

Around the Halls: 2012 Senegal Presidential Election

Africa, Elections, Politics, Development, Developing Countries

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The Youth Vote in Senegal

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According to the World Bank, Senegal has started to recover from the global economic slowdown that started in 2009; however, the aftermath of the crisis on the current macroeconomic conditions continue to put strain on the youth population. Senegal's energy sector has performed poorly and tourism and remittances have begun to suffer from the eurozone crisis, keeping the West African nation below the expected 4.6 percent average sub-Saharan [growth rate](#). Senegal, once a leader in the region in terms of economic performance, is falling behind other top performers, such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, and [Mozambique](#). Small gains in growth for Senegal are not translating into improved employment opportunities for young people.

The youth population (ages 15-24) is feeling the brunt of these adverse economic conditions. The Consortium of Economic and Social Research (CRES) in Dakar indicates that youth are blocked from many employment opportunities due to a policy of increasing the retirement age and a hiring freeze in the public [sector](#). Additionally, sectors driving growth have intensive capital requirements, such as information and communications technology (ITC) and infrastructure and youth often have difficulty gaining access to start-up capital and credit to participate in these needed markets. Thus, young people are pushed toward working in the informal sector, migrating out of Senegal, or participating in illegal activities. In response, young Senegalese have created a movement called "Y'en a marre", or enough is enough, to express their frustrations with the economic situation, lack of amenities, government corruption and the rise in food and fuel [prices](#). Youth effectively protested Wade's first attempt at constitutional tampering last year, and have already begun to protest the announcement of Wade as an official candidate via the youth dominated group "Movement of the 23rd" or M23.

If Wade is re-elected, frustrated youth might see current economic conditions as cause for large scale revolt. What is particularly disturbing is that neither the outgoing government nor a new government stemming from the opposition seems well equipped to face massive youth unemployment. The recently adopted Social and Economic Document of Policy 2012-2015, which succeeds the Strategic Documents for the Reduction of Poverty (DSRP) of the 2000s, dedicates only minor support to the unemployment issue. Even though the opposition parties denounce youth unemployment, they have not proposed concrete solutions to reduce it significantly.

http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2012/0210_senegal_halls.aspx