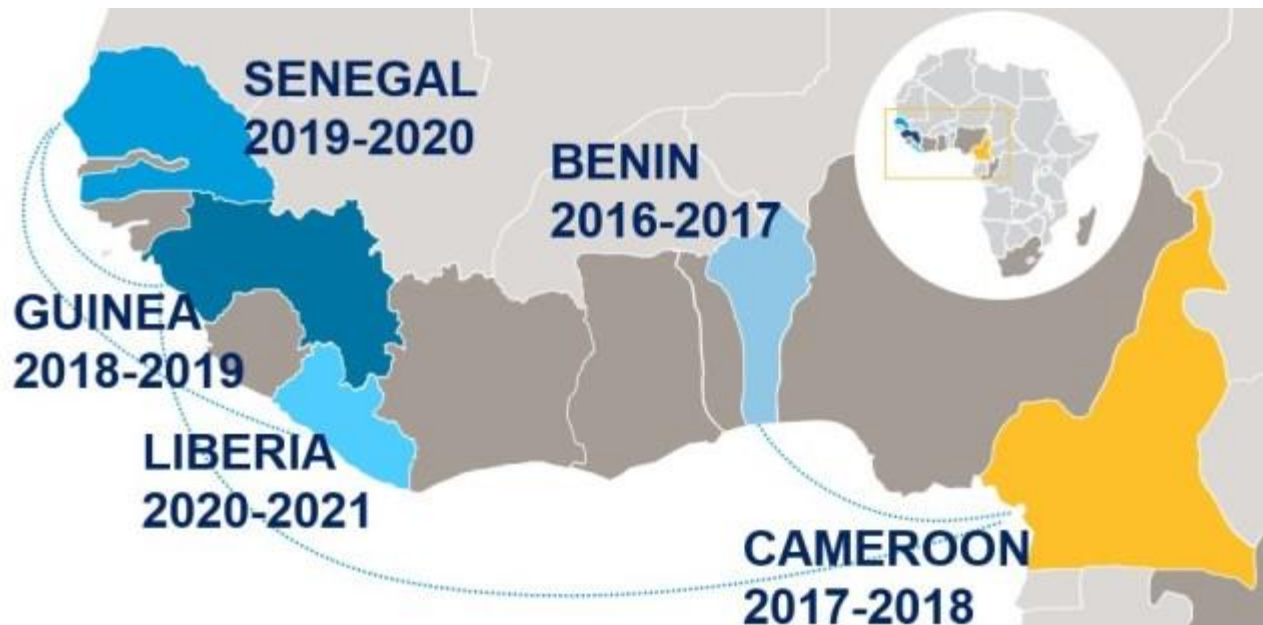


Na ngeen def (Hello) from Dakar, Senegal



In Senegal, there is the concept of 'teranga' which means you meet a stranger you treat them like family. It can be loosely translated as hospitality, but in Senegal it means so much more than - is the basic foundation of Senegalese culture. We are experiencing this hospitality as we arrived a couple weeks ago. I was here in Senegal last year for over six weeks during our assessment and preparing for our hosting of the President in June 2018 during a short stop over.

The primary people groups are the Wolof, Fulani, Serer, Maninka and Jola. Wolof is the largest with population of over 6 million people. Wolof is also the primary language spoken here and so we are learning some phrases in this language. In our country briefings, we are learning more about the culture, religion, relationships, languages - as I can't say 'oh, I have been in West Africa for over 12 years, I know how it is here'. The primary religion is Islam, there was an emphasis by France since 1841 with two people groups and in those groups there is a larger portion of the population are Catholic - up to 22%. Some unique aspects of Islam here involves brotherhoods and the marabout (spiritual leader) - importance of peace, high mosque attendance, and Touba - a holy city. The percent of the population who are evangelical Christians is less than 1%. There are many living, studying, and working here from other countries in West Africa, so in the churches often it is people from elsewhere not from Senegal attending. There is a great emphasis on peace and you see that from their greetings "How are you?" - "Jaam nga am" - which means "Have you peace?" and your response is "Jaam rek, Yow nag" which means "Peace only and you?"

During the *Africa Mercy's* 10-month stay in the port of Dakar, Republic of Senegal, Mercy Ships plans to provide 1,200 to 1,700 life-changing surgeries (maxillofacial, burns reconstructive, pediatric orthopedics, women's health, general which emphasis on children, and ophthalmic) onboard, to treat over 4,000 at a land-based dental clinic as well as providing healthcare training to 1,000 to 1,500 local health care professionals through mentoring and courses, both in Dakar and in each of the regions. We are partnering with the Ministry of Health and Social Action to reach those from the interior who need the surgical services we have planned and can offer. The first time a Mercy Ship came to Senegal was way back in 1993/1994 with the *m/v Anastasis* - so for almost everyone I meet, they are not familiar with us. Thankfully I have connected with some former local workers and a few former patients who have shared their memories and some of their photos.



* Health and safety for the entire crew.

Jërjër! - the word in Wolof for Thank you - for your prayers and support as I serve.

Keith

Prayer Requests:

* Our patient selection process in all fourteen regions of Senegal - those who have surgical needs that we can met would come for the registration and consultations - the need is great and we know of our capacity.

* Our start-up with surgeries, dental and medical training - orientation for our local workers - our relationships with the local workers, patients, caregivers, training participants, the church, and partners. I have started making friends with the day crew and so look forward to having patients back in the hospital and little ones playing in the hallway which I walk between my cabin and my office multiple times a day. May together we bring hope and healing.