Working with the Daaras

Policy Progress and Field Research
Koranic Education in Potou, Senegal

- The popularity of the daaras poses significant difficulties for attaining universal basic education (MDG2): daaras do not teach French, the official language of Senegal or use the recognized government curricula.

- As such, students in these schools are not counted in official enrollment statistics.

- In Potou, a Y5 survey shows a primary level net attendance ratio of 54%, and a more recent survey shows little progress.

An Historic Perspective

- Government insistence on French as the official language of instruction represents a long history of colonial rule.

- Before independence, French colonial authorities suppressed religious educators, and then, when they became centers of imperial resistance, tried to coax them into the administration.

- The post-colonial government of Senegal, founded on secular principles, has remained resistant to fully accept the daaras. Yet a gradual process of decentralization, partially due to lack of state resources, gave religious leaders increased leverage.

Methodology

- Background research on legal and policy framework
- Stakeholder interviews
  - Government representatives at local and national level
  - Donor partners and civil society
- Focus groups, interviews at community level

Key Findings

- Daaras are a crucial part of the community fabric, inculcating religious values and providing potential networks for future employment

- High demand for daaras reflects the weakness of the public education system

- Parents are supportive of the public education system and would like a bridge between religious and secular system

- Donors are increasingly focused on providing this bridge, but bottlenecks exist at the national level