



**BROKEN  
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United  
Nations Human Rights Council 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle – 45<sup>th</sup> Session

## **Right to Education**

### **Country Review: Senegal**

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**Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK**

**July 2023**

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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## Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit organisation with one main goal – To protect human rights in education. The organisation started with a website and articles and is currently working on multiple projects, each aiming to fight human rights violations in the educational sphere. As the UPR is related to human rights violations, inequalities, human trafficking, and other violations, Broken Chalk prepares this article for the fourth Cycle and the specific country – the Republic of Senegal.
2. This report will provide an update on the previous issues related to education, plus recommendations on how to deal with new ones.

## Investment in education

3. The Senegalese government recognises the vital role of education in achieving sustainable development. Over the years, it has implemented various initiatives to invest in and improve the education sector. One notable endeavour is the Plan for an Emerging Senegal (PES), launched in 2014. This comprehensive development plan emphasises the modernisation of education through increased funding, improved infrastructure, and enhanced teacher training programs. The government has implemented various specific projects and programs to achieve the objectives outlined in the Plan for an Emerging Senegal. These include infrastructure development initiatives, such as the construction of highways, bridges, and ports, as well as investments in renewable energy, agriculture modernisation, and social protection programs to reduce poverty and inequality.
4. Senegal has undertaken substantial efforts to expand and upgrade educational facilities nationwide. This includes constructing new schools, classrooms, and libraries, particularly in rural areas with limited access to education. According to the data from the Senegalese Ministry of Education, the number of teachers has risen from 2,027 in 2015 to 2,348 in 2021; the number of student beds was 6,030 in 2012 and has increased to 43,375 beds in 2022; the number of scholarship holders has risen from 77,924 students in 2011-2012 to 122,778 students in 2021. Forty thousand teachers have benefited from training leading to a qualification.
5. In recent years, there has been an emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to address the skills gap and promote employment opportunities. The government has established vocational training centres and developed programs that align with the job market's needs. Furthermore, investment in educational infrastructure has been a priority. The government has sought to improve school facilities, including classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, to create an environment conducive to learning. This includes the expansion of ICT infrastructure in schools to enhance digital literacy and access to information. The education budget for 2022-2023 amounts to 778 billion CFA francs (1.186 billion euros), 172 billion francs more than the previous budget. The higher

education budget for the same period is 330 billion CFA francs (503 million euros). In 2018, 20.6% of Senegal's public finances were devoted to education, which now accounts for a quarter of the budget. Despite this, a severe regional imbalance exists, with investment concentrated mainly in large urban areas.

6. While Senegal has demonstrated commendable efforts in investing in education, several challenges hinder the sector's progress—limited financial resources, coupled with competing demands in other sectors, can be obstacles to achieving optimal investment levels. Of 10,102 elementary schools, 4,598 have an incomplete cycle, a severe factor in educational inequality.

## Technology in education

7. Over the years, the Senegalese government, in collaboration with various stakeholders, has implemented initiatives to integrate technology into the education system to improve access to quality education and enhance learning outcomes. Senegal has implemented digital learning platforms to supplement traditional classroom teaching. For instance, the “SenEcole” platform provides educational content aligned with the national curriculum, including interactive exercises, videos, and quizzes. Students can access these resources through computers, tablets, or smartphones, enabling self-paced learning and remote education. Such platforms promote personalised learning experiences, facilitate access to educational materials, and enhance student engagement.
8. Improving internet connectivity and infrastructure is crucial for effectively integrating technology into education. In Senegal, efforts have been made to expand broadband connectivity, particularly in schools and universities. This enables students and teachers to access online resources, collaborate with peers, and engage in distance learning. Additionally, the government has implemented initiatives to provide schools with computer labs and digital devices, ensuring access to technology for urban and rural communities.
9. The Senegalese government is now digital, and the political powers that be communicate regularly via the Internet: press releases, ministers' agendas and ministers' actions in the field. While fully operational, this digitisation needs to be improved by limited access to telecommunications in the countryside and isolated regions, where access to 2G and 3G services is limited. Online payment services such as Orange Money and Wizall are becoming increasingly widespread in the countryside for small artisans and pastoral areas. However, digital education still needs to catch up.

## Equality and non-discrimination

10. Senegal's gender inequality index is rising steadily but remains low: Senegal is ranked 113th out of 144 countries and 10th out of 36 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Girls' school

enrolment has been the main weakness of gender equality policies in recent decades. Senegal has adopted several laws to reduce gender inequality, including the Equality at Work Act. Senegal has made significant efforts by setting up political institutions dedicated to gender issues, such as the Directorate for Gender Equity and Equality (DEEG) and the National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality.

- 11.** Sanitary facilities for girls, access to sanitary protection and education about sexuality are all lacking. Menstruation-related challenges can impact girls' attendance and participation in school. Limited access to menstrual hygiene products, lack of private and clean facilities, and stigma surrounding menstruation can lead to absences and hinder girls' educational progress. Traditional gender roles and cultural norms can restrict girls' access to education. In some communities, girls are expected to prioritise household chores and early marriage over schooling, reinforcing gender inequalities and limiting their educational opportunities. Factors such as long distances to schools, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of transportation can prevent girls from attending school regularly, leading to high dropout rates. Early marriage and teenage pregnancy still significantly affect girls' education in Senegal. Cultural practices and societal pressures contribute to a higher risk of girls being forced into marriage at a young age, resulting in the interruption or complete cessation of their education. Additionally, pregnancies during adolescence often lead to school dropout due to social stigma and lack of support.
- 12.** Political institutions reflect real but isolated progress: while 43% of the members of the National Assembly are women, the government has only five women ministers out of 40. Some systemic ministries have been entrusted to women in the current government led by Amadou Ba: Foreign Affairs (Aïssata Tall), Economy and Planning (Oulimata Sarr) and Oil and Energy (Sophie Gladyma). Internal affairs, Defence and Justice, remain the preserve of male ministers.
- 13.** Participation in working life is more or less similar in urban and rural areas, but men's participation (69.4%) contrasts sharply with that of women (50.3%). Unemployment affects women disproportionately (38.3%) compared to men (11.3%).

## Recommendations

- 14.** Technology enables access to various open educational resources (OER), including digital textbooks, online courses, and educational videos. Launching a vast digitisation plan to raise digital awareness among the population. Telecommunications are an asset for education, although digital technology cannot replace face-to-face education. Teaching pupils about the potential and limits of digital technology, such as artificial intelligence, will ensure that the population is digitalised and aware of the effects of digital technology.

- 15.** The integration of AI holds immense potential to enhance personalised learning, improve teaching practices, and facilitate data-driven decision-making. Several steps can be taken to leverage AI in education in Senegal further: AI-powered tutoring systems can provide personalised instruction, adapt to students' learning styles, and address their individual needs. Immersive technologies like VR and AR can create interactive and engaging learning experiences, enabling students to explore complex concepts virtually. AI-powered language processing tools can assist in language learning, speech recognition, and automated translation, enhancing language education in multilingual contexts. These three examples can be achieved while being aware of the potential and limits of new technologies.
- 16.** Investment in primary and secondary education remains an absolute priority. Education is a fundamental right, and the Senegalese government must step up its efforts to bridge the territorial divide. Access to schools in the major conurbations (Dakar, Saint-Louis) contrasts sharply with rural areas. Senegal's young population makes it possible to pursue major public investment plans. Public debt is currently sustainable, and public investment in education and health will pay off in the long term: a better-educated and healthier population will be a more dynamic workforce for the economic market.
- 17.** Issuing quality labels and launching scientific research initiatives in partnership with private institutions. A research tax credit model would enable Senegalese universities to distinguish themselves in research and development.
- 18.** Senegalese universities are too often inaccessible due to their prohibitive cost for many students. Senegal has a young and dynamic population, a factor for assured growth. Still, the training of young people must be the priority, and all financial resources must be made available for this purpose. Higher education in Senegal must be brought closer to European university systems by being publicly funded. The privatisation of universities means that higher education is reserved for the wealthy classes and therefore offers no real career opportunities for most of the population. Against a backdrop of the Islamist threat, curbing terrorism means sending students to university.
- 19.** Senegal is a democratic country in principle but autocratic in reality: recent events and the partial trial of political opponent Ousmane Sonko bear witness to this political authoritarianism. Senegalese politics is economically liberal and authoritarian when it comes to civil liberties. Yet Senegal cannot be content with economic modernisation and must remain on the democratic path. There can be no development without democracy. President Macky Sall's announcement on 3 July that he will not stand for a third (and unconstitutional) term of office is a positive sign. Senegal's democratic institutions have thus been consolidated.
- 20.** Senegal's geopolitical position is a strength from which the country can draw essential opportunities. Non-alignment and Pan-Africanism enable Senegal to engage in dialogue with all the global players: the government must strengthen its economic cooperation with

the newly industrialised countries (BRICS) to bring a significant flow of FDI to the Senegalese economy. Student and cultural cooperation must follow this economic cooperation.

21. Building a common educational space in West Africa along the lines of the European Union's "Erasmus" model would give Senegalese universities greater international visibility and encourage student mobility.
22. Girls may encounter gender-based violence in and around schools, including sexual harassment, bullying, and abuse. Such incidents create an unsafe and hostile learning environment, impacting girls' emotional well-being and ability to engage in their education fully. Equality between men and women is an absolute necessity for Senegal and its development: ensuring gender equality is not only a question of human dignity but also a factor of pacification and harmonisation for society. Senegalese teachers need to be trained in gender equality issues. Introducing comprehensive sexuality education programs that address reproductive health, gender equality, and human rights can empower girls to make informed decisions regarding their education, health, and well-being.
23. Expenditure by the Ministry of Vocational Training represents only 0.9% of the total budget. With unemployment at 22.9%, priority must be given to vocational training. The Senegalese government must place particular emphasis on vocational training for women.

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