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# A Spot Under the Baobab Tree: The Gender Parity Law and the Fight for Women's Political Representation in Modern Senegal

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**A SPOT UNDER THE BAOBAB TREE: THE GENDER PARITY LAW AND THE  
FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN MODERN SENEGAL**

A thesis presented

by

Salima Etoka

to

The Political Science Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for Honors in Political Science

Trinity College  
Hartford, CT  
April 20, 2015

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Thesis Advisor

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Department Chair

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## Abstract

The discourse on women and development stems from a long history of the international community's commitment to advancing women's rights. Since the early 1970s, the UN has taken different approaches to address gender inequality. This thesis explores this discourse and the Millennium Development Goals to address the situation of women in Senegal. I first argue that in spite of Senegal's accomplishments in meeting different targets, women are still marginalized. In 2010, Senegal passed a gender parity law to increase the number of women within the government. Through fieldwork in Dakar, this study seeks to understand the mobilization efforts leading to the adoption of the law and the anticipated results as related to women and development. This analysis shows that the parity law has increased the representation of women in parliament; started changing stereotypes about women; and created a space for them to enter politics. Through the discussions with the local groups, I argue that efforts at the local, national and international levels, including improving education, decreasing illiteracy, creating economic opportunities, working with local organizations that advocate for women and holding countries that ratify international conventions to higher standards will achieve gender equality within Senegal where the parity law hasn't.

# Table of Contents

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| Index of Abbreviations ..... | IV |
| Interview Schedule.....      | V  |
| Introduction.....            | 1  |
| Chapter 1 .....              | 5  |
| Chapter 2.....               | 21 |
| Chapter 3.....               | 35 |
| Chapter 4.....               | 50 |
| Conclusion .....             | 68 |
| Bibliography .....           | 71 |

## Abbreviations

**AJS:** Association of Female Jurists (Association des Juristes Sénégalaises)

**AFEME:** Association of Women of the Medina (Association des Femmes de la Médina)

**COSEF:** Council of Senegalese Women (Conseil Senegalais des Femmes)

**FAS:** Femmes Africa Solidarité

**ISDD:** Institut Supérieur de Droit de Dakar

**MDGs:** Millennium Development Goals

**ONP:** National Parity Observatory (Observatoire National Pour La Parité)

**ORGENS:** Observatory on Gender Relations in Senegal (Observatoire des Relations de Genre Sénégal (ORGENS))

**RADDHO:** African Assembly for the Defense of Human Right (Rencontre Africaine Pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme)

**RSJ:** Réseau Siggil Jigeen

## Interview Schedule

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Interviewee</b>       | <b>Location</b> | <b>Organization</b>                        |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--|
| 6/16/2014   | Thiaba Sembene           | Dakar, Senegal  | RSJ  |
| 6/24/2014   | Madame Yoff <sup>1</sup> | Dakar, Senegal  | AJS  |
| 7/2/2014    | Yacine Diagne            | Dakar, Senegal  | AFEME                                      |
| 7/3/2014    | Amy Sakho                | Pikine, Senegal | AJS  |
| 7/3/2014    | Yaye Sokhna Ndiaye       | Dakar, Senegal  | Union of Women Associations of Pikine East |
| 7/7/2014    | Jihonda Mané             | Dakar, Senegal  | AJS  |
| 7/7/2014    | Prof. Moussa Ndior       | Dakar, Senegal  | Director of ISDD                           |
| 7/16/2014   | Yaya Ngor <sup>2</sup>   | Dakar, Senegal  | ORGENS                                     |
| 7/21/2014   | Oumy Ba                  | Dakar, Senegal  | Quartiers du Monde                         |
| 7/21/2014   | Maman Cisse              | Dakar, Senegal  | Student                                    |
| 10/15/2014  | Madina Dia               | Dakar, Senegal  | FAS  |

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<sup>1</sup> This name has been changed in order to protect the identity of the individual at AJS.

<sup>2</sup> This name has been changed to protect the identity of the individual at ORGENS.

## Introduction

Gender inequality is a global problem. The developed and developing countries have created conditions that prevent men and women from accessing the same opportunities. Worldwide, thirty-five percent of women are victims of physical or sexual violence by their intimate partner.<sup>3</sup> Two-thirds of the 781 million people who are illiterate are women.<sup>4</sup> Women produce 70% of crops globally, but they own 2% of the land.<sup>5</sup> The Democratic Republic of Congo remains the “rape capital of the world,” where women are mutilated and entire communities continue to be destroyed by war.<sup>6</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women remain marginalized throughout different societies.

Women are not only victims of violence and marginalization; they are unable to address their issues through political institutions. The United States is a democratic country that has set an example for the rest of the world, yet the composition of women is 19% in Congress and 20% in Senate.<sup>7</sup> There are currently 22 female heads of state, meaning that despite the long journey for women’s rights, there are challenges that remain.<sup>8</sup> For example, women earn lower wages than men; they are under-represented in sectors like engineering;

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<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women*. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *Gender and Leadership*. (2015). Infographic. *International Federation of University Women*. Web. 18 Apr 2015. <http://www.ifuw.org/infographic-gender-leadership/>.

<sup>5</sup> Musau, Z. (2015, April). Gender equality still within reach. *Africa Renewal*. Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2015/gender-equality-still-within-reach>.

<sup>6</sup> Palermo, Tia, & Peterman, Amber. (2011). Undercounting, overcounting and the longevity of flawed estimates: statistics on sexual violence in conflict. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 89(12), 924-925. Retrieved April 13, 2015, from [http://www.scielosp.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0042-96862011001200017&lng=en&tlng=es](http://www.scielosp.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0042-96862011001200017&lng=en&tlng=es). 10.1590/S0042-96862011001200017.

<sup>7</sup> Ighobor, K. (2015, April). A celebratory rise in women’s political participation. *Africa Renewal*. Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2015/celebratory-rise-women’s-political-participation>

<sup>8</sup> Female world leaders currently in power. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from [http://www.jjmccullough.com/charts\\_rest\\_female-leaders.php](http://www.jjmccullough.com/charts_rest_female-leaders.php)



and, they are 24% of senior management globally.<sup>9</sup> In other parts of the world, women fight for the right to education, health and ending female genital mutilation. Nicholas Kristof and Sherly Wudunn state in *Half the Sky*, “women and girls cloistered in huts, uneducated, unemployed, and unable to contribute significantly to the world represent a vast seam of human gold that is never mined.”<sup>10</sup> Women are becoming aware of their marginalization and the disadvantages that arise when they cannot fight the systems and laws which oppress them.

With my interest in gender equality and women’s rights, I was concerned with the portrayal of African women. Africa is the continent where anything and everything goes wrong. In the West, we are often shown images of people escaping war; women balancing water on their heads; and women who are oppressed in their communities and need to be empowered. My experiences as a Congolese-American have exposed me to the truth about women in traditional, African societies and the expectations that exist for these girls and women. While I studied in Senegal, I was exposed to the reality of women in Africa and their daily challenges. Certain tasks were to be completed by women in the household, despite their other duties. Through my internship, I saw the situation that young girls face in the suburbs of Dakar. A local NGO worked with these uneducated adolescents on health education and to prepare them for the future.

After my study abroad program, I decided to spend the summer conducting research. I had expressed interest in a project that analyzed gender and development but within the African context. After background research, I discovered that women in West Africa had

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<sup>9</sup> *Gender and Leadership*, International Federation of University Women

<sup>10</sup> Kristoff, N., & WuDunn, S. (2009). *Half the Sky*. New York: Vintage Books, 239.

been active in the market economy. I was informed that Senegal passed a gender parity law with the hopes of increasing women in politics. At the start of the project, I envisioned my thesis analyzing the disjuncture between the international community's discourse on women and development and the activism at the local level. I proposed working with women in Senegal civil society organizations to understand the conditions of women and their work in helping other women contribute to development. I was convinced that these women who were engaged in development projects and women's rights would highlight these problems and the international community's commitment to gender and development.

As the project evolved, the gender parity law became a center piece to my analysis. It presented itself as an opportunity to learn about the involvement of women and their role within Senegalese society. I started by examining the discourse on women and development and the engagement of the international community. I then explored the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically the third goal on the empowerment of women and gender equality to address the conditions of Senegalese women. These proved that Senegal has made advancement in meeting different targets. In 2010, Senegal passed a law that called for greater representation of women within the government. I analyzed the mobilization efforts and rhetoric in advocating for the law and the anticipated results. Lastly, my focus was on the accomplishments and failures of the gender parity law and the factors that could achieve gender equality within Senegal.

Using Senegal as a case study, the parity law reveals some interesting finds about the women. They encounter challenges within Senegalese society because of cultural and religious reasons. Despite fulfilling certain indicators for the MDGs, Senegal has failed to assure change in gender relations. I discovered that civil society organizations understood the

role of women in development and their arguments for the parity law are in harmony with the international community's efforts. My analysis demonstrates that the law has increased the representation of women in parliament; started changing stereotypes about women; and has created a space for women to enter politics. Even with these accomplishments, the law has fallen short of granting women access to the same opportunities as men within and outside of politics. The conclusion of this study is that efforts at the local, national and international levels, including improving education, decreasing illiteracy, creating economic opportunities, working with local organizations that advocate for women's rights and holding countries that ratify international conventions to higher standards are the efforts that are going to lead to the accomplishment of the third millennium goal.

Beginning in Chapter one, I argue that the MDGs are a framework for understanding the current situation of women in Senegal. In chapter two, I present the literature review on the international discourse on gender and development since the 1970s. This discussion is followed by my methodology. In Chapter 3, I discuss the parity law, its origins and purpose. The last chapter investigates the consequences of the parity law and the problems that remain five years after its adoption. Ultimately, I argue that the adoption of the parity law demonstrates Senegal's commitment to the third millennium development goal and the engagement by local society for women's rights, yet its implementation establishes the inability of the law to create a society where women and men contribute equally to the development of the country.

## **Chapter One**

### **The Millennium Development Goals: The Framework for Analyzing the Conditions of Women in Contemporary Senegal**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides the background for understanding contemporary Senegal and the conditions of women in the areas of education, political participation and employment opportunities. This is accomplished through discussing the MDGs adopted in 2000. In the first section, I define these goals as the framework for the standards developed at the global scale regarding development by the year 2015. Subsequently, I discuss the criticism by scholars on the MDGs and their alternative interpretation on the international efforts concerning development. While recognizing the debate about the creation and implementation of the goals, the succeeding section presents the case study of Senegal. My argument focuses on the successes, challenges and tremendous growth by Senegal in meeting the third development goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

#### **The Millennium Development Goals**

The main purpose of the United Nations (UN) since its creation in 1945 has been the gathering of world leaders to discuss and take positions on global issues. Through this governing body, the international community has dealt with development since the 1970s. These efforts will be further discussed in the succeeding chapter. World leaders, civil society organizations and other delegates came together at the Millennium Summit in 2000 and adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which included the MDGs. These

leaders were motivated by the belief that creating better conditions was not a fight for certain countries, but something to involve everyone. In the report following the summit, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other delegates explained that “we will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, they declared their obligation: “We reaffirm our commitment to eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth, sustainable development and global prosperity for all.”<sup>12</sup>

Delegates agreed on eight concrete goals covering various components of development and created indicators that would measure their execution. They become known as “...the world’s time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions— income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion— while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability.”<sup>13</sup> The goals reflected the opinion that the world was taking drastic actions that would change the lives of those living in extreme poverty by 2015. It was important that a system be created to measure the extent to which any change was taking place. A report by the advisory groups to the UN Secretary regarding the MDGs summarizes the declaration and the roles of the local and international communities:

Achieving the Goals is largely about making core investments in infrastructure and human capital that enable poor people to join the global economy, while empowering

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<sup>11</sup> Assembly, U. G. (2005A, September). *World summit outcome*. In Final document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, UN doc. A/60/L (Vol. 1, pp. 25-26), 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Investing in Development: A practical plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. Earthscan; Millennium Project, 2005, 21.

the poor with economic, political, and social rights that will enable them to make full use of infrastructure and human capital, wherever they choose to live.<sup>14</sup>

These goals were diverse and expressed the mutual fight to encourage developed nations in improving the quality of life.

The goals presented in the *Millennium Declaration* by numerical order were: “To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; [and finally,] develop a global partnership for development.”<sup>15</sup> The first goal involved halving poverty for those living on less than a dollar a day.<sup>16</sup> The second and third goals are focused on increasing school attendance and closing the gap between boy and girls in schools. To speak briefly about the other goals, world leaders wanted to increase the number of mothers receiving access to health care, especially during pregnancy and decrease the number of children dying before the age of one. They committed themselves to combatting diseases like HIV/AIDS that have impacted people around the world. The seventh goal dealt with providing people with the right resources to foster a positive interaction between human beings and their environment. The last goal brings the developed nations into the dialogue and outlines their role in making this campaign a success.

### **The Third Development Goal: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

Although these goals are crucial to the development story of different countries, the third goal, “to promote gender equality and empower women,” is important to my analysis

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Assembly, U. G. (2000B). United Nations millennium declaration. resolution adopted, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

since I will later apply it to the context of Senegal to examine issues of women and development. This goal has different indicators that quantify gender equality and empowerment. The first indicator points to closing the gap between boys and girls in the education system. Whereas the second goal wanted to increase the enrollment in schools, the third goal focuses on the ratio or the distribution of kids in schools based on their gender. Simply put, the international community seeks to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015.”<sup>17</sup> The second indicator of the third goal strives to increase the number of women in parliament and encourage governing bodies to employ different methods for engaging them. The third indicator recognizes that women face discrimination in the labor market. Its purpose is looking at their position in the economy and trying to create equal opportunities between men and women.

While the third goal provides different indicators for measuring equality and empowerment, its focal point is on education. Access to education is represented as the tool that will improve the conditions of women and entire societies around the world. The UN Secretary declared at the summit in 2000 that “experience has shown, over and over again, that investments in girls’ education translate directly and quickly into better nutrition for the whole family, better health care, declining fertility, poverty reduction and better overall economic performance.”<sup>18</sup> The recommendations indicate that allowing girls to access education translates into positive changes taking place.

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations (2010, September). “GOAL 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.” Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG\\_FS\\_3\\_EN.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_3_EN.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Annan, K.A. (2000). We, the peoples of the United Nations in the 21st Century. United Nations, New York, 22.

Overall, the international community acknowledged the contribution of women in development in the rhetoric of these declarations. At the adoption of the MDGs in 2000, they highlighted one of their purposes as “to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective way to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.”<sup>19</sup> After the 2005 Summit, they stated that “we recognize the need to pay special attention to the human rights of women and children and undertake to advance them in every possible way, including by bringing gender and child-protection perspectives into the human rights agenda.”<sup>20</sup> Whether development is reached through education or political representation or employment opportunities, the argument stressed is that all members of society need to be involved for the development of the country.

### **Criticisms against the Millennium Development Goals**

Now that I have provided the background information on the MDGs and the indicators for determining the world’s success of achieving these goals, I would like to analyze some of the counter-arguments that show that these aims were not universally accepted. Certain scholars that I will discuss have mentioned the problems with the variables, wording that discriminates against certain regions and even confusion with the indicators. In spite of these valid arguments, I have chosen to use this framework to discuss women and development in Senegal because it has validity. The adoption of the goals by delegates from around the world gives the MDGs legitimacy.

One of the main arguments against the application of the MDGs is centered on the problematic nature in the creation of the indicators. As I stated earlier, these indicators range

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<sup>19</sup> Assembly, *World summit outcome*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 28.



from halving the world's population for those living on less than a dollar a day to achieving 100% enrollment in primary and secondary schools. The winner-take-all approach judges these countries on whether or not they completely fulfill the requirements, rather than highlighting the major progress they've accomplished. There was even consensus that these goals were ambitious and that countries would not reach these standards in time. Clemens, Kenny and Moss propose "... that the goals as a set are impossible to meet because of how they were designed, not primarily because of lack of policy effort, commitment, or aid."<sup>21</sup> They don't account the major improvements made by countries when evaluating the percentage changes, including the increase in the number of children in school or the decrease in infant mortality. As I will highlight in the next section, the MDGs were expected to be achieved in 2015, but there are currently more countries that have work to complete than those who can celebrate their achievements.

Another argument raised is that in the creation of these indicators the international community failed to take historical patterns into consideration. This argument has basis in the fact that these goals didn't take into account the earlier work of these countries regarding economic growth. William Easterly finds that "... the MDGs are poorly and arbitrarily designed to measure progress against poverty and deprivation, and that their design makes Africa look worse than it really is."<sup>22</sup> For example, the first goal would like to halve the world's population living on less than a dollar a day. Associated with this indicator is the fact that economic growth has to occur at the country level. Clemens, Kenny and Moss argue that "economic growth is central to the poverty reduction goal because it is the only source of

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<sup>21</sup> Clemens, M. A., Kenny, C. J., & Moss, T. J. (2007). The trouble with the MDGs: confronting expectations of aid and development success. *World development*, 35(5), 735-751, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Easterly, W. (2009). How the millennium development goals are unfair to Africa. *World Development*, 37(1), 26-35, 26.

increased income for the poor that can be (comparatively) rapidly achieved.”<sup>23</sup> Economists have calculated the economic growth that these countries would need in order to lift people out of poverty. With the case of Senegal, its economic growth of 3% in the early 1980s and 5.5% in 2000 shows that the goals were unrealistic and these countries wouldn’t have the opportunity for reaching the 7% economic growth.<sup>24</sup> Senegal, despite being more developed than other countries, serves as an example that this level of growth wouldn’t be possible.

Additionally, there’s a question regarding the intentions. I found these arguments to be interesting because of the makeup of the summit that adopted them. The summit brought together leaders, civil society organizations and other delegates. It wasn’t just UN Committees making these decisions, but rather, people from different backgrounds. On one hand, there doesn’t seem to be a bias against certain regions since they were all represented. This argument is whether these goals were meant to be judged on a country specific level or if they were indicators for the world on development. Easterly defends that “the MDGs were meant as a major motivational device to increase development efforts in and on behalf of poor countries, and the resulting publicity and aid increases suggest they can claim considerable achievement on that score.”<sup>25</sup> Hannels and Cassels have similar viewpoints: “The millennium development goals represent desirable ends; they are not a prescription for the means by which those ends are to be achieved.”<sup>26</sup> The way I read this is that although the numbers will tell us that most countries are failing to achieve the goals, this is a reflection of the world and its commitment that needs to continue to pull all people out of poverty, rather than the lack of engagement by specific countries.

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<sup>23</sup> Clemens, et al., “The Trouble with the MDGs,” 5.

<sup>24</sup> Diagne, et al., “Assessing Development Strategies,” 8.

<sup>25</sup> Easterly, “How the Millennium Development Goals,” 26.

<sup>26</sup> Haines & Cassels, “Can the Millennium Development Goals,” 2.

Furthermore, the labeling of certain regions like Sub-Saharan Africa as failures will have negative consequences on the region. As I have just described, the big concern is on whether these goals were supposed to be judged at the global scale or whether individual countries were to be reprimanded for their shortfalls. The latter approach is more popular and the African continent receives the negativity. For example, “Sub-Saharan Africa would not reach the poverty goals until the year 2147 and for child mortality until 2165.”<sup>27</sup> “The UNDP (2003) estimates that, on current rates of progress, sub-Saharan Africa would not meet the hunger, primary education and child mortality targets for at least another century.”<sup>28</sup> While the data confirms that African nations need a longer period to achieve these goals, it doesn’t show the whole truth. For one, this data doesn’t capture the improvements made by African countries since 2000. Easterly explains that “it is demoralizing to have goals for Africa that can only be attained with progress that is nearly without historical precedent from other regions or in Africa itself. Africa has enough problems without international organizations and campaigners downplaying African success when it happens.”<sup>29</sup> This argument echoes the earlier points made about the potential by international organizations to blame Africa for its low performance. This could mean the suspension or decrease of aid provided to these countries. By taking this approach, those who needed the most help would not benefit and these groups would not acknowledge the structural problems with the MDGs.

## **Senegal and the Millennium Development Goals**

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<sup>27</sup> Haines & Cassels, “Can the Millennium Development Goals,” 2.

<sup>28</sup> Clemens, et al., 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> Easterly, 34.

Despite the pessimistic outlook on Sub-Saharan Africa and the MDGs, Senegal has been recognized for its efforts. Although I will discuss the third development goal in the next section, in general, efforts are being made by the government to improve the lives of people. Senegal has created policies that have resulted in the progress in 5 of the 7 goals. The two goals it struggled with were the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ones related to enrolling all kids in the education system and achieving gender parity in the schools.<sup>30</sup> Regarding reducing poverty, Senegal will not halve those living in poverty by 2015, but there are noticeable changes between the works they've been able to do, especially in the urban areas.<sup>31</sup> Also in the urban areas, there's progress being made in the number of women who have access to health care, particularly during pregnancy. For example, "the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel has increased from 49% in 1999 to 66.9% in 2009."<sup>32</sup> Senegal is doing a better job of providing access to water in the urban areas and working on the rural areas, but there's greater work to be done for sanitation, both in the urban and rural areas. As data shows, "at a national level, the rate of access to drinking water has increased from 56% in 1990 to 76.6% in 2005.... From 25.8% in 1990, access to sanitation has reached 41% in 2005."<sup>33</sup> If I am using earlier arguments that countries that don't reach the desired goal for the goals are failures, Senegal wouldn't stand out. It's after recognizing where this country started and the progress it has achieved that we can see the real changing taking place in how people live.

### **Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: The Senegalese Context**

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<sup>30</sup> Sahn & Stifel, "Progress Towards Millennium Development."

<sup>31</sup> Diagne, et al.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

This next section focuses on the indicators for achieving the third goal and how changes have taken place in Senegal. I start with education and what's been done the primary and secondary level. Laurie Lee explains, "Senegal has also achieved the Millennium Development Goal of equality between the number of girls and boys enrolling in primary school."<sup>34</sup> Not all children under the age of 16 are enrolled in school, but this accomplishment recognizes that Senegal has been successful in closing the gap between girls and boys. She actually specifies that, "in fact, now slightly more girls than boys enroll in primary school, although more boys than girls complete primary school."<sup>35</sup> Past the primary level, there's tremendous work to ensure the same rates of success as at the primary level. In higher education, the percentage of women in education was 2% in 1960; then it increased from 17 to 18% between 1975 and 1985.<sup>36</sup> In 1995, women made up 1/3 of the enrollment at the University of Dakar.<sup>37</sup> Currently, males outnumber women at the university by five to one.<sup>38</sup> Regarding the rates of literacy which serve as another measure for education, the literacy rate among Senegalese women between 15 and 24 is 56% whereas it is 74% for men between the same ages.<sup>39</sup> These numbers are critical and remind us that Senegal will not achieve the MDGs #2 and #3 in a timely fashion, but they remind us that it's a country that should be congratulated for their efforts. Girls have made large progress in getting to primary school, and other efforts may assure the same success at the secondary level and university.

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<sup>34</sup> Lee, L. (2013). "21st Century Progress in Africa: Achieving MDG 3 in Senegal." *Impatient Optimists*. Retrieved from <http://www.impatientoptimists.org/Posts/2013/09/21st-Century-Progress-in-Africa-Achieving-MDG-3-in-Senegal>, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 2

<sup>36</sup> Minister of Women, Children and Family. (1993). *Senegalese Women By the Year 2015*. Dakar: The Republic of Senegal, Minister of Woman, Children and Family.

<sup>37</sup> Gellar, S. (1982). *Senegal: an African nation between Islam and the West* (pp. 96-97). Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 122.

<sup>38</sup> Engelking, T. L. (2008). Senegalese Women, Education, and Polygamy in "Une si longue lettre" and "Faat Kiné". *The French Review*, 326-340, 7.

<sup>39</sup> UN Women (2013b). *Press Statement of Michelle Bachelet Executive Director of UN Women in Dakar, Senegal* [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/1/press-statement-of-michelle-bachelet-executive-director-of-un-women-in-dakar-senegal>.

Some of these changes came about after initiatives from the government. The government in the 1980s created a national law making education obligatory for those under 16 and it increased the number of girls who started attending schools. Some of the other changes can be attributed to the organizations that are involved in educating women and their children on the importance of education. While more students, especially girls are enrolled in school, girls continue to be pulled out first when families need another person to work; a girl gets pregnant at a young age or ends up getting married.<sup>40</sup> These organizations are also working with the women who are illiterate to learn their own local language.

The second indicator for the third goal calls for an increase in the number of women in political representation, especially in parliaments. As stated earlier, having women in government decision making bodies allows them to voice their opinion. At the global scale, the UN reports that “in 2012, the number of women members of parliament globally jumped to 20.4 per cent at the end of 2012 from 19.6 per cent at the beginning of 2012—still far short of gender parity but a rare annual increase of nearly one percentage point.”<sup>41</sup> It’s in this category that Senegal surpasses even the international standards and serves as an example for other countries. In Francophone Africa, Senegal has been a leader with a rate of 19.2 percent of women in parliament since 2001.<sup>42</sup> This number explains women in government and the situation has only improved in this country for women in politics. Most recently, the UN has praised its accomplishments: “Senegal leapt from number 54 to 6 globally in terms of women's political representation...”<sup>43</sup> This is a great achievement for Senegal and for Africa in general for having such high numbers of representation within government. Unlike

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<sup>40</sup> Engelking, “Senegalese Women, Education, and Polygamy in ‘Une si longue lettre’ and ‘Faat Kiné,’” 7.

<sup>41</sup> United Nations, “Goal #3.”

<sup>42</sup> Kasse, A. F. (2004). *Women in politics in Senegal*. In Collaboration with, 66, 2.

<sup>43</sup> UN Women, “Press Statement.”

education with shows the lack of progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women, this second indicator shows that Senegal may be headed in a positive direction and that others can learn from it.

Change is starting to happen leading to the increase of women in National Assembly and the growing consciousness by women about their role in government. The gender parity, which I will discuss in chapter 3, has been influential in advancing women politically. This was one approach by the government to ensure that women were protected by law in their efforts to increase political representation. Senegal is not the only country seeing this change: “Women in sub-Saharan Africa are taking new democratic structures with force. They are challenging governments; they are questioning policies; they are running for political positions; and some have been elected into power.”<sup>44</sup> Another reason for this increase has been the work of NGOs and other organizations in civil society. Kassé suggests that “in the absence of a legislative mechanism, they have mainly concentrated on working with political parties and political actors generally, through initiatives to raise awareness, advocacy campaigns, and the holding of training workshops.”<sup>45</sup> In chapter three, I will discuss the groups in Senegal that have been involved in these efforts, the challenges they see women facing in their society today and the future for women as the struggle continues to gain more power and representation within the National Assembly and the political parties.

One of the first characteristic of the government of Senegal is its democracy and peaceful transition of leaders, which women have been a part of. In 1960, Senegal became independent with Leopold Senghor as its first president. The first female representative, Caroline Diop, was elected in 1963. By 1978, the major parties had female candidates on

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<sup>44</sup> Fallon, K. M. (2008). *Democracy and the rise of women's movements in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 113.

<sup>45</sup> Kasse, 2.

their ballots for the National Assembly. Diop along with other representatives“... played a highly visible role in national and international women’s politics and have used their office for vigorously promote the status of women.”<sup>46</sup> Senghor was replaced by Abou Diouf in 1980 and he remained in power until 2000. In 2000, Abdoulaye Wade, a member of the opposition party since the early 1980s, became the third president. Under his leadership, Senegal saw its first female Prime Minister, Mame Madior Boy. The gender parity law was adopted during his presidency and he’s been given credit for his support. Macky Sall is the fourth president of the republic and he’s also had a woman in his cabinet. Aminata Touré served as Prime Minister. She was described as “an anti-corruption campaigner, human rights defender and a strong advocate for social justice, and gender equality.”<sup>47</sup> Her work, locally and internationally, alongside other activists has focused on women’s rights and encouraging the government to continue improving the conditions of women through legislations. These women in government despite their small numbers are an important part of the Senegalese democracy.

The last indicator for the third development goal is fighting discrimination against women in the labor market and their access to the formal sector. One method to quantify this goal is to analyze the number of women in the non-agriculture sector. At the global level, “women’s share of paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased slowly from 35 to 40 per cent between 1990 and 2010, though it remains under 20 per cent in Western Asia, Northern Africa and Southern Asia.”<sup>48</sup> Looking at women in non-agriculture sector not only allows us to see the opportunities that exist for women for employment, it

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<sup>46</sup> Gellar, 122.

<sup>47</sup> UN Women. (2013a). *Senegal appoints female Prime Minister* [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/9/senegal-appoints-female-pm>.

<sup>48</sup> UN Nations, “Goal #3.”



also allows us to discuss the benefits that women and their families enjoy from more economic freedom.

One factor I would like to emphasize is that the informal economy is how women and men meet their daily needs in Senegal. Since finding employment in the formal sector proves to be difficult, people find other means to survive. “Here in Senegal the vast majority of women are engaged in the informal sector (83 per cent) and are in the lowest income bracket.”<sup>49</sup> This ranges from women with small stalls outside their homes as well as having a stand at the local markets. Women are involved in projects related to market gardening, small-scale animal rearing, cattle fattening and handicrafts.

Traditional roles for women are changing as they find employment outside the home. In both the urban and rural areas, women are searching for ways to provide for their families. The migration to the urban areas has resulted in more opportunities for women outside the agriculture sector. Barbara Callaway and Lucy Creevey describe how “women are moving out of subsistence agriculture into the modern economy but at a different rate and following a different pattern than are men.”<sup>50</sup> Women are represented as administrators, managers, secretaries or clerical workers. They are also seen as typists, sales clerks, maids and unskilled workers in textile mills and tuna-canning factories. More women are working as civil servants as the government recruits them. The idea is that while women are slowly moving out of the agriculture sector, they are having blockage in the current system and unable to access the same opportunities as men.

Even with the shift of women into the modern economy and improvement of women and their economic conditions, there are issues that still remain. For one, women find

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<sup>49</sup> UN Women, “Press Statement.”

<sup>50</sup> Callaway, B., & Creevey, L. (1994). *The heritage of Islam: women religion and politics in West Africa*, 1993.

themselves taking on multiple roles. Callaway and Creevey explain that “as long as women carry a double burden---unpaid work in the services of their families, plus work outside the home to support themselves and their children---they will be unable to compete with men in the open market in unequal terms.”<sup>51</sup> Also, even though women have more liberty from their ability to make money, they are unable to find employment in the same areas as men.

Regarding the employment opportunities, the UN Secretary stated that “in the developing countries, the labour force engaged in global production typically includes a large proportion of women—whether in textiles, electronics, data processing or chip manufacturing. In many cases, these women work in conditions and for wages that are appalling, and which we must strive to improve...”<sup>52</sup> When they work outside the home, they are forced to carry on the same household duties as before and it’s why Callaway and Creevey argue that no matter the outcomes, women cannot equally compete in the global market. Women are also engaged in activities that don’t produce that much revenue and do little more than taking care of the immediate needs of the woman and her family. This inability for women to get ahead, coupled with other problems are reminders that the issues of gender and development haven’t fully been addressed.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have introduced the MGDs as the framework to capture the conditions of Senegalese women in regards to education, political representation and employment opportunities. I acknowledged the controversy by those who argue that the MDGs are a representation of the global fight to end poverty, rather than accusing certain

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>52</sup> Annan, “We, the Peoples,” 22.

countries as incapable of passing good policies to end poverty. I then turned my attention to Senegal as my case study and discovered that while it won't reach the 2015 goals, it has made significant progress. My focus on the third development goal showed that many problems still exist for Senegalese women, which justifies the work by NGOs and other civil society organizations. In the next chapter, I present the literature review on the international discourse on women and development, which the MDGs are a part of and a discussion of my project.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology

### Introduction

The MDGs are examples of the global movement concentrated on women and the efforts to offer them the opportunities to reach their potential. Advocates working through the UN or NGOs envision a world where each woman is given the resources possible to achieve their dreams and there's equality between men and women. In *Half the Sky*, Kristof and Wudunn explain the impact of these efforts: "The tide of history is turning women from beasts of burden and sexual playthings into full-fledged human beings."<sup>53</sup> My thesis builds from the international discourse on women and development, understanding that the MDGs are another form of the international community's engagement with the questions of gender and development. This chapter presents a literature review on this discourse and the critical approaches to development, followed by an examination of Senegal as a case study. Lastly, an explanation of my project, my methodology and its significance will follow this discussion.

### International Discourse on Gender and Development

Gender and development and the "empowerment of women" are concepts part of the larger conversation from the international community and the earliest attempts to tackle the issues of gender and development. One way the international community has shown its reaction towards these issues has been the conferences on women organized by the UN starting in the 1970s. The first conference was in Mexico in 1975, followed by Copenhagen

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<sup>53</sup> Kristoff & WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 250.

in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and China in 1995. These conferences were responsible for fuelling the realization that the inequalities between men and women existed at the time and that something needed to be done to change it. After each conference, documents were produced to capture the main arguments and the action needed to be taken by the governments and civil society organizations in addressing these problems. Before discussing the scholarly work in response to these conferences, I am interested in offering a brief overview of the main arguments cited in the reports.

The Commission on the Status of Women of the UN organized the World Conference of the International's Women's Year in 1975 in Mexico. It was meant to be a participation effort by member states. "The conference defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women through 1985."<sup>54</sup> Some of the categories included research and training for the advancement of women in Africa, access for women in financial assistance, and the integration of women in the development process as equal partners to men. After the first conference, the ten years 1976-1985 were declared the Decade for Women. The 1980 UN World Conference on the Decade for Women was responsible for reviewing the plans from the 1975 conference especially on the topics of employment, health and education. As a result, "A Programme of Action called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in protecting women's rights to inheritance, child custody and nationality."<sup>55</sup> The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi in 1985 kept ties to the earlier conferences and efforts calling for change

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<sup>54</sup> "World Conferences on Women." *HeadQuarters*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2014.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*.

about the conditions of women. “Governments adopted the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, which outlined measures for achieving gender equality at the national level and for promoting women’s participation in peace and development efforts.”<sup>56</sup> All these earlier efforts laid the foundation for the fourth conference.

The Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 is referenced today by the UN and international groups working on the empowerment of women. One of the outcomes of the conference was the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. The declaration “adopted unanimously by 189 countries, is an agenda for women’s empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality”<sup>57</sup> It divided the areas of focus into: women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and the armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and finally, the girl-child. This conference created the approach for those engaging in the global fight for women’s rights and future events are planned to discuss how far the world has come in meeting those goals.

Through these conferences, the international community developed its approach to women and development that continues to play a permanent role today. In my thesis, I am drawing from these conferences and their reports as the means to understanding how those at the international level decided to discuss the issues of gender and development. It allows me to use historical analysis to understand the progress of this debate since the 1970s. In the next

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<sup>56</sup> "World Conferences on Women." *HeadQuarters*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2014.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*.

part of the literature review, I am going to look at the arguments developed by scholars about the conferences, the approaches to development and their implications.

While the international conferences on women created resolutions in a neutral manner by the member governments on how they were going to approach these issues, the real world implementation is what created controversy. Most of the work on women and development argue that there are three distinctive time periods regarding how the international community chose to engage in advancing women's rights around the world.<sup>58</sup> Each period carries its own problems and consequences for all women involved. The time periods are classified as the women in development (WID) approach, changing to the Decade of the Women with the women and development (WAD) approach and finally, after the Beijing conference, the gender and development (GAD) approach. The WID approach is viewed as the welfare because the international community sent funding to different organizations with the idea that only money was necessary for making changes for women.<sup>59</sup> It failed to take into account the various needs of the women and their future needs. Organizations offered temporary relief without thinking of the long-term goal. After this mistake, the international community changed to creating job opportunities and began to see that women couldn't work alongside development but that they had to be incorporated into the development efforts.<sup>60</sup> With the last approach, the international community understands that the involvements of women in projects are crucial to making any sort of changes. As Xiaoxian notices that "women's participation and benefits for women were also included in the bilateral and multilateral aid

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<sup>58</sup> Momsen, 1991; Xiaoxian, 2008; Njoh, 2003; Mehra 1997

<sup>59</sup> Momsen, J. H. *Women and Development in The Third World*. London, UK: Routledge.

<sup>60</sup> Maguire, P. (1984). *Women in Development: An Alternative Analysis*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Center for International Education.

programs of national and grassroots organizations of developed nations.”<sup>61</sup> The main critique of the scholars regarding the earlier approaches by the international community is that they failed to integrate women into actual projects or find the means to help them benefit from the development efforts.

### **Critical Approaches to Development**

While the international community has come to a conclusion about women and development and the best methods to ensure equality between men and women, there have been critical approaches by feminists. In this section, I am going to develop these arguments. The feminist’s critical approach to development cites dissatisfaction with the approaches used for women and development.<sup>62</sup> They are concerned that development only wanted to make changes at the individual level, but they failed to tackle the structural problems that continue to place women and men on unequal footing. In their viewpoint, simply talking about including women in development and offering them funding is not the progress for making real change in societies.

While the biggest contribution from the critical approaches to development has been the realization that structural change is crucial to achieving gender equality, their other contribution has been linking women or gender to the issues of development. At first, the world was hesitant or they didn’t realize that women and men were affected differently by development. The book that greatly informed the community of women and their absence in

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<sup>61</sup> Xiaoxian, G. 2008. “Women and Development in China: An Analysis and Reappraisal of Practice.” *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*. 40 (4): 13–26.

<sup>62</sup> See Maguire, 1984; Porter, 1999; Mohanty, et al, 1991.



economic development in Africa was the work of Esther Boserup in *Women's role in Economic Development*. Her work connected women and economic development and shaped the international community's efforts to increasing the capacity of women.<sup>63</sup> She was critical in centering the focus on providing women the opportunities to play a role in the economic development. Today, as the fight for women's rights continues and gender and economic development are linked, her work is still cited.<sup>64</sup> Her work started the trend for questioning the approaches to women and development. It was the precursor to other studies that would argue that the methods for women and development needed to be evaluated and that there was a connection between gender and economic development.

Another contribution by feminists is the recognition of empowerment as another approach to development and a term that takes multiple forms. Momsen argues that “[empowerment] aims to empower women through greater self-sufficiency and sees women's oppression as stemming not only from male patriarchal attitudes but also from colonial and non-colonial oppression.”<sup>65</sup> Kabeer explains that the “World Bank defines empowerment as the expansion of freedom of choice and actions and increasing one's authority and control over the resources and decisions that affects one's life.”<sup>66</sup>

Empowerment is articulated as something that is crucial and influences the social, economic and political policies that a country adopts on the issues of equality between men and women.<sup>67</sup> Some ways the international community and studies have defined empowerment is through the percentage of girls getting an education, the number of women with means of

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<sup>63</sup> Boserup, E. (1980). *Women's Role in Economic Development*. New York : St. Martin's Press.

<sup>64</sup> See Duflo, 2012; Dejene, 2007; Mikkola, 2005.

<sup>65</sup> Momsen, *Women and Development in the Third World*, 102.

<sup>66</sup> Dejene, Y. (2007). “Promoting women's economic empowerment in Africa.” In *Africa Economic Conference*, Addis Ababa (pp. 15-17), 6.

<sup>67</sup> See Bhatta, 2001; Chakravorty, 1992.

making revenue, the social-economic status of women and the role they play in decision making at the personal, family and national level.<sup>68</sup> Some scholars focus their studies on other aspects like women's access to economic opportunities, access to health and the decrease of diseases that affect women as well as policies and how they positively or negatively impact access for women.<sup>69</sup>

### **Senegal: A Case Study**

It's after this analysis on the international discourse on development and women and the critical approaches to development that I must bring everything back to the existing literature on Senegal. How has gender and development been analyzed in Senegal? Religion and its impact on the position of women and their efforts for equality have been greatly discussed.<sup>70</sup> Studies have focused on economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for Senegalese women and the potential for women to escape their lives of misery.<sup>71</sup> Micro-finance and entrepreneurship are encouraged for women as tools for development<sup>72</sup> Studies have analyzed NGOs and women's rights groups in the civil society and their work in development as the means for understanding the challenges of women in Senegal.<sup>73</sup> Organizations like the Réseau Siggil Jigeen, which has the goal of the empowerment of women or the Association of Female Jurists, which has used law since independence for women's rights are recognized for their work. These new work focus on a single group to

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<sup>68</sup> See Xiaoxian, 2008; Momsen, 1991.

<sup>69</sup> See Duflo, 2012; Mehra, 1997; Snyder, 1995

<sup>70</sup> See Creevey, 1991; Kasse, 2004.

<sup>71</sup> See Guérin, 2006; Perry 2005; Heath, 1990.

<sup>72</sup> See Kane, 2014; Kyaruzi & Hales, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> See Sieveking, 2007; Scales-Trent, 2010.

learn how they got involved in civil society, how they operate, what challenges they face or see women facing and the future they imagine for women in Senegal.

My thesis builds from the earlier research and arguments about women and development around the world and then in Senegal. A democratic nation like Senegal with a gender parity law presented itself as an opportunity to see how the international discourse on women and development impacts those working at the local level. While some of the case studies looking at an organization in the Senegalese civil society are studying similar issues, my focus and methodology differs. My thesis centers on the gender parity law of 2010 and the fight to pass it to understand Senegal's commitment to women and development. Although the law has achieved significant results for women in regards to the millennium development goal #3, research on the subject has been lacking. Whereas Senegal's accomplishments can serve as an example for other countries and future work on empowering women, the lack of data suggests that the world is not yet paying attention. It's through this original research that I hope to learn everything worked out and what lessons can be adopted from the Senegalese case.

## **Methodology**

### *Interviews*

My methodology consisted of semi-structured interviews. At the beginning of my research, I wanted to communicate with civil society organizations, but I wasn't sure how to start. I began by doing online research on organizations in Senegal that were doing development work. These groups worked on development and women's issues through law,

economic activities, political mobilizing or conducting research. I reached out to organizations throughout Senegal. I was concerned with speaking to a diverse group of people because I understood that the conditions of women were different depending on the regions. Within the first two weeks of my stay, I emailed more than twenty organizations, only to receive a response from one or two groups. Realizing that email wasn't the best mode of communication, I began looking for contact information like addresses or cell phone numbers. These also proved difficult to find. With my best efforts, I ended up conducting eleven interviews and gathering sources from three additional organizations.

I conducted the semi-structured interviews in the offices and homes of these organizations. They lasted between 20 minutes to an hour. All interviews were conducted in French between May and July 2014. They were recorded and transcribed and translated at a later time. I had the assistance of a translator, Hamidou Ba. He was instrumental for my thesis on Pikine and played a role in making connections with different groups for this project. I conducted interviews with three members of the Association of Female Jurists (AJS). I also worked with these groups: The Réseau Siggil Jigéen (RSJ), Association of Women in Medina (AFEME), the Union des Groupement Féminin de Pikine L'Est (Union of Women Associations of Pikine East), Quartiers du Monde, and the Observatory on Gender Relations in Senegal (ORGENS). I also conducted interviews with a Political Science Professor and a local student who was engaged in different associations. Due to time constraints, I ended up corresponding with the Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) after my return to the US.

The questions for the interviews were divided into three parts. I began by asking the person to describe the organization and how he/she got interested in women's rights. This

was followed by a conversation on the challenges encountered by Senegalese women and the reasoning behind these problems. I also asked questions about how the organization understood the role of women in development and how the current Senegalese government engaged women in their projects. Since I was concerned with the gender parity law and learning about who was involved in passing it, I devoted a question to asking which organizations or women's groups were involved in the mobilization effort. Before the end, I asked the interviewee what could be done at the local, national and international levels to improve the conditions of Senegalese women. I was interested in their perspective on the roles of national and international actors on empowering women and achieving gender equality. I ended the interview by asking the participants to clarify anything already said or to bring up something related to these issues that I hadn't mentioned. I coded the interviews for major themes regarding the main points and their responses are an integral part to chapters three and four.

### *Primary Sources*

Aside from conducting semi-structured interviews with members of civil society organizations, I collected primary sources on the law and the women's movements in Senegal. Some organizations were unable to offer me an interview, but offered a wealth of information through their reports, books, articles and documentaries. The three I visited were: the Senegalese Counsel of Women (COSEF), Article 19 and the National Observatory on the Parity (ONP). These publications allowed me learn about these organizations and the role they played in the mobilization efforts. At COSEF, I gathered books that documented the entire process leading to the adoption of the law. At ONP, I was given access to a report conducted by this government body that looks at the effects of the parity law and their

recommendations for its implementation. I also gathered documents about the Caucus of Female Leaders of Senegal, which was involved in passing the law and also documented their contribution to the process. Article 19 shared a documentary on the parity law and other reports that look at the role of women in Senegal.

These primary sources were used to verify the accounts in the interviews and to provide information that was lacking. The publications are rich and offer a detailed narrative of the efforts by civil society to advance women's rights. These reports are mainly found locally and it was through my fieldwork that I gained access to them. They are published in French. Just as I translated the interviews to examine the data, I also translated these reports to analyze the descriptions they gave on the situation of women in Senegal and the efforts to empower them.<sup>74</sup>

### *Limitations*

Similar to other studies that face limitations, I would like to acknowledge some of the difficulties I encountered and how they affected the final product. I gathered the data for this project in May through July 2014. At first, I had a difficult time arranging the interviews. I sent out emails, but only received a few responses. After noticing this trend, I tried to find contact information, only to realize that some groups didn't have addresses or phone numbers listed. I had to ask the other respondents if they had contact information for these groups and other times, it was a struggle to get in touch with them. While I had anticipated speaking with 15-20 women, it was a miracle walking away with the 11 interviews. These next two stories highlight my persistence to communicate with these groups.

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<sup>74</sup> All the citations coming from the interviews and primary sources are in English and were translated by me. I have included some of the original French in the footnotes.

One group I went downtown to locate after finding their information online. When I arrived, the guard informed me that the organization was there, but that I needed to come back during office hours. When I returned two days later, a guard inside informed me that the group had relocated to another location. They didn't offer the specific address but reassured me that everyone in the neighborhood would know what it was. After spending nearly an hour trying to find this building and asking around; I stopped a cab driver, gave him the phone and had the lady direct him in Wolof. We remained on the phone until she saw our vehicle from the fourth floor of the office. I wouldn't have found her place without her guidance.

Another incidence speaks to the volume of the trust that exists within Senegalese society and how I would never try this in the US. I had finally gotten the number for an organization I needed, but for some reason, the cell phone reception was bad. I had a hard time understanding what she was saying. I found a cab driver and give him the phone so she could address him. Without knowing where I was going, I negotiated a price. The cab driver drove me to a location and told me wait for someone. A little boy came out of the house and directed me inside. When I got there, the lady I was looking there and I was able to conduct the interview. I was reminded in these two incidents that nonconventional methods were necessary in obtaining an interview in Senegal.

I also found that being Congolese-American conducting research in French might have played a role in the difficulties I encountered. When I finally got to the interviews, I had no problems, but the initial phase of contacting people was an issue. It seemed as if the fact that I was an undergraduate student and not a PhD made people question the contribution of my project. I was conducting research for my other thesis and Hamidou was involved with

that. He also played a role in making contact with different groups, setting up some interviews and providing valuable information about Senegalese women. Apart from him, I was responsible for everything. I contacted these organizations, set up the interviews, conducted, transcribed and translated them. I found that my earlier undergraduate work in French and my experiences in Paris and Senegal prepared me to handle this project. Although I wasn't a PhD student or affiliated with a research institution, I was able to explain the premise of my thesis to the participants.

## **Conclusion**

In this literature review, I've had the opportunity to demonstrate how the world drew its attention to the global issues related to women and development. I've explained how the discourse, even as it's changed through time periods, came from the conferences that united governments and organizations with the same goal of addressing the concerns facing women around the world. In the second part of the literature review, I've shown that not everyone was open to accepting the arguments developed by the international community and those groups like feminists brought critical approaches to development and discussed how the approaches weren't concerned with making structural that would have actually created changes for women and then today. I've demonstrated that there are studies being conducted on women and development in Senegal and the efforts by NGOs and other organizations working in civil society. While these studies pose similar questions as mine, only a small percentage have considered the gender parity law as a continuation of these efforts and Senegalese commitment to advancing women's rights. In the last section, I presented my



methodology and the primary research through interviews and primary resources to look at the law and what it reveals about women in Senegal. I acknowledged the limitations in my thesis. In the following chapter, I will look at the gender parity law, the mobilization efforts, counterarguments and the intended consequences to show that the law was defined as a mechanism for achieving MDG #3 and including women into development.

## Chapter 3

### The Gender Parity Law: Mobilization, Adoption and Anticipation

#### Introduction

After explaining that Senegal made significant progress towards meeting the MDGs and providing the background on the international discourse on gender and development, I turn my attention to the gender parity law. As stated, MDG #3 calls for greater representation of women in government. As women are underrepresented in the political sphere in both industrialized and developing countries, Rwanda is praised for passing the 50% mark of women in parliament.<sup>75</sup> Along with other countries, it has used quotas to allow more women admittance to government. Senegal has also turned its attention to the lack of women in the elected bodies. It passed a gender parity law in 2010 to address these deficiencies.<sup>76</sup> In this chapter, I will examine the language within the law, the mobilization efforts that led to the law being passed and the anticipated results. In the next chapter, I will evaluate the effects of the law in the five years of existence and its successes and challenges. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the gender parity law embodies the elements of the international's community call for the political representation and empowerment of women and its adoption demonstrates the active role of women organizations within civil society.

#### The Larger Overview

Before describing the mobilization efforts for this law, I would like to start the analysis by giving context to the law. In the simplest terms, this law envisioned changing

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<sup>75</sup> Article 19 (2014). *Sénégal: Etude monitoring Femmes-Médias*. Dakar: Author.

<sup>76</sup> Ministère de la femme, de l'enfance et de l'Entreprenariat Féminin, & ONU Femmes. (n.d.). *Hommes et Femmes, rendons effective la loi sur la parité* [Brochure]. Dakar : Authors.

how women and men were represented in politics. Article 19 in their report of Senegalese women and the media note that “the parity is an opportunity for legal access for men and women in instances of decision making and it can constitute a lever of action and control in the allocation of resources and services destined for those most vulnerable.”<sup>77</sup> The law changed the electoral code and established how it should be applied and to which institutions.<sup>78</sup> The first article states that it applies to all institutions with elections or partial elections. The second article states that the lists for elections must alternate between the two sexes. If there are an odd number of candidates on the list, the parity applies to the most even numbers as possible. Article three states that the conditions of the application of the law will be defined and clarified by decree. The last article states that the law and its applications shall be inscribed into the Electoral Code. All lists were to conform to these requirements; otherwise they would not be accepted.

### **Actors Involved in Passing the Law**

Changes in societies don't take place in a vacuum and the same is true for the parity law. From the interviews conducted last summer and reading of primary sources, I discovered who the main actors were. Madame Dia with FAS emphasized that “the parity law is the result of the long march of the Senegalese civil society and of the government.”<sup>79</sup> The credit is awarded to President Abdoulaye Wade and the different organizations within

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<sup>77</sup> Article 19, Sénégal: Etude monitoring Femmes-Médias, 4.

<sup>78</sup> These institutions include the regional, municipal and rural councils, their boards and commissions; the Senate, its offices and committees; the National Assembly, its office and committees; the office of the Parliament Congress; and finally, the Office of Economic and Social Council and its committees. – See Ministère de la femme, de l'enfance et de l'Entreprenariat Féminin, & ONU Femmes. (n.d.). Hommes et Femmes, rendons effective la loi sur la parité [Brochure]. Dakar : Authors.

<sup>79</sup>Dia, Madina. Email Interview. Dakar: October 15, 2014.

French : «La loi sur la parité est le résultat d'une longue marche de la société civile sénégalaise et du gouvernement d'alors. »

Senegal that brought about this fight. Moussa Ndior, a Political Science Professor and Director of L'Institut Supérieur de Droit de Dakar explains:

First, it was the President of the Republic who said that women are conscience of their situation.... but they are not supported. Therefore, he brought up the law and there were other women then who brought about the fight. But before, it is necessary to note that it was the President of the Republic who initiated the vote for the parity law.<sup>80</sup>

President Abdoulaye Wade is recognized as the father of the law for giving his support. Apparently, upon entering politics, he was concerned with continuing the tradition of improving women's rights in Senegal. COSEF notes that while at a conference with other African leaders in 2002, President Wade approached the issue of parity and vowed to make it possible within Senegal.<sup>81</sup> He was awarded an International Human Rights Award in 2004 for his commitment to women's rights.<sup>82</sup> Once the civil society organizations joined the fight, he provided funding and met with leaders.<sup>83</sup>

Civil society organizations of different forms were also involved in the campaign to adopt the gender parity. Groups like the COSEF, African Assembly for the Defense of Human Right (RADDHO), AJS, RSJ, and Caucus of Female Leaders of Senegal (Caucus des femmes leaders du Senegal) and many others brought the nation together to address

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<sup>80</sup> Ndior, Moussa. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 7, 2014.

French: « D'abord c'est la président de la république qui a dit que les femmes prennent conscient de leurs situation et que les femmes viennent parce que nous savons que les femmes sont capable mais elles ne sont pas soutenu, donc il a pris la loi, et il y a d'autres femmes maintenant qui ont mener le combat. »

<sup>81</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes., & Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo. (2011). *Combats pour la parité: La campagne 'Avec la parité consolidons la démocratie'*. Dakar: Agence espagnole pour la coopération internationale au développement, 18.

<sup>82</sup> Engelking, « Senegalese Women, Education, and Polygamy in 'Une si longue lettre' and 'Faat Kiné,' » 7.

<sup>83</sup> Sarr, F. (2013). *Bilan D'une Campagne : Des hommes S'engagent*. Dakar : Laboratoire Genre et Recherche Scientifique.

issues of gender inequality.<sup>84</sup> COSEF and Caucus of Female Leaders of Senegal documented the long process towards the adoption of the law and I relied on their publications for the primary sources.

### **Overview of the Groups**

As mentioned, these groups utilize different approaches to development yet they united for a common cause. This diversity within these organizations shows the cohesiveness of the fight for women's rights at the local level. "COSEF combines the various women's actions groups into one organization with a general shared theme: to fight 'judicial, cultural, political and social marginalization of, and discrimination against, Senegalese women.'"<sup>85</sup>

RADDHO is an NGO that works on human rights throughout all of Africa. They conduct investigations, create reports and hold conferences on various issues. AJS is made up of 200 members who have an understanding of laws and are involved in providing assistance to marginal populations regarding judicial issues. They run two free legal boutiques, one in Dakar and one in the suburb of Pikine. Jihonda Mané who I spoke with at AJS mentioned that it's an organization that "fights against all the forms of discrimination and violence in regards in the general case and more precisely for women and children."<sup>86</sup>

Other groups are also interested in the issue of gender equality, but through a different angle. Thiaba Sembene describes RSJ as "an NGO that regroups 16 organization with members and which work in different domains like the fight against poverty, women's rights, rights in health, the fight against female genital mutilation, human rights, gender, and

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<sup>84</sup> Refer to list of abbreviations on page IV. The names have been provided in French and English when possible.

<sup>85</sup> Bauer, G., & Britton, H. (2006). Women in African Parliaments: A Continental Shift? In *Women in African Parliaments* (pp. 1-30). Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 167.

<sup>86</sup> Mané, Jihonda. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 7, 2014.

education.”<sup>87</sup> Founded in 1995, this organization brings together these groups to tackle areas of concerns within society. Another organization that was involved was the ORGENS. Their members are involved in addressing the discrimination between the sexes within education. One of their project consisted of reworking the textbooks used in school and addressing to the Minister of Education how these texts reinforced stereotypes that students were already hearing outside the classroom. They also offer leadership training for youth on addressing women’s rights. All these groups offered their expertise and willingness to be a part of the seminars, marches and sit-in.

### **Motivation to be involved**

In conversations with these organizations, I discovered why they dedicated themselves to such efforts. Yaya Ngor, an active member of ORGENS explains: “For us, it was injustice that it is the women who vote, among the people who vote, its women who have a majority; among those who mobilize in politics, it is the women who are the majority. But it is the men who govern. We said it needs to change.”<sup>88</sup> It seems that women were already involved in politics and could be counted on to mobilize, but in terms of occupying spaces of power, it was the men who ruled. Mané notes that “it’s not a law that fell from the sky. It’s the fruit of a long process, of a long battle, a long fight, but it’s not only a fight for women, it’s true that women were in front, but it was a fight for all citizens. It was a fight that united many actors of human rights, who wanted to see equality done.”<sup>89</sup> Mané

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<sup>87</sup> Sembene, Thiaba. Personal Interview. Dakar: June 16, 2014.

<sup>88</sup> Ngor, Yaya. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 16, 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Mané, Jihonda.

reinforces how this fight was mainly led by women's organizations, but it also incorporated other members of civil society, particularly those fighting for human rights.

## **The Role of COSEF**

As for the involvement of different groups, COSEF is at forefront of the movement. Starting in the early 1990s, they created different campaigns to engage with the questions of women and political representation. Through these campaigns, they tried to have the political parties voluntarily commit to quotas to increase the number of women candidates.<sup>90</sup> When this approach didn't work, they began a new campaign, "with parity, consolidate democracy," one where parity would be achieved through legislative means. In the early 2000, after the announcement by President Abdoulaye Wade on the parity, they got involved right away. As COSEF notes in their publications, their efforts can be divided into three approaches: mobilizing, campaigning and support.<sup>91</sup> In the early phase, COSEF kicked off the campaign and sent the petition showing the signatures of people who supported the cause. The petition gathered 4,000 signatures indicating that there was support.<sup>92</sup> The signatures were sent to the President. It also created a group pulling women from civil society organizations, political parties and labor unions who were committed to the cause. Other early actions included communicating with the public, doing a sit-in at the legislative offices and a march. During the same period, a model of the law and its applications were drafted by professors and other leaders and sent to the Minister of Female Affairs to be given to the

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<sup>90</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes, La campagne 'Avec la parité consolidons la démocratie,' 16.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes. (n.d.). *Guide de bonnes pratiques pour la mise en œuvre de la loi instituant la parité absolue au Sénégal* [Brochure]. Dakar : Author, 5.

President. The next day, there was a march by nearly 1,000 women going from the Place of Independence to the National Palace to once again show solidarity.<sup>93</sup> Their efforts came to an end when in 2007 the parity law was ruled unconstitutional.

Along with the activities from the first wave, these groups redoubled their efforts after 2007. In 2009, this network hosted events to look at the efficacy of the law with the President and cabinet leaders present. Along with Caucus des Femmes Leaders du Sénégal, members of civil society organizations, political parties and unions were running forums, debate and seminars to raise awareness of the law throughout the different regions of Senegal.<sup>94</sup> They also brought together women's rights groups to discuss how the law would impact women. They did presentations; hosted radio programs; and spoke with reporters to discredit the myths surrounding the law and to demonstrate that its implementation would benefit the entire country. It was through these efforts that the law would finally be adopted in 2010.

### **Arguments for the Gender Parity Law**

Local society organizations that debated in favor of the law imitated the arguments made by the international community on development discussed in chapter two. Yacine Diagne, the founder of AFEME, a group working in the Medina states that “we must understand that this country will not develop without women. It needs men and women, who are engaged in bringing about change.”<sup>95</sup> She continues:

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>94</sup> Sarr, F. (2013). *Bilan D'une Campagne : Des hommes S'engagent*. Dakar : Laboratoire Genre et Recherche Scientifique.

<sup>95</sup> Diagne, Yacine. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 2, 2014.



What's missing [when women aren't included in development], it's half of humanity that's missing...; and me, I say always in the world, in Senegal, has two legs to work. One leg, it's the men, the other leg, it's the women. When one leg is weaker than another, or when one leg is broken, does it work?<sup>96</sup>

Her response was shared by the other interviewees who expressed that women are essential to development. Since both genders were necessary for the development of Senegal, both genders were needed in the political development of the country.

The gender parity law was also understood along gender relations with the political system of Senegal. In a country where 52% of the population is women, the low numbers of women in national making bodies was viewed as a problem. As the Minister of Women explains in its documents, "Parity returns to an equal representation of women and men in instants of decision. Its goal is to promote an equal participation of men and women while making decisions. It has become today an essential tool for all strategy of promoting equality and justice of gender."<sup>97</sup> This argument recognizes that Senegalese women do not have access to power in the same way as men and in order to fix this anomaly, they needed access to a law that would force changes within society.

Another argument developed in favor of law was constructed with the understanding of democracy, what it offers its people and how it should handle discrimination. Parity as a concept resonated with activists because "the principal of parity, seen as an imperative to democracy at the same level as universal suffrage or the separation of powers, should find

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Ministère de la femme, « Hommes et femmes, rendons effective la loi sur la parité. »

French : « La parité à une représentation égale des femmes et des hommes dans les instances de décision. Son but est de promouvoir une égale participation des Femmes et des hommes à la prise de décisions. »

fully applied in the political and public life.”<sup>98</sup> In the case of Senegal, the law was going to be applied in the political life and not necessarily in all aspects of public life. Another way of understanding democracy and equal treatment under the law was explained in the local documents:

In sociology, the parity returns a state of functioning equivalence, which is the case in the Senegalese political space, with a massive presence of women, where the only criteria for entering a political party, is to be a citizen. Henceforth, all the advantages presented to one group should be presented to the other also, without discrimination.<sup>99</sup>

The discourse is that a democracy should offer equal access to representation for all its members and in the case of Senegal; women were being denied their rights to this equal representation.

Lastly, the last argument made a connection to the international community and their efforts with conferences, conventions and other documents in collaboration with local governments in promoting the empowerment of women. The conventions most referenced were the Maputo Declaration, Senegal’s constitution and other conventions signed by African countries at the regional level. The documents from the Minister of Women recognize that “the state of Senegal, which has subscribe to all the conventions of promoting and protecting the rights of women, took the option to institute the parity law absolute men

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<sup>98</sup> Sarr, « Bilan d’une campagne : des hommes s’engagent, » 13.

French : « Ainsi, le principe de la parité, vu comme un impératif démocratique au même titre que le suffrage universel ou la séparation des pouvoirs, doit trouver sa pleine et entière application dans la vie politique et publique. »

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

French : « En sociologie, la parité renvoie à un état d’équivalence fonctionnelle, ce qui est le cas dans l’espace politique sénégalais, avec une présence massive des femmes, car le seul critère exige pour entrer un parti politique, c’est d’être citoyen ou citoyenne. Des lors, tous les avantages conférés à un group doivent l’être aussi à l’autre, sans discrimination. »

and women in the instances of elections and semi-elections.”<sup>100</sup> These arguments emphasize that Senegal ratified these conventions and agreed to implement them fully in its national borders. By not implementing them, they were being hypocritical; claiming to advance women’s rights at the international level and then not fulfilling this promise at the national level.

The Maputo Declaration was often referenced by the activists, but they also noted other conventions. These include: The platform of African action adopted by the 5th regional African conference on women in Dakar, 1994; The program of action of Beijing, 1995; The Resolution 1325 of the United Nations on Women, Peace and Security, 2000; and the additional protocol to the African chart of human rights and people relative to women’s rights in Africa, Maputo in 2003.<sup>101</sup> These texts at the regional or international levels were brought forward to address issues of discrimination and assuring that proper steps would be taken to include women and to make sure that they had equal opportunity as men on reaching their goals. The Maputo Declaration was cited by the activists, the documentary produced by Article 19 and other documents from COSEF and the government because they wanted to show the contradiction within Senegal. In this case, the Maputo Declaration allows for medical abortions in the cases of incense, rape or when the woman’s life would be in

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<sup>100</sup> Ministère de la femme, « Hommes et femmes, rendons effective la loi sur la parité. »

French : « Ainsi le Sénégal qui souscrit à toutes les conventions relatives à la promotion et à la protection des droits des femmes, a pris l’option d’instituer la loi sur la parité absolue Homme-Femme dans les instances électives et semi-électives. »

<sup>101</sup> Article 19 & Caucus of Women Leaders of Senegal. (2012). *La Parité : à l’épreuve des faits*. Documentary movie. Senegal; Sarr, *Bilan D’une Campagne : Des hommes S’engagent*, 41.

danger.<sup>102</sup> Even though this law was signed and ratified, medical abortions in these three cases are made illegal by the Senegalese penal code.

### **Arguments against the Gender Parity Law**

Opponents against the parity law also made their concerns a component of this discussion. These included members of political parties, religious leaders and other skeptical members of society.<sup>103</sup> One of their arguments was that the parity law was discriminatory. It would discriminate against men who would be forced to compete with women who didn't deserve to be in the positions of power.<sup>104</sup> They also argued that it would allow women who were incompetent to be leaders.<sup>105</sup> Their concern was that women would be placed on the ballot without proper qualifications. Apparently, women couldn't handle the responsibilities that came with their positions when: they couldn't read or write and spoke the local languages like Wolof but not French, the national language. Considering that the literacy rate within Senegal for men is 65.2% and only 39.9% for men, they seemed to have a valid claim.<sup>106</sup> The activists countered showing that these opposition leaders were trying to maintain the status quo with the ultimate goal of blocking women from entering politics. Diagne notes that "there is always oppression, domination and resistance. There are men who don't want women to express themselves... There are pockets of resistance. It's not

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<sup>102</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes., & Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo. (2011). *Combats pour la parité: Actes du séminaire d'élaboration d'un modèle de loi sur la parité*. Dakar: Agence espagnole pour la coopération internationale au développement;

<sup>103</sup> Article 19, *La Parité : à l'épreuve des faits*,; Sarr, « Bilan d'une campagne : des hommes s'engagent, »65.

<sup>104</sup> Article 19, *La Parité : à l'épreuve des faits*.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes. (2012). *Pour l'effectivité de la Parité Absolue, le COSEF se mobilise* [Brochure]. Dakar : Author, 6.

everywhere, but is a phenomenon that's cultural and social."<sup>107</sup> Other women responded by citing that women were being targeted when there are men in the National Assembly who are in situations similar to the women. Sembene argues: "Women are in parliament and they don't know how to read. I tell you this isn't the first time in Senegal in parliament that there are those who didn't know how to read.... In parliament, there are those who can read and write but do not know their role as representatives."<sup>108</sup> These women reminded the opposition that women had been discriminated against for a long time and that the law would benefit all of the country. The women I spoke with reminded me that these voices were detractors who weren't speaking the truth, but simply wanted to keep the true vision of the law from being realized.

### **Anticipated Results of the Gender Parity Law**

Now that I have discussed the passing of the law and who was involved in the efforts, I would like to spend some time discussing the intended consequences. Those I spoke with hailed this law as a major improvement for the Senegalese women. It was seen as a stepping stone that would allow them to enter the political sphere. Primary documents obtained from COSEF mention that "the participation of women in instances of decision making has become an important concern for durable development. It's no longer the case to confine women to traditional and domestic roles, but to make them essential actors in development."<sup>109</sup> In creating this durable development, the same organizations published some of the outcomes they envisioned taking place because of the law. They are documented

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<sup>107</sup> Diagne, Yacine.

<sup>108</sup> Sembene, Thiaba.

<sup>109</sup> Conseil sénégalais, *Pour l'effectivité de la Parité Absolue, le COSEF se mobilise*, 2012,3.

by COSEF and labeled as: a renewing of the political elites; an emergence of women at the base; the encouragement of women to enter politics; a new of conducting political affairs, diversity and plurality of viewpoints in the government; popularization, information, training and accompaniment of women leaders; the valorization of national languages and a changing of mentality.<sup>110</sup> These envisioned results can be divided into two camps. This law was intended to change the attitudes towards women in positions of power and to transform these governing bodies by allowing women to be a part. They are also concerned with breaking old traditions that dictated that men were to be in position of power while women stay on the sidelines.

The first sets of goals are concerned with women and how they are to be represented within the political sphere. The parity law is seen as giving women the chance to build a political base within political parties and the national government unlike before. This law wanted to allow women, who weren't represented in politics for so long, to see themselves as active players with the possibility of taking a political office. It was going to encourage women to participate in politics because they wouldn't face the barrier of getting on the ballot. The gender parity law was the perfect opportunity for training and equipping women for politics. It acknowledges that women did not have access to the same training and capacities as men to perform their duties. It wasn't only about getting women into political offices; it seemed concerned with giving them the tools to be successful and to close the gap that exists between them and men.

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<sup>110</sup> Conseil sénégalais « La Loi sur la parité absolue au Sénégal, » 17-18.

French : « Renouveau d'élite politique ; émergence de femmes à la base; engouement des femmes pour la politique; nouvelle façon de conduire les affaires, diversification et pluralité de vues en gouvernance ; vulgarisation, information, formation et accompagnement ; valorisation des langues nationales ; et, changement de mentalité. »

The second set of goals is concerned with changing society's perception. By allowing women to build a local base and to be involved in politics, there would be a "renewing of the political elites."<sup>111</sup> The political leaders at this time were privileged men. By allowing women into the political offices, we were going to see a change in demographics of who was representing the people. With the emergence of women in parliament, the gender parity law was seen as possibly changing the way that politics would be conducted because women would bring their viewpoints and concerns. There was hope that the diversity would translate into policies and legislations. The last two goals in this section are concerned with increasing the value of the national languages and the changing attitudes about women leaders. The national language of Senegal is French, but many people speak other languages like Wolof and Serrer. This goal included the possibility of seeing the national languages playing a larger role in parliament, not only for the women but for also the men. The last goal wants the attitudes towards having women in political positions to change and to be more positive.

## **Conclusion**

Before starting the next chapter, I would like to summarize the framing of the law and what it reveals about gender and development. The dominant arguments from Senegalese scholars, politicians and other leaders in the NGOs I visited with or the primacy documents I found were developed along the lines that women deserved to be represented because they were also participants of society.<sup>112</sup> Just as the international community calls for both genders to be represented in decision making, those in Senegal at the local and national levels

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<sup>111</sup> Conseil sénégalais « La Loi sur la parité absolue au Sénégal, » 17-18

<sup>112</sup> Ngor, Yaya

were asking for the same thing. Similar claims about the third development goal about empowering women through education and political representation were made. It was brought to my attention that the reason why women are needed for development is because without them, society is missing an entire chunk of its population and their contributions cannot be recognized if they are not allowed to participate in politics. Professor Ndior summarizes the argument:

[Parity] means that decisions shouldn't just come to men, but that it's necessary that women also participate in these decisions. To participate in these decisions, it is necessary to be in those instances, it's why we say that all the instances of decision making where it is the form elective, when there's a man, and there should be a woman.<sup>113</sup>

Active members within the Senegalese civil society understood that the root of the problems facing women starts from the fact that women are behind. This law was advocated as the chance to do differently and to start a process where women and men were to be included in the political system.

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<sup>113</sup> Ndior, Moussa.



## **Chapter 4: Expectations versus Reality: Where are we five years later and where do we go from here?**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the gender parity law was to increase the representation of women in politics and to ensure that the needs of women are spoken for in the political sphere. From my conversations with different groups in Senegal, I discovered that those working on development issues realized the truth about why women needed to be included in political offices. In the earlier chapters, I explained the international discourse on gender and development, the third millennium development goal as the means to evaluating the conditions of women within Senegal, and the women's movement in the adoption of the gender parity law. I argued that the gender parity law was envisioned as a powerful tool that would provide opportunities for women to make meaningful contribution within society. In this chapter, I will discuss the effects of the gender parity law after two election cycles and its limitations; present the current challenges facing women; and argue that efforts that extend beyond electing women to the parliament by the local, national and international levels that will achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women because the law alone has fallen short of doing so.

### **Effects of Gender Parity Law**

The biggest accomplishment of the gender parity law is the increase of women within parliament. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, women continue to lack access to

political institutions and there are only 22 female heads of state.<sup>114</sup> For instance, women running for government in Africa are unable to find sources to fund their campaigns.<sup>115</sup> Senegalese women were under-represented in government and they didn't have the same opportunities to serve in these leadership roles.<sup>116</sup> COSEF during the campaign for the parity provided a fact sheet showing the lack of representation of women within parliament.<sup>117</sup> It found that within the first legislature from 1957 to 1963, none of the eighty seats were filled by women. By the fifth legislature from 1978 to 1983, women held 7 seats out of 100. By the eleventh legislature which was from 2007 to 2012, women occupied 27 of 150 seats or 24.6% of the seats. With the application of the parity law in 2012, women made significant progress, taking 42.6% of the seats.<sup>118</sup> This law can be credited with making women visible in parliament and helping them surpass the 30% of seats that were set as the standard after the Beijing Conference. Unlike other countries that are lacking women in the parliament, the Senegalese have a parliament that's nearly equal between men and women.

Increasing the number of women in parliament doesn't always translate into changes in society, but with the Senegalese case, the primary documents and interviews I conducted suggest that the parity law has greatly impacted how women are perceived within positions of power. The physical presence of women in government has forced societal norms to be

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<sup>114</sup> Female world leaders currently in power. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from [http://www.jjmccullough.com/charts\\_rest\\_female-leaders.php](http://www.jjmccullough.com/charts_rest_female-leaders.php)

<sup>115</sup> Ighobor, "A celebratory rise in women's political participation."

<sup>116</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes., & Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo. (n.d.). *Forum National Pour L'Effectivité de la Parité* [Brochure]. Dakar : Authors.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> Conseil sénégalais, Guide de bonnes pratiques.

reevaluated.<sup>119</sup> Yaye Sokhna Ndiaye, the President of the Union of Women Associations of Pikine East explains:

You know in the beginning, in the years 1960 and 1970s, we didn't give a lot of value to women. Their role was to stay at home and manage the kids, prepare the kids, stay in the kitchen. It was after that we talked about the 'emancipation of women,' after that we talked about gender, followed by parity.<sup>120</sup>

Having women in parliament who are part of institutions and the public eye for their role in creating laws makes other women realize that they are also capable and there's the possibility of them occupying similar positions.<sup>121</sup> Women no longer have to dream about being involved in politics. They see female leaders who are competent and who despite their gender are able to represent the nation. Increasing women in parliament has started to break down the stereotypes that for so long have dictated that women belong in one place and that place is definitely not the government.

Another reason why the increase of women in parliament and other governing bodies by the gender parity law is powerful is because the current female leaders may have the potential to improve the conditions of women throughout Senegal. Women in positions of power don't only set an example for future generations, but they also represent opportunities for women. When talking to the activists in Senegal, they suggested that women would be better suited to address the concerns of Senegalese women. Sembene notes that "the preoccupations of women would not be well fought for except by women. If they were well

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> Ndiaye, Yaye Sokhna. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 3, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> Bauer, G. (2012). 'Let there be a Balance': Women in African Parliaments. *Political Studies Review*, 10(3), 370-384.

represented there [in the national assembly], they would defend the causes of women.”<sup>122</sup>

The Senegalese not only have other African countries to look as examples, there are studies that have made similar points. In other parts of Africa, “... increased representation of women has widened the policy issues that come up for debate to include those that primarily concern women, such as gender-based violence and abortion.”<sup>123</sup> Muriaas, Tønnessen, and Wang note that the involvement of women in civil society organizations has translated into progressive social policies, especially for issues facing women.<sup>124</sup> An advantage to having 42.6% women in parliament is that they can use their positions to bring about legislation that would address the inequalities and discrimination that women still face today. An expectation of the law was that a diversity of voices in government would lead to different groups being advocated for. Five years after the adoption of the law, it’s too early to draw conclusions about the female Senegalese politicians and their role in shaping policies.

While it is difficult to draw conclusions about the Senegalese case because of the short time frame since the adoption of the law, there are cases from other African countries that highlight the possibilities of the parity law. Rwanda features a national parliament with 53% of the seats filled by women who came to power through a movement supported by women’s organizations.<sup>125</sup> These organizations mobilized and achieved massive gains, making it easier for women politicians to push for legislations and laws that favored women when they entered politics. While these women were acting in the national interest, their

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<sup>122</sup> Sembene, Thiaba.

<sup>123</sup> Bauer, G., & Burnet, J. E. (2013, December). Gender quotas, democracy, and women's representation in Africa: Some insights from democratic Botswana and autocratic Rwanda. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 41, pp. 103-112). Pergamon, 7.

<sup>124</sup> Muriaas, R. L., Tønnessen, L., & Wang, V. (2013, December). Exploring the relationship between democratization and quota policies in Africa. In *Women's Studies International Forum* (Vol. 41, pp. 89-93). Pergamon, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Powley, E. (2005). Rwanda: Women hold up half the parliament. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, 154-163.

affiliation with the women's movement allowed them to advance women's rights through legislation.<sup>126</sup> For example, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians which unites female political leaders:

Reviews existing laws and introduces amendments to discriminatory legislation, examines proposed laws with an eye to gender sensitivity, liaises with the women's movement, and conducts meetings and training with women's organizations to sensitize the population and advise about legal issues.<sup>127</sup>

A totally opposite example is Tanzania where women reached positions of power through the quotas agreed upon by the political parties. However, their presence hasn't translated into the advancement of women's rights. Ruth Meena suggests that the political parties in Tanzania have no intentions of allowing women to shape laws that address the problems that women face. She argues that "while special seats continue to be the most directive measure to tackle the increasing imbalance in regard to women's participation in politics, they do not seem to address in any significant manner issues concerning equity and equality in terms of political representation."<sup>128</sup> Political parties have brought women into politics through these quotas, but they serve as figure heads that are there symbolically, but whose position actually means nothing. In providing the examples of Rwanda and Tanzania, I wanted to emphasize that these two countries illustrate that gender parity laws or quotas are successful if women have the backing of the civil society organizations so that when they are in positions of power, they can represent the interest of women.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Meena, R. (2003). The politics of quotas in Tanzania. A paper presented at the IDEA/EISA/SADC, 7

<sup>129</sup> Bauer, «Let there be a Balance': Women in African Parliaments » 9.

These examples from African countries that passed similar quotas or laws have allowed me to make informed conclusions about the possibilities of the Senegalese law. Drawing from the Rwanda case, the parity law in Senegal has the potential to address the issues of women within the country. The simple act of its adoption is an indication that there's involvement by different actors in bringing women to the political sphere. As long as the law isn't found unconstitutional or revoked, women have a mechanism for entering politics. The Senegalese women's movement that mobilized for the parity law has similarities with the Rwandan case. Women in Rwanda had the backing of the women's movement to be able to pass legislation to advance women's rights and the conditions of women within the country. I propose that Senegalese female leaders will follow a similar path because they were brought to power by a women's movement and they will have the support of civil society to represent the interests of women. This is contrasted with the Tanzanian case where I showed that the quotas by political parties haven't translated into women being involved in shaping legislature. It's also to be contrasted with Botswana, another country that's very democratic, but the lack of quotas or parity law has meant that women are unable to participate in the political institutions.<sup>130</sup> With Senegal, I argue that with time, women may find themselves with the resources and support from the parity law and civil society to advocate for women and the conditions they face.

Overall, the greatest accomplishment of the gender parity law is the emergence or movement of women within the political sphere.<sup>131</sup> Women are represented in parliament and I have spoken about what possibilities this holds. The gender parity law shows that women

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<sup>130</sup> Bauer & Burnet, "Gender quotas, democracy, and women's representation in Africa: Some insights from democratic Botswana and autocratic Rwanda."

<sup>131</sup> Conseil sénégalais des femmes., & Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo. (2011). Combats pour la parité : « *La Loi sur la parité absolue au Sénégal* » [Brochure]. Dakar : Agence espagnole pour la coopération internationale au développement.

are involved in fighting for their rights and demanding that they be represented within government. COSEF notes that with the adoption of the law, there's greater presence of women campaigning during the elections.<sup>132</sup> These women are supported by groups like COSEF and RSJ which provides training and equipment to equip female leaders with the tools needed for their new roles. Women are more involved in the political parties than ever before.<sup>133</sup> They continue to be involved in the mobilization efforts and gaining support from the local people on certain issues.

The parity law, which may prove to accomplish nothing for women in Senegal with the passing of time, seems to be the necessary step in bringing about change. Before the 2012 elections, women were represented in the parliament but considering that they make up 52% of the population, their absence indicated that they didn't have access to political office like men did. In passing this law, the representation of women has started to reflect the gender makeup of the country, which could mean that very shortly, men and women will be equally represented in parliament. Those who offered counterarguments during the mobilization efforts criticize the law as putting incompetent women into power and they felt that it discriminated against men. They are a part of the larger group across Africa which views "quotas... as 'artificial' solutions to women's under-representation in politics, as a mechanism violating the rights of votes to select their preferred candidates."<sup>134</sup> Considering the difficulties that women faced, the law started the process for advancing women's rights in a society that may have not been interested in doing so.<sup>135</sup> Through this law, women have a

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<sup>132</sup> Conseil sénégalais, Guide de bonnes pratiques, 12.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Krook, «Gender quotas and democracy: insights from Africa and beyond,» 2.

<sup>135</sup> Ba, Oumy. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 21, 2014.

platform that may serve their needs of demanding actual changes. We'll be able to tell with time.

### **Limitations of the gender parity law**

In this section, I will discuss the limitations of the gender parity law and how it has failed to reach some of the goals it set out to do. In this case, I will focus on the lack of parity outside of the parliament, the difficulties in enforcing the law and other challenges that remain. The main focus of the gender parity law was to increase the representation of women within the different bodies I mentioned in the earlier chapter. In the National Assembly, the number of women has increased to 42.6% of the seats occupied by women.<sup>136</sup> Outside of this institution, the gender parity law has not contributed positively to the representation of women. The offices within parliament that are a part of the decision making process do not feature as many women as could be possible. After the 2012 elections, six secretary positions were open within parliament and only one woman ended up being elected for it.<sup>137</sup> In other cases, women are nominated to lead certain ministries, but often they are called to those that are seen as serving the interests of women and require less skills or technique.<sup>138</sup> For example, women are more likely to be nominated for offices that serve the interests of women like the Minister of women and children and less in offices that deal with economic development. Lastly, women are getting involved in political parties and they are using their position to mobilize for certain issues. One limitation of the gender parity law has been that women aren't in key, important positions within political parties and they aren't invited to

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<sup>136</sup> Conseil sénégalais, *Guide de bonnes pratiques*.

<sup>137</sup> Sarr, « Bilan D'une Campagne : Des hommes S'engagent, » 65.

<sup>138</sup> Conseil sénégalais, *Guide de bonnes pratiques*.



play strategic roles.<sup>139</sup> These first set of challenges highlight how the gender parity law hasn't necessarily translated into parity being fulfilled in all institutions and in fact, the representation of women hasn't increased in these offices due to this law.

Another limitation to the gender parity law has been the implementation of the law and the nonuse of sanctions by those who don't meet the requirements. As I described in the earlier chapter, the law stipulates that the lists which don't follow the parity law would be rejected and these political parties would be unable to participate in the elections. In 2014, lists from Touba which didn't alternate between men and women were allowed to participate in the election despite their deviance from the law.<sup>140</sup> Yaya Ngor argues that Touba, which serves as a religious center for one of the brotherhoods, is a reminder that religion plays a powerful role in Senegalese politics. She explains that "there is a pressure of religion on the country, there's pressure of religion on politics, on the way of thinking, on the way of behaving..."<sup>141</sup> A national law that called for the sanctions of those political parties that didn't alternate names was allowed to proceed even though it technically violated the law. She explained to me that although Senegal claims to separate religion and politics, this deviance illustrated how religion influences politics and ultimately allows for some groups to not comply with regulations. ONP also noted that without proper sanctions for who violate the law, it jeopardizes the effectiveness of it when other political parties see that there are not consequences for those who violate it.<sup>142</sup> In this case, there needs to be a greater distinction and communication between the law and the sanctions that are applied for those who violate it, otherwise there's no incentive to keep participating.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ngor, Yaya.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Observatoire National de la Parité, «Rapport de consultations,» 20.

With the adoption of the gender parity law, the National Observatory on the Parity was created with the goal of following through with the implementation of the law and seeing the results of this law.<sup>143</sup> They were concerned with analyzing the effects of the gender parity law in Senegal. When I visited in 2014, the office had finished being set up to start work. They had conducted one survey looking at the gender parity law and people's perception of the law. This agency, as long as it functions, will be charged with providing statistics on the gender parity law and assessing whether the law has positively or negatively impacted the situation and conditions of women in Senegal. If they are able to carry this out, they will provide valuable data to the politicians and the general public about the impact of the parity law. One of their findings is that some parts of Senegal are still unclear about the parity law and how it serves the development of the country.<sup>144</sup> They recommend further advocacy and dialogue with different communities.

Another finding is that while the parity law has brought women into the parliament, the government needs to invest more into the economic and political capacities of women.<sup>145</sup> If this agency can properly function, they will also be able to provide recommendations on how the government can best maximize this law to improve the conditions of women.

### **Current challenges facing women**

Five years after the adoption of the gender parity law, there are positive changes that have occurred on the behalf of women and there's the possibility of other changes in the future. Considering the fact that the parity law has its limitations and has only achieved some

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

of its goals, this section will present the challenges facing women despite the gender parity law and as described by those within civil society. If these challenges were addressed along with the parity law, the conditions of Senegalese women would improve. In the next section, I will address the suggestions by members of civil society on what could improve the situation of Senegalese women.

One of the challenges that has been unaddressed by the gender parity law has been the lack of economic opportunities for women. Since they are often at home or their work is in the informal sector, women may have a harder time escaping poverty and are unable to provide for their families. Professor Ndior argues that “today, the principal challenge of women in Senegal is the problem of economic means. Women would like to invest in development, but often they don’t have the means necessary to participate in the development of Senegal.”<sup>146</sup> Yaye Sokhna Ndiaye mentions that “the idea of development for us, it’s first the idea that the woman can develop, take charge of themselves, because women are always based on their men....It’s why we, we have initiated that women try to find work so that they can support their own needs and the needs of their kids.”<sup>147</sup> From their experiences, the interviewees believed that women needed the tools to take care of their problems without having to be dependent on their men. Yaye Sokhna Ndiaye whose group offers revue making activities noted that as long as the woman’s income was linked to the man, she would never be empowered.<sup>148</sup> If the man loses his job, it has an effect on the woman and her kids. If the man dies, the woman is left to care for her family without the proper means for doing so. A common theme developed in my interviews was that helping women gain employment in the informal sector or on a smaller scale would allow them to

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<sup>146</sup> Ndior, Moussa.

<sup>147</sup> Ndiaye, Yaye Sokhna.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

make money, control it and then ultimately use it to benefit the family. Improving economic opportunities are seen as a crucial point in addressing the issues of the empowerment of women.

Another major challenge for women that remains is the lack of competence resulting from the lower years of education and the limited training. As alluded to in the earlier chapters, girls are more likely to be pulled out of school for various reasons. Although Senegal has made significant improvements in closing the gender gap between boys and girls in education, there's work that remains. Even if Senegal is suddenly able to achieve parity within all levels of education, there are still issues for the older generation. "Often it's illiteracy that poses problem because a lot of women do not know how to read or write. It's a handicap...."<sup>149</sup> Illiteracy rates are higher among women meaning that women are unable to read or write, meaning their participation within politics is threatened and they may face difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. Oumy Ba also notes that:

There's the parity law that says one man/one woman, but me who works on the empowerment of women, I think that the parity should be different. What should be done is to reinforce the capacity of women because if we reinforce women in terms of competence, we will see instead of parity; we will talk about justice and equity.<sup>150</sup>

Being unable to read or write impacts women negatively because they are unable to read the legal texts and understand what rights have been given to them at the national or international levels. Women need to learn how to read and write and they need to receive training before they can even benefit from the laws that are passed on their behalf.

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<sup>149</sup> Ndiaye, Yaye Sokhna.

<sup>150</sup> Ba, Oumy.

Another challenge that was brought up was the fact that religious discourse and cultural practices are used to justify the role of women in society. “There are prejudices. They have been made to believe that women should be submissive; she should arrange herself behind her husband...”<sup>151</sup> Madame Yoff expresses a similar view: “We live in a patriarchal society which means that women have a lower status compared to men... because of our culture, we have a tendency to “assign” stereotypes or prejudices to women...which is what makes women vulnerable...what makes women weak in front of men.”<sup>152</sup> Islam and cultural practices are used to say that the only role for women in society is at home or taking care of their families. Along with beliefs about the place of women within society, there’s also the practice of polygamy. Polygamy, which allows a man to have up to 4 wives, has been criticized for favoring men and not giving enough rights to women. For Yaya Ngor, she believes women cannot continue working within the religion if they want to accomplish what they are looking for; they must completely break away from it. In this case, it doesn’t seem that religion is the enemy of women’s rights; it’s just that certain aspects of religion are used to present women negatively where they can’t even begin to fight for their rights.

Finally, the last sets of challenges are related to women’s rights guaranteed in theory versus the implementation of these rights. For Amy Sakho, the challenge facing women today, “it’s the respect of women’s rights. Personally, there is a lot to do for women’s rights. There are texts that talk about these rights, but in the plans of implementation, there are always problems compared to prejudice, the culture, that habituated women to place themselves behind men, to occupy second place. Therefore, to me I say that the challenge of

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<sup>151</sup> Sakho, Amy. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 3, 2014.

<sup>152</sup> Yoff, Madame.

Senegalese women, it's the respect of their rights."<sup>153</sup> As stated earlier, Senegal has signed all the major international and regional conventions, has attended the conferences on women's rights and has been making improvements on the third millennium development goals. Mané mentioned:

When we look well at the family code, the penal code and the juridical texts in Senegal, we see that in reality Senegalese women aren't discriminated, it's just culture reasons and for certain social, economic, cultural realities that make it that women suffer some violence. Therefore, I can say that on the juridical texts, in general, women have the same rights as men.<sup>154</sup>

This coming from an activist that looks at women's rights through law echoes the fact that Senegal on paper looks like it's made major development towards women's rights because it has ratified the major conventions. It's done its role in ensuring that women technically have the same protection as men. It's in the implementation of the law, which we also saw in the parity law, where lists that violate the law aren't disqualified, that demonstrates the challenges that women still face today.

### **How does Senegal move forward?**

Now that we've seen that the gender parity law stops short of allowing the conditions of women to truly improve and there are challenges that still remain, what can be done to achieve equality within this society? To answer this question, I turned to the civil society organizations who were involved in passing the gender parity law to ask what can be done at

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<sup>153</sup> Sakho, Amy.

<sup>154</sup> Mané, Jihonda.

the local, national and international levels to allow women to address their issues, take full advantage of the gender parity law and achieve true parity within society.

The discussion on what needs to happen to improve the status of women begins at the international level because of the sustained commitment on gender and development since the 1970s. One suggestion is that that the international community should continue to work in partnership with local Senegalese organizations by providing them funding, support, training and other opportunities for leadership development.<sup>155</sup> Professor Ndior explains: "Women are now conscience of their weakness. They are also conscience of the challenges that they encounter and they work to go past that. ... It's why they organize themselves in associations and when she organizes in associations she has more force, because they pull, when they pull, they are supported."<sup>156</sup> The idea is that these groups have shown that they are committed to the cause, but they often lack funding or the expertise to fully put pressure on the Senegalese government on the behalf of those who they advocate for. Organizations, governmental and non-governmental, working on gender and development who have the means of partnering with a different groups are encouraged to do so. AFEME working in Medina credits its partnership with a Canadian organization as being crucial to launching the association in the earlier stages when it needed as much funding as possible.<sup>157</sup>

Another permanent role for the international community is to hold those who sign conventions accountable. Senegal is one example of countries that signs international and regional conventions and then fails to implement them.<sup>158</sup> The gender parity law was framed by those who understood Senegal to have already made a commitment to this issue through

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<sup>155</sup> Diagne, Yacine; Maman Cisse. Personal Interview. Dakar: July 22, 2014.

<sup>156</sup> Ndior, Moussa.

<sup>157</sup> Diagne, Yacine.

<sup>158</sup> Mané, Jihonda.

their participation and ratification of earlier conventions.<sup>159</sup> Groups calling for abortion in the cases of rape, incest and when the woman's life is in danger have the backing of the Maputo convention, which Senegal ratified. Ultimately, the groups I spoke with recommended that the international community puts economic, diplomatic and other pressures on Senegal so that it is forced to use its institutions to ratify and implement the conventions that serve the interest of women. As Mané suggests, "If we arrive to harmonize the internal texts with these conventions, we will facilitate the work and it would permit women in power to welcome these rights, it would permit women to benefit of these laws and liberties that are included in the international and regional African conventions."<sup>160</sup>

The other suggestions by the activists I interviewed are on changes that would change the statuses of women in Senegal at the national and local levels. The suggestions presented are: a politics by the government that includes a strategy for women's rights with a focus on education. The activists also emphasized providing training and arming women with the possibility of creating an economic livelihood.

One suggestion was a national plan that would actually look to accommodate women into development projects. There's a consensus that women are needed and important to development at the moment, yet the country seems to be struggling as to what exactly they are going to do to make sure that women are contributing to the development of Senegal.<sup>161</sup> Further training for women is recommended as a strategy that could be taken by the government. It can work with the associations and NGOs to provide further training to

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<sup>159</sup> As mentioned in chapter two. These include: The platform of African action adopted by the 5th regional African conference on women in Dakar, 1994; The program of action of Beijing, 1995; The Resolution 1325 of the United Nations on Women, Peace and Security, 2000; and the additional protocol to the African chart of human rights and people relative to women's rights in Africa, Maputo in 2003

<sup>160</sup> Mané, Jihonda.

<sup>161</sup> Dia, Madina; Sakho, Amy; Ngor, Yaya.



decrease the illiteracy rates and give women the possibility of finding work and being economical independent. According to Dia, “The challenges of women in Senegal at this moment are to define a strategy of development of activities generating sustainable revenues in excess of the funds, a mobilization to work in synergy on the questions of gender. We already have a parity law.”<sup>162</sup> It is also suggested that the government support the activities that are helping women generate income as it’s helping women contribute positively to the development of the country. The government should play a greater role of including women in development projects now that there’s a consensus that women are important to development.

The second suggestion rests on the state improving education especially the percentage of girls who go and stay in school and those who go on with their education. As I stated with the third millennium development goal, Senegal has been making steps in taking care of these issues and there has definitely been improvement. Even with this development, ORGANS commented that there’s work to be done. Their argument is that the curriculum uses material that is very sexist. For example, the workbooks have examples of women in certain roles while men occupy other roles. This is problematic because it is going to discourage young girls from thinking that they can work in fields that are usually reserved for men. This organization describes its work with the state to try and create material that’s more appropriate and which could educate the young people to know that they are able to do whatever they want, including taking part in the national government and standing up for their own rights.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Dia, Madina.

<sup>163</sup> Ngor, Yaya.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I started out by describing the effects of the gender parity law within the five years of implementation. I was able to show that the law has been influential in allowing women to enter the political sphere and it has the possibility of allowing them to advance women's rights through legislation. I explained the limitations of the law to show that parity doesn't extend to the offices where it was supposed to be applied and I described how there aren't sanctions for those who violate the law, creating a situation where there doesn't seem to be incentive for these parties to follow through. After this, I examined the challenges that remain for women in Senegal even after the adoption of the law. Through conversations with these groups, I also offer suggestions of actions at the local, national and international levels that are going to be more effective in reaching gender equality and empowering women in a way that the gender parity law was not able to achieve. In the last chapter, I will offer my conclusions.

## Conclusion

If the Senegalese case has shown anything, it's that women may be marginalized and that they may have unequal access to education, health care or politics; but, these same women are at the forefront of the women's movement. Their mobilization led to the adoption of the parity law, which has been viewed as a necessary first step for women's rights in the Senegalese context and for fighting for equal representation within government. In Chapter 1, I argued that the MDGs were the framework to understand the situation of women because the third goal allows us to quantify promoting gender equality and empowering women. What we find is that Senegal has made significant progress in giving girls an education and increasing the representation of women in parliament. In Chapter 2, I described the MDGs as a continuation of the international discourse on women and development, tracing the three different approaches that the international community has utilized to bring women into the conversation about development. I also discussed scholars and their criticism regarding these approaches.

After providing the background information and theoretical framework, I turned my attention in chapter 3 to the parity law. The parity law was adopted through a combination of mobilization by the third president of Senegal and local organizations. Their efforts were crucial in advocating for the law as a means for allowing for both genders to contribute to development and for providing women the opportunity to enter politics. As COSEF noted, women were highly under-represented in parliament even though they were 52% of the population. In this chapter, I discussed what the activists envisioned taking place in Senegalese society because of this law.

The last chapter analyzed the effects of the parity law five years later. I found that the representation of women had increased; the perception of women in politics had begun changing; and women were finally involved in the political sphere. Through the examples of Rwanda, Tanzania and Botswana, I argued that although five years isn't long enough to draw all conclusions about the law, the parallels between Rwanda and Senegal has convinced me that the parity law could allow female political leaders to pass legislations to improve the conditions of women. I also noted that the parity law faces difficulties in its implementation; has not led to women being represented outside of parliament; and the Observatory, which is meant to provide recommendations for the parity law, was slow in getting started. For these reasons, I argued that the parity law has not alone achieved gender equality as envisioned by the third development goal. Through my conversations with local actors, I learned that improving education, decreasing illiteracy, providing economic opportunities, collaborating with groups advocating for women's rights and holding countries that ratify international conventions are all efforts that will empower women and achieve gender equality where the parity law couldn't.

Going into the future, the local actors I spoke with were ready to continue the battle for women's rights. Oumy Ba highlights that "It's true that it's a fight that started before me and that will continue after me. Therefore, what I can say to each person at their level, whatever is your reality in your locality; try to do something on the empowerment of women."<sup>164</sup> Maman Cisse, a young Senegalese student who will be part of the new generation of activists notes:

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<sup>164</sup> Ba, Oumy.

Senegalese women at the moment, they occupy themselves a lot with studying and enterprises. They are emerging; they do a lot of things. They are conscience that a woman must study, she needs to occupy herself with the home, but she also needs to study. She needs to go to school, be at a good level, she needs to go a lot of things....They work. They are emerging.<sup>165</sup>

Moving forward, future research is needed to understand how the parity law has progressed and whether it has been beneficial for improving the conditions of women in Senegal. The research should include comparative studies of how the parity law has impacted women in the urban areas versus those in the rural areas. Two election cycles cannot tell the full story of how the parity law brought women into government and whether they were able to make concrete goals for women's rights. For the time being, Senegalese women can continue to celebrate their triumphs of placing sixth in the world for the representation of women in parliament and for their efforts to empowering women and achieving gender equality.

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<sup>165</sup> Cisse, Maman.

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