



FIRST PERSON

Ancient Culture, Modern Technology

New technology gives an influential religious leader access to a wealth of information



Photo: USAID/Oumar Doucouré

“I used to think the Internet was just for people working in offices, but now I realize it is also useful for religious leaders and their communities,” says Imam Almamy Korobara. “I can find information for the Friday prayers, and I can help others understand what’s going on in the world. I’m connected.”

Djenné, Mali, is renowned for its UNESCO World Heritage mud-brick mosque. The archaeological site of Djenné-Jeno — a city of 10,000 dating to 250 B.C. that was mysteriously abandoned in the 14th century — is internationally known. But Djenné’s most recent claim to fame is... its wired imam.

USAID provided computer equipment and a one-year Internet subscription for Imam Almamy Korobara, an influential religious and spiritual leader who heads the Grand Mosque of Djenné. One of the most important Muslims in one of Africa’s most important Islamic cities, the imam has always been a champion of USAID’s development activities in the area, like the community radio station and learning and information center. Working closely with several U.S. ambassadors, the imam has advocated using new technologies to bridge Djenné’s information gap. The new computer equipment has allowed the imam to access the wealth of information offered on the Internet and promote Djenné’s rich historical, cultural and religious heritage.

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