About the World Faiths Development Dialogue

The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) is a not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of religion and global development. Housed within the Berkley Center in Washington, D.C., WFDD documents the work of faith inspired organizations and explores the importance of religious ideas and actors in development contexts. WFDD supports dialogue between religious and development communities and promotes innovative partnerships, at national and international levels, with the goal of contributing to positive and inclusive development outcomes.

About the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the center’s work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.

Acknowledgments

This report is a product of the Berkley Center multi-country research program supported by the Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion and International Affairs. The Senegal research program benefited from a consultation event; the Berkley Center and WFDD invited a group of scholars and practitioners to review research plans in Washington, D.C in January 2015 that drew on initial desk research. During that meeting and over subsequent months, the group helped to identify gaps in knowledge and priority topics for investigation. Participants included Erin Joanna Augis, Robert Baum, Laura Cochrane, Julius E. Coles, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Mamadou Diouf, Joanne Gleason, Philip Massey, Stephanie Sænger, and Leonardo A. Villalón. The Senegal research program centered on extensive and in-depth interviews in Senegal (several of them are online at http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/subprojects/country-mapping-senegal). We highlight the rich contributions of members of the Cadre des Religieux pour la Santé et le Développement who offered deep insights on their respective religious communities. Reports by Rokhaya Thiam, Mouhamadou Barro, and Moussé Fall of the Réseau Islam et Population enriched our understanding of religious networks, media, and perspectives on reproductive health.

Development of this report was managed by Lauren Herzog, program coordinator at WFDD. She and Wilma Mui, WFDD program associate, are the report’s principal authors. Fieldwork was conducted in Senegal between June 2014 and February 2016 by Lauren Herzog, Wilma Mui, and Katherine Zuk, former WFDD program associate. Crystal Corman, WFDD program manager, provided valuable feedback and guidance throughout the entire process; Nathaniel Adams, WFDD program coordinator, gave constructive comments on early drafts. Katherine Marshall, WFDD executive director, provided project oversight, participated in fieldwork, and edited the report. Sheikh Saliou Mbacké offered invaluable feedback and insights on the religious landscape of Senegal, including a paper exploring trends within the Mouride confrérie. Christopher Riley, former WFDD program assistant participated in initial field research and conducted phone interviews, and Sabrina Khan, a Georgetown University undergraduate student, researched the Catholic community in Senegal.

Comments on the draft report, notably from Laura Cochrane, Joanne Gleason, and Rebecca Blachly, were invaluable.

We express our sincere gratitude to all of those who shared their experiences, knowledge, and insights with us through interviews and exchanges. This report would not have been possible without their contributions.

Photographs in the report were taken by Lauren Herzog, Alice Liang, Katherine Marshall, Wilma Mui, Christopher Riley, Al Hadji Sene, and Christopher Uller.
This report, *Faith and Development in Focus: Senegal*, explores the complex history and present links between Senegal’s distinctive Sufi Muslim organizations and significant, if far less numerous, Christian actors and the nation’s development challenges. While few working in Senegal—among its public institutions, civil society, and active international partners—are unaware that religious institutions are particularly weighty players, there are notable gaps in appreciating how they are involved in development strategies and programs. There are few practical means of engaging them in the participatory processes that are vital to constructive and sustainable development approaches. In Senegal’s rapidly changing economic and social landscape, there are gaps in understanding the changes that religious roles and actors are also experiencing and their national and local implications. Important international forces are at work, notably transnational links through diaspora communities, international programs colored by religious factors, and the rise of non-violent and violent extremism across the West African region. While Senegal has been largely immune to the latter, the nation’s openness to global forces and the rapid social change upending many traditional social patterns suggest that complacency would be a mistake.

The report’s goal is to provide an accessible and thorough overview of Senegal’s religious landscape, tracing its history, contemporary institutions, and the dynamics of change, all in relation to major issues for development. It highlights several areas that are sensitive and contentious (family code and gender roles); demand urgent attention (education policies); and, offer promise (family planning). The overall objective is to enhance understanding of the often misunderstood roles of religious actors, and in doing so, to contribute to enhancing the quality of development dialogue and programs.

The report’s hypothesis is that ignoring or minimizing the importance of religious factors detracts from development programs in many respects. The fragmented nature of engagement both among religious actors and with the Senegalese government and its international partners leads to a wide variety of suboptimal results that include: the inefficiencies of overlapping programs; failures to learn from experience through lack of knowledge of what others are doing; missed opportunities because of limited engagement with communities; and even programs that are counterproductive through failure to appreciate the motivation of religious actors and organizations. The report highlights the special significance of issues for educational reforms and their implementation; approaches to women’s roles and family planning; and effective (and less effective) approaches to a variety of knotty problems facing vulnerable children. In each case, religious roles are especially significant and can be polarizing, yet religious actors have significant potential through meaningful dialogue and action.

The report highlights the diversity of faith-inspired actors working in development and their differing ideological perspectives and approaches to the challenges of modernization and social change. In Senegal’s complex and dynamic religious landscape, some actors are ambivalent about or even hostile to certain aspects of development strategies, but many more contribute actively to mainstream development efforts, either directly as religious organizations and communities or through the work of the many faith-inspired organizations. Significant gaps in understanding cut both ways—religious actors may not appreciate some imperatives and options for development policy, and secular actors may misunderstand religious motivations and perspectives or actively eschew contacts with religious counterparts. We hope that a solid base of information—including recognizing diversity and the immense cumulative impact of religious actors in everything from education to climate change adaptation—will challenge the all-too-common narrative of an inherent opposition between religion and development.

The underlying purpose of the investigative work is to provide a resource that can inform development policy and praxis in Senegal. It comes at an important time, as Senegal faces challenges on the economic, social, and political fronts in working to achieve the ambitious goals reflected in the Emerging Senegal Plan and, more broadly, the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Climate change is a far from abstract notion in the Sahel, including Senegal, with fresh memories of devastating droughts and erratic rainfall patterns. The challenges of adaptation and mitigation are real and immediate.

The report is part of a multi-year review of the roles that religious ideas, institutions, and leaders play in the wide-ranging fields of development and social welfare undertaken by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University and the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). Senegal is one of four countries of focus for the Religion and Global Development Program supported by the Henry R. Luce Initiative on Religion and International Affairs (the others are Bangladesh, Kenya, and Guatemala). Fieldwork in Senegal was led by Lauren Herzog (WFDD) working closely with Crystal Corman (WFDD), and with significant inputs from Wilma Mui (WFDD).

This report addresses an immensely complex topic. It is thus part of a continuing effort as WFDD, the Berkley Center, and our partners in Senegal work to expand the knowledge base and improve understanding of a critical topic. We welcome comments and observations.

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### Glossary

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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adiya</td>
<td>Contribution from <em>talibés</em> to <em>marabouts</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appel</td>
<td>Pilgrimage of the Layene community celebrating the revelation of their founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aqiqah</td>
<td>Islamic term for the sacrifice of an animal on the occasion of a child’s birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baay Fall</td>
<td>Followers of Sheikh Ibra Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casamançais</td>
<td>Individuals from the Casamance region of Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrérie</td>
<td>A Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daara</td>
<td>A Qur’anic school; also, a Sufi religious community, typically rural-based and with strong historical links to agriculture, under the leadership of a <em>marabout</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahiras</td>
<td>Community groups specific to Sufism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eid al-Adha</td>
<td>Muslim holiday “festival of the sacrifice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eid al-Fitr</td>
<td>Muslim holiday “festival of the breaking of the fast”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfants de la rue</td>
<td>A French term meaning street children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familles religieuses</td>
<td>French term meaning religious families, referring to the families associated with Senegal’s <em>confréries</em> (e.g., Sy, Niassène, Mbacké)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foulard</td>
<td>French term used in Senegal usually referring to a headscarf that only covers a woman’s hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamou</td>
<td>Senegalese term for the celebration of the birth of the Prophet; often associated with the annual pilgrimage of Senegal’s Tidiane community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gris-gris</td>
<td>A talisman or amulet used for protection, with origins in indigenous beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hajj</td>
<td>The pilgrimage to Mecca; one of the five pillars of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hijab</td>
<td>A veil worn by Muslim women covering head and chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibadou</td>
<td>Senegalese name for the hijab worn by Muslim women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakka jigeen</td>
<td>Spaces designated for women to pray within the mosque, separate from the men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalife</td>
<td>Spiritual leaders of branches within a <em>confrérie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalife Général</td>
<td>The leader of a <em>confrérie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kortié</td>
<td>Term used in Senegal to designate Eid al-Fitr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laïcité</td>
<td>French term meaning secularism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layenes</td>
<td>A Sufi order specific to Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magal Touba</td>
<td>Mourides’ annual celebration of <em>Sheikh</em> Amadou Bamba Mbacké’s return from exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahdi</td>
<td>In Islam, a figure who will come to Earth before the end of time to return Muslims to the path of righteousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marabout</td>
<td>General term in Senegal for a Muslim religious leader (serigne in Wolof or shaykh in Arabic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouride</td>
<td>A follower of the Muridiyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muqqadam</td>
<td>An appointed spiritual guide within Sufism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muridiyya</td>
<td>A Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magal Touba</td>
<td>Mourides’ annual celebration of <em>Sheikh</em> Amadou Bamba Mbacké’s return from exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musoor</td>
<td>Wolof term usually referring to a headscarf that only covers a woman’s hair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Glossary (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nasrul 'ilm</td>
<td>Islamic concept meaning knowledge benefiting humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndigel</td>
<td>An order or edict put forth by a religious leader to be adhered to by followers; often political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndougou</td>
<td>Wolof term referring to the breaking of the fast during Ramadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadiri</td>
<td>A follower of the Qadiriyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadiriyya</td>
<td>A Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salafi</td>
<td>One who follows Salafism, the conservative movement within Sunni Islam that seeks to return to the ways of the Prophet Mohammed and his original followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serigne</td>
<td>Religious leader in Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serigne daara</td>
<td>Qur’anic instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharia law</td>
<td>A legal framework based on Islam that regulates public and private aspects of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheikh</td>
<td>Islamic religious leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi’a</td>
<td>One of the two main branches of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufi</td>
<td>A movement within Islam, whose followers seek to find divine truth and love through direct encounters with God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>One of the two main branches of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabaski</td>
<td>Term used in Senegal to designate Eid al-Adha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talibé</td>
<td>From the Arabic for “student”—used in Senegal to refer to either a religious follower or a Qur’anic student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamkharit</td>
<td>Term used in Senegal to designate the Islamic New Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tariqa</td>
<td>Arabic for “path” or “way” and refers to a Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taṣawwuf</td>
<td>Arabic word for Sufism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidiane</td>
<td>A follower of the Tijaniyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tijaniyya</td>
<td>A Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tik'kon olam</td>
<td>Hebrew phrase meaning “repairing the world”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turuq</td>
<td>Plural form of tariqa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulama</td>
<td>Islamic religious scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ummah</td>
<td>An Arabic word meaning nation or community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waqf</td>
<td>Islamic term for ongoing charitable giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wird</td>
<td>Prayers and litanies specific to a Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zakat</td>
<td>Obligatory alms; one of the five pillars of Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note on spelling: For several of the terms used in this report, there are various spelling options (Arabic, English, French, and Wolof). In this report, orthography choices reflect those commonly used in literature and do not connote a particular stance or orientation.
Acronyms

AAII  African American Islamic Institute
AFID  Association Femme Islam et Développement
AJS   Association des Juristes Sénégalaises
AJWS  American Jewish World Service
ANIOS Association nationale des imams et oulémas du Sénégal
ASBEF Association Sénégalaise pour le Bien-Être Familial
AQIM  Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CBOs  community-based organizations
CEP   Community Empowerment Program
CIRCOFS Comité Islamique pour la Réforme du Code de la Famille au Sénégal
COSEF  Conseil sénégalais des femmes
CPR   contraceptive prevalence rate
CRS   Catholic Relief Services
CRSD  Cadre des Religieux sur la Santé et Développement
DHS   Demographic and Health Survey
ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States
FAFS  Fédération des associations féminines du Sénégal
FGC   female genital cutting
FIOs  faith-inspired organizations
GDP   Gross Domestic Product
GNI   Gross National Income
HAI   Human Appeal International
HDI   Human Development Index
IBIOS Institution de bienfaisance islamique pour les orphelins au Sénégal
IDA   International Development Association
IHDI  Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index
IMI   Institut Mozdahir International
ISSU  Initiative sénégalaise de santé urbaine
JIR   Jama'atou Ibadou Rahmam
MDG   Millennium Development Goal
MFDC  Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance
NGOs  non-governmental organizations
NRM   natural resource management
ODA   official development assistance
OIC   Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
ONECS l’Office National de l’Enseignement Catholique du Senegal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OVC</td>
<td>orphans and vulnerable children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAP</td>
<td>Priority Action Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEVA</td>
<td>le Réseau des parlementaires sénégalais pour la protection des enfants contre les violences et abus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFPC</td>
<td>Platforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Plan Sénégal Émergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIP</td>
<td>Réseau islam et population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOPE</td>
<td>Strengthening Community Opportunities for Peace and Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCPP</td>
<td>Senegal Child Protection and Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNELAS</td>
<td>Syndicat national des enseignants de langue arabe du Sénégal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNPE</td>
<td>Stratégie nationale de protection de l’enfant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMC</td>
<td>United Methodist Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USOFORAL</td>
<td>Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VVF</td>
<td>vesicovaginal fistulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFDD</td>
<td>World Faiths Development Dialogue</td>
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### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th century</td>
<td>Present-day Senegal part of the Kingdom of Ghana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th century</td>
<td>Toucouleur people occupy lower Senegal valley; Islam introduced by North African merchants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14th centuries</td>
<td>Rise of the Jolof empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th century</td>
<td>Islam in Senegal spread widely with the rise of the Qadiriyya.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1440s</td>
<td>Portuguese traders reach Senegal river estuary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1588</td>
<td>Dutch establish slave port on Gorée Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1659</td>
<td>French found Saint-Louis at the mouth of the Senegal River; it becomes a key slave-trading port.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1677</td>
<td>French take over Gorée Island from the Dutch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1756-63</td>
<td>Seven Years’ War: Britain takes over French posts in Senegal, forms colony of Senegambia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France regains its holdings during American Revolutionary War of 1775-83.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>Britain returns French holdings captured during Napoleonic Wars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>El Hadj Omar Tall, largely responsible for propagating the Tijaniyya in Senegal, makes the pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1800s</td>
<td>France extends its influence, gains control of all the territory of Senegal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>The Mahdi of the Layene community reveals himself as Limamou Laye on the Cap Vert peninsula of Senegal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Senegal becomes part of French West Africa; Sheikh Amadou Bamba is exiled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Sheikh Amadou Bamba returns to Touba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Blaise Diagne elected as Senegal’s first African deputy to French parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Sunni reformist movement begins in the urban areas of Senegal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Senegal becomes part of the French Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>National Assembly established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Becomes an autonomous republic, as part of the French Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>January, Senegal ratifies first constitution with Sudanese Republic; April, Mali Federation, a union between Senegal and the Sudanese Republic, established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>June, independence from France; August, Mali Federation dissolved after Senegal’s secession, becoming Senegal and the Republic of Mali; September, Léopold Sédar Senghor becomes president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Monseigneur Hyacinthe Thiandoum becomes first Senegalese Archbishop of Dakar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Senegal joins ECOWAS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Three-party political system introduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Casamance conflict begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Parliament bans female genital cutting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>April, Abdoulaye Wade becomes president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Law passed banning forced begging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>April, Macky Sall becomes president.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Religious forces have shaped Senegal’s history in many ways, from the colonial period to modern times, and they remain a vital part of national identity and institutions today. Religious actors have long provided many social services (especially in education), played important economic roles, and exercised great political influence, notwithstanding a pronounced secular veneer, the product of the French colonial heritage. Today, religious values and traditions influence many attitudes and behaviors, and thus color development programs and approaches. Senegal, like other parts of the world, is undergoing profound social and economic changes that are also affecting religious institutions. Their roles are changing, with influence eroding in some areas alongside expansion into new fields that include media, small business, health, job skills training, and water and sanitation. The significant development roles of religious actors, however, are generally quite poorly understood and appreciated.

Senegal’s government and its international partners engage with religious actors in various ways, sometimes deliberately and sometimes in an ad hoc manner in response to specific events or challenges. The most commonly cited example of successful engagement is collaboration with religious leaders in the late 1980s to curtail the spread of HIV/AIDS, but there are others (generally on a quite limited scale). The wide range of religious actors includes formal religious institutions—notably the distinctive Sufi confréries that dominate the religious landscape, but also national Islamic and Christian organizations—and faith-inspired organizations that extend from large and international to national to local, community-based entities. Notwithstanding extensive involvement in wide-ranging facets of development work, there are few formal mechanisms to foster collaboration, coordinate their activities, draw lessons from experience, and promote partnerships.

Few contest the observation that religious leaders and institutions have wide influence in Senegal, a country with especially high religiosity. Development actors often appreciate the potential benefits of engaging religious actors, but efforts to translate that awareness into practice have been inhibited
by poor understanding of how the institutions function, hesitations to cross lines between secular and religious, and the absence of effective communication channels. A tendency to instrumentalize religious actors—with development actors hoping to have religious leaders simply help implement programs designed without their engagement—rather than true partnership can raise hackles within religious circles. Some development actors write religious actors into action plans without consultation, with predictably disappointing outcomes. Engaging religious actors requires an understanding of their approach, as well as a willingness to listen and take their experience and views into account. This is important even where ideology, language, and differing priorities may suggest wide divides between secular and religious actors on topics such as gender roles and reproductive health.

Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs and the World Faiths Development Dialogue undertook a “mapping” of the development roles of faith actors in Senegal, exploring the religious dimensions of central development issues in an effort to better understand the roles that religious institutions and beliefs play that are relevant for Senegal’s economic and social development. This report highlights development topics and sectors where religious factors have special significance; describes Senegal’s religious landscape, underscoring the influence of the four Sufi confréries, as well as other religious communities; and emphasizes several key development sectors to illustrate both areas of focus and roles of religious actors. It aims to fill knowledge gaps about the changing religious landscape and the development activities of faith-inspired actors. The overall objective is to enrich understandings of religious-secular interactions and, thus, contribute to better quality and impact of development strategies and programs.

KEY FINDINGS OF THIS COUNTRY-MAPPING STUDY INCLUDE:

Senegal’s varied, complex, and dynamic religious landscape has important implications for development strategies and approaches. The most obvious are the direct involvement of religious institutions, notably the Sufi confréries, in politics and sectors like education and agriculture. Notwithstanding Senegal’s constitutional commitment to secular values and laïcité (secularism), especially in elite circles, religious attitudes color many policies and programs, as well as the ethos and tangible approaches of institutions, public and private, even among those whose religious links are tenuous or limited. Senegal’s social and religious diversity and deliberate commitment to religious tolerance is widely celebrated as a strength and a factor in stability, social harmony, and the general absence of the social strife that has affected neighboring countries.

Available surveys of religiosity, albeit limited, rank Senegal high among nations in the weight given to religious institutions and beliefs. Many Senegalese, even those working for secular organizations, draw on personal religious values and their appreciations of the religious and cultural context in shaping policies and programs. Religious undertones (Muslim and, in some instances, Christian) are omnipresent in many forms, albeit manifested in complex ways. Senegal’s active role in international interreligious initiatives and promotion of interreligious harmony and positive Islamic values reflect both its high religiosity and a commitment to balance and peace.

Senegal’s deliberate and parallel secular and Islamic traditions can complicate policy decisions, and there are tensions between them (as well as creative complementarity) reflected in the constitution, as well as in various laws and regulatory mechanisms. Senegalese, especially among the elite, highlight and support Senegal’s commitment to secularism. However, Senegalese secularism is distinctive, a unique “social compact” that inter alia implies that Islamic values are respected and understood as fundamental to national identity. The education sector, especially, currently confronts challenges in reconciling Senegal’s secular history and principles with local realities, religious traditions, and public demand. The dual traditions underlie complex—often unstated and not precisely defined—relationships between secular and religious authorities.

One significant manifestation of religiously inspired institutions is the Sufi community groups (dahiras) that are an integral part of local communities. They provide social support and often take the form of specific groups for men, women, and youth. Similar structures exist within Christian communities. Dahiras support social functions and important events, such as pilgrimages, weddings, and baptisms. Some dahiras are actively involved in community mobilization, tackling specific social issues like public health challenges. Strategic engagement with dahiras and other community groups in a development context has been limited, but we see their capacity for greater engagement as substantial. Some networks of dahiras link communities in different parts of Senegal; these networks can be advantageous, often offering job opportunities and advice, promoting business endeavors of those in the network, and influencing decisions on education.

Religiously based networks beyond these community structures extend into the diaspora, with active religious engagement among Senegalese abroad. Diaspora groups organize religious conferences and come together during religious holidays. They provide critical support to new arrivals in the community, helping in finding jobs and sorting out immigration matters. Remittances provide an important source of development funding for religious communities across...

The extensive religious media has not been engaged systematically on development matters. Over 90 percent of Senegalese watch or listen to religious media, often placing considerable trust in religious media hosts. Diverse programs target varying audiences—women, men, and youth—with topics ranging from religious practices to major social issues. Traditional television and radio are quite popular media outlets, but online media is a growing influence, especially among youth.

Few formal channels exist that link the government's development institutions and religious communities, though there are many informal channels. Levels of dialogue and engagement between faith and secular actors have varied greatly. Some religious leaders contend that government officials approach them only for political support at election times, rather than engaging them as partners. Many government officials and political leaders, however, have active ties to religious communities, specifically the major confréries, so there is considerable two-way communication.

Faith and secular actors largely agree on Senegal's core development strategies, but agreement and support have not been universal. Positive examples of engagement include health issues, such as hygiene promotion and malaria prevention, seen as domains where the approaches of national and international programs do not come into conflict with religious beliefs and values. Family planning has long been a sensitive issue, but faith actors are increasingly engaging in supporting and promoting family planning with their stance based in religious teachings. Senegal’s Family Code has provoked diverging opinions among various faith and secular actors, centered on how it affects women's rights and roles in society. Debates around the Family Code underscore the divide between religious and secular perspectives and values.

Religious communities in Senegal are deeply involved in the education sector, with important implications for the future development of the national educational system. Senegal’s education system includes the official national system, heavily influenced by French secular principles; an array of Islamic run institutions, most operating outside the official system (and varying in scope and quality); and more formal private schools, which are both secular and religious (especially Catholic). The public education system has expanded rapidly, but frequent strikes, overcrowding, and limited resources result in quality problems. The central reform challenges are to adapt the public system both to Senegalese economic realities and to the demand for religious and cultural relevance, as well as to integrate the official and non-official systems. A specific and contentious issue surrounds talibés (students) from some Qur'anic schools. As some students beg in the streets and there have been reported cases of abuse, various Senegalese and international partners seek reforms to address what they see as violations of human rights. Dialogue to generate better options for reform is urgently needed.
Senegal is often described as an oasis of stability in the tumultuous West African region. Violent conflict has been rare, and Senegal is renowned for its commitment to democratic institutions. Successive governments have focused consistently on development goals, with well-articulated strategies in several sectors. Political stability explains in large part Senegal’s attractiveness to international investors, and a wide range of development partners (public and private) have engaged there over several decades. Senegal is one of six African countries that achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) goal of halving the poverty rate.1 Among African countries, Senegal’s improvements in gender parity, especially in regard to political representation, stand out.2 Senegal’s democratic institutions have become stronger over the years, though notable governance weaknesses challenge progress. A vibrant and active civil society plays a variety of significant development roles. Aspirations to achieve middle-income status are reflected in the ambitious Plan Sénégal Émergent (Emerging Senegal Plan, PSE, 2012) that provides a policy framework for economic, social, and security development.

Senegal is nonetheless still a very poor country that faces many development challenges. Development progress varies widely by sector and periods of disappointing progress have alternated with robust growth. With 32 percent of the population between the ages of 10 and 24,3 perhaps the most difficult challenge is to stimulate the economy and society to generate jobs for young people and to address youth aspirations more broadly. Rapid urbanization set against a sharp urban-rural divide presents other challenges. The education and health systems both face important weaknesses (including those linked to high population growth rates). Looking toward the future, projections suggest significant negative impacts from climate change, notably in accentuating the already erratic rainfall patterns in this dry Sahelian country.

Senegal is a hub for international development actors; its geography and history lend it a role as a door to West Africa. The capital, Dakar, hosts many multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well as international and regional non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Local NGOs, a host of less formal community-based organizations (CBOs), and faith-inspired organizations (FIOs) work alongside international partners. It is not uncommon for development partners to choose Senegal as a pilot location to test new ideas and approaches.4

Religious dimensions of Senegal’s development challenges are significant but have received quite limited attention in the recent
past. Senegal has long been known as an especially religious country, with harmonious interreligious relationships. The population is 94 percent Muslim, mostly Sufis who affiliate with one of four main orders, or confréries (Layene, Mouride, Qadiri, and Tidiane). These Sufi orders have deep and wide roots, in the daily lives of Senegal's people and in local politics, but also crossing international borders—both through a large Senegalese diaspora and with links to Sufi religious orders in other African countries. The remaining six percent of the population are Christians (4 percent) or follow traditional African and other religions (2 percent). Senegalese pride themselves on strong, peaceful inter- and intra-religious relations (in marked contrast to religiously linked tensions in next-door Mali and across the Sahel). Interestingly, interfaith initiatives and organizations are relatively undeveloped, perhaps because religious tensions have been so rare. This religious context is dynamic in large part due to urbanization, rising education levels, and active transnational communication spurred by new technologies. Religious influences on political affairs, the economy, and social development are thus changing in important, largely uncharted ways.

Appreciating religious factors should be a key consideration for any development practitioner working in Senegal. The confréries meet important social and economic, as well as spiritual, needs. Each of the four confréries is deeply involved in local and community development. Their involvement sometimes has deep historical roots—as with the case of Qur’anic schools and agricultural enterprise—or has been reshaped in reaction to more contemporary social needs that have resulted from economic crises and dislocations and gaps in government service provision. Their changing roles, however, are only partially documented and understood.

1.1 STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH THEMES

The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, with support from the Henry R. Luce Foundation, have focused on Senegal in a country-mapping project within the Religion and Global Development program. The project’s goal is to analyze, at the country level, the ways in which faith institutions and actors engage on development issues and to explore religious dimensions of these issues. The ultimate goal is that this knowledge will encourage dialogue and collaboration among religious and development communities, enhancing the quality of development programs in various ways.

The research and dialogue effort for Senegal began with a thorough literature review that identified gaps in knowledge and highlighted key development topics where religion is a factor. Scholars and practitioners met in Washington, D.C. in January 2015 to discuss research objectives, outputs, and potential entry points for more detailed investigation. A nuanced portrait of contemporary Senegal emerged from this preliminary work, affirming both knowledge gaps and priority topics for exploration. Fieldwork in Senegal followed. It included, above all, 50 plus semi-structured interviews with nationally influential faith leaders, international development agencies, FIOs, and CBOs. This ‘mapping’ focused on organizations identified through desk research and snowball sampling through local contacts. In sum, major research themes emerged from the preliminary investigations, from the consultation, and from field discussions and were explored in greater depth as the research advanced.

Substantial research documents Senegal’s contemporary religious institutions and trends, but knowledge is often narrowly focused, fragmented in different intellectual and disciplinary silos, and not fully up to date. Senegal’s religious institutions, beliefs, and practices are changing in important ways; two examples are shifts in leadership patterns and new roles for traditional and new media. Researchers and practitioners
have tended to focus on the four Sufi orders that dominate the religious scene. However, their power and influence are shifting in response to internal and external pressures. The Sufi orders face new governance challenges, though they are still seen as ensuring social cohesion and stability, even enforcing law and order.

Rapid urbanization contributes to a diffusion or weakening of authority within several orders, disrupting traditional structures, especially around the fringes. The Sufi families grow larger with each successive generation, with the effect that power is no longer as concentrated as it once was in each order. Some see the orders as losing their traditional charisma, as well as their political and social influence, while others see change—more than erosion—of influence. Adding to this complex and changing Sufi context, different religious movements are growing in size and importance, notably the Sunni reformists. There are some leaders and movements that are seen as fundamentalist, with ties to the Gulf and other West African countries. The Sunni reformist movement is quite popular among young people, reflecting a cultural and religious shift. Christian organizations and leaders are important actors within the predominantly Islamic culture in Senegal, especially in the education sector, and they too are undergoing change.

Senegal’s active civil society is generally seen as quite secular, but faith-inspired actors play critical social roles and should, for many purposes, be viewed as part of civil society. Religious actors have long been intimately involved in education, the care of vulnerable children, peacebuilding, and the provision of other social services. Innovative roles of these organizations, as well as their social and political impact on policy and governance, deserve attention in reflections about development strategy.

Chapter two of the report presents a brief overview of Senegal’s development progress, focusing on successes and persistent challenges. Chapter three traces the development of Senegal’s religious institutions, emphasizing the historical and modern influence of Sufi Islam in the social and political realms and the more recent spread of Christianity in certain regions. It highlights the social dimensions of religion in Senegal, including traditions whereby religious communities provide resources and services, such as education. Chapter four outlines an initial mapping of the religious dimensions of development in Senegal by profiling the work of international, national, and local faith-inspired organizations operating in each of the study’s focus areas. The final chapter offers some conclusions and sets out ideas for further research and possible areas for action.
Senegal’s development performance and prospects are mixed. Its strengths include favorable location, political stability, and an enterprising population, but it faces significant resource limitations. The World Bank’s summary diagnosis in 2015 stated that while Senegal aspires to become an emerging country by 2035, “it has been stuck in a low-growth equilibrium since 2006,” with an average GDP growth rate of only 3.3 percent since 2006. Areas of progress include reductions in the overall poverty rate and strides in gender parity, notably in the ratio of girls to boys in primary education. Areas of weakness include quality in both education and health. Senegal remains a very poor country despite progress on several indicators over recent years. The World Bank estimated that 46.7 percent of the population fell below the poverty line (2011), with poverty substantially higher in rural areas than in the cities.

The Senegalese government’s development strategies are set out in the Emerging Senegal Plan (PSE), launched in November 2012. It focuses on both social development and infrastructure improvement. The PSE is to be implemented through five-year Priority Action Plans (PAP) built on strategic pillars and sector objectives. The PSE has three axes:

1. A structural transformation of the economy through the consolidation of current drivers of growth and development of new sectors to create wealth, jobs, and social inclusion, with a strong capacity to export and attract investment.
2. Significantly improving living conditions and a more sustained fight against social inequality, while preserving the resource base; and
3. Reinforcing stability, security, governance, the protection of rights and liberties, and the consolidation of the rule of law in order to create optimum conditions for social peace and to encourage the fulfillment of potential.

Tables 1 and 2 highlight Senegal’s development progress in broad terms. Table 1 and Figure 1 highlight GDP growth (relatively slow) and rankings in some widely used indicators. Table 2 focuses on the Millennium Development Goals, where the 2015 deadline (the goals were defined in 2000) prompted intensive reviews of absolute and relative performance. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), approved by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, will serve as a new set of benchmarks with a 2030 deadline. The 17 distinct SDGs range from No Poverty and Zero Hunger to Gender Equality and Climate Action. With 169 indicators, opportunities for engagement are plentiful. The SDGs provide an opportunity for Senegal to set its development priorities for the coming years. Religious leaders and communities have already been
engaged in many of the focus areas in one way or another, and thus some targets and indicators are more natural entry points. Other areas may require more dialogue for engagement with religious communities. Religious leaders can provide a strong voice in focusing on priority objectives and defining how the SDGs are and are not significant for Senegal, as well as highlighting and addressing obstacles to implementation.

Senegal made important progress toward several MDGs, such as reduction of poverty and child mortality, but progress in other priority areas, such as education and maternal and child health, was disappointing. Women have seen increased empowerment through government representation, and girls now outnumber boys in primary education enrollment; however, they are still underrepresented in higher education (female-to-male enrollment ratio of 0.59 in 2010).9 Child mortality decreased, but infant mortality declined at a slower pace. Maternal mortality decreased significantly, but women still face reproductive health challenges with contraceptive prevalence rates ranking among the world’s lowest (notwithstanding recent progress).10 Access to improved water and sanitation facilities has increased, but there are stark differences between access for urban and rural areas.

Development programs have strong Senegalese leadership. This includes government development programs, as well as various private actors: companies and local and community-based efforts that include faith-inspired actors. The latter are not well-documented in the aggregate. Also notable, but poorly documented, is the role of Senegal’s diaspora communities (estimated at over 600,000 people22), that send remittances and may be involved in specific development enterprises, for example founding schools or clinics.

Senegal has a wide range of international development partners. It received significant official development assistance (ODA), estimated at US$983 million in 2013,23 and is, thus, one of the highest aid recipients in West Africa.24 Major partners (over US$100 million annually in ODA) are France, the United States, and the International Development Association (IDA) (see figure 2).25 ODA has nonetheless declined as a share of GNI since 1990, when it represented 14.7 percent, to 6.7 percent in 2013.26 Many partners support Senegal with an active field presence; Dakar is filled with the headquarters of international aid agencies, as well as local associations and NGOs. Aid partners are engaged in many sectors and regions. Numerous NGOs are active in widely varying roles, both providing humanitarian and development assistance directly and as implementing partners for official development agencies. Among these are several active organizations that have faith links and inspiration, including for example World Vision, Caritas, Secours Islamique (Islamic Aid), and American Jewish World Service. Private aid flows play increasing roles, and private companies are often involved explicitly in development strategies and programs. An asset for Senegal is membership in the West African Economic and Monetary Union with trade agreements and a common currency.27

### Table 1. Senegal: Some key development facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Current Status (Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>14,672,557 (2014)11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total area</td>
<td>196,710 square km12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>6,312,888 (2014)13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(about 50 percent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth rate</td>
<td>2.9% (2014)14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital city population (Dakar)</td>
<td>3.14 million (2013)15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population aged 0-14 years</td>
<td>6.62 million (2015)16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US$)</td>
<td>$1,050 (2014)17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth rate</td>
<td>3.9% (2014)18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP Human Development Index Rank (2015 report)</td>
<td>170 of 188 (2014)19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption Perceptions Index Rank</td>
<td>61 of 187 (2015)20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal remittances, received (current US$)</td>
<td>$1,613,911,186 (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGETS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day</td>
<td>Proportion of population living below $1.25(PPP) per day (%)</td>
<td>Not Achieved, down from 65.7 (1991) to 34.1 (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</td>
<td>Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age</td>
<td>Not Achieved, down 20.4 (1992) to 16.8 (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 2: Achieve Universal Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that children everywhere, boys and girls, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
<td>Net Primary Enrollment</td>
<td>Not Achieved, up 44.7 (1990) to 79.5 (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reaching last grade of primary</td>
<td>No Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education</td>
<td>Gender Equality in primary education</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s equal representation in national parliaments</td>
<td>Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (%)</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce by two-thirds the under five mortality rate</td>
<td>Under 5 mortality rate</td>
<td>Not Achieved, Significant Progress: 141.1 (1990) to 55.3 (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant mortality rate</td>
<td>Not Achieved, Progress: 70.5 (1990) to 43.9 (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio</td>
<td>Maternal Mortality ratio</td>
<td>Not Achieved, Significant Progress: 530(1990) to 320 (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve universal access to reproductive health</td>
<td>Contraceptive prevalence rate</td>
<td>Low Access: 7.4% (1993) to 17.9 (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unmet need for family planning</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>HIV prevalence</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halt and reverse the incidence of TB and other major diseases</td>
<td>TB prevalence</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No TB deaths</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Achieved, down 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</td>
<td>Improved drinking water source</td>
<td>Not Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>89 (1990) to 93 (2015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Sanitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Achieved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The following are brief introductions of key sectors where religious engagement is especially noteworthy. More detailed analysis is provided in chapter four.

Poverty in Senegal has declined, but addressing extreme poverty remains a central development challenge. It is also a concern of religious leadership; the focus and understanding of both causes and manifestations of poverty may differ among the religious and non-religious actors concerned. Poverty rates declined steadily from 2001 to 2005, but the pace of progress has since slowed. This was in large part due to shocks, including drought, floods, and high global food and fuel costs. Poverty is not evenly distributed; there is a stark urban-rural divide (rural poverty is estimated at 57.1 percent compared to 26.1 percent in Dakar and 41.2 percent in other urban areas). Unemployment is high, and an estimated 32 percent of the working age population is underemployed. Many work in the informal sector (non-agricultural): approximately 2.2 million people, or 48.8 percent of the working population.

West and Central Africa (including Senegal) currently have the world’s highest birth rates and lowest contraceptive prevalence rates, and there is growing awareness that these rates are incompatible with development objectives. Senegal’s population has nearly doubled since 1990 to approximately 14.5 million people. Limited family planning use is one cause of poor health indicators, including high rates of infant mortality (44 per 1,000 live births), under-five mortality (55 per 1,000 live births), and maternal mortality (320 per 100,000 live births). In 2013, the total fertility rate for Senegalese women was 5.1 children per woman, and the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) 13 percent. Unmet need for family planning stood at 29.3 percent in 2013. Performance has improved with active government and partner programs, reflected in the CPR increasing to 20.3 percent in 2014, an increase of more than 8 percent in just two years, and the unmet need for family planning dropping to 25.6 percent.

Women’s rights and empowerment have paradoxical aspects, with considerable progress in the public sphere contrasted with stubborn patriarchal norms common in private life. Senegalese women have seen increased political representation; the share of female lawmakers in Senegal’s national parliament increased from 13 percent in 1990 to 23 percent in 2009 and 43 percent in 2014. A 2010 law on gender parity accounts for much progress and the 2012 national elections included female presidential candidates for the first time. Today, girls outnumber boys in primary school enrollment (female to male ratio of 1.08); however, gender imbalances persist, more intensely in secondary and tertiary education, with female-to-male ratios of 0.76 and 0.59, respectively. Primary education completion rates from 2014 show girls outpacing boys with 65 percent of girls finishing compared to only 57 percent of boys. While women are making gains, they face economic challenges. The employment to population ratio for women aged over 15 has barely increased since 1991, growing from 54 percent to just 57 percent in 2013. The 2014 Gender Gap Index for Senegal (see table 3) notes a female-to-male labor participation rate of 0.75.

Women in Senegal are active in many public sectors, but long-standing traditions of gender inequality persist at the household level, linked to cultural and religious norms. Polygamy, which is legal and sanctioned by Muslim religious leaders,
presents challenges to women’s autonomy and health. With up to four wives permitted per man in Senegal, wives often find themselves competing with each other for resources and the attention of their husbands, including striving to have as many children as possible. Women face limitations on their autonomy in economic matters, notably customary and Islamic laws that are commonly practiced restrict women’s access to and inheritance of land.

Senegal is experiencing a youth bulge that will have profound social and economic consequences if not addressed. The youth population (age 15-34) currently accounts for approximately one-third of the total population and already strains the education system and economy. At current rates, an additional 100,000 youth enter the workforce each year. Many young people work in the informal sector, comprising an estimated 44 percent of this sector. Nearly half of the youth entering this sector have no formal education. Another alternative for many disillusioned youth is migration to Europe; between January and March of 2015, there were an estimated 1,200 migrants from Senegal to Italy, up 25 percent from the same period in 2014. High unemployment rates spur much of the migration among Senegalese youth. If employment trends continue, they present serious threats to social and economic stability, and Senegal risks losing valuable human capital.

Table 3. World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index for Senegal, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Female-to-Male Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic participation and opportunity</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor force participation</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage equality for similar work</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated earned income</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational attainment</strong></td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary enrollment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary enrollment</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary enrollment</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and survival</strong></td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio at birth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy life expectancy</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political empowerment</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in parliament</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in ministerial positions</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years with female head of state (last 50)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Better religious literacy overall (including among development actors) could open avenues for conversation and potential collaboration. Previous engagement of Senegalese faith leaders in development efforts shows their potential for driving change, for example in promoting behavior change that stemmed the spread of HIV. Faith leaders also have the clout to hinder development efforts that they believe are counter to religious beliefs, with women’s roles a prominent example. The following chapter describes Senegal’s complex religious landscape with the goal of informing development practitioners interested in understanding religious perspectives and motivations for engaging in development.
Senegal’s distinctive religious institutions have wide-ranging influence, affecting daily lives as well as national policies and politics. Religious facets of Senegal’s national identity have deep historical roots and varied contemporary impact. By various measures, religiosity in Senegal is especially high: a 2010 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 98 percent of Senegalese surveyed said religion is ‘very important’ in their lives; Senegal ranked the highest on this measure among the 56 countries and territories surveyed.68

Senegal’s population is majority Muslim (94 percent) with significant and long-standing religious minorities, notably Christians (4 percent). Followers of traditional African religions and other beliefs make up the remaining 2 percent (though, as is frequently the case, measuring traditional adherents is problematic because of considerable overlap with other traditions). Traditional African religions preceded Islam and Christianity and have left their mark.69 Nearly all Senegalese Muslims today follow Sunni Islam, and an estimated 92 percent of Senegalese Muslims affiliate with one of four Sufi orders, or confréries (Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, Muridiyya, and Layenes). Catholics constitute the majority of Senegal’s Christian minority. Apart from Sufi orders and Catholicism, there is a Sunni reformist movement, as well as small, but active, Protestant and Shi’a communities.

Religious beliefs and practices are evident in daily life in Senegal. Various holidays, rituals, and pilgrimages are specific to Senegal. The government officially recognizes both Islamic and Christian holidays, with Muslim holidays often referred to by their West African names: Korité (Eid al-Fitr), Tabaski (Eid al-Adha), and the Islamic New Year, known locally as Tamkharit. Traditions and religious gatherings particular to Senegal include pilgrimages specific to the different confréries, such as the Gamou (typically associated with the Tijaniyya, but celebrated by all confréries) that celebrates the birth of the Prophet, the Mourides’ Magal Touba to commemorate Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbaké’s exile, the Layenes’ Appel to celebrate the revelation of their founder, etc. Many Senegalese Catholics make an annual pilgrimage to the town of Popenguine on Senegal’s coast.60

Religious leaders, communities, and institutions have considerable influence in many spheres, including many facets of development enterprises. Religious influences shape attitudes and decisions on topics like education, health care, political affili-
Religion has been at the forefront of recent debates in Senegal on gender, women’s health care, and educational reform.

3.1 RELIGION AND THE STATE

Senegal inherited the French notion of secularism or *laïcité* from its colonial era, and secular principles were reflected in constitutional arrangements after independence in 1960. Scholar Alfred Stepan observes that “the clerically hostile form of French *laïcité* does not actually apply to state-religion relations in Senegal, despite the fact that the opening articles in the constitutions in both countries refer to *laïcité* and are virtually identical.” Secularism in Senegal has specific Senegalese features, and its implications have come under considerable debate over the decades. In contrast to the French approach to *laïcité*, which involves the absence of religious involvement in government affairs and of government involvement in religious affairs, secularism in Senegal focuses more on freedom to practice one’s religion, equality among traditions, and pride in pluralism. Senegal’s particular form

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Box 1. Ethnicity in Senegal

Senegal counts more than 20 ethnic groups, with diverse languages and traditions. The 2010-11 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) indicates that the predominant ethnic groups are Wolof (43 percent), Pulaar (24), Sereer (15), Diola (5), and Mandinka (4); the remaining 9 percent consist of other ethnicities, including smaller, distinct groups, such as the Susu and Bassari. There are sub-groups within the larger ethnic groups, such as the Lébou within Wolofs, as well as Toucouleur, Fulakunda, and Fula Jalon within Pulaar. Conflict between ethnic groups in Senegal is rare; jokes or playful insults are often a sign of familiarity and friendship.

Historically, several ethnic groups have been more receptive to Islam and others to Christianity. Solid data is limited, but it is well understood that Wolofs and Pulaars tend to be Muslims, and there are more Christians among the Sereer and Diola than the other ethnic groups.
of secularism allows for government involvement in religion, as long as the government does not favor one religious community over another and does not interfere with respect of human rights or law and order.

Several articles in Senegal’s constitution detail the legal stance toward religion, and the preamble affirms that the republic is “secular, democratic, and social.” The Senegalese constitution (in its various iterations) has consistently provided protections for freedom of religion and equality for all Senegalese regardless of religious beliefs (Articles 1, 4, and 8, 2001 constitution). As such, any discrimination based on religion (or origin, race, or sex) is punishable under law. Article 4 also states that religious political parties (as well as parties based on race, religion, sex, language, or region) are not permitted under law. Both religious and non-religious communities and institutions are recognized by the state as legitimate providers of education (Article 22). Senegalese are guaranteed the freedom to carry out religious practices and to serve as religious education providers as long as they maintain law and order (Article 23). Furthermore, “religious institutions and communities have the right to develop themselves without constraint. They are not under the supervision of the State. They resolve and administer their own affairs autonomously.”

Box 2. Religious and secular discord: The Mbegue forest crisis

The Mbegue forest crisis in 1991 illustrates the complex dynamics between religious and secular forces in Senegal, as well as the significant power that religious leaders can exert. The 1964 land law accorded the Senegalese government control of all land; users have rights as long as the land is used in an economically productive way. Local authorities officially administer land rights. With both religious and government authorities intervening in practice in implementation, misunderstandings can arise. An example occurred in 1991 when President Abdou Diouf signed an agreement with Sheikh Saliou Mbacké, Khalife Général of the Mourides, permitting him to use 45,000 hectares for peanut production in Mbegue.

The, Khalife Général summoned his followers to clear land for peanut cultivation with the following radio address: “Mouride faithful of Senegal, come forward and all for the glory of god! Come in all the strength of your numbers to the village of Khelcom, in the forest of Mbegue. Bring with you any hatchet, any axe, any saw, any machete; bring any instrument in your possession capable of cutting a tree or clearing a forest.” His followers heeded the call and soon after, a large area of the savannah forest (some five million trees) was decimated and ready for cultivation. However, 6,000 pastoralists protested that their grazing rights had been ignored. This led to a low-level conflict between the farmers and the pastoralists around borehole access. The Mourides, who had emerged as a powerful economic, political, and religious force, had the upper hand.

An international outcry arose about the incident. The 1970s Sahelian droughts had heightened awareness about threats to the environment, including awareness that forests were being cut without regulation. Governments wished to revive dormant protective measures and institute new ones, with encouragement from international partners. That translated inter alia into agreements to protect forests, including Mbegue. When the international and environmental community discovered what had transpired in Mbegue, they were appalled. The resulting discussions led to a sharpening of agreements on environmental protection, greater awareness of the implications of ambiguous land rights, and heightened attention to the rights of pastoralists versus settled farmers. Many of the issues and tensions involved in this incident persist to this day. Religious roles in land tenure remain complex and often poorly understood. Pressures on land have increased with rapid population growth, as have the environmental challenges that confront Senegal.
Within this framework, the government does not shy away from engaging with religious communities in official, as well as unofficial, ways. Senegal’s first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, set the precedent by participating in religious ceremonies and soliciting the support of religious leaders. Political leaders have frequently paid official visits to the country’s religious leaders, and political candidates court support from religious communities. Official government delegations are included in religious events and gatherings, such as the Mourides’ Magal Touba and the Catholic pilgrimage to Popenguine. The confrérie leaders have been seen as important players in political campaigns over the decades. Local religious groups can mobilize members to support preferred candidates, and candidates seek the blessing of the leaders of Sufi orders. Historically, some faith leaders issued ndigel, or orders, to their followers to vote a specific way in a political election. While it is often said that certain religious leaders have the power to make or break a political campaign, the roles of religious leaders have in practice shifted over time to subtler (and less controversial) tactics. On some occasions, development issues have sparked government-religious relationship tensions; the Mbegue Forest incident in the early 1990s is an example (See Box 2), as are efforts to curtail talibé begging and reform schools and curriculum.

The government has played various roles in relation to religious institutions, with both formal and informal relationships in practice. The relationships reflect a mutual respect between religious communities and the government. For example, the customary audience that takes place today between the leader of the Mourides and government representatives during the Magal Touba pilgrimage began during the colonial period to show “mutual recognition” after a period of suspicion. A Ministry of Religious Affairs was established in 2010 following tensions between then-President Abdoulaye Wade and some of Senegal’s religious communities. During his presidency, Wade promoted Muslim-Christian dialogue, seeking to present Senegal as a worldwide model for achieving and maintaining peaceful relations between Muslims and Christians. These actions contrasted with an incident in December 2009, when Wade said in a statement that “for Muslims, churches are for praying to someone who is not God.” Dozens of Christian youth found the statement so offensive that they took to the streets, and some young people, especially, are attracted to fundamentalist teachings and join fundamentalist organizations.

Box 3. How far do extremist and fundamentalist religious views affect Senegal?

With growing security challenges in West Africa—and especially in light of recent attacks in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Côte d’Ivoire—Senegal’s government and partners have stepped up efforts to avert such incidents. This shines a spotlight on the possibility of violent extremist groups. As early as 2013, the Senegalese government publicly indicated that it was aware of dormant terror cells, citing this as a reason for their involvement in anti-terror initiatives in the Sahel. In early 2015, Senegalese news outlets reported new measures to fight terror threats, announced by the Ministry of the Interior, including new requirements for government authorization to open mosques and Qur’anic schools; the concerns center around funding sources. The government in January 2016 ordered a halt to construction of a mosque on the grounds of the airport in Dakar, citing security reasons and suspicions regarding project funding. In late 2015, the government cracked down on some imams it described as apologists for terrorism; several dozen imams and preachers accused of inciting or supporting terrorism were arrested.

There is a keen awareness in Senegal about security threats in West Africa. A 2013 Pew study found that 75 percent of Senegalese Muslims surveyed were concerned about Islamic extremism, with 19 percent unconcerned. By contrast, a 2014 Pew study found that only 46 percent of Senegalese were concerned about Islamic extremism in their country (versus 47 percent unconcerned). A 2015 Pew Research Center study that asked Senegalese about ISIS found that a majority of Senegalese surveyed (60 percent) had an unfavorable view of the group; however, 11 percent held a favorable view. Senegalese scholar Abdoul Aziz Kébé notes that there are preachers on Senegalese media who justify radical discourse; Senegal must be aware of this and clearly denounce radical views, particularly as extremist views can seduce youth who are in precarious situations, especially those frustrated by a lack of work. Kébé expresses concern about the influence of extremist beliefs in Mali, Nigeria, and Chad on Senegalese youth, in light of widespread use of modern technologies and the Internet.

Fundamentalist beliefs have been growing in Senegal in recent years. Kébé contends that Senegalese Islam is not going toward fundamentalism, but rather that there are increasing signs of fundamentalism; there have been visible changes in dress, and some young people, especially, are attracted to fundamentalist teachings and join fundamentalist organizations. Senegalese scholar Penda Mbow emphasizes the diversity within Senegal’s Sunni reformist movement; she sees three distinct categories within the movement: modernist reformism, conservative Salafism, and political fundamentalism. Several recent conferences in Senegal have focused on religious fundamentalism and extremism.
streets in protest, and Senegalese police used tear gas to disperse the protesters. The Archbishop of Dakar condemned Wade’s statement, commenting that it was humiliating to the Christian community. The president’s son, Karim Wade (a government minister at the time) apologized for any statement that was in any way offensive to the Christian community.97 Government officials saw the new Ministry as a logical step to assist governmental leaders to better communicate and work with religious leaders, as well as to avoid missteps and miscommunication.98 The Ministry was later abolished. Today, both the President and Prime Minister have advisors on religious affairs.

Government regulation of and direct involvement with religious practice, communities, media, and clerics is quite limited. Imams, mosques, churches, and religious media in Senegal have traditionally operated independently of the government. However, growing security threats in the West African region have prompted Senegal’s government to implement new measures (see Box 3).

3.2 INDIGENOUS BELIEFS: LEGACIES AND REALITIES

A common observation about Senegal is that 94 percent of Senegalese are Muslim, 4 percent are Christian, and 100 percent animist. However, few Senegalese would claim to hold animist beliefs, and a more accurate observation is that there is a lingering legacy of the traditional African religions that pre
dated Islam and Christianity. These traditions, which vary in significant ways by ethnic group, involve a complex series of legacies and practices, including some that color both Islamic and Christian practices; these include matrilinear and patrilinear family structures, attitudes toward spirit worlds, and veneration of ancestors. A 2010 study conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life found that 58 percent of Senegalese surveyed (Muslims and Christians) admitted to believing that sacrifices to spirits or ancestors can protect them from misfortune. Senegalese Muslims also had the highest reported use of amulets and religious healers among Muslims in the Sub-Saharan countries surveyed (see figure 5). Many indigenous traditions have survived, with indigenous beliefs often successfully integrated into both Muslim and Christian belief systems.

Traditional beliefs are visible in daily practices. Various religious traditions accommodate indigenous beliefs and culture; today, belief systems are interwoven and a Senegalese might, for example, wear a gris-gris (talisman or amulet) with Qur’anic or biblical verses inside for protection. Likewise, many households pour water across the threshold every morning to bar evil spirits from entering, while others sprinkle water onto food before eating as protection from evil spirits. Some rub mixtures onto their skin or sacrifice animals, all in the hope of providing protection, luck, and support.

Women traditionally held central positions among several Senegalese ethnic groups (see Box 1); they were political leaders, social leaders, priestesses, and traditional healers. The rise of Islam and Christianity, patriarchal traditions with predominantly male leadership, resulted in a diminution of women’s religious influence and leadership. There are few women in formal religious leadership roles in Senegal today, but at the community level, women have opportunities for informal leadership roles within local religious women's groups.

3.3 ISLAM

North African merchants introduced Islam in Senegal during the eleventh century. Some suggest that the region was originally receptive to Islam in great part due to leaders’ desire to facilitate trade relationships. Islam did not spread quickly or widely until the fifteenth century, which saw the notable rise of the Qadiriyya Sufi order, known locally as a confrerie—and later, the Tijaniyya, Muridiyya, and Layenyes during the nineteenth century. The majority of Muslims in Senegal practice Sufism, or tasawwuf, often referred to as the mystical path of Islam. Sufism stresses the importance of inwardness and reflection, with a focus on “God’s mercy, gentleness, and beauty more than of the wrath, severity, and majesty...” Senegalese Sufi leaders have described Sufism as a spiritual fight against desires, saying that controlling one’s desires and renouncing worldly matters lead to true freedom. Sufism is described as purifying the soul, devoting oneself to God, and cultivating a spiritual link to the creator.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, a leading scholar and philosopher on Islam in Senegal, highlights the complexity involved in defining Sufism:

It is not possible to give a definition of Sufism, for it is not one of the major divisions created by the schisms that have characterized the Islamic world (Shiites, Sunnis, Kharijites); nor is it one of the several juridical or theological schools existing in Islam; Sufism refuses the designation of a philosophical doctrine, even if eminent scholars in the field have written treatises setting forth the metaphysical bases of what is, above all, a spiritual way. In short, the ‘je ne sais quoi’ designated by this term, the origin of which is not known, is better explained as being an attitude, a disposition of the spirit, a way of life that can be found in all the sects and schools and which thus transcends them all.

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**Figure 5. Traditional Beliefs among Senegalese Muslims**

3.3.1 Confréries of Senegal

Senegal has a distinctive form of Islam, as it has one of the highest—if not the highest—percentages of Sufis among the world’s Muslim-majority countries. Adherents of Sufi Islam belong to various orders, which are often referred to in Senegal by their Arabic name—tariqa (singular) or turuq (plural). Each order pays heed to the teachings of its founder and consequently has its own practices, rituals, and leadership structures. These orders are commonly known in Senegal as confréries.\(^{117}\)

Senegal’s four principal confréries are without question the dominant feature of the country’s religious landscape and have great influence in the social, religious, and political spheres. There is no precise data, but an estimated 92 percent of Senegalese belong to the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, Muridiyya, or Layene communities; the Tijaniyya and Muridiyya have the largest numbers of adherents (see figure 6). The quite different histories of each of these four orders affect their modern structure and roles.

Confréries usually have a pyramidal hierarchy. Typically, each confrérie has a Khalife Général, (General Khalife) who is the leader of the confrérie, including all of its branches, in Senegal.\(^{120}\) However, there are also Khalifes who serve as spiritual leaders of branches within an order.\(^{121}\) Khalife Généraux and Khalifes are the eldest son, grandson, great-grandson, etc. of the religious family within a confrérie. The terms marabout, serigne, and sheikh are all used to designate religious leaders (of varying levels of seniority), sometimes interchangeably. The term marabout may also refer to one who makes amulets or to an instructor (also called serigne daara) at a Qur’anic school. A Sufi instructor may also confer the title of sheikh on one who has completed spiritual training. Within these religious families, power is passed to each successive generation; succession normally passes through the living males of one generation before passing to the next generation. Although the line of succession is usually quite clear, some of the confréries have seen struggles and infighting over succession.

Each confrérie is led by one or more familles religieuses, or religious families. Typically, this is the family of the order’s founder (as in the case of the Muridiyya) or an individual that trained under a master in that order abroad (as in the case of several families of the Tijaniyya). Senegal’s Sufi religious families remain a strong social force today, notwithstanding important changes in recent decades. With each successive and larger generation of the religious families, power has become less concentrated. Some scholars believe that the confréries, longtime mainstays of Senegal’s religious landscape, may be on the decline. Alternative social and religious structures have been on the rise, including a Sunni reformist movement and a small movement of Senegalese who have converted to Shi’a Islam,\(^{118}\) perhaps in an attempt to withdraw from the ideological monopoly of the Sufi orders.\(^{119}\) Despite these changes, the vast majority of Senegalese Muslims are still adherents of Senegal’s Sufi orders.

Imams lead prayers at Senegal’s numerous mosques, offering practical spiritual leadership with weekly, if not daily, interaction with followers. In Senegal, imams are commonly selected by the communities based on their religious knowledge, reputation, and demeanor. The typical imam has completed extensive studies in Islam, although there are no official requirements for training. The majority of Senegal’s imams are affiliated with the confréries; others are independent. Imams of confrérie-specific mosques are typically appointed by the Khalife Général or the sheikhs of a confrérie. The Lébou community, an ethnic group largely specific to the Dakar region, traditionally appoints the Imam Ratib of Dakar, who receives a monthly stipend from Senegal’s government—this “official” relationship is a unique case.\(^{122}\)

Notwithstanding the various distinctions that mark the Sufi orders, there are few considerable differences between them in terms of religious beliefs and practices. A Tidiane religious leader in Senegal observed, “We perform the same rites, we have the same models, and we have the same struggles.”\(^{123}\) A few noteworthy differences do exist; for example, the Layenes hold beliefs that distinguish them from the other confréries (e.g., a belief in the Mahdi and the second coming of Jesus). Mourides place great emphasis on work as a spiritual source. Although many of Senegal’s mosques are specific to a certain confrérie, it is not uncommon for a follower of one confrérie to attend the mosque of another.\(^{124}\)

### 3.3.1.1 Qadiriyya

Originally founded in Baghdad in the eleventh century CE, the Qadiriyya was named for Sheikh Abd al-Qādīr al-Jīlānī. The order is thought to have come to Fez through scholars who had come into contact with al-Jīlānī and then spread south to present day Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal. Scholars disagree as to exactly when the Qadiriyya made its way to Senegal, but it may have been as early as the fifteenth century CE.\(^{125}\) The Qadiriyya has a small representation today among Senegal’s Muslim population, but it was once more widespread there, and “[t]o the extent that these Muslims had a Sufi affiliation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, it was Qadiriyya.”\(^{126}\) The Kounta family is the principal religious family of the Qadiriyya in Senegal; it maintains strong ties with the Qadiriyya community in Mauritania, where the order is active.

During the nineteenth century, many followers affiliated with the Qadiriyya were attracted by the propagation of the Tijaniyya, another confrérie that focused on religious duties, morality, and prayer,\(^{127}\) in comparison to the Qadiriyya emphasis on an intellectual pursuit of Islam.\(^{128}\) The Qadiriyya values spiritual devotion and hard work highly, believing that “it is necessary to adore God as if one was about to die, and it is necessary to work as if one will never die.”\(^{129}\) Whereas some Qadiri sheikhs permitted their followers to receive both the Qadiri and Tidiane wārds (prayers and litanies specific to an order)—often to minimize divisions between the orders and loss of followers—Tidiane leaders believed that the wārds were not compatible, forcing its followers to choose between the two orders.\(^{130}\)

In the late 1980s, Qadiri leaders attempted to revitalize the order in Senegal to attract new followers. However, in 1989, with conflict along the Senegal-Mauritania border, largely over grazing rights,\(^{131}\) tens of thousands of Mauritanians in Senegal were repatriated, diplomatic relations were strained, and the border between the two countries was closed.\(^{132}\) The conflict, which lasted until 1991, sparked animosity toward Mauritians in Senegal (and vice versa) that left a lasting legacy. Limitations on travel between the two countries appear to have weakened relationships within the Qadiriyya.\(^{133}\) Negative perceptions of Mauritania made it difficult for the order to attract more followers in Senegal, but Senegalese Qadiri leaders claim that the conflict has not harmed their connections with the religious communities in Mauritania.\(^{134}\)

Historically, the Qadiriyya’s principal activities were agriculture and commerce,\(^{135}\) but today their principal focus is religious education. Qadirs are engaged in various other social activities, such as job training to youth. A preoccupation with high rates of unemployment has spurred different activities and groups to seek to engage youth. The confrérie provides medical care and other social aid to the needy and skills training to women.\(^{136}\)

### 3.3.1.2 Tijaniyya

El Hadj Omar Tall had the largest responsibility in propagating the Tijaniyya in Senegal. He was born in the Fouta Toro region on the border of Senegal and Mauritania. He made the pilgrimage to Mecca around 1827, where he met and studied under Muhammad al-Ghali, a Tidiane Khalife of Hajiz (a region in present-day Saudi Arabia), who revealed the secret of the Tijaniyya to him.\(^{137}\) Tall became a Tidiane Khalife and returned to spread the Tijaniyya throughout Senegal and the sub-region.\(^{138}\) He envisioned West Africa as an Islamic state based on Tidiane inspiration. In order to realize this vision, Tall sought to purify Islam in the region and eliminate non-Islamic beliefs (typically held by pagans and Christian colonists).\(^{139}\) For Tall, this meant spreading the Tijaniyya order through aggressive, often military, means. He also took up arms against the French colonists. While he did not succeed in his goal of creating an Islamic state, he propagated the Tijaniyya throughout the region.\(^{140}\)

Several active Tijaniyya branches in present-day Senegal are led by prominent Senegalese families. These include the Niassène family, the Omarien community, the Tall family, and the Sy family. There are no doctrinal differences among these branches; Senegalese Tidiane leaders say that all share the same beliefs.
and cooperate regularly on activities. They also maintain strong links with Moroccan Tidianes, and many Senegalese Tidianes make a pilgrimage to Fez, where the tomb of the Tijaniyya’s founder is located.

Niassène

The Niassène family is a key religious family in Senegal and the sub-region today. The order’s founder, El Hadji Abdoulaye Niass, was born in Senegal in 1848. He came into direct contact with the Tidianes and received permission to put others on the path of the Tijaniyya. His son, Sheikh Ibrahima Niass, played a critical role in expanding the Niassène family’s foothold in the Tijaniyya in West Africa. The Niassènes are headquartered in Medina Baye, Senegal.

Although most religious families focus on providing a religious education to followers, the Niassène family has built its reputation on the high quality of the education it provides. The name is so synonymous with quality education that parents from several countries send their children to study with the Niassène family. Children come from as close as The Gambia and Guinea and as far away as Nigeria and beyond. The Niassènes have followers in many different countries, and Sheikh Ahmad Tijani bin Ali Cisse (of the Niassène family) was named by a Jordanian Islamic institute as the thirteenth most influential Muslim in the world.

The Niassène family, in view of its size and power, maintains a highly organized structure: “[it] functions like a state...and all its members and representatives work for the Khalife. They work so that things are done as they should be. For example, the Khalife cannot travel everywhere, but he has representatives—ambassadors and ministers—so that his direction and objectives are fulfilled.”

Omariens

The Omarien community, one of the oldest branches of the Tijaniyya in Senegal, takes its name from El Hadj Omar Tall, who was largely responsible for the spread of the Tijaniyya in West Africa. Like the Niassène family, the Omariens are very invested in the promotion of religious education. They have constructed Qur’anic schools, as well as modern schools that complement an Islamic education with French, English, and science curricula. They also engage with many issues affecting those who are impoverished, such as access to health care and nutrition; they have organized free health screenings for communities in need. They also host conferences highlighting concrete actions the Omariens can take to reduce poverty in Senegal. The Omariens’ influence extends to Mali, Nigeria, Mauritania, and Niger.

Sy

The Sy family, an important branch of the Senegalese Tijaniyya, is based in Tivaouane, which is considered the center of the Tijaniyya in Senegal. El Hadj Malick Sy, who was born in the 1850s and pursued extensive studies, founded this Tijaniyya branch. Sy maintained a civil, and at times collaborative, relationship with French colonial authorities and aimed to demonstrate to the French that not all Tidianes used militaristic means to propagate the Tijaniyya as El Hadj Omar Tall had done. Sy studied with some of the great Muslim intellectuals of the period and received the Tidiane wîrd at age 18. He opened his own Islamic center in Tivaouane and is credited with helping to spread the Tijaniyya within the area that is present-day Senegal. The Sy family has been actively involved in promoting peace, solidarity between the confréries, and Christian-Muslim dialogue.

3.3.1.3 Muridiyya

The Muridiyya, or Mouride order, was founded by Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké during the late nineteenth century. The son of a Qadiriyya marabout, Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké was born around 1853 in the village of Mbacké, Senegal. His father transmitted the Qadiri wîrd to him. In his early twenties, Amadou Bamba taught in the school of Islamic sciences that his father had established and began writing his first works on Islam. Amadou Bamba traveled extensively throughout Senegal and Mauritania in his twenties to gain as much knowledge as he could from leading Sufi masters and works. During his travels, he wrote his two most prominent works.

Sheikh Amadou Bamba established an educational system in the area that is today Touba. As the number of his followers grew, this system could no longer accommodate them all. He left Touba in 1895 with those he felt were the most genuine talibés, but he drew others to him. The French colonial administration, already wary of Bamba’s influence, saw this as a sign that Bamba had amassed a following that might undermine their authority. They
arrested Bamba and exiled him; he spent seven years in exile in Gabon (1895-1902). There was a surge of new Mouride followers on his return, reviving the colonial authorities’ suspicions of Bamba. He was exiled again in 1903, this time to Mauritania. After four years in exile, he returned and there was another influx of followers. He spent the rest of his life under house arrest, but Bamba continued to attract followers to his movement.

The Mourides are not the largest order in Senegal, but the order has had perhaps the greatest influence on Senegal’s social, economic, and political development. Mourides have been active in agriculture, a mainstay of the Senegalese economy. By the end of the 1970s, Mouride became synonymous with peanuts; the Mourides’ role in peanut production brought them significant economic gains. Mouride leaders held large tracts of land, and their talibés helped cultivate the crops in exchange for a stake in the crops and spiritual guidance. In 2002, the Khalife was still Senegal’s number one producer of peanuts through his many daaras.

The Mouride hierarchy resembles that of the Niassene family. For members of the religious family of the Mourides

There are commissions with administrative responsibilities, for example education and health. Each tends to be assigned by the Khalife to a branch of the family (there are twelve families). Each [branch] is responsible for a different area. One of the grandsons travels within the diaspora. He’s like the minister of foreign affairs. We all do it. We all travel, but he’s the main one.

The Mourides are active in community development, most prominently because they administer all of Touba’s affairs separately from the government (see Box 5). They organize and finance the construction of mosques, Islamic schools, health infrastructure, and public works projects. Various Mouride associations, such as the Association culturelle religieuse islamique mouride, promote Islamic education, culture, and charitable acts. Mourides are also active and organized in the diaspora. Regardless of distance, they tend to remain devoted to the Mouride community and Touba; Mourides in the diaspora are among the city’s most important financial backers. Remittances are used to develop the infrastructure of Touba and help to build and maintain the Grande Mosquée de Touba (Great Mosque of Touba).

Baay Fall
Sheikh Ibra Fall, who joined Sheikh Amadou Bamba in Touba, shaped the marabout-talibé relationship within the Muridiyya. Fall was one of Bamba’s closest advisors and revered him. Fall favored hard work at the expense of carrying out typical Muslim rites, such as praying, fasting, and completing religious studies. His example spurred a small offshoot of the Muridiyya. His followers, who call themselves the Baay Fall, do not emphasize religious instruction, pray-
three days later. Following Limamou Laye’s death in 1909, in 1887, but he went into voluntary exile on Gorée Island. Mahdi to Layene beliefs, the Issa had declared himself to be an envoy of God; according to Layenes, the Mahdi’s successor could only be the Layene community’s belief system differs from that of the other three major confréries in noteworthy ways, but most significantly in the belief that the Mahdi revealed himself as Limamou Laye in 1883 on the Cap Vert peninsula of Senegal. He was a pacifist, but he attracted the attention of colonial authorities because he had been gaining a following. The French colonial authorities briefly imprisoned him, believing that he was gathering arms for an anti-colonial movement. They tried, unsuccessfully, to arrest him in 1887, but he went into voluntary exile on Gorée Island three days later. Following Limamou Laye’s death in 1909, his son, Issa, became the Layenes’ leader. Layenes believe that Limamou Laye’s son, Issa, was the second coming of Jesus. Issa had declared himself to be an envoy of God; according to Layene beliefs, the Mahdi’s successor could only be the second coming of Jesus, known as Issa in Islam. Today, the Layenes are principally centered in Yoff, a part of Dakar.

The Layenes consider themselves to be socially conservative. One Layene leader commented that the Layenes are very serious, do not allow dancing (even though it is an important part of Senegalese culture), pronounce the name of God frequently, and are known for their purity. Layenes typically marry young so that children are protected from perdition. Children in the Layene community generally begin Muslim rites, such as fasting and ablutions, at younger ages (sometimes even before age 5) than most Muslim children. The teachings of the Mahdi (Limamou Laye) start with educating youth about purity, sincerity, non-violence, and non-discrimination. The emphasis on non-discrimination and equality is a core element demonstrated by referring to each other, Layenes, as “Laye” instead of using last names. The use of this term places all Layenes on an equal level, eliminating discrimination based on names (which can be linked to the traditional caste system). Despite these confrérie differences, the Layenes say that they are able to interact easily with the other orders.

The Layenes, like the other confréries, engage in community development and social works. The Layene leadership and

Box 5. Touba: A holy city with special legal status

Touba, the holy city for Mourides, is located nearly 200 kilometers from Dakar and has a special status, both spiritually and legally. Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké settled the area that is now Touba in 1887 with a vision that it would become a spiritual center. Mouride Khalifes (the descendants of Bamba) are the de facto rulers of the city and sponsor infrastructure projects largely based on plans that Bamba laid out. The monumental Great Mosque of Touba is especially prized. The city has grown rapidly from a small village at independence to a sprawling city today, with a population estimated at about 600,000 in 2014—one of Senegal’s largest cities (many Mourides have publicly contested official census data, asserting that Touba has more than one million inhabitants). The city population swells to several million during the annual Mouride pilgrimage, Magal Touba.

Touba’s administration is unique in Senegal. The Mouride leadership are the rulers, de facto and in law. The city’s layout, services, and administration reflect its special religious status. Some compare it to the Vatican as an autonomous and religiously run entity with a global character (through links to the Mouride diaspora). Touba was recognized in 1976 as a communauté rurale autonome, or autonomous rural community. This designation allows Touba to manage most of its own affairs. The religious leadership oversees the educational system, health care, and public works, though in practice, the government generously supports much of the infrastructure, such as water, electricity, and telecommunications. Voluntary contributions from Mourides, both in Senegal and abroad, support many projects, such as a sewage system, Franco-Arabic schools, a hospital, and an Islamic library. Activities legal in other parts of Senegal, such as dancing, consumption of alcohol, and loud noise, are not permitted within the boundaries of Touba.

Touba’s status has come under debate in recent years, for example as to how far Senegalese law applies to those who live there. In 2014, Touba did not comply with Senegal’s gender parity law, presenting a list of 100 percent men in its list of political candidates. Opinions in Senegal were sharply divided on the topic. The government took no action against Touba’s noncompliance.
Layene associations aim to educate the community on Layene teachings, with a particular focus on Islamic schools and libraries. Certain Layene members believe that religious communities must be key actors in community development in Senegal. Thus, they see Christian efforts to establish schools and health centers as reinforcing the relationship with the community. The Layenes work to establish media programs on the television and radio. Leaders have been forthright in supporting the government’s development objectives set forth in the Emerging Senegal Plan.

### 3.3.2 Dahiras

Community groups known as dahiras are specific to Senegalese Sufism and play a major role in the lives of Senegalese Muslims who wish to be actively involved in their religion beyond attending mosque for Friday prayer. There are many such groups, and their aim is to promote solidarity among their members, support members’ spiritual needs, and provide mutual aid. These community-level associations reinforce unity among members of the same confrérie or followers of the same spiritual guide.

Traditionally, dahiras provided a critical form of social support for Senegalese who moved from rural to urban areas of Senegal. Men often used these networks to advise newcomers on economic opportunities, and many dahiras in the diaspora fulfill this role. The Mourides, in particular, are known for their tight-knit communities and for assisting members to find entrepreneurial opportunities in their new locales. Members of dahiras, both in Senegal and abroad, typically pay a small monthly membership fee.

Dahiras are typically organized into federations (often by confrérie and geographical location) both in Senegal and in the diaspora, such as the Fédération des Dahiras Layenes du Sénégal (Federation of Layene Dahiras of Senegal) and the Fédération des Dahiras Mourides du Grand Sud de la France (Federation of Mouride Dahiras of the South of France). Dahiras are generally independent, but federations can at times mobilize dahiras for specific events. As an example, the Federation of Layene Dahiras of Senegal works to organize collective marriage ceremonies for couples who do not have the means to marry without customary wedding and dowry expenses.

**Box 6. Religious media**

There is an active religious presence in Senegalese media, with religious newspapers, radio shows, and television shows, as well as an increasingly active social media presence. In line with Senegal’s religious composition, most religious media is Islamic. The majority of hosts are men, but there are popular woman hosts. Programs aim primarily to increase the public’s religious knowledge, and they compete to attract more viewers. Traditionally, religious leaders—and particularly the highest leaders of the confréries—have been tasked with providing education and advice to their communities. As religious media and social media expand in Senegal, some Senegalese, especially youth, turn instead to these sources for news and information. Technological innovations are thought to contribute to the changing power dynamics in the confréries of Senegal because they allow religious leaders outside the traditional confrérie hierarchy to gain public exposure and followers.

The expansion of religious media has changed the way that Senegalese live out and discuss their religion. Religious shows allow Senegalese to understand Islam and the different traditions within the religion more fully. The popularity of religious media gives hosts an important platform, which they use to discuss a broad spectrum of subjects. Topics can range from world affairs to more specific religious issues (praying, fasting, ablutions, etc.) to the position of Islam on birth spacing and family dynamics. Events of particular religious importance in Senegal or internationally are also broadcast. Quality control of shows and hosts is a concern for some who focus on the widely varying backgrounds and knowledge of religious sponsors and hosts.

A mosque in Saint-Louis, the former capital of Senegal under French colonial rule.
Dahiras are often segregated by gender. Some women’s groups are a branch of a dahira with both men and women, but other women’s dahiras are independent and self-organizing. An important function of women’s groups is to provide social and material support to each other at critical life moments, such as the birth of a child or the death of a family member. Women in dahiras also support their confrérie by raising money for religious events and gatherings, or even for new religious institutions (e.g., daaras, clinics). An important activity of women’s associations is logistical support for religious gatherings, such as pilgrimages (e.g., Magal Touba, l’Appel) in the form of cooking or other such assistance.

Men’s and women’s dahiras are active on various social issues, for example in raising awareness and mobilizing their members for different causes. Dahiras have instructed members on proper health and food preparation measures prior to religious pilgrimages to prevent the spread of illness, including during the Ebola crisis in West Africa. Some provide information about universal health coverage. Many dahiras also perform charitable acts, such as collecting donations for prisoners and organizing free medical consultations.

Youth participation in dahiras is often active, with activities paralleling those of men and women’s groups. Like other dahiras, youth-focused groups hold informational and training sessions on different issues, including religious and moral values. They also mobilize to support different causes, such as environmental protection, and perform charitable work in the community. When youth face unemployment, the dahiras can provide a sense of solidarity and spiritual guidance for those who may feel hopeless.

3.3.3 Women and gender in Islam

Senegalese Muslims admire women in their roles as mothers and wives. Senegalese point to examples of revered women within their Islamic traditions (such as Mame Diarra Bouso, mother of Sheikh Amadou Bamba) to demonstrate respect for women in the confréries. Given that Islamic leadership in Senegal has historically been patriarchal, women religious leaders are rare (and confrérie leadership passes through a patriarchal hierarchy). There are, nonetheless, some examples of women religious leaders within confréries, notably in the Niassène family, which appoints women as muqaddam (spiritual guides). The absence of women in religious leadership positions may have strong ties to Senegalese culture. A Pew study found that only six percent of Senegalese Muslims surveyed believe that women should be allowed to hold religious leadership positions, significantly lower than other Sub-Saharan countries surveyed.

Muslim women in Senegal have access to religious education and are instrumental in religious rituals. Very few attend Friday prayers; a Pew Forum study found that 26 percent of Senega-
Senegalese women are active in communities, participating in religious groups (such as dahiras) and secular women’s groups. There is an evident secular-religious divide, though, with few women able to straddle the line and participate in both religious and secular women’s associations. Some secular women’s groups argue that Islam either oppresses women or that men have distorted Islam to oppress women. Religious women, on the other hand, often believe that members of women’s secular groups are jaded and anti-religion. Tensions are further exacerbated by groups at odds on socially and religiously sensitive subjects, such as abortion. Collaboration among associations that all work to improve the well-being of Senegalese women is quite limited.

3.3.4 Sunni reformists

For decades, some Senegalese (numbers are not known precisely, but are small) have turned to the Sunni reformist movement for what they often view as a more authentic or pure practice of Islam. The movement began in the 1930s in urban areas of Senegal, largely in reaction to the religious practices of the Sufi confréries. Sunni reformists viewed the hierarchical structure of the confréries as an obstruction that hindered a believer’s direct relationship with God. Senegalese intellectuals of the movement studied Salafi Islam abroad and returned to Senegal to launch organizations, such as Al Falah or Jama’atou Ibadou Rahmane (JIR), that have been proactive in promoting their religious ideals in Senegal.

Al Falah (founded in 1940) and JIR (founded in 1979) share similar objectives. Al Falah seeks to return all Muslims to what they view as the right path, following the teachings of the Qur’an and the sunnah in the image of the Salafis. JIR, in a similar vein, aims to educate Senegalese to promote a “truly Islamic society.” Both associations focus on disseminating their message and have been active in the media. Al Falah has its own mosques and schools, as well as summer camps for children. The association organizes conferences and has a health center in Dakar. It maintains strong ties with Saudi Arabia. JIR has been particularly active in promoting its values through education; the association purports to educate more than 5,000 students each year in its schools, which complement the official national curriculum with studies in Arabic and the Islamic sciences. Sunni reformists appeal to youth through active campus groups at the universities.

Despite ideological differences, Sunni reformists claim that they maintain close relations with the confréries. JIR sends medical teams to religious events organized by the confréries, such as the Magal Touba or Gamou pilgrimages within Senegal, to assist pilgrims. However, some leaders within the confréries comment that JIR members avoid Sufi mosques and would dislike being led in prayer by a Sufi. This differs from the Shi’a community, whose members sometimes pray in the Sufi mosques, and are thought to have a more Sufi approach to religion than Sunni reformists.

In contrast to Senegalese Sufi orders, the reformist movements often have an international perspective and view themselves as part of the larger international Muslim ummah. Increasing access to technology makes it easier for young Senegalese to access media and information from other Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey, for example, have invested in Senegalese public works projects (health structures, Islamic schools, etc.), and many offer scholarships to Senegalese students.

Women members of the Sunni reformist movement often choose more conservative dress than women among Senegal’s Sufi community. Although much of the movement’s growth came in the 1970s, it was during the 1980s that many women in the movement began wearing the hijab—this is often called ibadou in Senegal after Jama’atou Ibadou Rahmame. Many young women in the Sunni movement regard this as an external manifestation of their piety and a way to demonstrate their Sunni identity. Except when they enter a mosque, Senegalese women outside the movement typically either do not cover at all or wear a headscarf that covers the hair only (foulard in French or musoor in Wolof).

3.3.5 Shi’a Islam

There are two principal segments of the Shi’a community in Senegal: the Lebanese diaspora community (which began immigrating to Senegal at the turn of the twentieth century in pursuit of economic opportunity) and Senegalese who converted from Sunni to Shi’a Islam as a result of an intellectual movement largely inspired by the Iranian revolution in 1979. In 1969, the Lebanese sheikh Abdul Monem el-Zein came to Senegal to provide for the spiritual needs of the Lebanese community there, but also to guide Senegal’s tiny Shi’a community—and possibly to convert Senegalese.
Most Senegalese who have converted to Shi’a Islam did so as youth around the time of the Iranian Revolution. As they studied the Iranian Revolution, they learned about Shi’a Islam and began to question the dominance of the confréries and Sufism in Senegalese society. The Iranian embassy promoted Shi’a Islam in Senegal by disseminating materials; their “propaganda” led the Senegalese government to close the Iranian embassy in Dakar in 1984 for several years. Leaders of the Shi’a movement in Senegal still maintain strong relations with Iran.

The Shi’a community constitutes a very small percentage of Senegal’s Muslim population, though precise data is not available. The community is focused on expansion and has opened schools and launched charitable projects through Shi’a development associations, such as the Association Ali Yacine and the Institut Mozdahir International (IMI), with an eye to generating publicity for the movement and gaining new members. Projects focus on economic development, health care, environmental protection, and agriculture. The community is active in the media, disseminating knowledge in their effort to dispel stereotypes about Shi’a Islam. As first and foremost an intellectual movement, Senegalese Shi’a seek to expand their community while maintaining the intellectual quality of the movement with members who have a solid foundation in the principles of Shi’a Islam.

3.4 CHRISTIANITY

Christians are a small minority in Senegal (about four percent of the population), but Christianity in various forms has played important roles in Senegal’s history and in contemporary society. Christianity was first introduced in West Africa in the fifteenth century by Catholic Portuguese explorers who founded churches and sought to convert the local populations. Early in the sixteenth century, Pope Leo X encouraged the King of Portugal’s chaplain to enlist converted Africans in mission activities, believing that they would be more successful in converting local communities than the Portuguese. Catholicism was the dominant faith of the French colonizers, and it played significant roles as part of the colonial legacy. Conscripted evangelizing efforts by Protestants came later. The great majority of Senegalese Christians today are, therefore, Catholic, though Protestant communities are also active.

3.4.1 Catholicism

Early French colonial efforts were closely associated with the Catholic Church and its missionary work, as, from the 1800s, the French expanded their foothold in Senegal. Missionaries came first to St. Louis and then established a post in 1845 near Dakar, as well as several others on Senegal’s coast. Conversion was slow; Islam was firmly rooted in Senegal by then, and the Europeans advancing Catholicism were seen as foreign outsiders. Various congregations worked in Senegal, notably the Sisters of Saint-Joseph de Cluny. In 1848, three Senegalese priests were ordained, setting a precedent for a native, Senegalese priesthood.

French missionaries established Catholic schools and provided health care. Catholics were pioneers in education; the Sœurs de l’Immaculée Conception de Castre established the first school for girls in Dakar. Missionary-founded education expanded across Senegal in the mid to late 1800s, including training schools for Catholic educators. The Catholics also taught about Christianity in local languages. The French 1905 ant clerical law (which also applied in the colonies) slowed the growth of Catholic schools; a result was the establishment of a secular education system (20 years later, the French governor general reversed the ban on Catholic schools). In 1962, Monseigneur Hyacinthe Thiandoum became the first Senegalese Archbishop of Dakar, more firmly grounding the Catholic Church of Senegal as a Senegalese institution.

Senegalese Catholics (who number about 500,000 today) are concentrated in the areas that missionaries could initially most readily reach—the Sine-Saloum region on the coast of Senegal and the Casamance in the south. The Catholic Church of
Senegal has its headquarters in Dakar and is overseen by the Archbishop of Dakar. The Church consists of seven dioceses under the Ecclesiastical Province of Dakar: Dakar, Ziguinchor, Kaolack, Saint-Louis, Thiès, Tambacounda, and Kolda. The Church works with Catholic NGOs, notably Caritas and Catholic Relief Services (see chapter 4).

Senegalese Catholics, like Muslims, actively promote and support community-based groups. Church groups may be specific to youth, women, and others. As with dahiras, these Catholic groups provide social support to members and encourage their spiritual growth. They support each other in times of birth and death. Groups often help organize and manage logistics for religious events. Beyond these activities, the Church supports community development. It provides skills training to youth, literacy training to rural women, health education to girls, and funding for microfinance projects, among others.238

3.4.2 Protestant Christianity

Protestants represent a small percentage of the Senegalese Christian minority, with numerous active denominations. Protestantism spread originally through the efforts of the Paris Evangelical Mission Society, which was largely supported by the Reformed Church of France.239 It became active in Senegal in 1863, focusing its evangelization efforts largely in the Casamance and in Saint-Louis.240 From the middle of the twentieth century, the number of Protestant missionaries increased,241 and there is a quite active presence today in Senegal.

3.4.2.1 Lutheran

The Lutheran Church of Senegal, founded in 1974 by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, was recognized as a religious association of Senegal in 1987.242 Lutheran missionaries from Finland still work closely with the Lutheran Church of Senegal, but Senegalese now lead the church. It is present in six of Senegal’s 14 regions, primarily in areas of northern and central Senegal, with several dozen congregations through these regions. A great part of the church's following is in the region of Fatick, where the headquarters of the Lutheran Church of Senegal is located. There are approximately 6,000 Lutherans in Senegal today,243 making the Lutheran Church one of the larger Protestant churches in Senegal. The community is growing and ordained six new Senegalese pastors in February 2016. Lutherans are active in social and charitable works, supporting health clinics, literacy courses, and agricultural projects, among others.244

3.4.2.2 United Methodist Church

The first United Methodist Church (UMC) missionaries arrived in Senegal in 1998 when the first congregation in Senegal was chartered.245 The UMC has since expanded to 16 churches, with nine ordained pastors as of 2015. The church is growing, but retains a foreign missionary presence. Current goals include creating self-sufficient churches and becoming a member of the Provisional Annual Conference. Most financial support comes from the U.S., but a missionary aim is to develop agricultural programs that will sustain local churches.246

The UMC is involved in various development activities. Women’s skills centers in Dakar and Mbour promote entrepreneurship by teaching sewing and cooking skills, and the church conducts leadership and skills training for prisoners.247 A microcredit program targets groups of women and includes financial management classes; the program boasts a repayment rate over 90 percent to date. The headquarters in Dakar hosts a health clinic, and an active nutrition program serves high-protein, low-carbohydrate meals to up to 50 children one to three times a week.248

3.4.3 Other Christian Groups

The Assembly of God Church, the Baptist Church, and the Presbyterian Church are among other churches active in Senegal. Many maintain a strong foreign missionary presence and have not yet achieved the same level of Senegalese ownership as the Lutheran Church of Senegal.

A tiny, but active, Jehovah’s Witness community has encountered resistance to its efforts to expand. The Ligue des imams et prêcheurs du Sénégal (League of Imams and Preachers of Senegal), an Islamic association, is particularly combative toward the approach of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, claiming that the church is attempting to corrupt Senegal’s youth through dangerous means, particularly by trying to convert populations they see as vulnerable—such as women, youth, and children—at times when the man of the house is not present.249 Objections have gone beyond...
verbal criticism: in 2011, a Jehovah’s Witness temple in Dakar was vandalized. Other churches, particularly evangelical churches, have also been the targets of vandalism in Senegal in recent years linked to complaints that they were attempting to turn Muslim and Catholic youth away from their faith.

3.5 INTERRELIGIOUS RELATIONS

Islam is Senegal’s dominant religion, but the Christian communities and minority Muslim groups have achieved a careful balance within society, and interreligious relations are generally characterized as peaceful and cooperative. Religious tolerance and cooperation serve as a point of pride for the Senegalese; they also constitute an element of the Senegalese identity. There are many examples of Senegalese openness to dialogue and religious tolerance. However, wise observers comment that continued efforts and dialogue are needed to realize true religious tolerance, understanding, and cooperation (see Box 8), especially in light of regional, religiously-linked tensions. Senegalese point to interreligious marriages, including those of several Senegalese presidents, as evidence of the tolerant culture. Some Senegalese families count both Christian and Muslim religious leaders among their numbers—18 percent of Senegalese Muslims responded in a survey that they have an immediate family member who is Christian. A family that has both Muslim and Christian members, they say, would not persecute based on religion. Abbé Jacques Seck comments:

There are several Muslim-Christian cemeteries in Senegal, like this one in Joal-Fadiouth.

Box 8. Muslim-Christian relations by the numbers

In 2013, Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life released a study that examined Muslim-Christian relations in nineteen sub-Saharan African countries, including Senegal. In Senegal, researchers conducted 1,000 public opinion surveys (given few responses from Senegalese Christians, data is from surveyed Muslims only). It highlighted many positive aspects of Muslim-Christian relations (see figure 7). Involvement in interreligious activities and a focus on religious commonalities point to the cooperation, understanding, and respect on which Senegalese pride themselves.

However, responses about perceptions of hostility and religious conflict indicate that interreligious relations are perhaps not as idyllic as many Senegalese present (see figure 8). Low rates of understanding of Christianity among Senegalese Muslims suggest that efforts are needed to achieve true understanding between Muslims and Christians.

Figure 7. Positive interreligious views among Senegalese Muslims

The reason for this mutual respect is also cultural. Our African ethnic heritage has traditionally focused on cultivating a common vision, a common peace within villages, cities, and throughout Senegal… Many families are in fact interfaith themselves, so it would not be very practical to live with intolerance. During my lifetime, there have also been explicit outreach programs, including a commission whose mission was to improve dialogue between the religions of Senegal.254

Senegal’s government recognizes both Islamic and Christian holidays, including Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Christmas, Easter, and Ascension. Offices are closed and both Christians and Muslims take time off during each other’s holidays. These holidays form part of Senegal’s shared inheritance. Muslims often invite Christian friends and neighbors to their houses to share food for Muslim holidays, and vice versa. Some mosques in Dakar even decorate with lights during the Christmas season. Tolerance and cooperation are apparent in the existence of Muslim-Christian cemeteries.

National leadership demonstrates religious tolerance and diversity. Senegal’s first president following independence, Léopold Sédar Senghor, was Catholic. All subsequent presidents have been Muslims, though some first ladies have come from other religious traditions. Elisabeth Diouf, the first lady during Abdou Diouf’s 20-year presidency, is a devout Catholic, and it is widely believed that Viviane Wade, wife of Senegal’s third president, is Catholic (she is quite private about her religious beliefs). Abbé Jacques Seck, a Senegalese Catholic leader, doubted that this was likely to happen again, suggesting that Senegal’s Muslim character is more politically noteworthy today and that Catholic influence has waned at least to a degree.255 Religious intolerance has often been marked by strong public objection and outcry. For example, public outcry followed after Jeune Afrique published a cartoon in January 2016 widely seen as insulting to the Mouride founder Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké; the publisher removed the cartoon from its website.

3.6 RELIGIOUS NETWORKS AND THE SENEGALESE DIASPORA

Growing numbers of Senegalese—mostly men—have emigrated to countries abroad, especially since the 1970s, to seek economic opportunities, spurred by high poverty and unemployment rates at home. In addition to other West and Central African countries, France, the United States, Italy, Canada, Spain, Greece, and South Africa are popular destinations. Remittances from emigrants represent an important contribution
The Senegalese diaspora tends to be active in their religious communities, maintaining strong ties. *Dahiras* of the various *confréries* in the diaspora provide support to emigrants not only by catering to their spiritual needs, but also material needs—for example, advising on legal matters and entrepreneurial strategies. The *dahiras* create a sense of solidarity, and members typically send as much money as they can spare back to Senegal to support religious leaders and communities. Mourides in the diaspora are known for their generous contributions to infrastructure and development projects in the Mouride holy city of Touba.

The Mouride community, in particular, has strong links within the diaspora. Significant Mouride emigration began in the 1970s and 1980s in response to droughts and falling peanut prices. New arrivals are welcomed by Mouride *dahiras* set up in various global cities, making them popular destinations with fairly comprehensive support that could include housing, financial, spiritual, and employment opportunities. The Mourides are known for giving credits and loans to each other to support entrepreneurial endeavors. The Mouride community has established the Kara International Money Exchange, which functions much like a rapid, low fee version of Western Union. Kara is designed for ease of use so even illiterate vendors can participate. Little documentation is required for transfer, but this does not make the system more vulnerable to theft or fraud, as users are bound by the values of the *confrérie*.

Senegalese Tidianes often gather separately within diaspora communities based on affiliation—the Sy family of Tivaouane, the Niassène family of Medina-Baye, Kaolack, etc. However, they come together for religious events and celebrations, such as the *Gamou* celebration of the birth of the Prophet, as well as conferences and visits of religious figures from Senegal. Senegalese Christians have also established organizations in the diaspora. The Senegalese Catholic Association of America, for example, provides spiritual guidance to members and supports development efforts in Senegal by offering assistance for poverty reduction projects, an orphanage in Dakar, and clinics throughout the country.

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**Table 4. Senegalese in the Diaspora by the Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emigrants</th>
<th>636,200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emigrants as percentage of population</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigration rate of tertiary-educated population</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigration rate of physicians born in Senegal</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top destination countries in Africa</th>
<th>The Gambia</th>
<th>Mauritania</th>
<th>Côte d’Ivoire</th>
<th>Gabon</th>
<th>Mali</th>
<th>Guinea-Bissau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top destination countries outside of Africa</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Among the Tidiane communities, the Niassène family, for example, has made great efforts to cultivate strong ties with its U.S. communities through regular visits and the establishment of religious centers in New York. Many Niassène-affiliated Tidianes in the U.S. today are African American. The Niassène family has promoted marriages between Senegalese and African American followers, and there are opportunities for American followers to study Islam among the Niassène community in Senegal.
4.1 CIVIL ENGAGEMENT, INCLUDING RELIGIOUS MOTIVATION

A wide variety of organizations with religious links and inspiration are part of Senegal’s vibrant civil society, and they are intricately involved in many facets of development work. As in other world regions, there is ambivalence as to whether faith institutions should be considered as civil society or are better treated in a distinct category. The wide range of faith-linked institutions—and the degree to which their faith affiliation is formal and explicit—further complicates the issue. Nonetheless, faith-linked institutions operate within the broad context of civil society for many purposes, and many civil society organizations are, formally or informally, inspired by faith or affiliated with religious entities. In Senegal, those with religious links are subject to the same regulatory mechanisms and coordination arrangements, such as they are, as other civil society organizations.

Senegal’s contemporary civil society reflects legacies from colonial rule and responses to evolving political and social developments. A wide variety of organizations with religious links and inspiration are part of Senegal’s vibrant civil society, and they are intricately involved in many facets of development work. As in other world regions, there is ambivalence as to whether faith institutions should be considered as civil society or are better treated in a distinct category. The wide range of faith-linked institutions—and the degree to which their faith affiliation is formal and explicit—further complicates the issue. Nonetheless, faith-linked institutions operate within the broad context of civil society for many purposes, and many civil society organizations are, formally or informally, inspired by faith or affiliated with religious entities. In Senegal, those with religious links are subject to the same regulatory mechanisms and coordination arrangements, such as they are, as other civil society organizations.

Revive societal bonds that were diluted during the colonial era and disrupted by modernization, notably urbanization. Many early civil society organizations were local grassroots entities that revolved largely around religious, cultural, and ethnic linkages. Formal non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—both national and international—began to multiply in the late 1970s.

A major transformation began with the droughts of the early 1970s that devastated Senegal and neighboring countries, sparking a severe agricultural crisis. It continued with the worldwide economic downturn of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Government budgets for social sectors, such as health and education, were severely strained, prompting communities to take on additional responsibilities. The government introduced tax exemptions to encourage civil society involvement in economic activities to spur development and encouraged Senegalese to establish economic interest groups. The 1990s saw a shift as the efforts of locally oriented groups were supplemented by organizations that took on more active involvement in national issues and advocacy, including human rights. Political interventions by civil society increased. The focus was on various issues related to democratic institutions...
and governance, with groups targeting women’s rights, as well as human and civil rights. Mass mobilization of social groups contributed in significant ways to reforms and social change, including advances in gender equality and activism around education reform.

In a comparative framework, Senegal’s CBOs, NGOs, and other civil society groups are numerous and active in a region of Africa where governments can be suspicious of civil society and, at times, work actively to restrict it. A 2011 Civicus report highlighted both strengths and weaknesses of Senegalese civil society. Strengths include its diversity and often active role as a mediator between state and society. Challenges include competition for scarce resources and funding, as well as weak coordination. The report highlights the central historical and social significance of religious aspects of civil society, but also notes important questions and unresolved issues, starting with definitions of civil society and its roles. The following comment is telling as a perception of where fault lines lie: “the role of religious groups, especially the marabouts [sic], is still problematic when they act as an intermediary between the state and the population. At times the stabilising forces of religion are the same forces which prevent citizens from demanding their rights, at the right moment and in an organized manner.”

4.1.1 The civil society regulatory environment

Senegal’s constitution recognizes freedom of association and many groups form and operate in a relatively free environment. The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Women, the Family, and Social Development oversee registration and regulation. All types of organizations are legally prohibited from identifying with a race, ethnic group, sex, sect, language, or region. Formally registered organizations in Senegal operate in three legal forms: associations, foundations, and NGOs. Associations are the easiest to form and operate, whereas NGOs have the highest legal barriers to formation, typically requiring an initial two years as an association.

Some 11,600 associations currently operate in Senegal; they are counted as 5,000 community associations; 2,500 sporting and cultural associations; 2,000 religious associations; 700 professional associations, including 250 trade unions, 300 educational, and 150 health associations; and more than 200 political associations. There are 487 registered NGOs—303 national and 184 foreign. There are no restrictions on faith-based organizations per se, so long as they do not discriminate based on race or religion.

Many entities exist informally as organisations communautaires de base, or community-based organizations (CBOs). Typically working at the local level, CBOs rarely have legal status, and no specific legal framework governs them. The scope and impact of these organizations are difficult to assess in a generalized manner because their work is localized, and many make little use of marketing materials and public communication channels.

4.2 FAITH ACTORS AND DEVELOPMENT

Virtually all development activities and issues in Senegal have religious dimensions. Religious beliefs are a factor in attitudes and decision-making at all levels and influence many behaviors. Thus, religious beliefs have many, often complex, implications for development. Faith communities in Senegal—notably Islam and Christianity—have long traditions of involvement in activities that span many sectors of the development agenda. The most striking instance is education, formal and informal, but religious traditions and engagement are features in various sectors. The centrality (and complexity) of these religious dimensions emerged in many WFDD interviews with both secular and faith-inspired organizations. Religion was highlighted as a motivating factor for social work and for charitable contributions—including among employees of secular organizations—and in determining priorities. Both faith and secular actors asserted that faith calls them to action, with many citing a belief, often expressed in religious terms, that everyone deserves a dignified life.

This report uses the term faith-inspired organization (FIO), in contrast to the commonly used faith-based organization (FBO), to highlight the range of organizations engaged in development work and their complex and varied faith or religious beliefs. The FIO designation aims to capture a wider range of actors than FBO, which suggests direct organizational links. The mission and vision of an FIO is inspired or guided by the teachings of a religious tradition or traditions, or an organization’s history may be deeply rooted in such traditions. This definition reflects the wide diversity among FIOs in Senegal and the different roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in their missions and operations. Many organizations cite religious values as the primary motivation for their work, but the ways in which religious values and development work are understood and advanced differ; one example is how directly religious language or efforts to gain religious followers should, and should not, be involved in service provision. FIOs fall broadly along a range extending from large well-funded transnational organizations like World Vision, Islamic Relief, and Caritas Internationalis to smaller Senegalese NGOs and associations to informal local organizations. Links to religious institutions may be unstated and rather complex. Some organizations appear on the surface to be secular but are colored by the faith of their staff, which emerges in conversations about motivations for social and community development.
Larger and more formal civil society institutions are easily identifiable and attract the most focus. However, local FIOs are a common feature of communities, and they also play vital roles in development. There is, however, no overall “mapping” or sound estimate of numbers and reach. Situated within the community, these organizations operate with an intimate understanding of the context and are often respected in part because of their religious ethos. Their work is often, though not always, transparent and they are directly accountable to the communities. CBOs, many of which have faith links, respond to specific needs, for example mobilizing resources to install wells with pumps. CBOs may strategically seek the support of local religious leaders, who are often aware of those most in need, especially marginalized individuals and communities. The potential for religious leaders to quickly mobilize their community is a valuable asset; however, as is true in many community-driven strategies, careful oversight and coordination may be needed to mitigate inconsistency, repetition, or exclusionary activities.

Field research between June 2014 and February 2016 to map the activities of FIOs in Senegal focused on Islamic, Christian, Jewish, and multi-faith organizations working at the local, national, and international level, as well as on specific issues focused on areas where development and faith agendas are closely linked. Christian FIOs were often the easiest to identify in Muslim-majority Senegal for various reasons, including name recognition (several international organizations), web presence, and explicit faith affiliation. Contributions of FIOs to development efforts extend across many domains, ranging from education and health to peacebuilding and food security. Broad generalizations about FIOs working in Senegal are problematic given patchy data and wide diversity. This chapter provides a broad introduction to several key development sectors, highlighting their religious dimensions, then presents selected organizations and their work, to illustrate the range and nature of engagement. The analysis does not seek to compare or assess their effectiveness or their overall impact. Such an evaluation would illuminate the contributions of FIOs to broader development strategies and their distinctive inputs, but was beyond the scope of the present research project.

4.2.1 Education

Religion plays a central role in both education delivery and policy in Senegal, with debates dating back to the pre-independence era. There are parallel secular and religious education systems, and the balance or intersections of these are complex and often not well understood. Poor management of some informal Qur’anic schools, for example, is clearly problematic but there are also examples of excellence among them. Despite Senegal’s secular constitution and traditions, there have been continuing demands, now enacted in policy, to include religious instruction in the public school curriculum. This is reflected in the growth of Franco-Arabic schools—both public and private—that offer instruction in both French and Arabic and include both secular and religious aspects within the curriculum. With a significant number of private, religiously-operated schools (from pre-school to Catholic and Islamic universities), a wide range of religious organizations play important, direct roles in education.

Senegal has seen significant gains in school enrollment and literacy rates in recent decades, the result of both a culture that values education and government policy focus and investments. However, there are significant gaps and problem areas. Priority in public discourse is reflected in significant budget outlays: education accounted for 41 percent of the total government budget in 2012 and education expenditures increased by 62.5 percent between 2003 and 2006. In 2013, Senegal’s primary school enrollment (7-12) counted 1.58 million students and lower secondary (13-16) 1.23 million, with 7,795 public primary schools and 1,189 private schools. An estimated 87 percent of students at the primary level attended public schools, while the rest attended registered private schools (2013).

Official data on education highlight steady increases in net primary school enrollment, which doubled between 1981 and 2014, to 73 percent. Attendance rates at primary level vary widely from well over 90 percent of school-age children in urban areas to as low as 10 percent in some rural areas. Student performance is a significant issue. The gross primary completion rate in 2014 was 61 percent, and of those who continue to secondary school, a great number drop out—the lower secondary-level completion rate was only 41.2 percent. Literacy rates are low by international standards, with 70 percent of youth aged 15-24 literate, and 56 percent of the population aged 15 and over.

Disparities within the education system are a central issue with the major gaps being rural/urban and boys/girls. UNDP’s 2014 Human Development Report noted that Senegal’s Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.485—ranking 163 of 187—and its Inequality-Adjusted HDI (IHDI) was only 0.326. The HDI is calculated based on health, education, and income, representing the national average on human development achievements. The IDHI provides a more comprehensive outlook on a country, showing how the human development achievements are distributed. Senegal lost nearly one-third of its HDI value, and education inequalities accounted for nearly 45 percent of this loss.

The number of girls attending schools has increased rapidly in recent decades and in some cases, enrollment rates for girls are higher than for boys. In 2012, the ratio of 1.09 girls in primary school for every boy was a notable change from 0.73 in 1990. However, more boys continue to the secondary
level than girls—in 2011, 91 girls were enrolled in secondary school for every 100 boys, though this represents substantial progress from 1990 when the secondary gross enrollment ratio was 0.50. Beyond access to education, girls and women lag in other ways. Only 51 percent of females ages 15-24 were literate in 2013, and the literacy ratio of females to males ages 15-24 was 0.83, an increase from just 0.57 in 1988.

Senegalese children can attend public or private schools, but quality is a major challenge for both. Education is compulsory and free for children ages 6-16, though costs for materials, unofficial costs, and registration fees, while low, can be prohibitive for the poorest families. Public schools are largely accessible to communities throughout Senegal. However, rising enrollments have strained resources, leading to inadequate infrastructure, double-shift schooling, and large class sizes. Political and social turbulence have long affected education quality, notably teacher strikes that abbreviate academic years. This undermines the popularity of public schools and is one reason that parents send their children to alternative, often religious, schools. Compared to private school students, who had an 88 percent success rate on primary leaving certificate exams, the rate for public school students stood at only 53 percent.

Private sector education helps to fill the gaps and it includes a significant number of religiously run schools. Private schools provide education not only for the children of the elite; middle

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**Box 9. Types of schools in Senegal**

*Public schools:* Government run institutions comprise a majority of schools in Senegal. Reforms in 2004 allowed up to four hours of religious education in the public schools. Some FIOs in partnership with the government construct classrooms to meet the demands of growing enrollments and poor infrastructure (temporary classrooms, etc.).

*Private, secular schools:* Privately run institutions, recognized by the government. These schools are required to follow the government-approved curriculum, use government recommended textbooks, and employ licensed teaching staff. Some receive government subsidies for operating expenses.

*Traditional Qur’anic Schools, daaras:* These schools are largely informal schools established by a Qur’anic teacher, marabout, and largely teach the Qur’an. This system is very decentralized and the government regulates few schools. (See Box 11. Talibès and Daraas.)

*‘Modern’ daaras:* Privately run, but are regulated and approved by the government as private schools; some receive government support. This group of schools is a small segment, but seen as a potential area for expansion. Modern daaras may offer trilingual instruction, with Arabic, French, and national languages.

*Franco-Arabic private schools:* hybrid form of school that teaches both in Arabic and French and that includes religious education (Qur’anic studies, etc.) and the normal public curriculum. These schools are generally licensed by the government.

*Franco-Arabic public schools:* With the 2004 reforms, these schools were incorporated into the government school system. Their basic structure is similar to their private counterparts. Public Franco-Arabic schools have increased steadily in number, from 9 schools in 2003 to 103 schools in 2009.

*Private Christian Schools:* The majority of private Christian schools are Catholic, however some Protestant affiliated schools exist. (See Box 10. Catholics and education.)
and working class families make enormous sacrifices to pay for private education because they believe it offers a more secure economic future for their children and instills sound values. Students from registered private institutions are admitted to state examinations and may receive state diplomas. In 2009, about 88 percent of primary schools were public and secular, 1.3 percent public Franco-Arabic, 6.1 percent private and secular, 2.9 percent private Franco-Arabic, 1.7 percent private Catholic, and 0.1 percent private Protestant. The share of private education is higher at the secondary level than primary (33.6 percent versus 13.2 percent).

Religious education is a significant issue and the focus of policy debate and practical action. The education reform of 2004 allowed for optional religious education in public school curriculum, reflecting longstanding demands in political discourse. Up to four hours of religious education a week are permitted in Senegal’s public elementary schools, and parents can choose to enroll their children in religious classes, with the option to select either a Muslim or Christian curriculum. The same education reform recognized Franco-Arabic schools and aimed to create modern daaras and to modernize existing daaras by integrating trilingual instruction—Arabic, French, and national languages. Islamic and Arabic schools have long appealed to families in Muslim-majority Senegal. Language is an important issue in the education sector; literacy rates often do not take into account those literate in Arabic or local languages. Some statistics do not include those enrolled in daaras in gross and net enrollment rates.

Apart from formal and informal educational institutions (including universities and various technical training colleges), there are a wide variety of institutions and programs focused on informal education, particularly adult education. These include literacy programs and a range of traditional and modern apprenticeships. Various religious institutions and FIOs are involved in such programs.

The following organizations and profiles illustrate the work of FIOs in the education sector and trends in religious education. Those selected serve as examples of approaches and engagement but are not fully representative of all education activities relating to religion, given their wide range and diversity.

### 4.2.1.1 Caritas Senegal

Caritas Senegal, established in 1966, shortly after Senegal’s independence, gained NGO status in 1995. The mission of Caritas Internationalis, the international FIO that Caritas Senegal is part of, is to serve the poor and to promote charity and justice throughout the world. It serves as the official “helping hand of the Church.” Caritas Senegal draws on the social teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church to inform its work and does not proselytize, but works to transmit the values within the Gospel that it views as universal values. Caritas Senegal avoids all forms of discrimination: ethnic, political, and religious. Projects are centered on education, food security, migration assistance, and improved access to water and sanitation. In each area, at both the local and national levels, the goals are to raise awareness and to contribute to improving lives.

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Box 10. Catholics and education

The Catholic Church in Senegal plays an active role in education and the Office National de l’Enseignement Catholique du Senegal (National Office of Catholic Teaching of Senegal, ONECS) oversees their educational efforts. During the 2013-2014 school year, there were 298 formal Catholic schools in Senegal, ranging from pre-schools to two universities (in Dakar and Ziguinchor, part of the Université Catholique de l’Afrique de l’Ouest, or the Catholic University of West Africa), and educating over 107,000 students. In addition to its formal schools, Catholic Church initiatives provide informal education to 50,000 children in rural villages who do not have access to other institutions.

The Catholic teaching philosophy focuses on the development of an individual as a whole, including material knowledge, values, and the spiritual. Catholic school students come from Senegal’s various faith traditions, where the majority of students are Muslim, and while a spiritual education is included, proselytism is explicitly excluded and other faiths are respected. Catholic schools today appeal to those seeking a rigorous education, and they have a reputation for providing high-quality education; students typically perform well on exams. Brother Jean Marie Thior, the National Secretary of ONECS attributes this to teacher training, where they are taught to communicate knowledge, know-how, and social skills, as well as leading by example. At the primary school level, the teachers are all Catholic by design, but at higher levels, there are about 400 non-Catholic teachers who, while not Catholic, are expected to respect the spirit of Catholic education.

The Catholic Church and ONECS foster a positive relationship with the government and the Ministry of Education. ONECS sees that its formal schools adhere to government requirements, including school hours and curriculum content. The government in return provides a small annual subsidy to reward mutual efforts in education. Private Catholic schools are a popular option for many families. However, they can be much more expensive than public schools, and are out of reach for many families.

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Caritas’ Senegal team aims to tailor its projects to social demand. Given parental demand for better quality education and the importance of education within the Catholic tradition, it has been especially active in this sector. Two focus areas have been improving facilities and teacher training. Caritas has worked with the Senegalese government to expand educational facilities, building public elementary and high schools for which the government provides teachers. The Catholic Church is known for its emphasis on teacher development, and Caritas extends that to teachers within the public school system.

Caritas offers a child sponsorship program that assists children from the poorest families in Senegal and provides students with school supplies. Their child sponsorship program is need-based and available to children of all faiths. This program covers the public school fees, which can be prohibitive for some students.

**Box 11. Talibés and Daaras**

Many parents in Muslim-majority Senegal seek an Islamic education for their children. Daaras, or Qur’anic schools, are seen to provide children with both a religious and moral education. Daaras are outside the formal, regulated educational system and vary greatly in structure, hours of instruction, educational content, and instructor training. Many daaras focus exclusively on religious education, typically through rote memorization of the Qur’an and instruction in the Islamic sciences and practice. Some daaras function as a complementary form of education through afterschool or weekend programs, while others are the primary source of education for children and operate as boarding schools. The schools typically provide room and board for students, often at low or no cost.

Students at the daaras are known as talibés. Recent estimate show that ten percent of school age Senegalese children attend only Qur’anic school (164,000), whereas many children attend both Qur’anic and modern schools (820,000). Many boys are sent to live in these schools—typically in another city—while studying and memorizing the Qur’an, whereas girls typically receive a Qur’anic education close to home. Parents may choose to send their sons to study in the daaras, thus fulfilling their obligation to provide them a religious (and moral) education. Many Senegalese entrust their children to the instructors, called marabouts, trusting them as selfless religious leaders motivated by their faith. Students come not only from Senegal, but also surrounding countries.

Traditionally, daaras offered education, with room and board, in rural areas. Talibés carried out farm work in the daaras’ fields, which provided for the needs of the daaras and the marabouts’ operating expenses. The 1970s droughts spurred the rural exodus, and led to transfer or establishment of daaras in the cities. A new system emerged where many marabouts faced difficulties providing for their talibés without the agricultural system they had previously depended upon. To make ends meet, some marabouts began sending the talibés into the streets between classes to ask for money. It is common today to see talibés in the streets asking for money, rice, and sugar throughout the day.

The daara system has come under scrutiny because of reported cases of child mistreatment. Many daaras provide their students with a quality education and proper care, but some have poor living conditions and require their students to go into the streets to ask for money. There have been reports of marabouts abusing children who do not raise the required amount of money. A 2010 Human Rights Watch report indicated that at least 50,000 children in Senegal’s daaras may live in poor conditions, at times facing abuse or exploitation. Dr. Rudolph T. Ware III, a scholar on Islam in Africa, provides a contrasting perspective on Qur’anic education in Senegal, explaining the roots of and motivation for several practices of knowledge transmission that are often perceived as controversial. Senegal’s government, NGOs, and religious leaders are involved in a variety of efforts to modernize and better regulate the daara system, but there is no consensus or coherent reform program at present.
4.2.1.2 Franco-Arabic Schools

The first Franco-Arabic school in Senegal opened its doors in 1963. A private institution, it sought to combine the state sponsored curriculum with an Arabic and Islamic education. The number of private Franco-Arabic schools had grown to 233 as of 2009, comprising almost three percent of all formal primary schools. More than half of the schools are located in Dakar. Public Franco-Arabic schools began to be established in 2002, although the education reform law officially sanctioning such schools was not passed until 2004.

The reforms were successfully enacted as previously disjointed actors and efforts came together with a common goal of incorporating Arabic and Islamic studies into the public educational system. Key actors included Cheikh Mbow, the Director of the Division of Arabic education, members of Syndicat national des enseignants de langue arabe du Sénégal (The National Union of Arabic Teachers of Senegal, SNELAS), and members of Islamic organizations. Many of these actors held strategic positions within the Ministry of Education and were at the center of initiatives to add religious education into the school system. Mbow said, “We need to create a model that will be at the intersection between the classic educational model and the demand for a religious education.”

The motivation for school reform was the perceived gap in the curriculum and its secular focus, but it was also in reaction to the classification of schools. The majority of the leaders of the reform were current or former members of SNELAS, and they viewed the divide between the formal education system and the informal system, which was often religious education, as unjust. Their advocacy resulted in the facets of education reform that involved religious education.

4.2.1.3 African American Islamic Institute

The African American Islamic Institute (AAII) was founded in Senegal’s Kaolack region in 1988 by Sheikh Hassan Ali Cisse, a leading member of the influential Niassène family of the Tijaniyya, with operations in 17 countries; headquarters today are in the United States. AAII’s work is rooted in the Islamic concept of nasrul ‘ilm, or knowledge benefiting...
humanity, which promotes the practices of feeding the hungry; caring for the sick; protecting the interests of women and children; teaching and pursuing knowledge; and fostering peace among mankind. AAII is involved broadly in human development, with a particular focus on education, health, women's empowerment, child welfare, hunger, poverty, and peacebuilding.

AAII views universal education, for both girls and boys, as a basic human right supported by Islamic teachings, especially in passages about literacy and the pursuit of knowledge. It holds that providing an Islamic education can counter radical ideologies and promote peace in Senegalese society. AAII has branches in Medina-Baye, Kaolack, and Kossi-Atlanta and it operates an International Islamic Schools Program consisting of three schools (a Qur’anic school, an Arabic school, a pre-primary school) and two adult literacy initiatives (a women's literacy project, and an adult literacy and education project). The women's literacy initiative has taught over 5,000 women to read and write in their local languages. The adult literacy initiative operates in Kossi-Atlanta and offers both academic and computer literacy for men and women in rural areas in order to improve their economic stability and give them the ability to educate their children.

AAII's education programs respond to the demands of Senegalese society, while also offering an education in Senegalese Sufi scholarship, which appeals to African American and other international Muslim students. The International Islamic Schools program is open to international students from Africa, America, and Europe, preparing them for higher education opportunities. The program offers language courses in English, French, Arabic, and Wolof, as well as a variety of academic courses needed to continue in conventional educational systems.

The Qur’anic school offers year-round classes for 1,800 students, both boys and girls. It has an international faculty and the curriculum focuses on teaching students to read, write, and memorize verses of the Qur’an. Students work toward the goal of becoming Hafiz, or one who has committed the entire Qur’an to memory. Most students begin Qur’anic education around age ten, spend two or three years completing their Qur’anic education, and then continue studies in secular or Arabic schools. A visit by (founder) Imam Cisse to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s motivated African American parents to send their children to study with him; many of those students are now imams.

The Arabic school offers an immersive Arabic primary and secondary school education with a full academic curriculum that complements conventional coursework with a religious curriculum. Courses include Islamic jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, literature, mathematics, and history. The school is open for ten months of the year and had 600 students as of 2008. Anecdotal reports suggest that graduates of the program go on to succeed in both the secular and religious worlds, including one young woman who is now in medical school. The pre-primary school teaches 250 children from ages three to five reading, Islamic manners, memorization of short chapters of the Qur’an, pre-computational skills, and socialization in an Islamic environment.

4.2.2 Orphans and vulnerable children

Children’s welfare presents multiple and overlapping challenges in Senegal and is a central focus for various FIOs. Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are “orphans and other groups of children who are more exposed to risks than their peers,” as defined by the World Bank. Many factors contribute to varying degrees and types of vulnerability. Critical issues for Senegal include child labor, female genital cutting (FGC; see box 13), malnutrition, some instances of trafficking, and limited access to education and its poor quality. The most visible vulnerable children are those on the streets, some of them talibés and others orphans. Youth, an important category at the borderlines of OVC, face many challenges. The government’s Stratégie nationale de protection de l’enfant (National Strategy for Child Protection, SNPE), aims to establish an integrated national system of child protection, including public and private sector actors, to support and promote positive social change. Various FIOs are directly or indirectly involved in aspects of the strategy.

Faith communities globally have through history given high priority to care of OVC, and especially orphans; this tradition is significant in Senegal. In Islam, the Prophet taught that those who care for others will be highly esteemed and rewarded and Christianity also highlights care for the most vulnerable. An estimated seven percent of Senegalese children under 18 years old are paternal, maternal, or double orphans. In 2005, approximately 250,000 children were living without a mother, 370,000 without a father, and 67,000 had lost both parents. Socially, many Senegalese count les enfants de la rue (street children) within the larger category of orphans (see quote). These children often have living parents, but they receive little (if any) support from their families—education, food, etc. There are few orphanages in Senegal, but those that exist are typically faith-inspired. The extended family often takes in orphans, possibly explaining the low prevalence of institutional facilities for orphans. More common are a range of child sponsorship programs that support children within a community framework.

Other children besides orphans face various vulnerabilities. Some religious groups focus on these issues in specific programs and as advocates. Child labor, linked to limited access to
education in part due to school overcrowding and high cost, is a leading issue. Under-education is a critical challenge with only 27.4 percent of appropriate age children attending secondary school. Many work instead. DHS 2014 data indicate that 26.5 percent of children in Senegal age five to 17 worked during the week prior to the survey (economic activities or domestic tasks), and boys were more than twice as likely to work as girls. Child labor is three times higher in rural than in urban areas (35.8 percent compared to 11.7 percent). Agriculture, a mainstay of the Senegalese economy, is one of the largest employers of child laborers: 85.6 percent of children ages 7-14 engaged in economic activities in 2011 were working in agriculture.

Malnutrition affects many Senegalese children and has long-lasting effects on their wellbeing; the stunting rate for children under five was 18.7 percent (2014), with the rate in rural areas almost double that in urban areas (23.2 percent versus 12.4 percent). Stunting, or low height for age, is a sign of chronic malnutrition and can lead to decreased cognitive, motor, and language development in the short-term, and affect school performance, work capacity, and work productivity in the long-term; proper nutrition before age five is particularly important. Some FIOs recognize this vulnerability and have responded with programs that include efforts to combat malnutrition, including food fortification, deworming, and vitamin supplements. However, this is rarely a central priority. There are various individual sponsorship programs, some of which address nutrition and food security specifically.

The OVC issue that has attracted the most active FIO involvement is the situation of the talibés (see Box 11), with a variety of community-based care facilities and advocacy efforts. Christian missionaries run some programs. Talibé centers typically give children a safe space to relax and have fun, and provide showers, meals, and clothes washing. Certain centers also offer basic medical care. While some missionaries hope their acts of compassion will lead to conversion, they describe a broader mission of providing direct support and breaking the cycle of sending children to institutions with poor living conditions. Christian involvement with vulnerable talibés is sensitive, especially following the 2013 arrest of a Brazilian Christian missionary who ran a center for talibés and street children in Mbour; he was imprisoned for several months on suspicion of attempting to convert and corrupt minors, but was later released.

4.2.2.1. Secours Islamique France

Secours Islamique France (Islamic Relief France, SIF), a humanitarian aid and relief organization founded in France in 1991, is a member of the Islamic Relief Worldwide network. It grounds its activities in the values of Islam, particularly peace and caring for the most impoverished populations, focusing its work in areas that have symbolic and important meaning in the Qur’an—water, orphans, and food for the most vulnerable. Inspired by the values of Islam and the preservation of human dignity, many SIF projects are based on Islamic principles, such as waqf (ongoing charity), aqiqah (animal sacrifice), and zakat al maal (charitable contribution), or around the Islamic holidays of Ramadan and Eid al-Adha. SIF’s Senegal mission opened in 2009, largely focusing on food security, welfare for the poor, and vulnerable children. Since its Dakar office opened, SIF Senegal has progressively increased its emphasis on childhood projects; eight percent of the mission’s programming funds supported childhood activities in 2009, increasing to 59 percent in 2014 (of a total budget for 2014 of US$776,772).

Child sponsorship is a central SIF activity globally. The Senegal program specifically targets orphans and began with 28 sponsored children in 2009, growing to 520 orphans in Dakar alone in 2015. The sponsorship program provides monthly scholarship distributions to the child’s guardian, who acts as the child’s representative. The SIF team conducts regular home visits to children in the program to ensure that the scholarship funds are put to proper use. The team can then check on the child’s welfare, namely living conditions, educational progress, and health. Through partnership with a government health structure, beginning in 2013, SIF-sponsored children receive free health screenings. SIF Senegal also has a stock of medications that they can provide.

“The generic and general definition of an orphan is a child that has lost both his parents, or a child that has lost one of his parents. But in Senegal, people have the tendency to expand this definition to children who roam the streets, even if both parents are alive because we don’t consider them very different from orphans given that they are without support. We have a narrow definition of orphan and another that is broader. We focus on the broader definition because that definition allows us to support childhood development. It is the child that interests us. We believe that a child must be aided, assisted, educated, and cared for.”

- Issa Diop, coordinator of the Institut de bienfaisance islamique pour les orphelins au Sénégal
to sponsored children with a prescription from a health center. SIF aims to prepare sponsored children and their guardians for the future through skills training. Guardians are provided with training on best childcare practices and they are offered elective training in income-generating activities.\(^{356}\)

SIF is also involved with the *talibé* issue. In 2014, their program included 2,000 *talibés* from 15 *daaras* in Dakar.\(^{357}\) The organization’s *talibé* activities fall into four categories: improvement of the material living conditions of *talibés*, education, modernization of the *daaras*, and professional integration.\(^{358}\) SIF works to provide *talibés* with access to clean water and improve general hygiene. Working with *daaras* (which provide training in Arabic), SIF integrates French language training into the curriculum. Teachers trained in French assist the children in gaining French language skills to make the transition into traditional schools—if desired—easier. School supplies kits are distributed to *talibés*.\(^{359}\)

SIF Senegal also has food security and malnutrition initiatives.\(^{360}\) Following the tradition of the Prophet, the Aqiqas project allows families to donate a sacrifice in honor of their newborn children to provide meals for vulnerable children in Dakar.\(^{361}\) During Islamic holidays, in particular, SIF provides food assistance to the most vulnerable populations. SIF Senegal has been involved in malaria prevention efforts through the distribution of mosquito nets and provides aid following emergencies such as fires, floods, and droughts.\(^{362}\)

### 4.2.2.2 Human Appeal International

Human Appeal International (HAI) Senegal is a field office of HAI United Arab Emirates. In 1988 HAI succeeded the *Comité des Œuvres de bienfaisance* (Committee of Charitable Works) founded in 1984 in the UAE. The Senegal office was established in 1992.\(^{363}\) HAI Senegal considers itself, first and foremost, a humanitarian, political, non-denominational NGO that serves all Senegalese in need, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or geographical location.\(^{364}\) Projects include care of orphans, aid to victims of natural disasters, and assistance for the most vulnerable in society (children, elders, and those with disabilities). As with many other HAI field offices, several of HAI Senegal’s activities are centered around Islamic holidays. However, HAI Senegal states that it has no religious affiliation.\(^{365}\) This contrasts with HAI UK, which highlights the Islamic principle of zakat in its work.\(^{366}\)

In line with its humanitarian orientation, HAI Senegal projects focus on community development, aiming *inter alia* to improve socio-economic living conditions, reinforce relationships with the government, and build private structures.\(^{367}\) HAI Senegal consults with communities to identify local needs before implementing programmatic activities. Staff members say that this ensures sustained community engagement and a participatory approach.\(^{368}\) This approach has shaped HAI Senegal 2014 programs in 51 communities, which include well building, construction of classrooms and places of worship, and sponsorship of a few individuals’ pilgrimages to Mecca\(^{369}\). HAI Senegal staff comment that they do not approach religious authorities when working in new communities because they want to avoid religious politics.\(^{370}\)

HAI Senegal also focuses on orphans, particularly their education and health. The orphan program began by sponsoring 279 orphans, growing steadily to supporting 3,800 orphans as of 2015.\(^{371}\) HAI Senegal provides bimonthly stipends for health, education, and social needs. A team of social workers follows up with each orphan to ensure that the money is being spent for the child’s well-being and that his/her needs are being addressed. The staff organizes free consultation days for children in its programs to monitor their health and provide necessary medications. HAI UK and HAI Australia donors and sponsors help fund the orphan program.\(^{372}\) HAI Senegal’s social development program accounted for 87 percent of its 2014 budget of US$3,290,638. This program includes HAI Senegal’s projects to aid orphans and their families; send individuals on pilgrimage to Mecca; and construct infrastructure, such as wells and places of worship.\(^{373}\)

HAI Senegal provides training to families of orphans—both single and double—especially widowed mothers.\(^{374}\) This program assists women with income generating activities so that they are better able to support their children and families. In 2014, HAI Senegal began more actively promoting micro projects and funded 31 such projects in various domains, including agriculture, sewing, and micro gardening.\(^{375}\) HAI Senegal maintains that by supporting beneficiaries within their own areas of interest, it can strengthen the women’s capacity and encourage sustainable enterprises that will have long-term benefits for children and families.\(^{376}\)

### 4.2.2.3 L’institution de bienfaisance islamique pour les orphelins au Sénégal

The Institution of Islamic Charity for Orphans in Senegal (IBIOS), founded in 1988 and legally recognized the same year, is located in Thiaroye in the suburbs of Dakar. This small organization works to help local children with an emphasis on orphans, children in difficult situations, and children from impoverished families. Sadio Diop, who serves as the organization’s coordinator, explains that his parents founded the organization because “every Senegalese must contribute to the development of his country,” and his parents did so by investing in orphans, who are the most vulnerable population. Diop and his sister run the organization today, observing that
“the Prophet (PBUH) [taught] that there is great grace in aiding an orphan.” They aim “to give these children the same opportunities that other children have.”

IBIOS identifies as an orphanage but its definition of an orphan is broad: children without one or both parents, as well as children who have two living parents but without proper support or care. Diop argues that this definition is important to IBIOS’ work because staff believe that all children deserve to be cared for, aided, and educated. Thus IBIOS provides for students’ basic needs, including clothing, medical care, and an education.

IBIOS services and programs are available to all children in need, regardless of religion, gender, or race. In 2014, IBIOS worked with 180 children, 90 percent of whom it considered “very vulnerable.” At one site, IBIOS hosts a school, health center, and mosque. The Ministry of National Education recognizes their primary school, a Franco-Arabic school that offers instruction in both languages to ease transition into secondary options. About 50 percent of the students are orphans, and the others come from families unable to assure an education for their children. IBIOS has a policy that they will not deny a child an education if the child’s parent(s) is unable to pay school fees. Diop says that this sets the school apart from others.

In addition to formal education, IBIOS provides supportive services for students after their primary education and extends medical support to the community. As IBIOS provides only primary education, it stays in contact with students as they continue to secondary school, assisting them as necessary. If a student does not succeed in his or her studies, IBIOS encourages the child to pursue vocational training. IBIOS built a health center, originally for its students, but opened its doors to community members when the need became evident. The health center is officially recognized by Senegal’s Ministry of Health and Social Action, and children in IBIOS’ programs receive free consultations and medications as needed. Under the leadership of Diop’s parents, IBIOS ensured funding through personal connections with Saudi funders; however, new funds are being sought to build a three-story building to house the orphans to better ensure their safety and well-being.

4.2.2.4 World Vision

World Vision has been active in Senegal since 1975 and established an office in 1983. World Vision International (one of the world’s largest FIOs) “work[s] with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation.” The organization’s ideals, rooted in Christianity, inspire its work and approach, which value all people and leads them to act as stewards and partners. Initially focused on the droughts of the 1980s, World Vision/Senegal (WV/Senegal) has expanded its scope to health, water and sanitation, education, food security, and child protection.

A core tenet of World Vision is placing children at the forefront of its work. WV/Senegal cross-sector programs target children—directly or indirectly—through programs that work to improve the overall well-being of communities. Health programs target children directly, such as baby weighing, deworming, vitamin A supplementation, and immunizations. The organization also assists women in creating small businesses as part of a food security program, which in turn affects the well-being of children in the women’s households. WV/Senegal’s 2014 budget was US$21,755,703, approximately 70 percent of which came from sponsorship funds.

World Vision is active on child protection issues, defining child protection as “all efforts to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of violence against children—especially the most vulnerable.” The definition includes the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of children. WV/Senegal work ranges from girls at risk for FGC to talibés. Starting early, WV/Senegal works with
WV/Senegal works at the national level, including advocacy and partnership development. WV/Senegal has been involved in the government’s National Strategy for Child Protection, aimed at establishing an integrated national system of child protection, including public and private sector actors and, more broadly, supporting and promoting positive social change. In 2014, World Vision launched a three and a half year project, the Senegal Child Protection and Participation (SCPP) project, which promotes community initiatives that address child labor, early marriage, and FGC. Activities have included advocacy through art, marches against early marriages, and creating partnerships. In 2015, World Vision formed a partnership with the Parliamentary Network enfant contre les violences et abus (the Parliamentary Network for the Protection of Children against Violence and Abuse, PEVA) to strengthen policy for child protection.

4.2.3 Women’s empowerment, men’s roles

Improving women’s status is a central development goal for Senegal and for many of its development partners. Many FIOs and religious communities emphasize the importance of addressing women’s poverty, enhancing education for girls, ending harmful practices affecting girls, and supporting vulnerable groups, such as widows and orphans. Religious actors are engaged in various, targeted gender-specific development activities along these lines. This section reviews progress and challenges that arise in various gender development activities, focusing on the positive involvement of religious actors or religious elements. It also explores more contentious aspects; in a context where certain features of gender agendas are especially contentious among some religious communities and the traditions of a patriarchical effect.

Box 12. Youth and religious interventions

Senegal, like many of its West African neighbors, has a young population, with 19.6 percent of the 2015 population between the ages of 15 and 24. This youth bulge strains already limited education, health, and employment systems: youth unemployment is significantly higher than unemployment overall (13.0 percent of those 15-24 years versus 10.0 percent overall in 2014). Poor youth literacy (ages 15-24)—at 56 percent in 2013—limits youth employment options. Youth who do obtain higher education also have difficulty finding employment; unemployment among Senegalese with higher education degrees was 31 percent in 2011. Employment opportunities for those with university-level education have not kept pace with the number of graduates; in fact, college graduates experience the highest rate of long-term unemployment (greater than one year) at 74 percent. In contrast, those with no formal education have a long-term unemployment rate of 41 percent, many working informal jobs. With weak employment prospects domestically, many youth migrate frequently to Europe. Migration to Italy between January and March 2015 counted 1,200 Senegalese, up 25 percent from the same period in 2014.

Religious leaders share the broad concern about the challenges of youth unemployment. There is a range of responses that aim variously to support individuals and groups and, more generally, reach out with approaches to discourage illicit behavior (like drug taking) or the lure of radical messages, especially those that encourage violent action. These programs are not well mapped, but are taking on increasing importance. Several FIOs, including the National Association of Imams and Ulamas of Senegal, Caritas, and the Lutheran Church of Senegal, provide literacy and job skills training to youth. Some faith communities and institutions do not separate youth from other programs, but do explicitly engage youth in overall efforts, such as through health and peacebuilding activities. Caritas highlights the importance of engaging youth: “We don’t see youth as the future of the world; the youth are the world and they are the agents of their own growth, development, and fulfillment.”

At the same time, within the confrérie structure in Senegal, religious leaders often see the role of youth as sustaining and passing on traditions and spreading messages. Youths have their own dahiras—composed of both males and females—which often take up social action; for example, the youth dahira, Asfiyahi, coordinates blood drives, cleanup campaigns, and ndogous (breaking of the fast during Ramadan) for vulnerable populations. While youth dahiras are one way to engage in social action, one of the most prominent youth led movements, Y’en a marre (“Fed up”), does not have an explicit religious connection. Founded in 2011 in response to corruption, school strikes, and frequent power outages, this group led by young rappers and journalists who wanted to translate discontent into action, rallied youth to speak up during the 2012 elections. They have continued to strengthen youth leadership and encourage grassroots efforts.
society still have a significant hold, approaches and views on gender equality can be polarizing. Following an introduction of these dynamics, a series of examples illustrates entry points and FIO activities.

Senegal has made significant strides toward gender equality, reflected in its move from a ranking of 102 among 134 countries in the 2009 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report to 72 among 145 countries in 2015. The improved rank is explained above all by gains in women’s political empowerment. However, change in other categories has been limited: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; and health and survival. Senegalese women and girls are well-represented in primary education and politics but face challenges in many other domains, such as participation in secondary education and economic activities.

Women in Senegal have worked hard to advance women’s rights and welfare. Women’s groups and associations take various forms, ranging from social activism to political advocacy. Following the socio-economic crisis in the late 1970s, many groups formed including the Fédération des associations féminines du Sénégal (Federation of Senegalese Women’s Associations, FAFS), founded in 1977. Initially composed of 12 religious or professional women’s associations involved in charity and outreach, FAFS has grown to include more than 400 associations that work to ease the work burden of women; promote family planning and reproductive health; decrease illiteracy; reduce poverty and poor living conditions; improve nutrition; and increase knowledge of women’s rights. Conseil sénégalais des femmes (Senegalese Council of Women, COSEF) pushed legislation to outlaw FGC in 1999 and enact tax reform in 2001. The Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers, AJS) focuses on family law, education, violence against women, health and sexual rights, and FGC. Yeewu Yewwi, a Senegalese feminist organization, focuses on the “liberation” of women. Another example of women’s social involvement is the tradition and organization of the Bajenu Gox (roughly translated as neighborhood godmothers). Linked to local governments, these women, normally unpaid, are involved in counseling families on topics such as nutrition, child welfare, family planning, and avoiding Ebola. The Minister of Health emphasizes their constructive roles.

Such activism has resulted in the government’s embrace of international frameworks for women’s rights and other important legal changes. The Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified by Senegal in 1985, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing have shaped legislation on women’s rights. In 1999, parliament voted to ban the practice of female genital cutting (FGC, see Box 13), and in 2010, legislation (Loi n° 2012-11) required gender parity in all Senegalese institutions that are partially or totally elective, as well as on candidate lists. Between 2011 and 2012, the percentage of women in Senegal’s national parliament jumped from 23 to 43 percent. Progress has lagged in local politics, with only 13 female mayors out of 557 municipalities in 2015.

The role of religious leaders and communities, including religious women, on gender issues and reform agendas has been complex, not without tensions and areas of discord. Some religious women—including women media hosts—discount or discourage the work of secular women’s organizations, especially when their activities encourage explicit notions of feminism. Senegal’s Family Code has been the subject of active debate with religious issues at its core (see Box 7). Implementation of the Code has been mixed; many villages regulate their own affairs with little regard to the law. Some conservative Islamic groups have contested the Family Code, arguing that it is largely based on French secular traditions rather than local Islamic traditions; they contend that the Qur’an accords great importance to women, as well as the necessary protections, so the Code is an unnecessary intrusion.

In contrast to some Muslim-majority countries, issues of women’s mobility or dress rarely prevent Senegalese women from seeking work outside the home. However, there are other barriers to employment. Women in Senegal are active in agriculture, but overall levels of employment have changed slowly; the share of women over 15 working increased from 54 percent in 1991 to 57.5 percent in 2014. Although significantly more women are now engaged in the formal sector than 25 years ago, unpaid family workers and own-account workers represent a significant share of those employed (68 percent in 2011). Women represent a higher proportion of the unemployed workforce: 12.9 percent compared to 7.5 percent for men.

Women’s roles are changing, but there are some persistent features—some broadly linked to cultural traditions and some with more direct and explicit religious links. Women’s double burden of household duties and income-generating activities outside the home is commonly dictated by cultural norms and religious traditions that affect women’s roles in the family. The role of the mother is greatly revered in Muslim and Christian communities, with a high premium on childrearing. The pro-natalist mindset and the expectations to have a large family are considered to be both cultural and religious. It is the norm for Senegalese women of all faiths to assume household and childrearing responsibilities, but they may have limited influence in family decision-making. Polygamy is legal and quite commonly practiced in Senegal among Muslims; the country’s Muslim religious leaders generally sanction the practice. Polygamy can have negative impacts for women—for example fostering competition among co-wives for resources and the attention of their husband. In some instances, polygamy has encouraged women to compete in having children, sometimes for reasons of inheritance.

Girls and young women are especially vulnerable to child marriage, which is common in Senegal. The legal marriage age is 16 for girls and 18 for boys. However, between 2002 and 2012, 12 percent of children married by age 15, and 32.9 percent
and no particular religious affiliation is associated with the practice is often rooted in tradition; data does not suggest that Senegalese government advocates against child marriage. The contracting HIV and AIDS, and dying during childbirth. The have higher risks of becoming a victim of domestic violence, girls are well-documented: those who marry at a young age by age 18. The negative consequences of early marriage for victims of violence, with one option to facilitate extradition to Europe or the U.S.

A 2013 Pew study on global attitudes on homosexuality found that high religiosity correlates with low acceptance rates. In 2013, 96 percent of Senegalese surveyed responded that homosexuality should not be accepted by society, a finding similar to a 2007 survey. In response to a query from President Barack Obama during an official visit to Senegal in 2013, President Macky Sall stated, “Senegal is a tolerant country that does not discriminate in terms of rights. But we are not ready to decriminalize homosexuality. That is the option of Senegal for the moment. That isn’t to say that we are homophobic. But it is necessary for society to absorb, take time to answer the questions without pressure.” In March 2016, he said that homosexuality would never be legalized in Senegal under his leadership.

Organizations in Senegal (including some linked to religious communities) approach the issue differently. The Islamic organization, Jamra, with the support of Catholic and Muslim religious leaders and some 30 other organizations, established Mbañ Gacce, which operates as a watch group defending religious and cultural values. It advocates against the decriminalization of homosexuality. In contrast, several organizations support the LGBTQI community in direct and indirect ways. AIDES Sénégal and l’Association Prudence work primarily on HIV/AIDS issues, and, in part given the connections among the issues, support LGBTQI individuals, while Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l’homme (RADDHO) supports LGBTQI victims of violence, with one option to facilitate extradition to Europe or the U.S.

by age 18. The negative consequences of early marriage for girls are well-documented: those who marry at a young age have higher risks of becoming a victim of domestic violence, contracting HIV and AIDS, and dying during childbirth. The Senegalese government advocates against child marriage. The practice is often rooted in tradition; data does not suggest that any one religious tradition is more prone to early marriage, and no particular religious affiliation is associated with the practice. However, to date religious leaders have not emerged as strong opponents of the practice. There are some resources available for vulnerable mothers and single mothers; for example, the Maison Rose in Dakar, whose ethos is linked to a broad spirituality, provides lodging and support to women in difficult situations.

The following profiles illustrate a range of approaches where faith leaders or religious elements are engaged in development projects. Economic empowerment and education represent the most common activities involving faith leader and FIOs on issues for women and girls. Activities include health literacy training, microfinance projects, skills training, financial literacy training, intergenerational mentoring, and access to capital. Various efforts (both by secular and faith-linked organizations) address the complex links between religious and cultural aspects of harmful practices such as FGC. A few rather pioneering efforts address the roles of men in gender dynamics. The organizations and projects presented illustrate the diversity of interventions.

**Box 14. LGBTQI communities in Senegal: Religious engagement**

Although religious values and cultural norms (taboos) have led people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) to be largely invisible in Senegal—with some even in hiding—their human rights have emerged as a point of contention, especially with some external partners. No law outlaws LGBTQI identity, but the penal code (Article 319:3) criminalizes homosexual acts and includes no protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

4.2.3.1 African American Islamic Institute

The African American Islamic Institute (AAII) (introduced above in the context of education) also has explicit strategies and programs directed at women’s empowerment. These focus on three avenues: health, education, and economic autonomy. AAII runs the Shifa-al-Asqam Socio-Medical Center in Kaolack, constructed with UNFPA and UNICEF assistance. The clinic’s primary focus is maternal and child health, offering primary and reproductive healthcare to women, including pre-natal care, family planning services, and information aimed at reducing child and maternal mortality. Since it was established in 1997, the clinic reports that its efforts have led to a 50 percent decrease in maternal mortality and a 35 percent decrease in under-five mortality in its coverage area. Other AAII health initiatives include FGC awareness raising at the community level, establishing a hospital for treating vesicovaginal fistulas (VVF), and operating a mobile health clinic.

AAII job training and microfinance programs aim to promote the economic empowerment of women. AAII founded the Hazrat Zainab Women’s Collective that provides women with the opportunity to work in textile design and manufacturing. Launched in AAII’s Boston office over 20 years ago as a way to promote Senegalese manufacturing among its global community, it has since focused on developing women’s trade skills in Senegal. AAII training programs support the design...
and implementation of microcredit projects that integrate health education and good business practices.439

4.2.3.2 Tostan

Tostan (‘breakthrough’ in Wolof), an NGO with no religious affiliation, was founded in Senegal in 1991 by Molly Melching, an American who has worked in Senegal for several decades.440 It has since expanded its work to other African countries. Tostan’s mission is to “empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights.”441 Tostan, well known for its dedication to community empowerment, has received numerous awards for its work.442 Its work involves various sectors, including health, education, environment, empowerment of women and girls, FGC, and child protection, under the umbrella of a consciously holistic approach.443 Tostan works deliberately to engage religious leadership in its efforts to promote women’s and human rights. Tostan’s annual budget for programs in 2014 was US$6,765,516 (among six West African countries).

Tostan is keenly aware of the important role that religious beliefs play in everyday life in Senegal. In the Dakar office, Imam Mouhamed Chérif Diop, a staff member who advises on the role of religion in Tostan programs, works to ensure that there are no conflicts with Islamic principles and beliefs in the organization’s programs.444 Tostan’s approach is to engage community members and leaders, among them religious leaders, on project objectives.

Tostan is especially well known for its work to end the practice of FGC.445 With support from, inter alia, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) beginning in 1992,446 Tostan’s approach centers on education, raising awareness about the harms of the practice, and encouraging community dialogue. Given the topic’s sensitive nature, Tostan’s strategy includes building trust between project leaders and community leaders, including religious leaders, in order to create a safe space for dialogue. A central feature of Tostan’s approach is public declarations by communities of their commitment to end FGC. Tostan’s community-driven approach highlights the benefits of engaging religious communities. The Senegalese government has modeled its action plan to end FGC on the Tostan approach.447

Tostan works in communities that express interest in its programs through a whole-community approach, which is central to the organization’s Community Empowerment Program (CEP).448 Integrating the community’s culture and beliefs into their work, Tostan works to earn the trust of the communities. One program aims to empower women through teaching them to read and write in local languages, gain basic math skills, and send and receive SMS messages. Such integrated and participative approaches have engaged over 42,000 women in improving their reading skills.449

4.2.3.3 Association Femme Islam et Développement

The Association of Women, Islam, and Development (AFID) was founded by a group of Muslim women in 1997 to aid the poor and empower women and advance various humanitarian causes. Based in Dakar with smaller branches throughout Senegal, AFID’s mission is to support women’s rights and their position in Senegalese society by promoting the benefits that Islam accords to women. AFID argues that Islam’s codification of women’s roles and privileges can potentially improve women’s status in disadvantaged contexts, and therefore the association draws on the teachings of the Qur’an regarding women’s roles and value in society. It also works to raise awareness of Muslims’ duty to respect women’s rights and asserts that women should know their rights as granted to them in the Qur’an.

AFID programs engage women through various avenues, beginning with adult literacy classes, as it believes that women can learn about their rights through reading; with literacy and knowledge of women’s rights, women will not be marginalized. AFID members also target especially vulnerable women, visiting and collaborating with incarcerated women. Viewing women as the pillars of the Senegalese family, AFID is particularly concerned for women without family support whose children live in the prisons with them. AFID provides small-scale support that typically involves microcredit loans or grants to individual female entrepreneurs active in agricultural, textile, or small enterprise sales. These entrepreneurs learn a skill, gain economic independence, and contribute to the family. AFID also hosts meetings for men and women that emphasize positive Islamic messages around women’s rights. Exchange visits throughout Francophone Africa and other regions are designed to encourage Senegalese Muslims to cooperate and share experiences transnationally. Charity activities include sponsoring annual meals for the poor, as funding permits.450

4.2.4 Reproductive Health

Reproductive health has long been a challenge for Senegal’s development, and the repercussions of decades of high fertility rates are evident in the indicators of infant, child, and maternal health and in strains on education systems.451 The challenge is not exclusive to Senegal; West Africa currently has the world’s highest maternal mortality and lowest contraceptive prevalence rates (CPR).452 The Senegalese government accords a high priority to family planning, and concerted efforts to promote maternal and child health have led to great changes to certain indicators. Senegal’s CPR is low by international standards, but has increased significantly in the past few years: 12.1 percent of married women ages 15-49 used a modern
contraceptive method in 2010-2011, but with a push for improved reproductive health that number increased to 20.3 percent in 2014. However, in 2014, 25.6 percent of married Senegalese women ages 15-49 still had unmet needs for family planning, with Senegal showing higher unmet needs than several other West African countries.

Religious and cultural beliefs have been viewed by many observers as a significant obstacle to positive reproductive health outcomes, accounting in part for limited acceptance of family planning and relevant behavior change. Attitudes and behaviors are shaped by aspirations to large family size and differing views on which family planning practices (if any) are permissible for pious families. Some religious figures have encouraged fears that family planning represents an attempt to limit and control family size. Development partners, working with the government, support programs that aim to convince the population (including religious leaders) that family planning is morally acceptable within their respective faith traditions and is beneficial for families. There have been reported cases of religious leaders providing moral and financial support for health structures that offer family planning services, but they prefer a “behind the scenes” approach.

Senegal’s religious leaders and communities were not actively engaged on issues of demography and family planning until recently, but there is increasing conviction within government and partners that their support is vital. Faith leaders had limited roles in developing the 2012-2015 National Family Planning Action Plan prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Action, which addresses religious leader roles in specific terms. Planned actions include nominating “champions” in the religious community to speak publicly in favor of family planning. In 1996, USAID began to explore the role of religious beliefs in attitudes about family planning in Senegal. Local organizations, such as ASBEF, have regularly engaged with religious leaders in family planning activities. International NGOs, notably Marie Stopes International and IntraHealth, have also worked with local religious leaders to raise awareness about the benefits of family planning. Such initiatives have generally targeted faith leaders at the grassroots level, but have not systematically engaged the leadership of Senegal’s religious communities.

Notwithstanding the stated intention to engage faith leaders and communities in a systematic fashion, implementation was uneven at the beginning of the 2012-2015 National Family Planning Action Plan. The following organizations and profiles highlight current initiatives that focus on engaging faith leaders both at the local level and at the highest levels of religious leadership. They include exchanges with imams and other religious actors at various conferences and workshops where religious dimensions of family planning and family health are discussed. Consistent with the government’s policy to promote

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**Box 15. Religion and the Demographic and Health Surveys**

The DHS, the most frequently performed and extensive health surveys carried out in Senegal, provide a rigorous source of information on attitudes and behaviors. Its multiple editions, international scope, and detailed questionnaires permit in-depth quantitative analysis across time and geographic area. DHS results have strengths and shortcomings; conclusions drawn from any analysis need a firm, qualitative grasp of the underlying societal context. Unfortunately, for the purposes of our analysis, religious adherence and personal practice of faith are not central to the questionnaire; however, the DHS provides useful data on religious affiliation and religious beliefs as a barrier to family planning use. The addition of a section dedicated to religious practices would be helpful for development practitioners working on health-related development topics.
birth spacing, these discussions typically center on birth spacing for maternal and child health rather than on “family planning” per se; some Senegalese link the term “family planning” to birth limitation and population control.

4.2.4.1 Réseau Islam et Population

The Réseau islam et population (Islam and Population Network, RIP) was created in 1995 with UNFPA support to build a network of religious leaders and Islamic scholars in support of family planning programs. 464 A “Muslim association of reflection, education, and awareness on population issues.”465 RIP works to address socio-cultural and socio-religious barriers relevant to population that were first highlighted in a UNFPA survey. 466 It operates as a largely informal network, without a permanent office, working primarily on specific and funded project interventions. RIP’s objectives are threefold: first, to offer guidance to the Senegalese public on the teachings of the Qur’an and the sunnah as they relate to development problems; second, to educate the public on Islamic teachings about social issues; and third, to raise awareness on family planning through public outreach targeting religious and traditional leaders, community leaders, NGOs, women, and youth. RIP has sought to build a diverse membership of imams and Islamic scholars, teachers, legal experts, sociologists, social workers, and doctors providing technical expertise and engaging in outreach activities. 467

RIP was an early adopter of context-sensitive health development, led by Senegalese for Senegalese. Though the size and programs of RIP have ebbed and flowed—in part due to changing narratives and priorities in the development community around population issues—its approach has consistently included awareness campaigns and strategic operational work with secular stakeholders.468 RIP has largely focused its activities at the grassroots level, with training sessions for locally prominent imams and other religious leaders who can speak directly with their constituents about reproductive health. RIP has thus worked over the years to increase awareness in Senegal of reproductive health issues through an Islamic lens. Its 1998 booklet, La Déclaration de politique de population à la lumière des enseignements islamiques (Declaration of Population Policy in Light of Islamic Teachings), prepared in partnership with UNFPA, reviews population policy with an Islamic perspective on family planning and other reproductive health topics.469 A summary version was issued as a pamphlet and developed a toolkit for religious networks and has disseminated messaging—in multiple languages, including Wolof—through radio and television programs and at seminars.

RIP aims to inform the public, particularly through training workshops; reports and studies on the question of Islam, population, and development; and sharing Islamic perspectives on other questions of Islam and society. RIP was part of the Initiative sénégalaise de santé urbaine (Urban Reproductive Health Initiative, ISSU), a Gates Foundation-funded initiative established in 2009 to inform the urban population about family planning and provide services to poor urban women.470 Between 2011 and 2015, RIP conducted many small-scale, grassroots trainings, which reached approximately 1,000 local imams.471 The idea was that local imams would then conduct radio shows, conferences, and discussion groups for their communities.472

4.2.4.2 Cadre des Religieux sur la Santé et le Développement

Established in September 2014, the Cadre des Religieux sur la Santé et Développement (Group of Religious Leaders on Health and Development, CRSD) works to improve maternal and child health outcomes through an initial focus on family planning. Its focus is on engaging Senegal’s religious families and communities at senior leadership levels. CRSD grew from the agreement of a group of religious leaders (supported by WFDD) to support reproductive health and family well-being within their faith communities. The faith leaders represent Senegal’s main faith traditions—including the four Sufi confréries—and religious institutions (both Muslim and Christian), as well as a representative from the Ministry of Health and Social Action. A primary goal of CRSD is to counter a quite widely held belief that Islamic teachings forbid or discourage the practice of family planning, as well as to further a positive understanding of religious support for maternal and family health.

The group’s initial action involved a series of visites de courtoisie (courtesy visits) to faith leaders of various traditions across Senegal. This traditional, respectful approach allowed members to launch a constructive dialogue with other faith leaders and discuss views on the permissibility of family planning based on various religious interpretations.473 In November 2014, CRSD members visited Morocco, which has successfully integrated religious leaders into family planning initiatives, to better understand the roles that faith leaders can play in promoting maternal and child health and the benefits of family planning for society. Members met with Morocco’s Ministry of Health, religious leaders, and various organizations working on family planning.474

CRSD published an Argumentaire islamique sur l’espacement des naissances (Islamic Arguments for Birth Spacing) in July 2015. The document presents the Islamic justifications for birth spacing and highlights family planning methods that are permissible in Islam. Written by two Senegalese Islamic scholars, the document draws on the Qur’an, the sunnah, and hadiths, in addition to the teachings of Islamic scholars, both
4.2.5 Peace and Interfaith Relations

Senegal is often heralded as one of the most economically and politically stable countries in West Africa. While several countries in the region confront instability brought on by coups, rebel attacks, social unrest, and dictatorships, Senegal has experienced little social tension and—since independence from France in 1960—has never had a coup d’état or military rule. Senegalese generally enjoy social harmony and interreligious peace within a functioning democracy. The country is quite safe, too, with homicide and crime rates that are low for the region. Although West Africa faces growing threats from violent extremists, such as Boko Haram and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel, Senegal has been largely immune within its borders.

Interreligious relations within Senegal are largely harmonious and are often cited as a source of pride. The country is clearly Muslim-majority, at 94 percent, with Christians consisting of four percent (see chapter 3 for inter-religious relations). This pride in amicable interfaith relations is evident in a 2010 Pew survey in which Senegal’s Muslims were most likely (at a rate of 92 percent) to hold overall positive views of Christians among all surveyed Sub-Saharan countries. Senegalese generally enjoy social harmony and interreligious peace within a functioning democracy. The country is quite safe, too, with homicide and crime rates that are low for the region. Although West Africa faces growing threats from violent extremists, such as Boko Haram and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel, Senegal has been largely immune within its borders.

Socially, Senegalese of different faith traditions intermingle for holidays, thus building social cohesion; Muslims often invite Christian friends and neighbors to their houses to celebrate Muslim holidays and vice versa. Legally, Senegal honors religious diversity, and the constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Senegal is rated low on a Pew Research Center 2013 Government Restrictions Index at 1.2, indicating the limited restrictions the government places on religious institutions and practice. However, Senegal received a moderate score of 1.7 on the Social Hostilities Index, signaling a moderate amount of social hostility based on religion; cases of vandalism of religious property have increased in the past few years.

Senegalese (including the national government) take pride in their leading role in various global interreligious organizations and initiatives. Senegal and Senegalese hold leadership positions and have been honored for them; for example, in 2011, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Council for World Jewry recognized then-President Wade for his commitment to promoting interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance. In recent years, the government has hosted international interreligious meetings about nutrition and vaccination. Serigne Mansour Sy Djamal serves as a co-president of the global interreligious organization Religions for Peace. Sheikh Saliou Mbacké (related to the former Khalife Général of the Mourides of the same name) has held leadership in an Africa wide interfaith group, Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa. Abbé Jacques Seck, a Catholic priest, has coordinated interfaith networks within Senegal, speaking often on the topic in the media. In part because of limited religious tensions within Senegal, organized interreligious engagement has been quite limited.

Various faith communities also work to maintain and strengthen interreligious relations in Senegal by collaborating within and across the different Sufi orders, as well as with the various Christian denominations. The Lutheran Church of Senegal, for example, has a department of peacebuilding, and one of its pastors works with Muslim religious leaders and offers trainings on Islam to Christians. The program targets Christian leaders, informing them about Islamic beliefs and values, even teaching the Arabic language through reading Bible passages in Arabic. Imam Oumar Diène, the Secretary General of the Association nationale des imams et oulémas du Sénégal (National Association of Imams and Ulamas of Senegal, ANIOS), argues that interreligious dialogue is a tool to preserve the dignity of each religion without provoking the other, while promoting mutual appreciation. Diène says that ANIOS values interreligious dialogue to explore how religious communities can better live together in peace. Many religiously affiliated organizations explicitly state non-discriminatory intentions and an openness to work with individuals from different religions. Muslim and Christian leaders generally accept children of all
faiths in their schools and try to create an environment that fosters relationships and understanding between children of different religions.

A low-level protracted conflict in the Casamance region of southern Senegal stands in contrast to Senegal’s overall stability and peace. The region is a strip of Senegal between The Gambia to the north and Guinea Bissau to the south, thus effectively isolated geographically from the rest of the country. This geographic separation, as well as demographic and historical differences, has contributed to the distinctive identity of the Casamançais. Religiously, 20 percent of the population practices Christianity or traditional African religions, compared to 5 percent nationally. Further, 60 percent of Casamançais are from the Diola ethnic group, versus four percent nationally. France did not extend its foothold into the Casamance until the late 1800s, and thereafter the Casamance and northern Senegal developed under separate administrations until independence. Efforts by Senegal’s government to implement nationwide policy and unification measures have at times met with resistance in the Casamance, where residents do not always feel that the government understands or prioritizes their realities.

The Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) has pushed for Casamance autonomy from Senegal since 1982. Originally established as a political party in 1947, MFDC transformed into a separatist movement that was led for many years by Augustin Dioum Senghor, a Catholic priest (who died in 2007). Violent clashes have flared periodically between the Senegalese military and the MFDC, with particular intensity in 1993 and 1998. Civilian and military deaths between 1982 and 2005 were estimated at 1,200. Following each violent outbreak, a ceasefire is declared and peace agreements signed, but the agreements have, again and again, broken down. The most recent ceasefire was declared in April 2014.

Both the conflict and efforts to bring it to an end have, like many other conflicts, different causes and facets that include religious elements. The fact that the movement’s leader over several decades (Father Senghor) was a Catholic priest led many to emphasize the influence of religious differences between the region and the rest of Senegal as a driver of the conflict. The mix of factors is, however, complex with geography, demography, history, and disputes over natural resource management playing important roles. Religious actors are among those who have worked to bring the conflict to an end. Religious leaders from various Sufi orders and Christian denominations have preached about peace in the Casamance in sermons and led prayers for peace. Christian and Muslim leaders have come together at different moments to hold interreligious prayers. Imam Mame Libasse Laye of the Layene community notes that, “peace [in the Casamance] should be a concern for all Senegalese” because the region is like a body and “when one part hurts, it is the entire body that feels pain.” Various international organizations including FIOs are involved in reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts in the Casamance—with varying approaches—seeking a lasting peace agreement between the MFDC and the Senegalese government. A 2014 ceasefire was the result of multi-year discussions between the two parties, mediated by the Community of Sant’Edigio. Commentators report a weariness of the Casamance people about the violence and suffering caused by the conflict. The following examples illustrate different approaches and actors, ranging from FIOs to mobilizing local religious leaders.

4.2.5.1 American Jewish World Service

American Jewish World Service (AJWS), with headquarters in New York, provides grants to human rights advocates in developing countries and lobbies in the United States for better policies toward the developing world. Inspired by the idea of tikkun olam, Hebrew for “repairing the world,” AJWS supports more than 500 local advocacy organizations in 19 countries. Their approach to local development is to support local advocates and communities in solving their problems. AJWS is committed to working on human rights, and they intervene in the areas of civil and political rights, land and water rights, sexual health and rights, ending child marriage, and disaster relief. AJWS provides long-term flexible grants where grantees are able to renew grants. Through four different grant types—general support, project based, capacity building, and hybrid—they support a diverse group of grantees. An AJWS representative in each country provides additional accompaniment, including assistance in monitoring and evaluation, budget support, and identification of potential grantees. Since 1992, AJWS has granted over US$7 million to support human rights efforts in Senegal.

AJWS has been especially dedicated to promoting a resolution to the conflict in the Casamance region. As of 2015, AJWS support to grantees in the Casamance for various initiatives for peace totaled US$1.16 million. Since 2010, AJWS has supported 17 grantees, who are working to reconstruct infrastructure and negotiate peace in the Casamance, including: Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (USOFORAL), Platforme des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance (Platform of Women for Peace in Casamance, PFPC), and World Education Senegal. Grantees have secured commitments from Senegal’s leaders to prioritize peacemaking in the Casamance; represented over 40,000 women from 210 women’s groups; increased women’s political power; freed hostages held by armed rebels; worked to reintegrate displaced citizens and former combatants into their communities without reigniting conflict; and supported a coalition of nine peace organizations to provide strategy and leadership and, ultimately, represent civil society in the official peace process.
AJWS awarded its first Casamance grant to USOFORAL, and has supported its efforts since. USOFORAL, a grassroots organization founded in 1999, utilizes and builds upon the traditional role of Senegalese women as mediators in peace movements. USOFORAL has established local peace committees to mediate conflicts, direct reconciliation and negotiation activities, and engage women as leaders in their communities. It also co-founded PFPC, a coalition of over 200 women’s groups that puts women at the center of solutions for peace in the Casamance.506

Other AJWS grants have supported organizations that work with youth, such as Y’en a Marre, and community development in the regions of Kolda and Sedhiou.507 It has backed efforts to end the practice of female genital cutting (FGC) in Senegalese communities.508

4.2.5.2 Catholic Relief Services

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Senegal, founded in 1960, was one of the first international organizations working there post-independence.509 It is an affiliate of CRS, created in 1943 by the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States to help Europe and its refugees recover from World War II. CRS assists the poor and vulnerable, working to preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity and justice, and embody Catholic social and moral teaching.510 CRS works in collaboration with a wide range of local partners in Senegal, including Caritas Senegal.511 Programs support food security, nutrition, agricultural resilience, and community health services.512

CRS Senegal focuses much of its efforts on peacebuilding and interreligious dialogue, particularly in the Casamance region. During a lull in the Casamance conflict in the early 2000s, CRS Senegal launched The Casamance Rehabilitation and Peace-building Project, a community-driven reconstruction project funded by USAID. A 2012 CRS conflict analysis in the region found that 80 percent of conflicts arising within and between communities were related to poor natural resource management (NRM).513

Thus in 2013, CRS launched a three-year, US$1.2 million USAID/Conflict Management and Mitigation project in the Casamance, Strengthening Community Opportunities for Peace and Equality (SCOPE).514 The SCOPE project uses a people-to-people approach to promote peaceful exchanges between people and communities, focusing on NRM, engagement of women and youth in community peacebuilding, economically sustainable community connector projects, savings and internal lending communities, and the creation of intra- and inter-community peacebuilding structures. A key project goal is to create a diverse and representative body that will lobby the government of Senegal and the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), as well as advocate for peace and development in Casamance.516 Local inter-village committees promote dialogue and help to resolve conflicts, thus setting the stage for a larger representative body that includes other stakeholders, such as NGOs, associations, and community-based organizations. CRS has worked in the Casamance with organizations comprised of members of different faiths—Islam, Christianity, and traditional religions. The different faith groups have jointly organized prayer ceremonies and sensitization sessions.517
LOOKING AHEAD

Senegal stands out among West African countries for its stability and robust democracy, but it faces significant development challenges. The central premise of this report is that Senegal’s complex religious institutions and traditions are critical both to Senegal’s strengths and to its challenges. They are part of the national identity, shaping public policy and private behavior. The profound social and economic changes that Senegal is experiencing are intricately linked to the religious landscape, which in turn is undergoing profound change, affected by global and local forces.

The distinctive social and political roles of religious institutions and beliefs in Senegal have been the subject of quite extensive research. This has highlighted the roles that Sufi confrérie leaders have played in politics, dating back to the French colonial period and extending throughout the life of independent Senegal—in effect amounting to a unique “Senegalese social bargain.” It has also underscored the economic roles of these distinctive Senegalese religious institutions, notably in the agricultural sector and in the Senegalese diaspora. In the initial phase of this Berkley Center/WFDD research, consultation with experts identified significant knowledge gaps, above all in understanding how contemporary changes are affecting religious institutions, and also in linking Senegal’s development strategies to various aspects of religious institutions and beliefs.

This report provides a preliminary mapping of the contemporary religious landscape, set in the context of the development strategies of Senegal and its partners, which center on addressing widespread poverty and low human development indicators. It underscores the multidimensional links between those strategies and religious beliefs, practices, institutions, and leadership. These are particularly apparent in the attitudes and behaviors that underlie education, health care, and conflict/conflict resolution, as well as in the changing roles of women.

The research on Senegal did not set out to offer specific policy recommendations. Rather, the goal is to direct attention to areas where appreciation of religious elements might enrich understandings of development potential and of obstacles that stand in the way. The conclusions thus center on highlighting relevant experience and identifying topics that merit further research.

5.1 OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The religious landscape of Senegal is varied, complex, and dynamic, and it matters in development debates and implementation of development strategies. In some
respects, and notwithstanding the overlay of Senegalese laïcité, the religious attitudes and narratives of most Senegalese are reflected in language and approach across virtually all institutions, including within the government. Among private organizations, there is a gamut from explicitly religious to others whose religious ties are tenuous or limited (for example, an institution that ascribes to Islamic values but with no formal institutional affiliation). The many FIOs active in Senegal, with explicit links to various faith traditions, are engaged in a wide range of development activities. Of these, many have clearly stated religious tenets at the core of their efforts. Secular organization employees also often cite their religious values as a motivation for development work. Interviews with Senegalese staff members of secular organizations suggested that many rely on their understanding of the religious and cultural context to develop programs and approaches. Islamic and Christian values and language are thus an undertone in many of Senegal’s organizations.

In analyzing these religious influences on policy and programs, this backdrop of complexity and dynamism is important. It affects, inter alia, the way in which institutions or attitudes are appropriately labeled as religious, non-religious, or secular. Within this context, the degree to which religious values and institutional links affect approaches and operations falls along a wide spectrum, rarely with identical implications. In short, an assumption of religious affiliation is not a hard and fixed matter, but it requires explicit inquiry.

Senegalese, whether from elite groups or in poor communities, emphasize the central role that religious traditions and institutions play in all aspects of life. Available surveys of religiosity, albeit fairly limited, affirm that Senegal ranks high among nations in the significant weight given to religious institutions and beliefs, even in highly religious Africa. The operational question for development practitioners is how this affects both development programs and policies.

Positive interreligious relationships are an important feature of Senegal’s history, and they affect development approaches in various ways. Many Senegalese highlighted the strength and benefits of social and religious diversity and the resulting social harmony that Senegal has enjoyed. The general absence of social strife and religiously-linked violence that have affected neighboring countries is attributed to a history of embracing religious diversity. This traditional commitment to religious diversity is a factor in the relatively limited influence of Islamic fundamentalist teachings in Senegal, despite important links to the Arabian Gulf (studies abroad, financing of mosques, etc.). It also has inspired Senegal’s often active, and at times, leading role in African and international interreligious initiatives. Senegal is seen and wishes to be seen as a leader both for interreligious harmony and for positive Islamic values.

Sufi traditions and the widespread presence and authority of the Sufi confréries color many aspects of society and politics. In some settings, this appears to translate into an openness to new ideas, while in others it can lie behind or exacerbate resistance or negative attitudes toward social change. Examples include strong religious support for some forms of modern education and conflicting views on women’s roles, especially within the family setting.

Complications arise from Senegal’s deliberate and parallel secular and Islamic traditions, as well as their imprint in constitutional and legal instruments. A commitment to secularism is vaunted by significant parts of Senegalese society, especially among educated elites, who hold fiercely to the values they ascribe to secularism. However, laïcité à la Sénégalaise (Senegalese brand of secularism) also implies that Islamic values are not only respected, but that they are fundamental to national identity. In areas like education, this has important implications, as the public education system—which has long been distinctly secular in nature—faces challenges in adapting to Senegalese realities, as well as to the values that are part of both Islamic traditions and multi-religious ethos. The dual traditions (secular and Islamic) offer opportunities to build on a unique social compact that underlies complex—often unstated and not precisely defined—relationships between secular and religious authorities.

Muslim and Christian communities have great impact within local communities, but they also have significant networks beyond, both nationally and internationally. Sufi community groups (dahiras) provide material, as well as spiritual, support in many local communities, especially in rural areas. Dahiras serve primarily social roles, facilitating logistics for religious gatherings, holidays, and rites of passage, such as weddings and funerals. Men’s, women’s, and youth dahiras can address community-specific issues, in addition to offering opportunities for fellowship within the group. Some networks have taken on explicit roles in mobilizing communities to address issues, such as hand washing and vaccinations, and they have the potential to expand into other domains. They often play financial roles, for example in facilitating non-formal credit arrangements. Similar community groups also exist in Senegal’s Christian communities. Development programs have on occasion worked deliberately through such communities and networks, but we see their capacity for greater engagement as significant.

Religious networks extend internationally in diaspora communities, especially in West Africa but also in Europe and the United States. Diaspora groups organize religious conferences and gather to celebrate religious holidays. The networks also provide critical support to newcomers, offering job leads and legal assistance on immigration matters.
Remittances through religious channels are an important source of development financing, notably for the Mouride capital of Touba, but also in communities across Senegal. The financial power wielded by the diaspora can influence religious politics in Senegal. Religious networks linking diaspora communities influence Senegalese migration patterns and business relationships.

The omnipresent religious media is an important channel for passing information to the general public, but has not been engaged systematically. More than nine out of ten Senegalese listen to religious radio or watch religious television programs, and many place considerable confidence in religious hosts and personalities. Hosts are diverse—men, women, and youth—allowing them to reach many segments of the population. Topics are as diverse as the hosts and range from proper religious practices to world affairs to social issues. Radio and television programs are the most popular religious outlets, but new media forms, such as Facebook and online videos, have growing reach and impact. Between 2009 and 2014, the percentage of Senegalese using the Internet increased from 7.5 to 17.7 percent. Youth, in particular, look to new media sources for information, including religious material.

There are few formal channels for engagement between government development policy institutions and religious bodies, but informal channels abound. Dialogue, engagement, and cooperation among faith and secular leaders and institutions on development topics have varied greatly in the years since independence. In many areas, coordination and regular communication are weak. Perhaps the most dramatic instance of communication failure was the early 1990s Mbegue Forest debacle (see Box 2), but there are others reflecting both gaps in “commission” and, above all, failures by “omission.” A point of contention for some religious leaders is that government officials approach them only for political support at election times, though traditions of paying respect to religious leaders are part of expected behavior for politicians. Many government officials and political leaders have ties to religious communities, specifically the major confréries.

Faith and secular actors have generally agreed, even if often tacitly, on Senegal’s core development priorities and strategies. However, there are significant areas of diverging opinions. Positive examples of engagement include health issues, such as hygiene promotion and malaria prevention. These issues are seen as domains where public approaches entail no conflict with religious beliefs and values. Family planning is an issue that straddles the line, with an increasing number of faith actors actively engaged in the topic and beginning to promote family planning, preferring to base activities on religious teachings.

Diverging opinions on development issues among various faith and secular actors have at times represented obstacles to development progress. Various debates about reforms to the Family Code are an example of frustration and contention that have arisen largely from how it affects women’s roles and rights. Some view the existing code as an unnecessary intrusion based on inherited French secular traditions. At present, no meaningful forum exists where differing sides can voice their opinions and work toward solid solutions. The debates highlight the complex and not well understood tension and division between religious and secular feminist approaches to the issue. Another area of tension has surrounded land tenure. Religious roles in agriculture and land management are significant, but the implications for development strategies are not clearly understood.

Religious communities in Senegal have a keen interest in education strategies and management, and they are actively involved through networks of schools and other educational institutions. This has important implications for the future of the national educational system. Senegal’s complex education system includes diverse state-operated public schools and private schools (Islamic, Christian, and secular). With frequent teacher strikes, overcrowding, and limited resources in public schools—as well as a desire to instill what they perceive as appropriate values in their children—parents are drawn to the private alternatives. Many private options, and especially Catholic schools, are viewed as providing higher quality education.

Schools offering a Qur’anic education are quite popular in Muslim-majority Senegal (especially for very young children). They vary widely in terms of curriculum, quality, and structure; there is no uniform system for setting standards and oversight. Both curriculum and management of the large and diverse
network of Qur’anic schools are topics of active debate, as is its role within the overall education system. An active concern is the phenomenon of talibé students from Qur’anic schools begging in the streets; this behavior demonstrates financial pressures and is explained as a deliberate strategy of encouraging humility as part of religious training. Among a minority of schools and teachers, it is simply abuse. It has attracted wide and longstanding interest among Senegalese and international partners as a human rights issue. Dialogue that can generate better reform options is urgently needed.519

5.2 LOOKING AHEAD

This report represents a preliminary exploration of Senegal’s religious landscape, outlining religious elements of different sectors and highlighting areas where religious actors engage with development topics and partners. It has underscored important links, but also topics, that merit further research. The complex intersection between religion and development, particularly the influence of the confréries, leaves many questions unanswered. Additional research is needed to better understand how urbanization and social media have influenced or interface with shifting dynamics within religious institutions and beliefs; connections between religion and agriculture; the engagement of religious institutions on current and projected impacts of climate change; and religious dimensions of education reform, including core national curricula and evolution of the parallel education systems.

The strong, traditional roles of the confréries, especially the Mourides, in agriculture and farming has been well documented; however, the scope of their contemporary operations and the extent to which they continue to influence agriculture today are less well understood. The role of religious communities in evolving land tenure patterns, sustainability and water use, government subsidies, and labor (particularly the role of talibé followers) remains unclear. These issues are further complicated by climate change, which presents new challenges, including ever more erratic rainfall, droughts, and flooding.

Severe droughts in the 1970s accelerated urbanization in Senegal. Many members of Senegal’s religious families are based in urban areas today, but they often maintain homes in rural religious locales, as well. These changes have implications not only for the economic base, which previously relied heavily on farming and agriculture, but also for confrérie training and philosophies, as traditional marabout-talibé relationships in rural, agricultural settings change to accommodate new urban realities. Economic and social ties have been maintained during these changing times, though; many trade and business decisions are colored by affiliation (for example, a Mouride landlord will often give preference to a Mouride plumber).

These shifts also have important ramifications for women and their roles in the family and society, as economic changes encourage more women to participate in the labor force.

Senegal’s education system is at a crossroads and is the subject of active national debate and significant partner engagement. How to incorporate the various religious dimensions is an important, if not always explicitly stated, challenge; issues include how to integrate teaching about religion in the public curriculum and how to link, if not integrate, different school systems—and especially religious schools—into a national framework. The education system overall has expanded rapidly, but there are many quality challenges. The protracted and unresolved transition from the two major distinct systems—Qur’anic and French—to the introduction of newer hybrid options, entails efforts to address the issue of how to link the traditional and religious to the modern and secular.

Recent years have seen initiatives engaging various stakeholders to address educational content and improve quality of instruction. Active issues involve language of instruction, curriculum elements, and the extent to which civic and religious values can and should be incorporated. Various experiments underway (both public and private) aim to bridge the gaps. Arabic instruction is a focus, with expanded opportunities for the small, but growing, Arabisant (Arabic-speaking) elite. The future of Arabic as a language of instruction in Senegal is at issue, as the country aims to position itself globally, especially with parallel initiatives seeking to expand instruction in French and national languages. Senegal is in search of a viable path forward that will better align the educational offer with public demand.

A sensitive and important issue is approaches to vulnerable children. A traditional area of religious concern, the various initiatives of religious communities and FIOs to address the issue should be explored in greater depth. The long-standing issue of talibé exploitation within the urban daara context (and the visible manifestation in widespread begging and reported child abuse) calls for dialogue and action.

Efforts to engage religious leaders on issues around family health and family planning (long sensitive topics in Senegal and the broader West African region) are promising and should be carefully watched. There are two important aspects: first, the recognition that religious support for reforms and efforts to shift traditional norms and behaviors is essential; and second, the deliberate effort to engage religious communities at a senior level. This systematic effort is described by religious leadership as new and a breakthrough. If the experience is positive, it suggests a formula that could be applied in other sectors.

2. Ibid


5. The terms conférence and order are used interchangeably in this report.


10. Ibid


24. Burkina Faso receive $1,040 million, Cote d’Ivoire received $1,262, Ghana received $1,331 million, and Mali received $1,391 million; “Aid statistics by donor, recipient and sector.” OECD, 2015. Available at: http://www.compareyourcountry.org/aid-statistics; cr=occd&cl=en#

25. Ibid


27. According to the World Bank (2013), the economic and monetary union was formally created in January 1994, based on the West Africa Monetary Union of the CFA franc zone, with eight members, a currency guaranteed at fixed parity to the Euro (656 to 1) through an operations (overdraft) account arrangement with the French Treasury coupled with stringent zone-wide fiscal and monetary rules. Patterned after the European Union, with a Commission located in Ouagadougou financed by a share of a one percent levy on all imports into UEMOA, the Commission is spearheading efforts to establish a customs union, harmonize investment incentives, public financial management procedures, and taxation, and monitor key macroeconomic convergence criteria—including fiscal deficits, inflation, public sector wages, and government arrears. Regional institutions include a common central bank—Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest—BCEAO, a Regional Banking Commission, a regional Stock Exchange since 1998, and a partially functioning Securities Exchange Commission. The BOAD (Banque Ouest Africaine de Développement) is considered as an independent, specialized institution under the UEMOA treaty. Available at: http://go.worldbank.org/FKHEP1VQ0


30. Ibid

31. Ibid


34. “Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births).” World Bank, 2013. Available at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.ER.IN


42. “Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%).” World Bank, 2015. Available at: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS


95. Ibid

96. Ibid


104. Ibid


106. Ibid


116. WFDD e-mail exchanges. November 2015. Dakar, Senegal

117. The term brotherhood, often used in the past as an English translation, can be confusing as the Senegalese orders are not related to the Muslim Brotherhood.


122. WFDD e-mail exchange. December 2015. Dakar, Senegal


129. WFDD interview with member of a religious family. March 2015. Dakar, Senegal.


135. Ibid


137. Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijānī, the founder of the Tijāniyya, was born in Algeria around 1727 CE. After completing the hajj in 1762, al-Tijānī visited several Sufi centers in the Maghreb and became familiar with a few existing Sufi orders. He then settled in Fez, Morocco, where he had previously studied, and began teaching others about Sufism. It is said that the Prophet Muhammad appeared to Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani and told him to leave
Many Muslims believe that the Mahdi will come to Earth before the end of time to return Muslims to the path of righteousness and that his appearance will coincide with the second coming of Jesus (Issa) so the two can together combat the Antichrist. Although different groups (for example in Sudan) recognize the coming of a Mahdi, adherents of the Qadiriyya, Tijaniyya, and Muridiyya confréries believe that the Mahdi has not yet come. This prophesized redeemer of Islam arrived in the form of a fisherman named Limamou Thiaw, thus transforming him into the newly named Limamou Laye. Following the revelation that he experienced, Limamou Thiaw's family, friends, and community ostracized him before many of them came to accept his teachings.


Ibid

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182. Ibid


190. Ciss, Alioune Badara. “Règles sanitaire et hygiénique : Ebola hante les pèlerins.” Le Quotidien, 2015. Available at: http://media.wix.com/ugd/1b1eb6_5eb7f990e3394eb7acc8e9a2a2763e73.pdf;


199. 109.2(1997): 723-745.; Berkley


207. Ibid

208. Ibid


215.WFDD internal report. 2014.


220. Ibid


229. Ibid

230. Ibid


Ibid


“Fed Up” with corruption, rappers inspire a new generation to create a better Senegal.” American Jewish World Service. Available at: https://ajws.org/stories/yen-a-marre/


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“Senegal: Country Gender Profile.” The Inter Africa Network For Women, Media, Gender Equity And Development (Famedev), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 2007.

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To learn more about the Religion and Development: Country-Level Mapping Project in Senegal visit: http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/subprojects/country-mapping-senegal