MARKET RESEARCH REPORT
ADVANCING INTEGRATED MICROFINANCE FOR YOUTH IN SENEGAL

APRIL 2011
REPORT AND PHOTOS BY PAULINE GARNIER-CRUSSARD
FREEDOM FROM HUNGER
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTEXT FOR THE MARKET RESEARCH</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARKET RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARKET RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Sites</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Profile</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>METHODOLOGY: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE SITES AND POPULATIONS SURVEYED</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of “Youth”</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Labor in Senegal</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARKET RESEARCH RESULTS</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUTH</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Income</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Money</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services: loans</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services: savings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion on Saving for Change</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth gatherings today</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from the community and potential difficulties</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for youth to form savings groups</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested Savings group names</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested dues for youth savings groups</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS/COMMUNITY LEADERS</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services: loans</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services: savings</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion on Saving for Change</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth gatherings today</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set-up of a program like Saving for Change</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DESIGN OF THE AIM FOR YOUTH PROJECT .............................................. 24

ACADEMIC STATUS .......................................................................................................................... 25

GENDER ........................................................................................................................................ 25

AGE RANGE .................................................................................................................................. 25

ADDITIONAL SERVICES ................................................................................................................. 26

CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................. 26
Introduction

Context for the Market Research

The Advancing Integrated Microfinance (AIM) for Youth initiative aims to develop, test and document innovations in the integration of financial services and education for young Senegalese ages 13 to 24. The project goal is to improve the capacity of youth living in poverty to access and use financial services as a way to enhance their future economic opportunities. In partnership with Tostan in Senegal—presented in greater detail below—Freedom from Hunger is working to offer integrated financial services to these young people.

“Youth” do not represent a uniform group of people whose needs can be met with one standard approach. Cultural differences, stage in lifecycle, and availability and access to local resources are all determinants of what financial needs youth have as well as how those needs can be met. To ensure that education is locally relevant, retained and applied, and that financial services are appropriate and operationally viable, Freedom from Hunger and its partner, Tostan, worked together to design and implement this market research study in Senegal. The market research also paid special attention to the risks and vulnerabilities youth face in specific contexts, thereby ensuring that these integrated services are provided in a safe environment.

Our Partner Organization

Tostan is a non-governmental organization (NGO) whose name means “breakthrough” (as in the hatching of an egg) in Wolof, a language spoken by a majority of Senegalese.\(^1\) Through its various programs launched since 1991, Tostan has had directly reached more than 160,000 beneficiaries, and has indirectly affected more than two million people. In addition, Tostan has helped thousands of West African communities gain access to a 30-month holistic education program. Tostan works with communities located in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Gambia, Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia and the Sudan.

\(^1\) Also spoken in Gambia and Mauritania.
Tostan’s goal is the empowerment of African communities, based on human rights and made possible by sustainable development and by positive, constructive social transformation. Tostan fulfills this mission through its Community Empowerment Program (CEP). The goal of the CEP is to provide African communities with the skills and knowledge needed to make lasting improvements to their standard of living. The CEP has been methodically developed and perfected over the past 15 years, with systematic consultations with the communities and painstaking revisions, making it one of the most original and efficient development programs in Africa.

**Market Research Objectives**

As previously stated, the goal of the AIM for Youth project is to improve the capacity of youth living in poverty to access and use financial services as a way to enhance future economic opportunities presented to them.

Freedom from Hunger and Tostan worked together to conduct this market research with young Senegalese in the Thiès, Mbour and Kaolack regions, with the goal of identifying the most appropriate approaches in order to empower young people in their access to and use of financial services, and their complete assimilation of the foundations of financial education.

The study thus included a qualitative examination of the financial pressures placed on youth and their strategies for handling these pressures. This report also seeks to understand more about the role of youth in the household economy, the opportunities that are available to come together as groups, and their preferences for integrated financial services and financial education.

The research questionnaire, developed jointly by Freedom from Hunger and Tostan, focuses on four research objectives:

1. Identify the financial pressures facing youth today
2. Identify and analyze their current financial strategies
3. Identify youth autonomy in money management and decision-making
4. Identify appropriate delivery mechanisms for the integrated services

Tostan has intentionally adopted an approach in which any socioeconomic or cultural change must be respectful of traditions and customs, which it sees in a positive light, rather than stigmatizing and abruptly fighting against them.
To meet these goals, focus group discussions (FGDs) addressed the following:

**Identification of sources of money available to youth.** What income-generating activities are available to youth? How often and at what time of year do young people receive money from these sources? How much revenue is received from these sources each time? What are the challenges facing youth in order to gain access to these sources of income?

**Identification of the uses of these financial resources.** How is the money used? How often and at what time of year do young people spend this money? Which expenditure is considered as the most important by youth, and why? What unexpected expenses can be encountered by youth in the community? How do they cope with these?

This series of questions enabled an examination of the types of financial services that youth consider accessible, as well as what they know about existing financial services.

**Identification of financial services (savings and loans) to which youth have access.** How do youth borrow and save? How often do they make use of these services? How much do young people borrow/save at a time? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of service? What are the preferences of youth, in view of the socio-cultural context in which they live?

Following a non-exhaustive presentation of the *Saving for Change* program, youth and parents and/or communities leaders had the possibility of responding and asking questions to learn more about the program. After this, a final series of questions was asked, pertaining to the possibility of creating savings groups adapted to youth needs.

**Identification of delivery mechanisms for the integrated services:** In which social activities do youth participate? How do young people organize themselves in groups today? Why do young people get together in groups? Which segmentation would be most appropriate for such savings groups: co-ed or gender-based groups? Why? In terms of support and guidance, what role could be played by the community (leaders and parents) in setting up these youth savings groups? What challenges might arise during the creation of a program such as *Saving for Change*?

This qualitative questionnaire activity was conducted using ethnographic data-collection tools, particularly FGDs, as described in the methodology.
Market Research Design and Methodology

Survey Sites

The sites selected for the market research were based on the areas of Senegal where Tostan is already active. To ensure a varied cross-section of the populations interviewed, the groups were located either in villages near to the Tarmac Road or, conversely, in very remote areas. Although Tostan has set up Saving for Change groups for adults in the areas around Thiès, Mbour and Kaolack, prior to this study the program had not been promoted in any of the six villages visited.\(^3\) On the other hand, the CEP either is currently underway and scheduled to conclude in July 2011 (Mboss and Djokoul), or ended more than ten years ago (Touba Toule and Ndiarno) or some four years ago (Mboulème and Keur Balla Lô).

Thus, the three research teams, comprising representatives from Tostan and Freedom from Hunger, traveled to the departments of Thiès and Mbour, located in the Thiès region, as well as to the Kaolack department, in the region of the same name. During the 2005 census, the population of Thiès was estimated at 529,261 people, Mbour’s at 513,278, and Kaolack had 382,784 inhabitants.\(^4\) More specifically, the three teams visited members of the communities of six villages located in these departments: Touba Toule and Ndiarno (Thiès), Mboulème and Keur Balla Lô (Mbour) and Mboss and Djokoul (Kaolack).

The market research was conducted from March 31 to April 3, 2011. The team that traveled to Thiès included three members of Tostan: a facilitator who led the FGDs in the vernacular language Wolof, a scribe whose native language was Wolof, but whose descriptive notes on the FGDs were taken in French, and, finally, a group leader with overall responsibility for the success of the FGDs, the materials, and the desired participant profile, as per the pre-determined segmentation (explained in detail, below). The team that went to Mbour comprised two members of Tostan (the facilitator and the scribe) as well as a Technical Advisor from Freedom from Hunger. Finally, the team that ran the study in Kaolack had five members: the facilitator, the scribe and an interpreter, working for Tostan, as well as the Director of the Microfinance and Youth Program and a Research Consultant both hired by Freedom from Hunger. Translation into French was requested so that they could understand the content of the FGDs, which systematically took place in Wolof.

---

\(^3\) Except, in some cases, for certain radio programs broadcast weekly on local stations, the participants were unfamiliar with Saving for Change.

\(^4\) Recensement Général de la Population et de l’Habitat (General Census on Population and Habitat)—RGPH—2007.
After four days of field surveys, the three teams reported to each other and jointly synthesized the data collected in the field. This session took place on April 4, 2011, in the Centre de Capabilisation pour le Développement Durable (CCDD, Sustainable Development Empowerment Center) in Thiès.

Table 1: Number of participants in each Focus Group Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>THIÈS</th>
<th>MBOUR</th>
<th>KAOLACK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segment/Village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls and young women</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and young men</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and community leaders</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Profile

The participant groups were selected based on two criteria: age and gender. This resulted in three categories: girls and young women, ages 13 to 24; boys and young men, ages 13 to 24; and, last, parents and/or community leaders.⁵

⁵ At the start of the FGDs and during their presentation, parents were asked to confirm the ages of their children, in theory 13 to 24 (inclusive). The “community leaders” included village chiefs, their advisors and influential members of the community. The word “parents” intersects with the definition of “community leaders,” as the latter, although often older people, can also have children within the desired age range.
The participants in each of the two youth focus groups were asked to introduce themselves and to indicate their marital status (married or unmarried) and their academic status (attending school, a training center, or neither). In addition, the young people were to draw a typical member of their community, potentially representing each of them, to be used as the subject of questions posed to the entire group (such as, “in your opinion, how could this girl (or this boy) earn money?”).

To ensure the level of comfort, attentiveness and participation of all focus group members, it was preferable to separate the young women from the young men, so that the girls could express themselves freely, sharing their activities and their needs, without concern for the views of boys, whose priorities and needs may differ. This gender segmentation was respected throughout the process. However, as concerns age, it was difficult for the teams to verify that the ages given by participating youth during their introductions were, in fact, accurate.\textsuperscript{6}

Regarding the groups of parents and/or community leaders, the pre-requisite was to have at least one child between the ages of 13 and 24. Owing to the “dominant” presence of fathers and village chiefs, who systematically spoke up during interviews, the survey team in Kaolack considered it to be more accurate to meet exclusively with the mothers during every other FGD, to ensure that their voices were heard.

\textsuperscript{6} For example, a student’s age may be falsely increased if this will allow him/her to benefit from a particular program or, conversely, lowered, if he/she is having academic problems to ensure the possibility of enrollment in a class, despite being behind in his/her studies. Additionally, in rural areas, if a birth certificate was not issued, the mother may give an approximate age for her child.
Methodology: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

During this study, three tools were used: two questionnaires for the FGDs with the youth (similar for boys and for girls) and one questionnaire for the FGDs with the parents.

1. The first tool used with the youth pertained to their sources of income, how this income is used, and the financial services to which they have access (borrowing or saving via more or less formal systems). This questionnaire was completed with 12 groups of girls and boys, divided between the three departments.

2. The second tool used with the youth (another 12 groups of boys and girls from the same villages) addressed the principles of the Saving for Change program, which the facilitator presented, followed by a question and answer period. The young people then shared their desires and fears, and their perceptions of how integrated financial services could be organized to align with their needs. The research team decided it was better to separate this tool from the first.

3. The third tool, for sole use with the parents, included nearly all of the same points from the first two, the difference being that the facilitator did not raise the issue of the sources and uses of the children’s money, but rather addressed the financial services accessible to young people (loans and savings). This was because the research team felt that the parents would undoubtedly be unable to accurately describe how youth earn and spend their own money. Save for this one exception, the parents discovered the terms of the Saving for Change program in the same way as the youth; they asked for clarifications and further details and gave their opinion as to whether such a program would be appropriate for their children. This was an opportunity for them to express any reservations that they might have and to make any adjustments to the type of youth savings groups that would, in their opinion, work best. This tool was utilized 12 times, four times in each of the three departments.

The FGD is a qualitative data-collection technique, which was used with groups of six to ten participants discussing a very specific subject as part of a dialogue led by a facilitator (moderator). Such a method, built on open-ended and detailed questions, allowed the research team to gather a large quantity of data in a relatively brief period of time, typically one to two hours.

The FGD facilitators used a discussion guide and a pre-established questionnaire, with which they had fully familiarized themselves in advance, to be able to naturally and spontaneously moderate the debate.
among the participants. In addition, the facilitators used visual aids, such as drawings (illustrating the sources and uses of income, and the financial services, available to young people), and small objects (the “hot potato” tossed around during the introduction of the participants), to encourage participation and thorough consideration as part of a dynamic group discussion of these specific subjects.

**Contextualization of the sites and populations surveyed**

**Concept of “Youth”**

The concept of youth is a vast one that encompasses a wide variety of characteristics. The term “adolescent” is relatively unused in Wolof; the term “children” is more common. However, for example, from the time when a girl becomes a mother, she is no longer considered a child, but rather an adult, even if she is only 15 years old. Conversely, the fact of holding a job does not make a child an adult, because child labor is very widespread in Senegal.

Thus, the scale of ages of 13–24 years made it possible to capture a variety of information from these youth. The above notwithstanding, this age range is by no means set in stone, and was selected for this specific market research, but does not mean that changes (increasing or decreasing the age of eligibility) may not be made in the future. We will revisit the issue of the age-based segmentation of youth later, from a perspective of the possible creation of a community savings program such as Saving for Change (see the “Recommendations” section).

**Child Labor in Senegal**

In Senegal, although child labor is part of a long socio-educational tradition, based on its consideration as an initiation into a way of life and of working, it must be said that this phenomenon developed in particular with the rise in poverty and in a context of the fragmentation of traditional production units. In

---

7 The term “Youth” allows for a degree of flexibility in its definition. This is illustrated in a 2008 report by the Youth Employment Network for West Africa (YEN-WA), in partnership with the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization, which defines youth as being ages 15 to 30 years old.
rural areas, children begin to participate in household tasks, work on the family farm and sell products at the local market, at a very early age.

Thousands of children in Senegal—beggars from the Koranic school, brick-makers, minor-repair mechanics, car washers and waxes, maids, stone breakers and garbage collectors—perform activities now ranked among the worst forms of work. This leads to massive school failures, which in turn engender worrisome drop-out rates. Indeed, numerous students are at risk of leaving school before the fifth-grade level (school life expectancy), with many of them winding up either repeating a year or dropping out. However, for the cross-section of youth who participated in the FGDs and for whom Tostan has set up education projects, 70% were attending school (64% in the department of Thiès, 50% in Mbour and 89% in Kaolack). This finding, though, does not exclude the possibility of their combining a scholastic education with (low-) income-generating activities.

**Market Research Results**

The results of the market research were quite conclusive, with regard to the needs (access to and management of financial services) expressed by youth and felt by their parents. Youth have varying sources of income and needs (illustrated by their expenditures), and now have access to a form of savings and loans, outlined below.

What young people refer to as “financial problems” concern, in reality, unexpected expenses (for health problems, deaths, sudden arrivals of relatives who must be honored and served, bad harvests, locust infestations or drought, causing their business, and therefore their revenue, to drop). It also involves expenses, both frequent and occasional (social events, religious celebrations, academic expenses, etc.), which the youth considered as problems to be managed, whereas they are, in fact, foreseeable costs. This is a reflection of the need expressed by the youth to prepare for their future through savings and to manage investment projects through loans. It is also the reason the preliminary presentation of the Saving for Change program resonated with both youth and adults, who have an acute sense of their needs and of the limitations of available financial services.
Results of Focus Group Discussions with Youth

Sources of income
According to the responses of the youth in the 24 FGD groups, their revenue sources today are small trade, the sale of agricultural products, housekeeping work, apprentice work, contributions from parents and, finally, income from the sale of bred animals. These various sources of income are not without their share of difficulties.

- Young people managing small businesses may suffer losses due to failure to sell off their merchandise, or high rates of taxation on the location of their stands. In addition, they may be the victims of theft or of customers’ refusals to pay.
- The challenges facing youth who work in the fields are drops in production and/or yields owing to a lack of manpower, agricultural material or soil fertilization, to grazing animals that destroy new shoots, or to insect invasions (often locusts).
- Concerning youth who perform housekeeping duties, the risks relate to non-payment by their employers and the difficulty of the work (exhaustion, but also bad treatment).
- Youth who enjoy the financial support of their parents lament the irregularity of the money received, due to their parents’ unstable employment situation. This is added to the risks of dependence and laziness engendered by this “free” money.
- Finally, youth engaging in animal husbandry are confronted with the risks of theft of their animals or the loss of the latter due to non-suitable treatment (lack of knowledge or resources for the proper care of animals).

Given the frequency and the amounts of this irregular revenue, young people are unable to plan ahead for the unexpected and, as a result, for “resolving their problems.”
Table 2: Sources of income for youth (B=boys; G=girls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type/Origin of Income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Amount of Money</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small trade</td>
<td>• Daily</td>
<td>• FCFA 500/day</td>
<td>• Failure to sell off merchandise</td>
<td>Girls earn less, on average, than boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Weekly</td>
<td>• FCFA 200–1,000/week</td>
<td>• Outstanding client payments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monthly</td>
<td>• FCFA 10,000/month (B)</td>
<td>• Local competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FCFA 5,000/month (G)</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>• Annual</td>
<td>• FCFA 100,000–200,000/year</td>
<td>• Locust invasions, grazing animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(harvests after wintering in September/October)</td>
<td>• FCFA 400-500/week</td>
<td>• No or late rain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FCFA 15,000–50,000/month</td>
<td>• Lack of equipment and labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FCFA 100,000/quarter</td>
<td>• Falling prices and production levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
<td>• Any time during the year</td>
<td>• FCFA 10,000–20,000/month</td>
<td>• Outstanding employer payments</td>
<td>Mostly women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FCFA 200–1,000/day</td>
<td>• Accusations of theft</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice work</td>
<td>• Any time during the year</td>
<td>• FCFA 100, 200 or 500/day</td>
<td>• Violence and possible sexual abuse</td>
<td>Mostly men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FCFA 1,500–3,000/week</td>
<td>• Laborious work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FCFA 20,000–30,000/month</td>
<td>• Unstable work, no job security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>• Daily</td>
<td>• FCFA 20,000–25,000 each occasion</td>
<td>• Money unavailable</td>
<td>Mostly women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Weekly</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Not sufficiently stimulating and may cause laziness</td>
<td>Given for celebrations, holidays and back-to-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monthly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock farming</td>
<td>• Annual</td>
<td>• FCFA 15,000–50,000/year</td>
<td>• Theft, poor upkeep/care of the animals (epidemics)</td>
<td>Mostly men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After the harvest</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cost of maintenance (straw and water)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use of money
Thanks to money earned or received, young people try to provide for their expenses, to which they accord the following prioritization:
On average, young people consider **clothing** to be their main expenditure. This includes the minimum required to earn the respect of the community and their own self-respect, as well as less ordinary apparel for major events (religious celebrations such as Korité and Tabaski).

The second major expense (for those in school) is **school supplies** (including major back-to-school expenses in October, as well as more frequent, less costly replenishments of supplies during the year).

Next are expenditures for **animal husbandry** (purchase of animals concerns nearly as many women as men), **toiletries** (mainly for women), contributions toward **family needs** (purchase of food, medications and other).

Finally, **agricultural materials**, mentioned by both girls and boys.

Regarding unexpected expenses, the youth mentioned sudden visits from a relative who must be received with great displays of generosity\(^8\) in the African tradition; treatment in the case of illness (malaria, diarrhea, fever, etc.); religious ceremonies (baptisms, weddings and funerals); school fees or the purchase of agricultural equipment. To prepare for such unexpected expenses, young people work and save. When savings are not enough, and if the young person owns an animal (goat, sheep or chicken), he/she will sell it (typically at market) to earn money. Otherwise, he/she will borrow from parents, friends, the local shopkeeper or from a tontine group,\(^9\) if he/she or his/her mother is a member.

**Financial services: loans**

Youth mentioned various means from which to access loans; i.e., parents, tontines, friends, local shopkeepers and even the bank,\(^10\) although the latter was not listed by all participants. However, when youth were asked to rank their preferences from which to obtain loans, the following order was given: **parents** (5/12), **local shopkeeper** (4/12), **friends** (2/12) and, lastly, **the tontine** (1/12). While the top two sources of loans (parents and shopkeepers) were preferred equally by boys and girls, friends, however, were only cited as a preference by boys, and tontines, only by girls.

---

\(^8\) It is very common that an animal (goat, sheep or chicken) that has been raised will be killed at the time of a visit from a relative, in honor of the visitor, who honors the host with his/her presence.

\(^9\) The term *tontine* is used in West African French speaking countries for ROSCAs (*Rotating Savings and Credit Associations*).

\(^10\) The term “bank,” when used by the communities, can refer to different things. In Tostan’s terminology, village banks are community funds set up by Community Management Committees (CMCs). These funds are supplemented by dues used by the members as a source of rolling lines of credit and savings, whose rules of operation and interest rates are set by the members in a strictly informal arrangement. Crédit Mutuel du Sénégal, mentioned by some participants, is a microfinance institution (MFI). MFIs are local institutions recognized by the Senegalese State, but with limited bank transaction and wage deposit facilities.
The reasons for these preferences follow. Borrowing money from their parents mean no penalties, gossip or exposure, in the case of a late payment or non-payment. Parents are understanding and discreet, which reassures young people. The appeal of the shopkeeper lies in the personal and discreet relationship established between the young borrower and the lending shopkeeper. As for friends, they have quality relationships, in which constraints are not predominant and mutual understanding is assured. Finally, the benefit of the tontine is that it is a social structure that can be of benefit to one and all.

Nevertheless, each service also has its limitations, of which youth are quite aware. For example, young people expressed the possibility of feeling embarrassed to ask for money from parents and that the slightest problem or delay in repayment could damage the parent-child relationship. Regarding shopkeepers, young people mentioned the risk of getting into bad habits by borrowing money as a regular recourse. Additionally, shopkeepers may not be available at the time the youth needs money, or may go bankrupt. As to borrowing from friends, despite the aforementioned confidence, the youth we interviewed clearly stated that a friendship could deteriorate at the slightest problem with repayment. Furthermore, a friend who is asked for a loan may refuse or may not be discreet, which could be humiliating. Finally, the limitation of tontines is that young people cannot access money whenever they want and must, instead, wait their turn. This is compounded by the penalties for late payments, which are stricter than in a completely informal system.

In addition to loans whose access difficulty and frequency do vary, young people are also accustomed to saving money and are not too poor to do so. Whether in terms of money invested as a form of insurance or money put aside or entrusted to a third party, young people demonstrate imagination when it comes to urgent situations, even if their solutions are not always wholly satisfactory. Let us now look at how young people save money.
Financial services: savings
Young people use their savings to cover expenses and handle unexpected needs. Their preference for savings systems is as follows: a hidden box (6/12), with their parents (3/12), breeding animals for fattening (2/12) and with the shopkeeper (1/12).

Whereas the hidden box and animal breeding were mentioned equally by both girls and boys, entrusting money to the shopkeeper is more of a male trend, while entrusting it to parents is more female (namely because of the close relationship between mothers and daughters). The reasons given for these preferences were the following: the box is placed in a safe, discreet location, known only to the youth, who trusts only in him/herself. Parents are a reliable option for the safekeeping of money, because the money will remain accessible and can even help the parents, in case of need. Animal husbandry is beneficial because it prevents the temptation of wasting money stored as cash and, conversely, constitutes an investment that can be recovered when needed by selling the animal. Young people did not mention any particular difficulties in selling their livestock, even in cases of emergency. The shopkeeper’s presence and inventory provide a guarantee that the youth’s savings can be collected when required. Their need may be food-based (basic needs), family-based (to support a family member or to host a guest), or social (costs incurred for a ceremony or membership in a group11).

However, here again, these financial services have their limitations. The box, although cited as the most appropriate method for young people to use to save money, may be stolen by another person when the youth’s back is turned. Because the boxes are often made of wood, rats may gnaw on the bills or fire could burn it all up. Finally, the secret box is readily accessible and so is not dissuasive when there is a temptation to take money out for wasteful spending. Although parents appear to be trustworthy, parents in

11 Youth in the village of Mboulème have an association whose purpose is to establish partnerships with youth groups from Mbour and to organize wrestling sessions (dues: FCFA 500 per month, FCFA 250 per week). The association has 42 members.
need may use their child’s savings for their own purposes and then be unable to restore the funds. They may, furthermore, take this as a contribution toward the family’s household needs. Regarding livestock, the risk mentioned, here again, was the possibility of nighttime theft of the animals, in addition to the risk of epidemics due to a lack of resources and knowledge needed to provide adequate medical attention. The risk of depositing savings with the local shopkeeper is, quite simply, diversion of the funds by the merchant, who may be in need of cash and has no written proof compelling him to refund the money. In addition, and without necessarily entailing the misuse of the young person’s savings, the shopkeeper may go bankrupt and close the shop, or be the victim of theft or fire. Finally, and to a lesser extent, the shopkeeper may simply not be present at the store when the youth (urgently) needs the funds.

**Opinion on Saving for Change**

The youth responded positively and unanimously welcomed the idea that a program such as *Saving for Change* could be established in their communities. In fact, following the presentation of the program, the youth expressed their enthusiasm for the idea of benefiting from a program that would allow them to manage their money in a safe and accessible manner, while increasing solidarity and unity within the community. Thus, according to the youth, such an integrated microfinance program could help them plan for the future, with adequate financial resource management and participation in the development of the community.

**Youth gatherings today**

Religious, sports and cultural gatherings are the main reasons why youth come together. Additionally, youth get together regularly for discussions about problems affecting the village in order to try to identify solutions. There are also reading classes, organized by Tostan. Finally, clean-up days also take place in certain villages on Mondays, the weekly day off during winter. Youth tend to gather in age-based associations. The aim of these associations is to contribute to the village’s development or to provide mutual help by raising funds for religious and social events.

For the implementation of a program such as *Saving for Change*, the majority (8/12) of the youth focus groups expressed a preference for co-ed savings groups. One-third of the groups interviewed, however, would preferred single gender-based grouping. The first suggestion was based on the idea that this type of mixed-gender group already exists in the villages and poses no problem, and that a youth group should include as many girls as boys. In addition, it is important to provide an example of successful mixing, so that the current segregation may not be reproduced to the same extent in future generations. Lastly, this type of division of youth could lead to competition between the groups, thus dissipating, rather than pooling, their efforts.
On the other hand, those in favor of gender-based separation (the groups from Thiès department) explained their reasoning by stating that girls would not feel as comfortable expressing themselves with boys as they would in an all-female group. The fact is that the Senegalese people follow patriarchal rules in which women do not stand in the presence of men and tend to wait until the men have spoken, before taking their turn. A distinction between groups of boys and groups of girls would provide stimulation that could encourage each participant to accomplish more.

**Support from the community and potential difficulties**

Young people expect a great deal of support from their parents in helping them set up their savings groups. This support can take three different forms: moral support, via advice and ideas from parents; financial support, via possible financial assistance, in case of need (namely for the group’s dues); as well as the tacit agreement that the parents will not interfere, but rather will give their blessing for the success of the program.

Despite this support, young people may face challenges in this area. Four main difficulties were mentioned: non-compliance with group rules (regular payment of dues, attendance and punctuality at meetings, repayment of loans in the long term, etc.), the possibility of quarrels between members, lack of motivation that could diminish the group spirit and, finally, poor money management.

**Opportunities for youth to form savings groups**

According to youth, savings groups could meet during the rainy season (from June to September). Whether youth are on vacation from school or not attending at all, they are often present in the village during this period, to help their parents in the fields. Youth who do not leave on vacation are, as a result, very busy, but as Monday is the weekly day of rest, savings groups could meet then. During the rest of the year (the “dry season”), some youth felt it would not be possible to meet, due to their academic schedule. High school students, for example, are away from the village during the week (Monday to Friday), staying in the city, often at the home of a relative, and only come back on the weekends. Nor is it possible for those working in the city to be present in the village. However, some youth stated that middle school students are back in the village every day after classes, from 2p.m. onward. In addition, high-schoolers are home on Saturdays and Sundays, in addition to holidays and vacations.

Thus, after initially considering that it would be impossible to meet outside the rainy season, the youth found that there were, in fact, options for weekly meetings year-round: on the weekend for older youth (in high school) and any day after 2p.m. for younger ones (in middle school).
Table 3: Options for youth savings group meetings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEGMENT/PERIOD</th>
<th>RAINY SEASON (JUNE-SEPTEMBER)</th>
<th>DRY SEASON (ACADEMIC YEAR: SEPT-JUNE)</th>
<th>SCHOOL VACATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School girls</td>
<td>Unable to meet because they help their parents to work the fields or due to rain</td>
<td>Unable to meet because they attend school or Possibility of weekend meetings or weekdays after 2 p.m.</td>
<td>Unable to meet because on vacation away from the village (often staying with a relative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School boys</td>
<td>Possibility of meeting because all youth are in the village during this period</td>
<td>Unable to meet because in school or migrated to the city (rural exodus) or Possibility of meeting any weekday after 2 PM</td>
<td>Possibility of short meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed girls</td>
<td>Possibility of meeting because they are in the village during this period</td>
<td>Unable to meet because away in the city for work</td>
<td>No vacations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed boys</td>
<td>Unable to meet because helping their parents in the fields or Possibility of meeting in the village every Monday (day off)</td>
<td>Unable to meet because away in the city for work</td>
<td>No vacations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: One of the comments made pertained to the fact that only those who do not leave the village become members of savings groups, regardless of age (above or below 15 years).

Suggested Savings group names

The youth suggested a number of names for their savings groups. These suggestions, in Wolof, included the following: “DEGOO” (understanding); “DIAPPO” (union); “DIBALANTE” (solidarity); “AM DIOM” (modesty); “SOTANTE KHALAT” (sharing ideas) and “TOSTAN” (hatching). More specifically, the youth of Thiès also suggested “LIGGEY NGIR WAJAIL SUNU ÊLLÊG” (working to prepare for the future); “MBOOTAAYU AND JÉF” (association for collective action). In a similar vein, girls specifically listed “MBOOTAAYU JIGEEN ÑIY LIGGEY” (working women’s associations) and “MBOOTAAYU NGIR YRKKUTE XALE YU JIGEEN ÑI” (associations for the development of young women).

Suggested dues for youth savings groups

In terms of the weekly dues to be paid by savings group members, youth seemed to have grasped and accepted the concept of committing to regular, mandatory savings once they have decided to become a member. The majority agreed that FCFA 100 would be a feasible amount for the long-term, although suggestions ranged from FCFA 25 to 500 per week.
### Table 4: Savings amounts suggested by the youth focus groups, by location and gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEGMENT</th>
<th>THIÈS</th>
<th>MBOUR</th>
<th>KAOLACK</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls and young women</td>
<td>FCFA 200–500</td>
<td>FCFA 100</td>
<td>FCFA 75–500, but more likely</td>
<td>The amount must necessarily be suitable for all members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FCFA 25 or 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys and young men</td>
<td>FCFA 50–500,</td>
<td>FCFA 100</td>
<td>FCFA 25–500, but more likely</td>
<td>Young school boys would not be able to save more without the support of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>but more</td>
<td></td>
<td>FCFA 25 or 50</td>
<td>their parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>likely FCFA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Because the responses varied primarily by gender and location, there was no need to differentiate school children (boys and girls) from those working full-time.

### Results of Focus Group Discussions with Parents/Community Leaders

#### Financial services: loans

According to the parents of youth, ages 13 to 24, the latter have four different means of access to loans: from the parents themselves (5/12), the tontine (5/12), the local shopkeeper (1/12) and the bank (1/12).

This order of preference, defined by the parents, is based on their impressions of their children’s needs and of how the youth manage their financial issues. The vast majority of parents consider themselves to be the most common source of loans to their children, due to the discretion entailed by their relationship. Moreover, parents see lending money to their children as a means of establishing their authority and of providing advice and guidance to them.

Tontines were listed as the second main source of funds to which youth have access. When they obtain a loan from a tontine, youth are obligated to repay it and, as a result, to engage in some sort if income-
generating activity. Thus, tontines are beneficial, because they compel youth to work and to be dynamic and responsible. The final advantage of the tontine is its local proximity.

Concerning shopkeepers, one of the advantages is the accountability that these loans engender in young people who are required to repay them, establishing an atmosphere of trust between creditor and debtor. (The concepts of “dignity” and “accountability” were mentioned by the youth and, even more so, by the parents, during the FGDs, regarding the mindset that young people should have.) In addition, a shopkeeper does not require any paperwork for the loan, which simplifies access to credit for young people, particularly minors.

Finally, the bank is considered to be the safest source, with bank loans being described as affordable. (One group specified that minors are not allowed to borrow from mutual societies.)

However, these financial services do have limitations, of which the parents are well aware. For each of these lending services, the parents perceived the same challenges as their children, i.e. the risk of non-repayment, which could damage the parent-child relationship or relationships between members of different families. Forgetfulness, late payments and the inability to repay a loan are both common and harmful in villages (with effects ranging from damage to parent-child relationships, to refusal of future loans by the shopkeeper, to feelings of shame and hatred between multiple families, or even to the risk of imprisonment, in the case of bank loans).

It is interesting to compare the parents’ perception of their children’s preferences to the options actually favored by the latter.
*Note: Although the parents were fully aware that they are a major source of loans for their children, they had an exaggerated impression of the use, made by the latter, of tontines.

Financial services: savings

According to the parents, young people have five ways to save money; they are listed below in the order of frequency at which they were referenced. Youth can entrust their money to their parents (10/12), hide it in a box (5/12), invest it in livestock (4/12), or deposit it at a bank (2/12) or in the funds of a tontine (2/12).

Youth savings preferences, according to parents/community leaders

---

12 The numbers correspond to the frequency at which the responses were mentioned. They add up to a total of 12 for each population segment surveyed (girls and young women, boys and young men, and parents/community leaders). A zero means that the response was not mentioned.
The benefit of children leaving money with their parents is the confidence that this inspires, constant accessibility, and the possibility of the parents supporting or advising their child, in case of problems. The main advantage of the box is the youth’s easy access to the money, allowing him/her to respond to any need, whether for a planned or an unplanned expense. The child is independent and manages his/her money as he/she sees fit. Investments in livestock are considered to be strategic, because they entail putting money to work, with animals that grow, are fattened and increase in value, but they also give children access to cash, if needed, through the sale of the animals. While tontines tend to stimulate activity in children, banks (which were referenced equally often) are considered a safe, guaranteed location, in which money can grow.

Once again, these savings options have associated challenges. The parents themselves admitted that they sometimes use the funds entrusted to them by their children for other purposes, despite the fact that this places their relationship at risk. Other than this diversion of funds, parents may also be away at the time the child wants his/her money, or may inaccurately calculate the amount, due to the absence of written records.

The disadvantages of the method of savings in a hidden box relate to the possibilities of theft and fire. In addition, easy accessibility can also be a disadvantage, because the youth can have access to the box at any time, which does not lead to a real accumulation of funds (over and above the fact that, rather than being put to work, “the money is sleeping”).

With regard to banks, the disadvantages cited varied and could even be contradictory. For example, some parents mentioned the risk that the youth might not withdraw money frequently enough, rendering it useless, while others said a child might withdraw too often, thereby preventing it from growing, or withdrawals may be difficult—or even impossible—due to a cash shortage at the bank. Finally, the major flaw of tontines is that they can give rise to quarrels and may not be sufficiently secure.

As was done for borrowing, we can make a comparison of the responses given by parents and children, concerning how youth manage their savings.
Here, we can see that the secret box, used by youth to store their savings is not known by parents. Conversely, the parents place greater importance than they should on the role they play in holding their children’s savings.

In fact, according to the parents, they could play a greater role in savings management by providing advice on financial management, planned activities, compliance with norms, and by means of awareness-raising, and help with the formalities for obtaining legal documents or for opening an account for their child.

**Opinion on Saving for Change**
Parents were also unanimous with regard to the possibility of setting up such a program as Saving for Change in their communities. They perceived Saving for Change as a program promoting solidarity and education in the management and “culture” of savings, as well as access to loans. Saving for Change could allow young people to become more independent, and thus be a lesser burden on their parents. The parents expressed hope and confidence in this clear and innovative program designed for youth, believing that it could provide for a positive change toward enhanced development.

**Youth gatherings today**
According to their parents, young people get together in associations or clubs for sporting events (soccer games and wrestling matches) and religious gatherings (Dahira, Tabaski, Korité and baptisms), as well as

---

13 A youth tontine may act as an association if it applies for legal status as an economic interest group.
for mutual help, solidarity and clean-up activities. These encounters take place on a weekly basis, even though each religious celebration takes place just once a year (for example, Kankourang occurs only in September).

For the implementation of a program such as Saving for Change, the majority (8/12) of parent focus groups expressed a preference for co-ed savings groups. One-third of the groups interviewed, however, desired segmentation by gender. This corresponds to the preferences of the youth from Thiès, who rejected the idea of creating mixed-gender groups. The first suggestion was based on the idea that “competition” between co-ed groups could energize all youth, further stimulated by the enthusiasm of female members, and would inspire each group to unite its forces to work toward sustainable development. Conversely, those in favor of gender-based differentiation advanced the argument that girls and boys do not have the same needs so would not be able to agree on common projects. Furthermore, some parents mentioned the risk of disagreements between boys and girls or of difficulties for the boys in coping with the marriage or pregnancy of one of the girls in the group.

**Set-up of a program like Saving for Change**

The parents also shared their fears: failure of members to comply with the savings group’s rules, such as payment of dues, loss of the key (for the cashbox), absence, or premature distribution of the group’s funds. These concerns were particularly strong in the Mbour department. In Kaolack and Thiès, parents did not express any particular worries as they knew their youth to be mutually supportive and respectful of rules, which would be considered shameful to transgress. In addition, the creation of savings groups would certainly reduce the rural exodus, which is a cause of extreme parent vexation. Parents also shared their expectations regarding the set-up of this type of program, relating to their desire to strengthen solidarity and mutual understanding between youth and their respect for norms. Such a program could help to develop the community and reduce poverty and, thus, the rural exodus.

For this to come to fruition, parents and community leaders will need to support their youth in a variety of ways, such as awareness-raising and guidance, with a view to independent financial management and empowerment of the young people. In addition, and in more practical terms, the parents commit to helping their children financially, in the event of difficulties paying their dues; morally, by not otherwise engaging them at the time of group meetings; and, finally, procedurally, in case of a need for a certificate or legal recognition in order to open a bank account.

According to the parents, a meeting of youth could be possible during the rainy season, which lasts from June to September. Whether youth are on vacation from school or not attending at all, they are often
present in the village during this period to help their parents in the fields. This means that youth who do not leave on vacation are very busy, but as Monday is a day off (and the day sometimes chosen for clean-up activities in the villages), it would be entirely possible for savings group meetings to take place on that day of the week. The parents felt that a weekly meeting could work for everyone.

However, the rainy season period lasts about four months, which is not long enough for even a short savings cycle. The truth is, to establish strong cohesion among the members, and the possibility of making their money grow, of managing loans, and, finally, organizing financial education or healthcare prevention sessions (where applicable to young people), the group’s cycle must be at least six months long. But the parents rejected the possibility of meetings during the dry season (the rest of the year, from October to May), because schoolchildren are attending classes. This means that middle school and high school students travel outside the village and are, as a result, unavailable during this period.

In terms of additional financial services, the focus group parents in Mbour only mentioned the possibility of access to Savings and Loan Institutions in cases where the youth cannot keep too large an amount of cash in their savings groups’ boxes and so need an option for their funds. However, most parents placed greater emphasis on empowering their children, by means of training on financial management and conducting income-generating activities to be identified through the use of feasibility studies. Otherwise, concerning additional needs, some parents mentioned the need for animal fattening projects and for the acquisition of a millet mill and a huller (in Thiès).

**Recommendations for the design of the AIM for Youth Project**

For the best chance of success of a Saving for Change style program, efficient promotion of the latter is vital among community leaders, parents and groups of youth ages 13 to 24. An affinity between group members is crucial to their cohesion and sincere solidarity. The financial savings and loan services created by such a program should be reassuring to the young people, because they will enjoy the discretion and accessibility repeatedly mentioned during the youth FGDs.

The challenges currently faced by youth are the irregularity of their income and the financial pressures hounding them. Youth who are not, or who are no longer, in school have less financial pressures, because they engage in income-generating activities.
Given that youth and parents alike shared tremendous enthusiasm for the idea of establishing a savings program like *Saving for Change*, there will surely be no difficulty in finding many youth interested in participating. Consequently, the possibility of separating the members into different categories may be of interest.

**Academic status**

All of the groups could bring together youth based on their academic status. In other words, groups of students could be separated from groups of workers. This is justified by the fact that the latter do not have the same availability in their schedules to attend meetings, nor do they have the same concerns and needs, or the same amounts and frequencies of remuneration. Making the groups more uniform would make it possible to align their social and financial objectives with the actual desires of the youth members. This being said, it is important to highlight the fact that a program such as *Saving for Change* is not designed to help youth to find work, but rather to support all of their members, regardless of their situation. All of the young members will need to be responsible and accountable. *Saving for Change* should be a continuation of development programs already in place, which encourage students to stay in school and fight massive rural exodus. This is also why parents and community leaders should be involved in the implementation of the program, beginning with its initial promotion in general meetings.

**Gender**

A gender-based division was only recommended by one-third of the focus group members, in both the parent and youth groups. As a result, a systematic separation is not necessary. However, given that the desire for gender segregation was unanimously approved in the Thiès department, it would be preferable to separate the boys from the girls in that specific area. The code of conduct and socio-cultural context specific to each location should dictate how the program is set up, so that it can truly and respectfully meet the needs of the target communities.

**Age range**

Another distinction could concern groupings by age range. It seems appropriate to take into account the differences in young people’s financial management needs by time of life. As indicated at the start of this report, the concept of “youth” includes a wide variety of situations, often dictated by marital status. Thus, it could be beneficial to group youth ages 12 to 15 together, and those ages 15 to 24 in a separate group, so that the modules are appropriate for their beneficiaries. This is, however, only a suggestion, to be examined in depth and discussed again at a later date. In addition, beyond a consideration limited only to age, marital status should also be taken into account when defining the groups. For example, two young women age 18 may not have the same needs and expectations, depending on whether or not they are
married (or are mothers). An unmarried childless woman of 18 will have a profile that is more similar to that of a 16-year-old girl with the same status.

**Additional services**

Concerning complementary non-financial services, it would be conceivable to add educational sessions on ethics and managing income-generating activities (vegetable gardening, animal husbandry or petty commerce) via feasibility studies as well as micro-projects that could guide youth in making their money secure. With regard to complementary financial services, it would also be possible, in accordance with recent Senegalese legislation on MFIs, to establish partnerships between *Saving for Change* groups and these MFIs, assuming, of course, that the group members wish to do so. One potential, more geographically accessible innovation could be the creation of village banks, which would manage larger total sums of money. In this case, additional training and awareness-raising would be provided.

Likewise, partnerships with local players involved in development, such as Tostan and Nike, could be deepened, with the aim of consistent support for joint efforts. The Community Management Committees (CMCs), in particular, which are set up by Tostan, are key players in community capacity-building, thanks to their involvement in participatory decision-making and to the trust placed in them by community members. For this reason, it is crucial that they be consulted prior to setting up any project and/or program.

**Conclusion**

The young men we met in Senegal are the fathers and heads of households of tomorrow; the young women are future mothers and wives, the future pillars of society. And yet, due to their recurring financial difficulties, these young people have little confidence in themselves or in their skills and are worried about the future.

Despite their young age, boys and girls manage to earn money through activities such as petty commerce; the sale of agricultural products or sheep and poultry; housekeeping; and apprentice work. This comes in addition to the financial support girls receive from their families. Although their sources of money differ, youth all face financial pressures that make their daily lives irregular and unstable. These pressures, which youth refer to as “problems to resolve” are of different types and may or may not be foreseeable. They can include health issues and deaths, the sudden arrival of a relative, and poor harvests. These
financial pressures are compounded by a number of unavoidable expenses, such as those for social events, religious celebrations and school supplies.

The strategies currently employed by youth to cope with these obstacles comprise additional (and exhausting) work, un-secured and irregular savings and, to a large extent, costly and irregular loans. Youth today are already able to adapt to the difficult situations that arise, but this is very costly, uncertain, and frequently humiliating. Indeed, loans are considered taboo and are seen poorly by both young people and adults alike, hence the repeated desire of youth to have access to simple financial services that are designed for them and, above all, discreet.

Young people are autonomous when it comes to making decisions and managing their money. Parents have a great deal of influence over them, providing them with advice and support. That being said, if a parent breaches a child’s trust, the latter will manage on his/her own and will not make the mistake of trusting the parent again. Furthermore, although the parents’ responses were in alignment with their children’s (in terms of savings and access to loans), certain differences in their perceptions provide a good illustration of the fact that youth do not tell their parents everything. Young people are clever and supportive of each other, despite their personal difficulties.

Despite all this, their need is real, and their interest has been confirmed: the establishment of a program such as Saving for Change, entailing integrated finance (not only education in financial management, but also access to financial services) appears well-suited to Senegalese youth. This would give the present generation every chance of ensuring a dignified, promising future that is respectful of tradition and local culture. Indeed, youth expressed a need to get together to strengthen their cohesion and solidarity for the shared goal of financial independence and, eventually, reinforcement of community development, thereby reducing the deeply lamented school drop-out rate and rural exodus.

Young people want to have access to credit so that they can conduct their income-generating activities, and also to have a safe place for depositing their savings, which have, thus far, been difficult to preserve. The discretion pursued by youth, due to the shame they feel in the case of financial pressure, would no longer be a focal point, because, in a program such as Saving for Change, solidarity, confidence and transparency reign. The appropriate mechanisms for providing them with integrated financial services would be the organization of savings groups in the village, meeting weekly, such as every Monday (the day off during the rainy season), or on weekends during the dry season. These youth groups could be co-ed or single-gender, and potentially based on age, activity (school or work), or marital status, depending
on the preference of the young people, and on the agreement of their parents and community leaders. They could save a set amount each week, determined by the youth in their internal rules, according to their wishes and, above all, their possibilities. In addition to this regular, mandatory saving activity, defined by the young people, these youth could lend to each other based on the presentation of a personal plan. Financial education and working toward a complete command of these financial activities would be an integral part of the group meetings, the terms of which will have been explained to the parents and community leaders.

In view of the results and recommendations of this market research, and basing the project on a participatory approach, an alternative to the challenges faced by youth in Senegal appears to be taking form today. This alternative could be the fruit of the Advanced Integrated Microfinance process accepted, understood and supported by community leaders, and designed and controlled by the young people themselves.

*Groups of boys and girls from Djokoul village (Kaolack)*