

Terms of Reference.

27 March 2026

The logo for The Hunger Project, featuring the text "The Hunger Project." in white serif font on a dark blue square background.

Assignment: Study on economic opportunities, drivers and aspirations of women and young people in self-reliant epicentres in Senegal

Type of Contract: Consultancy

About The Hunger Project

The Hunger Project (THP) is a global organisation founded 40 years ago in the United States by John Denver and a group of friends, with the mission of ending hunger and poverty. One of its core principles is decentralisation: taking action at the level where it can be most effectively managed. Today, the directors of the 13 countries where THP operates collaboratively determine strategies, annual plans, and budget allocations. In total, >425 staff members work across 21 offices worldwide. Our programmes are based on an innovative, holistic approach, which empowers communities living in rural and remote areas to become agents of their own development. By addressing the underlying and interlinked root causes of hunger and poverty, we support communities to progress towards healthy, self-reliant lives.

The Context

In Senegal, The Hunger Project has to date facilitated ten epicentres to self-reliance through its community-led development model. Many of the 10-15,000 community members that inhabit the zone of an epicentre, or rather community hub, have commenced new - or strengthened existing income generating activities to improve their income security. However, women and young people face specific constraints - e.g. insufficient access to credit, assets, and markets; access to decision-making; limited training opportunities; gender- and age-related biases; and, limited existing networks – that continue to exist in various degrees in self-reliant epicentres. Furthermore, there are specific drivers and aspirations that stimulate or prevent youth from engaging in economic opportunities within their homestead. More scientific data is required on this to ensure that the proposed new economic interventions align with these drivers and aspirations.

Purpose of the Study

Our community-led development approach is called the epicentre model, which we have been implementing across Sub-Saharan Africa for over four decades. An epicentre is a dynamic centre of community mobilisation and action, as well as sometimes an actual facility built by community members. Through the Epicentre Strategy, typically 5,000-15,000 people are brought together as a cluster of rural villages, giving villages more clout with local government, than a single village is likely to have, while also increasing a community's ability to collectively utilise resources. The epicentre serves as a focal point where the motivation, energies and leadership of the people converge with the resources of local government and non-governmental organisations. It puts women first, and brings together community members with different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds to work together to build a path to sustainable self-reliance by shifting the power to small-scale producers and promoting community-led development and social cohesion.

THP supports communities for a 5-8 year period, during which we work on nine core thematic areas that align with government interventions and the Sustainable Development Goals: 1) leadership & governance, 2) gender equality, 3) water & sanitation, 4) (adult) literacy & education, 5) nutrition & food security, 6) health, 7) income generation, 8) productive agriculture and 9) climate resilience. Furthermore, in collaboration with community members and local authorities we assist in the construction of various infrastructure to improve the fulfilment of basic human needs. Infrastructure ranges from a food bank, irrigation systems to a health clinic. For women and youth in particular access to basic services is vital. When access exists, they develop the capacity and confidence to participate in decision-making processes. This in turn is a stepping stone toward achieving equity and social justice.

By 2026, the epicentre strategy has been developed, pioneered and tested by African experts in remote rural areas, reaching over 2173 communities (2 million people) across 9 different African countries. Ninety Epicentres (1462 communities) have already reached sustainable self-reliance (after receiving about eight years of support from THP), reaching 1.4 million people; the others are well on their way to achieve that target.

Despite that we see that poverty is being reduced to less than 1%, income generation being diversified and, many women starting their own businesses, we are conscious of the fact that economic opportunities for youth remain limited in epicentres. Something that we wish to remedy on the basis of action-focussed research.

The **overarching objective** of the study is therefore to provide an action-oriented perspective by identifying, analysing and prioritising the most realistic and high-impact economic opportunities for women and young people (aged 15–35) in self-reliant epicentres. In addition, the study should explicitly assess the key economic opportunities and constraints within each epicentre in order to determine how the community, or specific groups within it, can be linked to existing markets and value chains in ways that enable sustainable and inclusive income generation. The findings should guide concrete, feasible and measurable actions in the short and medium term.

Specific research objectives

1) **Women's Economic Participation Analysis**

Conduct a comprehensive gender analysis in each epicentre to understand women's current economic participation, including formal and informal livelihood activities, income levels and revenue ranges, and the key barriers and enabling factors influencing their engagement (e.g. access to assets, finance, markets, mobility, time use, social norms, and decision-making power).

2) **Youth Aspirations, Drivers and Migration Dynamics**

Conduct an in-depth analysis of young people in each epicentre, exploring aspirations, interests, and motivations related to income generation. The analysis should capture both economic and non-economic drivers influencing decisions to stay, engage locally, or migrate.

3) **Youth Economic Opportunities and Constraints**

Map viable income opportunities for young people within local economies and existing value chains, and identify the structural, social, and economic barriers that limit their participation, progression, or effective linkage to existing markets.

4) **Assessment of Local Structures and Ecosystems**

Analyse how existing epicentre structures — including organisations, groups, networks, governance systems, and service providers — can support or strengthen economic activities for women and youth, considering inclusivity, capacity, and power dynamics.

5) **Integrated Pathways and Prioritised Recommendations**

Based on the analyses above, identify realistic pathways to increase income, economic independence, and participation for women and youth, including pathways that link the community, or specific target groups within it, to existing markets and value chains. Develop concrete and prioritised recommendations for each epicentre, combining scalable quick wins and medium-term opportunities. Recommendations should consider market demand, risks of saturation, economic and social feasibility, required preconditions, assumptions, and potential risks.

6) **Identification of Implementation Partners**

Examine which local organisations — including youth-led initiatives where relevant — and other actors within the ecosystem are best positioned to support implementation of the proposed recommendations.

Research hypotheses:

- Strengthening (collective) economic activities is a potential way to increase women's income, economic autonomy and bargaining power within epicentres.
- Young people (aged 15–35) who have easier access to markets, capital and assets are more likely to generate stable incomes, thereby combating migration.
- Existing epicentre structures and networks facilitate the rapid adoption of new economic opportunities for women and young people if the prerequisites (capital, practical training, market access) are in place.
- Bottlenecks identified in value chains limit the economic potential of women and young people, but can be removed in short-term with targeted interventions.

Scope of Work

We foresee a nine-twelve week contract in which the consultant will undertake research in six of the nine self-reliant epicentres. This will correspond to two epicentres per economic zone (West, Centre, Periphery) in Senegal.

Geographical Scope

- Coki epicentre (Louga region)
- Dodel epicentre (Saint-Louis region, Podor)
- Dinguiraye epicentre (Diourbel region, Bambey)
- Ndereppe epicentre (Diourbel region, Bambey)
- Namarel epicentre (Saint-Louis region, Podor)
- Diokoul epicentre (Louga region, Kébémér)

Proposed Research Questions (this list may be expanded upon by the consultant)

A. Women – Economic Participation, Constraints and Opportunities

Current activities, income and agency

- What livelihood activities do women currently engage in (formal/informal), and how significant are these in terms of income generation, seasonality, and control over earnings?
- To what extent do women influence economic decisions (investment, pricing, spending), and how does participation affect their autonomy and bargaining power within households or groups?
- What is the level of proficiency with digital tools and platforms (social media, mobile payments, e-commerce, online management) of women, and to what extent does this proficiency influence their income, visibility and access to economic opportunities?

Barriers and enabling factors

- What are the main constraints limiting women's economic participation or growth (access to capital, land/inputs, markets, mobility, time burden, childcare, safety, social norms, information, networks)?
- Which of these barriers are structural versus context-specific to particular epicentres?
- What are the specific barriers to the use or adoption of digital tools (connectivity, cost, technical skills, mistrust, socio-cultural constraints)?

Market and value chain dynamics

- Which existing activities show realistic growth potential without oversaturating local markets (production, processing, trading, services)?
- Where are the main bottlenecks in the value chain (pricing power, storage, quality standards, transport, aggregation, buyer relationships)?
- What examples of successful digital initiatives demonstrate a positive impact on women's entrepreneurship in the same context?

Feasibility and pathways (feeding into recommendations)

- Which scalable or “easy win” pathways could increase women's income and autonomy within 6–24 months?

- What preconditions would be required (collective action, finance access, childcare solutions, logistics, digital or financial inclusion)?
- What strategies would help to ensure the long-term integration of digital technology into local entrepreneurial practices (continuous training, mentoring, public-private partnerships, creation of community digital hubs)?

B. Young People – Aspirations, Drivers and Viable Economic Pathways

Aspirations and motivations

- What do young people consider a desirable livelihood or “good future,” and how do status, independence, lifestyle, and social expectations shape their choices?
- What economic and non-economic drivers influence decisions to stay, commute, or migrate (income expectations, boredom, services, connectivity, peer pressure, climate risk, safety, family obligations)?

Current engagement and entry points

- What income-generating activities are young people currently involved in, and how do they typically enter these roles (family networks, informal apprenticeships, group initiatives, seasonal work)?
- Which opportunities feel meaningful or attractive to them — and why?
- Opportunity mapping within local economies
- Which sectors or value chains offer realistic entry roles for youth (trade/services, agricultural value chains, logistics, repair, aggregation, digital micro-activities, seasonal or hybrid livelihoods)?
- What practical pathways exist for youth to start or scale activities without relying on formal vocational training?
- What is the level of proficiency with digital tools and platforms (social media, mobile payments, e-commerce, online management) youth, and to what extent does this proficiency influence their income, visibility and access to economic opportunities?
- What examples of successful digital initiatives demonstrate a positive impact on youth’s entrepreneurship in the same context?

Constraints and risks

- What barriers prevent youth from engaging (capital, tools/assets, land, workspace, networks, mobility, norms, regulations, risk aversion)?
- What risks are associated with youth-focused investments (debt exposure, elite capture, exclusion of young women, social conflict, unrealistic expectations)?
- What are the specific barriers to the use or adoption of digital tools (connectivity, cost, technical skills, mistrust, socio-cultural constraints)?

Potential support mechanisms (to be prioritised later)

- Which enabling mechanisms appear most promising in this context (market access, working capital models, shared assets, cooperative approaches, basic entrepreneurial practices, peer networks)?
- What strategies would help to ensure the long-term integration of digital technology into local entrepreneurial practices (continuous training, mentoring, public-private partnerships, creation of community digital hubs)?

C. Epicentres as Economic Ecosystems and Enablers

Structures and readiness

- How do existing epicentre structures (groups, governance, savings structures, networks) currently support or limit economic participation by women and youth?
- Which epicentres appear “economically ready” for scaling interventions, and which require strengthening of foundational conditions (organisation, trust, market linkages, financial systems)?

Power dynamics and inclusion

- Who controls local structures and decision-making spaces? Who is excluded (young women, poorer households, migrants, minority groups)?
- How do local norms or leadership dynamics influence participation in economic initiatives?

Local ecosystem actors

- Who are the key actors shaping local economic opportunities (traders, producer groups, transporters, municipalities, microfinance actors, diaspora networks)?
- What partnerships or alliances could realistically strengthen implementation?

Entry points and comparative trends

- What are the most logical entry points for economic interventions per epicentre or region?
- Which local organisations or private entities operate in and/or near epicentres, that are able to effectively link women and youth to local markets? What is their current track record in successfully linking small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs to (local) markets?
- Which parts of the community, or which specific target groups, are best positioned to be linked to existing markets and value chains, and under what conditions could such linkages lead to sustainable income generation?
- Which trends emerge across epicentres regarding barriers, opportunities, and readiness levels?

Methodology (indicative, practice-oriented)

The evaluation will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Bidders are expected to propose a detailed methodology in their technical proposals. However, the approach should align with the following guidance and principles:

- Conduct a targeted desk review of project documents, evaluation reports, government statistics, demographic data, and other relevant documents.
- Quantitative methodologies, such as household surveys or individual surveys, enterprise snapshots, value chain scoring, and comparative data analysis.
- Qualitative methodologies, including the designing and conducting of key informant interviews or focus groups discussions with THP Senegal and CSOs, key stakeholders, such as local authorities, women and youth.

The study is expected to cover the six identified epicentres, and will consist of six epicentre-specific analyses, as well as one overarching trend analysis covering all the nine areas in which THP Senegal operates.

Guiding principles

- ✓ Action- and feasibility-oriented
- ✓ Participatory and inclusive, specific youth-appropriate methodologies are expected
- ✓ Focus on short- and medium-term impact

Key Deliverables

Deliverable	Content	Delivery Date
Inception report	Due approximately 2 weeks after contract signing. This report will outline the researcher's refined methodology and work plan, including the budget. It should include: the evaluation design and rationale, data collection tools (draft interview guides, survey questionnaires, etc.), a detailed evaluation matrix linking questions to data sources, sampling plan focussed on core stakeholders (this should include specific methods for groups youth) and prioritised epicentres, and a timeline for fieldwork. The inception report will also address any limitations or needed adjustments to the plan. The evaluator will commence data collection only upon approval of the inception report.	April 2026

Ethical approval certificates	Approval letter from relevant Ethical Committee should be obtained by the researcher, if required and thus budgeted for appropriately.	April/May 2026
Field Research	Start field research.	May 2026
Validation workshop	Research validation meeting, due immediately after conclusion of field work. The evaluator will present initial findings, emerging trends, and any early recommendations to key stakeholders in a debrief meeting or workshop. The purpose is to validate findings, fill any gaps, and ensure factual accuracy. Feedback from this session should be incorporated into the reporting phase. Deliverable: slide deck or summary of preliminary findings (PowerPoint presentation) to be shared in advance of the debrief.	End May/Early June 2026
Draft evaluation report	Draft report for review and approval. The report should address all evaluation questions and criteria with evidence, and include practical recommendations. THP will review the draft and provide feedback, focusing on factual corrections, clarification needs, and alignment with expectations.	Mid June 2026
Final Evaluation Report	One consolidated evaluation report with clear summary per country as well as overall findings, including implications and recommendations from the evaluation	End June 2026
PowerPoint presentation	Summarise findings from the evaluation report	End June 2026

Skills and qualifications

- Hold a at minimum an university degree, preferably in economics, rural development, social sciences or a related field;
- Have at least 5 to 7 years' professional experience in conducting studies or evaluations, ideally in relation to local economic development;
- Have proven experience in conducting research with young people, with a good understanding of their dynamics, aspirations and constraints;
- Proven experience in evaluating income generating/ livelihood programmes;
- Demonstrate experience in conducting market analyses and/or value chains;
- Proven experience in conducting research in remote rural settings is a major asset;
- Strong quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis and research skills including statistical methods/skills using SPSS or STATA;
- Proven track record or commitment to inclusive practices, ensuring meaningful participation of women and young people throughout the evaluation process;
- Possess excellent writing and communication skills;
- Strong facilitation and coordination skills;
- Demonstrable ability to work independently;
- Demonstrate excellent interpersonal and team-working skills, strong sense of initiative, and reliability;
- You have the ability to speak and write fluently in English and French.
- You must be committed to and uphold [THP's principles](#).

The presence of young researchers (under 35) within the team is strongly encouraged to facilitate interaction with young beneficiaries.

Remuneration

The budget is EUR 13,700. The consultant is responsible for paying for all aspects of the assignment from this budget, including but not limited to staff time, travel, recruitment and payment of data collectors, translation and transcription. This contract payment scheme will be as follows:

- 30% on signature of the contract
- 30% on acceptance of the inception report
- 40% on acceptance of the final report

The consultant must submit a complete technical and financial proposal. The financial proposal must present a detailed overall budget including a precise breakdown of the various expenditure items as well as the applicable taxes and tax obligations.

Selection Process

Interested companies/firms/consultants must submit the following documents/information to demonstrate their qualifications:

- **Technical proposal:** A detailed response to this ToR, including the proposed methodology and approach for conducting the evaluation; a workplan, timeline and budget. All applicants are required to describe in their proposal how they will uphold ethical standards and child protection throughout the data collection process. Specifically, the consultant(s) should outline how they will guarantee safe, appropriate, and inclusive participation for all stakeholders, with particular focus on the needs of young people. Additionally, the proposal should detail the measures that will be taken to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity.
- **Financial Proposal:** Should detail the level of effort for all consultants and data collectors, specifying daily rates, travel expenses for all team members, and costs associated with validation workshops. The proposal must clearly explain how the total budget has been calculated and account in-country expenses.
- **Evidence of similar work done in the past:** Should provide a concise overview of the consultant or agency, highlighting recent experience most relevant to the assignment. CVs of the key project personnel. Please provide two recent reports produced by the lead consultant and two reference letters from comparable assignments.
- **All necessary legal / registration documents**

The contract will be awarded to the tender offering best value for money, as well as best understanding of the ToR, specific experience of the consultant(s), timeline and work plan, along with and reputation and credibility.

Please send your application to both Alassane Pouye (Country Manager - The Hunger Project Senegal) Senegal@thp.org and Mieke Bakx (Impact Broker – The Hunger Project Netherlands) mieke@thehungerproject.nl **before the 24th of April.**

A shortlist of applicants will be contacted by email and undergo an interview in the first round.

Commercial inquiries or job postings are not appreciated or accepted regarding this vacancy.