



USAID Mission Director, George Deikun hands out graduation certificates at a recent Workforce Development Initiative graduation. *Photo/USAID*

Successful Public- Private Partnership Leads to Jobs for Vulnerable Youth

Despite India's booming economic growth, large segments of the youth population lack the education and skills necessary for success in the modern economy. Corporations increasingly need skilled labor but there is a disconnect between the skills acquired through the current education and vocational training systems and those required in the modern workplace. In many schools, the curriculum is de-linked from market needs and students often lack the communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and spoken English that will make them employable.

To address this gap between existing skills and those demanded by the new economy, the USAID supported Workforce Development Initiative (*Ek Mouka or one opportunity*) program mobilizes poor and marginally educated youth, provides them training in skills demanded by industry (computers, spoken English, communication skills, customer relations, teamwork, etc), and links them with jobs: both fulfilling corporate manpower needs and creating opportunities for vulnerable youth. Designed in close collaboration with the private sector, the program is run by the Community and Progress (CAP) Foundation, a USAID grantee. Apart from providing financial resources and sharing training costs, the private sector is also engaged in market surveys, curriculum development, classroom lectures, training and placement. Microsoft, Lucent Technologies, Moser Baer, Genpact, Reliance Energy, Apollo Hospitals, the Tata Group (Voltas, Titan, Taj Hotels, TCS), Arvind Mills, Mahindra World City, Ballarpur Industries, DLF etc. are some of the prominent corporate partners who also employ program graduates.

Mission Director, George Deikun recently attended a valedictory event for a group of new EK Mouka graduates in Mumbai. Representatives from Tata and Reliance,



Students engaged in a role play that develops their confidence and communication skills. *Photo/USAID*

two of India's largest corporations and integral partners in the initiative, were also present at the event, where they pledged to further scale up the number of youth and centers for workforce development that they are willing to co-finance with USAID and/or state governments of India.

Said Deikun of the program, "We in USAID feel privileged to be a part of this very exciting public-private partnership that is revolutionizing the way vulnerable youth are provided with the skills that will help them to be productive and active members of society. This program has gone far in meeting the USAID strategic objective to "create opportunities for vulnerable people" and we look forward to seeing it build upon its strong foundation."

Promoting Positive Health and Nutrition Behavior in Muslim Communities

With health and nutrition indicators very low among women and children in some majority Muslim areas, USAID, in collaboration with its partner CARE and the Jamia Millia Islamic University in Delhi, is working to train prominent Muslim community leaders in Rajasthan to promote positive health and nutrition behavior in their communities. By involving religious leaders and using specific Islamic commandments on health and nutrition, the project seeks to explain healthy behaviors, from care during pregnancy to early initiation of breast feeding to proper feeding of infants and young children, through an Islamic lens. The project engages religious leaders as support agents and provides training so they can help educate Muslim children in the *madrasas*, counsel families, and make announcements from the Mosques to encourage women to participate in monthly maternal and child health and nutrition days.

The program is helping to promote positive health behaviors while working within religious teachings. Based on the success of the program, CARE plans to replicate it in other states. USAID will also be working with the Government of India to help scale up this training model in the \$450 million World Bank-supported Integrated Child Development Services Project IV, that will be implemented in eight states from 2009-2013.

Eco-Housing Goes City-Wide in Pune: A Pace-Setting Start in Maharashtra State

The success of USAID's eco-housing program in the city of Pune, Maharashtra has prompted the Minister of State for Urban Development, Rajesh Tope, to propose property tax rebates and amendments to development control rules to encourage and sustain similar green development throughout the rest of the state. Launched with technical assistance from USAID, the model, called a "win-win situation for the government, civic bodies, consumers and the environment" by Tope, involves green architecture, water conservation and recycling, energy efficiency, solid waste management and protection of plant and trees. Adoption of eco-housing in Pune city alone is estimated to result in substantial annual energy savings, reduce energy demand, and save up to 15 million liters of water per day within two years.