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**American Delegation Arrives in Mali to Tour Small Business Investment Projects,
Meet with Senior Government Officials on ADF's Strategic Partnership with Mali**

***African Development Foundation Has Pledged to Deliver Investment Capital to 40 Small Businesses;
ADF and Mali Will Commit Up to \$2 Million Per Year to Investment Program over Next Five Years***

BAMAKO – March 5, 2005 – Leaders of the African Development Foundation (ADF), a United States Government agency that provides investment capital to small businesses and producer groups in 15 African countries, will visit Mali this week to meet with senior government officials and visit several newly funded small business projects.

ADF and the Government of Mali recently signed a memorandum of understanding to commit up to US \$2 million (CFA 989 million) annually to an ADF program that will provide expansion capital to up to 40 small businesses and producer groups over the next five years.

The ADF delegation will arrive on Saturday, March 5, and spend three days visiting recently funded and newly proposed small business projects in Niono, Zantiebougou, Bandiagara and Tombouctou.

On Wednesday, March 8, the group plans to meet with President Amadou Toumani Touré, Prime Minister Ousmane Issoufi Maïga (who worked with ADF's as the Foundation's country representative for Mali in the 1980s), and the Minister for the Promotion of Investments, Mr. Ousmane Thiam. The meetings will discuss ADF's progress in implementing its strategic partnership with Mali.

"ADF's strategic partnership with the Government of Mali will provide dozens of small enterprises and producer groups with catalyst capital for business expansion and deliver essential training in financial management, business management and marketing to small business owners," said Mr. Fields. "We want to thank the Government of Mali for its generous commitment of support to the program."

The ADF program will provide small- and medium-sized businesses with investment capital to help them develop new products, sell their products in domestic and international markets, and attract new streams of private capital. The initiative will deliver awards of about US \$250,000 each to privately held small companies, producer groups, and other small enterprises. ADF's Mali staff will also provide small businesses and producer groups with training and technical assistance in financial management, business management, and marketing.

In 2004, ADF awarded a total of nine new grants in Mali, including:

- Ami Guindo, a textile maker;
- ACPAM, a provider of refrigeration services for urban food sellers;
- Mali Volailles, a seller of chicken hatchlings;
- ALCD, a producer of high-quality, low-cost charcoal made from cotton stalks and other agricultural byproducts;
- Miellerie Moderne du Mali, a maker of processed honey;
- TAMAK Sarl, a maker of processed animal hides;
- The Laundromat for Fistulous Women, which provides fistulous women with opportunities to earn income and finance surgery to repair their medical condition;
- Dugu ka Jeya, a commercial waste management and disposal business; and
- The Village Women's Association of Bandiagara (AGVF), a micro-credit organization that provides women-owned micro-enterprises in the Dogon region with access to capital.

ADF accepts applications from private small businesses, farmer groups and producer associations. Persons interested in applying for support can contact ADF's country representative, Mr. Amadou Konaté, at the ADF office in Bamako.

The American delegation is led by Mr. Fields, who is a former USAID deputy assistant administrator for Africa. It includes Ward Brehm, ADF's board chairman, and board members Jack Leslie and Ephraim Batambuze. The group is accompanied by Mrs. Rama Bah, who serves as ADF's regional program coordinator for Benin and five other west African nations.

Mr. Brehm is a Minneapolis, Minnesota businessman and philanthropist who has been actively involved in African development issues for more than a decade as a private citizen, church member, and as a member of two United States Congress delegations to Africa.

Mr. Leslie is chairman of Weber Shandwick Worldwide, one of the world's leading public relations agencies. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, former chairman of USA for UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency), and has been a member of UNHCR missions to Afghanistan (1998), Kosovo (1999), and Tanzania (2001).

Dr. Batambuze is a practicing cardiologist with Prairie Cardiovascular Consultants, the largest heart care program in the state of Illinois. Born in Uganda, he studied medicine at Makerere University and came to the United States in the early 1970s to complete a residency in internal medicine in Chicago. Rising political violence in Uganda under the Amin regime prevented him from returning home, and he was granted political asylum and American citizenship.

The African Development Foundation (ADF) is a United States Government agency dedicated to expanding access to economic opportunity in Africa. Over the past 20 years, ADF has funded 1,600 projects in support of African entrepreneurs and local African communities. For more information on ADF, its programs, and its application guidelines for Bénin, go to www.adf.gov/mali.htm.

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