

## **Perceptions of Senegalese Telecommunications Policy Experts on Factors Affecting Policy Reform**

Senegal is recognized for developing one of Africa’s most extensive and modern telecommunications infrastructures (Internet World Stats, 2012). Despite the success and status achieved by the Senegalese telecommunications industry in Africa, the potential of development for the Senegalese telecommunications sector remains untapped. Today, the Senegalese private sector strives to prosper in a telecommunications industry, which is utterly dominated by the Senegalese National Telecommunications Company (SONATEL). The business environment is hostile to the private sector because there is an unfair competition between leading telecommunications operators and Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) (OPTIC, 2012). Among other issues, there seems to have been biased treatments between telecommunications’ operators in the grant of licenses as seen in the cases of Tigo’s and Espresso’s license acquisition. Findings from literature and semi-structured interviews conducted with eight Senegalese telecommunications experts revealed that factors affecting the policy reform in the Senegalese telecommunications sector are issues associated with three of the six Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) produced by Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi (2012). These three categories represent voice and accountability, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality. The perceptions of Senegalese telecommunications experts on factors affecting the policy reform are presented in the table below:

**Table 1 – Categorization of Factors Affecting the Policy Reform in Senegal**

WGI	Interviewees’ Perceptions of Factors Hindering Policy Reform		
<b>Voice and Accountability</b>	Misunderstanding and/or miscommunication between the government (decision makers) and “independent” telecommunications experts		
<b>Government Effectiveness</b>	Institutional instability	Lack of defined strategy and clear vision expressed by the government for the sector	Lack of expertise in the government
<b>Regulatory Quality</b>	Lack of independent and strong regulatory authority	Absence of regulatory authority before liberalization	Conflict of interest between the government, SONATEL and regulators

*Sources: (The World Bank Group, 2012), Literature and Interviews*

Successful policy reform in the Senegalese telecommunications sector will depend on the ability of Senegalese institutions in charge of telecommunications to address issues described within the three categories depicted in table 1. This policy brief seeks to inform decision-makers on factors perceived by Senegalese telecommunications experts as hindering the policy reform.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 2 below provides a set of recommendations to remedy to the Senegalese telecommunications experts’ perceptions of factors affecting policy reform.

**Table 2 – Recommendations**

Interviewees’ Perceptions of Factors Hindering Policy Reform	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misunderstanding and/or miscommunication between the government (decision makers) and “independent” telecommunications experts</li> </ul>	Set up once per year a taskforce comprised of diverse telecommunications stakeholders to discuss constraints faced by the sector, brainstorm on strategies for the development of telecommunications, set up targets, measure results, and improve processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of defined strategy and vision expressed by the government for the sector</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional instability</li> </ul>	Recruit decision-makers in institutions in charge of

	telecommunications based on a nonpartisan selection process, in which the best candidates and experts are appointed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of expertise in the government</li> </ul>	Start a master program on policy-making and regulation of telecommunications to train future policy-makers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of independent and strong regulatory authority</li> <li>• Absence of regulatory authority before liberalization</li> <li>• Conflict of interest between the government, SONATEL and regulators</li> </ul>	Set up a strong and independent regulatory institution in order to avoid conflict of interest and boost regulatory quality.

## THE RESEARCH

According to the findings from interviews with Senegalese telecommunications experts and the WGI, the three categories below highlight issues perceived to hinder policy reform.

### I. VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The country's first and second phase of telecommunications reform that respectively led to the creation of SONATEL in 1985 and its "partial privatization" in 1997 were the outcomes of taskforces involving a diversified group of telecommunications stakeholders. According to one interviewee, the last open discussion on telecommunications involving various stakeholders took place in 2004. Thus, certain experts interviewed decried the miscommunication and/or misunderstanding with the government as a factor affecting policy reform.

### II. GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS

According to a report published by the Organization of Professionals in Information and Communication Technology (OPTIC) (2012), institutional instability is one cause of barrier to entry in the telecommunications industry for the private sector. The instability in the minister in charge of telecommunications and in the regulator contributes to impeding the development of a strategy for the telecommunications sector. Also, interviewees stigmatized the lack of expertise of decision-makers in the minister in charge of telecommunications.

### III. REGULATORY QUALITY

Senegal's telecommunications regulatory environment is often criticized by the private sector. They argue that the Authority for the Regulation of Telecommunications and Posts (ARTP) does not guarantee a fair and competitive environment against SONATEL. This could be explained by the weakness or the lack of competence of certain decision-makers within the ARTP, as well as fact that the ARTP and SONATEL are tied to the government. There is a potential conflict of interest as the Senegalese government owns 27% of SONATEL and the president of Senegal names the executive director of ARTP. Overall, interviewees believe that the most pressing reform in the Senegalese telecommunications sector is to set up an independent and strong regulator.

### SOURCES

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