



## Diversification strategies and rural women's well-being in Senegal

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### Key messages

- **Income diversification through participation in non-farm activities can significantly help rural women improve their well-being and that of their households.**
- **The implementation of actions to promote the non-farm diversification activities of rural women would effectively contribute to the achievement of the government's objectives in terms of inclusive development and gender equality in Senegal.**

### Economic situation of rural women and commitments made by the State

In Senegal, women play a key role in agriculture; they constitute 60% of the agricultural labour force and are responsible for the production of more than 70% of food (IFAD, 2019a, b).

Nonetheless, they face many challenges, particularly in terms of access to finance and quality inputs. Their productive capacity is also constrained by difficulties in accessing land and by the poor quality of infrastructure and services (see PRSP I, 2002; PRSP II, 2006; Ndiaye, 2007; PSE, 2014).

Furthermore, over half of the poor (57.1%) live in rural areas, and most of them are women who depend mainly on agricultural activities for their subsistence (ANSD, 2013).

**Through the Plan Sénégal Émergent (PSE), the State is committed to promoting inclusive development based on the respect of women's differentiated needs by guaranteeing them equal access to opportunities.**

For this purpose, various measures have been implemented since 2016, including the "Gender Budget Document" and the National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality (SNEEG 2016-2026).

Although these measures have led to significant progress (RAC, 2018), the economic situation of rural Senegalese women continues to be marked by their limited access to

productive resources and economic opportunities. Rural women still possess and farm less land. They use fewer productive inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, enhanced seeds) compared to men. They also have low income levels, which restricts their ability to save and invest (DAPSA, 2018; FAO, 2018; IFAD, 2019b).

In order to achieve its goals of inclusive development and gender equity, the government should therefore prioritise the design of alternative policies aimed at improving living standards and lifting the economic constraints faced by rural women.



Photo: US Army Africa / Staff Sgt. Christopher Klutts

### Diversification strategies to develop the rural area

The scientific literature shows that the **adoption of diversification strategies** contributes to:

- improving the living conditions of rural populations (Bezu and Barret, 2012; Aloba Loison, 2019),
- increasing the empowerment of rural women (Maligalig et al., 2019), and
- reducing the limitations in access to production factors - if profits are invested back into agriculture (Anriquez and Daidone, 2010; Dedehouanou et al., 2018)

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Currently, the Senegalese government is supporting agricultural diversification strategies, with the aim of achieving self-sufficiency in the production of rice and onions, optimising the performance of the groundnut sector and developing the fruit and vegetable sector.

An alternative policy option that has not yet been tried by the government is high-return **non-farm diversification**, that is, participation in high value-added non-agricultural activities. This type of diversification refers to economic activities other than 'primary' agricultural production, and is generally designed to improve the profitability of the latter - such as agro-processing.

## Analysis of the strategic potential of non-farm diversification

In 2019-2020, a team of Senegalese PEP researchers carried out a collaborative research project to assess the effects of **high-return non-farm diversification strategies on rural well-being**. The findings reveal that the adoption of such strategies contributes to improving significantly the well-being of rural Senegalese women and their households.

**In terms of women's well-being**, there is an:

- increase in their monthly income by 98,410 CFA francs
- improvement by more than 3% in their level of economic empowerment<sup>1</sup>

**Concerning the well-being of households**, the results show that the impact in terms of:

- revenue is plus important quand income is higher when both genders of the household diversify their activities;
- food security is better when only women diversify in the household.

Thus, women's adoption of non-farm diversification strategies increases their incomes, strengthens their economic empowerment and improves the food security of their households.



## Conclusions

The government's current policy for rural development, based on the Program for Accelerated Pace of Senegalese Agriculture (PRACAS), is mainly centred around agricultural diversification.

The results of the study suggest, however, that **complementary measures aimed at facilitating the adoption of non-farm diversification strategies by rural women** would enable the State to meet its inclusive development and gender equity objectives more efficiently.

To this end, the authors suggest the following steps:

1. Use the experience gained from existing social safety net projects and programmes to **further encourage non-farm income diversification among rural women**.
  - This is to some extent the purpose of the Yokk Com Com project, which supports the development of income-generating activities and complements the cash transfer programme PNBSF.
2. **Evaluate the need for investment** in basic rural infrastructures, required for the development of the non-farm sector - such as roads and transport services.
  - These investments contribute to the creation of economic opportunities and non-farm employment in rural areas.
3. Assess the needs and define the mechanisms **for providing technical guidance to women** engaged or not in non-farm diversification strategies - notably through the sharing of experiences and best practices (in local languages).
  - Indeed, the results of the study suggest that measures to strengthen the intellectual and entrepreneurial capacities of rural women may be necessary to ensure the effective adoption of diversification strategies.
4. A practical option would be to encourage the growth of farmers' organisations to help uneducated women collectively take ownership of non-farm diversification strategies through learning and action.

<sup>1</sup> Women's economic empowerment is measured by a multidimensional index that reflects rural women's access to decision-making power in four areas, namely agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry. For each area of activity, the survey provides information on the person responsible for managing resources within the household. Thus, a rural woman is economically empowered if she is responsible for the management of the productive resources in at least one of the four areas mentioned above.



**This brief summarises outcomes from the project [PMMA-20418](#), conducted 2019-20.**

To find out more about the research methods and findings, read the full paper, published as part of the [PEP working paper series](#).



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*The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of PEP.*

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