children in the labour force. The census even estimates that 29 percent of the productive population are aged between 6 and 17 years. These data confirm the overwhelming rate of youth in the total Senegalese population, but at the same time, they call for immediate political action. Such a prevalence of child labour is indeed a strong indicator of a great gap in the social fabric. These children are exposed to a high risk of violence and exploitation, including human trafficking. Adequate policies are required to ensure their safety.

Senegal is also a place where unregulated migration of unaccompanied minors to large cities can often be observed. Frequently, they end up on the streets as so-called “talibe” – young pupils of a Koran school who are often forced to beg for their daily subsistence. These children are faced with a high risk of trafficking, a very profitable crime perpetuated by well-informed networks. Trafficking of children is a well-spread phenomenon that governments are, fortunately, beginning to tackle.

Forced migration

We cannot conclude this analysis without mentioning the phenomenon of forced migration into Senegal, either at the northern border with Mauritania or in the southern part of the country, in the Casamance.

Indeed, the state of affairs induced by these two specific serious situations, starting in 1993 at the Mauritania border and more than 20 years ago in the Casamance, should be considered as forced migration. The large number of displaced persons and refugees in both places call for policies to support the development of the region, in particular as the inflow of displaced persons represents a heavy burden on the host community and can strongly hamper its own development.

Conclusion

From the different elements presented above, it appears that to achieve coherence between development and population strategies, considering the migration aspect is vital. Even when taking fecundity and mortality rates into account, it is acknowledged that discrepancies between regions in Senegal are to be explained by the migration dynamics, as they have deeply shaped the country's demographic profile and now call for a restructuring of territories and development facilities. Indeed, beyond the rural depopulation phenomenon, the country has been experiencing, for over a century, internal migration flows from the north and eastern parts to the west and southern regions. Until recently, many states, including Senegal, have failed to acknowledge the important role that internal migration plays in supporting agricultural and industrial growth and in giving opportunities to the poorer parts of the population to access basic services.

Linking the rural-urban divide – the case of China

China is a country with a marked rural-urban divide. We could use the political term of “One country, two systems” to describe the dual character of the nation (*eryuanhua*). The rural income declined from 45 percent of the urban income in 1990 to 30 percent in 2003. To overcome the rural-urban divide, several institutions, new laws and regulations have to be designed mainly in land policy and local governance. A harmonised public services system is required, too.

Land policy

The question of land rights was discussed throughout the year of 2008. The plenary session of the CCP Central Committee in October 2008 postponed final decisions for the new land reform to 2009. According to Chinese law, the land is owned collectively (*jiti suoyou zhi*) by the villages. Individual farmers can lease the land for 30 years. Rural residents who stay away from their home communities for more than three years will lose their land lease rights, unless multi-local households ensure that the families retain them.

The land policy reform has three objectives: to institutionalise transparency in the land title trade, to extend the land lease period from 30 to 70 years, and to ensure the agricultural usage of the land. With these regulations it is hoped to prevent the most evil effects of urbanisation, illegal expropriation and land confiscation without proper compensation. Desired side-effects are the reduction of land loss, the establishment of large agricultural production sites, and the reduction of migration by safeguarding of livelihoods. For example, if a farmer gives his land title to a major dairy farming company, he will automatically own part of the enterprise. For multi-local households, this new law could lead to the reinforcement of a patrimonial society since land titles are normally given to the male heads of the household. A second effect could be the dissolving of being bound to their piece of land and merge with their urban part of family. In the long run, the land policy reform may also have another advantage for multi-local households: More stability

and security for the rural section of the family. An open question that remains is what happens to those who have sold their land titles. In this case too, multi-local households are the best option to secure livelihoods for all family members. In the case of urban unemployment, these people still have their plot of land to which they can return.

The role of remittances

Recent research findings have revealed that migration leads to rural modernisation and poverty reduction. Chinese research has established that the remittances may even surpass the GDP of the whole village. Officially, the rural GDP growth based on remittances is put at eight percent, but regional discrepancies are huge: In some regions, 50 percent of the rural income originates from migrant remittances. Most of this money is used for living expenses and healthcare. Rural home communities are dependent on these remittances. Central Henan province was China’s top labour exporter in 2003. Some 13 million farmers – one third of the rural labour force – worked away from home in 2003 and remitted 52.8 billion Yuan (\$ 6.8 billion) to their hometowns (China Daily, www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-04/14/content_323279.htm).

More rural job opportunities are to be produced and “New socialist villages” are to create a new rural consumer class. The policy of establishing a “New Socialist Countryside” is part of the current five-year plan (2006–2010) and focuses not only on development aid, economic and infrastructural development, but also on political, cultural and social integration. The declared aim is to close the rural-urban divide and abolish the dual rural/urban system. The most difficult issues during the implementation phase still concern land rights and the delivery of public services.

Public service system

Abolishing the dual public administration is of utmost importance for the citizen registration policies in China – the so-called Hukou system. The household-registration system, which since 1958 has classified citizens as belonging to rural and urban population, has been identified as the main obstacle to harmonising the labour market. In 2008, special economic zones – like Shenzhen – started to abolish the Hukou system. In 2002, the State Council announced that migrant workers were “members of the working class” and therefore should be treated equally. Public services such as health and education should be provided to migrants as to their rural communities as well, migrant schools should become legalised, and health treatment should also be made available to migrant communities. Furthermore, migrants are allowed to purchase private residences in the cities. Nevertheless, the integration and modernisation of the rural public services system will probably be the most challenging reform for the coming decades.

Dr. Nora Sausmikat
Asienhaus, Essen
nsausmikat@aol.com



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