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Senegal's National Single Registry (*Registre National Unique*): towards national coverage

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1 Introduction

The objective of this paper is to introduce Senegal's National Single Registry (*Registre National Unique*—RNU), describe its institutional set-up and evolving coverage and explore some of the key challenges and solutions that emerged on its journey towards its current national scale. The information presented in this paper was generated by the RNU's line agency, the National Single Registry Directorate (*Direction du Registre National Unique*—DGPSN).

2 How has the National Single Registry evolved?

In Senegal, the provision of social protection and the reduction of inequality were set as priorities for economic and social policy. As a result, the DGPSN was created and mandated to drive and streamline social protection strategies and interventions. This vision was set out in the 'Emerging Senegal Plan' (*Plan Sénégal émergent*—PSE), in which Section II aims at significantly improving the population's living standards, intensifying the fight against social inequalities and further investing in human capital.

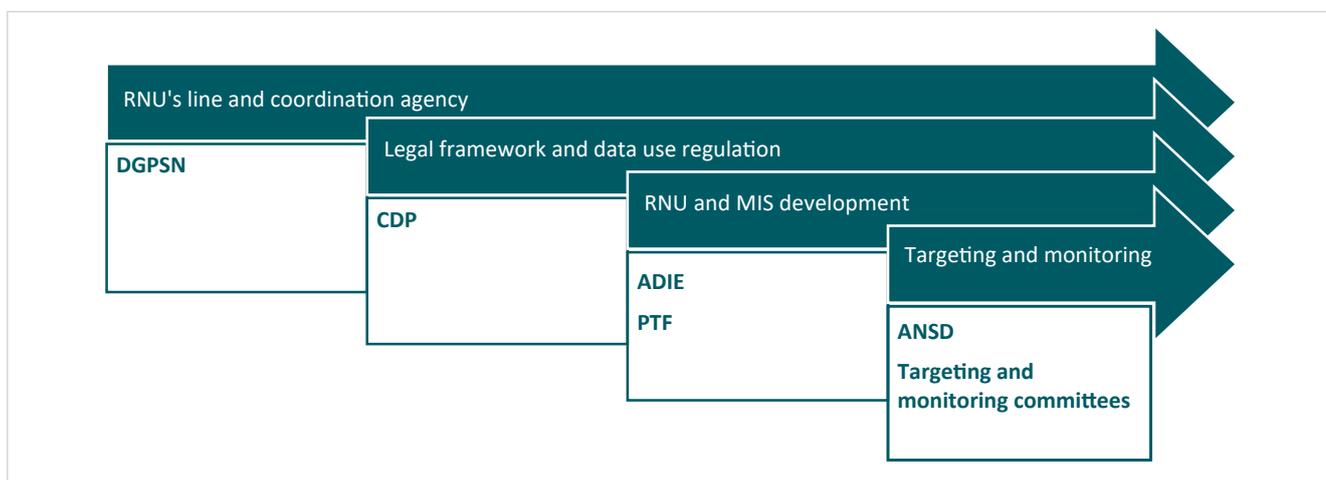
Achieving this vision of improved well-being has been hindered by the lack of coordination among the various social projects and programmes. In addition, social programmes only have limited means to target their beneficiaries. Aware of these constraints, the Government of Senegal opted in 2015 to implement and develop the RNU, containing data on poor and vulnerable households. The RNU built on the tools and processes developed to select the beneficiaries of the National Programme of Family Security Benefits (*Programme national de bourses de sécurité familiale*—PNBSF) launched in 2013.

3 Which ministries and organisations were involved in its implementation?

The RNU is based on a unified questionnaire that encompasses the concerns of several sectors (health, education, food and nutrition security, gender etc.). Several ministries and public and parapublic institutions involved in social safety nets sought to strengthen the ownership and recognition of the RNU—an institutional tool designed to target poor or vulnerable populations—by engaging in the development of the questionnaire, its validation and update.

FIGURE 1:

Stakeholders involved in implementing and developing the RNU



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Note: DGPSN: *Délégation Générale à la Protection Sociale et à la Solidarité Nationale*; CDP: *Commission de Protection des Données Personnelles*; ADIE: *Agence de l'Informatique de l'Etat*; PTF: *Partenaires Techniques et Financiers*; ANSD: *Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie*.

The DGPSN is the RNU's line and coordination agency. Its database is hosted by the State Agency for Information Technology (*Agence de l'Informatique de l'État—ADIE*), which is also in charge of implementing and developing the management information system (MIS).

The RNU's implementation and development are also supported by technical and financial partners such as the World Bank and UNICEF, and the National Agency for Statistics and Demography (*Agence nationale de la statistique et de la démographie—ANSD*) is involved in geographic targeting, data collection and scoring. Targeting and monitoring committees comprising local community resource persons are in charge of preselection and monitoring of beneficiary households. The legal framework and the use of data are regulated by the Personal Data Protection Commission (*Commission de protection des Données personnelles—CDP*). These processes are shown in Figure 1.

The following stakeholders are also involved in implementing the RNU:

- **Social workers (supervisors/community educators—*relais communautaires*):** They facilitate the preselection process and ensure compliance with the procedures established by the RNU's Directorate. They support communication, social mobilisation, awareness-raising etc.
- **Experts/consultants:** They are occasionally approached for specific tasks and areas of expertise (planning, communication, MIS, monitoring and evaluation etc.).

- **Administrative authorities:** Governors, prefects and sub-prefects support the committees and targeting processes.
- **Local communities:** They produce the orders establishing the district or village targeting and monitoring committees and support the allocation of municipal quotas by district or village.
- **Regional branches:** The DGPSN's focal points are responsible for planning, monitoring and communication at the regional level.

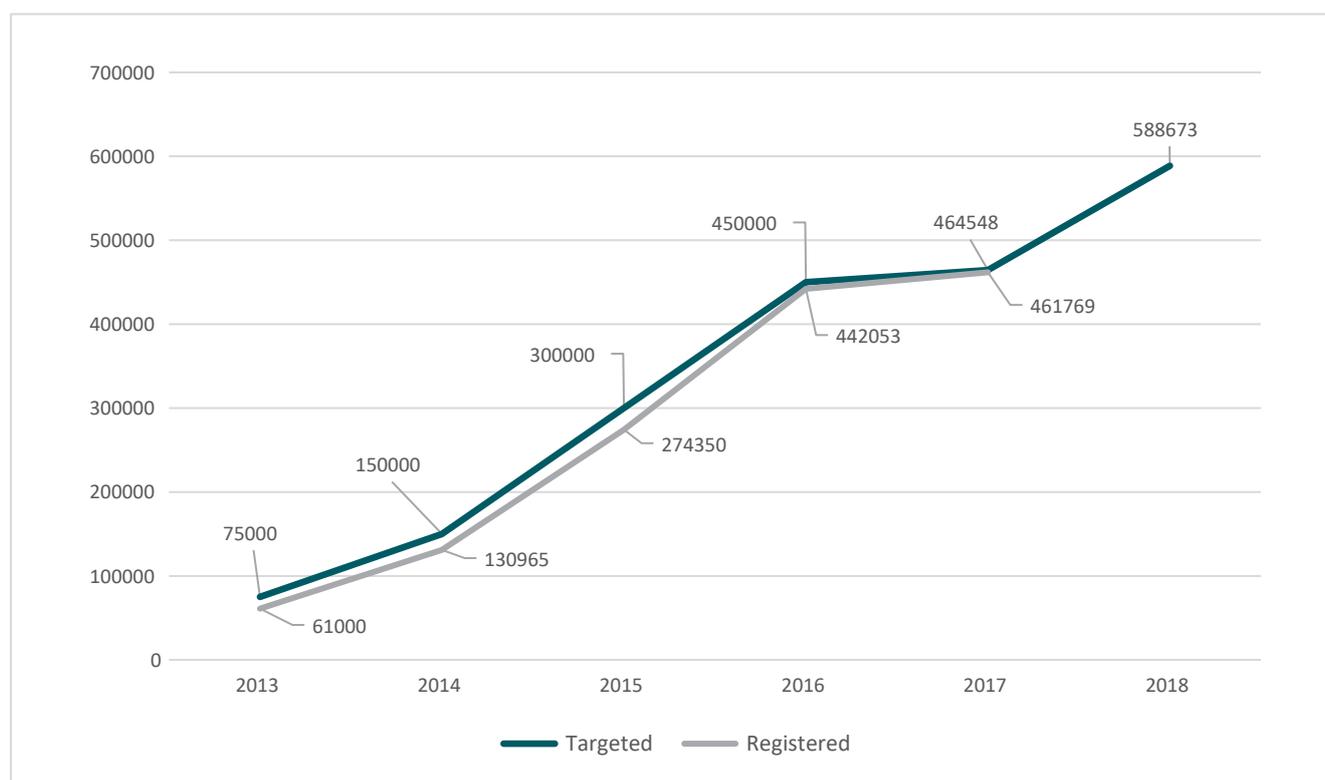
4 How long has it taken to reach the current level of coverage?

The RNU was created in 2015, building on the beneficiary data that the PNBSF had already been registering since 2013. Since its inception, the RNU has been laying the groundwork for its development—for example, carrying out preselection, survey, reconciliation and consolidation campaigns, and more recently implementing its MIS and updating its data. The RNU currently holds data on 461,769 households (see Figure 1)—around 28 per cent of all households across the 14 regions, 45 departments and 552 municipalities of Senegal. The goal was to register 588,673 households by the end of 2018—all the people living below the poverty line.

The RNU's household selection and registration processes combine several approaches: geographic targeting, community-based targeting and through an ANSD-led survey and scorecard carried out on the basis of households' vulnerabilities reported by communities.

FIGURE 2:

Evolution of the number of households registered in the RNU



Source: Author's elaboration.

5 How many programmes are using the RNU?

Eleven programmes or projects have been using the RNU from the

outset to select their beneficiaries or monitor their target audience within low-income populations, including those listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1 :

RNU users

Programmes signatories of data-sharing protocols	Cash transfers	Health	Food insecurity	Productive social protection
PNBSF	✓			✓
Universal Health Coverage Agency (<i>Agence de la Couverture maladie universelle—CMU</i>)		✓		
World Food Programme (WFP), Malnutrition Reduction Unit (<i>Cellule de lutte contre la malnutrition—CLM</i>) and PNBSF	✓		✓	
Helen Keller International (HKI)			✓	✓
ACTED ⁴			✓	
Action contre la Faim (ACF)			✓	
Economic and Social Dynamics Strengthening Programme (<i>Programme de renforcement des dynamiques de développement économique et social—PRODES</i>)				✓
CORRIANS ⁵	✓		✓	
Executive Secretary of the National Council for Food Security (<i>Secrétariat exécutif du Conseil national de sécurité alimentaire—SECNSA</i>)	✓		✓	
High Authority of Waqf	✓			✓

Source: RNU management.

6 Challenges and solutions

Building the RNU required overcoming several challenges, the most recent of which consisted of implementing the MIS, developed with ADIE's technical coordination. This MIS consists of a series of modules meant to improve the coordination of interventions, the activity planning, the monitoring performed by the various stakeholders involved in implementing the RNU and the use of data by programmes.

The other challenge regards expanding the RNU to:

- broaden its coverage;
- target households living in poverty, not only those in extreme poverty;
- implement an efficient mechanism for updating households' data; and

- meet the demand from projects/programmes/organisations wishing to target their beneficiaries as part of shock-responsive projects.

In particular, updating RNU data aims to ensure its use by several programmes, its reliability and relevance, its permanence and validity over time and its social and political legitimacy. Senegal opted for the following two ways of updating data:

- **an ongoing update** performed through the MIS, including:
 - the complaints and grievance redress mechanism; and
 - RNU user programmes' feedback about updating data; and



Photos taken during the village assemblies convened to validate the list of households to be registered in the RNU.

- a **full cyclical update** performed through:
 - local committee meetings for household recertification;
 - village/district validation assemblies; and
 - data collection based on the survey form.

As far as this updating process is concerned, communities are involved down to the village level through a validation mechanism operated by local communities and administrations. To reduce the number of inclusion and exclusion errors, the lists of eligible households are presented to the communities and validated by over 15,000 village and district assemblies, thus ensuring accountability and reducing fraud.

In 2018, two surveys were conducted to qualitatively and quantitatively assess the RNU's update and scale-up processes, answering the following two questions:

1. Does the current community-based targeting approach help reduce inclusion and exclusion errors at the RNU level?
2. Have the Manual's community-based targeting approaches been applied? Are they adapted to efficiently reduce inclusion and exclusion errors?

The outcomes of these assessments (Ferré 2018) have shown that the RNU's update and scale-up process helped to significantly improve data quality, according to the multiple surveyed stakeholders, who have identified process transparency and community involvement as the main reasons for this improvement.

These outcomes have also shown that:⁶

- The scores of RNU households are significantly lower than those of non-RNU households, confirming that registered households are more destitute.

- Good scoring performance is confirmed by statistics regarding the average consumption of RNU and non-RNU households—registered households are poorer (earning XOF3,000 less per person per month). The average consumption of RNU households is slightly below the second quintile—a rather consistent result, as the RNU is meant to register poor households, i.e. the two lowest-income quintiles of the population.

On average, RNU households are significantly poorer: 86 per cent of RNU households are poor and 53 are extremely poor, against 76 per cent and 36 per cent of non RNU households, respectively.

Inclusion errors are rather low—on average, 13 per cent of the registered households should not be in the RNU.

The roll-out of the RNU's MIS throughout the country with the support of ADIE will make it possible to manage information in real time and to avoid fraud.

The DGPSN has also committed to strengthen its institutional capacity for managing the RNU by improving its governance, defining its missions and financing sources, promoting its use by all safety net projects and programmes, and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of its activities by including a dedicated line in the national budget.

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4. See <<https://www.acted.org/en/countries/senegal/>>.

5. CORRIANS is a group created to help reduce food and nutrition insecurity in Senegal. See <<https://bit.ly/2P4dLNi/>>.

6. The 912 households in the 39 villages/neighbourhoods of the quantitative assessment sample were randomly selected in three of the four recertification pilot regions: Kaffrine, Kaolack and Tambacounda.

Reference:

Ferré, Celine. 2018. *Sénégal: Résultats de l'enquête d'évaluation de la recertification des ménages du RNU*. Registre National Unique.

The views expressed in this brief are the authors' and not necessarily those of the Government of Brazil or the United Nations Development Programme.

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