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Report of the joint field visit to Senegal by members of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, WFP and UN-Women, 2–6 October

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Executive Board of UNICEF
First regular session 2024
6–8 February 2024, New York

Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS
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Report of the joint field visit to Senegal by members of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, WFP and UN-Women, 2–6 October 2023

I. Background

Visit overview

1. The joint field visit to Senegal of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) took place from 2 to 6 October 2023. The delegation included 18 Executive Board members from the four Boards. H.E. Ms. Christina Markus Lassen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations and President of the UNICEF Executive Board, facilitated the overall coordination of the visit. The complete list of the delegation is contained in the annex.

2. The visit aimed to highlight the commitment and contribution of the United Nations system in Senegal within the context of national priorities. A focus was placed on inter-agency collaboration in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) aligned with the three national priorities of the Plan for an Emerging Senegal (Plan Sénégal Emergent, or PSE), and how the United Nations entities are contributing to the fulfilment of national priorities through their country programme documents, where applicable. The visit also sought to highlight the efficiency agenda of the United Nations system, as well as provide an understanding of the situation in the West and Central Africa region.
3. The programme of the visit included two and a half days in Dakar, with the full delegation participating in meetings and engaging with government officials, donors, civil society, the private sector, and representatives of United Nations regional entities. The delegation was then divided into two groups for visits to projects and programmes supported by various United Nations entities over another two- and one-half days. One group visited the Casamance area in southern Senegal (Kolda, Sédhiou and Ziguinchor regions). The second group remained in Dakar but also visited the Thiès Region, located some 70 kilometres east of the capital city.
4. During the visit, the delegation engaged with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Senegalese Diaspora, the Minister of Health and Social Action, the Minister of Economy, Planning and Cooperation and other high-level officials, and learned about the country's priorities and the areas in which support from the United Nations system was most needed. The delegation also met with the governors or their representatives in Kolda, Sédhiou and Ziguinchor, several mayors, representatives of civil society, including youth and women's groups, the private sector, local communities and community leaders.
5. The final day of the visit, which involved the entire delegation, the Resident Coordinator and the Regional Directors, addressed regional political and economic issues, with the participation of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Ms. Giovannie Biha, and the Special Coordinator for development in the Sahel, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye. A rather worrying picture emerged regarding the overall security and stability of the West African region due to the action of terrorist groups and the coups d'états in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and the Niger, with the urgent need for measures to address such challenges and to increase peacebuilding efforts in the region. The Special Coordinator reiterated the importance of an integrated Sahelian regional strategy, with particular reference to the issues of sustainable development and the fight against climate change, and highlighted how the Sahel should be seen also as a source of economic and investment opportunities and not just crises.
6. Following the visit, the delegation made several comments, observations and recommendations.

II. Overview of Senegal

7. Senegal is the second-largest economy in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. The country is characterized by its tradition of democracy, a strategic geographic position, considerable agricultural and mining potential, and substantial cash transfers from its diaspora. In 2021, the country technically met the graduation criteria and moved up to middle-income country status for the first time.¹ Senegal has experienced strong economic growth since 2014, although such growth was interrupted by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The country regained its growth momentum in 2021, driven by industrial production, services

¹ United Nations, LDC Portal, <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/content/senegal-graduation-status#:~:text=Senegal%20met%20the%20graduation%20criteria,graduate%20as%20early%20as%20202027>.

and retail trade that continued into early 2022. However, this economic recovery was accompanied by a weakening in public finances aggravated by increased spending in response to multiple crises. Moreover, socioeconomic gains have been overshadowed by recent political tensions, violence and protests, spillover from the war in Ukraine, tighter financing conditions and political instability in the region. The production of oil and gas are expected to give the economy a boost over the next few years.² In view of its high exposure and vulnerability to climate change, and in response to the Paris Agreement, Senegal is implementing mitigation and adaptation measures in priority economic sectors, communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and cities.³

8. The country has an estimated population of 18 million in 2023,⁴ which reflects a fascinating ethnic, linguistic and religious mosaic, and the majority of the population (75 per cent) is under 35 years old.⁵ The population is predominantly rural (54.8 per cent rural versus 45.2 urban)⁶ and 23 per cent of the population lives in the Dakar Region.⁷ Among the many challenges faced by Senegal are high levels of neonatal mortality and maternal mortality, particularly outside of the capital; inadequate social protection; non-enrolment in school and educational drop-out; high rates of unemployment, which disproportionately affects women,⁸ young people (aged 15–34 years) and people living in rural areas;⁹ and chronic malnutrition, which affects 18 per cent of the population, with much higher rates (up to 27 per cent) in some regions.¹⁰

9. The United Nations system in Senegal supports the country's national priorities and development efforts through the implementation of the PSE and the Sustainable Development Goals. Through their respective areas of focus and expertise, as well as with other United Nations entities and partners, the six entities support the PSE vision of “an emerging Senegal in 2023, with a cohesive society under the rule of law”, and its three main pillars: structural transformation of the economy, promoting human capital and enabling good governance.

III. The United Nations in Senegal

10. All six United Nations agencies involved in the joint field visit have both country and regional offices in Senegal. They are part of an extensive long-standing United Nations presence in the country, which in 2022 was made up of 34 agencies, funds and programmes, some of which are regional or subregional representations covering several countries.¹¹ The diversity of their respective mandates and expertise is conducive to inter-agency cooperation within the United Nations country team, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.

11. The UNSDCF guides the entire country team programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective United Nations support for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UNSDCF 2024–2028 will be informed by the five-year Priority

² International Monetary Fund, “Senegal’s Growth Prospects are Strong”, *IMF Country Focus*, 12 July 2023.

³ United States Agency for International Development, Senegal Climate Change Country Profile, Fact Sheet, 15 November 2022.

⁴ National Agency for Statistics and Demography (ANSD), General Population and Housing Census, 2023.

⁵ Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Senegal, Presentation to joint Executive Boards (internal document), Dakar, Senegal, 3 October 2023.

⁶ United Nations Population Fund, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028], UNFPA, New York, 7 July 2023, para. 1.

⁷ ANSD, General Population and Housing Census, 2023.

⁸ Unemployment data from UNDP country programme document, 2024–2028.

⁹ UNFPA country programme document [2024–2028], para. 1.

¹⁰ Demographic and Health Survey, 2019.

¹¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Group website: <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/senegal>, accessed on 11 October 2023.

Action Plan 2024–2028 and the three development axes of the Plan. The process of developing the new UNSDCF involved key stakeholders at each stage of the process, with consultations held with development partners, the government and locally elected representatives, civil society, the private sector and groups in marginalized situations identified at risk of being left behind (e.g., children, persons with disabilities). Technical workshops were held with the Government at various stages to ensure alignment with national priorities.

A. Cooperation with the Government

12. During a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Senegalese Diaspora, the Minister of Economy, Planning and Cooperation and the Minister of Health and Social Action, recognition was paid to the long-standing efforts made by the United Nations system to meet the needs of the Senegalese population. The various agencies support Senegal in areas including but not limited to maternal and child health; school feeding; malnutrition prevention and treatment; education; infrastructure development; access to sexual and reproductive health services; social protection; improved agricultural practices; and governance, leadership and the political participation of women. Senegal was seeking to strengthen coordination between the United Nations agencies, with a view to implementing the reform of the United Nations system through the coordination of the actions of all the agencies working in the field. Senegal values the expertise of the United Nations.

13. The coups d'états in the Sahel region have slowed down development and threatened the peace and security of all countries in the region. The positive cooperation with the United Nations system on security issues was highlighted, as was the need for interventions by the United Nations, as the primary actor for peace, to help to promote peace and stability in Senegal. The country is placing great importance on energy transition through the development of renewable energies, and already has hydropower and solar and wind capacities. Some of its programmes to provide water and energy to populations in rural areas have been replicated in other countries in West Africa. Senegal is making efforts to strengthen food and energy sovereignty and is viewed as a regional role model in this regard. The Government is devoting more than 20 per cent of the budget to education – although education quality remains a concern – and is making efforts to improve the business climate.

14. A demonstrable result of the close cooperation between the United Nations system and the Government of Senegal, and of the State's appreciation of the entities' contributions to its development, is the new United Nations House, a state-of-the-art building funded by the Government of Senegal. The building will house all United Nations organizations in Senegal: more than 2,000 staff who are currently located in 18 premises scattered around Dakar. The United Nations House was inaugurated on 23 November 2023. After finalization of the relevant paperwork and additional customization, the entities are expected to take occupancy of the building in a phased approach starting in the second quarter of 2024 at the latest, or earlier if the conditions are met. During the delegation's visit to the building, discussions centred around concurrence of the United Nations House with several aspects of the efficiency agenda of United Nations reform, including common premises, a common back office and a business operations strategy. The move is expected to result in significant cost avoidance, streamlined processes, strengthened accountability, and closer contact between programme and administrative staff and to most of the ministerial counterparts also located in the vicinity of the United Nations House in Diambiadi.

B. Coordination among the United Nations entities

15. During an introductory meeting with the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Senegal and the United Nations country team, the country and regional representatives shared updates about their work and their joint efforts in fostering sustainable development in Senegal. Among the many challenges highlighted by the United Nations entities were a lack of access to justice, particularly in rural areas; the food crisis that continues to affect many households, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic; the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) affecting 16.1 per cent of girls under 14 years of age, and child marriage, which affects one in three girls under 18 years of age;¹² a proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the area of Casamance; the high rate of children not in school (almost 40 per cent in 2022¹³) despite the relatively high percentage of the government budget devoted to education; the need for strengthened data collection to identify and target vulnerable populations; human rights violations; and women's lack of autonomy and lack of access to land ownership.

16. Yet the Government is making progress in several areas, with support from the United Nations entities. Women are being transformed from victims to actors for change in climate change; under-5 mortality has decreased since 2015 as a result of falling levels of common childhood diseases and malnutrition, and improved access to health care, immunization, water and sanitation;¹⁴ efforts to promote the use of renewable energy are continuing; some schools are being used as entry points for environmental awareness-raising; the country is viewed as a regional role model in terms of social protection; and municipalities are being reformed, and are now addressing areas such as the environmental sector and industrialization. The Government has invested in youth programmes aimed at building capacity and creating opportunities for entrepreneurial development as well as meaningful and decent work.

17. During the field visit, the delegates witnessed how “One UN” translates on the ground, through collaborative work of the various agencies in implementing joint projects in the country.

C. Women, children and youth

18. In 2021, the gender inequality index ranked Senegal 131 out of 191 countries.¹⁵ The persistence of gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls is due to deeply rooted harmful social norms. The delegation was particularly impressed by a pilot police gender sensitivity training project at the police station in Mbao, Dakar Region, supported by the European Union and UN-Women. Led by a female commissioner, the project has provided capacity-building and sensitization, helping both policemen and policewomen to deal with gender, psychological and health issues in a holistic manner. The delegation observed that the female commissioner broke the stereotype of the role of women and felt that the pilot programme demonstrated successful implementation of gender standards, and cooperation with the United Nations system, and that it should be made more visible, scaled up and replicated elsewhere.

19. In Sandiara, Thiès Region, the delegation learned that 10 per cent of the municipal budget is devoted to women's empowerment, complementing contributions from the United Nations entities. The mayor explained that recent priorities have been building schools, setting up businesses and job opportunities for women. The town has been designated a special economic free zone, and is

¹² Demographic and Health Survey, 2019.

¹³ UNICEF, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028].

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UNDP Gender Inequality Index, data for 2021: <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads>.

viewed as the integrated trade, logistics and industrial hub of Senegal. Among its objectives are job creation, improving the social living conditions of populations, and lightening housework and reinforcing the capacity of women's groups and associations.¹⁶

20. The United Nations is firmly committed to youth development in Senegal, aligned with national priorities such as the Youth Plan for an Emerging Senegal (PSE Jeunesse). During discussions with young men and women at the youth-led Senegal Youth Consortium in Guédiawaye, Dakar Region, the delegation heard how young people (under 35 years) are contributing to and benefiting from the work of the consortium in areas including citizenship, community engagement, skills development – including computer training – jobs creation and entrepreneurship. The consortium is a civil society organization made up of 18 youth-led organizations managed by youth leaders. The consortium collaborates with the Government of Senegal through a memorandum of understanding and receives contributions and support from UNICEF and other partners. The delegation underscores the importance of innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit of young people in the economic and social development of Senegal and encourages continued support for these dynamics. The delegation also underlines the importance of reinforcing the contribution of women's associations in government efforts that aim to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 by developing strategies and programmes to address the needs of communities in Casamance.

21. The delegation observed other examples of positive youth interactions with the government and the key contributions made to the development of their communities. In the Sédhiou Region, the Children's Municipal Council was set up and supported by UNICEF. With support from other United Nations entities (UNDP, UN-Women and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) and the local community, the Council contributed to the local development plan, developed a child consultative framework and a forthcoming report on the universal periodic review, and helped to organize basic computer training. Youth are also raising awareness, among their peers and elders, of issues such as the importance of birth registration, in a country where systematic and timely birth declarations remain a challenge and only one in five children is registered at birth.¹⁷ Birth registration is society's first acknowledgement of a child's existence and identity, and critical to children being able to benefit from services such as education and health care and exercising lifelong civic rights. The Council is playing a critical role in using radio, the Internet, television and social media outreach to raise awareness among the population on this and other issues such as feminine hygiene, FGM and sexual health, and providing a platform for victims to communicate or share their experiences. The Council has flagged as a concern the lack of any hosting or reintegration centre in Sédhiou for child victims of conflict. A key takeaway from the visit was that development aid needs to come from within. Participants in the discussions expressed their deep appreciation for the role of the United Nations and other partners.

D. Education, protection, health and water, sanitation and hygiene

22. The high rate of government investment in education has increased school enrolment rates but has not reduced inequalities. Nearly 44 per cent of boys and 33 per cent of girls of school age are not enrolled in school.¹⁸ Between 2017 and 2022, limited progress was seen in completion rates, which rose from 61 per cent to 63 per cent in primary schools and from 37 per cent to 40 per cent in middle schools, and stagnated at 26 per cent in secondary schools. Completion rates are higher for

¹⁶ www.unido.or.jp/files/Dr.-Diop-Welcome-to-Sandiara-Special-Economic-Zone.pdf (undated presentation).

¹⁷ UNICEF, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028].

¹⁸ Rapport national sur la situation de l'éducation, RNSE (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (MEN), 2022).

girls at all levels. Eighty-six per cent of adolescents aged 15–17 years are not in education, employment or training¹⁹ due to the lack of pathways between basic education and vocational training, insufficient guidance towards scientific and technical areas, a lack of training structures outside of Dakar, and discrepancies between the training available and the expectations of adolescents and employers.²⁰

23. The delegation visited a WFP-UNICEF intervention school in Kolda, where it witnessed the benefits of investments in education and the role of education as a catalyst for women’s empowerment and for creating a more equitable society. The school integrates educational, agricultural, nutritional and women’s empowerment elements. The delegation observed a handwashing facility and learned that it had been installed following the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the practice of handwashing was now institutionalized among schoolchildren. The delegation recommends that any positive innovations adopted as a result of the pandemic be expanded to other schools. The delegation also observed that the sanitation facilities were rudimentary, and that the outdoor toilets did not include doors in their design, which could be an issue for girls in particular, especially as they reach puberty and adolescence. It is recommended that these gaps be addressed. The delegation also observed that the early childhood development centre on the school compound was housed in a provisional structure that should be upgraded. The delegation encourages construction of a sturdier building to provide learning for children at this critical juncture of their development. A further observation was that there is keen interest among the local community in the United Nations, as demonstrated by the large turnout to greet the delegation at the school, and more so by repeated requests for enhanced support from the United Nations.

24. Approximately 10.4 per cent of women aged 15–49 years in Senegal have experienced physical violence, while 3.4 per cent have experienced sexual violence. One in three women aged 20–49 years old (32 per cent) is married before 18 years of age.²¹ A huge number of children are exploited, with boys exploited through forced begging and girls through domestic labour and sexual exploitation. Between 2017 and 2019, the proportion of girls (aged 10–14 years) who had undergone FGM increased from 18 per cent to 20 per cent.²² There are reports of FGM and child marriages in transborder areas where some parents escape from their local community control mechanisms prohibiting FGM to perform FGM in a neighbouring country with little control.²³

25. Despite the decline in under-5 mortality between 2015 and 2021, there are still high levels of neonatal mortality (which accounts for 50 per cent of under-5 deaths) outside of Dakar, due to low coverage levels of maternal and neonatal care. Non-communicable diseases are increasing, the treatment of HIV/AIDS among children is declining, and adolescents experience health and nutrition challenges, including related to mental health.²⁴ With a view to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3.2 on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent/youth health, Senegal has prioritized the reduction of newborn and under-5 mortality in its National Health Development Plan through the establishment of quality health care easily accessible to individuals and communities. In 2021, 15 per cent of people in Senegal did not have access to high-quality drinking water and 67 per cent did not have access to improved basic sanitation.²⁵

26. During a visit to the Kolda Health Centre, which is supported by five United Nations entities (UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, UN-Women and the World Health

¹⁹ Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA), conducted in 2022 with the National Agency of Statistics.

²⁰ RNSE (MEN, 2022).

²¹ Demographic and Health Survey, 2019.

²² UNICEF, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028].

²³ UNFPA, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028].

²⁴ UNICEF, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028].

²⁵ Ibid.

Organization (WHO)), the delegation viewed some of the services in place to provide comprehensive health services for women and girls, including prenatal and postnatal care, sexual and reproductive health and antiretroviral treatment, in line with recent decentralization of HIV prevention, treatment and awareness-raising to all health centres in the country.²⁶ The centre reported that it maintains detailed statistics of services provided, and on gaps in the distribution of resources, personnel and infrastructure. The delegation observed that the hospital has capacity constraints, particularly to perform caesarean section operations to save the lives of women and children. Requests were made for additional equipment and machines to be made available. The delegation was keenly interested to learn about the New Deal strategy, a community effort that started in Tambacounda in 2014 with UNFPA support, and was quickly adopted by Kolda, to address the high rates of child marriage and school dropout, and to strengthen the leadership of girls, particularly adolescent girls. The strategy seeks to ensure that parents commit to not give away their daughters in marriage, and girls commit to not getting pregnant and to finishing school. The delegation learned that this social contract between children and their parents has been effective.

27. The visit to the neonatal health centre at the Roi Baudouin Hospital in Guédiawaye, Dakar Region, demonstrated the need for equipment and support in an area where child and maternal mortality are still quite high and there are health-care needs in the immediate area. The hospital, which is supported by UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Women and WHO has one of the largest maternity wards in the country, with an average of 6,000 deliveries per year, and a 14-bed paediatric department, with an average of 7,000 consultations and 800 hospitalizations per year.²⁷ Yet, the delegation observed that the ward visited was missing beds for the babies and lacked equipment, and the structure was old and in need of repair.

28. A highlight of the visit was the discussion with the leaders of the Kullimaroo Centre in Ziguinchor Region, launched by the Platform for Peace in Casamance in 2015. The Centre offers girls and women, the majority of whom are victims of sexual violence, and female victims of other forms of violence, an environment in which they benefit from free emergency accommodation, and medical and psychosocial assistance, as well as vocational training (e.g., sewing, tie-dye) and financial empowerment. The Centre works with a network of other actors (e.g., religious leaders, youth associations, educators, sports associations and relevant government authorities and child protection services) to identify and support vulnerable women and girls, mainly those who are victims of sexual violence. It uses social mobilization techniques to raise awareness of harmful practices and of its services. The interventions made by members of the delegation underlined the importance of providing support to the platform, with a view to strengthening its reception capacity and enabling members of the association representing civil society to develop its mission in the region.

E. Agriculture, fisheries, food security and nutrition

29. The Government of Senegal is committed to transforming agriculture and food systems, including through investment to achieve self-sufficiency in rice. There are, nonetheless, significant challenges to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (“zero hunger”), particularly with regard to climate shocks, unsustainable farming systems, lack of access to markets and poor terms of trade for vulnerable smallholder farmers in marginal areas.

²⁶ Briefing Pack, 2023 Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards to Senegal, “Visit to the Kolda Health District” (internal document), 28 September 2023.

²⁷ Briefing Pack, 2023 Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards to Senegal, “Visit to the neonatal unit of the Roi Baudouin Hospital” (internal document), 28 September 2023.

30. Agriculture comprises 9.6 per cent of the gross domestic product of Senegal.²⁸ Yet, some regions of Senegal have high rates of food and nutrition insecurity, particularly in the north, south and east. The agriculture sector is dominated by subsistence farming and constrained by limited access to inputs, technology, finance and credit; most of the population is employed in this sector.²⁹ Most farmers are not members of farmers' associations and have limited access to financing.³⁰ Fisheries have a significant role in Senegal as they contribute to food security and provide jobs, especially for coastal populations.

31. Mothers in Senegal have low nutritional status, with 54 per cent of women of childbearing age being anaemic and 22 per cent underweight.³¹ In discussions with the National Nutrition Development Council, the delegation heard about efforts that aim to strengthen the multisectoral approach and institutional positioning of nutrition in line with the PSE. The Council is also exploring the nexus between gender, nutrition and climate change. The work of UNICEF (in addressing malnutrition and stunting) and of WFP (in strengthening nutrition) was commended, and the authorities welcomed continued engagement of the United Nations organizations. The delegation found that the work of the Government in these efforts was impressive, more so given the challenges of limited resources and expertise. Continued strengthening of the synergy between the different entities is recommended.

32. The delegation visited a fruit and cereal processing unit in the Mbao Forest – considered the “green lung” of Dakar – where a project to strengthen the socioeconomic resilience of market gardening groups was undertaken for two years. The delegation observed that the women involved in the market gardening groups are preserving biodiversity, which is useful in the fight against climate change.

33. The Saré Bacary Binta Valley climate change resilience programme in Kolda Region was set up by the United Nations system in cooperation with the province and the non-governmental organization La Lumière Kolda. The programme involves the cultivation of 22 hectares of rice, and benefits more than 80 households. WFP provides support in terms of water management and capacity-building on future techniques related to production and selling the rice in the market. The delegation was pleased to learn about increased crop yields that resulted from capacity-building on good agricultural practices and techniques and about the prospects for expansion. The delegation recommended the use of fertilizers to further increase crop yields.

34. The delegation observed that the UNDP/IOM Global Programme on Migration for Sustainable Development in Malifara village, Sédhiou, combined several dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals – sustainable development using renewable energy (solar) to create jobs. The project provides land and money to irregular migrants at the local level, to encourage them to carry out agricultural activities. The delegation took note of the ongoing challenge of women's access to land and encourages such development, with a view to consolidating agricultural activities in the region by further involving all components of local society. The delegation recommends the adoption of modern agricultural technology and the use of fertilizers to improve agricultural production. The delegation also recommends that additional funds be allocated to improve hygiene facilities in schools and in villages in the region.

35. The identification and construction of the Soumbédioune historic fish market in Dakar was initiated within the framework of the municipality's Fass Emergent programme, which was supported by the United Nations Capital Development Fund. The project aimed at bringing economic empowerment to fishermen and

²⁸ ANSD, Economic and Social Situation in Senegal, 2019, January 2022.

²⁹ World Food Programme, Senegal country strategic plan, 2019–2023.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UNICEF, Country programme document for Senegal [2024–2028].

women by renovating the market (which was built in 1954). After the visit, the delegation appeared sceptical of the project at several levels. The fish market project seemed inadequate in size, despite a reported budget of \$500,000, and late in its development, since the renovation started two years ago. The Member States were left wondering whether the resources invested in the project had resulted in, or will result in, a significant impact on the local women, and questioned the added value of the United Nations development system in this endeavour.

F. Access to justice

36. At the core of governance, and at the core of stability and development, is a strong social contract. With courts and tribunals heavily concentrated in the Dakar Region and a few large cities, access to justice is difficult in much of the country. The delegation visited the House of Justice in Keur Massar, Dakar Region, which was funded by the European Union and built in collaboration with UNOPS, to support the rule of law and access to justice for vulnerable people, particularly those living in remote areas. It is one of 13 judicial infrastructures built by UNOPS across the country.³² Through the House of Justice, people take their grievances around the rights and mediation of local disputes and human rights. The delegations observed that this was a highly commendable solution based on community needs in the area of justice. The project has contributed to strengthening the rule of law in Senegal by improving access to effective justice for a greater number of citizens, especially in remote areas (axis 3 of the PSE: “governance, institutions, peace and security”, and Sustainable Development Goal 16: “peace, justice and strong institutions”).

G. Data and statistics

37. Senegal has conducted regular and timely censuses, and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), supported by UN-Women, UNDP and UNICEF, and has established a strong health information system. However, it still faces limitations in terms of the timely availability of disaggregated data.³³ The delegation visited the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, or ANSD), the main national implementation partner of the UN-Women led Women Count Senegal project on the production and use of gender statistics for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring. UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP also support the agency in strengthening the national statistical system. UNICEF helps ANSD to better take into account some of the child-related Sustainable Development Goals in the surveys (DHS, census) for stronger child rights monitoring. During the discussion, the importance of reliable data in government planning and policy formulation, and in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, were stressed. Significant achievements made by UN-Women through the Women Count project include integration of gender in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics for the first time, a national reference survey on violence against women, the first time-use survey and the household production satellite account. The agency runs a project for capacity-building of women and girls in statistics, with specific training in gender statistics with the support of UN-Women. The agency found the work done by the institution to be impressive, but took note of the challenges of resources and capacity constraints highlighted during the discussion. With the support of UNDP, ANSD developed a multidimensional poverty index for a more inclusive measurement of poverty.

³² Briefing Pack, 2023 Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards to Senegal, “Project to support the strengthening of the rule of law in Senegal (Pared), Construction Component” (internal document), 28 September 2023.

³³ UNDP, Country programme document for Senegal, 2024–2028.

IV. General observations, comments and recommendations

A. Strengthening the impact of the United Nations in Senegal

38. The delegation was of the view that the visit provided an excellent opportunity to assess what the United Nations system was delivering in Senegal and to form an assessment of whether the United Nations country team was living up to the expectations of Member States to help Senegal to achieve its national priorities.

39. During meetings with regional and local government officials, the delegation became aware of the critical role played by the United Nations entities in support of their initiatives. Generally, the United Nations appears to be welcomed and needed in Senegal. Continued and enhanced support from the United Nations system is recommended. It is also important for the various United Nations entities present in-country to do equally effective work, resulting in concrete outcomes for the communities they serve. Significant additional efforts need to be made to improve coordination, fragmentation of resources, follow-up, planning and information-sharing.

40. The importance of security as an important precondition for development was mentioned throughout the visit. In Casamance, there were specific requests from authorities for United Nations support in helping to clear landmines. Government estimates put large areas of land, mostly in the Ziguinchor Region, as still at risk of being mined. In addition to the physical risk posed by the ordnance, the mines often cut people off from roads, schools or farmland, affecting their livelihoods and with a significant socioeconomic impact.³⁴ United Nations support was also requested for rebuilding (in Ziguinchor Region, in particular), housing, enhanced child protection, guaranteed education and quality of health care.

41. The delegation emphasized that United Nations agencies should accompany Governments in accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals and in reinforcing the development and peace nexus.

42. The delegation noted the importance of promoting South-South cooperation and developing synergies between countries by focusing more on development-oriented activities.

43. The delegation observed that activities undertaken by the United Nations system need to be reinforced at the national and regional levels by developing more synergies between all offices in the region, and by adopting coherent approaches in responding to the challenges facing the region.

44. The delegation emphasized the importance of accompanying Governments in reinforcing the regional integration and implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area to enhance local economies.

45. The delegation observed that the situation of refugees and food systems are affected by the security situation in the region, which complicates the work of the United Nations entities. In this regard, the entities should reflect on new approaches to address the root causes of migration in West Africa in the current crisis affecting the Sahel region.

46. The delegation noted the need to better understand how Member States can support reforms of the United Nations development system by strengthening synergy among the agencies, as well as constructive interaction between the

³⁴ Adapted from Al Jazeera, 'For Senegalese landmine victims, a forgotten conflict lives on', Feature, 31 December 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/12/31/for-senegalese-landmine-victims-a-forgotten-conflict-lives-on>.

Resident Coordinator, the agency heads and other members of the United Nations country team.

Project size and scale

47. The delegation pointed out that many of the projects visited were small-scale, with limited impact, and a degree of imagination was required to assess their impact on the broader society, including women and girls. Several were described as being pilot programmes or catalytic initiatives, rather than established interventions. The delegation was left to form the conclusion that perhaps an expansive network of these “micro” projects is collectively making the desired impact. It is recommended that the United Nations entities assess their support to such projects and provide the necessary technical and financial support to help them to scale up to make an impact and to significantly improve the lives and well-being of the populations served.

48. As an example, regarding the above, the project in the Soumbédioune market raised questions related to its conceptual design, level and efficiency of implementation and costs. The fish market appeared to be a small and simple structure; its implementation began two years ago and will only be functional in 2024. The delegation was left unclear as to whether the resources invested in the project had resulted in, or would result in, a significant impact on the local women. The issues of food security and a safe workplace could therefore not be assessed by the delegation, due to a lack of evidence.

49. The delegation also saw a small “kangaroo ward” at the Roi Baudouin Hospital in Guediawaye, Dakar Region, which was taking care of only eight newborn babies at a time with inadequate apparatus or equipment. It was difficult to gain any meaningful takeaways from the visit to this activity.

Scope of the visit

50. The visits to ANSD and the Keur Massar House of Justice provided useful insights. The delegation was able to get a sense of what the United Nations entities were doing and, more importantly, how they are contributing to implementing various initiatives. This includes, for ANSD, the Women Count Senegal project and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and gender statistics, and, for the House of Justice, ensuring justice for the marginalized population.

51. With regard to the programme elements, the delegation felt that it would have been important to have a dedicated meeting with civil society institutions in Senegal. Experience has shown that interactions with civil society often help to provide a different perspective on multiple issues, particularly governance, institutions, peace and security, policy matters and transparency. However, part of this requirement was fulfilled by the meetings with youth at various stages of the visit.

52. It had been conveyed to the delegation that the United Nations system, particularly UNDP, has substantive engagements in the programmes related to climate change, protection of the ecosystem, managing climate-induced risk factors, etc. Unfortunately, the delegation did not have adequate opportunities to gain meaningful insights into these issues during the joint field visit.

53. The delegation was of the view that there was insufficient clarity on the interventions and contributions by the United Nations system in various initiatives, in terms of funding, research, knowledge and expertise, monitoring, evaluation, etc. The delegation suggests that it could perhaps be useful if the stakeholders (Government, private sector, civil society, United Nations entities and other relevant groups) could collaborate well in advance of the visits to prepare the briefings.

54. For example, the briefing in Sandiara, Thiès Region, appeared to overwhelmingly focus on the achievements of the municipality, which was welcomed by the delegation. However, insufficient details were provided, or emphasis placed on the interventions by or cooperation with the United Nations system.

Funding

55. The delegation highlighted the importance of evaluating the correlation between the level of funding invested in projects, and their impact on the lives of the population of Senegal.

56. The delegation stated that the collaboration of multiple agencies on a single project/programme should take into consideration the need to keep administrative costs low and ensure clear accountability.

57. The delegation recommends that, in a context of static or reduced official development assistance, blended financing approaches be considered, with the Government directly investing in development. The United Nations system will need to assess whether it is fit for purpose (in terms of staffing, skills and leadership), and can be sufficiently competitive to work on projects that the Government has itself funded.

58. The issue of funding also needed some additional clarity. It would be useful to receive more information on the reported \$233 million allocated to UNDP by the Government of Senegal. In the same vein, it would be helpful to receive more clarification on the sustainability and sources of financing. For example, the UNDP one-pager on the “Emergency Community Development Programme (PUDC)” reveals that the Government provided \$233 million (almost 100 per cent of the cost of the programme), while the UNDP contribution was \$1 million.

59. Also on funding, when asked, the Chief of the Independent Project Unit (for the new United Nations House) said that he did not know the total budget of the new United Nations common premises. But, while a positive partnership overall, the generous contribution of the Government in favour of the United Nations left some unanswered questions. Related to the United Nations common premises, substantive green measures (energy and water efficiency, solar, wastewater treatment, etc.) may be necessary to make the maintenance of the new 60,000 square metre United Nations common premises cost-effective. It may also take years to have sufficient housing, schools, health facilities, transport stations and shopping facilities installed in the now remote area in order to relocate the staff around the premises. Until then, commuting to and from the premises may adversely impact the efficiency of the staff.

B. Strengthening future field visits

60. Members of the delegation said that the Boards should have a more active role in preparation of the programme of future joint field visits and that there should be most substantive pre-departure briefings, including with the United Nations country team and the Permanent Representative of the designated country, with a view to strengthening the programme.

61. The delegation recommended that for future field visits, the agenda should focus on a few (two to three) thematic axes on which the different United Nations agencies can converge, and each contribute their constructive ideas.

62. The delegation recommended that the Directors/principals of the United Nations agencies working on the ground share their perspectives and insights with members of the Executive Boards on the functioning of the United Nations system before the delegation departs for a field visit.

63. It was further recommended that the Boards revamp their workings so that they can have more substantive, strategic discussions. It was proposed that the regional Under-Secretaries-General and their special representatives and envoys be engaged, so that the Boards can better understand how the decisions they adopt in their own entities intersect with the political and peacekeeping work being undertaken.

64. The delegation noted that it was at times difficult to identify which agencies were involved in the programmes/projects visited, to determine which agency was in a leading role (as applicable) and to assess the unique or complementary efforts of each agency. It is recommended that the briefing notes prepared and distributed to the delegation in advance of the field visits include this information.

65. The delegation recommended as an area for improvement regarding future field visits the provision of adequate opportunities for participants to have meaningful interactions with the beneficiaries of United Nations programmes/projects.

66. The delegation expressed appreciation for the detailed and comprehensive briefing package but asked that it be provided further in advance of the start of the visit, and, to ensure its accessibility by the entire delegation, that the entire document be made available in English.

67. The delegation noted that it would have been highly useful if wrap-up meetings were scheduled at the end of each day's activities, thus providing a forum for discussion of the shared experiences and significant takeaways.

68. Members of the delegation made note of the ongoing challenge of identifying an ideal time for scheduling the field visits that did not clash with other important meetings and events in which the delegates were involved.

69. The delegation highlighted the need to streamline and improve some of the logistical processes, such as those related to flight reservations, to take account of the schedules, age, health status and security of the delegates.

V. Conclusions

70. The delegation would like to express its deepest appreciation to the Government of Senegal, the Resident Coordinator, the United Nations country team, UNICEF as coordinating agency for the joint field visit, and the Executive Board secretariats of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, WFP and UN-Women for their contributions to the visit, for the efforts made to provide a wide overview of the work of the United Nations agencies in Senegal, for being wonderful hosts for the joint field visit and for making it a successful and impactful visit.

71. The delegation looks forward to the consideration of its observations and findings, and the implementation of its recommendations.

Annex

Participants: Joint field visit to Senegal by members of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, WFP and UN-Women, 2–6 October 2023

<i>Region/List</i>	<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS</i>	<i>UN-WOMEN</i>	<i>WFP</i>
Western Europe and Other States / WFP List D Developed Country Electoral Group (NB: includes Japan)	Denmark H.E. Ms. Christina Markus Lassen 2023 President Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations		Italy Mr. Marco Romiti First Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations	n/a
Latin America and Caribbean States / WFP List C Latin America and Caribbean Electoral Group	Argentina H.E. Ms. María del Carmen Squeff 2023 Vice-President Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations	Costa Rica H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan Valverde 2023 Vice President Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations	Dominican Republic Ms. Luz del Carmen Andújar Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations	Guatemala H.E. Ms. Olga María Pérez Tuna Ambassador of Guatemala in Italy and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Agencies in Rome
Asia-Pacific Regional Group / WFP List B Near East/Asia Electoral Group	Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat 2023 Vice-President Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations	Bangladesh H.E. Mr. Muhammad Muhith 2023 Vice President Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations	Thailand Mr. Surat Suwannikkha, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations	Saudi Arabia H.E. Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Alghamdi Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to FAO
Eastern European States /WFP List E Central and Eastern Europe Developed Country Electoral Group	Poland Ms. Joanna Sylwia Skoczek Minister Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations	Moldova H.E. Mr. Gheorghe Leucă Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations	Ukraine H.E. Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya 2023 President Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations	Hungary H.E. Mr. Zsolt Belánszky-Demkó Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome

<i>Region/List</i>	<i>UNICEF</i>	<i>UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS</i>	<i>UN-WOMEN</i>	<i>WFP</i>
African Regional Group /WFP List A Africa Electoral Group	Rwanda Mr. Robert Kayinamura Minister Counsellor Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations	Kenya H.E. Mr. Martin Kimani 2023 President Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations	Cameroon Mr. Serge Pamphile Mezang Akamba First Counsellor Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cameroon to the United Nations	Morocco Mr. Abdellah Larhmaid Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Rome-based agencies
Secretariat staff	UNICEF Mr. Gilles Fagninou Director, Secretary of the Executive Board	UNDP Ms. Dalita Balassanian Deputy Secretary of the Executive Board	UN-Women Mr. Jean-Luc Bories Secretary of the Executive Board	WFP Ms. Mihoko Tamamura Deputy Secretary to the Executive Board
	UNICEF Ms. Allyson Alert-Atterbury Strategic Planning Specialist	UNOPS Ms. Hafida Lahiouel Director, Legal Group and Officer-in-Charge, New York Board and External Relations Office		
	UNICEF Ms. Ana Belén Torres Cámara Executive Officer	UNFPA Ms. Sabina Saeed Board and Governance Specialist		