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Summary Report of the Workshop on:

**Meeting the Challenge of Religion and Pluralism in Africa:
Presentation of Grantees' Initial Findings**

Nairobi, Kenya

June 16–18, 2009

Co-hosted by

Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations (PROCMURA)

&

Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA)

Overview

On June 16–18, 2009, TrustAfrica convened the grantees of its Religious Pluralism initiative to present the initial findings of their work and reflect on opportunities to extend its reach. The workshop, held at the Nairobi Safari Club in Nairobi, Kenya, brought together 25 participants, representing 12 grantee organizations, TrustAfrica, and other stakeholders interested in addressing the religious dimension of pluralism and identity in Africa. The meeting was designed to follow up on an earlier convening, held in July 2007 in Dakar, Senegal, and a related series of grants totaling \$806,996 (see Appendix). The Nairobi convening gave many of these grantees an opportunity to share their project experiences and outcomes and to refine their networking strategies. It was also the first time TrustAfrica brought together grantees to look back at the implementation of funded projects and discuss potential follow-up activities.

The discussions were framed by the following questions:

1. What are the main results of the projects?
2. What challenges were encountered while implementing the projects? What strategies proved successful in promoting religious pluralism in Africa?
3. How do grantees intend refining their network strategies? Are they planning post-grant follow-up activities?

Background

TrustAfrica launched its Religious Pluralism initiative in April 2007 as a means to plan and implement a grant-making program addressing the religious dimensions of pluralism and identity in Africa. The initiative aims to support innovative measures to address the challenges posed by religious intolerance and ostracism both inside and between faith groups, mainly as it relates to marginalized believers. It also seeks to encourage the replication of good practices of intra-faith and interfaith dialogues and of peaceful cohabitation between members of different faiths. Finally, the initiative aims to enhance the role of religious leaders as advocates of peace and democratic governance on the continent.

These specific goals are pursued through three strategic objectives:

1. Fostering an informal network of organizations, religious leaders, and experts who work to promote interfaith dialogue, support each other, and strengthen the civic role of religion in Africa (for pluralism, peace and democratic governance).
2. Identifying and disseminating successful faith-based strategies for promoting pluralism and inclusion in Africa.
3. Expanding spaces within religions for dialogue and greater openness to allow for different understandings of religious precepts as well new ideas and new categories of believers.

Over the past two years the initiative has carried out a set of activities that include:

- (1) A survey of the field conducted between April 2006 and March 2007 that identified individuals and organizations working on the ground and the issues in the field of religious pluralism in Africa;
- (2) A convening held July 10–12, 2007, in Dakar, Senegal, that brought together practitioners, scholars, and other stakeholders to explore the role of religion in Africa as it relates to issues of pluralism and tolerance. The three main questions around which the workshop discussions evolved were: how to amplify the voices of marginalized believers, how to promote interfaith dialogue, and how to assist efforts by religious leaders to build peace and social inclusion in Africa. After three days of fruitful deliberations, participants identified the challenges that practitioners and ordinary believers and non-believers face and in the same token paved what could be the niche for TrustAfrica to make substantial difference and lasting impacts by making practical recommendations which guided a round of grants;
- (3) Grant making aimed at implementing key recommendations that arose out of the workshop. A total of \$806,996 has been dedicated to fund various projects across the continent tackling in different ways the issues related to religious pluralism and identity;
- (4) Ongoing grant monitoring that helps TrustAfrica follow up with grantees on the effective implementation of the projects' activities and outcomes;
- (5) Development of a database of African individuals and organizations on the continent and in the Diaspora that deal with the issue of religious pluralism in the continent.

Nairobi Workshop

In June 2009, approximately one year after the first cluster of grants was made, TrustAfrica reconvened the project participants, grantee organizations, and donor representatives for a workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. The convening brought together all but one of the grantee organizations, including two new grantees that are just starting to implement their projects. The aim of the workshop was to give grantees the opportunity to present their initial findings, share thoughts on how to pursue the advocacy work on intra-faith and interfaith dialogues, refine networking strategies and to start planning follow-up activities.

The workshop opened with a session on *Religion, Conflicts and Peace Building in Africa*. Three grantees delivered presentations on advocacy work they had conducted in areas prone to conflict or recovering from conflict in East Africa. Two of these speakers — representing Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), the Interfaith Peace Building Initiative (IPI), and the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) — presented their work on promoting the positive involvement of the youth in peace building activities in Africa. Through their youth branches, they have been taking steps to transform the vibrant energy of African youth into a force for peace building. The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) discussed its project activities, which focused on teaching conflict prevention and management skills to religious leaders and creating a forum where Christian and Muslim leaders can explore ways to promote peaceful coexistence.

The following session explored *Traditional African Religious Responses to Questions of Pluralism, Religious Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence*. Presenters reasserted the importance of revisiting African history and traditions to find workable solutions to religious intolerance and exclusion of the ‘other’. Indeed, the grantees’ research on the moral significance of proverbs and storytelling traditions in several parts of Africa, as well as the Yorùbá and Ibo divination practices in Nigeria, revealed a robust tradition of advocacy around inclusiveness, pluralism and religious pluralism within traditional African social and religious settings. The two presenters called for a renewed consideration of traditional African religions, which are often denigrated by mainstream religions even though they are still a part of everyday life for many ordinary people.

The second day began with a session on *Religion, Pluralism and Socio-economic and Political Processes in Africa*. Speakers from the African Monitor and the Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust (both in South Africa) shared insights on how African religious leaders can use their charisma to advance developmental work, help eradicate poverty, and combat social exclusion. The two organizations have close ties to former archbishops of Cape Town who took a prominent stand against apartheid. Their tremendous social capital enables them to reach people belonging to various faith groups — an invaluable asset when attempting to promote religious pluralism at the leadership and grassroots levels. The Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust, which is affiliated with the 1984 Nobel Peace laureate, chronicled its efforts to instill respect for its social diversity, including religious pluralism, in the South African healthcare system. With the support it received from TrustAfrica, it produced a 68-page handbook, *Simply Ask! A Guide to Religious Sensitivity For Healthcare Professionals*. The African Monitor was founded by Njongonkulu Ndungane, who succeeded Tutu as archbishop in 1996. It has undertaken pioneering work to

empower individuals at the grassroots level to foster social change and ownership of development processes in Africa. In collaboration with TrustAfrica, African Monitor launched its 164-page publication, *Development Support Monitor 2008/09*, at the Nairobi convening. The book examines how well African governments and their development partners deliver on their commitments and implement their policies and programs. Like the Diversity Trust's handbook, it is a tangible and lasting product of the work supported by the Religious Pluralism initiative.

The next session focused on *Marginalized Believers: Gender and Advocacy for Religious Openness*, with presentations by the African Women of Faith Network (AWFN) s/c African Council of Religious Leaders (Kenya); Chipua – Institute for Social Transformation (Tanzania); and Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et Lois au Sénégal (GREFELS) s/c Women Living Under Muslim Law (Senegal). Speakers emphasized the importance of empowering women and girls in maintaining harmonious communities. Strengthening networking ties and outreach strategies for and among African women of faith, they said, will make it possible to reduce the marginalization of women within faith-based organizations and thereby enhance their positive transformative role in society. Grants from TrustAfrica enabled AWFN and GREFELS to conduct instructive work on these issues. Overcoming the male-dominated structures within their faiths, they were able to voice the concerns of women believers and bring to the table decision-making and social problems. The presentation by Chipua documented its process for engaging girls from disadvantaged social groups, helping them gain self-esteem and confidence, and helping them build skills that lead to meaningful livelihoods.

Reflections

The Nairobi convening allowed two new grantees to present their projects' goals. One is researching the links between religion and political processes in various African countries. The other is setting up a virtual network for scholars of African descent to exchange ideas on the theory and practice of religion in Africa. Each of these new grantees benefited from comments and suggestions made by the other participants.

Collectively, the presentations brought refreshing information from the field. The convening was thus an enriching forum for learning and exchanging experiences related to project implementation, difficulties encountered, and strategies for overcoming them. Participants agreed that this was the first time a funder had brought them together with like-minded organizations to discuss their projects' implementation and outcomes.

The tenor of the discussions was honest and constructive. Participants showed enthusiasm for engaging one another on their respective work as well as openness to in-depth discussions of inter- and intra-faith issues. If we take the example of the two main religions, Islam and Christianity, Muslims and Christians challenged conventional precepts and practices. Religious leaders such as Njongonkulu Ndungane of African Monitor, Father Johnson Mbillah of PROCMURA and Shaykh Saliou Mbacke of IFAPA boldly recognized that African religious leaders have often failed to respond to pressing questions of their communities. One even bemoaned the involvement of religious leadership in issues that have less urgency or relevance — as with some clerics' positions on homosexuality. In doing so, they run away from the real problems

facing their constituencies, such as poverty, denial of basic human rights, political oppression, and weak governance.

The workshop also served as a brainstorming forum on how to rationalize the work of various groups, some of which have similar agendas and compete for scarce resources. Participants expressed the need to build synergy, complementarity, and efficiency by working in a more consultative way. Some helpful initiatives might include a periodic meeting of African religious leaders, systematic sharing of information, and regular publication of information materials for religious organizations. Participants also said it was critical to create a database of faith-based organizations, interreligious organizations and religious actors that describes their activities, the issues they address, and potential individual and institutional funders.

The main idea that emerged at the workshop centered on creating a network of practitioners of religious leaders interested in pluralism. Participants identified this as a gap that TrustAfrica could help fill, and a complement to the virtual network already under way. Interestingly, they see their organizations as the driving force of this network, and view themselves as core actors in the endeavor to institutionalize a culture of acceptance within their respective faith communities and religious institutions. TrustAfrica's ability to catalyze this sense of awareness and purpose, through its moral and material support, is surely one of the most promising outcomes of the Religious Pluralism initiative.

Workshop Participants

1. **Ms. Aissetu Barry**, Executive Director, Interfaith Peace-Building Initiative (IPI), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
2. **Ms. Codou Bop**, Executive Director, Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et Lois au Sénégal (GREFELS) – Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Dakar, Senegal
3. **Ms. Emma Kang’ethe**, Project Director, African Council of Religions Leaders for Peace (ACRL), Nairobi, Kenya
4. **Prof. Gerrie Lubbe**, Chairman, Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust, Pretoria, South Africa
5. **Mr. Shaykh Saliou Mbacke**, Coordinator, Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Dakar, Senegal
6. **Rev. Dr. Johnson Apenad Mbillah**, General Advisor, Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), Nairobi, Kenya
7. **Prof. Penda Mbow**, President, Mouvement Citoyen, Department of History, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal
8. **Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane**, President, African Monitor, Cape Town, South Africa
9. **Ms. Jessica Nkuuhe**, Executive Director, Urgent Action Fund–Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
10. **Prof. Jacob K. Olupona**, Professor of African Religious Traditions, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA
11. **Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku**, retired professor of religious studies, Accra, Ghana
12. **Mr. Sabastiano Rwengabo**, Research Fellow, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Makerere University Centre for Basic Research (CBR), Kampala, Uganda
13. **Ms. Mitra Deliri Sabet**, Executive Director, Chipua – Bahá’í Community of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
14. **Ms. Marietta Williams**, Executive Director, United Muslim Women Advocacy and Empowerment, Monrovia, Liberia
15. **Ms. Hawa Ba**, Program Consultant, TrustAfrica, Dakar, Senegal
16. **Dr. Bhekinkosi Moyo**, Program Director, TrustAfrica, Johannesburg, South Africa
17. **Mr. Sidi Diawara**, Program Officer, TrustAfrica, Monrovia, Liberia
18. **Ms. Jeanne Elone**, Program Associate, TrustAfrica, Dakar, Senegal

Appendix: Related Grants

To date TrustAfrica has granted a total of \$806,996 to secular and interfaith organizations across the continent and the Diaspora to implement the recommendations of the Dakar workshop report and address issues that emerged from the scanning of the field. The projects funded covered both mainstream (Christianity and Islam) and marginalized religions or faiths (traditional African religions, Baha'ism, Hinduism, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, etc.). Minority groups such as women and youth drew special attention, as specific projects were dedicated to their issues. Most of the projects funded were collaborative in nature, involving several organizations located in different geographical areas. The grants are:

1. **African Monitor Trust** (based in South Africa: www.africanmonitor.org): A grant of \$85,000 for an 18-month project to pilot a community-based approach by faith-based organizations to engage in and monitor development projects across religious communities. The project and grantee are headed by the well-known Archbishop of Cape Town, Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane. The project (with a total budget of about \$350,000) is partially funded by Trinity House, the Department for International Development (DFID), Oxfam Great Britain, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
2. **Chipua – Institute for Social Transformation** (based in Tanzania: www.chipua.org): A grant of \$28,180 for a 12-month pilot project to “empower women and young girls by using tools based on values that are common to all religions.” The project, partly funded by USAID, will provide alternative instruction programs for underprivileged young women who lack the means to pursue vocational training and who suffer from discriminatory practices (especially religious practices) that prevent them from becoming leaders in their communities and religions. Most of the women and young girls benefiting from the project are members of the Baha'i faith, a minority group often subjected to ostracism and intolerance. The project and Chipua are led by Ms. Mitra Deliri Sabet, a member of the Baha'i Community of Tanzania who works with the Tanzania Interfaith Forum (TIFF) and the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP).
3. **International Circle for the Promotion of Creation – CIPCRE** (based in Cameroon: www.cipcre.org): A grant of \$33,500 for a six-month project to prepare, test and initiate a faith-based program for addressing discriminatory rites and other practices faced by widows. Created in 1990, CIPCRE is a Christian NGO that plays a dual role as a support organization for local development initiatives and a tool for Christian testimony. It operates national offices in Porto-Novo (Benin) and Bafoussam (Cameroon) and a liaison office in Bamenda (English-speaking Cameroon).
4. **Desmond Tutu Diversity Trust** (based in South Africa: www.desmondtutudiversitytrust.org.za): A two-year grant of \$60,750 (in partial support) for a pilot project aimed at sensitizing and equipping health-care practitioners with knowledge and reference materials on the diverse religious traditions practiced by their clients. It aims to ease the distrust, misunderstanding and offense caused unintentionally during health-care provision due to ignorance of various religious beliefs and traditions. The project would focus on three core sensitization

activities, namely: (1) production and distribution of a booklet about different religious traditions with regard to health care; (2) production of information, education and communication materials to educate health practitioners and patients about different faiths and their belief systems, and (3) religious diversity workshops for health practitioners.

5. **Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa – IFAPA** (based in Kenya: www.africa-faithforpeace.org): A two-year grant of \$75,000 to initiate a ten-country effort aimed at establishing a multi-faith regional network of youth dedicated to peace-building within and between religious communities. This will build on in-country work that IFAPA has done over the years in some of Africa's most conflict-ridden countries and locations: Togo, Liberia, Southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Algeria, and Northern Uganda. One of IFAPA's major strengths is its diverse composition, which covers all of Africa's major faith groups: African Traditional Religions, Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. The project has great potential in attracting future funding from within and outside Africa. Within Africa, the sources include national governments and the private sector; and from outside Africa, potential donors include the Lutheran World Federation, Finn Church Aid, Church of Sweden, and the Oslo Foundation for Peace and Human Rights.

6. **Interfaith Peace Building Initiative – IPI & The Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action – EIFDDA** (based in Ethiopia): A joint grant of \$50,000 for a fifteen-month project to connect and train youth in faith-based organizations in the three conflict-prone countries of the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea. Specifically, the project will cover: (a) the establishment of an Interfaith Conflict Prevention Steering Committee in the project areas; (b) preparation of training modules, kits and materials for the implementation of capacity building trainings for interfaith engagement in the target areas; (c) training of youth representatives in dialogue skills, peace building and reconciliation techniques; (d) establishment of Peace Clubs in schools and community centers; and (e) organization of Dialogue Forums and Cooperation Circles hosted by local community groups in the target areas. Both grantees are very highly regarded and have track records in the project areas. IPI is an indigenous membership association, and a member of the global interfaith organization, United Religions Initiative (URI), and Pax Christi International, an international organization working to promote peace and justice all over the world. The collaborating organization, EIFDDA, was initiated in 1999 as a country level extension of the International level dialogue among leaders of major religions and between the major religions and the World Bank and other donor agencies. This dialogue is known as World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD).

7. **Mouvement Citoyen** (based in Senegal): An 18-month grant of \$54,566 for research by a team of scholars on the relationship between religious communities and the status of peace, tolerance and democracy in Senegal. The research will be conducted in three thematic areas: (a) the relationship between Muslim communities and academia, (b) interpretations of religious writings, and (c) the status of secularism in Senegal. The researchers will present their reports at a workshop at the well-respected West African Research Center in Senegal, with an eye to stimulating debate on the issues investigated. Participants will include

researchers, religious leaders, journalists and some leaders of political parties and civil society organizations will be involved. A selected number of people from Nigeria and Sudan (countries where religion seems to have invaded the political sphere) will also be invited to enrich the debate with their countries' experiences. Mouvement Citoyen was created in 2002 by members of civil society, researchers and students concerned with the ideals of religious pluralism and social justice. It has since has conducted research projects and exchanges on religion and society, gender discrimination, illegal migration, and social exclusion. It has previously received support from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, and the embassies of Holland, Switzerland and France in Senegal.

8. **Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa – PROCMURA** (based in Kenya: www.procmura-prica.org): A two-year grant of \$70,000 for a project aimed at: (1) sensitizing Christian and Muslim leaders from six countries in East Africa (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) on the art of conflict prevention and management; and (2) creating a forum for Christian and Muslim leaders to openly discuss and consider ways to promote peaceful coexistence. PROCMURA has extensive experience in the field. It is the only Christian organization in Africa dedicated to building bridges of understanding and promoting mutual relationships between Christians and Muslims throughout the entire continent. Founded in 1959, it was originally known as the Islam in Africa Project and sought to ensure that the Christian mandate to bear witness to Christ was carried out faithfully and devoid of polemics and name-calling, so as to promote harmonious relationships with Muslims. PROCMURA is now active in more than 20 African countries, and its current partners who contribute financially to its programs are: Danmission, Danish Sudan Mission, Tranque bar Fund, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Mission Eine Welt, and Fonds Oecuménique TN.

9. **Sauvegarde et Valorisation des Manuscrits pour la Défense de la Culture Islamique (SAVAMA – DCI)** (based in Mali: www.savamadci.org): An 18-month grant of \$100,000 for a set of four projects that comprises collaborative research and dissemination on African religious traditions in the context of their responses to questions of pluralism, religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The study will be based primarily on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in Mali, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa. The research is premised on the hypothesis that African religious practices, especially indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam, espouse an ethos of peaceful religious coexistence, interaction, tolerance and cooperation, which can be harnessed as a means of overcoming contemporary religious conflict and mistrust. The four projects cover: the teachings from the ancient manuscripts of Timbuktu (Mali); the ethical and moral significance of proverb and storytelling traditions in West, East and South Africa; Muslim-Christian relations in Ghana; and Yorùbá and Ibo divination practices in Nigeria. The researchers are: Mr. M. Abdel Kader Haidara of Timbuktu, Professor Kofi Asare Opoku in Ghana, Professor David Owusu-Ansah at James Madison University, Professor Emmanuel Akyeampong at Harvard, Professor Jacob Olupona at Harvard University and Professor Anthonia Kalu in Nigeria. The project will be coordinated by Safeguard and Valorization of Ancient Manuscripts for the Promotion of Islamic Culture (SAVAMA–DCI), which is based in Timbuktu, Mali and has a world-class record in the preservation of ancient religious writings.

10. **African Council of Religious Leaders (African Women of Faith Network)**, based in Kenya: (www.religionsforpeace.org): A twelve-month grant of \$50,000 to carry networking activities aiming to build trust amongst women of faith and strengthen their skills in mobilizing faith-based support as well as advocating with senior religious leadership, policy makers, and the public to enhance religious tolerance to promote peaceful coexistence at regional, national and local levels in Africa. AWFN was established by the World Conference of Religions for Peace in January 2003, as the first regional sub-network of its Global Network of Women of Faith Network, to provide a mechanism for cooperation and coordination. Hence AWFN brings together over 500 organizations of women of faith, representing all the diverse religions and nations of Africa. The African Women of Faith Network plans to carry the following activities: hold one regional high-level religious leaders and women of faith dialogue to speak collectively as advocates for peace and conflict mediation, hold five national consultations to promote cross-community interaction and to develop participants into agents of conflict transformation and reconciliation, and finally hold High level interfaith media and public awareness creation activities on religious inclusion, tolerance, dialogue and peaceful coexistence. These activities will foster empathy, and help participants form real relationships and develop a more complex and sophisticated understanding of each other. In addition, a multi-religious effort towards enhancing religious tolerance and promoting peaceful coexistence will reach a substantial number of leaders of religious communities and faith-based institutions.
11. **Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et Lois au Sénégal – GREFELS** (based in Senegal: (www.grefels.org):
- A \$5,000 grant to fund the participation of one young member of the network to the Association for Women's Rights in Development International Forum in November 14–17, 2008, in Cape Town (South Africa). GREFELS serves as the coordinating office of Women Living Under Muslim Laws–Africa & Middle-East (WLUML–AME) and as such is the network focal point in the African continent. WLUML is an international solidarity network that provides information, support and collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. The network works through research and advocacy to help strengthen women struggles for equality and rights, especially in Muslim contexts. The Association for Women's Rights in Development is an international membership organization that works to strengthen the voice, impact and influence of women's rights advocates, organizations and movements internationally to effectively advance the rights of women. The grant allowed Women Living Under Muslim Laws–Africa & Middle-East (WLUML–AME) to take advantage of the meeting of AWID to organize a planning meeting of WLUML–AME experts.
 - A one-year grant of \$50,000, beginning December 1, 2008, to help Women Living Under Muslim Laws–Africa & Middle-East (WLUML–AME) develop a comprehensive electronic platform and to incubate an internship and mentoring program that will enable the member associations to acquire needed technical assistance and program support. Generally, Africa is the weakest link in WLUML's global network. Its member associations are the least connected to each other and yet have the greatest unmet need for information, technical assistance, and mutual support. The grant will allow WLUML to undertake the following

activities: an organizational survey of all its member associations in 19 African countries, with a focus on identifying their programming needs, capacities, issues and opportunities for networking and collaboration; an electronic forum and exchange where its member associations and partners can exchange ideas and plan strategies for adapting WLUML's overall plan of action to local contexts; an internship and mentoring program for promising young women scholars and activists who can be offered internship and mentoring opportunities as a means of enhancing WLUML's age diversity and building a new generation of leaders for this important work of achieving more pluralistic Muslim communities; and the strengthening of the capacity of WLUML to coordinate the services that its members and partners require.

12. **Young Researchers Network on Religion & Politics s/c Centre for Basic Research – CBR** (based in Uganda: www.cbr-ug.org) – A \$50,000 grant over a period of 9 months (April 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009) to carry a research project on Religion and Democratization Processes in Africa. The proposed project intends to investigate the contribution of religion – negative or positive – to democratization processes in Africa. Research will be carried out by a group of young African scholars in five countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Senegal. The goals of the project are: (1) to analyze the relevance of different religious institutions and actors in Africa's nascent democracies; (2) to examine issues which underline the centrality of religion in democratization processes; (3) to demonstrate the influence of religion on democratization through, the actions and activities of religious institutions, religio-political developments, state-religious institution interactions, and alliances between political and the religious forces within countries. Finally, research results will be synthesized in order to draw lessons for democratization and inter-religious dialogue from the experience of politico-religious interaction in each of the project countries. Research coordination will be ensured by Sabastiano Rwengabo (Uganda) and Mame-Penda Ba (Senegal). Project management will be provided by the Centre for Basic Research, Kampala, Uganda.

13. **Virtual Network on Religion and Pluralism in Africa to be managed by Prof Jacob Olupona** – A twelve-month grant of \$50,000 to set up a website that will host a virtual forum on religious pluralism in Africa. The site will be a forum where scholars of religion in Africa in both the humanities and the social sciences can engage in an interdisciplinary conversation on topical issues relating to the theory and practice of religion in Africa. Inter-religious dialogue and peaceful coexistence of groups in Africa's multicultural nation states will also be a central concern of this scholarly forum. The initiative aims to create opportunities for young and established scholars to exchange ideas by engaging in conversations that in turn will generate viable short- and long-term responses to matters of religion and public life. The ultimate goal is to see this initiative develop into a permanent forum for cyber scholars to read and research religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue in Africa. This virtual forum will be managed by Jacob K. Olupona, Professor of African Religious Traditions at Harvard Divinity School, and Professor of African and African American Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. He will be assisted by a technical and research assistant who will help in collecting and organizing the information for the site.