



Wassor 

Impact Report

2021-22

Message from the CEO



Bineta Gueye Thiam

Over the past year, WASSOR has made tremendous progress in promoting mental health and empowerment across Senegal. In line with our commitment to equity, inclusivity, and holistic well-being, we have strengthened our foundation by establishing legal status and formalising our operations in Senegal.

These steps enable us to better serve the vulnerable populations we support, particularly as we prepare to launch our audience-led awareness campaigns and training programmes to address mental health issues nationwide.



Our journey continues, and with your support, we will ensure that mental health becomes a universal right, stigma is eradicated, and individuals everywhere can access the care they deserve.

Our Core Principles

- Empowerment: We believe in a holistic approach to well-being. Our programmes offer mental health support, economic empowerment, and education, enabling individuals to build better lives.
- Community-Centred: We work closely with local communities, ensuring that our mental health initiatives are inclusive and equitable, with particular focus on underserved populations.
- Advocacy: We raise awareness about mental health to reduce stigma, ensuring mental health is recognised as a fundamental human right.

Our Impact at a Glance

- **Mental Health Advocacy:** We developed strategic messaging for our upcoming awareness campaigns. These messages reach thousands, promoting the idea that mental health is health and reducing the stigma talking about it and around seeking care.
- **Vocational Training & Support:** As we work towards opening our first support centre, we aim to provide comprehensive and holistic support for well-being. We sought training for the volunteers and a group support was proposed to them.
- **Community Outreach:** We collaborated with our audience, gaining insights into their realities, which have shaped our mental health strategies and the production of support resources. We will expand our community engagement, alongside our existing relay programmes that engage university students and rural communities.



WASSOR's 2021-22 Highlights

- **Mental Health Support:** We conducted a short national survey and organised discussions with mental health professionals, fostering open conversations to reduce stigma and promote inclusive care.
- **Empowerment:** We began by reviewing literature on the mental health situation in Senegal, then shared a questionnaire with our audience to guide the implementation of targeted, collaborative awareness campaigns. These will help us meaningfully reach a wider audience, reduce mental health stigma, and promote mental health as integral to overall health. Our initiatives have helped volunteers develop skills, demonstrating that well-being is holistic.
- **Community Engagement:** Our campaigns reached over 500,000 people, raising awareness about mental health, psychology and psychiatry. The upcoming awareness programmes will expand this reach, especially into underserved and rural communities. We made 20 referrals during this period.

Future Goals



Secure Legal Status and Strengthen Operations: We have secured our legal status in Senegal, formalising our operations and enhancing our ability to provide equitable mental health care across the country.



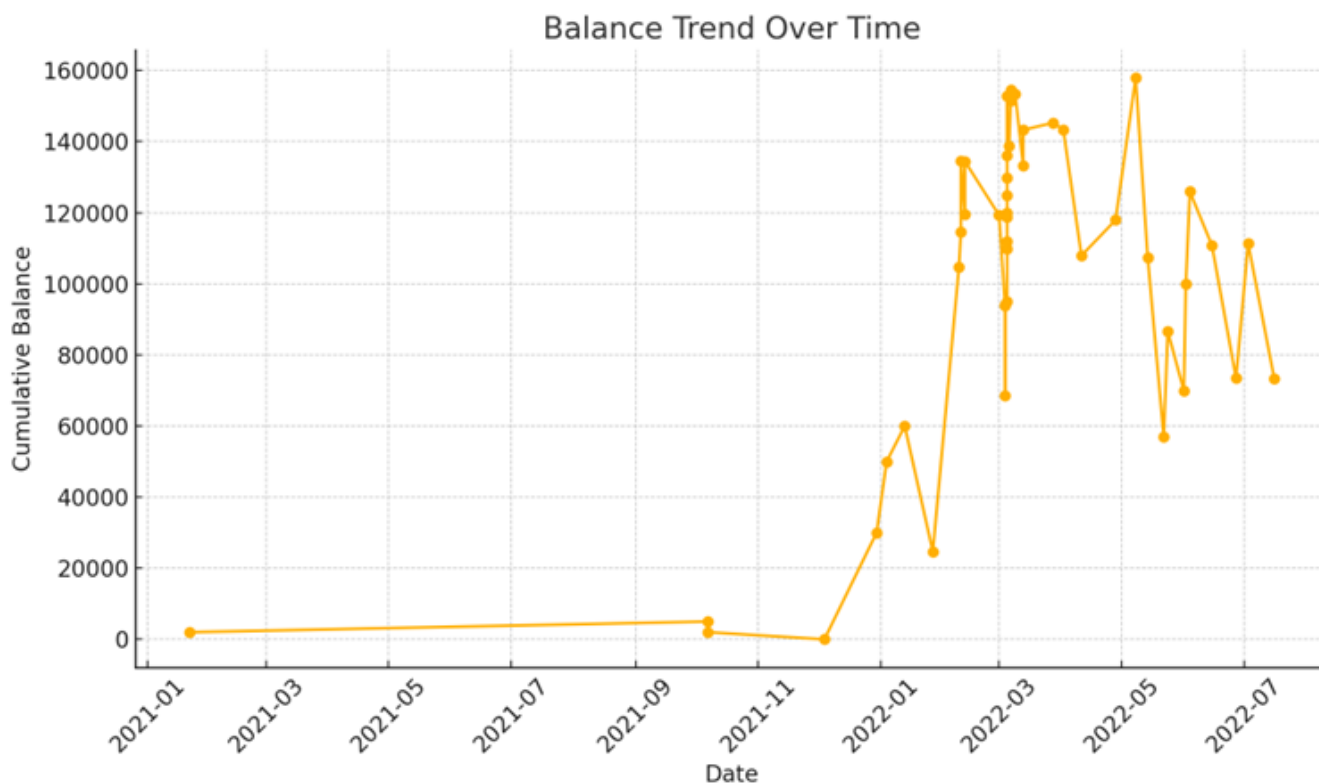
Launch Awareness Campaigns and Training Programmes: We will run more awareness campaigns, and broaden our scope into various areas of psychology, such as: forensics, clinical and developmental.



Establish the First Support Centre: The WASSOR support centre, currently under development, is a community hub. It will provide a comprehensive space for mental health, legal, and financial support. This hub will serve vulnerable women and other marginalised groups, offering holistic care and assistance.

Finances:

Most of our income was generated through a charity sale and membership fees.



Special thank you to **Fatima Bocoum**, who generously allowed us to use her premises for our sales.

Results and Feedback from the questionnaires:

01

Knowledge of Mental Health, the survey.

After thanking the respondents of our “let’s talk about Mental Health” survey. WASSOR shared the results and invited them to fill a form for further discussions around Mental Health (MH) via their chosen medium. WASSOR used The World Health Organisation ’ definition of MH, which is:



A state of well-being in which a person is able to evolve, to overcome normal stresses of everyday life, to perform productive work and to take part in community life. As such, Mental Health is the cornerstone of one’s well-being but also the one of effective functioning of a community.” WHO (2021)

WASSOR explained the distinct difference between poor MH and Mental Disorder (MD), the former is a broad concept that includes temporary distress. Whereas the latter speaks of medical conditions which requires the care of a psychiatrist, a qualified psychologist, or a trainee psychologist under supervision. Poor MH is different to MD; MD are illnesses that affect that way people think, feel, behave. They also impact on how we cope, interact, form relationships with others, and may have profound effects on our daily functioning. There are many types of MD and they each have with different signs and symptoms. despite the need for urgent interventions given Psychological Distress is the world’s leading disability² . What WASSOR is offering at this point are meaningful conversations about MH with professionals and those with lived experiences, discuss its aetiologies, its manifestations within the LOCAL context, give evidence-based information, giving advice for self-care and signpost where necessary. Thus, WASSOR exists at the nexus of feeling unwell, temporary disturbances and acute psychiatric intervention³ .

¹ Organisation mondiale de la Santé. Pour un système de santé plus performant: rapport sur la santé dans le monde 2000

² Wainberg, M. L., Scorza, P., Shultz, J. M., Helpman, L., Mootz, J. J., Johnson, K. A., Neria, Y., Bradford, J. E., Oquendo, M. A., & Arbuckle, M. R. (2017). Challenges and Opportunities in Global Mental Health: a Research-to-Practice Perspective. Current psychiatry reports, 19(5), 28.

³ Most of Senegal’s centres for treatment rely on asylum models.

Figure 1. nationality

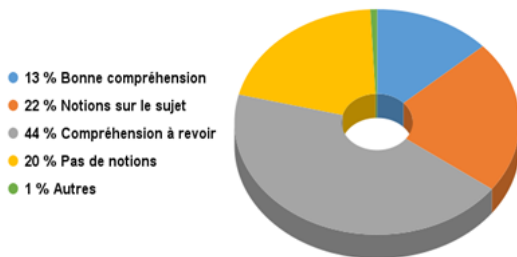


Figure 2. Residence.

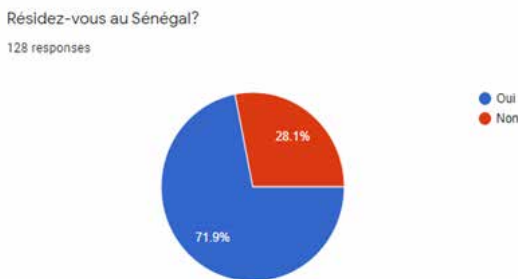


Figure 3. The level of understanding MH.



The results also show that most of the respondents do not understand MH, with only 13% of our respondents able to name the Biopsychosocial nature of MH. 22% have linked MH to one aspect, that is recognising either the psychological, the social, or the biological factors and only 2 mentions of spirituality. Almost half of the participants (44%) had very little knowledge and many seem to conflate MH with Depressions. 20% of the respondents simply said that they did not know and about 1% were off topic.

A. Demographics.

WASSOR had a small sample size, we collected 132 responses of which only 128 were used. Nationality = 92.2% Senegalese; 71% of whom resident in Senegal and the 21.2% live outside of Senegal (Figure 1 & 2).

Figure 4. asks, have you had any formal Mental Health training?

When we asked the respondents if they had formal Mental health training, 83% said no, 14.8% replied yes and 3.9% said other, see figure 4. The vast majority of the respondents (94.5%) said they would welcome conversations with experts.

"J'ai répondu en tant qu'étudiant en 5ème année de médecine et amoureux de la psychiatrie, et je trouve que ce que vous voulez mettre en place bénéficierait énormément à la communauté, surtout pour lever le stigma de la maladie mentale."

"Merci pour cette initiative."

"la santé mentale est encore très négligée ici et beaucoup en pâtissent malheureusement. quelque soit ce que vous planifiez dans ce domaine, j'espère que ça aboutira."

"La santé mental ne doit plus être un tabou. Merci!"

"Hâte que vous commencez."



Feedback from the professionals we have worked with:

*"Merci Bineta de m'avoir associé à ce qui semble être pour moi une revolution
En tout cas le besoin est là. Il faut arreter les ravages"*

- Mr Assana Seck ex-police commandant, Senegal.

*"I encourage you in what you do because it is needed by the country, I am happy to help
where I can"*

- Dr Abou Sy, Lecturer, Forensic Psychiatrist at UCAD and Ministry of Health, Senegal.

*"What you are offering is the bridge needed between the community and the hospitals. I am
happy to be involved"*

- Dr Samba - Psychiatrist at Fann, Dakar.

*"What you are offering is not only fantastic for your country but it help us support better our
diverse clients and students"*

- Victoria - Transactional Analysis Link Centre, UK.

Audience Stories: Demonstrating the Importance of WASSOR's Work

As part of this year's report, we are honoured to share personal stories from individuals who have benefited from WASSOR's programmes. These experiences illustrate the impact of our work in raising awareness around mental health, challenging societal stigmas, and enhancing understanding of conditions such as autism. Below are some selected stories that emphasise the importance of our mission. Consent was given.



Story 1:

Destigmatising Mental Health in Religious Contexts

One individual, a student experiencing depression, shared their frustration with the common belief that depression is linked to a lack of faith. They highlighted how often people suggest prayer as the sole solution, while emphasising that, though prayer can be supportive, it is essential to also seek professional mental health care. Like any illness, they pointed out, depression requires a balanced approach that includes both spiritual support and medical treatment.

Key Takeaway:

This story reinforces the importance of addressing misconceptions surrounding mental health and faith. It demonstrates the need for a holistic approach that integrates both spiritual and professional care, and how WASSOR's efforts in facilitating such discussions help reduce harmful stigmas.

Story 2:

The Challenge of Accessing Culturally Sensitive Therapy

Another individual spoke about their struggles with perfectionism, which had become severe enough to resemble obsessive-compulsive tendencies. They explained that their religious practices were especially affected, as they felt an overwhelming need to perform every action perfectly, disrupting their daily life. Although they sought therapy, finding a mental health professional who could understand both their psychological needs and religious background was difficult. They felt reassured after hearing WASSOR's discussions but explained that the high cost of therapy, combined with their financial commitments as an entrepreneur, made access to care a challenge.

Key Takeaway:

This story highlights the difficulties in accessing culturally sensitive and affordable mental health care. It underscores the need for services that address both the mental health and cultural or religious contexts of individuals, aligning with WASSOR's goal to make mental health care more inclusive and accessible.

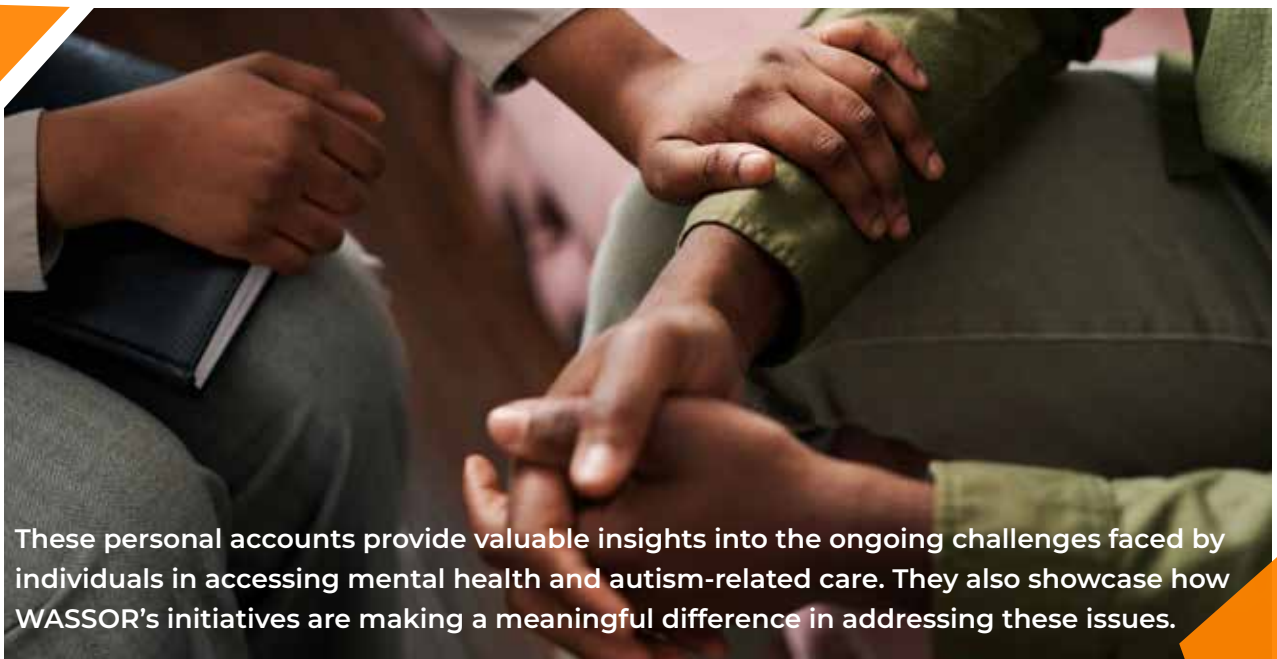
Story 3:

Raising Awareness About Autism in Underserved Communities

One person recounted their experience in Senegal, where they first encountered autism. They described witnessing a child with autism struggling during a medical procedure, requiring the use of a sedative to calm them down. This situation made them realise how little awareness exists around autism, especially in underserved communities, where parents may not recognise the early signs of the condition. Another individual shared a similar experience, where their sibling was initially thought to be misbehaving, only to later be diagnosed with autism. They stressed the importance of early awareness and diagnosis.

Key Takeaway:

These stories highlight the significant lack of awareness about autism in many communities, particularly those underserved by medical resources. They demonstrate the importance of early recognition and education, which aligns with WASSOR's mission to increase autism awareness and provide support to affected families.



These personal accounts provide valuable insights into the ongoing challenges faced by individuals in accessing mental health and autism-related care. They also showcase how WASSOR's initiatives are making a meaningful difference in addressing these issues.



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