



African Development Foundation

NEWS RELEASE

ADF Mission Meets with President Obasanjo, Governors, To Discuss Development Plans, Build on Success of Housing Construction Program in Jigawa State

ABUJA – January 15, 2004 – A delegation from the African Development Foundation (ADF), a United States government agency that supports community-based development programs in 15 African countries, will meet with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and several Nigerian governors this week to discuss plans to expand ADF's support for development initiatives across Nigeria.

Accompanying a delegation led by Mr. Claude Allen, Deputy Secretary of State for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ADF representatives William R. Ford and Ernest Green will meet with President Obasanjo at the Presidential Villa tomorrow morning to discuss ADF's program and new opportunities for ADF to work with federal, state and local representatives on enhanced support for development projects that target Nigeria's poorest citizens.

The ADF delegation will then meet with a delegation of Nigerian governors and federal ministers in Abuja on Saturday to discuss the potential for new strategic partnerships as ADF expands its funding and the scope of its activities in Nigeria.

The ADF delegation will be in Nigeria until January 18, and their visit to various ADF projects will be highlighted by tours of a recently completed housing construction project in Jigawa. In 2002, after local flash flooding destroyed hundreds of homes in several Jigawa communities, ADF entered into a strategic partnership with the government of Jigawa State to contribute matching funds and technical assistance to a pilot program that built improved housing for 400 low-income families in four flood-devastated communities.

The pilot program tested the adaptability of compressed-brick technology – an environmentally friendly process that produces high-quality building blocks from local soils without burning wood fuel. It also hired Nigerian social workers to engage local communities in designing the new homes and assigning completed housing units to flood-affected families. The new homes were completed at an average cost of N 410,000 (US \$3,000), and ADF regards the enthusiastic response of residents of Marawa, Nasarawa, Gululu and Auyo as evidence of the positive impact of its participatory development model and the building designs and technologies introduced under the pilot program.

– More –

“From the very beginning, we asked the residents of the affected communities to play a central role in designing, building and distributing the new homes,” Mr. Fields noted. “That process gave the communities a real sense of ownership over the project, and it has produced high-quality housing units that reflect the design preferences of local residents. Jigawa residents haven’t just built housing units. They have created new homes for their families that can also be adapted for a wide variety of uses, including retail space.”

Mr. Fields is traveling to Nigeria with four distinguished Americans: ADF Board chairman Ernest Green, a leader of the American civil rights movement who serves as managing director of public finance for Lehman Brothers; Mr. Bill Ford, past president of the African Development Foundation and member of its Advisory Council, who directed the USAID program in Nigeria in the early 1970s; current Board member Dr. Ephraim Batambuze, an Illinois cardiologist who was born in Uganda and immigrated to the United States as a political refugee during the Idi Amin regime; and recently retired ADF Board member Claude Allen, who serves as deputy secretary of Health and Human Services in the Bush Administration.

ADF currently supports 19 projects across Nigeria, including the four pilot housing projects in Jigawa, thirteen micro-credit projects that assist primarily women in obtaining financing for small business development, and a life skills training and HIV/AIDS prevention pilot project for secondary school students in Plateau State. ADF’s current funding support for projects in Nigeria stands at more than N 423 million (US\$ 3.1 million).

The Foundation implements its Nigerian initiatives in cooperation with Diamond Development Initiatives, a Kano-based non-governmental organization that assists potential ADF-grantees in developing proposals for funding, provides technical assistance and training for approved projects, and evaluates project success in meeting development objectives. The director of Diamond Development Initiatives is Mr. Adamu Garba.

“Since 2000, ADF has worked with dozens of Nigerian communities on implementing projects that have made a real difference in the lives of thousands of Nigerians. The purpose of our trip is to study the successes we have achieved and explore new opportunities for partnership with local communities, state governments and the federal government,” said Fields.

The African Development Foundation (ADF), a U.S. government agency established by the United States Congress in 1980, is the only federal agency working solely at the grassroots level in Africa to alleviate poverty and promote broad-based sustainable development. Over the last 20 years, ADF has funded more than 1,500 community-based projects, with 250 projects currently receiving support. ADF supports program around trade and investment, small and medium enterprise development, HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation, and community grassroots empowerment. In 2004, the Foundation will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the inauguration of its community-based grant program. To learn more about ADF and its initiatives, go to www.adf.gov.

###