



# Senegal Gas Deal Drives Locals To Desperation

## Press Release

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When gas discoveries of 425 billion cubic meters were confirmed in 2015 for the coastal areas shared between Mauritania and Senegal, it spawned hope. At that time the local artisanal fishers who had brought money into the communities of Guet Ndar in St Louis and others, were already braving many hardships such a coastal erosion of their villages and loss of life at sea. Worst of all were, however, the competition by foreign industrial vessels and gradual loss of access to the most productive fishing grounds reachable with their open boats. The once strong economic performance of the fisheries has given way to massive loss of income and a gradual collapse of the fishing communities with hundreds of men leaving the country because of the shame associated with the impossibility to provide for their families. More and more women are reverting to clandestine prostitution as a last resort to feed their children and keep them housed after all help from the extended family and loans failed to secure a living.

A recent report by AP provides some background to this desperate situation. Global gas and oil giants BP and Kosmos Energy and Senegal and Mauritania's state-owned oil companies, PetroSen and SMHPM, raising hopes to provide electricity for the 30% of the people in the countries not having regular supplies. In time BP secured ownership to almost 60% of the gas project development on both sides of the border painting a rosy picture of thousands of jobs, energy and wealth for the communities. The rigs were starting to appear recently about 10 km off the coast. A terminal for liquid natural gas is being frantically built. It seems including with German money after a visit of Chancellor Scholz in May 2022, who was concerned about energy security in the country after losing Russian supplies. The companies estimate that they can produce 2.08 million metric tonnes of liquified natural gas a year, enough for 20 years of production according to their statements. A report by Environmental Action Germany (Umwelthilfe e.V.) and Urgewald, a German-based environmental and human rights organisation, estimates the investment cost of the first phase of the venture at about USD 5 billion. The companies won't confirm, but say phase one is a multi-billion dollar investment and to be completed end 2023 allowing them to start production.

As early as 2018 fishers and communities were advised that they would lose access to fishing grounds. But in the hope of alternatives, many hung in there living on earlier savings. We learnt that BP sent prepared statements in response to the AP's inquiries. *"BP said it is engaging with the fishing communities in Senegal and Mauritania and trying to benefit the wider economy by locally sourcing products, developing the workforce and supporting sustainable development. More than 3,000 jobs in some 350 local companies*

*have been generated in Senegal and Mauritania, according to the company. BP also cited its work to renovate the maternity unit at the Saint-Louis hospital and its help of 1,000 patients with a mobile clinic operating in remote areas.*

*But local officials, advocates and residents say they haven't seen many jobs or other options to combat the economic loss... Despite money coming in from prostitution, the women who spoke to the AP said they and others struggle to feed and shelter their families. Some have pulled children out of private school because they can't pay tuition." They are being told all the time to be patient, but that does not bring bread to the table.*

It is clear that the massive investment in fossil fuels is not only devastating lives in coastal communities in Senegal and Mauritania, but also a huge step backwards to stem climate change that is hitting the communities and many more across the continent particularly hard. Economic studies suggest that it would be much better for the countries to invest in renewable energy sources, stop industrial overfishing and overharvesting terrestrial resources to build climate resilient economies for their young populations.

*Mundus maris president, Cornelia E Nauen said in a recent interview "we have had long-term collaborative relations with families and fisher organisations in the fishing community in Guet Ndar and elsewhere in Senegal who are now suffering untold hardship. We support local calls for not expanding beyond the current phase of fossil exploitation and invest in a socially responsible way into youth education, creating future proof jobs, e.g. by implementing the voluntary guidelines for sustainable artisanal fisheries. We stand by the men, women and youths demanding public action supporting anti-poverty measures that last, not short-term hand-outs."*

Mundus maris supports the international call for moving finance out of fossil fuels. The global database GOGEL.ORG is a Company-level database with detailed information on companies operating in the upstream and/or midstream subsectors of the oil & gas industry that lists 991 companies responsible for 95% of oil and gas production wrecking the global climate and lives of millions. We join the common plea for moving finance into renewables and socially and environmentally responsible jobs.

For immediate release.

For more information:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/senegal-gas-deal-drives-locals-to-desperation-prostitution/7050938.html>

<https://www.gogel.org>

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