



# **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION IN SENEGAL**

**TRADE UNION REVIEW**

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## INTRODUCTION

Senegal is part of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) Champion Countries Initiative,<sup>1</sup> a voluntary collective of Member States committed to promoting effective GCM implementation, follow-up and review. A National Migration Policy (PNMS) was technically approved in 2018, reviewed in 2023 but has yet to be implemented. Reports indicate that a National Steering Committee and operational, technical and monitoring committees are being established. In June 2024, the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families noted a general lack of clarity regarding the content, status and impact of the PNMS.<sup>2</sup> In July 2023, Senegal presented a 10-year National Strategy to Combat Irregular Migration (SNMLI), aiming to prevent migrants from leaving the country irregularly by tightening border security and tackling smuggling networks. The Inter-ministerial Committee for the Fight against Illegal Migration (CILEC) is the coordination body in charge of implementing the strategy.

Senegal's Atlantic coast is a major departure point in West Africa for

Senegalese and transit migrants alike. Due to limited opportunities in the largely informal and precarious economy in Senegal, many choose to risk treacherous boat journeys to Spain's Canary Islands. Since 2020, as emigration has increased, so has the government's focus on preventing departures and addressing irregular migration through stronger border enforcement. Senegal's European Union partners provide direct assistance in this regard, while other migration issues remain largely unaddressed.

Migrants facing expulsion proceedings to third countries are often held in police or gendarmerie premises pending proceedings, rendering them vulnerable to further abuse. Up to 100,000 Koranic students – often children – from neighbouring Guinea, Mali, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau are victims of forced begging in Senegal.<sup>3</sup> Reports of economic exploitation of migrant domestic workers and children in gold mines also persist.<sup>4</sup>

Senegal's diaspora, estimated at 1 to 2.5 million people and their remittances are viewed as a critical resource for the country's development. However, Senegalese workers abroad are not adequately protected from exploitation through regular migration pathways or bilateral labour migration agreements.

<sup>1</sup> Champion countries | United Nations Network on Migration

<sup>2</sup> UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Senegal, June 2024, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCMW%2FCOC%2FSEN%2F58685&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCMW%2FCOC%2FSEN%2F58685&Lang=en)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* See also: Global Detention Project, Senegal: Submission to the UN Committee on Migrant Workers, June 2024, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/senegal-submission-to-the-un-committee-on-migrant-workers>; and Human Rights Watch, Submission to the Africa Regional Review on implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, July 2021, [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1416/files/resources\\_files/hrw\\_submission\\_africa\\_gcm\\_regional\\_review\\_july2021.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1416/files/resources_files/hrw_submission_africa_gcm_regional_review_july2021.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> US Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Senegal, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/senegal/>



## ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Social dialogue on migration is limited. While trade unions have been involved in monitoring of Covid-19 recovery measures, their role in migration-related policymaking and programmes is ad hoc. In response to the pandemic, unions have provided humanitarian

assistance to informal sector workers, including migrants. Significantly, bilateral labour migration and social security agreements have been concluded without the consultation or involvement of trade unions. As these are not public, trade unions cannot ensure that the rights of workers affected are guaranteed.

## GCM IMPLEMENTATION

Senegal has not adequately addressed the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel Senegalese migrants to leave the country (Objective 2). Instead, it has focussed on preventing irregular migration along its coastline, with the involvement of police and military forces, including Spain's Guardia Civil. Senegal's ambitions to enhance the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration (Objective 5) are yet to be fulfilled, as bilateral agreements remain centred on return and readmission. Returned Senegalese migrant workers face risks of poverty and exclusion.

Pre-departure information and support services are limited, making many workers vulnerable to exploitation by criminal networks. Although the Labour Code prohibits recruitment fees, such charges are common. Decent working conditions for Senegalese migrants in countries of destination, for example in Southern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa regions, are not assured (Objective 6). While Senegal has improved data collection and reintegration services through Offices

for Reception, Orientation and Monitoring (BAOS), trade unions report limited involvement in BAOS activities, weakening the protection of migrant workers' rights, including those placed abroad under bilateral cooperation agreements.

Senegal has taken steps to address forced begging by migrant children, creating a compensation fund for trafficking victims and repatriating children to their origin countries. It participates in the West African Network for the Protection of Children, an ECOWAS mechanism for supporting countries in their efforts to assist unaccompanied children in situations of mobility. However, Senegal has not consistently prioritised the best interests of these children and reintegration efforts remain inadequate. Migrants facing specific risks, for example children trafficked into the mining and fishing industries and migrant women, lack sufficient protection from exploitation and abuse (Objectives 7 & 10).

The Senegalese Human Rights Committee has set up a department to receive human rights complaints, but there is no dedicated mechanism to support migrants' access to justice or protect them from retaliation.

Senegal has entered into several bilateral agreements with destination countries of Senegalese communities and ratified the Multilateral Convention on Social Security of the Inter-African Conference on Social Security and the Social Policy Framework for Africa. More must be done in practice to ensure that

mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits are available and extend to all migrant workers (Objective 22). Many migrants in Senegal work irregularly or in the informal economy, limiting their access to social protection and basic services (Objectives 15 & 16).

## TRADE UNION ACTIONS FOR RIGHTS-BASED MIGRATION

Trade unions are working to increase migrant representation, despite challenges posed by informality and legal restrictions on foreign workers holding office in trade unions. Up to 90 percent of the workforce is in informal employment according to ILO data. Foreign nationals may only hold union office if they have lived in Senegal for at least 5 years, and only if their country of origin grants the same rights to Senegalese nationals.

Senegalese trade unions cooperate with counterparts across the region and the Mediterranean to promote labour and human rights in migration, particularly through the African Trade Union Migration Network (ATUMNET)<sup>5</sup> and the Trade Union Network for Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Migration (RSMMS).<sup>6</sup>

## TRADE UNIONS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

*Trade unions call for a New Social Contract for all workers, including migrant workers, with SDG 8 at its core. A New Social Contract should address workers' demands for decent, climate-friendly jobs with a Just Transition; rights for all workers regardless of migration status; minimum living wages and equal pay; universal social protection; equality to end all discrimination; and inclusion of all countries in decision-making processes to build a rights-based development model. These elements are crucial to advancing the GCM objectives.*

Trade unions call on the government of Senegal to:

- Create a multi-stakeholder framework for the effective implementation and monitoring

of the National Migration Policy without further delay, involving trade unions and migrant communities in the process.

- Address the adverse drivers of migration, including poverty, child labour and

<sup>5</sup> Our values are: Respect, Diversity, Solidarity and Partnership | African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation ([ituc-africa.org](http://ituc-africa.org))

<sup>6</sup> RSMMS – Trade union network on mediterranean and sub-Saharan migrants

forced labour, and provide decent work opportunities locally.

- Develop rights-based migration pathways with trade union involvement in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
  - Ratify the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention (C181) and ensure protection for Senegalese workers going abroad and migrant workers coming to Senegal during recruitment and employment processes, with mechanisms to investigate and address abuses.
  - Prevent violence against migrants and ensure access to justice for victims. Increase labour inspections, in informal sectors such as mining and domestic work and address labour rights issues for migrant workers.
  - Ratify and implement ILO Conventions (C097, C143, C189 and C190), which address migrant workers, domestic workers, and violence in the workplace.
  - Extend social protection coverage and basic services to migrant workers and their families.
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