



## Workshop on Global Development and Religion in Senegal

Research programs on development and religion in Senegal were the topic of a workshop convened on January 13-14, 2015 by the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University. This research is supported by the Henry R. Luce Foundation. The workshop explored objectives, scope, and especially sector and issue focus. The consultation brought together 12 leading scholars and development practitioners with experience or interest in issues at the intersection of religion and international development in Senegal (see Annex). Abdoul Aziz Kebe was unfortunately unable to participate at the last minute because of illness and Mohammed Elsanousi participated only briefly because of an urgent operational event in Africa. All participants contributed actively to the discussions (there were no advance papers or formal presentations) and several have followed up with specific counsel on areas of focus and relevant research materials.

Engaging diverse perspectives and expertise, the workshop involved explored issues facing contemporary Senegal and situated planned research within the context of those challenges and specifically their various religious links. It focused on the important but often concealed religious dimensions of central development topics, looking to useful operational insights.

The core project scope and objectives that the Berkley Center and WFDD are pursuing were affirmed. Senegal's diverse contemporary religious landscape and the direct, and often changing, role of religious institutions in many development sectors are not well studied and are rarely integrated in policy discussions. A first and central challenge is thus to situate the roles of religious communities and leaders in Senegal's dynamic development landscape. This is complicated by the poor cooperation typical among most secular institutions and religious communities and the often decentralized character of religious institutions.

Continuing exchange is planned and the workshop participants will constitute an informal advisory group that can offer feedback and direction to the Berkley Center and WFDD as they continue work on Senegal. This note summarizes the discussions briefly, organized by central themes that arose in the course of the workshop discussion.

### OVERVIEW OF DISCUSSION

#### *Understanding religious institutions and communities*

A first task is to produce a country "mapping" that provides an up-to-date and reasonably comprehensive overview of religious institutions, leaders, and other actors, that also illuminates their roles in development (accepting that the term is broad and differently understood in different quarters). There was general agreement that, while there is quite substantial research about Senegal's contemporary religious institutions and trends, this knowledge tends to focus on

certain aspects (for example, developments within specific Sufi orders<sup>1</sup>) and is rather fragmented in different intellectual silos. Further, Senegal's religious institutions, beliefs, and practices are changing in important ways. That includes understandings of leadership and roles of traditional and new media. When engaging religious communities, researchers and practitioners tend to think first about the four Sufi orders. However, we were urged to think beyond this traditional context and structure. The power and influence of the orders is changing, responding to pressures from within and without. Other religious movements are growing in size and importance, most prominently among them the Senegalese Sunni reformists.

Two distinct but related issues were highlighted in respect to the Sufi orders: governance, and attitudes towards public integrity. The orders themselves are often seen as assuring social cohesion and stability, down to enforcing law and order. However, with a diffusion or weakening of authority within various orders accentuated by urbanization, the structure has the potential to disrupt, especially around the fringes. With each successive generation of leaders in the different orders, families grow larger. Power is no longer as concentrated as it once was. Some see the orders losing their traditional charisma and political and social influence. Among issues that deserve exploration is the limited explicit focus within the structures of the orders on the much discussed issues of public accountability and corruption.

Education came up in many contexts. An important topic is current approaches to education of the "next generations" of brotherhood leaders. Many youth in the Sufi orders – as well as others from religiously engaged families – go abroad for their studies, particularly to Arab countries. When they return to Senegal, they may demand reforms within their respective orders. It is common today for Senegalese to insist that "*je suis musulman tout court*" rather than associating with an order. Salafi movements have not historically had a strong influence in Senegal; however, with travel and internet access, young people especially can connect readily and actively to these currents of thoughts. Significant groups are susceptible to such messages given the ever-growing use of social media. To be clear, the tendency expressed in the discussion was about theological and social attitudes and practice, with a sense that more extremist ideas have very limited appeal in the Senegalese context.

Sunnite (a Senegalese designation for reformist, more Puritan tendencies) movements have become increasingly popular among young people, with the focal points largely in the universities. They specifically target youth in their outreach; they have created summer school and camps, supported microenterprise and community development (particularly through employment in hair braiding and the clothing industry), offered private education, and mobilized around fan clubs for preachers.

There was some discussion of the roles of Christian organizations and leaders within the predominantly Muslim culture in Senegal, with the sense that these actors are important both in some policy areas, notably the education sector, and in social change. Although Catholics constitute the majority of Senegalese Christians, Protestants are also active. The Protestant presence is small and primarily region-specific, but it is nonetheless influential. In the

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<sup>1</sup> The Sufi *confreries* were variously referred to as orders and brotherhoods. The latter term has taken on some sensitivity when conflated with the Egypt centered Muslim Brotherhood, since the Sufi and Senegalese institutions are quite different in virtually every respect.

Casamance, some Protestants have sought to convert Catholics to Evangelicals. Most of these charismatic Christians are immigrants from other parts of West Africa but there is a substantial presence of foreign Protestant missionaries. Some groups are absent, for example, it was stated, Mormons.

### *Public health, mental health*

Improving public health and the health care system is a high priority for the Senegalese government and its development partners. Religious groups are involved to a degree, for example with support to clinics and pharmacies. However, some participants emphasized that there is a striking and remarkable lack in Senegal of an understanding of public health, and this gap extends to religious communities.

A specific concern is that mental health is often overlooked and understudied in contemporary research. Women, especially, suffer from a range mental health disorders that result from crises in their personal lives and families yet have few openings even to discuss them. Psychologists tend to be secular and carry assumptions about conservative Muslim women. As such, female preachers have a special role as those who can help; however, they often preach patience as a solution rather than anything that extends beyond.

There was active discussion about privacy as an example of the impact of cultural factors that may have religious dimensions. Privacy is a key concern in treatment in countries such as the US, to the level of principle. In Senegal, however, a family member's health tends to be viewed as a family issue rather than an individual one. The entire family can accompany a woman to a rural clinic for treatment, and some hospitals require a family member to check in with a patient admitted for care.

### *Human rights issues: attitudes on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights*

LGBT rights are the subject of lively discussion in Senegal and, as in many countries, the religious engagement is crucial and politics enters actively on the scene. In Senegalese society, LGBT rights and status were never at the forefront; communities were well aware of the presence of LGBT individuals within their circles and accepted them. Senegalese society has in recent years become considerably less tolerant and accepting of homosexuality. A major tipping point was the US Supreme Court's decision on gay rights that transpired exactly during President Obama's visit to Senegal.

Traditional acceptance, it was asserted, has given way to both legal and political intolerance. Traditional approaches did not see sexual identities as exclusive. There is no word in Wolof for "gay male," and there is no concept of homosexuality in Senegalese society. Rather, society considers homosexuals as "men having sex with men" (MSM) or Senegalese will call gay men "goor-jigeen," or a man-woman. Actions are more important than a gay identity or attraction. This is juxtaposed with the societal obligation to have a family and children that men face. Previously, it mattered little with whom men were intimate so long as they still had children. The external environment has changed this approach. Policy implications were discussed: it is vital to view issues in context, to seek appropriate timing for discourse, to avoid blunt "conditionality",

and to encourage local advocacy for key human rights principles that indeed conform to Senegalese religious and cultural characteristics of tolerance.

### *Media*

Religious media is growing in importance in Senegal and is widespread and influential. Both religious and secular media outlets host shows featuring religious topics. Some hosts manipulate media, though, to use it as a source of revenue. Among these hosts, some claim to be religious leaders and take to the radio or television to preach their own interpretations of Islam. These hosts especially target youth through both traditional and new media.

New and social media are redefining the idea of “space” in Senegal, as well as the influence of local leaders. In the past, youth would tend to approach their respective religious leader, not family members, when they had a question about health. Now that health information is readily available on the internet, they are able to post their questions to social media platforms and receive answers and feedback from sources online. This trend has both positive and negative implications, especially depending on the ability of the youth to discern the difference between reliable and unreliable information that they encounter. Access to social media and information from around the world has raised concerns within some religious circles about the influence of Western culture on Senegalese youth.

### *Agriculture*

Agriculture is an especially important topic with strong religious facets, and it needs to be seen together with issues of land tenure, inequality, and family planning. Although the Sufi orders, the Mourides especially, were once heavily involved in agricultural production, their involvement has declined, with the long drought years of the 1970s seen as the turning point.

One issue centers around labor and traditional relationships between Sufi order leaders, or *marabouts*, and their followers, or *talibés*. Traditional systems involved use of followers to till the land and for harvest. There has long been debate as to whether and how far the relationships between *marabouts* and *talibés* were fair or equal – one perspective saw the relationship as close to master and serf, while another highlighted the mutual benefits involved. Many participants emphasized that, in the way the system was conceived and applied sometimes in practice, the *marabout* gave more than he received from his *talibés*. The benefits for the *talibé* included the skills and livelihood training the followers received as well as training in the Qur’an and in proper morals. By the age of 25, the *talibé* would receive land and have the necessary resources to enter into marriage. The agricultural production system depended on this relationship which was in turn supported by the French colonial system and independent Senegalese government, for example through large land concessions.

The differing and changing roles of cooperatives were discussed (with the understanding that quite different meanings are attached to the term). A government approach to agricultural and social development through a cooperative movement was an important approach in the post-independence years and was seen as countering the influence of the Sufi orders. It involved granting access to land by cooperatives, which were facilitated through micro-networks of Muslims and Christians who would buy land together and share the area. However, this system has mostly dissolved, and the initial ideologies associated with the cooperative movement have

largely disappeared. What are termed cooperatives today differ in organization and concept, though they also involve groups that approach production and marketing as a collective venture. What is distinct today is that such initiatives tend to be quite local and they fall outside the traditional power structures. Local initiatives can open new possibilities for groups to gain access to land. The Casamance still has some functioning cooperatives that have notable religious dimensions; for example, there are vegetable gardens, occasionally associated with fertility shrines, Christian women's cooperatives, Christian cooperative stores, and some cooperatives are facilitated through start-up funds from the Catholic Church to the Diola.

Rice cultivation (rice is a staple of Senegalese food) is especially important among the Diola in the Casamance where it is still dominated by traditional religious authorities. Lower Casamance rice production is organized by traditional religious authorities, who regulate collective labor teams and individual hiring, who regulate the construction of rice paddy protective fences, and who perform rain rituals and rituals to enhance the fertility of the land. These rituals persist in areas that would publically identify as Muslim or Christian.

Exploring knowledge about land tenure trends and their religious dimensions deserves focus and priority. The work of the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center should be explored.

### *Caste and inequality*

There was a noteworthy discussion about inequality in Senegal, the attitudes and approaches of religious leaders and intellectuals to the topic, and the lingering role of the historical practices around castes. Historically, castes were a central feature of Senegalese society, distinguishing classes and the division of labor. It was not, however, specifically associated with wealth and poverty, as was common in other hierarchical societies. The consensus was that castes in Senegal are not as operative as they once were, and today come into play primarily in the area of marriage and alliances. There is a paradoxical discourse in Senegalese society which asserts that all Muslims are equal, despite the use of caste distinctions for marriage determinations. Inequality is often masked, but it reveals itself when marriage is at issue.

An interesting example explored was the approach to caste of members and especially women in the Sunnite reformist movement. Here, the caste system is less significant because a conscious part of the movement is an embrace of the notion that Islam eliminates differences between people, while the caste system creates divisions. In some research surveys, Sunnite respondents tended to answer every question except those relating to caste. When asked about castes, they replied "*non-casté*." Many Sunnites in the research project declined even to discuss the caste system because of their ideological commitment to egalitarianism in Islam. However, even among the Sunnites, the caste system in practice still plays an important role—Sunnite women often consider castes when making decisions about marriage, and more than half of Sunnite women have married those outside of the movement, especially wealthy men who are not part of the movement.

Another distinctive example cited was from Casamance. The Casamançais pride themselves on having an egalitarian society. In the Casamance, blacksmiths were traditionally forbidden from marrying each other because it would unduly concentrate power. Diola society, however, has not been adopted the Wolof tradition of castes, especially given that most of the occupations

associated with caste do not exist in the community. The Layene order also prides itself on being egalitarian. Layenes have taken measures to combat discrimination based on caste; typically, they greet each other by the name “Laye” rather than by last name, which may identify caste.

### *Education*

Education, in several dimensions, was a recurring topic: the Qur’anic education system, approaches to religion in the public system, education and religion at the universities, and modernizing trends.

Senegalese parents have long faced a dilemma in deciding which types of education to seek for their children. Public schools in Senegal traditionally followed French-style models. Many parents, as well as education specialists, are dissatisfied with this option because they find it to be poorly adapted to the Senegalese reality. Animosities toward French systems and their ideologies linger, colored by the colonial past and some contemporary bilateral relationships.

Religious education appeals to significant numbers of West African parents. That appeal plus historical patterns of recruitment to French-style education explain the modern dual system. A continuing issue is that the state school system has not yet offered sufficient options for religious education. However, the state did respond to demands by developing the system of Franco-Arabic schools and creating plans to modernize traditional *daaras*. A host of issues continue to be subjects of debate, centered often on the quality of both state and religious and non-religious private schools as well as the focus of the curriculum.

The situation in the Casamance is somewhat different. Secondary education was often unavailable locally until recently. One concern was access to education; children had to leave their communities to attend secondary schools. With the massive expansion of free and public second education in the region, many more students have been able to stay in school through the *baccalauréat*. One result of this development is that private Catholic schools have declined in popularity.

The Senegalese government gives priority to plans to improve the educational system so that it better meets the needs of the population. One element is further integration of religious education into the public school curriculum. Plans also include modernizing the *daara* system by implementing some French-style elements and strengthening oversight. Many communities have taken it upon themselves to improve local schools based on their own needs and conception of modernization. Some villages rebuild and restructure their local schools with funds from migrants from abroad, primarily from the US and France. This international influence also goes beyond financial support. Senegalese who have studied abroad tend to exert influence on educational reform in their home country, including in the area of curriculum.

Important innovations in monitoring and evaluation methods are improving the quality and availability of data about education in Senegal. In particular, USAID has used technology to survey literacy rates, doing surveys via cell phones. The results are interesting and suggestive notwithstanding questions around methodology: school principals who were asked about test scores and general literacy responded readily, but on the ground verification suggested that the information may not be accurate. While the survey offered insights into how principals

understood their interests and reached a wide swath of the population, it highlighted some pitfalls in use of cell phone surveys, which tend to be susceptible to margins of error and sample bias.

### *Youth*

Population growth has resulted in a society that is unusually young: more than half of Senegalese are under the age of 20. Youth, therefore, is commonly highlighted as the most critical group for Senegal's future, with youth empowerment the key to development. Senegalese youth face serious issues around unemployment and the questionable quality of education. The broad narrative of a focus on youth is shared by religious communities, which focus considerable attention on young people. It is, however, difficult to discern specific approaches or innovations and this deserves clear focus. It was noted that the Sunnite reformist movement is particularly active in approaching and engaging young people.

Some examples of engagement were discussed. Where schools have the necessary resources, youth have developed clubs that focus on engaging their local communities. In one community, students undertook to survey the needs of their communities, and made the results public through social media. Some see students, especially at the universities, as empowered to engage in discussions around development, especially on family planning, and to question the decisions of government officials.

### *Women and gender*

As elsewhere in the world, women's roles are seeing remarkable changes in Senegal and this affects religious communities and practices in various ways. A central topic, in terms of policy, where religious voices are particularly influential is the family code. Although women's roles were a longstanding issue from pre-independence times, the debates have revived recently. The 2010 law on gender parity has focused debates on perceived and actual differing religious and secular views on gender roles. Discussions among clerics and scholars about the involvement of women in religion and their broader role in society have particular importance for this research at the intersections of development and religion.

An example of a woman leading from a religious perspective is Mariama Niass, who for some time has been the principal female figure involved in Qur'anic teaching. Women have become increasingly involved in Qur'anic teaching. In some Qur'anic schools, most of the teachers are women. The proliferation of religious educational structures has signaled pivotal changes in girls' education. For many families, religious education is a more appealing option for their daughters than the education offered in public schools. Women are also active in preaching Sufi and broader Islamic messages on television.

In the Casamance, in particular, women have long held important positions in agriculture. There, women are found in positions of power and make critical decisions for their families regarding seed choice and crops. This allows women a great deal of agency within Diola societies.

### *The Casamance*

The Casamance stands out from the rest of Senegal in various ways, and discussions highlighted both the fact that the Casamance is an integral and important part of Senegal, and that it is distinct in important respects. The region tends to be underappreciated in most international

development research and programs. Development issues ranging from education to caste systems take different forms in the region. It is also home to the production of Senegal's staple crop and the longest low-level conflict in West Africa. Top-down models focusing on religious leaders might apply in northern Senegal, but not in the lower Casamance. The region is often neglected in the broader research agendas on Senegal, but is crucial for Senegal's development.

## **RESEARCH PLAN**

The current Berkley Center and WFDD research budget for Senegal allows for a broad but somewhat constrained program. The separate grant to WFDD for maternal and child health from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation enriches the program. The plan is to deepen our research from secondary sources and continue studying areas of particular interest, especially where there are development policy links. Outputs will include a country report, targeted issues briefs, and teaching materials are the expected research products. One brief and several interviews are complete and appear on the website.

This document was reviewed by participants and reflects their observations. We invite further reflections and suggestions as we proceed.

## ANNEX 1: CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

### **Erin Joanna Augis, Ph.D.**

Erin Augis is associate professor and chair of Sociology at Ramapo College of New Jersey. She has been researching Senegal's reformist Islamic movements and writing on female adherents' beliefs and practices for eighteen years. She recently published "Aïcha's Sounith Hair Salon: Friendship, Profit, and Resistance in Dakar" in *Islamic Africa* (December 2014), and she is completing a book manuscript on Senegal's reformist women. She also writes and speaks on the presence of militaristic Islamic movements in the Sahara.

### **Robert Baum, Ph.D.**

Robert Baum is an associate professor in the Religion and African and African American Studies Program at Dartmouth College. He attended Wesleyan University for his bachelor's degree, and upon graduation, he received a Watson Fellowship. He spent an entire year in a Diola village in southern Senegal, where he learned the language and began field research before beginning graduate school at Yale University. He returned to Senegal for two more years, and did archival work in London and Paris in preparation of his Ph.D. His first book, *Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Pre-Colonial Senegambia* won an American Academy of Religion award for the best first book in the history of religions (2000). He has written numerous articles on the history of Diola religion, religious constructions of gender, indigenous religions and is currently completing a book on the history of Diola women's prophetic movements.

### **Jocelyne Cesari, Ph.D.**

Jocelyne Cesari is a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs and visiting associate professor in the Department of Government at Georgetown University. A renowned scholar of Islam and Middle Eastern politics, she also directs the "Islam in the West" program at Harvard University and the Berkley Center's Islam in World Politics program. Her research focuses on religion and international politics, Islam and globalization, Islam and secularism, immigration, and religious pluralism. Her recent book, *The Islamic Awakening: Religion, Democracy and Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), is based on three years of research on state-Islam relations in Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tunisia, conducted when she was the Minerva Chair at the National War College (2011-2012). Her book *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (2006) is a reference in the study of European Islam and integration of Muslim minorities in secular democracies. She is also the author of *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Islam in Western Liberal Democracies* (2013). She coordinates two major web resources on Islam and politics: Islamopedia Online and Euro-Islam.info.

### **Laura L. Cochrane, Ph.D.**

Laura Cochrane is associate professor of Anthropology and Director of the Cultural and Global Studies Program at Central Michigan University. Her ongoing research in Senegal places personal and social expressions of the arts and religious faiths within the contexts of West Africa's environmental and economic concerns. This research focus includes studies of faith-based (Muslim and Christian) approaches to local economic development, and a project based on Sufi individuals' life histories of faith. She has published in both anthropology and African studies journals, and is the author of *Weaving through Islam in Senegal* (2012), an ethnographic

book on Senegalese weavers' discourses about art and faith. She earned her Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis.

**Julius E. Coles**

Julius E. Coles is the director of the Andrew Young Center for Global Leadership. Before assuming this position, he was president of Africare from 2002-2009. He has also served as the director of Morehouse College's Andrew Young Center for International Affairs from 1997-2002 and as the director of the director of Howard University's Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center from 1994-1997. Most of Mr. Coles' career of nearly thirty years in the Foreign Service has been spent as a senior official with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) where he retired with the rank of Career Minister. He received a B.A. from Morehouse College (1964) and a Masters of Public Affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs (1966). He has appeared on CNN International, the Lerner News Hour, VOA TV and radio programs, and Radio Canada.

**Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Ph.D.**

Souleymane Bachir Diagne is a professor in the Departments of French and Philosophy at Columbia University. His areas of research and publication include history of philosophy, history of logic and mathematics, Islamic philosophy, and African philosophy and literature. His most recent publications include *Islam and the Open Society: Fidelity and Movement in the Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal*, Codesria (2010); *L'élan vital dans la pensée de L.S. Senghor et de Mohamed Iqbal* (2011); *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson, and the Idea of Negritude* (2011); *Comment philosopher en Islam?* (2013); and *L'encre des savants: Reflexions sur la philosophie en Afrique* (2013).

**Mamadou Diouf, Ph.D.**

Mamadou Diouf is the Leitner Family Professor of African Studies and the Director of Columbia University's Institute for African Studies. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Paris-Sorbonne. Before joining the faculty at Columbia University, he was the Charles D. Moody Jr. Collegiate Professor of History and African American Studies at the University of Michigan, from 2000 to 2007. Before that, he was Head of the Research, Information, and Documentation Department of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and faculty member of the History Department of Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal. His research interests include urban, political, social and intellectual history in colonial and postcolonial Africa. His publications include: *Tolerance, Democracy, and Sufis in Senegal* (ed. 2013), *New Perspectives on Islam in Senegal: Conversion, Migration, Wealth, and Power* (with Mara A. Leichtman, 2009).

**Mohamed Elsanousi, Ph.D.**

Mohamed Elsanousi is the Director of External Relations for the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Most recently, he served as the director of Community Outreach and Iner-religious Relations for the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) for twelve years. In that role, he was responsible for ISNA's long-term strategic planning related to interfaith and federal government relations. Within this context, he developed and executed creative interfaith initiatives and projects that invited American Muslim leaders to take a more creative role in their

communities. Dr. Elsanousi holds a Bachelor's degree in Shariah and Law from the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan; a Master of Laws from Indiana University; a graduate diploma in philanthropic studies from the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy; and a Ph.D. in Law and Society from the Indiana University School of Law.

### **Joanne Gleason**

Joanne Gleason is the associate director of the Population Council's Reproductive Health program based in Washington, DC. Gleason has been working with the Council since 1989, initially managing the reproductive health and family planning program for Latin America and the Caribbean (1989-1993), and subsequently for sub-Saharan Africa (1994-1998). In these roles, she provided operational support for more than 200 projects, focusing on reproductive health, post-abortion care, family planning and contraception, breastfeeding, female genital cutting, and HIV and AIDS. From 1999 to 2008, Gleason served as administrator for the USAID-funded global Frontiers in Reproductive Health program, supporting Council efforts in LAC, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Gleason has worked and traveled extensively in more than 35 countries throughout the developing world. She holds a master's degree in international studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and a bachelor's degree in foreign languages and international economics.

### **Philip Massey, Ph.D.**

Philip Massey earned his M.P.H. and Ph.D. in Public Health with a concentration in health communication and global health from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. His research focuses on health literacy as well as the role of expanding technologies on participatory health communication and health promotion, both domestically and globally. His research has investigated a social media intervention to build health literacy skills among low-income adolescents, diffusion patterns of internet use in the U.S., and the multifaceted and interactive nature of health information seeking. Dr. Massey's current work in global health examines health, media, computer, and digital literacies among Senegalese youth to better understand the health and information technology landscape in West Africa. Dr. Massey is also investigating communication patterns on social media platforms to inform evidence-based mHealth strategies that engage priority populations and build capacity to make informed decisions related to cancer prevention and control that promote and sustain health.

### **Stephanie Saenger**

Stephanie Saenger is the country development officer at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Ms. Saenger serves as the primary contact for USAID programs in Senegal and is a direct liaison between overseas missions, government agencies, embassies, implementing partners, and key stakeholders to further development objectives. Ms. Saenger currently serves on the State Department's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group on the subgroup on Development and Humanitarian Assistance. This group seeks ways in which religious communities can partner with the government to promote resilience within vulnerable populations. Prior to joining USAID, Ms. Saenger had 15 years of international development experience starting as a Peace Corps Volunteer and then serving with Lutheran World Relief, The World Bank, and World Vision. Ms. Saenger earned a B.A. from the University of Colorado, as well as M.A. and M.B.A. degrees from American University.

**Leonardo A. Villalon, Ph.D.**

Leonardo A. Villalón is dean of the International Center and Professor of Political Science and African Studies at the University of Florida. He is a specialist on the politics of the Francophone countries of the African Sahel (Senegal, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Chad), and coordinates the UF Sahel Research Group. His research has focused on questions of Islam and politics and on democratization and political stability. Villalón has taught at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, and the Université Gaston Berger in St. Louis, Senegal, and has lectured and directed seminars and workshops at universities and other institutions in numerous other West African countries. His work has been supported by a Carnegie Scholars award, and by grants from the State Department, the UK Department for International Development (DfID), and the Minerva initiative. He is currently co-editor of the *Journal of Modern African Studies*.