GUIDE OF SÉĐHIOU

Some tips to better know this city of Senegal
INTRODUCTION

AFRICA IS TOO BIG FOR A WORD AND HOPE GROWS HIGH UP IN TREES

"Throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." (Mark Twain)

In the end of March 2010 we- four European citizens from France, Italy, Estonia and Austria- selected for a volunteer ship in Senegal by the European Union, started our adventure towards the unknown. After a pre-departure training in Palermo, done by the coordinating organization C.E.S.I.E., and a long journey we finally arrived at our destination: Sédhiou, a sleepy little village in the region of Casamance in the South of Senegal.

“Traveling is a brutality. It forces you to trust strangers and to lose sight of all that familiar comfort of home and friends. You are constantly off balance. Nothing is yours except the essential things – air, sleep, dreams, the sky – all things tending towards the eternal.” (Cesare Pavese)

Half of our stay was a fight: a fight of constant arrival without arriving, a fight against homesickness, a fight for adaptation into Senegalese family and everyday life. What was normality
to the local people was a mind shaking discovery for our newborn souls.

“Adventure is a path. Real adventure forces you to have firsthand encounters with the world. The world the way it is, not the way you imagine it. Your body will collide with the earth. This will change you. Nothing will ever again be black-and-white.” (Mark Jenkins)

Overwhelmed with feelings and impressions, nakedly confronted with ourselves, we became humble. What can we really leave behind in Sédhiou while we are receiving so much more than we can ever give?

“The real discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” (Marcel Proust)

The second half of our stay we looked at the world with new eyes. The following guide gives information about life in Sédhiou as we have experienced it. We bear witness of situations, things and people who we met and the stories they told us, the lives they shared with us. Overcoming our speechlessness, we found a new language to express what Sédhiou taught us, mixing facts and personal observations. This is our little contribution to share the greatness of our volunteer ship and we hope it finds entrance to the hearts of its readers. May you discover the travelers’ spirit inside of yourselves as, like Rilke said, the only journey is the one within!
**GEOGRAPHY**

**Capital:** Dakar

**Border Countries:**
Mauritania on the North, Mali on the East, Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau on the South, the Atlantic Ocean on the West. Inside Senegal there is the smallest African State: The Gambia.

**Surface:** 196,192 kmq

**Calling code:** 221
Time zone: UTC
Currency: CFA francs (1 € = 660 F CFA)
Political system: Semi-presidential republic
Population: 12,170 million (2009 projections)
Administrative organization: the Country is divided into fourteen regions.
The capitals of the regions are: Dakar, Diourbel, Fatick, Kaffrine, Kédougou, Kaolack, Kolda, Louga, Matam, Saint Louis, Sédhiou, Tambacounda, Thiès, Ziguinchor.
Ethnic groups: Wolof (43%), full (24%), serer (14%), tukolor (10%), diolas (5%), manding

Languages:
- Official language: French
- Other recognized languages: Wolof, Fila, Manding, Soninke, Serer
- Local dialects/languages: balante, mandiaque, mancangne, baenunca, mansuanca, creol, etc...

Religion: Muslim (90%), Christian and animism
VISA: For the citizens of the European Union, the passport is sufficient for journeys up to three months. For longer periods, it is necessary to ask for the extension of the permanence to the Police for Foreigners. For more details, see the article “What do I need before leaving for Senegal”? 
CASAMANCE

This is the southern geographical region of the Country, under the State of Gambia. Located between the Gambian border and the Guinea Bissau, we distinguish the Low Casamance (coastal region of Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring) and the Middle Casamance (Kafountine, Djendé). These are the most touristic areas, with beautiful coasts. The most internal area of the region is the Upper Casamance (regions of Kolda and Sédhiou).

The Casamance is crossed by the river with the same name, whose length is 300 km. The tropical climate, interrupted by the raining season, makes the Casamance the Garden of Eden of Senegal.

Population: data not available

Administrative system: from the administrative point of view, the Casamance is divided in three regions: the Region of Ziguinchor, the Region of Kolda and the new-born Region of Sédhiou, which was created at the end of 2008.

Surface: 30,000 km²
**Ethnic groups:** diolas, manding, fula, balante, serer, diahankey

**Languages:** french, wolof, manding, balante, mandiaque, diahankey, mancangne, baenunca, mansuanca, creol, etc...

**Political situation:** in the last 25 years the Casamance has been stricken by a violent and long war for the independence of this beautiful area, wanted by the rebels of the Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de la Casamance (MFDC), with the latent support of the Guinea Bissau in certain periods. The acute phases of the conflict seem now to have let the pace to a truce between the Senegalese government and the rebels of the MDFC. However, the affair cannot be considered solved and there are still episodes of renewed outbreak with attacks, even if rarely, in the Low Casamance, particularly on the way Cap Skiring – Ziguinchor - Kafountine. The area, however, is disseminated by check points controlled by the Army. We have never encountered any problem in all our trips to and from Ziguinchor, but it is of the utmost importance not to travel during the night and make sure to reach the destination before dusk.

**Main cities.** The principal city of the Casamance is Ziguinchor (217,000 inhabitants), which is located on the Casamance river, at one hour by car from the coast. The coast is disseminated of villages famous for their beaches and the annexed tourism. We should mention Cap Skiring, located in the very south, at the border with Guinea Bissau, and, in the north Casamance, Kafountine and Abéné.
Moving to the internal area of the region we find Kolda and, at 170 km from Ziguinchor, Sédhiou.
Population: the municipality of Sédhiou counts around 45,000 inhabitants (46 municipal councils).

Mayor: Amadou Tidiane Ba (2008-2013). The mayor is also Ministry for the High Education of Senegal.

Logo:
Contacts of the Municipality
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Ethnic groups: Mandinka, Balantes, Wolof, Diolas, Fula, Creol, Diahankey, Mancangne.
Languages: French, Manding, Wolof, Balante, Diolas, Fula, Creol, Diahankey, Mancangne.
Religion: Muslim, Christian, Animist.
Main activities: fishing, agriculture, fruits commerce.
Infrastructures: Government, Prefecture, Municipality.
Jumelage: Les ULYS (in France).
LANGUAGES

In the Republic of Senegal the official language is French, but it is used regularly by a minority of Senegalese, who were educated in colonial-style schools of French origin. In 2005, 10% of the Senegalese people were real French speakers whereas 21% were partially French speaking. Most people speak their own ethnic language. Three-quarters of the population speak the Wolof language, thereby making it the lingua franca of the country. There are actually five other major languages: Serer, Alpuular, Mandingo, Diola (Jola), and Bassari. Senegalese languages are primarily oral rather than written, although younger Senegalese can often write in their native language using a modified form of the Latin alphabet. However, Muslims may use the Arabic alphabet to write in their native language. General literacy rate in Senegal is 39.3%, 51.1% men and 29.2% women.

The native language of Wolof, of the ethnic group of the Wolof people, is also spoken in Gambia and Mauritania. Like the neighboring language Fula, it belongs to the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo language family. Wolof dialects
may vary between countries (Senegal and the Gambia) and the rural and urban areas. "Dakar-Wolof", for instance, is an urban mixture of Wolof, French, Arabic, and even a little English spoken in Dakar, the capital of Senegal.

Senegal has a wide variety of ethnic groups and, as in most West African countries, several languages are widely spoken. Here is a clarifying list of the ethnic groups:

- Wolof 43%
- Peul 24%
- Toucouleur 24%
- Serer 15%
- Lebou 10%
- Jola 4%
- Mandinka 3%
- Maures or Naarkajors, Soninke, Bassari and many smaller communities 9%

Languages spoken in Senegal:

The number of individual languages listed for Senegal is 38.

Badyara, Bainouk-Gunyaamolo, Bainouk-Samik, Balanta-Ganja, Bandial, Bayot, Bedik, Crioulo, Upper Guinea, Jola-Felupe, Fulah, Gusilay, Karon, Kerak, Kuwaataay, Laalaa, Maninkakan (Western), Mlomp, Ndut, Noon, Oniyan, Palor, Saafi-Saafi, Serer-Sine, Wamey, Xaasongaxango
Languages spoken in Casamance
Soninke, Mandinka, Jola (Diola), Wolof, Balantes, Mandjacos, Mankan, Baenunca, Mansuanca and Créole.

Languages spoken in Sédhiou
French, Mandinka, Wolof, Jola-Fonyi, Jola-Kasa, Pulaar, Pular and Mandjak.
ENVIRONMENT

THE CLIMATE
The particularity of Africa is to have two seasons. A dry season from November to May and a rainy season from June to October. It is important to note that in recent years there is a shift of seasons. Everything tends to become misaligned. Problems occur when the rain is not abundant. Lack of water causes consequences for wildlife and for the production...

During the dry season temperatures can reach up to 48° and lower till 30°. During the rainy season, called “hivernage” (winter time) the temperatures go from 20° to 35°. The humidity is heavy during this season.

FLORA
Sédhiou region has many varieties of trees. Each of them is used for different activities. There are species for large construction projects. They are called “wood arts”. There are five species designed for this purpose: Caïlcedrat, Dimb vert, Santan, Linké, Kapokier.
Their peculiarity is to have a diameter greater than 45 centimeters. Thus the cutting of these trees can produce beams for infrastructure. The strength is a characteristic common to all.

Secondly, there are species for artisanal production. If you own a djembe it may be derived from these trees. They are called wood crafts. Their diameter, inferior to 45 centimeters, allows the artisans to easily work on the wood. In addition many dead trees can be useful for this purpose. Here follows the list of the species:

- The dead Dimb for creating sculptures, djembes ...
- The dead Palm Tree for house building (roofs, fences...)
- Cailcedrat, Fromager, Tomboiro Noir and Linké for the creation of canoes
- The dead Romier for furniture manufacturing

The Bamboo, which is very widespread, is very used in the region of Sédhiou. It is highly resistant to termites, which are very present here. It is called Wood service.

And finally, there is brushwood:

- Kinkeliba, whose leaves are daily used for making the typical local tea
- Terminaliat, which is used to brush teeth
- Baobab, famous for his oil
Thus, this region is very rich of trees. Each year since 1991, Senegal dedicates one day to the trees, victims of mass deforestation. The Country is trying to educate the population towards reforestation and protection of its forests. "Waters and forests", the National Service for the Environment Protection, pays special attention to this phenomenon and does not hesitate to severely punish poachers. The bushfires also cause forest destruction. Casamance is also provided with many wild fruits. Here is a list: *Ditarrium Sénégalais, Jujube, Leungh, Madd, Néré (Oule), Nététou, Pain de singe, Piment noir, Solom, Toll, Zinzimbre*

The most developed economic sector in Sédhiou is agriculture, which is currently expanding more and more. During the rainy season many people in Sédhiou come to work to the fields to increase their production. Here is a list of the main agricultural products: *Mill, Sorghum, Corn, Rice, Fonio, Sesame, Sweet potato, Cassava, Cowpea (Beans), Watermelon, Peanut, hibiscus, Sorrel, Cabbage, Mango, Orange, Cashew, Papaya, Djaralou, (African Eggplant), Djabere, Cotton, all varieties of peppers, Lettuce, Carrot, Tomato, Turnip, Kaba*
These productions don’t last all year long but they follow specific times of the seasons. Pollution and global warming are causing many problems. Some products are destroyed by the increasing deregulation of seasons.

Thus, it is easy to see that the flora in Sédhiou is rich. The lack of infrastructures prevents producers to expand their market across the Country. The poor quality of roads and bridges is a concern for the economy of the region.

FAUNA

The animal ecosystem is living an incredible change in the last few years. The climate irregularity caused the disappearance of some animal species and the escape of others. Thus, baffles, lions, panthers and ourebi moved to the eastern part of the Country in the region of Tambacounda. Tourists come to Sédhiou for only one reason: hunting. Many animal species are present for this purpose. There are the venison, such as the wild pig and the wild rabbit. Many birds such as: La Poule de roche, la Tourterelle Cap, la Pintade, Le Pigeon Vert, La Tourterelle Collier, La Tourterelle Mallier, Le Pigeon Ronier, Le Gangas, Le Francolin Commun
Some species are protected because of the risk of extinction over the years. We can walk in the bush and cross: The doe or wrapping Harnessed, Hyena, Monkey, The Gorilla, The duiker, The Black Crowned Crane, Eagles, Pelicans, Pink Flamingo. The species you will encounter the most often are those so-called "pets": Pig, Goat, Sheep, Donkey, Rabbit, Dog, Cat, Cow, Cock, Goose. Your phobia of insects and reptiles will not be settled here because they are numerous: Mosquitos, Cockroaches, Ants, Termites, Bees and wasps and hornets, Spiders, Lizards, scorpions, Vipers.

In conclusion, we can say that this is a region to be discovered. Fauna and flora are very interesting and variegated, but they tend to disappear because of global warming. Many bush fires have also caused the loss of numerous animal and plant species. The need of respecting the environment is becoming an important issue for local people. Unfortunately the lack of information and knowledge on the subject is a real problem for residents.
HEALTH

INTRODUCTION: THE HEALTH SYSTEM IN SENEGAL

The health system in Senegal is called "health pyramid". The top of the pyramid is made up of research centres (e.g. Universities). The second step of the pyramid is the regional level, with regional hospitals. Each region (there are fourteen regions in Senegal) should have a hospital. In the case of Sédhiou, there is not this sort of hospital yet, because Sédhiou became a region only in the end of 2008, being a department until that moment.

If we go down along the pyramid we find health districts, made of health centres and postes de santé, which constitute the regional level of the senegalese health system.

The Postes de Santé were created to decentralize health assistance. In fact, especially in rural areas, hospitals are widely dispersed. Their main tasks are:

- first cares, in particular the realisation of the vaccination programme, addressed especially to children under age one;
- consultations for first cures (in particular concerning health reproduction)
- consultations before and after delivery, sensitizations.

They are led by the "chefs de Poste" nurses, who are public servants or contractulised. They are assisted by communitarian personnel paid by health committees (district level). Personal employees are matrons, women volunteers
who are trained in health centres (hospitals) by midwives, who are the technicians in charge for motherhood. They are also Agents de Santé Communautaire (ASC). The health posts are also in charge of organizing vaccination days and screening for HIV. There are several health posts in the regional territory. The Postes de Santé, together with the Cases de Santé, represent the first official level of the Senegalese health system.

The cases de santé have a very important role, because they offer the first aid to the population in a wide range of problems, like diarrea, malaria, headaches, etc...

The cases de santé are managed by Community Health Workers (CSA). They are volunteers, trained by the nurses of the poste de santé and are supervised by them. Among the staff there are also volunteer matrons, mentioned above. The treatment is sometimes free, because the patient only pays the drug. Sometimes, if the community is well organized or if
it works cooperatively with other villages, it can create a common fund, which allows the purchase of medicines. When the medical problem is beyond the competences of volunteers and nurses, the patient is sent to the hospital.

THE REALITY IN SEDHIOU

STRUCTURES

Hospital
Sédhiou, as mentioned in the introduction, has not a regional hospital, but there is one structure which is classified as a health centre type 2, that means with a surgical block. It can accommodate forty people and consists of three departments: maternity, medicine and surgery. It should be noted a relevant lack of qualified staff, able to meet the needs of the community. Either doctors, especially specialists, either nurses and assistants are insufficient. Across the region, there are 5 medecins. In the district of Sédhiou there are only 3 doctors, which means a doctor every 49,293 people (source of information: Mbaye Fall, supervisor of the district's first aid).

- GP in surgery, medecin Head of the Region
- a doctor Head of the district
- a communitarin doctor.

The district of Sédhiou is composed by:
- 1 surgeon dentist
- 7 nurses paid by the State
- 13 nurse assistants (1 nurse for every 7.394 inhabitants)
• 8 midwives paid by the State
• 1 social assistant
• 1 laboratory technician
• 1 technician in ophthalmology
• 2 technicians radiologists
• 2 technicians in surgery service

There are no gynecologists, cardiologists or orthopedists. The closest regional hospital is in Kolda, 1.5 hours by car from Sédhiou.

Postes de santé and cases de santé
In the region Sédhiou there are about forty postes de santé (the Region of Sédhiou is formed by three departments: Sédhiou, Bounkiling, Goudomp). In the solely department of Sédhiou there are 14.
The tasks of the postes have already been mentioned in the introduction. We could just add that in regard to HIV screening, in case of positivity of the virus, the postes are obliged to refer to the hospital, which is currently the unique structure allowed to be in charge of the patient.
There are 39 cases de santé throughout the district of Sédhiou. 25 are working.
As in many aspects of African life, it should be noted that the health sector has a strong and rooted system of solidarity. It is thanks to the volunteers that all these health structures can survive and ensure a primary and essential help to the population. They supply to many geographic difficulties (the dispersion of hospitals), and to the lack of financial and human
resources in this rural area of Senegal. The community rewards or motivates volunteers by offering them land or rice.

MAJOR DISEASES AND PROBLEMS, TREATMENTS AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

• Hygiene
The problem of hygiene is particularly important. In fact, this territory is characterized by:
  • lack of good infrastructures to ensure good health
  • ineffective waste management - garbage accumulated alongside roads and sometimes burned by the inhabitants,
  • presence of animals on roads and in houses (as in all rural areas, goats, donkeys and chickens are very present, as food for families or as a way to work).

As a consequence, insects brought by dirt environment are present (e.g. cockroaches). The heat and humidity, typical in tropical areas, promote the development and proliferation of bacteria and, of course, the mosquitoes that cause malaria. The inadequate availability of drinking water is another important factor. Most of the population uses water from the wells, which unfortunately is not treated and not drinkable. All these factors cause health problems. The most common concern is dysentery and related diseases. In 2009, the hospital treated 7300 cases of dysentery. This means that the number of cases is much higher, including cases where people
have not visited the hospital. It should be noted, in this regard, that the local population have a strong tendency, due to lack of information or means, to prefer traditional methods or to avoid at all the care, instead of going to the hospital, even when the cases are very important and very sensitive (e.g. pregnancy or malaria). Poor hygiene can also cause eye problems. This is affecting many times the local population. It should be noted that it has been many years that the hospital has not registered or treated cases of typhoid fever and cholera.

**Malaria**

Malaria is particularly developed in the regions of Sédhiou, Kolda, Tambacounda and Kédougou (all areas lying below the Gambia). The rate is higher than the national average. Thus, these regions have regular meetings after every three months to do the so-called 'Review of Malaria', analyse the evolution of the disease and take decisions, if necessary. The rate of malaria has also declined in recent years. The number increased sensitization and free distribution of mosquito nets.
In the period January-May 2010, the Region of Sédhiou recorded 355 cases of malaria (0.7% of the national average) and 0 deaths. This is a very positive outcome.

The concept of malaria, today, is very well known to local populations. A massive work of sensitisation is done and it is effective also thanks to the many partners who are actively contributing financially. In particular, this awareness machine is articulated on several levels. Debates are held in the Basic Community Organizations (CBOs) and Postes de Santé. Radio crochets, that is one-day events with music (to attract the population) are also organised. Music is an essential tool if we want to involve the public in the demonstrations. During these events the organisers ask questions about malaria to the participants, who receive useful gifts as a reward (soap, books, hygiene products).

The hospital and its partners also organize the distribution of mosquito nets, which are preceded by a census in homes for the identification of the number of beds without protection. In 2010, 57,900 mosquito nets have been distributed only in Sédhiou Department (14 health posts), under the "National Program against Malaria". The ASC return to the houses after a while, to check whether the nets have actually been installed correctly.

The awareness machine has been enhanced in 2010, with the creation of "Home Care Providers" (DSDOM). These volunteers are chosen in those villages where there are no health structures. They are firstly trained in the hospital, then sent to the postes de santé for practicing, and finally sent to villages to conduct home visits and especially to detect
malaria cases. As throughout Senegal, testing and drugs for malaria are free. Volunteers are authorized to cure the light form of malaria at home. If malaria is severe, they bring the patient to the nearest health centre. The test anti-malaria has been existing for two or three years now. It can detect the disease in few minutes and then treat it rapidly and perfectly. Even in the worst cases, patients can recover no more than one week. Before creating this test, people were treated against malaria even if patients were not affected by this scourge. So in this area, the progress of medicine has been great.

**HIV**

If the situation concerning malaria is positive, we cannot say the same for HIV. The field is much more sensitive, moreover the specific features of AIDS makes it difficult for people to understand and even accept this disease. Note that the rate of development of the virus is the highest in the Country. The HIV rate in the regions of Kolda and Sédhiou is 2%, while the national average is 0.7%. In 2008 cases of HIV at national level were 196 081. The cases in Sédhiou-Kolda were 7066 (7.35%). In 2009 the national cases were
145,511. Of those cases identified, 4,729 were in the region Sédhiou-Kolda, 3.2% (source of information: Ngor Ndiaye, responsible for health education and information).
So a lot of work has to be done, even if it should be noted that, as for malaria, a multilevel awareness campaign is realised. Moreover, it is not limited to the health field, but shared with other sectors such as education and youth. In this case, awareness is very well organized at the institutional level. In fact, it takes place on several levels. At the national level, by the Conseil National pour la Lutte contre le SIDA - CNLS, at the regional level by the Conseil Regional pour la Lutte contre le SIDA CRLS and locally by the Conseil Departmental pour la Lutte contre le SIDA - CDLS. Within the latter level, led by the Prefect, a Technical Committee Restricted – CTR exists. It brings together technical and political figures of the affected area (municipal assessors for education, youth ...). CTR meet each month to monitoring the situation and take decisions.
As with malaria, awareness against AIDS promotes debates, information through radio broadcasts, radio crochets with music and useful gifts (condoms). There is also a strong social mobilization, with public meetings where local authorities and qualified staff gather to provide advice to the public. Free Days screenings and home visits are also organised by the hospital and its many partners (e.g. schools, National Alliance for the Fight against AIDS - ANLS).
In general, awareness campaign affects the whole population, adolescents as well as adults. Among the latter, HIV appears to be more widespread (starting from age 25), although data
is not precise. Once the patient reaches the hospital, the staff explains the screening to him. Once screening has been done, the results are presented to the physician. If they are positive to the virus, the doctor shall convene the patient and explain him the route to be followed during the course of the disease. If the patient agrees to participate in treatment program, his case is supported by hospital and the patient is considered "included". The person may do the screening in the *postes de santé*, but only the hospital is authorized to treat patients. Treating HIV in Senegal is free. It is not uncommon that patients abandon the treatment program. Often, patients do not understand the characteristics of this virus. They feel well for years and they often distrust doctors. The mere fact that death is never caused by AIDS (but, of course, by all sorts of diseases caused by the absence of an immune system, so-called AIDS) leads the patient to often deny the very existence of the disease.

**Pregnancy: main problems**
The total number of women in reproductive age in the department Sédhiou is 34,013, out of a population of 147,881 people. In the first quarter of 2010, deliveries in age of adolescence (10-24 years, according to WHO definition) were 31.03% of the total. During the second quarter, the percentage increased to 39.01%. The total births during the period from January-June were 1588, including 470 births by teenage mothers, which is the 29.6% of the total. The number of teenage abortions in the same semester is 37.
As illustrated by these data, early pregnancy is very numerous. Advocacy work is undertaken to reduce them, especially in schools. It should be noted, however, that this work often encounters the barrier of parents, who, also for religious reasons (Islam does not allow sex before marriage), refuse sex education and have difficulties to accept the distribution of condoms to their children.

In general, pregnancy in Senegal is a delicate issue. In 2009, the Department of Sédhiou recorded 25 deaths. The four major causes are: haemorrhage, hypertension, anaemia and infection. A pregnant woman who catches malaria is considered a serious case and should be immediately hospitalized.

As already mentioned, the population, because of lack of information or resources, addresses late to the hospital. Unfortunately, pregnant women are not an exception. The gestation period foresees four visits, if the conditions of health of the mother are good. The majority of the women do not meet this schedule and comes to the hospital on the 4th or 5th month, sometimes even later. The costs that pregnant women should pay are 200 FCFA for the *carnet de santé* and 300 FCFA per
visit (ticket). In addition, he must pay the blood tests that cost 9500 FCFA.

**Other diseases and problems**

**Tuberculosis** is widespread in the territory of Sédhiou. Because of overcrowding (it was often more than 20 people living in the same house, under conditions that do not privilege hygiene) TBC easily spreads over. In the first semester of 2010, 60 cases of TBC have been treated. In the district of Sédhiou there is a high rate of total recover (95%). Awareness against TBC is promoted through radio spots and campaigns in many schools.

**Heart disease** is another very developed problem in Sédhiou and affects both men and women. Among the causes, the high heat, combined with outstanding efforts during the work (e.g. in rice fields), not excellent alimentation and many pregnancies. In Sédhiou unfortunately there is no specialist in cardiology. To receive care in this area, you have to go to Dakar. In any case, in Senegal there are no structures that ensure excellent care for all heart problems.

**TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

Most of the population, for all sorts of diseases and problems, whether a fracture or a case of malaria, have the reflex to turn to traditional medicine before going to hospital. Traditional medicine is considered very effective and, of course, preferable to usual care. Its importance is recognized at official level. Indeed, within the Ministry of Health of Senegal, there is a subdivision "Traditional Medicine".
BLOOD DONATIONS
The donation of blood Sédhiou is a tricky business. There are not many donors, even if a local handle things. It's the ADOBS – Association Donneurs Bénévoles du Sang de Sédhiou. The health centre of Sédhiou faces a problem of blood availability; blood is of the utmost importance here, given the needs in surgery and especially for pregnant women and for numerous anemia, already mentioned.

PHARMACY
In Sédhiou there is a pharmacy. It is in the centre of the town, between the hospital and the market. Here you can find medicines and mosquito nets, even though the latter are more expensive than at the hospital (about 5000 fcfa).
EDUCATION

Introduction to the educational system

Senegal has taken the French educational system. It includes: Kindergarten (3 years), elementary school (5 years), collège or secondary school or first cycle (7 years) and secondary or second cycle (3 years). This last phase is otherwise known, in Senegal, as lycée.

In Senegal in 2005, in accordance with the latest data available, the admission rate in the first year of primary school (CI) was 91.5%, the gross enrollment ratio (GER) was 82.5%, the proportion of girls in education was 48.6% and the success rate was 53.9%. Although these figures are improving, they are rather disappointing compared to the objectives of the current plan for the development, the Ten-Year Education and Training (PDEF). The issue of universal access to primary education is currently being resolved in Senegal. Unfortunately, retention is not improving as fast as
the access and, consequently, the success rate is still low (51%) and is particularly disappointing considering the Country's major financial investment in education (about 4% of GDP). Access to and retention in Senegal are marked by great disparities. Sector analysis noted that “a child living in a rural area can expect to have 3.5 years of primary education (including repetitions), while a child living in the city can expect up to 6 years”. Thus, living in an urban area allows to nearly double the length of schooling compared to life in a rural environment. At all levels of education, the proportion of girls completing their education is lower than that of boys. The sector analysis also notes: "When households are classified by income quintiles, two salient features emerge: first, the enrollment rate increases steadily between the first and last quintile and, secondly, inequality between girls and boys are more pronounced among the poorest households (quintiles 1 and 2) than among the richest households (quintile 5)".

It is now clear that the continuous high level of dropout is more related to demand than to supply. Anyway, the main supply factors causing these differences are:

• the constant presence of schools that offer only incomplete cycles (36% of schools);
• distance from school, which in many rural areas, is dispersed.

Regarding demand, negative perceptions of parents about the school also provides a source of concern, such as various
forms of education provided to public, sometimes far from meeting social demand. This is reflected by the spontaneous creation of local groups of community based schools (CBS), that the department strives to include in its strategic plans. In addition, 11% of children attend private schools. As far as quality is concerned, the needs of the Country in regard to school construction, renovation of the "temporary shelters" and ensure that many schools meet the standard of water and sanitation are enormous: an unprecedented amount of work must be done each year. After many hesitations, the program review is nearly completed and is reinforced by experiences in life skills. Finally, because of too wide disparities in the performance of schools in terms of academic results, the Ministry of Education is taking action to strengthen monitoring at local level to ensure minimum standards of education in whole Country.

Like almost all Countries in sub-Saharan Africa that participated in the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, Senegal is committed to achieve EFA (Education for All) by 2015. The “Ten-Year Education and Training” (PDEF), whose editing started in 1996, is the main framework for education and training for the period 2000-2015. This program integrates the previously established «National Action Plan for Education for All” (EFA / NAP). Despite its weaknesses, there are encouraging results in the areas of governance system, access, equity and quality. Admitted to the Fast Track Initiative
(FTI) in 2006, Senegal has fixed the achievement of universal provision of good quality primary education by 2015 as its main priority for the education sector

The school Sédhiou

In Sédhiou we find:

• Nursery schools: three public schools and one private Catholic school. There is also the “Case de tous petits”, a special institute created in the frame of a National Program aimed at developing knowledge of the French language already in the pre-school age.
  • Elementary schools: eight public schools, a private Catholic institution and a private Franco-Arab centre.
  • Collèges: three public and two private institutes.
  • High School: one public school
  • Secondary technical schools: technical center for women. Here they teach basic cooking and sewing.
  • Universities: there is no university in the whole region. We must move up to Ziguinchor, or in the north of the Country (Dakar, Thiess, S. Luis, etc ...).

Within this framework we should notice that the offer is grossly inadequate to cover the demand for education. Just one data to clarify this reality. The lyceum is the only high school institute in the whole department of Sédhiou, if you do not consider the women's center. In 2010, students who took the exams for their BAFM (patent graduation means) are
about 10,000 units.
Because of the low offer at collège level, the State requires to
students that support their FEAC (certificate of completion of
elementary school) to have a minimum score in order to
access the collège. Maybe for the same reasons, students are
allowed to double classes once per cycle (Basic, 1st, 2nd
cycle), after which they are expelled. The alternative is private
school that most of the local population cannot pay. This issue
is particularly relevant in the territory of Sédhiou if we
consider that many students, even at the collège or high
school, have difficulty with the French language (the only
official language at school and in the Country).

The role of Enfance et Paix
In the frame of this difficult reality, which unfortunately
cannot guarantee education to all young Senegalese, NGO
Enfance et Paix is an option, a small but important
contribution to support the not financially secured people.
Enfance et Paix, which exists in Sédhiou since 1997, created a
school which currently includes a nursery for toddlers (2-6
years), collège and high school. Two categories of students
may be admitted to this school.
Hardship cases. They are orphans or children from very poor families. The selection is made by the municipality, on the basis of the certificate of death of parents or certificate of indigence. These people are admitted to school for free. The municipality gives symbolic grants to support the school.

Young people in extreme poverty. The school staff makes the selection of their CV. They pay a modest fee for registration and a monthly fee.

In 2010, the school received 150 social cases and 309 youngsters in poor conditions. Students who have not obtained FEAC are still allowed to the collège of Enfance et Paix (if they meet the other admission requirements), in order to give them an opportunity that public schools cannot give. However, if they do not get the FEAC in the first year of collège, they get expelled. As in public school, they may miss
only one year per cycle. All the teachers of the school, who receive a small salary, have already a first job in other schools of Sédhiou. This makes things complicated, because they cannot dedicate themselves fully to Enfance et Paix: this causes problems in education and relationship with the students. In addition, these teachers are tied to the salary and it happened often, because of several financial problems of Enfance et Paix, that they have not been paid and this caused several strikes and entire weeks of absence. We should stress at this point that the school of Enfance et Paix is not a private institute. Its mission is precisely to support a system that lacks the means to guarantee the basic right to education. The staff could be made of volunteers because, as the principal of the school, Mr. Jacques Sadio, stressed, "you must love children to help them." Jacques works in the school since 2002 and he receives no salary. This year, despite the enormous difficulties that the school has, 41 students obtained their BAFM and seven students got their diploma.
GREETINGS

Greetings are an essential aspect of Senegalese cultural importance. The exchange of greetings is the key to successful interaction with Senegalese people at every level, whether in the market, on the street, in the office, or over the telephone.

As Sédhiou is a small town, where almost everyone knows everyone, greeting is even more important than in a bigger city. When you arrive to Sédhiou, prepare yourself for a great amount of small talk, but what’s the most important – always reply when you’re being greeted! The local people take it as a personal insult, if you don’t greet them back or if you don’t stop for a moment, when they offer their handshake for greeting. In a case of ignorance they can become pretty
insisting or remember your ignorance the next time they meet you and feel insulted. People are taken aback if you do not greet first before beginning a conversation, even if you just want to ask a question. Greeting serves as an icebreaker and will make the person you greet feel better disposed toward you. “Ca va?” (shortened phrase from “Comment ca va?”) is the most heard phrase from morning till evening, it stands for “How are you?” in French. Greeting in a local language (originally from Arabic language) is recommended "Salam aleikum" (“Peace be with you”) and the answer “Aleikum salam” (“With you the peace”). Or in the local language of Mandink: “I be heera do?” (“Do you have the peace?) and the answer: “Heera dorong” (“I have the peace”). But a French “Bonjour” (“Good morning/day”) or “Bonsoir” (“Good evening”) will always do.

Greetings are crucial in Senegal and their important should never be underestimated. Exchanging greetings each time you meet someone, even if it is later in the same day, is pivotal to maintaining good relationships. You are expected to exchange lengthy inquiries into the health and well being of the other person and their family before asking any other question or beginning a discussion. For foreigners, these greetings may seem a meaningless waste of time, because they are always the same and quite lengthy. You may also be baffled to see a Senegalese doing something you consider "really important" stop everything to spend ten minutes greeting a friend s/he
has seen just hours ago. But once again it is because greeting acknowledges the existence of another human being and taking the time to relate to him or her in a personal way is a priority in Senegalese society, which helps achieve the goal of harmony and peace in the community. Every member of the community is expected to greet every other member of the community regardless of status or wealth. Indeed, the greetings are a way for Senegalese to show respect for every member of the community, rich or poor, noble or of a low caste because every member has an important role to fulfil. Shaking hands is also a part of the greeting process. People shake hands as often as they see each other during different times of the day. Women, especially in villages, are sometimes not expected to shake hands when greeting. So as being a
woman it is not a personal assaultment when a person approaches to a group of people and shakes hands only with men and not to women. When greeting a group of people or someone from a distance, raising clasped hands will take the place of a handshake. When one is working or eating, the arm may be offered instead. Note that in shaking hands the right hand is always used.

It is also interesting to note that Senegalese people often express anger, not by hostile words or threats, but by refusing to greet the person. This is considered a great insult denoting a lack of respect or outright contempt for the individual. People may hurt other people's feelings by not greeting every individual with whom they come into contact, even if the other is in the middle of a business transaction, a discussion with someone else, reading etc.

When the foreigner in Senegal learns the Senegalese greetings and uses them, this indicates to Senegalese that the person is one who has taken the time to learn, what is important in Senegal and feels the person respects him and the customs of his society. He is therefore much more eager to help this individual. To the Western mind the amount of time spent in greetings may appear unnecessary or even wasteful (especially in business) they are used by the Senegalese to feel one with each other and achieve a sense of group harmony. There are also some spiritual groups that greet by taking another person's right hand and placing the top of the hand
on their forehead and you’re supposed to do the same, because that shows respect for each other. There are some men for example who are not allowed to shake women’s hands. Instead they will just clasp their hands together and nod vehemently. This also happens when people are in the middle of praying and they want you to know that they are greeting you but they are not supposed to talk or be touched during prayer. Some will shake your hand and then touch their heart. If you are passing by a large group and you do not have time to greet everyone you can get away with just clasping your hands together and holding them up in the air to them about chest high and then touching your heart. This is actually a very respectful way of greeting and it makes you stand out from just a “toubab” that waves at people. Young women will often do a small knee bend when they greet older men. And sometimes a hand is taken for greeting to give a kiss on the hand, that’s more often done by children than adults.

Something else that is a normality here, is that men of all ages hold hands here and not just when they’re greeting. Good friends will walk hand in hand or with their arms around each other’s waists or shoulders and holding hands at the same time. Groups of them will do this altogether. It’s sweet and the novelty still has not worn off because men in the states just aren’t that touchy with each other. The downside is that women don’t hold hands nearly as much. They can, but they tend not to.
On the streets you will always meet people calling you Toubab (in case you’re a white person, but also a black person can be called toubab, referring that this person is a stranger). A polite answer to this approach is to turn to a person approaching you and greet him/her in Arabic, Mandink or French. A bit more difficult case is with the children who shout from every corner of the street: “Bonjour Toubab!! Bonjour Toubab!!”, it’s important to maintain your tranquillity and to at least wave at them, because it could be the highlight of the day for those children.

Now an example of a normal everyday greeting:

1: Salam aleikum (Peace be with you)
2: Aleikum salam (With you the peace)
1: I be heera to? (Do you have the peace?)
2: Heera dorong (I have the peace)
1: Kor ta na nteng? (How are you? In Mandink)
2: Tana nteng (I’m fine)
1: Su kono nKolu le? (How’s your family?)
2: I bi jee (They’re fine)
1: Yoo! Como ca va? (Volila! How are you? In French)
2: Ca va bien. Ca va. E vous, ca va? (Very fine. Fine. And you, fine?)
1: Ca va – ca va, merci (Fine – fine, thank you)
2: Ca va, merci (Fine, thank you)
1: How are you doing with the tiredness?
2: Peace only/ It’s fine
1: How are you doing with the heat?
2: Peace only/it’s fine. It’s HOT!
1: Yes it’s HOT huh?
2: Every day it’s hot.
1: How is your family
2: They are fine. Inshallah! (It’s in God’s hands) How is your family?
1: In peace. How are your relatives?
2: In peace/They are fine.
1: How are your children?
2: They are in peace. Inshallah! (It’s in God’s hands) It’s fine. What’s your name?
1: Abdullah Sadio (for example). What is your name?
2: Fatu Diatta (for example). How is your husband/wife?
1: He/She is fine. Inshallah! (It’s in God’s hands)
2: How are you doing with Sédhiou?
1: It’s fine, Inshallah! (It’s in God’s hands). How are you doing with the work?
2: It is fine. How are you doing with resting?
1: Peace only. Inshallah! (It’s in God’s hands) How are you doing with the mosquitoes?
2: It’s fine/Peace only.
1: I greet your house/family!
2: They will hear you.
1: Peace only.
2: Peace only.
ON THE STREETS OF SEDHIOU

Streetpicture

When your feet first touch the red sand of the streets of Sédhiou, it can simply blow your mind. Colourfully dressed ladies selling peanuts and mangoes on the side of the street, the barefoot children with ripped T-shirts running to you to ask money, people greeting you from all the corners of the street, children screaming "Tubab!!! Tubab!!! Tubaaab!!!", men passing with their praying suits, looking like directly taken out from a fairytale, women making plats and talking in Mandink to each other with an extremely loud voice, people staring at you.... But don't lose yourself, because the motor taxis (Jakarta) - the motorcycles, that offer a taxi service, and are represented as the only public transport in this town, - do not pay so much attention of pedestrians crossing the streets. On the side of the road there can be found a family of wild pigs, having a swim in dirt, and goats eating plastic. The
roadsides are full of rubbish in this town, because the people just simply do not have any rubbish bins. Every kind of rubbish they produce, is thrown on the streets. A couple of times in a week they sweep the rubbish in front on their house into one pile and just burn it. A donkey wagon, led by a couple of 10 year-old boys, a colorfully dressed lady crossing the street, while carrying a bucket full of fish on top of her head, a child tied to her back with a piece of cloth, and in her hand, there’s hanging a dead rooster, five sheep are crossing the street and a chicken is picking pieces of leftovers under a mango tree, where there are three yellow-headed lizards having a race towards the next brunch and a few goats fighting for a piece of mango skin - a scene like this accompanies every single day in Sédhiou.

**Shops-Restos**

In Sédhiou there are shops- small boutiques, which are mainly led by men from Mauritania, Mali and other neighbor Arabic countries. Mostly the shopkeepers speak French or at least try
to understand your needs. Entering the shop, it is always strongly advised to greet the shopkeeper and other people at the shop. Often it is necessary to point a finger on the product you would like to buy. To do shopping in Sédhiou takes a lot of patience and time, because sometimes the shopkeeper needs to have a conversation with a friend in the middle of serving you, has to finish his lunch, does not understand the product you are talking about, calculates everything for three times, does not have a change, wants to get to know you, wants to marry you or simply takes his time to get up from his sleeping mat, where he had a nap, when there was no one at the shop.

On the main street there are two Restos. To the Restos people normally go to eat lunch, which is a plateful of rice with onion sauce and fish or rice with maffe sauce and meat. The lunch is from 1pm until 3pm. Before and after this time it is complicated to find something besides a sandwich a french bread with mayonnaise/egg/vegetable
sauce/onions/fries/meat/beans. The Restos are led by a family. When you enter the Resto it is respectful to greet all the other guests, then to greet the family on the kitchen door and ask for food. Waiting for at least 30 minutes for your food to arrive is normal, after that it is advised to politely ask about your order, because they might have simply forgotten that. If you take a look at the kitchen, don't be shocked to find a topless grandmother laying on the floor and just having a nap,
a mother breastfeeding her child or the whole family just living their everyday life, almost not noticing that there are guests. When you arrive to the Resto while the family is having their lunch, you can be asked to have a lunch with them or they take their time to finish their lunch before taking your order. On Fridays at 2, there's a big prayer for 30min - 1hour, at this time all the shops and Restos are closed and people pray towards Mecca: it is not respectful to disturb a praying person. For paying at the Resto it advised to have as accurate money as possible. Never the less, be patient and take your time!

**Being Toubab**

On the streets you will always meet people calling you Toubab (in case you’re a white person, but also a black person can be called toubab, if this person is a stranger). A polite answer to this approach is to turn to this person and greet him/her in Arabic, Mandink or French. A bit more difficult case is with the children who shout from every corner of the street: “Bonjour Toubab!! Bonjour Toubab!!”, it’s important to maintain your tranquility and to at least wave at them, to show your respect towards the locals. The local people are often very curious-you can easily be stopped on the street for greeting, a handshake, a random question, an invitation, a conversation.... so there’s no room for shyness.
SENEGALESE TIME

There’s another time in Senegal, people say. What does it mean? Yes, their day still lasts for 24 hours, there’s 7 days in a week and 365 days in a year. But what meaning do people give to the time? Is the time just minutes, hours and days or is it something beyond?

The difference is the way people use the time, the way people respect the time and timing. In the houses of Sédhiou there’s not many clocks seen around, but still they know when to wake up and when to go to sleep. “They have time,” we once said. The women have time to do the laundry for 3-4 hours, to cook for 2 hours, to dance and joke around. The people have time to pray 5 times per day also just to have a sit and observe. They have time to greet each other for 10 minutes and to pay visits to work and at home regularly just to ask how they are doing. At the same time when we as Europeans are used to get many things done as fast and organized as possible. Being used to put our laundry in a washing machine and can’t wait for it to finish its 1,5 hour program or put food in a microwave and impatiently take it out before 2 minutes of warming up has ended. How
often are we used to tell people at home who greet us or ask us to visit them: “I’m sorry, I must run, I don’t have time!” This is such an impoliteness in here. People don’t understand, where’s the rush. Time doesn’t run away from you, you can catch it even if you take time to greet or discuss with a random person on the street or have a sit to take a glass of Senegalese tea.

In Sédhiou it’s rare to see people hurrying somewhere. The local tranquility has a great influence from the weather conditions also. As in this heat and humidity it is physically almost impossible to move fast. The shopkeepers take their time before serving a client. The resto keepers take their time to lay down on the floor for relax when there’s no people around. But the consequences must be faced also – if you give someone an appointment for meeting, it’s normal for them to arrive 30 minutes later. By pointing out: “You were late!”, they end the discussion by admitting with a face that has no regrets. “I know”. Or when an event is supposed to start at certain time, it actually starts 1 or 2 hours later. Time is relative.
According to what it can be said – I have time or I don’t have time? The priorities? What has to be done and what do we want to do. If the priority is to respect the time, how it is practiced? Is the time respected by being arranged into timetables and arrivals or is it respected by giving human relationships time to become from quantity to quality, to give a chance for an simple observation, to walk instead of running, by giving time some time? Local suggestion: Patience!
THE SENEGALESE FAMILY

If you have the opportunity to discover Senegal and to stay with local people, don't hesitate because you will be overwhelmed with surprises, feelings and discoveries. You will find the true African life with all its contradictions. Very big families are a common thing, including children, parents, grandparents, uncles, cousins and nephews. In Sédhiou a family can count more than 60 people living together. That seems improbable, nevertheless no one is complaining.

Everyone has a clear role to play in the house. Let's start with the boss of the house, the man. The boss of the house is the responsible of fulfilling the needs of the family. As he is absent very often, it's rare to see a family father who is participating in the household, the kitchen or the education of his children. When he comes back from work, he often prepares tea, discusses with his friends or watches television (if he has one). He deals with the animals of his territory. He feeds the goats, sheep, chickens... even if he is important for the family in terms of finances, he unfortunately isn't the center of the family.
The woman is of a crucial importance. Religion and tradition have a huge importance for these women. I will explain you the typical day of a woman in Senegal and you will see that courage is too weak as an expression. It's 6 o'clock in the morning, the woman wakes up. She prepares breakfast for the whole family. Often with her newborn baby on her back she wipes the house. She cleans the toilet, the shower and even the outside area. At around 8.30 she takes her bath and goes to the market which is often very far away from her house. Sometimes even a few kilometers, but that doesn't pose an obstacle for her. After a couple of hours the Senegalese woman comes back with her food for the day. Immediately she starts to prepare lunch. Most of the time she cooks Thieboudienne. Her child is always around. Sometimes she has to look after it, change its clothes. It's almost 2 o'clock, everybody meets to eat lunch. As soon as it is finished the Senegalese woman cleans the dishes. While her child is sleeping, she is doing the laundry. It is common for some among the women to undertake a little business (selling frozen ice, peanuts, mangos) additionally to her difficult working day. When laundry and dishes are done, she takes her time to relax a bit. When she wakes up, mostly because of her child,
she starts to prepare dinner. Important to know that the preparation of the dinner lasts a couple of hours. Cleaning the rice, preparing the fish, getting the sauce ready... the more girls there are in the house, the more helping hands. She is dividing the tasks in order to ease her own load. A group of these women shares discussions, laughter. You can feel the good atmosphere. When the man is around, unfortunately the women's attitudes change. You get the impression that not everything can be spoken out loud when men and women are together. No one complains. Everybody knows their role in the household. You live a good life there. You appreciate the moment without asking yourself questions about the future. The days pass by but don't look alike. There is always life going on, action. Therefore it's very difficult to sleep long because of the screaming of the children, the women's laughter, the strange noise of cocks and goats under your window. But it's still nicer to be woken up like this than by the unbearable noise of the city. Every morning is a ritual. Heating water for the coffee. Buying bread. Having breakfast. Taking the bucket and getting water from the sink or the well. Taking your bath while saving the maximum amount of water. You have to calculate well which is not easy in the early morning. Getting dressed and cleaning the room that gets dirty very fast. Sometimes you have to do the laundry. You're gonna get expert in that topic. Watch the women and you'll be impressed by their efficiency. Even a washing machine can hardly compete with them. With the only strength of their hands these women can clean away any stain. After washing, the laundry has to be exposed to the sun. Often it'll be difficult to stay under the burning sun too long. Later a little walk is recommended. You will meet your neighbors.
It's very funny to stop and play with the children. Laughter is obligatory, you can be sure. Make sure that you don't fall in front of them, because that will be all they remember and they will remind you of it every time they see you. In the late afternoon you'll be invited for tea. Sitting in the shadow, under a mango tree, you discuss with your hosting family, neighbors and friends, about everything and nothing. In these gorgeous moments you'll probably have the chance to learn how to prepare Senegalese tea, called ataïa, with foam in the glass just for decoration. Once back at home, doing the dishes, playing with the children of the family... you will be confronted with the real life and your need for analyzing it has to wait a bit. It is guaranteed that the life of African families is filled with strong emotions. Filled with surprises. Filled with crisis (you have to get used to meet animals from early morning on, bear to live in a family with all its habits, confront yourself with insects, play with children who don't expect your attention and get used to the electricity cuts very common in Africa...). But one thing is sure: living in a family allows you to discover the real Africa. Africa from inside.
RELIGION AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

« Did you hear from this young rapper’s death? He died because a powerful Marabu cursed him for criticizing his son!"  
Worth mentioning: the young man had a serious problem with his stomach, but didn’t go to the hospital. What should a Marabu have to do with his death?

First it has to be said that Marabus are not considered to do harm to others, on the contrary. They are spiritual leaders who guide their followers on the right path of Islam, with 94% being the main religion in Senegal. They are said to be given certain divine powers of healing and a special insight into past and future which makes them important counselors for the village population. As they are expected to know the Koran, they are seen as big moral authorities. Normally a Marabu doesn’t ask a salary for his “treatments” which range from giving advice to unhappy spouses to social activities as cleaning up the environment of the community. Also his followers, the Talibe (Arabic word for students) work for free to serve their beloved prophet Mohammed.
The popularity of regional spiritual leaders arrived in the 19th century with the Sufi brotherhoods. The Marabus have spiritual as well as economic and political power and are part of the national culture. They serve as a living example of goodness as well as a link to God above. Especially widespread is the adoration for Cheikh Amadou Bamba, the founder of the Mourid brotherhood, and his follower Cheikh Ibra Fall. Both pointed out the importance of physical work as a tool to salvation. The great fame of Bamba with 2 million followers in our days is due to his charismatic resistance against colonialism. He is regarded as the defender of Senegal and is said to have done miracles from his exile in Gabun. His student Ibra Fall founded his own brotherhood: his hard working students are called Bay Fall, which means God’s workers, recognizable by their dreadlocks and patchwork clothes.

In Sédhiou a young man and former rapper, called Khalilou Khadimou Rassoul, is attracting young people in the name of his movement called nabism (Nabi means prophet). He is said to have a special gift from God that shows sometimes at night, when his enlightenment changes the colour of his face. Everyday his followers are gathering around him, listening his speeches and drinking tea while discussing all kinds of philosophical and spiritual topics till 5 o’clock in the morning. Their main principles are patience, tolerance and suspiciousness. They devote 24 hours of the day to their Marabu’s cause. A lot of volunteer work has been done by his
initiative, trying to develop Sédhiou. Once a week his students meet in a religious house called Daraa built with their own hands, play the drums and dance and sing screaming out God’s name or “Jerefif”, to thank God in Wolof. Catholic Christianity is mainly represented by the Diola in the region of Casamance (Lonely Planet Senegal 2007). Ancestors play an important role as well and fetishes called Grigris. Grigris are part of the animist heritage to calm down bad spirits an bring good luck and they show the perfect synthesis between traditional beliefs and Islam: the word of God in the form of Koranic verses sewed into tiny leather bags which are worn around waist, arms or neck protect its owner from all kinds of dangers; very popular are those which prevent knives or bullets from entering your skin! A sentence you hear at every corner of Sédhiou is certainly
that “Africa has its mysteries” which cannot be explained in a rational way. There are hundreds of oral animist traditions which hold a lot of secrets: natural objects can be seen as spirits as well as invisible phenomena and practically everything that can’t be explained and is therefore given a magic meaning. Spirits are all around, good and bad ones, and only people with the sixth sense can perceive them. They can take over all sorts of appearances and sit as owls in Baobab trees, the “houses of spirits”. According to certain villagers it is not recommendable to be on the street at 2 o’clock in the morning if you want to avoid a meeting with the devil himself. How to recognize him? Take a look at his feet: if the toes point into the wrong direction, run as fast as you can! And be careful with your hair, your personal signature or a picture of yours- in case it gets into the wrong hands, your soul might be possessed and enslaved forever. But there are a lot of natural mystics with good effects: during a marriage in the raining season a grey sky is threatening the guests? A lady with special mystic gifts might pray the rain away while the men are heavily discussing if such a practice is Muslim or
simply superstition.

Another important tradition is the appearance of the Kankuran, a spirit linked to the circumcision ceremony. When the kids get their circumcision, the Kankuran is called out by the wise old men of the village to chase the bad spirits away. The Kankuran shows up in the night after the circumcision and a strong wind accompanies his appearance. This rite has ancient roots when the circumcision used to take place in the forest. Circumcision represented a real initiation rite into the adult society: in the forest the boys had to prove their virility. As the forest is seen as a danger, the Kankuran was expected to protect the kids from any harm when they were out there. Nowadays the circumcision doesn't take place in the forest anymore, but the Kankuran is still highly respected by people. Anytime a Kankuran is called out and enters the streets of Sédhiou, you can hear girls screaming: when the Kankuran is out, women are not supposed to stay outside. You better run, when you see the man in the red or brown costum or people around you start running. Otherwise you show him a lack of respect and risk to get beaten up by him!

All in all Senegal is a country of tolerant, moderate Islam- very
open to other religions and interreligious discourse. As God is one, he is meant to be shared, isn’t he? You can lose yourself in hours of discussion about the question of where we are coming from and where we are heading to in life to conclude that human being must keep on searching. Or as the Koran indicates: “Look for knowledge and if it were in China!”

As Islam instructs Senegalese Muslims believe in the existence of the one God called Allah and his prophet Mohammed. In their everyday life they respect the five pillars of Islam:

People do five prayers to God per day, kneeling down on a carpet in a corner of their house and pronouncing “allahu akbar” (God is big) in a half sung, half spoken way into the direction of Mecca. On Friday there is the official praying day that takes place in the mosque, at least for the male population and women after their menopause; people dress up in their best clothes and a special atmosphere lies in the hot air of Sédhiou.

The devotion to monotheism is supposed to be very strong as prophet Mohammed was fighting hard against idolatry during all his life. At the same time there are many illiterate people who only know little about Islam and others who learn the Koran by heart without understanding its meaning. With others you can have a deep debate about any topic for hours and at every occasion they cite a Sura of the Koran.

The fasting during Ramadan lasts about 30 days, depending on the moon calendar, and starts as soon as the sun rises till it
goes down again. This means no eating, no drinking and no sexual activities the whole day long, at least for those Muslims who are not sick, not pregnant, not travelling, not too young or too old. As solidarity is a key word in Sédhiou, foreigners are constantly called on to participate in fasting that serves as a means of purification and reinforcement of spirituality. In the evening the family comes together and as soon as the Imam starts his prayer, people break their fasting, starting with tea or coffee followed by a plate of rice with fish or spaghetti. In the end of Ramadan there is a big celebration called Korite which is accompanied by visits to the mosque, family and friends. On this day the fourth pillar of Islam, giving a part of your belongings to the poor, is especially important - you can enter any house in Sédhiou and are the most welcome to share a plate with the locals!

The Tabaski takes place two month after Ramadan as a
celebration of forgiveness; on this day a sheep is killed and everybody shares the meat. Whenever you owe someone an excuse, this is your chance to say sorry officially!
The last pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage to Mecca, the so called “Hadsch” to surround 7 times the biggest Muslim sanctuary, a huge black stone named Kaaba, which is seen as the house of God. This is only recommended to people if they can afford it—some save money for years to be able to organize this journey to Saudi Arabia. Others refuse to go there as the racist tradition forbids Black people to approach the Kaaba and touch it: “Why should I travel so far to be treated like this? Prophet Mohammed would not like it; after all he nominated the first Imam in Islamic history ever and guess what? He was black!”.
The only thing that makes a Senegalese smile is when you say you are atheist: “Not to believe in the existence of God is a sickness of the soul!”, a young Talibe declares while sipping his hot, strong tea. What if God was one of us?
THE POLYGAMY

“A man without a woman is like a vase without flowers”; this African proverb almost reflects Senegalese reality; almost? Senegalese men prefer their vase to be filled with a couple of those colorful plants called women. Alima is married with a man. But she is not the only one. After 15 years of marriage and 4 children her husband decided to take a second wife who has exactly the same rights and duties towards him. Every two days her husband sleeps in his second wife’s room. Alima lives in a polygamous relationship, a fate which she shares with a lot of Senegalese women. In Senegal there is an exceptionally high percentage of multiple marriages reaching nearly 47%. The word polygamy derives from Greek language and literally means “the practice of multiple marriages”. When it is the man who has more than one wife, it is called polygamy, a lifestyle that is relatively rare worldwide. But where does this concept of living come from and why is it so popular in Senegal till our days?

The most outpointed reason is found in the Muslim religion: every man is allowed to marry up to four wives if he is able to spend an equal amount of time and money on each of them. Polygamy is actually older than Islam and was accepted as a very old tradition. Surprisingly enough Prophet Mohammed lived in a monogamous relationship with Khadija for 25 years. Only after her death he became polygamous, marrying a lot of
war widows left with nothing and taking care of them. In Africa polygamy used to be part of the empire building as a lot of women means a lot of children who can work on the fields and support their old parents. Infertility as well as a high mortality rate are also named as social factors contributing to the widespread practice of polygamy.

When it comes to Senegalese men, there is mainly one reason for polygamy: competition. A wife who has an official rival will double and triple her efforts to please her unsatisfied husband. Moreover men can resist better to outside temptations which is quite important: in Islam having an extramarital affair is the second biggest sin after murder.

Personal opinions towards polygamy show a big variety; there are those for whom one woman is not enough, “because God knows that for a man it is very difficult to have only one woman” and there are others who reject polygamy, “because the African woman is too dangerous. If you hurt her, she’ll be capable of anything.”

Talking to Senegalese women shows a much clearer tendency: they can’t deny that they suffer enormously from their situation. Daily jealousy is not their only ambiguous feeling in a polygamous marriage. Whom does the husband love more and can he truly love and treat two or more different women exactly the same way? Most women don’t rebel: they feel obliged to accept the sharing of their husband as a religious must. But their frustration is strongly felt as they are tired
fighting for their husbands’ attention. “The problem is that men are not aware of our suffering; they only think about their own interests”, says Fatou, a woman who is highly respected at her work. “The good thing is that in a polygamous marriage the woman has more time for herself. I’m sure that the women of the next generation will not accept their fate as we do. Change is in the air.”
FOOD AND DRINKS

Senegal is famous for its many traditional dishes and typical food. Each region of the country has its specialties, so you can enjoy these spicy and colorful dishes. The moment of meals in the Senegalese families is not to be missed. Each family will invite you to share their food, even if you have never met them. The notion of sharing here is not an utopia but a way of life, a national value. You have the right to eat with your hands, a spoon or a fork and you share a meal in a large bowl. No plates, a unique dish to gather around. Women prepare the meals for their families. They have a good time and often talk and laugh in their mother tongue with some friends. Just by watching them we understand the importance of this sharing.

- In the traditional dishes, we find the Tieboudienne. A mixture of fish, rice, carrots, cabbage, eggplant, mixed with tomato sauce, chilies and broth Maggie...
• The *Maffé*, another typical dish of the Country, is a mixture of rice and fish or meat, all served with a peanut sauce. Of course the added spices makes this dish delicious.
• The *Yassa*, white rice with potatoes, onions, peppers, grilled fish, chicken or meat is often served in restaurants. This dish is very rich in onions.
• The *Domoda*, tomato sauce, flour, lemon, white rice with fish pellets (like donuts).
• The *couscous* is often prepared here, but it is a different variety from the Moroccan couscous.
• The *Soup* is a mixture of chicken, beans, potatoes with palm oil.
• The *Tuna* is a sandwich that you can get on the side of the road if you're feeling a little bit hungry. The bread is filled in with tuna, beans and chili. In general, women stand on the side of the streets in the evenings to prepare and sell any sort of sandwiches.
• The *Namba* consists rice, oil, onions and beans.
• The *Fataya*, a true delight, is a little pastry filled in with fish or meat and a spicy onion sauce. There are also large Fatayas, filled with beef meat, onions, fried egg, ketchup and pepper. It might remind you a kebab.
• In numerous dishes you will find a sticky sauce that is a tradition in Sédhiou. This sauce is called *Coucha* and it
is composed by hibiscus and *oseille*. The taste is very particular.

Mango jam can accompany your breakfast. It is prepared by children and adults: we advise you to taste it because it is a true delight.

- Very rare in Senegal, in Sédhiou you will have the chance to appreciate the meat of *Phacocere*. In general it is prepared with onions and french fries and is covered with a very spicy sauce that looks like ketchup. Be careful!
- The delicious meat of *deer* is rarely prepared here, but if you have the chance to eat it, don’t miss it. You will not be disappointed!
- To accompany these dishes there are also many local and national drinks, like the *lait caillé* (a homemade yoghurt), hibiscus juice, Baobab juice, orange juice, Mango juice and ataja (tea).

Among the alcoholic drinks we find Boron, Cadjou, Palm wine, Kanan. Local beers are Flag and Gazelle.
MUSIC AND DANCING

"Allahu akbar", sing the Talibe, the religious students, during the religious singing, praising the uniqueness of God
"Everything's gonna be allright", sings Bob Marley out of the speakers of a passing motortaxi.
"L'Afrique, c'est mon pays..", sings a local visitor of a popular bar called Mancedou.
Sédhiou without music would be like a rainbow without its colours, representing the very mixed and contradictory society itself. Music is simply everywhere and not only as a nice background entertainment, but as an essential part of every single social activity. And this has nothing to do with passive listening or watching: people make music and dance themselves. And they don't hesitate to invite you to sing and dance with them. So you better be ready!
The origins of Senegalese music root in the singing of the griots, praise singers, who used to glorify kings and princes. They used to be the only ones to perform music and transported history, genealogies and stories with its help. Nowadays they are invited to occasions like marriages, where they shout and sing out the last pieces of advice to the just married couple, usually accompanied by the Kora, a harp-lute with 21 strings and a big hole in the middle where people throw money in.
If Africans are said to have "music in their blood", it is certainly due to the incredible arts of drumming that seems to be a not further mentionable part of their everyday life for them. It is an unforgettably mystic experience to sit under a sky full of stars, listening to the traditional drumming of a djembe player who sings stories from the rich oral Manding heritage: about a husband who turns into a snake during the night and kills his wife or about a woman whose husband turned his back on her because of his second wife. When she asks her Marabu, a spiritual guide, how to reconquer her man, he tells her to get him the milk of a female lion that is breastfeeding her little ones. As she is capable of this, she is capable of everything! Worth seeing is also the weekly gathering of certain Islamic brotherhoods which praise the Lord by singing and dancing to the sounds of drums that are played for 3 hours nonstop. It leads people to a very agitated meditation that shows itself in ecstatic dancing movements done in groups, men and women apart from each other. After such an outburst of energy a drummer often has bleeding fingers or broken playing sticks, but at least he has given it all.
"When I play, I forget the pain after a while. It is like making love with God", a drummer comments with a smile. Apparently contradictory to the religious singings is the Sabar drumming as a means of e.g. celebrating the beginning of summer holidays in Sédhiou. While the drums are giving the rhythm, a group of girls and women is entering the dancing scenery barfoot and shaking certain parts of the body, especially pelvis, knees, legs and ass, in a way that makes Europeans' faces flush in the first moment. This very sexualized way of expressing themselves is seen as a normal part of their tribal past and adds another piece to the very colourful puzzle of Senegalese music. African dance has the concept of polyrhythm and total body articulation with the absence of close couple dancing as this was seen immoral in traditional societies. The national dance music in Senegal, a fusion of Western music like jazz, soul and Latin blended with traditional Sabar drumming, is called Mbalax and is played from night clubs to religious and cultural gatherings. It ows its great popularity mainly to the big African superstar Youssou N'Dour who is even more popular than the president in
Senegal and always on new ways when it comes to intercultural experiments in music. Not to forget Viviane N'Dour, a very popular female singer who combines R'n B and Hip Hop to a unique style of Mbalax and last but not least Akon, a Senegalese singer who is known throughout Europe thanks to his song "You're so beautiful", which you can hear at almost every street corner.
All in all it has to be underlined that music in Sédhiou is a very active and interactive thing. When you refuse to dance or admit that you don't like singing you risk to be seen as an alien. Among the young people every second person is a cool Hip Hopper or a relaxed Reggae man because singing, dancing and playing instruments is, at least for Senegalese men and women, like breathing. How to survive without it?
ART AND GAMES

Arts

In this little village with a particular mentality arts is unfortunately not the central focus of the inhabitants. It is common to see paintings on the wall made by local sculptors when you take a walk in the village. These paintings are very often dedicated to the Marabus of the village. Their faces can sometimes be seen from a distance of a few meters. Some young artists develop their hidden passion. They live their arts in a very solitary way and their first goal is not to sell. In order to cover their needs they do another activity. Tico, a young artist in Sédhiou has developed an activity that works out well. He is painting T-shirts with the Batik technique. Many youngsters go to him to let their names be inscribed on the back of their football T-shirts. As a sculptor Tico has created a radio boat. As his work is multifunctional he
makes something useful out of his pieces of arts. Arts is not very visible here. There is no artistic speciality. Only the costumes of the Kankuran (forest spirits) which are made out of wood or sacks of rice, are original. They are very beautiful clothes. In our carnivals these clothes would attract a lot of attention from the visitors. One of the strengths of the village people is making clothes. A lot of tailors create very different dressing styles; The article about this topic will give you a better idea about the beauty of their creations.
Games

In Sédhiou, children have to find their way to have fun. Indeed, unfortunately, few means and activities are set up to amuse them. Thus, they created their games. You know the game "the small horses". Here there's no official version. Some paper, a carton and some colors. That's what it is made of. Children seat in a circle, the first one launches the game and gets the match started.

The marbles game is the favorite amusement of many kids. They are real specialist and it's hard to defeat them. Clearly, there is always someone who gains the marbles of all the others, but the solidarity, which is a basic and rooted value here, leads the winner to redistribute them. The few you have, the more you share.

You will see many children having fun with a wheel and a stick. The objective is to make the wheel rolling as far as possible. Kids and grown up guys are real experts. They can
play for hours and never get bored. In Sédhiou there are two games rooms. Video consoles are set up. Of course, they are very old, but it is funny to remember our childhood thanks to games that we had too fastly forgotten, like Mario Bros on Nintendo. Table football are also installed, bunches of children gather around them. One advice: never under estimate these kids, they are real champions in this issue. The marelle and the hopscotch game (game with the elastic) are also well known. Both boys and girls love to play with them. In Sédhiou, children have been able to develop great ideas. We have forgotten these ideas, preferring material values to solidarity ones. "When we play together, we learn to know ourselves", a teen ager says, already very mature!
CLOTHES AND HAIRSTYLES

TISSUES

The Senegalese are known for their colorful and resplendent dresses, which are elegant and at the same time light and comfortable. Here is a list of major tissues used by the population of Sédhiou¹:

- kartoum
- wax
- bacien
- ciub
- perlage (often with small decorations, used for scarves)
- vual (this material is imported by Arab culture)
- prekal (which is similar to linen)
- soien
- bourodé (transpersed)
- linwax (half-linen, half-wax)
- supersan (also in rayé)
- mailuse
- ganila (which is similar to ciub)

The majority of these textiles are typically worn by women. The fabrics used for clothing men are mainly: cioub, supersan, bacien, flax, wax, linwax.

¹ The names of the tissus might not be correct, because we obtained them from interviews with local people.
A DRESS FOR EVERY OCCASION

In general, it should be noted that, as in Europe, women have more options. Men wear traditional clothing in special days, while women flaunt wonderful dresses even to go to market. In everyday life, men mostly wear Western clothes, usually jeans and t-shirt. Women too, but they often wear skirts in wax or khartoum.

Friday is not an ordinary day. It represents the day of prayer in the Muslim religion, so the majority of the population in Sédhiou honors this day with elegant clothes to go to the mosque, or to pray on the place of work.

Men wear long T-shirt with baggy trousers in cioub or baciem. Colors may vary: white, purple, gold. To go to the mosque, women can dress the same way as men, but also with traditional dresses or skirts (no matter the fabric). In any case clothes must be long and, for women, the use of a scarf that covers the head is compulsory.
In weddings, baptisms or Muslim special days (Tabaski, Korité), men wear clothes in *ciub* or *ganila*. Women also dress in *cioub*, with a headscarf. In all other situations, like New Years’ Eve or a Christian holiday (the Christian community is present in Sédhiou), clothes are more informal and not necessarily traditional. Men dress with Western trousers and t-shirts. Women dress in the same way, or by wearing the trousers with short skirts. In addition, the long T-shirt with trousers, long and often large, is always fashionable. Just a distinction with regard to women: single women can wear trousers, skirts or dresses. Married women must respect the will of the husband. In addition, married women have to wear foulards in public.
HAIR STYLES, WIGS AND HATS

Like all the populations of the Black Africa, the Senegalese have thick frizzy hair. Men wear their hair very short and they often shave, also because of the heat and to maintain a good hygiene. Otherwise, they keep long hair with dreadlocks, which may be thick or thin. This headgear, however, is not too frequent in Sédhiou, while it is quite widespread in the north of Senegal. There, indeed, the heat is less intense and the humidity is lower, allowing a wider development of this style. Sometimes, women keep their hair short like men. More often, when the hair is just a little bit longer, they make tresses in different styles, often adding fake hair (extensions). It may be the American style (they’re quite big) or mèches (more subtle). The grefages hairstyle uses Indian hair and works on them in order to obtain a style that reminds the hair of white people. Life style is similar to the mèches one, but they are very subtle and are made of real
hair only.
If women do not have time to arrange their hair, they always hang around with a wig, which decal the hair of white people, or a scarf.
The caps are used primarily by men, either to protect their hair from the sun (which can dry them and give them a red color) either because it’s fashionable. Baseball caps with the style of rap artists are especially popular.
The traditional caps (white and black) are worn only by older men.
The men studying to become marabous often wear hats that are reminiscent of a cylinder shape: they are called *sumbuia.*
JOBS

Behind the hotel Faradala in Sédhiou another world begins; women are going to their daily work in the rice fields very early in the morning. They take off their shoes, step into the muddy earth slightly overflooded with water and start cultivating rice - with nothing but their hands. They put the plants in the earth bowing down repeatedly and wait approximately 2 to 3 months to harvest the mature rice by cutting and threshing it. Sadio Silla sighs: “Working, working, working- that’s Africa.” The women don’t cultivate enough rice to sell, it’s for their own use as their families are big and rich of children. Why don’t the men help them in the fields? “They don’t want to”, is the short answer, cementing a long, never questioned tradition. Africa means hard labour - especially if you are born female; Senegalese women call themselves working slaves: as many among them lack education and don’t have a proper job, they are doing the unpaid and therefore unrecognized housework from morning
till night or sell peanuts and bananas on the side of the road - a few women next to each other without any sense of competition and in serious trouble when it comes to calculating. Some among them improve their pocket money by selling homemade juice. Some of them are part of women’s associations where they help together to manage e.g. a chicken farm in a profitable way. So don’t expect to see depressed faces: they are very proud and on their way to change women’s lives for the generations to come!

Local tailors are also worth visiting: you will not only get yourself handmade, perfectly suiting Senegalese clothes for little money, but also discover their total lack of business sense. You enter a dark room and meet a tailor who might wear his dirty pair of pyjamas full of holes. Don’t forget to bring your own mirror when you come to take your new clothes two days later; for there might be none at his place!

A similar experience waits for you in the shops and restaurants: ordering something that is a little bit extraordinary - e.g. an egg with your sandwich - might cause frustration, but at least you can be sure that they don’t put on
a face; stay patient and don’t give up! And compare prices in the different shops from time to time as tourists are endangered to be an easy prey to a suddenly awakening interest in money issues! To speak Arabic is also a personal plus as most shops in Sédhiou are mainly kept by Mauretanians.

In the field of education and development there is a lot going on. There are NGOs, financially supported by European countries as Italy and Austria (Enfance et Paix) that work for the development of Sédhiou, collaborating with local teachers, managers and social workers. Awareness raising campaigns against HIV, pre-adult pregnancy, female circumcision or Malaria are held regularly almost everywhere in Sédhiou. On these occasions people can make an HIV test for free, moscito nets are distributed and people’s sensitivity for important health or environmental topics is raised.

Young people discovered the motortaxi driving as a very popular working possibility in Sédhiou. Taxi drivers are all over the streets and by waving your hand or whistling they stop to take you at any place in Sédhiou for 200 CFA. In the raining season they often wear raining jackets or little umbrellas fixed on their hats and drive over the bumpy roads of the village.
When you take a walk through Sédhiou you can see carpenters mainly working outside, making gorgeous beds while many villagers are sleeping on a mattress on the floor. If you prefer walks very early in the morning, you can smell fresh bread coming out of the tiny bakeries on the side of the street. There are also a lot of hairdressers on the side of the road. Women usually go there to get their hair washed and modeled to plats once a month. If you want to try out the typical male short cut, you can go there till late at night!

But also technology has found its way to sleepy Sédhiou. The phone company SONATEL guarantees a more or less good connection with the world outside. Moreover there are people working at the local radio stations (Gabou FM) to spread the latest village news or at the Internet point- in case there is no electricity, they are obliged to wait for its return which can last a whole working day sometimes! Especially since SENELEC, public service responsible for the electricity, moved from Sédhiou to Ziguinchor.
More than 1 child out of 5 is involved in child labour throughout Senegal (UNICEF 2009). In Sédhiou you hardly see children working, only pupils of Koranic schools are concerned. They are given to a Marabu’s Daraa to learn the Koran and are sent out on the streets to beg money and to do services for their spiritual guides. This prevents them from having a proper education. “My parents wanted me to do this. I’d rather go to school”, one begging boy admits.

There is a local hospital where you can get medical treatment and there is even a veterinarian who is dealing with all the sheep, goats and chickens in Sédhiou. Don’t be surprised if he has not even once in his life vaccinated a cat- animals are widespread, as long as they are useful for human being.

Fishing is a very common job in Sédhiou. Often in couples, the fishermen take their canoes early in the morning and return home only in the evening. As the Casamance river is close to the village, they developed this activity in order to create a real economy. In Sédhiou, there is a National Office of Fishing, because this activity feeds a lot of families. As soon as you get to the market, you will find many women selling fish. Unfortunately, fish of a better quality is sent to Dakar, because it allows to get more income.

Money is a big issue in Sédhiou- especially the lack of it! One person out of 2 in Senegal lives under the poverty line (UNICEF 2009). In Sédhiou unemployment is quite widespread, especially among young people who dropped out of the
education system. On the first sight this is not very obvious because the extended families feed a lot of hungry mouths and there is always a place to sleep for everyone, the main reason why homelessness in Sédhiou is inexistent. Still many young people dream about going to Europe because they hope to find work there and come back as rich people, impressing the whole village. “Look, I’m almost 30 years, I would like to marry soon; but how should I start a family without a job?”, a local villager complains. Sometimes he works in the construction field for a couple of days, sometimes he drives a motortaxi or plays drums during a baptism- but that makes his day, not his life. And as there is no social insurance you lose your income when you get sick or have an accident. The manager of an NGO has found the perfect conclusion: “Life in Africa means dealing with the unpredictable every day”.

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SPORT

Sport in Senegal, is a real tradition. Everybody practices, contemplates or discusses about this activity. In a Nation where living conditions are not very good, the sport is a moment of happiness for every citizen. You can clearly read that on every face. The Senegalese lutte is the national sport. It is a traditional ritual that each Senegalese respects. It is easy to perceive the enthusiasm generated by the crowd gathering during combat, either in the mythical stadium in Dakar, “Léopold Sédar Senghor”, or in the small villages. The lutte consists in a fight. The objective is to make the other fighter fall on the ground, touching the soil with four parts of the body (in general, legs and arms) or the head. Preceded by a mystic ritual, each wrestler is accompanied by his team and by his marabout. Before each battle you can see these rites, dances and provocations that last for most of the time much longer than the confrontation itself. You can see fighters dancing. Everyone has his own way. They shake their bodies with incredible energy and flexibility. They throw sand on the ground, pour milk on their face and sand all over their body, pray on their knees. These rhytes are constantly followed by these Senegalese heroes. They fight half naked, with gris gris tied to their hips, arms or head. Like the Sumo fighters in Japan, they wear kind of big pants, in order to allow the grip.
In ancient times, the fighter was considered as the greatest warrior of the village. He used to build his reputation out of his power, strength and agility. This also allowed to have contact between different villages and partying until late at the night, no matter who was the winner. Today things have changed. The traditional struggle became the struggle with hits. They are much more violent, however these events bring together large masses. Everyone has his favorite wrestler. On Sunday afternoon, is the day of wrestling, many people are glued to the TV. Either by screaming out of joy or bursting into tears, each viewer puts all his passion to support his fighter. The different teams that bring together several wrestlers are constantly looking for prestige and glory and, being supported by many fans, they can not disappoint them. In Sédhiou, very
often, competitions are held. People participate to these events with ecstatic fever. Djembes, dances, screams, applaudes... The party is about to start. Fans dance without stopping for hours and the never stopping sounds of djembes create an atmosphere that makes you shiver. If you have the opportunity do not hesitate and go for it. You'll be forced to dance too and you will surely not be disappointed.

The second national sport is definitely football. Every child dreams of becoming a professional footballer and following the same path as his idols such as El Hadji Diouf and Mamadou Niang. In every village you will see young people playing football for hours. T-shirts of their favorite team, shorts, one football sock (probably on fashion) and plastic sandals, everybody is truly enthusiast. The Lions of Teranga (Senegalese national team) are true heroes for the people of Senegal and the pride of a Nation. Everybody remembers the World Cup 2002, when the Senegalese national team gained the match against the French national team, who was at that time a world champion. That victory represented the glory of
a Nation and became a symbol of independence for Senegal. If you are thinking to attend a football match, you will be welcome. But be careful here because the rules are not quite the same. Dangerous faults don’t exist. At least, you will develop an exceptional technique to avoid being hurt. It feels like if the lutte and football were brought together to create a new sport. But don’t worry: you will get used to it very quickly and there is little chance that you get hurt. Besides practice, everybody is passionate and follows the champion’s league and the various championships. As in Europe, everybody meets and discusses, defending passionately the favorite team. From this point of view, Europe is not so far. Basketball is the pride of the girls. The national team, many times champion of Africa, is another symbol of the Senegalese success. It is therefore common for boys and girls to play matches together. Handball is also practiced by many people. Like basketball and football, it is organized in a national championship. You will come across young senegalese guys with remarkable muscles. They exercise a lot, no matter the climate conditions. Concerning those who don’t show such a physical fitness, wait and see, just a few days and the difference will be outstanding! Many other sports are practiced in the Country. What is certain is that Senegal is a Nation of sport, a Nation that loves sport, a Nation that lives the sport.
TRANSPORTS

There are many types of public transport in Sédhiou. A true culture, a way of life. You must have the idea that the purchase price of a vehicle and its maintenance is too high for the majority of the Senegalese population. In Sédhiou, for example, many vehicles are funded by the International cooperation, such as “Handicap International”, “Medicos du Mundo”, and various international associations (Austrian, Italian...). Few people have the privilege to travel by such luxury.

To move within the village, you can borrow the "Jakarta" ... For 200 CFA francs, you can go anywhere in the village. From the market to Moricounda, from the shores of the Casamance to the bus station, so it is easy and profitable to get some fresh air on these African scooters.

Often customized, colorful, sometimes with a sound (e.g. bass playing reggae rhythm), they allow many Sédhiens to earn some money. If you hear honk, move a little on either the right or the left. These carriers will not hesitate to suggest you to take the taxi ...

Pape is a Jakarta driver during the day and he is a DJ in the
Mancédou bar during the weekend. Driving with him is a real pleasure ... Discussions and jokes are in the program. For him, this job is the way to live his passion for being a DJ. He is very happy on his moto. Like all the others on this type of job, he enjoys what he does. Despite that they speed sometimes too much, do not hesitate to ask them to slow down, they will do with joy and good humor. Of course you can hang around by bike or walking. This will be the most effective way to meet people, discover the landscape and think about everything and nothing. Very often you come across to very curious people. "Toubab", "My white", "Rooney" or wheezing sounds. Do not be offended, they use this method to greet you. The mood is not negative. Rather, it allows them to challenge you. In addition, it will give you the opportunity to do some sports and go on a diet without realizing it. During the dry season, it will be very pleasant to stroll under the trees.

If you decide to join Ziguinchor and leave the town, you can install on board of the taxi “sept places”. For 3000 CFA francs in 3:30h of trip you will reach the capital of the Casamance. Of course the travel conditions are not very safe. At any time, the car you are in can have any sort of problems. In this case, you find yourself stuck in small villages if you're lucky or in the bush if it is not your day. One thing for sure is that if you have a very cold water bottle, it will become your best friend. If it is fresh you will enjoy every sip. Every time the car stops, it is often surrounded by sellers of mangos, bananas, “oranges of
Casamance”, peanuts ... and they do not let you go until the vehicle will not be on the road again. The scenery that you will observe is fantastic. Rustic villages, the beauty of the Casamance river, the numerous palm trees, mango and baobab ... they deserve the best reviews as possible. Once arrived in Ziguinchor you can take the boat for Dakar. It is the most pleasant means of transportation. For 15,000 francs CFA, you can sit in a chair and sleep overnight. If you have a sudden urge to enjoy a cocktail, bar and bartenders will be there to greet you. Do not be surprised by very high prices, you pay twice as much as on the mainland. Music and dance are scheduled for a night of madness. The magical view of the Casamance is unique and, if you are lucky, dolphins will greet you and accompany your trip. For that alone you will not be disappointed.

Another way is also available to reach any city in the Country – common buses. Very colorful, very kitschy and very crowded, the buses are cheap and very typical. You'll meet lots of people leaving for villages or for the big city. The disadvantage
is that they stop at every village and you could find yourself accompanied by various animals - sheep, goats, chickens ... But it is really worth it. The heat will make you think twice, but all experience is good to take. From Sédhiou you can reach Dakar by this means of transport but you have to keep in mind that the journey is very long and very tiring. Crossing the Gambia can sometimes take hours because you must wait the ferry to cross the river. It all costs only 6000 CFA francs, but you can also communicate with many people and understand a true African. While crossing Gambia you will have to justify yourself to local authorities many times. At two Gambian borders (entrance and exit) you will have to pay a tax of 1000 FCFA. Moreover, the passage on the ferry will cost you 300
FCFA.
Once arrived in Dakar or in large cities you will easily find taxis, blue or yellow ... if you do not want to spend too much money and enjoy the warmth of Senegal, then take the yellow ones. The blue ones are acclimatized, for a higher price. The price negotiation is mandatory. You will have to fight for a good price if you don’t want to be tricked. Take your time to bargain and don’t worry, you will meet the taxis all the time and at any hour of the day... For information, in Ziguinchor the price of taxis is 400 CFA francs regardless of destination within the city.
For your information, you will have to pay for your luggage. Here the negotiation is compulsory, otherwise the price will be too high.
What is certain is that travelling in Senegal is not complicated. Always keep in mind that you often have to negotiate prices and not to be afraid of getting trapped for hours in the bushes. The best solution in certainly to have a car. Do not underestimate the Senegalese streets. Holes, water flood and any sort of obstacle could make your trip horrible. Good luck!
TOURISM

Sédhiou, capital of the region, tends to develop. You can't call it a touristic paradise. There are a few cooperations here, but not in the touristic field. To visit Sédhiou means to discover the typical daily life of Senegal. The life of the village itself offers the best chance for tourism.

Sédhiou has only one hotel called La Palmeraie. Situated on the riverside of the Casamance, this hotel welcomes special tourists. In this region the tourism for hunters is dominant and you find a lot of them in La Palmerie. Little cottages acclimatized, a swimming pool, a bar, a small beautiful garden with big palm trees: this hotel is quite expensive for the place. It costs 15.000 Francs CFA per night.

Two hostels are available in the village. The Faradala is at the
entrance of the village, a very simple and intimate place. There are rooms with ventilation. Shower, sink, toilet are in the room in order to have a proper environment for your stay. The Mancedou, situated in the district of Moricounda, has rooms available. For 10 000 Francs CFA you'll get an air-conditioned room and for 7 500 Francs CFA a room with ventilation. The advantage there is that it has a bar. You can refresh yourself whenever you like. Beers (between 500 Francs CFA and 800 Francs CFA), refreshing "lemonades" (300 Francs CFA, )Pastis (300 francs CFA), Whisky (300 francs CFA), Gin (300 francs CFA), red wine and rosé ( francs CFA) are always at hands in the fridge managed by Moussa and Jerome, the two barmen of Mancedou. If you like to benefit from the sun, you can put a table outside and sit there with your friends at the entrance of the bar, a really natural balcony. With a bit of luck you'll meet the young lady selling Fatayas (25 Francs per piece) to try a little starter. Around 8 pm the bar is able to transform into a disco. Between 8 pm and midnight many youngsters participate in these parties. With a ticket between 200 and 500 Francs CFA you can enjoy Senegalese music and learn to dance the Mbalax next to youngsters who go crazy for Youssou N'Dour, for example. Pape, the DJ of the disco, knows how to keep you up till late at night: at 1 o'clock in the morning the real evening starts and makes place for the older ones. The crowd of youngsters disappears and passes on the dancefloor to their older friends, who are passionate dancers.
as well.
There are two other discos in Sedhiou. The most appreciated one is the Therdo. There is a lot of space and always a crowd. You can buy drinks at a little bar but they are more expensive than elsewhere. This is due to the high popularity of the place. The Ceylooo, another disco, is close to the market place. This very ancient disco is interesting. Many people like it and choose it as a place to go at weekends. There is a bar (which is not open all the time unfortunately), but it is difficult to find alcohol there.
Furthermore there are hidden bars. To tell you where they are is too easy. This will certainly motivate you to look for them and if you’re lucky some good surprises are waiting for you.
In Sédhiou there is a cultural center. At the CEDEPS several activities take place: parties for school holidays, concerts of popular artists, meetings of cooperations... the CEDEPS is an intellectual place with a very good reputation. The entrance therefore is more expensive with prices up to 2 500 Francs CFA depending on the occasion.
The market is also an interesting place to visit. It is full of life. There are people everywhere. Odors and colors will enchant you and will make your walk really pleasant. Noise, people screaming and laughing will be part of your shopping moment. The Casamance, the river of the village, is very pretty to see. Many people go swimming or fishing there. Others do sports on the sandy riverside. You can see canoos of every size which
take villagers or fishermen to different horizons. The place of Independence, a very nice place, contains a lion statue of the Teranga in the colours of the Senegales nation: green, yellow and red. Many meetings are held there. The car station, very dirty and overcrowded, allows you to find taxis or buses to go to other places like Dakar or Ziguinchor. Just for your information: the atmosphere there is not so nice because everybody tries to convince you to choose his car or bus as a means of transportation.

When going through the streets of Sédhiou, you will see the "fort". First built by the French colonizers, it has turned into a cultural center nowadays and gives place to a lot of meetings like cards games (*concours de belotte*) and dames.

In the neighborhood «Montagne Rouge» you will have the chance to visit the grave of Jules Frédéric Ferry, a French professor who was the pride of the village. Many local people will love to take you there in order to share with you this feeling.
The devil island situated in the middle of the river Casamance is accessible with a canoe within 10 minutes. Although that it’s difficult to approach in the raining season, this island spreads a very calm atmosphere. You will see a lot of magical things. Pelicans and flamingos can be discovered. To visit the island is a must. You will feel free, be sure of that!

Concerning practical issues, it is important to notice the presence of a Post, a bank (Crédi Mutuel de Sénégal), a Police station, a prison and a haven to cross the river. The landscapes make a characteristic place out of Sédhiou. Many trees will protect you from the sun when you take a walk in the village. Leaving it behind, you will be overwhelmed
by the beauty of the places. Palm trees, tomato fields, flat landscape with fruit trees. You will be obliged to make pictures in order not to forget what you have seen. In a couple of years the village will be an important touristic attraction. The richness and the potential of Sédhiou will be soon revealed?
WHAT DO I NEED BEFORE VISITING SENEGAL?

VISA

Before leaving, it is very important to respect certain conditions. The visa is the first one. For the Countries of the European Union, it is not necessary to apply for a visa. For a period exceeding three months, you will have to go to your respective embassies to apply for extension of stay. The
Embassy will send you to the Police for Foreigner Affairs’ premises to seek clarification of your extension. It can take some time to obtain the VISA. It is very important to fill in the format of your request in an appropriate and complete way. Otherwise, your request will be surely rejected. It is also necessary to give a contact address and a telephone reference. You’d better give an easy-to-reach address (e.g. in Dakar), because the Senegalese post system is not reliable at all.

Make also sure to give an always available phone number. They will not call you twice!

**VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL PREVENTION**

The vaccination issue is also an important concept to follow. Only one vaccination is strongly recommended in Senegal: yellow fever. It can be done in clinics or hospitals, in departments specialized in tropical diseases. Also get an appointment with your doctor to decide together the other vaccinations to take. Typhoid, meningitis, hepatitis, rabies and other vaccines can be made. That depends on you. Remember to take with you medications prescribed by your doctor as ibuprofen, Doliprane, the diarrhea drugs, antibiotics against infection, anti - histaminics ... to avoid being in need here.

Take an appointment with your dentist to check the condition of your teeth because finding a good dentist in Senegal is
rather complicated. There are no vaccinations against malaria. You must, therefore, be constantly vigilant. The purchase of a treated mosquito net is the first objective. Normally, you can find mosquito nets in every hotel room or hostel, but do not neglect this parameter. Buy it in Senegal where it will be cheaper. In hospitals prices are very good (about 1000 FCFA). Then be sure to take insect repellent. Even if it is not very effective, it is still useful. The spirals are also recommended and rather effective. Among your clothes, take with you t-shirts with long sleeves and large, comfortable trousers in cotton. You’d better avoid to take with you black cloths, because dark colors attract mosquitoes. If you stay for a long time, the prophylaxis against malaria could not be very useful because it might be heavy for your liver and the side effects can sometimes be very negative. Otherwise "Malarone" and “Lariam” are effective treatments. Anyway in case of symptoms (fever, diarrhea ...) go directly to the hospital: they will get you a rapid test and, in case it is positive, they are very prepared in curing malaria.

USEFUL ADVICES

• For the water treatment, buy tablets like "Aquatabs", for example ... Or if you prefer you can buy bottled water ... For 500 CFA francs you can drink fresh water (Kirene) ... anyway, check if the bottle is closed. You can either buy
water in bottles of 5 L or 10 L. It is much cheaper.

- The possession of a **flashlight** is incredibly important here. The high number of electricity breakdown in Dakar and in other parts of the Country is increasing more and more. Your lamp will become your best friend.

- For a long time on this territory, a **mobile phone** will be useful. Several solutions. If you own an Orange phone or a phone accepting any type of chip cards, you can simply buy a Senegalese chip for 2000 FCFA. Otherwise you can get a new phone for 13,000 CFA francs, but of course do not expect a fashionable phone. Senegal offers three different networks: Orange, Tigo and Expresso.

- To change your **money** you have many options. You can go to a bank, but it will apply a 2% tax. Thus, you could choose other solutions. At the airport, some people will propose you to change your money. Be careful and do not change all you have, they might trick you and give you fake money.

- If you have an adventure spirit you can go in a boutique and get the change there. It’s up to you!

- To avoid sun burning, remember to bring a strong **sunscreen**. If you forget to protect yourself, you will get quickly burnt and your shower might be painful.

- For a long journey there is something you cannot be prepared for. Your **mind** will be exposed to hard challenges and stressful living conditions. Unfortunately, there is no
preparation for this. Here you'll know the ups and downs. But unlike Europe, these feelings are pushed to the extreme. There is no middle ground. But this leads us to know ourselves.
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