



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Rwanda Ambassador to the U.S. James Kimonyo Commends USADF for its Support of Small Community Based Businesses in Rwanda

His Excellency James Kimonyo lauded the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) for its investments to small community based businesses in Rwanda. USADF investments have assisted small enterprises like Gahaya Links, a company exporting sisal baskets that has grown from 27 to over 3,500 women, thereby creating a substantial number of jobs. These jobs have increased incomes from less than a dollar a day to up to fourteen dollars a week for women throughout Rwanda.

WASHINGTON – November 1, 2007 – His Excellency James Kimonyo personally thanked the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) for its continued support for grassroots groups and small businesses throughout Rwanda. Ambassador Kimonyo noted that USADF has committed over \$1.7 million since 2005 in community groups and enterprises throughout Rwanda. USADF's support of enterprises like Gahaya Links enables growth that creates additional jobs and generates higher incomes. Ambassador Kimonyo stated that job creation was one of the greatest needs in Rwanda, and USADF's community based investments were helping create jobs for the poorest people in Rwanda.

Lloyd Pierson, President of USADF, thanked Ambassador Kimonyo for his remarks. USADF recently welcomed Ms. Janet Nkubana, Managing Director of Gahaya Links, to USADF's Headquarters, where she thanked USADF for the Enterprise Development Investment Gahaya Links received in FY 2006. During her presentation, Ms. Nkubana stated that USADF's investment support increased Gahaya's production capacity, enhanced its quality control, strengthened the accounting system, and improved communication with Gahaya's master weavers located throughout Rwanda. "I had a very busy trip planned in the US, but I knew I had to stop by and say 'thank you' to USADF because it has made such a big difference in our business. The investment enabled our business to climb to the next level by helping us to strengthen business operations and reduce expenses, and this means we can increase our volumes. Very poor women who were making less than \$1 a day are now making two-three times that amount! This is having a huge impact in these rural communities." After her inspiring presentation, Mr. Pierson said "I was extremely impressed with the business acumen and success story of Gahaya Links... knowing that the business started with 27 women and now has 3,500 women... Gahaya has increased its members and their families' access to health care... very impressive!"

Gahaya Links Company Limited was established in 2004 through the initiative of Ms. Janet Nkubana and her sister Joy Ndungutse. Combining their experience in handcraft designing and marketing, with the talent found in rural women whom they have organized into cooperatives and associations, Gahaya Links creates quality sisal baskets and other home décor products that are inspired by local traditions and meet the exacting demands of Western consumers. Gahaya Links connects more than 3,500 artisans in 40 cooperatives and associations all over Rwanda with the lucrative international export market. Currently, a substantial portion of Gahaya's products are sold in Macy's in the United States. The company's major success in the last few years includes acquiring tremendous market exposure; also, it has the support of the government of Rwanda at the highest levels. The support from the Rwandan Government has consisted of assisting cooperatives to find markets for their products and building training centers for increased production and quality standardization.

The United States African Development Foundation (USADF) is a United States Government agency dedicated to expanding access to economic opportunity in Africa. Over the past 23 years, USADF has funded 1,800 projects representing in excess of \$150,000,000 in support of African entrepreneurs and local African communities. Other activities USADF has recently funded in Rwanda include: smallholder specialty coffee for export, dairy production, and the introduction of pomegranate as a cash crop for small farmers. For more information on USADF, its programs and its application guidelines, go to www.usadf.gov.