



AFRICAN VOICES

A NEWSLETTER ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

USAID Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development Winter 2002

USAID Helps Nigeria Prepare for Next Elections

By Ugo Daniels and Elizabeth Hart

Hopes for sustaining Nigeria’s democratic transition hinge on the 2002/2003 elections being perceived as legitimate by most of the country’s citizens. This requires a number of important steps, including a credible new election law, effective management of voter registration and the polling itself, responsible participation by political parties, voter education, and minimal violence. The USAID Mission in Nigeria has been able to put in place a web of programs targeting these issues to support its democracy building strategic objective.

The strength of USAID’s programs is two-fold. First, in the short term, USAID/Nigeria can quickly facilitate cooperation among its partners to take advantage of political opportunities. These rapid response efforts are often pivotal and catalytic in moving a democratic agenda forward. Second, in the long term, USAID will see stronger results and increased sustainability using “issue-driven” initiatives that consolidate gains from each partner’s programs.

These advantages came to the fore over the past year, as Nigeria took the first important step on the path to credible elections: the passage of a new law to govern the conduct of elections. USAID’s partners, working with elections authorities, National Assembly legislators, and civil society, were able to develop a coordinated approach that included both technical advice and support for civil society advocacy.

Public fora around the country allowed civil society organizations to provide comment to the proposed legislation and the Independent National Electoral Commission’s (INEC) plans for voter registration. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) assisted in ensuring civil society participation by providing copies of the draft legislation and invitations to civil society organizations to participate in the fora, as well as giving INEC technical advice on international standards and best practices in election administration.

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E. Happel/NDI

Voting in Nigeria’s 1999 elections.

Guinean Women’s Tour to Senegal Shows Solidarity is Essential

By Laura Lartigue

Saran Diabaté, a member of the Guinean People’s Union political party (RPG), was amazed at what she saw during a USAID-sponsored political study mission that brought 15 prominent Guinean female politicians to Senegal. “This was a pilgrimage for us. What struck us was the solidarity among women in Senegal. Regardless of political affiliation, women were helping women to promote development. There was solidarity, synergy, and commitment—women were engaged in the development process.”

During a nationally televised press conference in Conakry, Guinea, in October 2001, Diabaté and the other female participants spoke about valuable lessons learned from the September study mission to Senegal and how they planned to apply those lessons in the Guinean context. The study mission brought Guinean women, from both opposition and ruling parties, to Senegal to take a close look at how Senegalese women are, through synergistic partnerships, inserting themselves into the political process in greater numbers, and are making an economic difference.

The study mission, organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to give support to political parties currently

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In March 2001, INEC presented an electoral bill to the National Assembly that reflected significant civil society input. However, some key recommendations were missing. While some were precluded because they required prior changes to the country's constitution, the dynamics of Nigerian power politics had also resulted in either the omission or addition of critical provisions, such as conditions for the registration of political parties and restrictions on civil society's ability to use electronic media for voter education messages.

In such a situation, having a broad-based democracy and governance program proved invaluable. A partners meeting in May produced a two-pronged approach. First, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) facilitated meetings between IFES and key legislators reviewing the INEC bill, in which some of the shortcomings and internal contradictions of the bill were identified. Second, USAID/Nigeria's civil society partners—the International Human Rights Law Group (Law Group), the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs (JHU/CCP), and the public affairs section of the U.S. Embassy—facilitated a roundtable meeting with 18 Nigerian organizations. The participants carefully reviewed the bill and prepared a detailed position paper that was presented to the relevant National Assembly committees, using contacts facilitated by NDI. This meeting also established the Electoral Reform Network, supported by the Law Group, which maintained an effort to watch legislative developments regarding the law as the National Assembly deliberated over the ensuing six months.

While this concerted effort by some of USAID/Nigeria's program partners produced an excellent example of program coordination and participatory politics, the rough-and-tumble nature of Nigerian politics took over. The electoral bill that was signed by President Obasanjo in December actually included additional provisions that limit the abil-

ity of new political parties to contest the elections. USAID's partners are now challenged to devise an advocacy strategy as the legal challenges to these changes move forward. At the same time, the Mission's programs will continue to engage lawmakers and elections administrators as they attempt to resolve issues that have been raised.

As events continue to unfold on the political and electoral stage, USAID/Nigeria and its partners are well situated for timely and targeted initiatives. IFES and the International Republican Institute (IRI) will work to bring political parties into closer consultations with INEC about the conduct of the elections and to assure that all qualified political par-

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USAID Supports Conflict Management in Nigeria

By Tjip Walker

In effective democracies there are institutions that provide opportunities to address disputes. Where such institutions are lacking, the capacity to respond to conflict is limited or considered biased. Frustrated disputants frequently attempt to impose solutions through violence.

The resumption of civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999 brought an opening of political space that gave room for repressed disputes to surface. As a result, numerous conflicts have turned violent as disputants have shunned political solutions in favor of force.

To address this threat to continued democratization, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) started a 2-year program of support to indigenous conflict management efforts in Nigeria, relying almost exclusively on interventions and training activities by Nigerian NGOs. OTI has pursued a three-pronged strategy. One prong has been to support NGOs seeking to intervene in conflicts that have become, or are likely to become, violent and destabilizing. These interventions have taken a number of forms including facilitated dialogue, third-party consultation, process-promoting workshops, and the establishment of peace commissions.

Ensuring that these interventions are effective is highly dependent on well-trained facilitators. Therefore, a second prong of OTI's strategy has been to expand the number and skills of Nigerian facilitators through vari-

ous training activities. OTI has also supported efforts by trained facilitators to organize a Conflict Resolution Stakeholders Network (CRESNET), a self-sustaining resource for conflict mitigation intervention and training.

The final strategic prong has been to use media to sensitize the public about democratic values such as tolerance. Live dramas, radio campaigns, and even billboards have spread peace-oriented messages.

Since January 2000, OTI has partnered with over 70 Nigerian NGOs and provided nearly \$5 million in support of this strategy. Over 7,500 people have participated in OTI-sponsored workshops and taken the conflict resolution skills they learned there back to their communities. USAID/Nigeria is continuing these sorts of activities now that OTI has handed the program over to the mission.

Positive impact is evident from in-depth assessments of selected activities involving focus groups and surveys. More poignant is the testimony of those who have discovered peaceful, and frequently democratic, means to resolve their disputes. As Nigerians come to realize such possibilities, they get a little closer to the dream expressed in their national anthem, of a land where peace and justice reign.

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Investment in Malagasy Female Leadership Pays Off

By Leslie Gottert

Malagasy female leaders are engaging in groundbreaking work in the fields of legal education, microfinance, and business, and exploring the new frontiers of legislative, regulatory, and political action as a result of continued support from the USAID/Madagascar Democracy and Economic Growth Office. These three stories highlight how five Malagasy women have used their USAID-supported training to make a difference.

Teaching Human Rights

In 1999 and 2000, Bakolalao Ramanandraibe Ranaivoharivony, a leading Malagasy jurist and law professor, participated in the preparatory conference in Addis Ababa and then the World Conference for Women and Peace, or Beijing +5 Review, in New York as a representative of Malagasy civil society. According to Ranaivoharivony, discussions at these meetings raised her awareness of the plight of women and children exposed to violence in Africa and gave her an understanding of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its implications for her government. Knowledge of the efforts of other African countries to adopt modern legislation to protect women impelled Ranaivoharivony to become a proactive agent for change in Madagascar. Upon her return she outlined a two-pronged strategy to address domestic violence in Madagascar through legislative reform and legal education.

Ranaivoharivony's first action was to align Malagasy law with international standards. In a report to the Ministry of Justice she highlighted Senegalese, French, and Belgian legal frameworks relevant to the Malagasy context. This led to a request from the director of legislative reform to draft legislation on domestic violence.

Her commitment did not stop there. She initiated reform of the nationality code, which discriminates against children born of a Malagasy mother and

foreign father by denying them Malagasy nationality, whereas it is conferred at birth on those with a Malagasy father and foreign mother. Ranaivoharivony also promotes the disaggregation of data by gender and age in order to improve the accuracy of statistics used by the Ministry of Justice to inform its policy decisions.

As director of the Malagasy National School of Magistrature (ENMG) in Antananarivo, Ranaivoharivony has introduced a new training course for magistrates on judicial protection for children. Upon her return from the Beijing +5 Review, she initiated an innovative program for ENMG students—the next generation of Malagasy magistrates of whom over 50 percent are women—using drama to examine domestic violence issues. Through the creative process, the law students explored the human as well as legal dimensions of the problem. The initiative received an enthusiastic response from both the students, who collaborated on writing and producing a play on wife beating, and the public, who attended the performance at the courthouse. Videotaped for broadcast on national television, the provocative program aired on African Women's Day in July 2000 to public acclaim and favorable press commentary. According to a national daily newspaper, the production "speaks about a marital problem that is more widespread than one thinks." The journalist notes that the aim of the production was "less to denounce anyone in particular than to raise the awareness of national leaders about the International Convention of the Rights of Women that they have ratified, and to encourage victims to come forward."

Promoting Microfinance

From their positions at the top of their profession, Emma Andrianansolo



Students at the Malagasy National School of Magistrature rehearsing a play on the prosecution of domestic violence.

L. Gottert/USAID

Randreza, director of the Banking and Finance Supervision Commission (CSBF), Central Bank of Madagascar, and Monah Andriambalo, secretary general of the Professional Association of Mutual Financial Institutions, are playing key roles in the development of microfinance in Madagascar. USAID/Madagascar identified them as candidates to attend a course entitled "Financial Institutions for Private Enterprise Development" at Harvard University in June 2000. Since their return, they have provided critical support to USAID's efforts to expand access to financial services in Madagascar. As a result of the program, both participants have recognized the importance of information sharing through training and communications. In addition to applying the theoretical frameworks and tools acquired during the course to their professional work, Randreza and Andriambalo are extending their knowledge to counterparts through a series of workshops on regulatory and supervisory banking activities for microfinance institutions. Andriambalo has initiated a program to share up-to-date information through technical notes. To date a series of six technical notes on various topics, including legal questions, registration procedures, and fundamental principles of savings and loan institutions, have been

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Guinea

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active in Guinea, grew out of a workshop held in April 2001 on “The Future of Guinean Women in Politics.” Participants at that workshop made two recommendations: 1) to create a meeting place in Guinea where women can enter into political dialogue; and 2) to organize a study trip to a country where women are well represented in the political structure.

Although Senegal is a neighboring country to Guinea, the political landscape there is quite different for women. Says Richard Ferland, NDI Guinea field representative, “Senegal was chosen as a country where women have made great progress in inserting themselves into political decision-making positions, and where women are working together, in spite of class and educational differences, to advance the cause of Senegalese women in civil society, and in Senegalese politics.”

While in Senegal, the Guinean study group benefited from a week of experiences with their Senegalese peers through exchanges of ideas, lessons learned, and political successes for women at meetings with political party heads, government representatives, political observers, and representatives of numerous women’s organizations including the COSEF (Conseils des Femmes Sénégalaises), a successful self-funded inter-party political support group for Senegalese women. The women were particularly impressed by the organization of the COSEF, and the open-door policy of the organization to include all Senegalese women. Says Diouhé Bah of the People’s Republican Union party, “Women of all educational levels are able to come and speak their minds at COSEF—nobody is excluded. If somebody is visiting from the provinces, they are welcome to come and talk about something, and they hold meetings in the local language, Wolof, which is more inclusive [than French].”

Sia Tonguino, an RPG member, encouraged greater solidarity among all

Guinean women, urging her colleagues not to lose touch with their constituents in rural areas. “Here in Guinea,” she says, “there are many obstacles for women, such as women forced to work in the fields or to stay at home, difficulties in childbirth, and illiteracy, to name a few.



Three participants in the Senegal study tour. Clockwise from top: Saran Diabaté, Diouhé Bah, and Sia Tonguino.

We should be able to find common goals, and send out messages in all languages that will reach all women at all social-economic levels.”

In a speech that drew enthusiastic applause, Teninké Dioubaté, of the United Republican Forces said, “Human rights and women’s rights are preconditions for social and economic development in our country. Guinean women make up over 51 percent of the population. That figure is much bigger than the number of women who are decision-makers here in Guinea. Because of that, we are declaring war on all forms of discrimination based on sex.

“Right now, we are speaking about ways that women can acquire power.

Women should learn how to get in power, wherever that is, either by a nomination or with an election, by completely legal means. We need to follow the example of our sisters in other African countries, create our own political coalitions, local organizations, women’s associations, and have women elected into public office.”

The study group members have created the Women’s Political Party Organization (FPP), the first inter-party political organization in Guinea. They are now working to finalize the status of the organization and create flexible roles for committees, subcommittees, and members

to be welcoming and inclusive to all Guinean women. New ideas for the FPP include fundraising; training for women in leadership and negotiation skills; creating stronger, synergistic links between NGOs that promote women’s causes and female politicians; and working to diminish rivalry and create a cooperative environment between disparate women’s organizations so that all Guinean women will reap greater benefits.

In addition, in preparation for upcoming legislative elections, the study group participants have lobbied the leaders of all of the major political parties in Guinea to promote women as candidates to raise their political visibility, and to get more women into decision-making positions as members of the Guinean National Assembly.

For more information visit USAID/Guinea’s website at www.usaid.gov/gn, or contact Hannah Baldwin, USAID/Guinea’s democracy and governance officer, at habaldwin@usaid.gov or +224-41-2163.

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L.Lartigue/USAID (all)

Cooperative Business Capacity-Building in Mali

By Curtis Reed

In 1989 the village of Falan in Mali was one of the first subscribers to Cooperative League of the USA's (CLUSA) program services. Government officials had come to the village years earlier and declared, in conformity with national policy, that everyone was now a member of a village association. The problem was that the village association served the needs of the central government and not necessarily villagers. So during this period of military rule and a highly centralized and restrictive government, villagers wanted to create a modern, functioning cooperative to purchase agricultural inputs for cotton production.

CLUSA/Mali offered Falan the opportunity to create a business that more closely reflected villagers' desires by functioning along democratic principles, showing financial profitability, and conducting business in Bamankan, one of Mali's national languages. With program assistance, villagers restructured their old village association to meet their own expectations for service, transparency, membership, and profitability, among others. During that initial period villagers discovered they had resources to defend, and if they did not defend them, someone else (or a government agency) would control them instead.

Since 1988, CLUSA/Mali has provided cooperative training and assistance to village-based businesses and community organizations in the West African country. This work is conducted under the USAID-financed Cooperative Business Management Capacity Building and Advisory Services program and has provided services to over 375 cooperatively managed businesses and community organizations in the regions of Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, and Mopti.

The purpose of the program is to improve community-level management of productive resources (natural, financial, intellectual, physical, and material) and social infrastructure (local health and

educational facilities). Successful activities will strengthen the capacity of rural, collectively managed businesses and rural community-based organizations to plan and manage economic and social development initiatives and assist them to support the empowerment of their members through democratic, transparent, and participatory processes.

The idea is a simple one: build management capacity to enable beneficiaries to extract greater profitability from their resources through sustainable use.

More than 800 village-based businesses and community organizations sought out the program...because they had a desire to become more efficient, more profitable, and more democratic in their operations.

The final products are individual and collective progress towards the USAID/Mali vision of "More Mali, Less Aid."

The CLUSA/Mali program has been 100 percent demand driven. More than 800 village-based businesses and community organizations sought out the program precisely because they had a desire to become more efficient, more profitable, and/or more democratic in their operations. Once these groups have completed their individualized training programs, they have met these goals and become empowered to defend self-identified economic and social interests.

The villagers in Falan found this to be true. Before their training, they had accepted whatever input prices the government dictated. Afterwards, they began to negotiate directly with local banks and merchants for supplies. They completed loan applications, financial analyses, written sales, and purchasing contracts in Bamankan. The CLUSA/Mali program helped them develop a 10-year plan for the revitalized association. Villagers evaluated business propositions from members with an eye towards gaining 15 percent return on capital. Within three years they were able to self-

finance their agricultural input operations and began using bank credit to diversify income sources. By the fifth year members had invested profits to build two literary centers, add classrooms to the elementary school, provide financial support to the community health center, and support microenterprise opportunities for village women.

To formalize their micro-lending activities, Falan entered into a binding agreement with five other villages in 1997 to create a savings and loan network registered with the Ministry of Finance. This network currently services nearly 100 villages.

Falan vigorously advocated for the privatization of the transport of cotton to government-owned gins and won the right for themselves and others to do so. In 2000 members formally created and registered a secondary-level business with other village associations and purchased two trucks to transport cotton and other commodities.

Since November 1997 the CLUSA/Mali program has delivered cooperative management training and business advisory sessions to over 6,300 leaders of 281 village-based businesses and community organizations (local, regional, and national). Nearly 20 percent of businesses and community organizations completing the first training cycle were controlled and managed by women.

The most profound outcome of CLUSA/Mali's work has been the changes in attitude as client groups view themselves and their environment in new ways, moving from beneficiaries to property owners, from passive to active participants in their communities' development.

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Curtis Reed is the former coordinator of the CLUSA/Mali program.

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ties are able to complete the required registration documentation. Experience in other African countries has shown that involving political parties in dialogue with elections administrators is an important means to prevent boycotts and reduce cries of foul play after the fact. In addition, political tension around the issue of party registration can be reduced if all prospective groups are given access to clear information about how to register.

IRI will also train party poll agents in the basic procedures they need to use to ensure fair representation of all interested parties on election day. Effective party poll monitoring plays a critical role in assuring transparency, thus reducing the potential for electoral violence. IRI will begin with an assessment to determine which areas of the country appear most susceptible to election-related violence. IRI will also continue its work with political parties to strengthen the participation of women and train party leaders on methods for building party structures and developing clear policy agendas.

Meanwhile, the Mission's civil society program is adapting to the demands of the volatile electoral environment.

USAID/Nigeria has recently taken over community-based conflict mitigation activities formerly implemented by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives during its two-year tenure in Nigeria. (See box page 2.) JHU/CCP and CEDPA are developing mass media messages and community-based initiatives, respectively, to promote "zero tolerance for violence," while the Law Group continues to support the Electoral Reform Network's efforts to monitor the electoral law and other issues related to the conduct of the elections. These programs will end in June 2002 when a new civil society program will build on current efforts and include a focus on conflict mitigation, selected aspects of elections education and oversight, and greater transparency and accountability.

It is also important to note that USAID/Nigeria continues to support critical democracy-building initiatives that are not directly tied to the electoral process. NDI has undertaken intensive capacity-building work with the National Assembly. (See *African Voices* Spring/Summer 1999.) NDI will continue this work over the next two years, helping the Assembly maintain its legislative ac-

tivism even as members become increasingly involved in electoral activities.

USAID/Nigeria is also assisting to enhance democratic governance at the state level. As the states in Nigeria define their place in the new democratic dispensation, state assemblies face the dual challenge of establishing themselves as institutions that have not existed for many years as well as undertaking a large legislative agenda. The Mississippi Consortium for International Development is strengthening legislatures in eight states, providing training in legislative roles, procedures, and policy issues, as well as introducing state assembly members to models of legislative practice in several U.S. states.

USAID sees all of these efforts as essential complements to elections-oriented programs, ensuring that the practice of democracy continues and strengthens throughout the system even as elections dominate the headlines.

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distributed to over 50 organizations and individual practitioners.

Entering Politics

Upon their return from the Global Summit for Women in Johannesburg, South Africa, in October 2000, members of the Malagasy delegation were energized, focussed, and determined to make a difference for businesswomen in Madagascar. At the conference, outspoken female political leaders, including the vice-presidents of South Africa, Uganda, and the Philippines, insisted that female entrepreneurs must enter politics to ensure that national laws reflect their interests. Taking up that challenge when they re-

turned to Antananarivo, summit participants Lalao Raketamanga and Elia Ravelomanantsoa took action. They registered as independent candidates for the upcoming election for provincial councils in December 2000 and began to campaign. Raketamanga won a seat on the 76-member council of the national capital region, joining only six other female members. As a board member of Female Entrepreneurs of Madagascar, Raketamanga will ably represent female business owners during provincial council debate on key regional questions. She will serve as a catalyst for change through her efforts to inform her constituents, especially Malagasy business owners,

about critical issues shaping the business environment.

USAID/Madagascar remains committed to providing qualified Malagasy female leaders with training that will extend their knowledge of best practices in their fields and increase their networks of professional contacts in the United States and other parts of the world. Thanks to such opportunities, these dynamic professionals will most certainly make innovative contributions to the development of Madagascar.

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Initiative Builds Stronger Stakeholder Relationships

The challenges to sustainable development in Africa are great enough without sometimes contentious relations between donor agencies, U.S.-based private voluntary organizations (PVOs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) being added to the fray. Yet these sorts of situations can interfere with development



S. Pauling/USAID

Participants at an ALPI workshop.

work when unequal power relationships exist between interested parties. USAID's Africa Liaison Program Initiative (ALPI) seeks to eliminate that source of friction as much as possible.

USAID's Africa Bureau and InterAction, a coalition of over 165 international and humanitarian NGOs, initiated ALPI in 1999 after consultations on the need for effective collaboration and information flow between USAID, PVOs, and African NGOs. The first step was a series of regional meetings throughout Africa where stakeholders discussed challenges to working together. Unequal partnerships and mutual accountability quickly emerged as key issues.

NGOs often have a difficult time striking a balance between accounting to donors and beneficiaries. Accountability for results is almost always skewed "upward" toward those stakeholders who control the resources, while responsibility for accountability is forced downward on the entity that does not control the resources. This results in beneficiaries having less of a voice in any given project than they could, or perhaps should have. Poor communication (both within organizations and between USAID, PVOs, NGOs, local governments, etc.), lack of capacity strengthening pro-

grams, and lack of an enabling environment achieved through effective systems and policies were also identified as major challenges to mutual accountability.

ALPI's objectives are to: 1) create a space for dialogue between interested parties; 2) promote equitable, effective, and mutually beneficial relationships between key actors; 3) link best development practices to better development policy in the U.S. and Africa; and 4) collect and disseminate information best practices, lessons-learned, and relevant information. These contribute to the larger goal of increasing the effectiveness of development assistance. ALPI is USAID's primary means of consultation with PVOs and NGOs, and management at the Agency rely on the information generated through its processes.

ALPI intends to achieve its objectives, facilitated by InterAction, through a year-round cycle of events: sub-regional conferences in Africa, regional and Africa policy meetings in the U.S., and meetings and workshops on both continents. Each is designed to facilitate free information exchange and dialogue and to allow participants to appreciate

their different perspectives. These events are linked by online dialogue and information dissemination, follow-up studies, publications, and individual organization consultations.

ALPI's main loci for activity are two sub-regions—West Africa, and southern and East Africa—and Washington, DC. Every year there will be one conference in each sub-region, which will be linked to African participation at the InterAction Annual Forum and to meetings and discussions in Washington. In this way, not only will there be a continuum of events and activities over the year, but field oriented discussions at the sub-regional level will directly inform policy discussions in Washington. The next sub-regional meetings are scheduled for Kampala, Uganda, February 26-28 and Dakar, Senegal, March 5-7.

For more information, visit ALPI's website at www.interaction.org/alpi/ or contact ALPI program manager, Evariste Karangwa, at ekarangwa@interaction.org, or the Africa Bureau's PVO/NGO advisor, Sharon Pauling, at spauling@usaid.gov or (202) 712-4748.

—Christine Chumbler

Namibian Parliament Goes Online

The government of Namibia recently launched Parliament-Online at www.parliament.gov.na. Parliament-Online is an initiative aimed at taking Parliament closer to the people of Namibia. Through a combination of Internet technologies, the Namibian public now have greater access to Parliament and their elected representatives. The technologies that have been integrated into the system allow the Namibian citizens to directly participate and contribute in the deliberations of Parliament and engage with parliamentarians in real time.

On this site citizens can provide input and express views on legislation and subscribe to parliamentary documents, including bills, minutes, reports,

and acts. Citizens now have electronic access to the National Assembly and the National Council, Members of Parliament and their background information, bills and bill summaries, acts of Parliament, parliamentary committees, the Namibian Constitution, parliamentary schedules and events, public discussion forums and chat rooms, and online public opinion polls.

The development of Parliament-Online has been a collaborative initiative of the Namibian Parliament and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) through a grant from USAID.

For more information, please contact Esther Backhaus, USAID/Namibia, at ebackhaus@usaid.gov.

A New Approach to HIV/AIDS Work

The AIDS pandemic is challenging USAID and its partners to identify and quickly expand synergies between the roles of the public and government, as well as strengthen links between communities, the NGO sector, and governments. Fifteen years into international funding for AIDS prevention in Africa, there is now a shift away from targeted, public health programs to multisectoral responses at community, regional, and national levels. Multisectoral civil society organizations are helping with this process by building bridges between people, communities, and their government.

A new publication from PACT/AIDS Corps and USAID, *Survival is the First Freedom: Applying Democracy and Governance Approaches to HIV/AIDS Work*, is intended to assist with this process of collaboration with democracy and governance (DG) approaches. The document identifies some of the major obstacles to applying DG approaches to HIV/AIDS, such as lack of participation,

a weak enabling environment, inadequate resources, and lack of information, and offers practical ways to address and overcome them, in part by focusing on areas where HIV/AIDS and DG work naturally complement one another. It is organized around key DG concepts that have direct application to specific needs in HIV/AIDS programming: 1) democratic principles and practices; 2) rule of law; 3) increased citizens' participation; 4) increased capacity; and 5) enhanced flow of information. Specific tools for relating these DG focus areas to HIV/AIDS work are included at the end of each section.

Time and again, African communities have demonstrated their insight about priorities in coping with HIV/AIDS. Using DG approaches enables them to contribute these insights to current efforts to scale up effective responses to the pandemic.

The full text of Survival is the First Freedom is available online free of charge at www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACL456.pdf.

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