

# DEVELOPMENT, SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE AFRICAN SAHEL

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In Fall 2014, we launched a new collaborative program between the University of Florida, Sciences Po (Paris, France), and University Cheikh Anta Diop (Dakar, Senegal) to promote research and institutional exchange involving faculty and graduate students.

All three Universities are part of the Global Association of MDP (Masters in Development Practice) programs and this is the first initiative that builds on this network to create lasting collaboration on African development issues. The initiative is coordinated at UF through the Center for African Studies, the France Florida Research Institute, the Sahel Research Group, the International Center (UFIC), and has been partly financed by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York, which promotes closer association between American and French Institutions.

The project focuses on the development challenges facing the African Sahel in the wake of security and climate change. The Sahel is an expansive region characterized by intense environmental change, political and economic instability, and rapid population growth – all of which contribute to various security issues in the region. Despite this confluence of issues, development initiatives in the Sahel have lacked a systemic approach able to tackle interaction and feedback effects between different problem areas. The aim of the

project is to shed light on the interplay between these different challenges and to generate development-based interventions and solutions aimed at alleviating insecurity.

The goal is for selected project participants to meet three times during the academic year, once in each location. The first series of activities took place at UF during September 20-26<sup>th</sup>. Two students from the MDP program at Science Po, and three students from UCAD MDP and Economics Programs attended.

On the first day we held a one-day symposium on the theme “Demography and the Challenge of Social Change in the African Sahel”, which was organized around three main teams: 1) Malcom Potts (founder of OASIS, UC Berkeley) and Alisha Graves (co-founder of OASIS) presented a collision of crises in a discussion of population growth and climate change in Niger, followed by an argument for the effectiveness of family planning, girls’ education, and women’s empowerment programs in encouraging fertility decline; 2) Matt Turner (University of Wisconsin) and Leif Brottem (Grinnell College) discussed the impact of micro-climate variability on pastoral and agricultural livelihoods and the constant need for these population to adapt to environmental change; and 3) Arame Tall (IFPRI) and Sarah McKune (University of Florida) discussed the challenges of appropriately engaging local populations, particularly women farmers, in climate information services, and shared lessons from CCAFS projects in Senegal. More than 50 faculty and graduate students participated in the symposium, from Anthropology, African Studies, Climate Change Institute, Geography, Linguistics, MDP, Political Science, Public Health, Veterinary Medicine and other departments and programs.

The symposium was followed by a series of workshops and lectures held at the Center for African Studies. The workshops were designed to

expose students to specific issues and to generate discussion in order to facilitate small-team collaborative projects. The workshop and lecture topics included: “Pastoral livelihoods and vulnerability to climate change” (Sarah McKune - UF Public Health); “Demography, girls’ education, and women’s empowerment in the Sahel” (Alisha Graves - OASIS Initiative); “Food insecurity in the Sahel: Global markets and domestic policies” (Renata Serra - UF Center for African Studies); “Managing Salafi Activism in areas of limited statehood: Evidence from Mali and Niger” (Sebastian Elischer - University of Lunenburg and GIGA, Germany); and “Linguistic Warscapes of Northern Mali” (Fiona McLaughlin - UF Departments of Linguistics/LLC).

The weeklong events concluded with the formation of small-group cross-collaborations between students of partner universities. Students have self-selected into these smaller groups and will be working through the 2014-15 academic year to develop a deliverable in the form of either a literature review or a manuscript. Participating students will continue working from their respective universities, and select students will reconvene at each of the partner universities for weeklong collaborative endeavors. Students will meet at Sciences Po Paris in spring 2015 and at the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar during summer 2015. A virtual conference is scheduled to take place this December.

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