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What works for Youth Employment in Africa: **A review of youth employment policies and their impact in Senegal.**



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Abstract

We investigate the effective implementation of youth-employment programs in Senegal by conducting a desk review of programs and carrying out a series of focus-group discussions and key-informant Interviews. The findings reveal that the Senegal government's interventions in the period between 2000 and 2021 were broadly relevant and were effective in lifting many young people out of unemployment. Very few needy young people had the opportunity to participate in government programs, however, and, for those who did participate, positive effects appear to be temporary. Consequently, youth labor-market outcomes are still lagging. We identify several governance aspects that need improvement. First, employment programs are poorly inclusive. Second, vulnerable groups are insufficiently targeted (most young refugees or youth with disabilities are excluded). Third, the programs are not well known to most youth. Finally, programs are fragmented and weakly coordinated, making them less effective.

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I. Introduction

The population of Senegal is getting younger. With a growth rate of 2.5% per year, the country is experiencing a population bulge of younger individuals, and close to 75% of its population was below the age of 35 as of 2020 (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2020). While this demographic trend has the potential to drive economic growth and development, it also poses a major challenge in terms of employment. The number of young people joining the labor market increases every year, with an estimated 300,000 new young job seekers entering the market in 2015, up from 200,000 in 2000. These numbers are expected to reach about 400,000 in 2025 and 670,000 in 2050 (World Bank, 2018).

Since the 2000s, the country has put youth employment at the forefront of political agendas. The political commitment to providing more and better jobs for young people was reflected in the Emergent Senegal Plan (hereafter, PSE), which is the reference framework for economic and social policy up to 2035. Under the impetus of the PSE, macroeconomic trends indicated robust performance before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The Senegalese economy grew by over 6% per year during the 2014-2018 period. Growth in Gross Domestic Product stood at 7.4% in 2017, before falling to 6.2% in 2018 and to 4.6% in 2019. Senegal also officially became a lower-middle-income country in 2019, with a per capita GDP of USD \$1,410 (World Bank, 2019). However, little progress has been achieved in making the country's performance more inclusive of young people. In fact, recent economic growth has not generated enough formal jobs to absorb Senegal's large and growing youth population (Mbaye et al., 2021). There are only around 30,000 formal jobs for the approximately 300,000 young people who enter the labor market each year. Limited opportunities for formal employment opportunities push most of them into the informal sector, which accounts for nearly 90% of youth employment (World Bank, 2018; Challenge Fund for Youth Employment, 2021).

The low level of qualifications and skills of young people is also a problem and has a considerable impact on their employment opportunities. Almost 46% of young people looking for their first job have no education, while 24% have not completed secondary education. In addition, 36.2% of youth neither work nor study (Ministère de l'Économie du Plan et de la Coopération, 2021), making them vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviors such as irregular migration. At least 200 people, mostly youth, perished off the coasts of Senegal and Mauritania in October 2020 (Carretero, 2020). There is broad agreement that the lack of decent work opportunities is the main reason young people risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean (Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental, 2021).

The objective of this paper is to investigate the effective implementation of youth-employment policies in Senegal. Taking the African Union's definition of youth into account, we

define youth as people aged 15–35 years. Senegal is an interesting case study for several reasons. First, although the country has put in place several strategies to address youth employment issues since 2000, challenges facing youth in the labor market have remained pervasive. In this context, it is important to investigate the extent to which employment policies were effective in improving youth labor-market outcomes. Second, the government has poured more than 544 billion FCFA (over \$85 million) into youth-employment policies (Ministère de l'Économie du Plan et de la Coopération, 2021) since 2010, representing an annual level of expenditure of almost 0.1% of GDP. Given these substantial resources allocated to address youth employment issues, it becomes imperative to use evidence to investigate the impact of public-employment programs on youth employment. Third, the period under review (2000-2022) covers several structural challenges, such as rapid population growth and vast informality, widely held to have exacerbated employment challenges for the youth (Mbaye et al., 2021).

Apart from a few studies, little is known about the impact of public programs on youth employment in Senegal (Kane, Ndoye & Seck, 2021; Diagne & Cabral, 2017; Echevin et al., 2013; Bourkane et al., 2019). Kane, Ndoye, and Seck (2021) used the propensity score matching method to evaluate the impact of the National State-Employer Convention (hereafter, CNEE). The authors found that participation in the CNEE improved beneficiaries' employability and that participation in the CNEE increased the chances of finding regular and stable employment. The impact was, however, greater for men than for women. Diagne and Cabral (2017) used the Inverse Propensity Score Matching and instrumental variable methods to assess the impact of the National Agency for Integration and Agricultural Development (ANIDA) on employment, migration, and several dimensions of smallholder well-being. The findings indicated that ANIDA farms employed more than twenty-five full-time equivalent workers than non-ANIDA farms and that the share of individuals who sought new employment was lower in ANIDA farms (35%) than in non-ANIDA farms (49%).

The intention to migrate was also less pronounced in the group of beneficiaries (5%) than in the group of non-beneficiaries (9%). The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (2021) undertook a scoping study to examine the specific challenges affecting youth employment in Senegal. To do so, the study collected information through desk research, structured interviews with key stakeholders—including private sector firms, NGOs and government representatives—and focus-group discussions with youth. The study reveals that young people showed great pessimism and discouragement about job prospects in Senegal, due to the lack of decent jobs and technical skills and the limited support from the government. According to the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (2021), this situation was also the result of employers' preferences to hire experienced workers rather than build the capacity of younger workers.

Echevin et al. (2013) investigated youth employment issues in northern Senegal, focusing on the challenges and opportunities youth face in the labor market. To do so, four data collection methods were used: interviews with stakeholders, focus-group discussions with youth and community leaders, a household survey, and a firm survey. The findings indicated that young people had difficulty finding decent jobs in both formal and informal sectors. Most youth worked in agriculture with little or no job security or in family aid or apprenticeships with low and non-fixed wages. Youth were also pessimistic regarding their labor-market prospects and tended to spend little time searching for a job. The lack of structured support to orient, inform, and finance youth also hindered their job search. In addition, our findings highlight that most companies complain that they cannot find the skills they are seeking among young people, leaving many vacancies unfilled.

Bourkane et al. (2019) conducted a study on the impact of PSE on employment using a dynamic computable general equilibrium model combined with a microsimulation model. Their results indicated that the African Development Bank's contribution to the PSE investment during the 2014-2018 period had a positive impact with a creation of 28,852 jobs, 35% of which were held by women and 54% by youth. Nevertheless, most of these jobs were unskilled, reflecting the structure of employment at the national level. During the same period, 73.22% of the jobs created by the African Development Bank's contribution were occupied by uneducated individuals, compared with only 3.54% by those with a higher education.

Our aim is to make several contributions to existing research. First, the evaluations described above usually focus on a single youth-employment program, but there are at least twenty youth-employment programs in Senegal, requiring an all-encompassing analysis. Second, while well-intentioned policies have been designed to promote the creation of more and better jobs for young people, none of the existing studies mentioned above has investigated governance challenges such as the lack of transparency in the allocation of benefits and coordination across employment programs. Similarly, young people's awareness of employment programs has been little documented. Because youth are not a homogeneous group, we pay special attention to vulnerable youth such as women, people with disabilities, refugees, and returned migrants. In doing so, we were able to examine the employment situation of an otherwise hard-to-reach group of youth. Our emphasis on vulnerable youth constitutes a contribution because limited evidence exists regarding the inclusiveness of youth-employment policies in Senegal.

II. Overview of Youth Labor-Market Outcomes

To assess the progress made over the past two decades in improving the situation of youth in the Senegalese labor market, we examined labor market trends among youth aged 15-34 using nationally representative household surveys conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie).

Although unemployment declined for all categories of youth, that decline was less pronounced for young women, who remained among the most vulnerable. In the 2002-2019 period, the unemployment rate for young men and youth with disabilities fluctuated between 9.6% and 10.1%, respectively, compared to 13.9% for young women (Figure 1). The employment rate was also relatively low among vulnerable youth: on average, less than a third of young women and youth with disabilities were employed between 2002 and 2019, reflecting a structural issue rather than the fluctuations of business cycles (Figure 2). Inactivity also appeared to be more persistent among vulnerable youth (Figure 3). The proportion of young women and youth with disabilities who were neither studying, working, nor seeking employment was about twice that of young men. Youth with disabilities had a higher risk of falling into the category of inactive non-students. This situation indicates that too many young women and youth with disabilities are not building skills or gaining experience that could help them secure dignified and fulfilling employment.

Figure 4 shows that young workers had difficulties finding paid employment. Between 2002 and 2011, more than two out of every three youth were in vulnerable employment as either contributing (unpaid) family workers or own-account workers. The decrease in vulnerable employment during the period 2002-2019 is indicative of favorable labor market dynamics. A substantial proportion of youth, especially young women and youth with disabilities, who remained in vulnerable employment, however, is a sign of a still large informal economy.

Figure 1. Youth employment rate

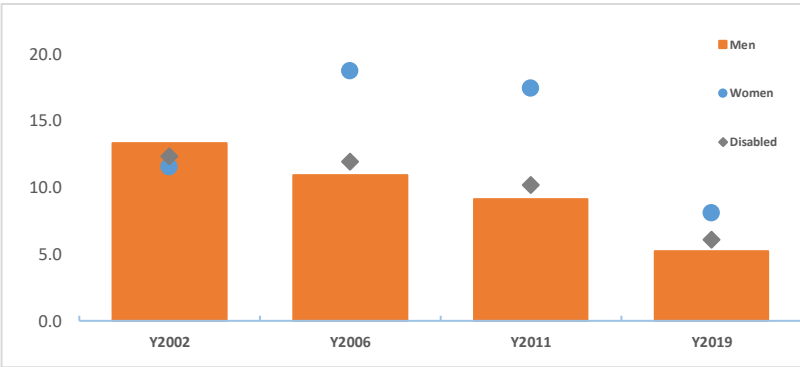


Figure 2. Youth employment rate

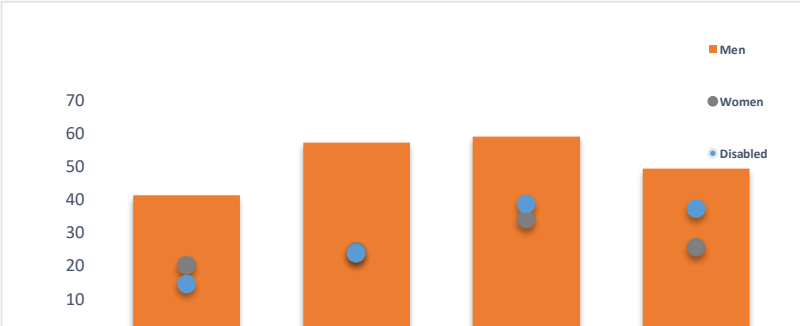


Figure 3. Inactive youth not studying

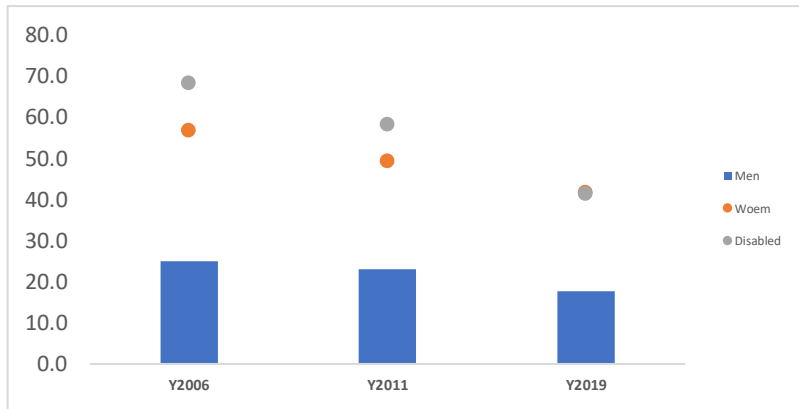


Figure 4. Youth in vulnerable Employment

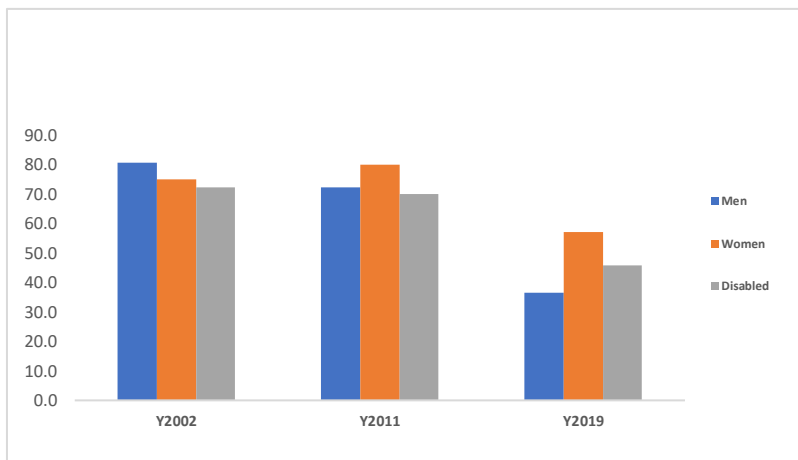


Figure 5. Youth in visible underemployment

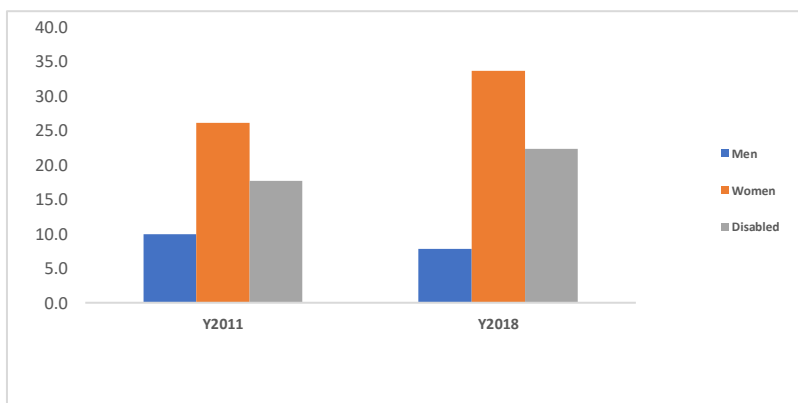
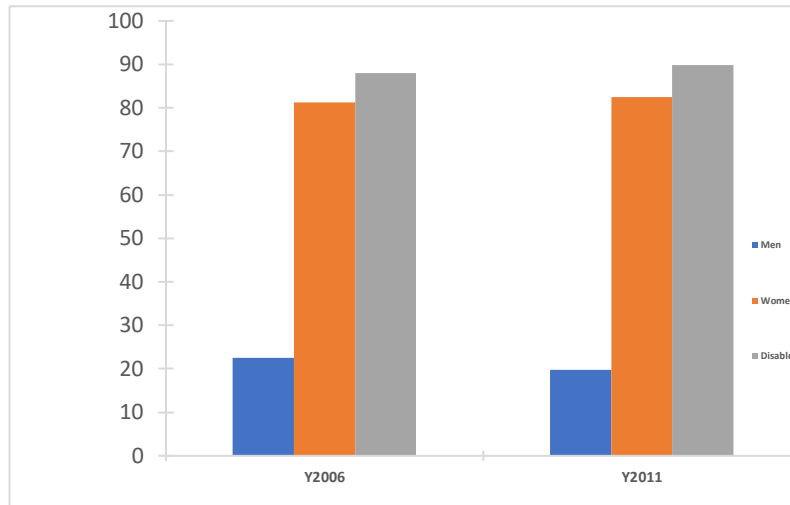


Figure 6. Youth in visible underemployment



Sources: Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2002, 2006, 2011, 2019. Authors' calculations

Further analysis shows that time-related underemployment (i.e., visible underemployment, defined as working less than forty hours per week, was a major concern for young women and youth with disabilities entering the labor market (Figure 5). In 2011, 26% of young women and 17.6% of those with disabilities were underemployed compared to only 10% of young men. The situation worsened in 2019, with the underemployment rate increasing by 7.6 and 4.7 percentage points for young women and youth with disabilities, respectively. Income-related underemployment (i.e., invisible underemployment), which is due to insufficient income, is a far more challenging problem for all categories of youth (Figure 6). During 2006-2011, more than 8 out of 10 young women and youth with disabilities were willing and available to change their current work situation due to insufficient income, compared with about 2 out of 10 young men. As a result, many young workers tend to hold less productive and more poorly paid jobs than they could and would like to hold.

III. Methodology

We used three mutually complementary methods of desk review of existing youth-employment policies, focus-group discussions, and key-informant Interviews. The desk review considered numerous documentary sources including government reports, research reports, and other relevant documents from national or global sources.

Focus-group discussions were held in Dakar, Thiès, Saint-Louis, and Diourbel. These four regions were selected based on their demographic weights. In fact, Dakar alone accounts for almost

one quarter of the population (23%) while Thiès, Diourbel, and Saint-Louis account for 12.9%, 11.1%, and 6.5% of the national population, respectively (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2020).

Participants in focus-group discussions were young men and vulnerable youth (women, people with disabilities, refugees, and returned migrants), all between the ages of 15 and 34. A total of twelve focus groups were conducted, with three sessions per region and ten participants per session. In selecting participants, we ensured that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of public-employment programs were included. The two sub-samples were constituted differently. In fact, we intentionally set the number of beneficiaries of public-employment programs at forty and the number of non-beneficiaries at eighty-one. This approach allowed us to better evaluate both access to information and the follow-up, effectiveness, and sustainability of youth employment initiatives.

Focus-group discussions were organized in April 2022 with the assistance of the regional services of Social Action (a structure within the Senegalese Ministry of Health and Social Action), which are decentralized technical services. Each Focus Group Discussion session was led by two facilitators. A participatory and collaborative approach was used by the facilitators to generate open discussions in a relaxed environment, and free and open discussion was encouraged. During each session, the facilitators outlined general rules of organization and ensured strict anonymity in transcriptions in order to reduce self-censorship. Before the discussions, the focus-group discussions guide was translated from English into Senegal's national language (Wolof) to ensure maximum participation. All focus-group discussions were recorded with the agreement of the participants and then translated into English before the thematic content analysis. A series of questions guided the discussions. Participants provided examples from their own experiences or impressions in response to each question. Before moving on to the next question, the facilitators summarized the main statements for validation.

Key-informant Interviews were also held in Dakar, Thiès, Diourbel, and Saint-Louis between April and July 2022. Key informant contacts were facilitated at the national level by the Center for Development Policy Studies and at the regional level by the services of Social Action and the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment) offices. Overall, 29 interviews were conducted with government institutions (at central, regional, and local levels) and non-governmental organizations, 3 with labor inspectors, 3 with civil society organizations, and 48 with representatives of beneficiaries (i.e., youth leaders). The interviews were conducted primarily in French, but also in Wolof with stakeholders lacking French proficiency. While most interviews were held with a single informant, some were conducted with up to three informants simultaneously. Informants were assured that all interview notes would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. An interview guide was prepared that listed topics

and questions to be discussed. In each interview, the guide was slightly modified to fit the interviewee's organization. However, the general structure of the guide was maintained to ensure comparability of the answers. The interviewees were sent questions beforehand, upon request, so they could be prepared to respond.

IV. Review of Youth-Employment Programs

A vast array of initiatives in Senegal are intended to promote youth employment directly or indirectly. Table 1 presents the employment promotion initiatives implemented since the 2000s. The review does not cover all initiatives because they are so fragmented and, in some cases, poorly documented. Hence, we describe the programs identified as the main instruments used by the government to promote youth employment.

As shown in Table 1, the direct employment promotion initiatives can be classified into funding and technical support initiatives (the National Fund for the Promotion of Youths, the National Employment Action Fund, the National Fund for the Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship, the General Delegation for Rapid Entrepreneurship of Youth and Women, the Senegalese Youth Entrepreneurship Program, and the Emergency Program for Youth Employment and Socio-Economic Insertion (Xëyu Ndaw Ñi), job placement initiatives (the Community Agricultural Areas Program, Agence Nationale d'Insertion et de Développement Agricole, National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment, and CNEE) and skills-training initiatives (the Fund for the Financing of Vocational and Technical Training, the School-Business Training Program). In contrast to direct employment promotion initiatives, Senegal has established structures or programs that, in their actions, contribute indirectly to the creation of jobs. The purpose of these structures, as illustrated in Table 1, is either to promote or professionalize a specific sector (e.g., the Agency for the Promotion and Development of Crafts or APDA) or to support business growth, competitiveness, and influence at the national and international levels (e.g., ADEPME, the Investment Promotion and Infrastructure Agency, the Agency for the Execution of Works of Public Interest, the Investment Priority Guarantee Fund, and the Fonds Souverain d'Investissements Strategiques).

Overall, Table 1 shows that Senegal has implemented several programs to promote youth employment in recent decades, and particularly since 2000. These have created many jobs and lifted thousands of young people out of unemployment. What stands out from Table 1, however, is that policies primarily promote labor supply initiatives, such as entrepreneurship programs, rather than

demand-side initiatives, such as reducing the economic constraints that inhibit business development and job creation.

V. Obstacles to the Implementation of Youth-Employment Policies: Critical Evaluation

To determine why youth-employment programs are or are not effective, an understanding of how programs are delivered is crucial. However, detailed information about delivery is often lacking. In this section, we discuss two programmatic gaps that policy makers need to address: the lack of transparency and the lack of evaluation. Finally, we examine the outcomes of the implementation of different employment programs.

5.1 Lack of Transparency

Transparency in the accounts of programs that receive capital and current transfers from the national budget is minimal. Moreover, program-management accounts are not readily accessible, and accounting reports are limited. For example, management and governance issues were pointed out in the 2015 audit report prepared by the State Inspectorate General (Inspection Générale d'Etat) on the Agence Nationale d'Insertion et de Développement Agricole. In fact, the Agence Nationale d'Insertion et de Développement Agricole is subject to public-accounting rules. However, from the date of its creation in 2006 until March 2012, in the absence of a deliberative body, an accounting officer, or auditors appointed in accordance with the law, the agency applied, with no legal basis, the rules of private accounting. This made it impossible to know how funds were spent, either in terms of operating costs or benefit payments (Inspection Générale d'Etat, 2015). According to the Court of Accounts, the Agence Nationale d'Insertion et de Développement Agricole never drew up a multi-year action and investment plan from 2010 to 2014, though the absence of the plan deprived agencies of a valuable tool for programming and medium- and long-term investments.

While each agency is subject to a performance contract evaluated annually by an independent firm chosen by the Supervisory Board, the National Agency for Integration and Agricultural Development (ANIDA), the Agency for the Development and Supervision of Small and Medium Enterprises (ADPME), and the Agency for the Promotion and Development of Crafts (APDA) never had performance contracts for the 2010-2014 period (Cours des Comptes, 2016). The State Inspectorate General (Inspection Générale d'Etat) also revealed that some projects had been

implemented for several decades without any plans to close them. This is the case of the National Employment Action Fund (hereafter, FNAE), which is still underway, more than fifteen years after its start. Yet this program should have been implemented within a limited period (Inspection Générale d'Etat, 2019). The 2004 audit on FNAE and National Fund for the Promotion of Youths (FNPJ) also revealed numerous irregularities and political interference in the allocation of funds (Cours des Comptes, 2004).

Table 1. Main Programs Used by the Government of Senegal to Promote Youth Employment

DIRECT EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION INITIATIVES					
Funding and Technical Support Initiatives					
Program	Start date	End date (if any)	Mission/Objective	Outcomes	Implementing structure
National Fund for the Promotion of Youths (FNPJ)	2000	2014	Provide funding for individual or collective projects initiated by young Senegalese aged 18-35	12,240 jobs were created between 2000 and 2004. (See World Bank, 2007, p. 87.)	Ministry of Youth
National Employment Action Fund (FNAE)	2000	2014	Reduce unemployment and under-employment, by providing financing to the National Convention State-Employer (for on-the-job training) and by channeling credit to finance business start-ups.	11,000 direct and indirect jobs were created between 2001 and 2004. (See World Bank, 2007, p. 87.)	Labor Ministry
National Fund for the Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship (FNPEF)	2004		Support women's entrepreneurship by providing financing and management support.	Between 2004-2012: 2009 projects financed 18,410 jobs created and/or consolidated 2,157 women benefited from the capacity building program (See Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental, 2013, p. 144.)	Ministry of Women, Family, Gender and Child Protection
General Delegation for Rapid Entrepreneurship of Youth and Women (DER-FJ)	2017		Promote entrepreneurship by providing financial and technical support for women and youth. The DER-FJ aims to finance more than 50,000 entrepreneurs per year and to create 100,000 direct jobs and 200,000 indirect jobs per year	Between 2018 and 2020, the DER-FJ injected 60 billion FCFA into the financing circuits and reached 106,000 beneficiaries. (See Conseil pour le Developement de l'Afrique, 2022, p. 96.)	Presidency of the Republic of Senegal

Senegalese Youth Entrepreneurship Program (PSE-J)	2015		Facilitate the creation of businesses by providing training, technical and financial support, advice and services to young graduates with projects	Between 2016-2018, PSE-J supported 298 businesses and created 1936 jobs. (See République du Sénégal, 2018, p. 60.)	Ministry of Higher Education
Emergency Program for Youth Employment and Socio-Economic Insertion (Xëyu Ndaw Ñi)	2021	2023	Boost training and job creation by: (i) supporting private sector job creation; (ii) implementing labor-intensive public work programs; and (iii) supporting technical and vocational training and entrepreneurship	Between 2021-2022, the program has generated 46,334 jobs, 12 200 training vouchers and funded 86,023 beneficiaries. (See Trevor, 2022.)	Presidency of the Republic of Senegal
Program to Promote Youth and Female Employment (PAPEJF)	2013	2019	Boost the emergence of youth and women's MSMEs by creating an environment that promotes entrepreneurship.	Between 2013-2019, 1,261 jobs were created, and 1,473 jobs consolidated (See African Development Bank Group, 2019.)	Ministry of Youth
Job placement initiatives					
Community Agricultural Areas Program (PRODAC)	2014		Promote youth agricultural entrepreneurship by creating favorable conditions for the development of profitable agricultural enterprises and by providing equipment for the development of production, processing, packaging and marketing of agricultural products. PRODAC aims to create 300,000 jobs for youth between 2012 and 2024.	35,393 jobs were created in the Community Agricultural Domains between 2014 and 2018. (See Revue Annuelle Conjointe, 2017, p. 117.)	Ministry of Youth
National Agency for Integration and Agricultural Development (Agence Nationale)	2008		Promote the integration of young people in the agricultural sector by facilitating their access to land ownership and helping them to carry out their agricultural activities.	Over the past decade, ANIDA has developed farms that range in size from 15 to 100 hectares, increasing from 100 farms in 2015 to 443 farms in 2021 and creating more than	Ministry of Agriculture

d'Insertion et de Développement Agricole)			35,000 jobs (Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental, 2021, p. 33.)	
National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (ANPEJ)	2014	(a) Strengthen the employability of young people and other target groups; (b) facilitate access to employment for youths and other target groups; (c) facilitate access to project funding for youths and other target groups; (d) support youths in the design and implementation of projects; (e) lead actions that can promote youth employment; (f) develop the program of the professional insertion of street vendors; (g) contribute to strengthening the technical capacities and the level of civic awareness of street vendors.	Since its creation, ANPEJ has helped more than 16,000 young people secure employment. (See Ministère de l'Économie du Plan et de la Coopération, 2021, p. 6.)	Ministry of Youth
National Convention State/Employers (CNEE)	1987	Improve the employability of young people seeking their first job, through internship and apprenticeship programs that grant tax benefits to enterprises taking part in the convention.	Between 2015-2019: 234 enterprises were enrolled under the convention; 13,128 young job seekers placed in internships or incubation thanks to the convention. (See Revue Annuelle Conjointe, 2019, p. 82.)	Minister of Economy, Minister of National Education, Ministry of labor National Council of Employers (CNP), National Confederation of Employers of Senegal (CNES)
Skills-training initiatives				

Fund for the Financing of Vocational and Technical Training (3FPT)	2014	(a) Secure the financing of vocational and technical training by mobilizing financial resources; (b) finance initial and ongoing training actions for people from companies, job seekers and project proponents while controlling the use of the allocated funds; (c) carry out prospective studies on the environment of economic development, employment and vocational training	Between 2016 and 2020, the 3FPT has directly financed the vocational training of more than 25,000 young Senegalese men and women and has enabled them to reach the qualification levels of skilled workers, technicians, and senior technicians for a total cost of more than seven billion FCFA. (See Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental, 2021, p. 35.)	Ministry of Employment, Vocational Training and Crafts
School-Business Training Program (PF2E)	2018	Promotes dual training models with the goal of enrolling at least 25,000 young people aged 16 -35 in apprenticeships with private companies.	579 youth were placed in apprenticeships with private sector companies in 2019. (See Busson, 2021, p. 18.)	Ministry of Employment, Vocational Training and Crafts
Indirect employment promotion initiatives				
Agency for the Development and Supervision of Small and Medium Enterprises (ADEPME)	2001	Assist and support SMEs that have applied for or received financial support from the state by providing business development advice, market and business studies, technical training, networking, relationship facilitation, and problem-solving support between other government structures and enterprises.	Between 2019 and 2020, 3,323 SMEs were formalized with over 77,927 jobs created. (See Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental, 2021, p. 36.)	Ministry of Trade and Small and Medium Enterprises
Investment Promotion and Infrastructure Agency (APIX)	2000	Support foreign and national investors in Senegal; improve the attractiveness of Senegal as an investment destination, participate in the upgrading of national infrastructure, provide services to investors; reforming the business environment; and supporting the	Between 2000-2011, 4,864 private investment projects (an average of 405 projects per year) were approved. Nearly 180,000 jobs were created. (See Cabral et al., 2014, p. 12.)	Ministry of Investment Promotion

Government in the process of formalizing memoranda of understanding.				
Agency for the Execution of Works of Public Interest (AGETIP)	1989	Strengthen labor-intensive public works by providing training as well as temporary jobs to unemployed youth to work on public infrastructure projects	Between 2000-2004, 46,870 jobs were created in 2000-2004 (See World Bank, 2007, p. 87.)	Ministry of Local Government
Investment Priority Guarantee Fund (FONGIP)	2013	Guarantee bank loans for the funding of growth projects; refinance microfinance institutions to allow them to provide credit to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), youth associations and women at subsidized interest rates; and to set up a permanent support and monitoring mechanism for project holders.	Between 2013-2020, 63,757 jobs were created and/or consolidated, mainly in agriculture and agribusiness. (See Mbaye, 2020.)	Ministry of Finance and Budget
Sovereign Fund for Strategic Investments (Fonds Souverain d'Investissements Strategiques)	2012	Promote the role of the state as an investor, partner and complement of the private sector; foster direct investments, domestic and foreign, to boost productive economic activity, by generating wealth and employment.	Between 2016-2018, 15,624 jobs were created. (See Ministère de l'Économie des Finances et du Plan, 2018, p. 102; Fonds Souverain d'Investissements Strategiques, 2018, p. 15.)	Ministry of the Economy

Sources: Authors' compilation.

5.2 Lack of Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of employment programs remain weak overall. While most agencies claim to have integrated the practice of monitoring and evaluation into program implementation, there is no systematic evaluation of employment interventions, apart from those partially supported by external funds. Annual activity reports are rarely available: either they do not exist, or they are not accessible. Moreover, major constraints hinder the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems. These are essentially inadequacies in the data collection system; the failure to conduct upstream surveys or ex ante evaluations; and the fact that evaluations have rarely focused on post-program outcomes (World Bank, 2007; Cabral et al., 2014).

VI. Main Findings from Key-informant Interviews and Focus-group discussions

In our key-informant Interviews and focus-group discussions, participants (youth, beneficiary representatives such as youth leaders, program managers, labor inspectors, and civil society actors) were asked the following questions: Is the state's approach to addressing youth employment effective? If so, why? If not, what are the constraints?

Many participants criticized the state's approach, though some (generally program managers) maintained that the government's approach had produced positive results. The ineffectiveness of the state's approach was explained, according to some, by the continuous implementation of new programs, while older ones were not evaluated and had not solved the problems of youth employment. A program manager reported:

The circumstances in which most of the public-employment programs are established are not favorable to the employability of young people. They are designed to provide cyclical rather than structural responses. There is a succession of programs, some overshadow others without the necessary follow-up. Currently we only talk about [the General Delegation for Rapid Entrepreneurship of Youth and Women], Xëyu Ndaw Ñi.... As a reminder, the first employment policy established by President Sall was carried by only three institutions (the Investment Priority Guarantee Fund, the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment and the BNDE).

In the opinion of some representatives of beneficiaries, the state does not need to create a multitude of programs to solve the problem of youth employment because the formation of the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment was intended to streamline existing programs. A representative of the program beneficiaries observed:

No, this approach of the state is not at all effective.... The National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment could solve the problem if it were well structured with the necessary funds. All these programs must be grouped into one. There must be only one youth-employment program that takes care of all youth without distinction and that will be decentralized throughout the country and accessible to everyone."

Some program managers also supported the effectiveness of the state's approach, despite recognizing that some improvements should be made in communication, information, monitoring, evaluation, and outreach. Many stressed the importance of the efforts made in recent years to promote youth employment. In the words of a program manager,

I will not say yes, I will not say no, because the state has put enormous means and a lot of effort into promoting youth employment, but the problem is still there and has not yet been solved.

Although the state has made significant strides in promoting youth employment, the implementation of the public-employment programs in Senegal still faces several challenges. Participants were asked to list the main challenges to the effectiveness of public-employment programs and their responses largely referred to the lack of coordination, the involvement of special interest groups (political parties) and the problem of access to programs.

Coordination issues are raised as one of the main challenges to be addressed. According to interviews conducted with all key informants, there does not appear to be a single frame of reference nor a functional coordination framework for youth employment promotion in Senegal. Key-informant interviews revealed, for example, that the Community Agricultural Areas Program and the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment, which belong to the same ministry, do not have a framework for exchanging and sharing information on initiatives to improve youth labor-market outcomes.

The National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment, which serves as the gateway for job seekers to access training, skills development, work experience, and other assistance, has not yet referred any applicants to the Community Agricultural Areas Program. However, the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment's gateway status is not recognized by all stakeholders, making coordination difficult. The Community Agricultural Areas Program and the

Agence Nationale d'Insertion et de Développement Agricole share almost the same mission, but we found no evidence of any partnership or collaboration between the two programs during the interviews. Another coordination issue raised by respondents is the lack of unification of job seeker databases. For example, the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment has its own database, as does the General Delegation for Rapid Entrepreneurship of Youth and Women, the Community Agricultural Areas Program, the Fund for the Financing of Vocational and Technical Training, the National Office of Professional Training, etc. As a result, an applicant can be in several databases at the same time. According to respondents, all these databases should be interconnected to ensure better tracking.

Furthermore, representatives of youth associations and civil society argued that many young people, potential beneficiaries, feel that there is a certain political influence in the choice of beneficiaries of public-employment programs. It has been argued that to participate in public-employment programs, one must be close to a political leader. In other words, applicants sponsored by political leaders were more likely to be accepted. As one program manager reported:

As you know, these programs are politicized. You have to be a member of their political party to receive funding. However, public-employment programs funded by taxpayers' money should not be used for political purposes.

Of course, this is the reason the majority of young people prefer to get involved in politics. It is for them a quick way to find a job. Here in Ngor, all the young people who got involved in politics with the Mayor were able to find either a job, or funding, or a training offer. So, we can say that the political parties have a real influence on the accessibility of employment programs in Senegal.

In principle, political parties do not influence our skills training program. However, because institutions are generally run by politicians, the risk of political influence over training offers cannot be ruled out.

Regarding problems of access to programs, many participants, especially vulnerable people (youth with disabilities and refugees), feel marginalized in public-employment programs. A young person with a disability reported:

There is discrimination against young people with disabilities in employment programs. Yet the State of Senegal has elaborated a social orientation law that is supposed to take into account all our concerns. I think that this law, if applied, should help people with disabilities to easily find a job.

A representative of a refugee association reported that public-employment programs were extremely difficult to access, even for those with refugee identity cards. She expressed the impression that refugees were not eligible for these public programs and that a Senegalese identification card was required to participate.

As reported by several program managers, the government has established a number of facilities intended to smooth contact with public-employment programs. The most recent of these include employment and entrepreneurship centers, which serve as a one-stop shop for the stakeholders involved in promoting youth employment. Many young people nonetheless remain unaware of the existence of employment and entrepreneurship centers. This explains why several leaders of youth associations claimed that young job seekers found it difficult to take advantage of the government's employment initiatives. For example, a participant had this to say during a focus group discussion:

Because the centres are new, most young people do not know about them. This is normal. But the government should inform young people better.

The few young people who were aware of the existence of the employment and entrepreneurship centers believed they were only available to women seeking to set up income-generating activities. In the words of one young man:

For me, the centers are only intended to provide financing to women who wish to establish a small business. I was unaware that young people could also benefit from their services.

This is consistent with the findings of the Perception Survey of Public Policies and Initiatives for Youth,¹ which revealed that more than half of the young people surveyed were unaware of the major structures in charge of youth employment (Direction Générale de la Planification et des Politiques Économiques, 2021).

VI. Conclusion

¹ The Perception Survey of Public Policies and Initiatives for Youth (EPPIJ in the French acronym) was conducted in 2021 by the General Directorate of Planning and Economic Policies to examine the outcomes of the different employment programs. The EPPIJ is a nationally representative survey with a total sample size of 1,000 youths aged 15-34.

The objective of this study is to investigate how young people in Senegal could best be supported to respond to labor-market challenges and opportunities. In particular, we focused on youth-employment programs, including their limitations and alternative policy options. To do so, we combined a desk review of existing youth-employment policies, key-informant Interviews, and focus-group discussions.

The desk review of youth-employment policies showed that policymakers have made enormous efforts to address youth-employment. In fact, policies have succeeded in lifting thousands of young people out of unemployment, but several obstacles have still negatively affected performance.

The focus-group discussions and key-informant interviews provided several important lessons that the government would benefit from incorporating into the implementation of youth-employment policies. The first is the pessimism of many young people regarding public employment-support programs, an attitude nurtured by the impression that there is bias in favor of a small group of political party activists. It is therefore urgent to deconstruct this impression to foster an environment of trust between the majority of young people and the structures that oversee employment programs. The second lesson is that information on employment programs does not seem to reach many young people. Developing a communication policy that is more accessible to young people is crucial. From this point of view, the use of community structures and authorities could be beneficial. The third lesson is the need for youth-oriented programs to be free of discrimination and to be inclusive, considering the special needs of vulnerable groups (people living with disabilities, refugees, young women, etc.). The fourth lesson is related to the fragmentation of the structures responsible for implementing youth-employment policies. Most participants stressed the need to strengthen the coordination among various employment programs.

Taking these lessons into account should allow the government to improve the effectiveness of its youth-employment programs. This should also allow the youth to evolve in a better climate of confidence: confidence in themselves, confidence in their future and confidence in their government.

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