



**MILLENNIUM  
CHALLENGE  
CORPORATION**  
REDUCING POVERTY THROUGH GROWTH

# Transcript

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# Millennium Challenge Corporation Hosts a Public Outreach Meeting

## Speakers

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Blaise Compaore,  
President,  
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Jean-Baptiste Marie Pascal Compare,  
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## Transcript

MCLEAN: Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to the headquarters of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. By the attendance we've seen earlier today at the State Department and also here, it seems that Burkina Faso is a very popular country with a lot of friends.

(APPLAUSE)

So let me first of all give a special welcome to the president of Burkina Faso, His Excellency Blaise Compaore.

(APPLAUSE)

And also to the rest of the Burkinabe delegation. We are honored to have you here at our headquarters.

My name is Matthew McLean. I am the vice president here at the Millennium Challenge Corporation. It's a very exciting day for us and for our partner country, Burkina Faso.

Earlier today, as I mentioned, we met at the State Department for the signing of the \$481 million compact between the Millennium Challenge Corporation of the United States of America and Burkina Faso to reduce poverty through economic growth.

And this afternoon we are pleased that you could all join us here this afternoon to learn more about this latest compact. It is our tenth in Africa, and our seventeenth worldwide. We're very proud of this, and as you look around the room, you'll see on the walls the various compacts that we have signed, from the very first one with Madagascar until today. And soon as we can get it framed, we will put, and we will be very honored to put, our compact with Burkina Faso on our wall here at our headquarters.

Burkina Faso's story is an extraordinary one. Here we have a country committed to reform and progress, to growth and development, to using all its resources to leverage our resources in order to usher in a new day of prosperity for the Burkinabe. We are pleased and honored to partner with the Burkinabe in this endeavor to help them reach their goals for sustainable growth, economic growth.

Let me just share with you how we'll move forward today. First, two special recognitions. I want to recognize our ambassador from the United States to Burkina Faso, Ambassador Jeanine Jackson. Thank you for coming with us today.

(APPLAUSE)

And let me also begin by thanking BCIU, the Business Council for International Understanding, for helping make this event possible. It's good to see BCIU's senior vice-president, Mr. Jeff Donald, our friend. You've been very good to us. Thank you very much. We want to recognize you and your role here today.

First, Ambassador John Danilovich will brief you on the components of the compact between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and Burkina Faso and why this compact is important for growth and for stimulating private sector activities, the key driver of growth.

Then, Ambassador Danilovich will introduce MCC board member, Mr. Ken Hackett. As president of Catholic Relief Services, Mr. Hackett has spent some time in Burkina Faso and offers firsthand insights into the progress unfolding in that country.

After both Ambassador Danilovich and Mr. Hackett speak, I will come back to the podium and introduce Burkina Faso's minister of economy and finance, Jean-Baptiste Marie Pascal Compaore, and our most distinguished guest, President Compaore of Burkina Faso.

After the president speaks, we'll convene a panel of experts to go into some of the details of the MCC-Burkina Faso compact and how it is opening up opportunities for private sector activities and investment.

So, with that overview, let me introduce Ambassador John Danilovich, the chief executive officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Previously, he served as the United States ambassador to both Costa Rica and later Brazil.

And he has been at the helm of the Millennium Challenge Corporation since November of 2005. And it's under his leadership MCC now has 17 compacts worldwide, committing nearly \$6 billion in U.S. assistance to Africa, to Central America, to Eurasia and to the Pacific to fight poverty.

So with that, Ambassador Danilovich?

(APPLAUSE)

DANILOVICH: President Compaore, members of the Burkinabe delegation, U.S. Ambassador Jackson, thank you very much all for being here today -- MCC board member Ken Hackett and Burkina Faso. Thank you all for joining us today at MCC headquarters to discuss our newest compact, that with the West African country of Burkina Faso.

Earlier today we signed a \$481 million compact with Burkina to make strategic investments in land security, agriculture, irrigation, roads and primary education.

All of us know the tremendous and difficult toll that poverty has taken in Burkina, yet we also commend the incredible resolve the people of Burkina continue to exhibit in their firm determination to replace poverty with prosperity and to forge a better life for themselves and for their children.

This makes Burkina Faso such a great and special success story, one of hope and progress in motion. I'm particularly pleased that MCC is playing a part in Burkina's success story. Congress created the MCC to fulfill one mission: to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth.

We do this by partnering with countries around the world that practice sound political, economic and social policies and work continuously to further their good policy performances, that take the lead in other development efforts by consulting with their citizens to develop homegrown solutions for reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth, and that accept the responsibility and accountability to deliver tangible, sustainable results that make a difference in the lives of the poor.

In Burkina, the MCC has found such a partner. The MCC-Burkina Faso compact is our seventeenth, and our tenth in Africa. With the signing of this compact, MCC has committed nearly \$6 billion to partner countries in Africa, Central America, Eurasia and the Pacific, an impressive figure, given that we were established just four short years ago.

On one of my first trips to Africa, I was fortunate enough to see for myself the progress unfolding in Burkina. Despite the challenges to overcoming entrenched poverty, Burkina demonstrates that even the poorest countries can be champions of bold reform, reforms that make a tremendous and immediate impact.

I visited the country to check on its MCC threshold program, designed to improve the access and quality of education for girls and to bolster their enrollment rates.

On MCC's behalf, this threshold program was well implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development, with participation from international and local nongovernmental organizations, showcasing what indeed can be accomplished through partnership and collaboration.

I sat in on one of the 132 girl friendly schools, which special funding has made possible. And you can imagine how moving it was to see young girls and boys doing their math and learning how to read. One of my most treasured moments as CEO of MCC was a chance to visit these students and to see the difference we are making in the lives of young Burkinabe.

Burkina Faso's successful completion of its MCC threshold program is one of the key factors our board considered in making this decision to improve the compact. Let me tell you about Burkina Faso's compact and why it is so important.

First, the compact is an anti-poverty plan that invests in four priority areas. We have a panel to go into further detail about the compact. I'd like to briefly highlight these areas for you.

First, the compact invests almost \$30 million in schools. This is designed to increase primary school completion rates for girls and give them the skills to eventually participate in a productive economy. This builds on a successful threshold program I saw in action during my visit to Burkina.

Second, the compact invests \$60 million in better rural land governance. This project is designed to increase investment in land and rural productivity by improving land tenure security and land management.

Third, the compact invests \$142 million agricultural development, which is designed to expand the productive use of land so as to increase the volume and value of agricultural products. With nearly 85 percent of the Burkinabe population involved with agricultural activities, bolstering the agricultural sector is vital to sustainable growth.

Fourth, the compact invests \$194 million roads, which is designed to improve the road network to provide Burkinabe with greater access to markets, schools and health clinics.

The synergy among these investments creates a powerful, integrated and comprehensive plan for the people of Burkina Faso to reduce poverty and to promote economic growth. These are intended to fuel lasting changes, not just temporary fixes.

Burkina's compact is also a testament to what Burkina is doing right, and they're significant for two main reasons. First, becoming compact eligible, developing a compact and reaching this momental (sic) milestone of actually signing the compact is not easy.

MCC uses 17 indicators, taken from third-party non-U.S. sources, to bring a country into our program. And we use these indicators to determine a country's continuation in our programs.

These indicators remain at the very core of the MCC model, and we will only partner with those countries committed to deepening good governance, fighting corruption, investing in health and education, and promoting economic freedom.

Burkina continues to perform well on MCC's indicators, maintaining and improving its performance. That's why we see Burkina Faso undertaken broad market oriented reforms.

It is decentralizing power to local governments, adopting a new labor code, improving its business climate. And it is streamlining the public sector, liberalizing trade barriers, lifting prices and rewriting its investment code.

It's making necessary changes not only to remain part of the MCC family, but also because these create the very foundation for sustainable economic growth. It is no wonder that the International Finance Corporation named Burkina Faso one of Africa's top reformers in 2007.

Second, these reforms and the compact's targeted investments help create a pro-business climate that is capturing the private sector's attention. Through its MCC compact, Burkina is improving its infrastructure, making its agricultural sector more competitive, and educating its children for the future.

What our MCC assistance supports and starts in Burkina Faso private enterprise will eventually leverage and finish. As the key driver of economic growth, the private sector is fundamental to our efforts to reduce poverty.

That is why I invite those of you here today from the private sector to look closely and carefully at MCC's investments in Burkina to consider complementary or add-on investments of your own.

I also invite those of you here from other government agencies, from non-governmental organizations and philanthropic foundations to join us in exploring ways to collaborate on pro-growth projects in Burkina, including private-public partnerships.

Consider, for example, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, founded by the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations, which is working with Burkina to leverage its MCC compact to investigate ways to improve crops and soil fertility and develop agri-dealer networks. This amplifies MCC's investment in agriculture and creates further private sector opportunities.

Burkina Faso welcomes trade and foreign investment. The country is open for business. In no uncertain terms, that is the message that the Burkina Faso-MCC compact we celebrate today reinforces.

The specific investments that comprise Burkina's compact reflect the priorities for development identified by the Burkinabe themselves. They have real cultural reform and change already under way in Burkina to promote new opportunities for growth.

They demonstrate a fierce resolve on the part of the government and the people of Burkina Faso to create the very conditions in which entrepreneurs and businesses can thrive and prosper.

Burkina Faso is doing its part. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is doing its part by awarding development assistance in a way that demands accountability and responsibility. We ask for results.

Now we look to you -- particularly members of the private sector -- to also do your part and work with us to maximize the impact of our efforts to replace poverty with prosperity for the people of Burkina today and well into the future. Together, we can accomplish extraordinary outcomes.

I want to thank you again for being here today, for being here with us this afternoon, for your interest in the Millennium Challenge Corporation and in our partnership with Burkina Faso.

It's now my great pleasure to introduce MCC board member Ken Hackett to the podium. Ken is the president of Catholic Relief Services, overseeing an organization with operations in 99 countries worldwide and a global staff of more than 5,000.

He has dedicated a 35-year career to Catholic Relief Services, beginning in 1972 when he served on the ground in Sierra Leone and in posts throughout Africa and the Philippines.

He was named executive director of CRS in 1993 and president of Catholic Relief Services 10 years later. After graduating from college and before beginning his work in CRS, Ken was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana, another one of our MCC countries.

With experience in many MCC partner countries, Ken is serving his second term on MCC's board. He's an outstanding board member. I value his judgment and counsel greatly, and he is a trusted friend. Please join me in welcoming Ken Hackett.

(APPLAUSE)

HACKETT: Thank you very much, John.

It is indeed a pleasure to be a private sector board member of the Millennium Challenge Corporation. It's a special and unique arrangement, but one that I think is showing great promise.

In fact, next week some of us other private sector board members will be traveling together to Rwanda. Senator Frist and myself will be going to Rwanda to look at the threshold program there. So it's a wonderful opportunity.

But this is an honor here today, this afternoon, to be among friends of Burkina Faso. This is a historical occasion. As president of Catholic Relief Services -- and most of the Burkinabe will know as Catwell; that's another story, an interesting one, but I won't give it to you today -- we have a long and rich experience in your country.

Catholic Relief Services -- Catwell -- first arrived in Burkina or Upper Volta in 1960, shortly after your independence. We were the first NGO, but we didn't call them NGOs in those days. I don't know what we called them, but not NGO.

And we signed an agreement with your government in 1960 -- in fact, 11 days after independence. Things weren't as busy in those days. CRS works and has worked in the largest towns in Burkina Faso to the smallest villages, the most remote villages.

And one of the great joys of our work is the opportunity to bear witness to the fruits of our partnership with the Burkinabe we serve. As we build up relations over time, we've had the opportunity to see the impact of those 40 years of presence in your country.

Back in the early days, Catholic Relief Services instituted a school feeding and an education program which, over almost five decades, has impacted millions and millions of children in your country. In fact, I would suggest that there are people in this room, who have directly benefited from the Catwell programs in Burkina.

Over the years, we've had a number of different staff and directors, some of whom now work for MCC. And we're proud of them. And we're proud of our long relations with the people of Burkina Faso. We take pride in the commitment to solidarity with all of the people we serve in your country.

We've gone through good times, difficult times, but I would say that together, and with your leaders, we have come through all the difficulties to now the great opportunities that are there.

I'd like to say a word about the threshold program, which was called the Bright program. This was the precursor to this compact.

In March 2006, because of Catwell's long and extensive experience in the education, we were asked by the government -- President Compaore -- to participate in the Bright program. And together with Plan International and two local NGOs, the Forum for African Women Educationalists and the Association Tin Tua, we launched into this program.

It was simple, yet profound. The scope: to build, equip and support 132 primary schools in 10 provinces with the lowest girls' education rates in the country. In addition to the actual infrastructure, the schools received desks and other equipment, textbooks, school supplies and a lunch program.

And while all children are welcome in those primary schools, the program encouraged girls' enrollment and attendance. And it included a community awareness raising campaign to convince parents of the importance of girls' education, and a take-home food ration for girls to maintain the highest rates of attendance, and preschools for young children in order to liberate girls who have childcare duties in many countries like Burkina Faso and permit them to attend school.

The motivation, the dedication of program participants was absolutely vital to a success of these projects. And it was exciting to see the involvement of communities in these projects.

In the first year of the program, Bright schools were opened in 70 villages, instead of the original 66. Why? Why did we exceed the target? Because four communities refused to wait. They wanted to do something now for their children.

The commitment of communities has been extraordinary. While waiting for the schools to be built, communities have stepped up on their own to build temporary shelters for the students. Hundreds of trees have been planted by the communities to beautify the school grounds and make them more conducive and comfortable for learning.



And we are most happy to see that the Burkinabe government has embraced the importance of girls' education and has taken to this effort. And that effort is reflected in the decision of the government of Burkina Faso to prioritize the continuation, as Ambassador Danilovich mentioned, of one aspect of the compact, and that is education in an expanded way.

We have seen dramatic progress in the first few years, with a 67 percent increase in enrollment and attendance rates of 95 percent. But even with that, a lot of hard work remains. The reality is that, like most countries in the region, girls' education has lagged behind that of boys.

And just 61 percent of the girls in the country right now attend primary school. Of those who begin school, barely three in 10 complete the first six-year cycle and graduate from primary school.

We're hoping that with this program, and with the leadership of this government, we can have a contribution that will change and improve that. And perhaps one day, one of the girls in our program will come to this stage to take this podium and be a leader in this program from your government.

I thank you very, very much for all that you've done.

(APPLAUSE)

MCLEAN: Thank you, Ambassador Danilovich. And thank you, Mr. Hackett, for your remarks.

Here at the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Millennium Challenge account we like to refer to is Smart Aid. And one of the reasons, I think, that we are Smart Aid is something that Mr. Hackett alluded to. It's the structure of our board, where we not only have members of our government, but members from outside our government, where we have the benefit of the wisdom and experience of people such as Ken.

So, Ken, thank you for your remarks.

We'd like to now here from Burkina Faso's minister of economy and finance, Jean-Baptiste Marie Pascal Compaore. And my apologies if I don't have a very good French accent, but...

Close enough? OK. Very good. Now, you actually signed the compact this morning.

Minister Compaore became Burkina Faso's minister of economy and finance in 2007. He has served his government since 2000 previously as the vice minister at the prime minister's office in charge of budget and finance, and later as a minister of finance and budget. And his career includes work at the Central Bank of West African States.

So, Mr. Minister, please address us. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

J. COMPAORE: Mr. President, Mr. Ambassador Danilovich, with the permission of my president, let me tell that today is a great day for a minister like me. It is not usual for a minister of finance to receive such a check of about \$500 million.

(LAUGHTER)

It's a great day, and it's also a grant that is not usual to. And you may all understand my happiness. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made this become to a possible.

I say this by my president, Mr. Compaore -- Blaise -- and the eminent team of the MCC. This compact we have just signed will help Burkina Faso, a landlocked country, to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth.

Strategic investment will be done in farmland projects. We will come together to see that in details, but let me tell something about each of these. Agricultural development project. This seems to me up to date, and it is a good response to this actual worldwide crisis.

More than 250,000 people in my country will increase their annual revenue beyond \$600 per year. That is important for us. We expect an annual increase yield up to 45,000 tons a year for our crops. This also is very important.

In the rural land government project, the project will facilitate and secure farmland use. We expect 23,000 land titles to be delivered at the end of the project. And that is very important for the private sector.

On the road project, this project will facilitate trade and communication with regional and international markets. Two hundred million and five inhabitants of nine provinces surrounding the primary roads and 30 villages serviced by rural roads will benefit also from transit or a project. It is important for a landlocked country, as you can see.

The Bright 2 schools, Mr. Kenneth, have a long benefit to 19 1800 persons in my country, and I can add to what you have said. It's a very, very good thing for my country.

So Burkina Faso has its compact now. And this compact is serious and promising. We want to assure you all that we are very determined to achieve all the results, and to have the best use of the funds given to us.

The process I've seen is strong commitment for the president of Faso and all the government, and it will be so all along of the progress implementation. You can be sure of that.

I'm sure that poverty will be defeated in Burkina Faso with the help of the United States and the MCC program.

Thank you for listening to me.

(APPLAUSE)

MCLEAN: Thank you for your words, Mr. Minister.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce the president of Burkina Faso. It's not every day that I have the chance to introduce the president of a country, but we're very, very honored to have you here.

President Blaise Compaore was first elected president in 1991, and he was last sworn in in December of 2005 for his third term as president.

Please join me in welcoming me Burkina Faso's president, Blaise Compaore, to the podium.

(APPLAUSE)

B. COMPAORE (THROUGH TRANSLATOR): Good evening, everybody. We are here with our Burkina Faso friends. I have prepared a speech, but I think I will speak by why haps (ph).

Today is a great day for Burkina Faso and for the United States of America. Burkina Faso and America are very different countries in their historical from every level, because while you are willing to win the moon, we are still striving to see how we can have access to water.

So I know that we are different people, but I believe we are all believers, and we have the same objective: objective of development, objective of sharing, et cetera, et cetera.

I think everything relies on men. Their ideas and so on are created by men, and this is what President Bush may realize by having this idea of organizing development, guiding people to achieve development.

The funded programs focus on human beings, and I think that this is very important, because everything revolves around man. We cannot talk just about cars and buildings and so on and leave the man aside. Man should be at the center of everything.

I think that man is at the arc of every scheme, and I would like here to commend the experts, the diplomats, the technicians, who get involved in the development of different initiatives. And they are at the center of this business.

Among the four main guideline projects identified, I think education is very important. This is an important factor for development. And if Burkina Faso has an ideal opportunity to get educated, I think that this is very good. It will contribute to the development of Burkina Faso, because education is very important with everything.

It is a matter of social. It is a social matter. It is also another aspect, but I think that women should have the opportunity to play their role as men do.

So we are working toward reinforcing women's responsibility in the country. We are working to work in law for women involvement in every part of the economic political life.

(APPLAUSE)

So talking about agriculture, I would like to say that food is very important for people, and I would like to thank you for focusing on agricultural productivity, because it will enable us to feed our population.

Talking about roads, I can say that it is also a priority of my country, because we want to be very open to the world, to the other parts of the world, and we need to have access to those markets, and we need to build the roads. So this project is also very important for my country.

For land rights and land security, I think this is also a very important issue, because it will enable us to attract investors, because we have been not protected. We will have legal protections.

What we need now is to be more committed and more determined to implement what has been decided.

As we realized during the formulation process, we are aware that we need commitment, more commitment, because we have to support a population with implementation of a project. So we need to be by their side and to work with them for the implementation for this project. And this requires responsibility by the government, good governance and (inaudible).

So I believe also that the private sector is very important in this project. And we have the needed reform we have undertaken and feel that we can attract more investors.

So we want also to request various American NGOs, who are already working in Burkina Faso, to continue to support our country and our people to come out from this project, this situation, to we realize development.

So this evening I want to tell you that we are together. And I would like to thank President Bush and the government of the people of America for their support. And I want to reassure that we commit ourselves for the implementation of the project.

So good luck to Burkina Faso, and...

(APPLAUSE)

MCLEAN: Mr. President, we want to thank you for your leadership of your country. We want to thank your country for its leadership in developing this compact, and we look forward to your country's leadership in implementing this important compact.

I'd like to thank President Compaore, Ambassador Danilovich and Ken Hackett for their time and their remarks here this afternoon.

We're going to transition now into our panel discussion, so as our speakers can take their leave, we'd like to invite our panelists to come out and take their place on the panel. And we'll begin from there. We'll have just about 30 minutes for the panel, so if we can make that transition.

As we begin our panel, we'll have just a couple of comments at the top from each of our panelists, and then they will be open to take your questions. We'll have a roving microphone going around for your questions.

When you ask your question, if you could please state your name and the organization that you're with and hold the microphone close to your mouth so we can hear you. It's being recorded, and it will be videotaped. We ask you to be brief in your questions. And with that, let me introduce our panel.

Minister Jean-Baptiste Marie Pascal Compaore we have met already. Thank you for staying with us.

Let me also introduce David Weld. David is MCC's country director currently responsible for MCC's program in Burkina Faso. And let me go off my notes for just one moment. David has worked tirelessly. There's not a more dedicated, more professional person representing our country than David Weld here, and that goes for him as well as his team.

We expect a lot from the countries that we work with here at MCC. This is not an easy program, and we are very proud when countries such as Burkina Faso step up and really give a very strong effort.

But we often don't talk about how much we expect and how much we demand out of our country representatives and his team, and I'd just like to personally make that recognition for David and his good work.

Back to the notes.

(APPLAUSE)

I get in trouble when I go off notes, but I think I was OK on that one.

David previously worked on developing MCC's compact with Benin, which was signed in February of 2006. David worked in Africa for Habitat for Humanity, managing programs in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

And in addition to his degree from Middlebury College, he received a masters from Princeton and a masters in African and South African politics from University of Capetown.

Capetown is a hardship post, isn't it? OK. Very good.

Also we'd like to introduce Andres Maz, who comes to us from Cisco Systems, where he serves as the executive director for global policy for Cisco Systems.

Did I get that right? Terrific. Thank you for joining us.

Do you want to each maybe just take a minute for a couple of quick opening remarks? And then we'll take questions from the audience. Go ahead.

U: Thanks, Mark. I would just like to spend a few very quick minutes to give the audience a perspective on the compact from the vantage point of the technical teams that have worked on it for the past two years. And just to underscore a couple of points that have already been very, very ably made.

The first, really, is that the ownership of this compact by the Burkinabe has been really remarkable.

It began, yes, with the consultative process, but it also included funding feasibility studies, engaging a core team of experts, roughly 10 people pulled from various ministries, to help put together the compact proposal, and then, finally, thinking very deeply and early in the compact process about the rigors of implementation.

This engagement helped create a spirit of openness and cooperation that bodes well for the success of this program. But I think it's also an indicator, an indicator for many of you in the private sector NGOs, of the kind of engagement that you can expect, working in Burkina Faso.

My second point is the level of preparation of this compact for implementation. MCC has learned a lot about implementation over the last couple of years, and I think this is where the Burkinabe really excelled.

Prime Minister Zongo, when he was still ambassador to the U.S., used to tell us all the time, "We don't want to do this program, if we don't execute it properly. It's not about the money. It's about results."

And he and all of our other interlocutors in the government have really helped us stay focused on implementation. Implementation, results, results, results.

And really, thirdly, I'd just like to identify the singular focus of this compact on rural growth. From the very beginning, it was evident that the greatest constraints to growth, and really the greatest occurrence of poverty in Burkina Faso, occur in rural areas.

And this is where most of the population live. It's a population that lacks access to the most basic inputs for consistent agricultural production, secure land, skilled labor and know-how, adequate water resources, sufficient problems with credit, access to markets and access to schools.

Many of the MCC investments are foundational, putting in place long-term road and irrigation infrastructure, building capacity and know-how among farmers and students, the kind of human development that President Compaore spoke about a little bit earlier, and then really helping to establish secure land tenure in rural areas.

All of these are important building blocks for private investment and other donor activity. I'd like to note that MCC is investing primarily in western Burkina Faso, but we, over the course of the past few years, have developed a tremendous amount of knowledge about the whole country that we are very willing to share and use to help partner with many of you, whether you're in the private sector or other donors or other development organizations.

And then, finally, I'd just like to close by identifying for you members of the public two resources that I'd direct you to. The first is the outstanding MCA-Burkina Faso website: [www.mcaburkina.bf](http://www.mcaburkina.bf), I believe. And it's an excellent website. Congratulations to Mr. Sirima for that, and for many other things.

And the second resource is the MCC resident country director, Kateri Clement, who will be resident in Ouagadougou. Kateri, bon courage, bon chance.

(APPLAUSE)

And I'd just like to identify what is an indication of how serious MCC and Burkina Faso take results. We've worked hard for the past two and a half years. We're taking one day to celebrate. That's today. And Kateri is packing up her bags tomorrow, and she'll be in Ouagadougou by the end of the week. So we're wasting no time, and we're going down.

So thank you, Kateri, and good luck.

MAZ: Thank you. For Cisco it's an honor to be here today and to see such government commitment and totally pushing for its transformation. Cisco has been working with the government of Burkina Faso for about three years.

We have three network academies, which are providing ITT training to engineers. We have about 330 alumni, and right now we have 90 students, one percent of them women.

We (inaudible) about three years ago, and we have been helping the government to transform its infrastructure, because it's not only about electricity and agriculture. It's also about water. It's also about connectivity and building the central infrastructure for the country.

And we are also happy to see the transformation in the ecosystem, in transparency in regulation and risk, all the things that help business and private industry to do business in a country.

It's an honor to be here. We are similarly impressed to such a well run government and its solidarity and ability to execute, so we look forward to continue working with you in the future. Congratulations.

(APPLAUSE)

MCLEAN: Do you have any additional? OK. All right.

Let's go ahead with the questions now. We've got time for a few questions. Do we want to start way in the back? Go ahead. If you could state your name, where you're from, and any question. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. I'm Terry Townsend from the International Cotton Advisory Committee. Thank you for the chance to go first.

I'd just like to know how the compact is being integrated with programs of other countries. The European Union, Japan, Canada, The Netherlands also have projects going on in Burkina Faso and in the region. And even the U.S. government has other projects, including WASIP, the West Africa Cotton Improvement Program.

So could you explain briefly how this compact now is being integrated with all the other work going on?

WELD: I might take that question. Very briefly, a large part of our review of the Burkinabe proposal, when it came in in October of 2006, and a large of what we've been doing for the past year and a half, has been working with other donors and ensuring that we are not duplicating, but that we are working in a complementary way with other donors.

And that's sort of a general answer. And in each of the projects, we could point to specific donor projects that this compact is building on, and that has been consultations. We have gone through consultations with those donors to strengthen our compact.

In the roads project, the World Bank and the EU in particular are large donors in Burkina Faso, and we had extensive conversations with them about where they were investing, where they saw the needs.

One of the things that came out of those discussions was the importance of building capacity in ministries, financial management capacity, procurement capacity, maintenance capacity.

So that's one example in the roads project. And there are several others for each of the other projects.

MCLEAN: Other questions on this side? In back over here. Go ahead. We'll make you run, Chris.

AUDIENCE: My name's Ian Butterfield. I'm with the Livingston Group.

I notice that the agriculture development project has got a very substantial water component in it -- I think water availability, flood control and dam safety.

Can you tell us the overall size of that water project within that larger project? And are there any other details about that water component that you can share with us today?



WELD: The overall project is about \$142 million. The water management and the irrigation component, I believe, is \$90 million or so. I might need to check my numbers. I think it's about \$90 million.

I think some of the interesting and exciting components of that part of that project are, yes, irrigation infrastructure, putting in place pumping stations and irrigation canals to bring water to poor farmers so that they can farm 12 months of the year instead of just the three months of the rainy season.

But in addition to that, and as you rightly point out, there is a significant technical assistance component of that activity, and then also what we call integrated water resource management plans.

And that's working with all of the stakeholders -- local government, local producer groups, all users of water -- to ensure common understanding of who has water rights and when water can be used and the fees for that water. And that's a very important foundational aspect of that particular investment.

MCLEAN: I saw another question over here. Go ahead. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: My name is Adir Sabel (ph), and I would like to know if you have any U.S. small business participation in this program. If yes, what's the requirement?

MCLEAN: Role for small businesses?

AUDIENCE: Yes, I was wondering if you have U.S. small business participation requirement in the program. If yes, what is the requirement of the small business to participate on like really like SBA programs?

WELD: I think there is no requirement for U.S. small businesses. I think an important point for all of the MCC compacts is the open and competitive procurement process that we do use.

I would identify for investors and small businesses that would be interested in bidding on some of the contracts that we post every six months a procurement plan giving potential bidders a heads up about procurements that are likely to be coming in the next six months.

I think if I understood your question, that might have been where you were going. If I misunderstood, let me know.

MCLEAN: There's a question here, and then right behind. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: My name is Loudas DeVira (ph), and I work with DCOM, which is a French engineering firm based in France.

With due respect, with all respect to President Compaore and the minister, I was wondering whether you could give us a brief talk about the political situation, considering that President Compaore has been president, apparently, since 1991? Please?

(LAUGHTER)

J. COMPAORE: Yes. What I can say is that the political situation is stable. As you can see, we have the program now inside, now outside, with our population.

Mr. Compaore has been replaced as president since 2005, because the election at that time. I think that in the past we had some problem with our neighbors -- Ivory Coast, Guinea, and so on. But now you can see that we are now the one who are trying to make themselves to get together. So I can do reverse.

So it's -- I think citizen's good. I can say so. Thank you.

MCLEAN: And the question right behind?

WOHLRATH: Tom Volrath (ph) from USDA, also with the Friends of Burkina Faso.

David, you mentioned in your remarks that, if I understood you correctly, most of the benefits -- or the concentration was taking place in the west part of the country and that MCC had gathered a lot of information about other regions in the country.

Given the multiple dimensions of this particular compact, could you explain a little bit about the distribution of the benefits and whether there -- like the school problem. Is that also concentrated in just the west part of the country, or is it countrywide, and the various other programs dealing with, say, technical assistance, and so forth?

And if it's all concentrated in the west, could you perhaps give us some insight in terms of the decision making process which led to the concentration of your effort in the west?

WELD: Thanks, Tom. Nice to see you.

The Burkinabe, in their proposal and from the beginning, had identified the western part of the country as a priority area for the parts of the compact that focus on agricultural development -- so the farm to market roads, the irrigation infrastructure. The land tenure project does have a nationwide approach, so that is throughout most of the country.

The 132 schools are located not necessarily in the west. They're mostly in the north and the east. There is some overlap.

I think a couple of those are in the west, and I would say in the western part of the country, two main areas -- the Sourou Valley in the northwest for the irrigation and a lot of the roads, the technical assistance to farmers, and then secondly, the Comoe Basin near Banfora and Bobo in the southwest for technical assistance and roads and markets.

MCLEAN: Move over to this side of the room with your questions right in front.

AUDIENCE: My name is Norman Addison (ph), AMIT News Service.

Burkina Faso comes in as the tenth country in Africa to sign the compact, meaning the ninth, and that is a lot of experience, a lot of knowledge, a lot of lessons. Is there an opportunity for Burkina Faso-MCA to collaborate with the other countries to find out what worked and what didn't work?

WELD: Yes, that's a great -- that's a fantastic question. I would really just compliment and congratulate in particular Mr. Sirima, the MCA-Burkina Faso national coordinator, and the government for tasking MCC to do exactly that.

Two years ago, when we began this process, he came to us and said, "Look, you guys have got this experience. Help me to tap into that so that we don't make the mistakes that you've made in previous countries and so that we build on the successes that you have had in previous countries."

Really, out of that work he has made at least two, possibly three, but I think it's at least two visits to Benin, directly south, and maybe one other country -- Ghana -- to do precisely that.

And the other thing that I'd identify is what MCC does every year. We hold an MCC University here at headquarters, bringing MCA representatives from all of our partner countries, both those that have signed compacts, as well as those countries that are in development, to share laughs and so to have precisely that kind of information exchange.

MCLEAN: I will add also there are other instances where I think it was some MCA officers from Benin and Ghana went to Georgia, I think, and exchanged. So it's not just within Africa, but there are certainly lessons to be learned not only within Africa, but outside with some of our other partner countries that are working through their own compact.

Is there another? Certainly, right in front.

AUDIENCE: I'm (inaudible) from (inaudible) and also a Friend of Burkina Faso.

MCC signed three compacts in this region in West Africa -- Benin, Mali and now Burkina Faso. It's about \$1.5 billion U.S. dollars.

With the pre-qualification criteria that you have for the companies, for the contractors, how does MCC make sure that you have enough competition between contractors, because this is so many contracts, so many works, so important works, that you don't have that many companies able to do it efficiently?

So my concern how could you make sure that you will have the right companies at the right time, and very efficient?

MCLEAN: I will add that we also have Ghana and hopefully Senegal next year, so competition will get even more, but I defer to the panel.

WELD: It's something that we also think a lot about. Absolutely. And we think a lot about it during the time it takes us to develop a compact.

Also -- how shall I say -- we think a lot about that as we consider with our partner countries how to structure each procurement and what the appropriate structure of the procurement is, where we can bundle activities to result in fewer procurements, and what the market for each procurement is likely to be.

So I don't have a pat answer for a serious issue that you raise, but it's one that we spend a lot of time thinking about and that we take a lot of time preparing for.

MCLEAN: We have two additional questions -- one here, and then one here.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. My name is Michael Davidson, also Friends with Burkina Faso, of the Jacobi (ph) Group, who has a presence in Ouagadougou.

Learning from the experience, can you give some details on the timing of this? Would we see fast and quicker disbursement? Will there be short list or will there be open bids, such as has been in some of our countries, et cetera, et cetera?

WELD: I don't want to make any promises, but we have also spent a lot of time in the past two years putting in place all of the important mechanisms to ensure that we do get faster disbursement, or at least faster disbursement than we've had in some previous compacts.

So if you are familiar with previous MCC compacts, we hope that we'll get faster disbursements out of the starting gate. If you're familiar with how we work, in Burkina Faso we have already engaged a fiscal agent and a procurement agent.

Both groups are already engaged, on the ground in Burkina Faso, ready to implement procurements and financial management activities. That is a significant achievement that we have not yet seen at this stage of the compact process include these compacts.

And Kateri is arriving this week. Over to you, Ray.

MCLEAN: OK. Question here.

AUDIENCE: Hi. I'm Nora O'Connell, and I'm with Women Thrive Worldwide.

And first, I want to congratulate the Burkinabe government and also the MCC on all the work that you've done to develop this compact. I was very pleased to hear President Compaore talk about the importance of women's empowerment in Burkina Faso.

My colleague and I were there about a month ago and met with many women in rural areas and in your capital and heard about the tremendous challenges that women face accessing land. I know this is very much on the radar screen of the Burkinabe government.

Can you talk a little bit about your efforts to increase women's access to land and about how that fits in with the overall success of the compact?

J. COMPAORE: Yes, that is a very good question. And in this compact the rural development project gave a larger part of space for women to come to be owner of land. That will be a situation of equity. We'll try to do it so, and we have to pass a law that will permit that.

And we are waiting now to sign the compact and to go further and the law to be engaged in there from the national, and it will be that will come soon. Thank you.

MCLEAN: We have time for one more question, but two things before we wrap up. First of all, I want to recognize Mr. Paul Applegarth, our first CEO here at MCC. And I will say the road to this day with Burkina Faso started under his leadership. I believe the threshold program was developed and signed under his leadership.

So thank you for coming today.

(APPLAUSE)

And second of all, we invite you to visit our website at [www.mcc.gov](http://www.mcc.gov) for the latest information not only on Burkina Faso, but the wide range of activities we have. The transcript from today's events will also be posted on that website in the coming days.

So if we can have one final question. I think we have a hand over here. We know that face. How are you?

QUESTION: Very good.

MCLEAN: If you could take the microphone.

QUESTION: Good to be back here in my old home. We have something important to add. Just we came from Haiti, were witnessing and trying to deal with the hunger crisis affecting them. Hunger crisis is also affecting Africa in a profound way.

However, the same countries that have been selected, and MCC has marked a page of honor and glory by anticipating this food crisis now with their programs preventing many from dying.

The bottom line of my question you might take down -- and I am a fanatic of MCC, so whatever good I say of MCC shows bias -- but anyway I want to say have you thought of projecting with our 10 partner countries in Africa and MCC?

What has been the response up to now to prevent the food crisis, because there are significant investments in agriculture, and to continue preventing it in the future?

And congratulations, (inaudible).

MCLEAN: Thank you. Regarding the food crisis, there are two approaches. One is dealing with the immediate problem that we're facing in various countries around the world, and the other is providing long-term solutions so that we can reverse the undergirdings that are weak right now so that we can reverse the crisis.

MCC is not an emergency aid program, but we are a long-term development assistance program. And I know the numbers before today. Out of the \$5.5 billion we have committed to long-term development around the world, \$2.8 billion of that goes to support agricultural productivity and rural development.

So nearly half of every dollar we spend, if my math is right, and maybe more than that, goes to help solve the long-term structural difficulties that are happening as it relates to the food emergency.

And I recall MCC is about four and a half years old. And I think it's important this is not something that MCC -- "Gee, what do our countries need?" It's the countries having the opportunity to come to us and say this is what we need you to invest in for us.

And I think that's why there is a bit of genius behind it, if you will -- that it's the countries coming to us and say, "This is what you need to invest, because know our country actually pretty well."

And I think that's a testament to the MCC model that we find our -- who would have anticipated the food crisis today four years ago? But MCC is a major contributor, a funder, a financier, by the United States for long-term solutions for the food crisis.

So thank you for bringing that. That question was not planted, by the way.

But anyway, let me conclude by thanking you for coming out today. It's a pleasure to have you in our home here at the MCC headquarters. We thank you for your interest in MCC. We thank you for your interest in the special day for Burkina Faso. And be sure to come back and visit us. Thank you very, very much.

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