

## **Mission Shalom International**

### **Dakar Senegal, West Africa**

**Project title: Education and food for vulnerable children in Dakar's slums**

#### **Background**

##### **1. National**

While many African nations frequently experience military coups and conflicts, Senegal has seen political stability since independence, nevertheless, the number of poor people, particularly in rural areas, remains high. Its main economic pillar is agriculture. However, the country heavily depends on donor assistance from international organisations and individual countries. Senegal's main export industries are phosphate mining, fertilizer production and commercial fishing and despite decades of political stability, poverty levels remain high.

Ever since independence from France in 1960, Senegal has been one of the most stable countries on the African continent and in spite of this, the country's political and economic stability, unemployment is widespread and around 30 per cent of Senegalese live in poverty. Many of them do not have access to clean drinking water, sanitation and medical assistance. They face a life in precarious conditions in which tens of thousands are struggling to survive, particularly in rural areas and urban slums of the country. The number of rural poor in the country amounts to roughly 4.4 million.

##### **2. Youths and children situation**

Thousands of young Senegalese are dreaming of going to Europe and are willing to risk their lives just to get there. Many have died at sea over recent years, trying to reach the shores of Italy or Spain. Senegalese youths work under precarious conditions, mostly without adequate protection and for incredibly low wages. Human trafficking within Senegal is common too.

UNICEF estimates that over 60% of women age 15 and above in Senegal are illiterate, and that only 16 percent of Senegalese girls finish elementary school and go on to secondary school. Our project will assist 200 adolescent girls yearly in Dakar's urban slums to have access to continued education; help families and communities provide support to their daughters in school; and work to break down the economic, cultural and social barriers that keep girls from attending and succeeding in school. West Africa is marked by one of the lowest girls' primary school enrolment rates in the world. Although the situation has noticeably been improving in Senegal, the crucial task here is to keep these girls in school once they are enrolled. Thousands of girls have to do domestic work once they are old enough and physically able to.

### **3. The impact of Covid-19 on children's education:**

Since the first case of corona virus (COVID-19) was registered in Senegal on 2 March 2020, the number of confirmed cases (over 4,000) and deaths (over 120) has been increasing nationally. In order to limit the spread of the disease, the government took a number of drastic measures, including cancellation of public events, lockdown of ports, closure of schools, places of worship and suspension of virtually all business activities. These restrictions, in line with expert recommendations, are having serious repercussions on the economy and the ability of vulnerable families to meet their daily basic needs. As a result, majority of low income, vulnerable and underserved families, have lost their livelihoods and people are struggling to feed and meet basic needs. Our previous initiative has provided critical, on-the-ground support to those most impacted by the pandemic. It has also helped to stop the spread of misinformation among youths, ensure equitable access to covid-19 education and sensitization. To a limited level, we have purchased and distributed food items, hand sanitizers, face masks to over 50 families (300 people) in dire need.

The pandemic is threatening to reverse decades of progress in the fight against poverty and income inequalities and also putting the future of a generation of children in great jeopardy. In just two months of infection and subsequent economic lockdown, the virus has done damage to many families and has adversely impacted a lot of people by livelihood losses, overwhelmed health and welfare services, depleted resources, decimated family life and forced children out of school.

#### **PROJECT GOALS**

Our project activities will be focussed on meeting the SDG needs as follows:

- A. SDG 1 - No poverty
- B. SDG 2 – Zero Hunger
- C. SDG 3 – Good health and wellbeing
- D. SDG 4 – Quality Education

#### **Specific objectives:**

1. Ensure the feeding and support of 200 children through the supply of basic school needs.

2. Sensitize Islamic teachers on the dangers of COVID-19 and compliance with prevention measures in their centres and the overall communities.
3. Reinforce the capacity of our organisation to better engage with stakeholders on COVID-19 emergency response among the vulnerable children.
4. Ensure the safe return of 200 school girls upon the resumption of school post covid-19 pandemic.
5. Support learning of school girls through the provision of meals, stationery and limited tuition.

### **Activities:**

Our project will work to address the complex reasons for girls' non-attendance or poor performance in school. It will:

- Boost girls' enrolment in schools through scholarships, tutoring, and mentoring to help them access and succeed in school.
- Provide support services to assist families in supporting their girls while at school.
- Enhance health/social education and supplies to help prevent illness and school absences.
- Promote community outreaches to help increase community investment in girls' education.
- Organize leadership workshops to help girls become changemakers in their own communities.
- School feeding and tuition assistance for 200 school girls every school year.

### **Methodology**

#### **Post lockdown back to school:**

By providing support for girls' education and home based care for vulnerable street children, our project will empower young boys and girls to fight the causes and effects of poverty in their lives and to build a brighter future for themselves, their families and their communities. We will work to reduce poverty levels in remote, urban slums of Dakar in Senegal and help the most marginalized and underserved children and their families.

Furthermore, we'll work to address the complex reasons for girls' non-attendance or poor performance at school. We'll provide: tuition, tutoring, and mentoring to help girls access and succeed in school; family support services to assist families in supporting their girls; health education and COVID-19 supplies to help prevent drop outs and school absences.

#### **Covid-19 sensitization:**

We will carry out community outreach to sensitize covid-19 prevention and explain the health guidelines to prevent community transmission. Our initiative will help

increase community investment in girls' education; and leadership workshops to help their parents become change makers in their own communities.

**Impact creation:**

Overall, girls who receive education can get better-paying jobs, have increased access to nutrition and sanitation, are better able to prevent illness and fight abuse, and are more likely to educate their own children. This impact ripples through each girl's family and community--creating a "multiplier effect" that makes educating girls one of the most effective weapons against generational poverty.

**Our organisation:**

Shalom International is a National NGO based in Senegal, West Africa engaged in disaster risks reduction, education and economic empowerment initiatives among vulnerable and underserved communities. It has been involved in the implementation of projects that assist communities to develop resilience building activities in times of both natural and man-made disasters and bring their voices and needs to a global audience. It has also been engaged in the promotion of educational projects through the establishment of schools and vocational training programmes for economic empowerment in response to the corresponding United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Furthermore, Shalom International has been serving as the National Coordination Organisation (NCO) for the «*Views from the Frontline (VFL)*» project of the Global Network for Disaster Reduction ([www.gndr.org](http://www.gndr.org)) in Senegal since 2008. Also served as the West African Regional Coordinator for the same project and currently implementing the *Views from the Frontline 2019* funded by the European Union. The *Views from the Frontline (VFL)* remains the largest independent global review (survey) of disaster risk reduction at the local level.