



FRONTLINES

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Films promoting HIV/AIDS awareness have aired across Nepal following a USAID competition.

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USAID Gets \$808M in Operating Expenses

By Ashtar Analeed Marcus

President Barack Obama signed a \$410 billion budget bill March 11 to run the federal government until the end of September, including \$808 million for USAID's operational expenses in fiscal year 2009—an increase of \$143 million over last year.

These funds will enable USAID to hire 300 new Foreign Service Officers as the Agency moves to double its FSO staff to more than 2,000 by 2012.

Global health and child survival programs will receive \$7 billion. USAID will receive \$2 billion of that to strengthen and monitor public health internationally.

The State Department's Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator will receive the other \$5 billion for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care, 60 percent of which is carried out by USAID.

For USAID's basic education programs, \$700 million is

available. Water and sanitation is now a \$300 million initiative, including pumps, wells, water systems, and hygiene programs. Microenterprise loans—or small businesses—are allocated \$245 million. International agriculture programs will receive \$450 million.

Under the agriculture portion of the bill, there is \$1.2 billion available in food aid. Disaster assistance is slated to receive \$350 million, a \$30 million increase since 2008, for famine detection and prevention and

assistance during global natural disasters. Refugee assistance, which is handled by State, was allocated \$971 million, an increase of \$104 million.

The Peace Corps was assigned \$350 million—\$9 million more than in 2008. The program has 7,800 volunteers in 76 countries.

One of the greatest decreases in budget was for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which received \$875 million, a drop of \$669 million from last year and \$1.4 billion below the request. ★

Rep. Lowey: We Have to Build USAID Back Up

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) is chairwoman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, which is instrumental in shaping the USAID annual budget. On Feb. 27, Lowey spoke by phone from her district in New York with FrontLines editor Ben Barber. Excerpts of that interview follow.

Q: Increasingly, USAID has been operating in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, working very closely with the Department of Defense, which spends its own money on development, on assistance. What do you think is the role of Defense in development activities?

LOWEY: The growing role of the military in humanitarian and development programs is of great concern to me, and implementation is best left to the professionals at the State Department and USAID, who are uniquely trained and qualified to help improve the health, education, and

economic security of foreign nations.

A recent Congressional Research Service study found that nearly one-fourth of our foreign aid dollars are

see **LOWEY** on page 14 ▶

World Forum Seeks Solutions to Impending Water Crisis

By Angela Rucker

Providing access to clean, safe water for the millions of people without it will not happen without significant cooperation among countries and considerable changes in the way the world manages this limited resource.

Officials at the fifth World Water Forum, held in Istanbul, Turkey, over three days in late March, called on political leaders to take action now to address pressing water issues that are predicted to slow economic growth, agriculture production, and human development, and increase

see **WATER CRISIS** on page 15 ▶



Photo by USAID

In August 2006, then-Senator Barack Obama saw firsthand how flood victims in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, were assisted by USAID and the Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa. Glenn Anders, USAID's director in Ethiopia, right, departs Ethiopia in April after a nearly three-year tour. Fekeadeselassie Marye, left, a former program monitor in Ethiopia, is now working at the Agency's office in Iraq. To read about USAID-funded programs in Ethiopia, see pages 8 and 9.

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Photo by Juan Jose Vega

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) shakes hands with Oro Verde Cooperative's President Carmelo Diaz as USAID's director in Peru Paul Weisenfeld (in cap) and Rep. Ben Chandler (D-Ky.) look on.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ...

A column devoted to what our partners and others in the field of foreign assistance are saying about development

Participation of the poor in mainstreaming gender empowerment for civil society stakeholders to promote country ownership of good governance for community-driven sustainable development

By William Easterly

I have just stumbled across a great series of articles on buzzwords in development. Some aid workers and development scholars are so jaded by these vague but ubiquitous buzzwords that they play “Development Bingo.” Whenever a development pro is giving a lecture, they hold Bingo cards marked with all the buzzwords and check them off whenever the lecturer mentions them in the talk. When they have got a full set of buzzwords, they stand up and shout “Development!” (No doubt leaving more than a few lecturers baffled.)

My favorite article discovery is Andrea Cornwall, “Historical Perspectives on Participation in Development, Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,” Vol. 44, No. 1, 49-65, March 2006. Professor Cornwall is a brilliant anthropologist at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. She also guest-edited a fascinating special issue of the journal “Development in Practice” (2007, Volume 17, Issue 4) devoted to “buzzwords and fuzzwords.”

In my favorite article, Professor Cornwall gives a history of how the aid powers that be have resorted to the buzzword of “participation” to convey good intentions to give the “power to the poor” over aid affairs, while never in fact ceding any such powers.

What is most scary is that “participation” as a buzzword goes all the way back into colonial times. In 1929, a

British MP told the Parliament that they had a “moral responsibility” to give colonial subjects “some participation in the shaping of their own destinies.” Right after World War II, the Labour government would “inspire these {colonial subject} men with the hope that, as never before ... London could assist them in their work of extending popular participation in public affairs.” The irony that these promises were made by an authoritarian empire run from London apparently escaped notice. The U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1966 similarly promised to emphasize “maximum participation...on the part of the people of the developing countries”—all while the U.S. was propping up dictatorial Cold War allies who were not too interested in giving power to anyone besides themselves.

Today of course, “participation” (and synonyms like “community-driven,” “empowering stakeholders,” “local ownership,” etc., etc.) is everywhere in aid documents. Yet the aid powers giving away their power is not exactly going to happen anytime soon. Cornwall cites the 1998 World Bank “Participation” manual, which lists “the poor and disadvantaged” as only one of many stakeholder groups (another is “World Bank management, staff, and shareholders.”) I wonder which stakeholder is going to win the next battle.

The main function of buzzwords such as “participation” and “empowerment” is to paper over the ugly reality that there will be some battles of conflicting interests between “the poor

and disadvantaged” and other more powerful groups like the World Bank and rulers of poor countries—and that the poor will almost always lose such battles.

Using clear language instead of buzzwords would at least force us to confront the reality of the battle for real democratic rights. We should use words that have historically been associated with popular movements actually seeking power to the people (even if those are also misused and have conflicting meanings, at least they meant something historically).

One word that is extremely unpopular in aid documents but has great historical resonance on “power to the people” is “liberty.” Neither the 347-page World Bank 1998 “Participation Sourcebook” nor the 372-page World Bank 2006 “Empowerment in Practice” ever mentioned the word “liberty.” The poor cannot have liberty, but they can have lots of empowerment and participation and ownership and civil society. I’d rather have liberty myself.

William Easterly is professor of economics at New York University, joint with Africa House, and co-director of NYU’s Development Research Institute. He is a research associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research. He is also a non-resident fellow of the Center for Global Development in Washington, D.C., and visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution during the academic year 2007-2008. The article above was posted in his New Aid Watch blog Feb. 19 and is reproduced with his permission. ★

SOME CITE GOOD NEWS ON AID

(also from William Easterly’s blog, posted Feb. 19)

A paper forthcoming in the Journal of Economic Literature states:

“There are well known and striking donor success stories, like the elimination of smallpox, the near-eradication of river blindness and Guinea worm, the spread of oral rehydration therapy for treating infant diarrheal diseases, DDT campaigns against malarial mosquitoes (although later halted for environmental reasons), and the success of WHO vaccination programs against measles and other childhood diseases. The aid campaign against diseases in Africa ... is likely the single biggest success story in the history of aid to Africa...”

“The well-known Kremer and Miguel paper showed a strong effect of deworming on worm infection rates in a district in Kenya, which reflected not only direct effects on children receiving the drugs but also surprisingly strong externalities to others in the same school or nearby schools.”

“Breastfeeding, immunization against diarrheal diseases, micronutrient supplementation and oral rehydration therapy (ORT) have all been found to work in randomized trials in the fight against diarrhea....Case studies suggest ORT is another health aid success story, accounting for a substantial drop in diarrheal mortality since 1980.”

Who is this wild-eyed aid optimist? Oops, it’s me.

The point is that even those of us labeled as “aid critics” do not believe aid has been a universal failure. If we give you aid agencies grief on failures, it is because we have seen some successes, and we would like to see more! ★

MISSION OF THE MONTH



Cooperative members weigh sheep for prospective customers in a Marjane supermarket in Mohammedia, about 70 kilometers away from Rabat, Morocco's capital.

Photo by Karima Rhanem, USAID

MOROCCO



supermarket chain Marjane resulted in increased revenues for cooperative members.

“It is the first time that I sell my sheep in a supermarket like Marjane. I have never been there. I only saw it on TV,” said Brahim Kebdi, one of the sheep herders.

“It could not have been done without USAID assistance,” the sheep herder added. “Thanks to the trainings we got, we produce quality sheep. We are also happy with the transparent transactions and direct interaction with customers.”

Word of the increased sales has reached herders from other regions of Morocco, who are now requesting USAID assistance.

“In the beginning we were reluctant to enter into sales contracts due to a lack of trust,” said Bachir BouAich, president of a cooperative from the Rhamna region. “After visiting the herders in the Oriental region, we were convinced to try. I can say that it is a very comforting situation when everybody is a winner.”

To date, USAID-assisted herders have fattened more than 10,000 lambs as part of the early weaning and fattening program. The program also has encouraged widespread adoption of management techniques by herders throughout Morocco.

“USAID’s assistance to the red meat industry was a strategic choice made in 2005,” said Bahaji Jaouad, the Agency’s agriculture program manager. “Today, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has started implementing the royal initiative ‘Green Morocco Plan,’ in which the red meat sector has been identified as being among the three strategic sectors to be developed in Morocco in general and the Oriental region in particular.”

Livestock brings an average annual value of approximately \$1 billion to Morocco (10 billion dirhams), accounting for 25 percent to 30 percent of the country’s agricultural Gross Domestic Product. ★

INSIGHTS

FROM ACTING ADMINISTRATOR ALONZO FULGHAM



As the transition in Washington continues to unfold, I am more convinced than ever that USAID is a vital element of our national security and deeply relevant to the issues that dominate the news each day.

Some of what we have to offer was brought home to me in early March, when I accompanied Secretary Clinton on her trip to the Middle East. The immediate purpose was to attend the international donor conference in support of Gaza and the Palestinian economy. While every development issue also has a political dimension, perhaps nowhere is that relationship more obvious than in the Middle East. Our West Bank/Gaza mission is accustomed to challenges but almost certainly the greatest challenges still lie ahead. We look forward to continuing to make a contribution as the Obama administration pursues what the Secretary has described as our commitment to achieving “a comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbors.”

Events in Sudan and continued human suffering in Darfur also figured prominently in news reports during recent weeks. We had anticipated that the ICC (International Criminal Court) indictment of President Bashir would adversely affect our programs on the ground. Sadly, one immediate impact was the expulsion from Sudan of NGOs funded by several donors, including USAID. Our partners had been providing food, health, and other services to more than 1 million Sudanese in Darfur, making an already difficult situation worse. Here again, the larger political context has important implications for our work. And here again, USAID is at the “front lines” in its efforts to respond to some of the most daunting challenges of our time.

The headlines about Sudan also provide a timely reminder of the vital link between USAID and our NGO partners in the field. This is an important constituency, one that engages millions of Americans at home and abroad. One forum for strengthening our partnership is the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, which meets three times each year. A range of issues was highlighted at the March meeting, including public-private partnerships, aid effectiveness, and food security.

It was also a pleasure to welcome Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) to USAID for an event commemorating International Women’s Day, which focused on women as a driving force for economic recovery. A member of the House Appropriations Committee, Representative McCollum is a co-founder of the Congressional Global Health Caucus and a champion of women and children around the world. As the father of two daughters, I take special pride in the important role that USAID plays in empowering women—not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is essential to ensure that our programs are successful.

Finally, I appreciated the opportunity to visit our USAID offices in Cairo and Amman this month. During the last three decades, we have made major contributions to Egypt and we look forward to our continued cooperation in the years ahead. Our Egypt mission will likely be front and center as we take on the challenge of regionalization.

As for the two days in Jordan, it was an unforgettable experience to return to the country where I served for five years as a private sector development officer and office director back in the mid-1990s. Many ideas that seemed like a distant dream at the time have since come to fruition, including the emergence of a dynamic private sector, the rapid growth of the port city of Aqaba, and the blossoming of a world class tourist sector as an important source of both income and employment. I was particularly gratified to visit a water treatment plant where USAID has helped to design, build, and operate critical technology that is now being transferred to the host country.

Amidst the press and demands of the day-to-day crises that we confront around the world, it was especially rewarding to see firsthand that what we do in places like Jordan can both achieve impact and have important long-term significance in ways that go well beyond what we might have once imagined. ★

After Fattening, Moroccan Sheep Sell Direct to Supermarkets

By Karima Rhanem

Challenge

Morocco’s sheep have for centuries played a vital role in traditional life and the economy—the wool is woven into carpets and robes; the horns are shaped into tool handles and buttons; and mutton currently accounts for 28 percent of the country’s supply of red meat.

Annual production of mutton is over 100,000 tons and livestock accounts for nearly 5 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product.

Sheep also play a central role in the religious holiday of *Eid al-Adha* in the Muslim world, which means the “Festival of Sacrifice,” and is known as *Aid El Kebir* in North Africa. Every family in Morocco is expected to slaughter a sheep in honor of the festival.

But sheep herders lacked marketing skills and knowledge of the domestic market. They could not meet quality and traceability standards required by Morocco’s rules and regulations.

Without any direct link to supermarkets, herders had to go through several intermediaries to find buyers and take up to nine months to sell their sheep.

Innovative Response

The Oriental is one of Morocco’s most important sheep producing regions, with 3.6 million hectares of rangeland and about 1.2 million sheep. USAID’s office in Morocco, through its Integrated Agriculture and

Agribusiness (IAA) program, helped link sheep herders there to markets through direct sales contracts with supermarkets.

For the past three years, USAID helped herder cooperatives sign direct sales contracts for the Aid El Kebir holiday with Marjane, Morocco’s leading supermarket chain. USAID also introduced weaning and fattening techniques along with traceability systems to help the herders prepare their livestock for sale and respond to market demands for quality and food safety.

In 2008 alone, seven cooperatives and four branches of Marjane supermarkets signed direct sales contracts for three consecutive Aid El Kebir holidays.

“As we were prospecting the Oriental region for sales contracts, we learned of the USAID-funded IAA Program working on the competitiveness of the lamb meat value chain,” said Saad Bendidi, Marjane regional director for Rabat and Casablanca.

“We visited the region and met the herder cooperatives working with the program. We found the quality, traceability, and the commitment we were looking for.” Bendidi added that Marjane sheep contracts for Aid El Kebir currently operate in Mohammedia, Oujda, and Casablanca, and that expansion to more stores was planned for 2009.

Results

In 2008, the cooperatives sold over \$1.7 million in sheep, a 70 percent increase over 2006 and 2007. Sales contracts with the

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

Fulgham Is First African-American to Head USAID



Alonzo Fulgham is flanked by USAID employees Kimberly Ball, left, and Alfreda Thomas during a Feb. 24 Blacks in Government event honoring Fulgham's service to the Agency.

Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulgham—the first African-American to occupy the top position in USAID history—was honored by the Blacks in Government (BIG) organization in February in a special event that coincided with Black History Month.

“I cannot think of an African-American in this organization who has had such a successful career,” Africare President and former USAID Mission Director Julius Coles said to more than 50 people attending the Feb. 24 celebration.

“This is the first time in the history of this organization since

its inception going back 50 years that an African-American has been put in charge.”

Fulgham was also the first person to hold three senior USAID positions simultaneously: acting administrator, chief operating officer, and executive secretary.

“We have to be among the most fortunate people in the American working world today,” Fulgham noted in his own remarks. “After all, our commitment is to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life for people everywhere.”

Fulgham also paid tribute to those who had pioneered

diversity at USAID, citing in particular the late John L. Withers who had “overcome both the poverty and widespread segregation of his time.”

Recently, Withers was honored with the establishment of a USAID award in his name that recognizes both his commitment to the work of USAID and his early courage as a military officer in protecting Jewish Holocaust survivors who sought refuge in his military base during the months after Germany's surrender. Sheltering two young boys was against Army regulations and could have ruined his career. Withers later joined USAID as a Foreign Service Officer, serving as USAID mission director in both Kenya and India. His son now serves as the U.S. ambassador in Albania.

“Alonzo has some great achievements but he's not going to tell you that himself,” noted USAID Counselor Lisa Chiles in her remarks.

Fulgham joined the Agency in 1989, serving as private sector advisor in Swaziland. Three years later, he was selected as an international development intern. He served in Jordan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Serbia before returning to Washington where he assisted with the work of the congressional Helping to Enhance the Livelihood of People around the Globe (HELP) Commission.

Fulgham has also served as USAID director in Afghanistan and as special assistant to Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin in the Asia and the Near East Bureau. Prior to joining USAID, he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Haiti from 1984 to 1986.

Ambassador Harry K. Thomas Jr., director general of the Foreign Service, hailed Fulgham as “a leader, a manager, a mentor, but most importantly as a friend.”

“These are truly historic times,” BIG's President Melvin Porter said at the start of the ceremony. He added that there is “no better way to celebrate Black History Month than by honoring our current administrator.” ★ —A.A.M.

BRIEFS

U.S. Aid to Nicaragua Delayed

MANAGUA, Nicaragua—Washington declared March 12 that it is delaying \$64 million in development aid to Nicaragua for three more months pending the resolution of an election dispute.

U.S. Ambassador Robert Callahan said the aid could be canceled if no solution is found. President Daniel Ortega's leftist Sandinistas won a majority of the mayor's posts in November but the opposition argues the vote was fraudulent and the government did not allow international observers. The money is part of a \$175 million Millennium Challenge Corporation compact for Nicaragua that was awarded in 2005.

Angola Floods Affect 125,000

About 25,000 people lost their homes in southern Angola flooding caused by three weeks of non-stop heavy rain, the Red Cross said March 13. It estimated about 125,000 people were affected across Cunene province by the floods. The BBC's Louise Redvers said more rain fell in December than during the five months of the

previous rainy season.

Homes and livestock were swept away and many people were cut off as flood water covered roads and fields.

Kenya Drought, Food Shortages Affect Millions

NAIROBI, Kenya—Kenya's drought and food shortages are expected to last until March 2010, seven months longer than previously projected, said a joint Kenya-U.N. report posted online March 19.

It is estimated that as many as 2.5 million people face acute food shortages for the next year because they live in areas hardest hit by the drought—semiarid southeastern regions and parts of central Kenya.

The report was posted on the Web site of the Kenya Food Security Steering Group, which is made up of officials from government ministries, U.N. aid agencies, USAID, Britain's Department for International Development, and NGOs.

Another 7 million people need some form of food assistance because they are affected by AIDS, cannot afford high food prices, or were forced to flee their homes during last year's deadly election-related violence, said the report.

Philippines Military Pulls Back to Save Hostage

MANILA, Philippines—The Philippine military agreed March 19 to pull back from a jungle stronghold of al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf extremists in exchange for a pledge of freedom for one of their Red Cross hostages, officials said.

The move came after Abu Sayyaf commander Albader Parad threatened to kill the three Red Cross workers—two Europeans and a Filipino—he has been holding for more than two months if the military launches a new attack on his group near Indanan township on southern Jolo Island, said Richard Gordon, head of the Philippine Red Cross.

“He told me he'll behead one of the hostages if the new fighting erupts,” said Gordon. “If the military will carry out an assault, he'll kill all of them.”

Hunger Number One Risk to World's Health, Says Kerry

Observing that over 850 million people worldwide go hungry, Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said at a recent committee hearing that

“one in seven people on Earth goes hungry every day. We must do more to alleviate this crisis and the suffering it causes.” In his statement, he added that “While other threats often command our attention, hunger and malnutrition remain the number one risk to health worldwide—a risk that will be exacerbated by two relatively new driving forces in today's world: the global financial crisis and global climate change.”

“Hungry people are desperate people, and desperation often sows the seeds of conflict and extremism,” added Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), the committee's ranking Republican.

Kerry noted that food insecurity in Africa is worse today than it was in 1970, with one in three people suffering from malnutrition. “Conflict, poor governance, and HIV/AIDS have all reduced basic access to food,” he said. “Now drought—aggravated by climate change—makes the situation even more desperate.”

Lugar and Sen. Robert Casey (D-Pa.) have introduced the Global Food Security Act of 2009, designed to improve crop yields, trade relations, and scientific cooperation and to authorize new funding sources to alleviate poverty. ★

Holbrooke Calls for 5-year USAID Effort in Afghanistan and Pakistan

U.S. Special Representative Richard Holbrooke came to USAID headquarters and met with Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulgham and the Afghan-Pakistan Task Force March 16 to plan for a new U.S. foreign aid approach to help end violence in the two countries.

“Four Americans were killed yesterday in Afghanistan. This is a war,” he said. It is quite a different task for USAID than fighting poverty and disease across the developing world, he added.

“Our aid programs have to reinforce our overall goals [and] advance our strategic objectives,” Holbrooke said.

The Taliban recruits fighters and suicide bombers by offering cash and guns to youths who are not ideologically committed so U.S. aid should try to “drain the swamp” by creating opportu-

nities and giving alternate livelihoods to those youths.

“I greatly admire USAID—it was my first assignment as a Foreign Service Officer,” said Holbrooke, who was stationed in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta in the 1970s as part of the CORDS program.

In a wide-ranging discussion with about 50 USAID specialists in Afghan and Pakistan programs—as well as officials from the Departments of State, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Treasury, and Defense on the USAID task force—Holbrooke called for a push to improve agriculture.

Agricultural aid has a chance to create jobs for hundreds of thousands of Afghans and wean them away from the Taliban, said Holbrooke.

He feared crop eradication to fight opium production might drive people to join the Taliban,

but he praised USAID’s “alternate livelihoods” program—boosting agricultural production of non-drug crops.

Holbrooke also called for training Afghan civil servants so that the rule of law will replace corrupt and uneducated officials.

Furthermore, he said information is a battleground where “a gang of mass murderers living in a cave” should not be defeating the United States.

“It is important to say [to Afghans and Pakistanis] that we are not there to stay as some kind of neo-colonial power—we are there to help prevent the return of the bad old days,” said Holbrooke.

“I want to move AID to the top of the agenda—I have great



Richard Holbrooke

Photo by Ben Barber/USAID

respect for Jim Bever,” he said, indicating the chief of the USAID Task Force and a former mission director in Afghanistan.

“At the NSC [National Security Council] Jim plays an indispensable role—when he talks, everyone in the room is listening.”

Holbrooke served in the Clinton Administration as U.N. Ambassador and negotiated the end to the Yugoslavia civil wars by bringing Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic and other leaders to the agreement known as the Dayton Accords, at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

For the past eight years he worked with the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. “I’m absolutely committed to these issues,” he said.

His greatest worry, he said, was “the dependency trap” in which USAID builds schools, clinics, and roads but they are not

maintained once turned over to local control. “We can succeed only if the government of Afghanistan succeeds,” he said.

After Holbrooke asked for examples of successful Agency programs, he was told about training of Islamic clerics in Bangladesh on women’s rights, and using Kyrgyz law students to train Muslim communities on legal rights.

Holbrooke asked why health programs in Afghanistan seemed to be less corrupt and more successful than other programs. Bever told him that local leadership by the health ministry was key.

As the meeting, which ran more than twice as long as scheduled, drew to a close, Holbrooke said he expected “at least five years” would be needed to complete the job of calming and developing the Afghan-Pakistan region. ★

Independent Polls and Monitors Reassure Ghana Voters

ACCRA, Ghana—Despite a razor-thin margin of victory in recent elections, Ghanaians selected and installed their new president, John Evans Atta Mills, on Jan. 7—it was a peaceful transfer of power rare to the region and due in part to civil election monitors and independent polls supported by USAID.

There was high potential for unrest during the electoral process. Ghanaian election watchers predicted a close and intense contest between the two leading political parties, with the possibility of a third resurgent party doing well to throw the election into a run-off.

To build confidence in the electoral process and check electoral fraud, USAID supported a coalition of local organizations—the Coalition of Domestic Electoral Observers (CODEO) and the National Democratic Institute—in deploying observers to ensure a strong observer presence at polling stations countrywide. The coalition trained 3,000 people in election observation.



A CODEO team member briefing election observers.

Photo by CODEO

On election days, the coalition stationed observers at randomly selected polling stations to report election activities to CODEO headquarters using cell phones.

For the first time in Ghana, the coalition used independent polls which served as a check and balance to official results and complemented the coalition’s regular domestic election observers.

The poll results of the presidential election were very close, leading to a run-off.

Mills won the run-off by a margin of one-half of 1 percent. The independent poll results mirrored the national electoral body’s polling figures. International observer groups also described the election as free and fair.

The strong observer presence monitored election days and—along with the independent poll—reassured the public and enabled political parties and the electorate to accept the results of the elections. ★

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As a former AID staff member (1967-1981), I enjoy reading *FrontLines*, even though my former colleagues are now long gone or retired. I did, however, want to offer a correction to a small item in your most recent edition, about which I happen to have first-hand information. You describe Secretary Clinton’s trip to Indonesia and her visit to USAID projects, which is terrific and well-deserved recognition (“Clinton Visits USAID Project in Indonesia,” *FrontLines*, March 2009). You then conclude with the following sentence: “She also announced plans to restart Peace Corps programs in Indonesia that were suspended in 1965 when volunteers were expelled after leftists accused them of espionage.”

As the former Peace Corps director in Indonesia, I both opened (in 1963) and closed (in 1965) the only program we ever had there. I am delighted with the prospect that after all this time some form of new partnership between Indonesia and the Peace Corps may actually happen.

It is important to recognize, however, that the Peace Corps was not “expelled after leftists accused them of espionage,” but we withdrew from Indonesia during “the year of living dangerously” because we considered the safety of our nearly 50 volunteers to be in jeopardy given the many tensions then in Indonesia-American relations. USIS libraries, AID and most other U.S. government agencies had essentially closed down already, and yet PCVs [Peace Corps volunteers] were continuing to work in their sites from one end of the country to the other. False accusations of CIA links had greeted the volunteers ever since their arrival, just as these attacks confronted all other U.S. agencies, but the Indonesian government, the Peace Corps, and the American Embassy all agreed we should continue to carry on until it became too difficult to do so safely and successfully any longer. In April 1965, by mutual agreement between our two governments, the Peace Corps volunteers gradually and without incident withdrew from their locations around the country and were reassigned elsewhere to complete their tours.

As we enthusiastically welcome this possibility of a new Peace Corps program with Indonesia, I think it important that the now-ancient history not be distorted.

Sincerely,
Alex Shakow

THE REGIONS

LATIN AMERICA

Caribbean Nations Protect Wetlands, Beaches, Other Natural Sites

By Sophia Cave

When you think of the Eastern Caribbean, you picture pristine beaches, blue water and beautiful birds. But this fragile splendor could vanish unless governments, aid groups, and experts unite to protect the environment.

In 2007, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) secretariat secured funding from USAID for a project to conserve biodiversity in their countries by improving legislation, management, and conservation.

Seven sites were identified for support, including forests, watersheds, lagoons, wetlands, trails, and peaks across several islands.

The Wallings Forest and Watershed Area in Antigua hosts 31 species of birds and attracts 10,000 tourists a year. Plans for the site include an assessment of the forest and an interpretation center for eco-tourists and locals.

The Codrington Lagoon is the largest wetland in the State of Antigua and Barbuda and the nesting site for the second largest colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds in the Western hemisphere. It contains environmentally sensitive areas. Proposed activities include a biodiversity inventory and sewage needs assessment for the Codrington Village, an interpretation building, and a sewage

treatment demonstration system.

The Levera Mangrove Wetland in Grenada supports a number of bird and aquatic species. It is part of the 450-acre Levera National Park and includes reefs and beaches. Proposed activities include a biodiversity inventory and management plan along with a boardwalk and bird watching tower. These activities will be submitted to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands secretariat for recognition as a protected wetland of international importance.

The Sandy Island/Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area comprises 1,944 acres on the southwest coast of Carriacou. It contains an extensive reef system, seagrass beds, and mangroves, which are critical habitat for mangrove oysters and serve as nursery grounds for several reef species. Protected under the Grenada Fisheries Act, proposed activities include a biodiversity inventory.

The Nevis Peak of St. Kitts and Nevis ascends from the shoreline to 3,232 feet. The area includes watershed and nesting grounds for a number of birds and other species including the endangered hawksbill turtle and juvenile Caribbean spiny lobsters. It's also a foraging area for the



The hawksbill turtle is a species indigenous to USAID-funded conservation project areas in the Eastern Caribbean.

Photo by Caroline Rogers, USGS

Caribbean queen conch.

Proposed activities include a biodiversity inventory and development of a management plan.

The Millet Nature Trail in Saint Lucia is contiguous with the Central Forest Reserve and forms part of the water catchment area for the largest dam in the eastern Caribbean. The area is home to a number of the island's endemic birds. Plans under the project include a biodiversity inventory, development of a management plan, and reconstruction of an interpretation site.

The King's Hill Forest Reserve of Saint Vincent occupies 52 acres on Sugarloaf Hill reaching an elevation of 600 feet. It protects one of the oldest coastal forests in the Caribbean. The reserve is home to a number of the island's endemic vegetative species, reptiles, and micro-faunal species such as spiders and scorpions. Proposed activities for this site include conducting a biodiversity inventory, a management plan, and a communications strategy.

These USAID-financed projects will improve the capacity of member states to increase public awareness of biodiversity conservation. ★

EUROPE & EURASIA

Serbia Reforms Commercial Courts with Automation

By Jelena Bulatovic and David Kahrmann

BELGRADE, Serbia—For more than a decade, turning to the commercial courts to enforce business laws in Serbia has not brought much satisfaction to plaintiffs.

A 2003 World Bank study found the Serbian Commercial Courts among the most inefficient in the world. There was little or no automation of court filing or record keeping, ineffective information gathering, substandard working conditions, and large backlogs of cases.

The outdated state of these courts—responsible for handling bankruptcy, enforcing rulings, and determining the validity of foreign court and arbitration decisions—also represented a real obstacle to economic development.

USAID launched the Commercial Court Administration

Strengthening Activity in 2004 to instill confidence in potential investors. The program, which recently ended, provided technical assistance to the commercial court system to process cases efficiently and transparently. USAID—together with the Serbian Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the High Commercial Court, and first-instance courts—has been working to improve the quality of court services so that people on both sides of a petition can have full confidence in the judicial system.

The program's Case Management System (CMS) tracks cases electronically, scans paper documents, and provides information online. This relieves judges and court staff of outdated, manually

see **SERBIA** on page 15 ▶



USAID Mission Director Michael Harvey, left, watches a demonstration of the newly installed Case Management System in Zrenjanin, Serbia.

Photo by USAID

MIDDLE EAST



A Palestinian family in the Zeitun area of Gaza City receives USAID-funded milk and blankets.

Gaza Aid Flow Stepped Up in Spite of Conflict

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip—Just a few days after the late December start of the Israeli military campaign in Gaza, USAID's West Bank and Gaza operations urgently started to distribute humanitarian aid to thousands of people affected by the violence.

With other aid groups, the Agency delivered badly needed medical supplies, blankets, plastic sheeting, and food for

families and for facilities caring for small children.

Under a USAID grant, the World Food Program delivered food for 20,000 households. The logistical challenges were great. USAID worked with several NGOs that already had a presence in Gaza so that once items arrived they could be distributed quickly and efficiently.

Every aspect of the operation was precarious. The destruction

in Gaza was extensive and the security at the crossings from Israel into Gaza was unpredictable.

"The urban warfare, combined with the lockdown of Gaza, created a harrowing situation in which there were no reliable safe havens for civilians. The assistance had to be delivered to them in the interstices

see **GAZA** on page 14 ▶

ASIA

Nepali Filmmakers Win Chance to Dramatize AIDS Threat

KATHMANDU, Nepal—A young Nepali boy working as a truck driver's assistant admires his boss's lifestyle. But when the boss contracts HIV through

promiscuity, the boy loses his job and changes his opinion about his earlier aspirations. This is the plot of one of eight films selected to promote HIV/

AIDS awareness following a competition sponsored by USAID.

Nepal's HIV epidemic is concentrated in groups such as: drug users; female sex workers (prostitutes) and their clients; men who have sex with men; and men who migrate for work, especially to India, and may pay to have sex. Many of these people do not have the information they need to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS; many believe they are invulnerable to the disease.

In fall 2008, the eight films were shown in over 150 movie theaters across the country, as well as through "Cinema on Wheels," a mobile film exhibition that visited 22 districts along Nepal's east-west highway, reaching thousands of soldiers, police recruits, truck drivers, and others. The movies were also screened in several schools and colleges in Kathmandu, allowing youth to provide feedback and ask questions.

The film competition was part of the media campaign "You Are No Exception," which invited emerging Nepali film directors to submit creative concepts for eight- to nine-minute short films. The selected nine directors produced eight short films in Nepali and regional languages. Each filmmaker had the opportunity to work with an established professional actor, who played a key part in the movies.

Popular Nepali actress Melina Manandhar was among the celebrities who volunteered. "I play the role of a radio jockey who interviews celebrities and responds to audience queries on HIV/AIDS," she said. "Since our small contribution to this awareness campaign can make a difference, we would surely want to help."

The films portray the stories of everyday Nepalis affected by HIV/AIDS—from migrant workers and their wives in the far west to the youth of Kathmandu. The

stories are told with simplicity and realism, and avoid the dramatization and melancholy with which HIV/AIDS is often portrayed—making the movies engaging and accessible to the average person.

"HIV/AIDS is more than just a disease. The social harassment and stigmatization towards HIV-positive people persists because the average person has still not been able to accept that he or she is not an exception," said Dovan Rai, the scriptwriter of a film featured in the competition. "These eight short films will challenge the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS as well as encourage people to protect themselves from this deadly infection."

The campaign culminated with an Academy Awards-style ceremony that aired live on two popular local television stations. Directors of the top three winning films received scholarships to study at Indian film schools. ★



Actors and crew work on a movie in Nepal. *Bhok*, one of the eight films created in a competition backed by USAID, depicts the plight of a wife who suffers because her husband, a migrant worker, is careless with his sexual behaviors.

Photo by Shalendra Karel

AFRICA

USAID, Peace Corps Help Kenyan Women Leave Risky Work Behind

By Kim Wylie

MARIAKANI, Kenya—One year ago, Heather Domenico and Grover Ainsworth had never heard of USAID. Today, the two Peace Corps volunteers work on a USAID-funded project to help Kenyan women gain financial independence and fight the spread of AIDS.

Their work is part of the ROADS project, which stands for "Regional Outreach Addressing AIDS through Development Strategies." USAID started the project in East Africa in 2005 and aims to reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS in towns along major transport routes. These towns have high rates of commercial sex work and multiple sexual partners, and, consequently, high rates of HIV.

As many as 80 percent of women in these communities have turned to sex work, including with truck drivers, because few opportunities

exist for other kinds of work.

The ROADS Project has established HIV/AIDS resource facilities, called SafeTStop centers, at major truck stops, which offer truckers an alternative environment to bars and brothels. Each center is equipped with HIV/AIDS educational materials and recreational facilities. They also have trained counselors, who provide truckers with voluntary HIV counseling and testing, and refer



This young woman takes a break from her job at LifeWorks Shukrani Ltd., a for-profit company in Kenya that produces home and fashion accessories. She is among a group of women who are finding financial rewards in a USAID-Peace Corps initiative.

Photo by Kim Wylie

them to other HIV/AIDS services.

The LifeWorks Partnership Trust, one component of ROADS, supports alternative jobs that help women earn money. LifeWorks Shukrani Ltd., for example, is a company that produces shawls, placemats, napkins, table runners, and tote bags. It employs 21 Kenyan women.

The business, based in Mariakani, is about 45 minutes from Mombasa, a tourist haven with palm-fringed beaches along a turquoise Indian Ocean. The gritty port on the less scenic side of town leads to a superhighway that leaves Mombasa, cuts through Mariakani, and stretches through Kenya into Uganda and to the Great Lakes Region.

Domenico, 34, and Ainsworth, 35, came to Kenya with the Peace Corps with an interest in marketing and business. Domenico, who had helped American corporations use Web-based technology for marketing goods, works on developing local markets for Shukrani products. Ainsworth, who has an MBA and worked on small businesses, develops export markets.

To date, Shukrani has made more than \$30,000, with sales in Kenya, Uganda, the Caribbean; and ABC Carpet and Home and Bodanna Inc., both in New York City. Shukrani is still operating in the red, but is expected to turn the corner in the next 18 months.

The stories of the Shukrani workers appeal to socially-conscious buyers who are able to put dollars into the pockets of the most vulnerable in these communities—women and older orphans.

Shukrani's workers earn a fair daily wage and don't have to engage in risky survival strategies to care for themselves or their families. "And we're giving women access to health benefits and insurance and supporting them to open their own private bank accounts," Domenico added.

Seamstress Wanjiku (a pseudonym), 22, who was orphaned at 16, said: "This project recruits people who are hopeless in life and kind of gives them a safe haven. They

see **KENYA** on page 14 ▶

FOCUS ON ETHIOPIA

High-End Ethiopian Handbags Enter Global Leather Market

By Phillip Kurata

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia—Well-heeled shoppers in New York, Paris, Tokyo, and other global fashion centers are beginning to see a new name, Taytu, beside familiar Gucci and Chanel, among the ladies' handbags in exclusive shops.

Ethiopia, home to the largest livestock population in Africa, produces and exports millions of hides annually, mainly in the form of semi-processed leather. Eyeing higher profits, Ethiopia is developing its own trademarked leather products. USAID is helping Ethiopia develop its leather processing and branding sector, along with the U.N. Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other development groups.

"The Ethiopian government supports an export sector of high-value, finished leather products, not semi-processed leather," said Taytu Trade and Industry Managing Director Salpi Nalbandian.

Taytu markets the products of 12 Ethiopian manufacturers of leather goods. The consortium was formed in 2006, when the Ethiopian government identified the leather industry as a potentially lucrative sector.

For example, Cabretta leather, prized for golf gloves because of its strength and elasticity, brings the Ethiopian herder \$2 for the skin needed for one glove, \$5 to the exporter of the leather, and \$25 to the retailer of a glove manufactured outside of Ethiopia.

Another Ethiopian leather product, Bati goat skin, is reputed to produce the softest, finest suede. Ethiopian herders make about \$10 for the skin needed to make one suede coat. The leather exporter collects about \$40 to \$50 after tanning. The coat, which is manufactured outside Ethiopia, will bring at least \$400 to the retailer, according to Light Years IP, a group that helps developing countries spur growth through the use of intellectual property rights.

Taytu handbags sold by the upscale Barneys New York fetch prices around \$1,500; one



Taytu's products

Photo by Michael Tewelde

particular Taytu handbag design is priced at \$22,000, according to the company's Web site.

Taytu made contact with Barneys and other high-end foreign retailers by participating in trade shows in New York, Paris, and Los Angeles. Theory, another high-end retailer of clothing and accessories, is considering marketing Taytu bags, according to Nalbandian.

Entering the international market is difficult, and Nalbandian credits USAID and UNIDO for helping to make that happen.

"It involves a long chain of work, getting the raw materials, meeting delivery deadlines, correspondence, understanding the work and business conditions abroad," she said. "We must win the confidence and trust of foreign buyers."

UNIDO provided expertise in design and manufacturing and USAID, in marketing, she said: "They have guided Ethiopia into the high-end market niche—they have advised that Ethiopia should not compete with China and India in producing for the mass market."

Taytu's sales revenues have risen from \$25,000 in 2006, when the consortium was formed, to \$85,000 in the last fiscal year. Five months into the current fiscal year, which runs from July to June, Taytu has received about \$70,000 in foreign orders. Sales from its shop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, also are rising sharply as a result of Taytu's entry into foreign markets.

"When local newspapers wrote about Taytu's success in



Leather jackets inside an Ethiopian factory

Photo by Michael Tewelde



Salpi Nalbandian

Photo by Michael Tewelde

New York and other cities, Ethiopian consumers became excited about the Taytu name," said Teshome Kebede Redie, a USAID contractor working in the Ethiopian leather sector.

Nalbandian said as Taytu profits rise, it will wean itself from USAID financial support. USAID pays the Taytu shop rent in Addis Ababa and the salaries of the shop staff. The Agency also bought the computers and furniture in the Taytu shop.

In another attempt to boost leather profits, the Ethiopian leather company Jonzo PLC plans to enter the shoe business, which absorbs 60 percent of the world's

leather output. Jonzo currently specializes in leather garments and handbags, some of which are marketed by Taytu.

"Footwear is a big opportunity for Ethiopia," said Jonzo General Manager Solomon Yesuf. He expects Jonzo to start shipping footwear to the St. Louis-based Brown Shoe Company in 2009.

USAID's Redie said that many shoe companies in the United States, Germany, and Italy are looking away from China to shoe suppliers in other regions because of rising prices that Chinese manufacturers are charging.

Jonzo is building a shoe factory on the outskirts of Addis Ababa and expects to have the capacity to make 55,000 pairs a day by the end of 2009. Its goal is to export half the production. The Ethiopian government facilitates the growth of the shoe industry by providing customs facilities, bonded warehouses, and concessionary rates for land rental at the factory site.

Getting the financing for expansion from Ethiopian banks has presented a challenge for Jonzo. But USAID has played a helpful role by offering to guarantee 50 percent of the loans as an enticement for an Ethiopian bank to put up the other 50 percent. ★

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Ethiopian Farmers Learn to Produce Milk, Butter, Cheese

ASALLAH, Ethiopia—Until two years ago, Ato Abebe scratched out a meager subsistence raising wheat and other cereals on a hectare of land in central Ethiopia. His family went to bed hungry several months a year.

Today, Abebe, who lives near Asallah, 180 kilometers south of Addis Ababa, makes nearly \$100 per month, lives in a new house, and plans to expand his dairy business while teaching his neighbors about it.

Abebe's turn of fortune came about in 2006, when he signed on as an apprentice dairy farmer with Land O'Lakes International Development, a division of the U.S. dairy company Land O'Lakes Inc. USAID funds the program with a \$5 million grant.

"Before, from June to August, we did not have food to eat or seeds to plant for the next season," Abebe said.

The farmer stands outside his new, one-room house with its

metal roof. His old thatched house is now inhabited by the source of his new wealth, a cow and a heifer. "Having a milk-producing cow is like having a steady salary," he said.

Abebe plans to acquire four more cows through direct purchase or artificial insemination with foreign bull semen brought to Ethiopia by Land O'Lakes and another development group, World Wide Science.

In the two years that the Asallah dairy project has been under way, milk prices have risen from roughly 20 cents to 50 cents per liter. Cows produce as much as 13 liters a day and output is rising as a result of crossbreeding with highly productive foreign dairy cattle.

In exchange for Land O'Lakes' tutoring, Abebe teaches other farmers in the area who want to emulate his success.

"We want him to transfer our knowledge," said Asfaw Tolessa, Land O'Lakes dairy extension manager for Ethiopia, where 130 farmers were selected for the program. Each one, in turn, teaches another 50 farmers.

To deal with periodic drought and exhausted land, the farmers learn to plant napier grass, also known as elephant grass, which

contains high protein and resists drought with its deep roots.

The grass can be harvested every three weeks, stored in airtight plastic bags, and kept for years as animal fodder.

The project hopes to include farmers' wives but proceeds cautiously because of rural traditions that define women's roles narrowly.

Encouraging dairy farming would have no lasting effect without consistent markets for milk. Swedish projects in the 1970s failed when milk prices crashed after several years. To avoid this, the USAID program created commercial sales outlets that sell milk as well as cream, butter, and cottage cheese, which are processed to have longer shelf lives than milk. USAID is encouraging Ethiopian banks to finance a modern dairy-processing plant for the cooperative.

Membership in the Asallah Dairy Co-op, up the road from Abebe's farm, rose from 37 in 2006 to 90 today. Average daily milk collection rose from 70 liters per day to 700 liters. Milk prices doubled while animal feed costs fell by half.

"We are making a lot of milk and a lot of money," said co-op member Almaz Gebre Silasse. ★ —P.K.



Milk collection workers at Asallah Dairy Co-op.



Ato Abebe stands outside his former house, left, and his current home.

Ethiopian Burial Societies Join Fight Against HIV/AIDS

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia—Burial societies, which have helped people through the expense and grief surrounding death for centuries here, are expanding their missions to keep people alive as the HIV/AIDS epidemic exacts its toll.

There are 200,000 burial societies, known as *idirs*, throughout this country, and almost every Ethiopian is connected to one, either personally or through family.

The Tesfa community association in western Addis Ababa, an idir that has adopted a new name and broader

mission, helps 4,300 orphans and vulnerable children as well as the elderly people who have become their caregivers.

"Many grandparents take care of their grandchildren because [the children's] parents have died from AIDS," said Tesfa chairman Berehnu Abera. "The demand for our services is rising because of the epidemic. The problem of orphans and vulnerable children is getting huge."

Typically, idir members make small monthly payments to a communal fund. When a death occurs, the group arranges and pays for funerals and the traditional three-to seven-day mourning period.

"Many community elders opposed participation [in the anti-AIDS work] because of the stigma attached to the disease," said Tesfa program officer Yonas Zewdu. "Now, in our district, there are very few HIV-positive people who are bedridden. Because the stigma has been lifted here, they have revealed their status and gotten medication and support." He said, however, that the stigma remains strong in some rural areas.

Save the Children estimates that in Ethiopia the epidemic has created about 1.4 million orphans and vulnerable children,

65,000 of whom are infected with the virus. In urban areas, AIDS patients occupy about 60 percent of hospital beds.

USAID works with organizations such as Save the Children and local idirs to involve them in home care. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the United States provided \$20 million from 2004 to 2009 for anti-AIDS programs in Ethiopia.

Idirs identify orphans and elders in need of assistance and trains families to care for the sick. The cost of home care is cut as families contribute, such

as by providing transportation to health care centers.

Tesfa organizes "community conversations" once every two weeks, where residents identify problems related to HIV and look for collective solutions. "This is a unique and highly effective approach that we are using in Ethiopia," Zewdu said. "Elderly people who provide care to orphans are able to voice their concerns and receive community support in the form of counseling, food donations, and financial assistance."

Tesfa also provides microloans and business training. ★ —P.K.

WHERE IN THE WORLD...

IN MEMORIAM

James F. Conway, 69, died Feb. 8 in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Conway's career in international development and humanitarian assistance spanned nearly three decades and included work for USAID in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In 2006, he was named director of USAID's operations in Kinshasa, and managed food assistance programs for the Central Africa Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republic of Congo. In 2003, Conway was named emergency disaster relief coordinator for the Agency's operations in Sudan and Angola. He held an M.A. in economics from the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom and a Ph.D. in sociology and religion from the University of California at Berkeley. ★

JANUARY 18, 2009 – FEBRUARY 14, 2009

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Margaret P. Hunt

SDBU/OD to SDBU/OD

Joann M. Jones

M/HR/PPIM to HR/PPIM

Shawn E.A. Jones

COMP/NE/OJT to Egypt/PO

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RDMA/GDO to COMP/FS

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Gretchen M. Larrimer

M/CIO/ICIO to M/CIO/BIE

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COMP/FS to CA/JOPA

Matthew Sumpter

COMP/NE/OJT to Tanzania/PDM

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M/OAA/DCHA to M/CIO/CMS

Susan A. Wofsy

COMP/NE/OJT to Mexico

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Left to right: Foreign Service Nationals Joy Jochico, Kristijan Jurjevic, and Amani Selim will spend two months at USAID headquarters in Washington to share their expertise with colleagues. Not pictured: Ousmane Sane.

First FSN Fellows Bring Expertise to Washington

Four Foreign Service National (FSN) employees—non-U.S. citizens who work for the Agency overseas—have traveled to Washington in recent months to kick off the new FSN Fellowship Program.

Ousmane Sane of Senegal, Amani Selim of Egypt, Joy Jochico of the Philippines, and Kristijan Jurjevic of Serbia and Montenegro received the fellowships, which enable them to spend two months in Washington on a project.

Each will share their skills as FSNs with their Washington colleagues and gain a fresh perspective to take back to their missions.

Nine more FSN fellows will be arriving in the coming months. On average, the FSN fellows have worked at USAID for over nine years.

Sane delivered a presentation on African economic development for the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade; Selim is developing evaluations for the Middle East and guidance for regional missions on monitoring and evaluation; Jochico is developing a decisionmaking tool and a guide book for programming in the water sector; and Jurjevic is working to create a USAID

Senior Executive FSN Corps.

“Hopefully, the rich experience gained from the fellowship program will further inform the Agency’s strategy to integrate FSNs more throughout the Agency and how they can contribute significantly to the work that is being done in Washington and in other missions,” said Jochico.

Jurjevic said that “the fellowship gives the FSNs a chance to further develop professionally and to be recognized as Agency-wide experts.”

The first fellows said they hope that receiving bureaus will fully take advantage of the knowledge and skills brought to Washington through the fellowships.

“The experience that FSNs gain in their work at their missions is priceless, and interaction in Washington generates a wealth of knowledge and creativity in all areas of development,” Selim said.

To apply for a specific rotational assignment, FSN candidates must complete an application, submit a written narrative, and provide a resume. FSNs interested in future fellowship opportunities should read late March and April Agency Notices. ★

Iraqis Prepare to Ease Trade Obstacles to Join WTO

By Florin Pasnicu

More than 1,000 trucks each day pass the “Ibrahim Khalil” border crossing between Iraq and Turkey. Located near Zakho in the Dohuk province, the crossing is one of the main commercial links between Iraq and the rest of the world.

In March, customs experts from USAID’s *Tijara* Provincial Economic Growth Program went there to review the procedures for commercial crossings with an eye towards streamlining border formalities and speeding the movement of imports into the country.

The larger goal behind the assessment, however, was to reform and modernize Iraq’s customs procedures so it can join the World Trade Organization (WTO), which sets global trade rules.

Iraq applied for WTO membership in 2004 and opened talks with the WTO headquarters in Geneva in 2007. Since April 2008, USAID has supported Iraq’s WTO membership through *Tijara*—the Arabic word for “trade.”

Tijara’s efforts have included training more than 600 government officials, lawyers, judges, and agriculture and health experts. They studied WTO accession procedures, technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures,

intellectual property rights, customs, tariffs, and services. Project representatives also helped draft and review trade legislation and administrative procedures.

The larger goal behind the assessment, however, was to reform and modernize Iraq’s customs procedures so it can join the World Trade Organization (WTO), which sets global trade rules.

“We deeply appreciate the technical support that we received from *Tijara* in the areas of capacity building, WTO awareness, and drafting WTO-compliant legislation, which helped us advance our accession efforts,” said Iraq WTO

Coordinator Sami Khairallah, who is also the deputy director general of the Foreign Economic Relations Department of the Ministry of Trade.

“We look forward to benefiting from *Tijara*’s assistance in the next technical steps—preparing the goods and services offers and reviewing the laws that affect trade in goods, services, and intellectual property,” he added.

Iraq’s accession in the WTO, which is expected to take several years, is likely to increase access to raw materials including crop seeds, fertilizers and construction supplies, and export markets for Iraqi businesses operating in oil, gas, and food products. It will also provide Iraqi consumers expanded access at lower prices to a wider variety of consumer goods, transportation, communications, and financial services.

The standardization of trade practices should also allow for significant savings in trade transactions costs and will generate increased opportunities for Iraqi exporters of agricultural products. The enforcement of intellectual property rights will provide incentives for foreign investors to set up businesses and create jobs. Fiscal revenues should also increase, allowing the country to enjoy more stable international trade relations. ★



Photo by USAID

Softball Season Heats Up

USAID staff in more than 100 countries battle poverty and disease daily, but a dozen or so softball players who work at Agency headquarters in Washington, D.C., will soon do battle with a different kind of enemy—other U.S. government agencies.

The USAID softball team is the reigning champion of the U.S. Government Interagency Softball League. Winning the championship two of the last three years, the USAID team—in what some call a display of “soft power”—trounced the Departments of Defense, Justice, Commerce, Agriculture, Homeland Security, and State.

Softball games begin mid-to late April and are played on the National Mall or at Hains Point, typically from 6 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

The league is designed to have fun playing and to get to know colleagues from other federal agencies. Interested parties can play one game, a few games, or all games. Anyone based in Washington or in town on temporary duty can feel free to come out and play or cheer the team to victory.

For more information, contact Coach James Brackin or Chief Recruiter Rebecca Gustafson. ★

Guide Offers Tips to Strengthen Local Media

Community media, especially local radio stations, are playing an increasingly vital role in the daily lives of citizens in rural areas, small towns, and urban neighborhoods on all continents. The local outlets provide daily forums for citizens at the grassroots level to discuss important issues of the day, receive educational materials, and participate in local governance and policy discussions.

Donors like USAID have helped community radio stations and networks—numbering over 4,000 globally—not only to empower democratic discourse, but to strengthen communication about key development areas such as health, education, agriculture, vocational education, and local governance.

USAID [Office of Democracy and Governance (DG)] has released the “Community Media Sustainability Guide: The Business of Changing Lives,” an online publication that “lives” by inviting community media activists and observers to make comments and suggestions.

The guide—co-produced with Internews and Pact, and available at www.internews.org/pubs/pdfs/InternewsCommunityMediaGuide2009.pdf—is linked to a Facebook site where people can post their comments. The interactivity is designed to include radio, Web, video, and print media.

The publication addresses ways to sustain the growing community media phenomenon including how to increase revenue sources, cut costs, inspire volunteers, and control energy costs. Case studies from South Africa, the United States, Mali, Haiti, and Peru provide examples. ★



Photo by Brian Glancy, USAID

Customs officers at work in the “Long Room” at Iraq’s Ibrahim Khalil border crossing with Turkey, where duty collection and import entry take place.

Foreign Service Survey Finds Pay Tops Concerns

A recent survey of Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) at USAID has found concerns over the loss of 23 percent of their pay when they work overseas.

The 23 percent cut comes because they lose their locality pay—the increase in pay that brings federal employees to comparable private sector salaries.

The survey of USAID FSOs by the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) found many areas of concern but “the question of pay equity was the principal one,” said Francisco Zamora, USAID AFSA vice president.

Foreign Service Officers at USAID and State in grades FS-01 and below lose 23 percent of their salary when they transfer overseas, Zamora said. Certain other federal agencies and FSOs in the Senior Foreign Service do not take this cut when they transfer overseas.

The USAID branch of AFSA conducted its third survey of

USAID’s FSOs in late 2008 and received 344 responses. Results of the survey have been published in *The Vanguard*, the AFSA newsletter.

The survey revealed that the top concerns of employees are overseas pay equity (67 percent) and ensuring equal benefits for all foreign affairs agencies (65 percent).

Efforts by AFSA to move an overseas pay gap bill through the post-election session of the previous Congress failed.

“Morale seemed to improve a bit,” said the publication, with the number of people judging morale to be poor falling from 32 percent in 2007 to 22 percent in 2008.

But this was tempered by the fact that 59 percent of FSOs think that things were getting worse.

The percentage of FSOs grading USAID Human Resources services as poor rose from 24 percent in 2007 to 33 percent in 2008.

Former Administrator Henrietta Fore got good marks from the FSOs—only 6 percent thought she had done poorly.

Some 60 percent of FSOs opposed the possibility of “directed assignments,” which are non-voluntary postings to critical priority countries of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan.

Some 68 percent said the main reason to serve in such posts is the extra pay and benefits, and 71 percent said that family separation is the main obstacle. Close to half of all FSOs will have served in those countries as of this summer.

Close to three quarters (73 percent) of the respondents favor elevating the Agency to Cabinet level status and a majority of the staff appeared to oppose the idea of merging the Agency with the Department of State.

On another issue, most respondents supported AFSA

objections to large scale hiring of mid-level FSOs under the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI) as it might slow down advancement of those still at entry and lower levels.

The association noted that it continues to work on cases of individual assistance that are confidential and difficult or inappropriate to publicize. These include possible separations, assignments, evaluations, tenure determinations, disciplinary actions, and financial problems.

The complete *Vanguard* report on the survey includes a sampling of comments including:

- ▶ concern over rights for same-sex companions
- ▶ requests for improved medical evacuation
- ▶ the fact that State officers receive Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential at many posts while USAID officers do not receive the same benefit;

▶ a desire to see the F Bureau (Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance), the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and the Middle East Partnership Initiative incorporated into USAID

- ▶ meeting the need for maternity leave
- ▶ a caution against overworking field staff by having them train DLI new hires
- ▶ an allegation that the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services is not working well and USAID should be allowed to control its own assets
- ▶ a concern that USAID was not in war zones when many people signed up and that civilians should not be forced to serve as an arm of war

For more information, see the February issue of *The Vanguard* at <http://www.afsa.org/usaidd/022009vanguard.pdf>. ★

Sighted at USAID

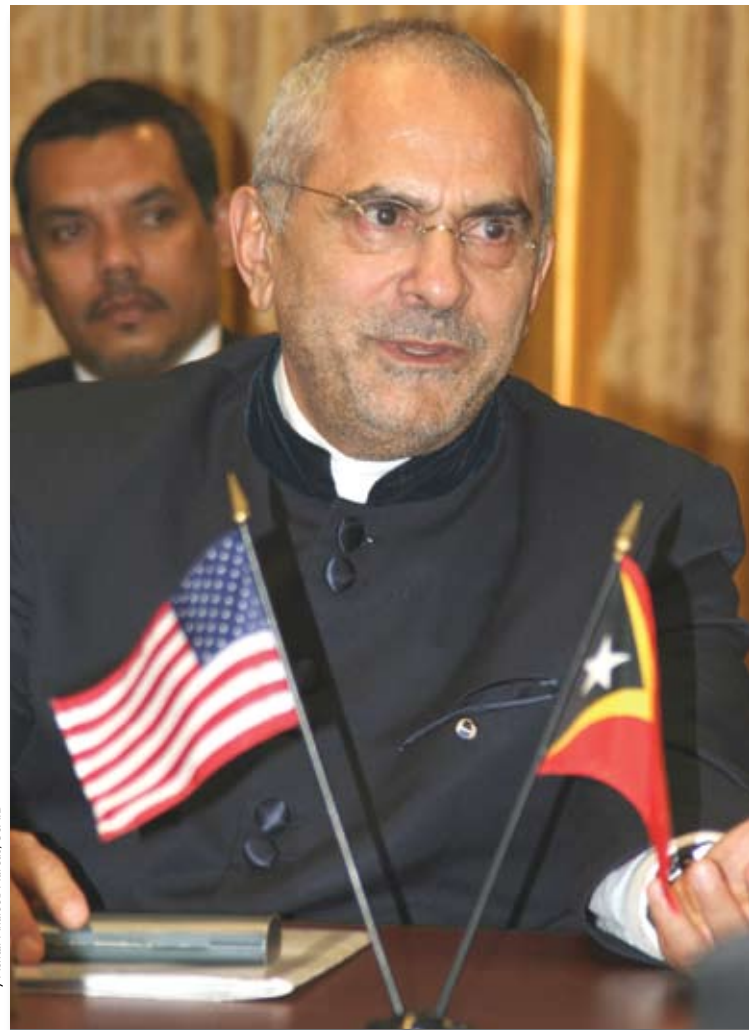


Photo by Ashar Analeed Marcus, USAID

East Timor President José Ramos-Horta speaks during a meeting with Acting USAID Administrator Alonzo Fulgham Feb. 24 about increased aid levels to East Timor and maintaining USAID’s presence in rural areas.



Suaad Allami of Iraq was one of seven women honored by the State Department’s third annual International Women of Courage Awards. With the help of a \$400,000 U.S. grant, Allami’s organization, Women For Progress, opened four women’s centers and educated 186,000 students in the impoverished area of Sadr City, Iraq. She is a practicing attorney hosting Women Lawyers Continuing Education seminars, translating Iraqi constitutional rights and protections for women into daily life. Her centers offer literacy education, child care, medical exams, legal advocacy, counseling for domestic violence, and vocational training.

Photo by Ashar Analeed Marcus, USAID



“Whether it is through agriculture, microenterprise activities, or the labor market, by supporting women in their economic life we will ensure healthier children, stronger communities, and a measurable return on investment,” Rep. Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) said at USAID’s celebration of International Women’s Day March 10. “To unleash the full potential and power women have to contribute, greater efforts are needed to promote violence-free homes, to expand access to reproductive healthcare, and to increase participation in political decision-making.”

Photo by Patricia Adams, USAID

FRONTLINES ADDS ONLINE EDITION

The *FrontLines* Web site recently added online links to each article, including additional news and photography excluded from the print edition due to space constraints.

The user-friendly format allows readers to cut and paste links to individual articles of interest—versus the entire newspaper—into e-mails, on Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter for easy distribution. A PDF of each issue is still available online.

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FrontLines online now includes links to every article in the issue, as well as photos and text unique to the online edition.

USAID, Advisory Board Pledge to Boost Agriculture Aid

By John Waggoner

WASHINGTON—The United States has neglected its efforts to help agriculture in the developing world in recent years and the new Obama administration intends to reverse that course, said Karen Turner, director of USAID's Office of Development Partners.

The depreciation of agriculture in USAID's portfolio in the last decades was due to a misplaced complacency, she told the February meeting of the Board for International Food & Agricultural Development (BIFAD).

BIFAD advises USAID on agricultural development policies under the Famine Prevention and Freedom from Hunger Act. It is the only USAID advisory board whose members are presidentially appointed. BIFAD receives technical, administrative, and financial support through the Agency.

In the past, USAID was guilty of "not adequately articulating what we wanted to do" and the board was sometimes seen as dictating "what to do," Turner said.

Moving forward, she said, it is incumbent on both partners that work be "jointly defined."

The February meeting, held at the National Press Club, was hailed as an opportunity to redefine the USAID/BIFAD relationship and to focus on food security.

Turner referred extensively to President Barack Obama's inaugural address in her keynote speech.

"To the people of poor nations," she said, quoting the new U.S. president, "we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds."

The sense of importance—if not urgency—of

reinvigorating the U.S. commitment to global agricultural development was palpable at the event, which hosted agricultural economists, researchers, deans of agricultural colleges from around the country, and professors of agronomy, hydrology, and animal husbandry.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in January called the commitment to alleviating hunger worldwide "a top priority" of the administration.

Another backdrop for the February meeting between USAID officials and the advisory panel were the food price protests and riots unleashed in more than 30 countries from every region of the world as a result of price spikes in 2007 and 2008. Though 2009 ushered in a dip in food prices, the lessons of the last two years have elevated the issue of global food security as a major development and national security challenge.

Also at the meeting, BIFAD Chairman Robert Easter of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Tim Rabon, a New Mexico rancher; and H.H. Barlow, a Kentucky dairyman, reported on a visit to Kenya last year, where they found farmers and herders interested in learning how to improve herds and marketing.

They said they were impressed by the passion of USAID development officers in the field and the complexity of their mission. They also said they are convinced of the benefits that could be gained from greater collaboration with their counterparts in the developing world. ★

USAID ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SEEKING FORMER EMPLOYEES

The USAID Alumni Association (UAA) is seeking former employees to join the new group, which aims to assist the Agency and other organizations advance their development goals.

"International development work is not just a job; it is a way of life and many of our alumni continue to be actively involved with development work through many different paths," the Association said in a statement. "Both those employees now on staff and those who have enjoyed a career with USAID and who are still engaged and concerned about development have a role to play."

The UAA is USAID's first official alumni group, coming together late last year during an alumni reunion at USAID's Washington headquarters.

"Until now, there has not been an effective and coordinated way for USAID's cadre of former employees to harness their collective enthusiasm for

development, and to offer their knowledge and expertise in a way which can augment and accelerate the impact of U.S. foreign assistance," said the group's statement.

Among its objectives, UAA wants to: assist in strengthening USAID; harness the expertise and energy of former USAID employees as a kind of "brain trust" and independent voice on development issues; and provide a forum for former employees to renew and maintain ties.

The UAA also plans to host a series of meetings on important development topics, and provide a link between the USAID alumni community and the broader foreign assistance policy community in and outside of Washington.

The UAA—initially a working group of the Washington Chapter of the Society for International Development—is looking for former Foreign Service Officers, Civil Service

employees, Foreign Service Nationals, Personal Service Contractors and other former staff interested in joining the group.

Patrick Fine, a co-chairman of the UAA Steering Committee, said: "We've been overwhelmed by thoughtful comments and good suggestions that show just how valuable a resource the Association can be to USAID in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of its foreign aid programs."

The UAA Web site—www.usaidalumni.org—is under construction.

To join the organization or get more information, send an e-mail to membership@usaidalumni.org. Information is also available by e-mailing Fine (pfine@usaidalumni.org) or Hank Bassford (hkbassford@usaidalumni.org).

The UAA is an independent organization not connected to USAID, and its activities do not represent Agency or U.S. government policy. ★

CONTINUED...

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appropriated to and implemented by the Department of Defense, and another 22 percent by other departments and agencies, and only 53 percent of our total foreign aid programs are executed by the State Department and USAID.

Q: There's a lot of discussion about foreign assistance reform. What would you like to see in a reformed USAID?

LOWEY: Well, when it comes to reform of USAID, number one, we have to build it back up again with more positions, and I have included in the appropriations for...this year that we just passed, the omnibus bill, an increase in staff for USAID and for the State Department.

We need people with specific skills. We need people who understand education, who understand health care. I would hope that we can have people with the skills. For example, USAID currently has 8,000 employees, which is half the number the agency had at its peak in the 1970s. And the bill that I talked about contains \$808.5 million—\$178 million above 2008—to allow USAID to hire 300 additional Foreign Service Officers.

So I really look forward to working with President Obama because his budget envisions major capacity increases for USAID.

Q: There's a budget crisis, a financial crisis. How will this affect the deployment of soft power?

LOWEY: The economic crisis...has a severe impact on the world's most impoverished nations and people. Despite our fiscal problems at home and abroad, I'm very pleased that President Obama's budget indicates he understands that it's critical that this economic crisis not diminish our commitment to diplomacy and development abroad. In fact, it's even more critical now. Economic stability and security around the world are directly related to our economic stability at home.

And I am very pleased for the first time since I've been in the Congress that there seems to be a broad understanding in the Congress and in the new administration that diplomacy is involved in a critical element of

our national security. And my role as chairwoman of the State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee is to continue making the point to my colleagues that diplomacy and development are vital pillars of our national security and we must maintain the political will to provide assistance.

Q: You just came back from three countries that receive USAID assistance in Latin America. What are the activities there that impressed you the most?

LOWEY: I saw some very important alternative development programs in Peru and Colombia to get the coca farmers off growing coca for cocaine production so they [can produce] chocolate and coffee and keep the narco-traffickers away from that area.

One of my most impressive visits a few years ago was the opening of a girls' school in Dadar, Pakistan. It was inspiring to see how appreciative the students were of the opportunity to learn. And I also continue to be very impressed with the quality of people we have in our embassies: USAID, the political people. They understand the countries, they work very hard, and they're absolutely committed to our policy in those countries.

Q: What do you see as USAID's strengths? And what would you like to see improved at the agency?

LOWEY: Well, our current assistance and development programs alleviate suffering, they reduce poverty around the world...However, neither the programs nor the people are able to keep pace with the increasing demands and the changing political and security environment in which they must operate today. So I'd like to see a greater coherence, coordination between the 10 Cabinet departments, over 15 sub-Cabinet or independent agencies with diplomacy and development responsibility. This has been a management nightmare for our ambassadors from the field—congressional lack of oversight, accountability, coordination, and coherence of assistance programs.

I'd like to see, and I feel confident that we will see because of the Secretary of State's great commitment to this, major changes in the State Department and USAID.

Q: Will these changes involve rewriting the Foreign Assistance Act or is that not important to the reforms that you'd like to see?

LOWEY: I think they're both important. But while the Foreign Assistance Act is being rewritten—and I know that [House Foreign Affairs] Chairman [Howard] Berman [D-Calif.] is hard at work at that project—the process has to continue to move forward, and the Secretary of State will continue to make changes that make all the programs more coherent and coordinated.

"I really look forward to working with President Obama because his budget envisions major capacity increases for USAID."

Q: You've always been particularly interested in basic education, health, and women's rights. What sparked your interest in this area, and why do you think these are important for development?

LOWEY: My interest in basic education, health, and women's rights abroad are an extension of my commitment on these issues at home, and they're rooted in the strong belief that a society that is healthy, well educated, and respects women's rights will be more stable politically, less susceptible to extremism and violence....

Q: There is a lot of need out there. The resources of USAID, of the U.S. government, are finite. What can we expect to achieve? Are we just holding a finger in the dike? Are there areas we should focus more on whereas maybe there are areas we should abandon?

LOWEY: Well, it's not realistic to expect diplomatic and development agencies to completely eliminate hunger, disease, and

poverty throughout the world. What we should do is set an example by respecting human rights, ensuring that our own population has access to health care and education. We can intervene and offer assistance where there is suffering, ensure that recipients are aware of the generosity of the American taxpayer. We can help countries develop the technical capacity so that they can be self-sufficient over the long term and we can reach out even to countries that totally disagree on fundamental issues to cooperate on areas of agreement.

And we'll have to coordinate better because there are many foundations that are doing this work. The Clinton Global Initiative, the Gates Foundation, we have to coordinate better with the World Bank, with IMF, with other countries so we're not duplicating efforts, so each dollar can be spent wisely.

Q: What do we do when there's a lack of security, there's a lack of governance, and there's a culture of corruption? We put something in place and then when we leave, the bad guys just take it over. What comes first—security, governance, or development?

LOWEY: I think it all has to work together. For example, in Colombia, President Uribe is very sensitive to this and he's overcome many challenges. And you can walk through Cartagena, you can walk through Bogota. You couldn't do that years ago. You can walk through Medellin. When we establish security—President Uribe has said we need to immediately put that in place to lift people up—we give them opportunities to earn their own way. So we need integrated approaches. We need security with economic development while respecting human rights and people's traditions. ★

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can meet their basic needs and there's no reason to go back to the road" to sex work.

Workers participate in periodic health education programs and educate others on the AIDS epidemic. They also help with volunteer community outreach—producing skits about drugs, alcohol, and HIV/AIDS during evenings and weekends. ★

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between hostile activities," said West Bank and Gaza Director Howard Sumka.

Some USAID commodities were destroyed when a U.N. warehouse in Gaza City was bombed. "Our own and our partner staff courageously exposed themselves to constant danger to help the people in need," Sumka added.

USAID relied on the United Nations to transport its relief supplies to Gaza. To ease the backlog of goods awaiting delivery, USAID embedded an employee at the U.N. warehouse to help organize their operations. The Israeli military set up a coordination group to maintain communications and develop procedures for providing aid amidst the military operations. USAID staff were prominent participants.

Since the hostilities ended in mid-January, USAID's partners have been delivering food and other items daily. The Agency provided about \$12 million for this urgent assistance, mostly in grants to American and international NGOs with operations in Gaza.

In addition to the grants, USAID provided more than 2,000 metric tons of food valued at \$2 million to 111,000 Gazans. Each family's food basket had a two-month ration of wheat flour, vegetable oil, chickpeas, sugar, and salt. The needs in Gaza have always been great; now, with 95 percent of the population dependent on food aid, they are enormous.

That is why on March 2, at the Sharm El-Sheikh donors' conference, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton pledged hundreds of millions of dollars for assistance to Gaza. USAID will continue to provide food and other essential items to thousands of Palestinian families. The Agency is also working to ensure that children's educational and psycho-social needs are met. ★

WATER CRISIS from page 1

tensions between water-poor and water-rich regions of the world in the coming decades.

“A lot of people think water is the next oil,” said USAID Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulgham, who led the U.S. delegation to the conference that attracted an estimated 25,000 participants. “Mobilizing the resources...is likely to be one of the greatest challenges we face.”

The annual estimated price tag to meet water and sanitation goals international experts agree are necessary: between \$15 billion and \$30 billion.

“We need to head off what is likely to be a major disaster that cuts across everything that we do at the Agency,” said Fulgham, naming agriculture, health, economic growth, and biodiversity among several key sectors. “I think a key message... is that with the right leadership and the right commitment, we can make progress.”

The forum is considered the world’s largest international event devoted to water and sanitation. Technical experts, activists, government officials, and political leaders from around the globe attended days of seminars and meetings devoted to find workable solutions to help the 800 million to 1 billion people who lack access to safe drinking water and

the 2.5 billion without access to adequate sanitation.

In a declaration at the end of the event, forum participants said: “The world is facing rapid and unprecedented global changes, including population growth, migration, urbanization, climate change, desertification, drought, degradation and land use, economic and diet changes.”

Forum leaders called water a “basic human need” and set out a list of non-binding recommendations for its members, including greater cooperation to ease disputes over water; measures to address floods and water scarcity; better management of resources; and curbing pollution of rivers, lakes, and aquifers, according to press accounts.

Fulgham chaired the forum’s roundtable on finance—grappling with how countries will pay for needed water reforms—and formally participated in several other meetings, including those devoted to climate change and the right to water and sanitation. As many as 60 technical advisors and others from the U.S. government attended the event, including experts from USAID bureaus for Global Health; Asia; the Middle East; and Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade (EGAT).

Ensuring financial support is among the most important water challenges the world will face, Fulgham said, naming NGOs, financial institutions, international donors, and the private sector as sources to tap. “We are going to have to mobilize resources from all sources and be creative about how we blend different forms of financial support,” he said.

This needs to happen in spite of the current worldwide economic meltdown, said EGAT Water Team Leader Jim Franckiewicz.

Developing strategic plans, bankable projects, and financing mechanisms can take a year or more, USAID officials stressed to their global counterparts.

“These are three activities that need to be underway,” Franckiewicz said. “All of these things take time. Our message was

there is plenty of work to be done and...there is no reason to delay.”

The U.S. government spent \$1.5 billion on water projects in Iraq in 2007 and committed \$900 million to water projects in the rest of the world. Some \$590 million of that money went to improve access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in 50 countries. As a result, more than 2 million people have cleaner sources of drinking water and more than 1.5 million have improved sanitation.

Today, USAID is spending \$300 million annually through the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act on water projects across the globe. Africa, in particular, has received a lot of attention of late, with the continent’s share of water projects growing from \$25 million to \$80 million to \$125 million for this fiscal year.

At the forum, the Agency announced a public-private partnership with Rotary International to implement sustainable water supply, sanitation, and hygiene projects in three countries: the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and the Philippines. The partnership will jointly fund the activities, with an expected minimum of \$2 million per country.

In addition, the Agency and the International Water Association signed an agreement to work together to increase access to clean drinking water and sanitation throughout the Middle East and Africa by strengthening water utilities and their regional associations. Focus is on access for the urban poor, water safety and quality management, climate change, and addressing leadership gaps. ★

SERBIA from page 6

kept registry books and paper files. Because the system randomly assigns judges to cases, opportunities for collusion have been drastically reduced.

CMS was first introduced in Novi Sad and Belgrade in 2006 and 2007. Now, all 16 commercial courts and the High Commercial Court are connected to the CMS network.

Nenad Stankovic, a lawyer with Joksovic, Stojanovic & Partners, gives the court enhancements high marks. “Any filing made with a court is now immediately recorded,” he said, “The judge, panel number, and fee amount are known as soon as the initial petition, complaint, or motion is made—all this has greatly contributed to the efficiency and speed of court operation and legal security. It has also helped to allay doubts [of corruption] as judges are assigned cases in the order they are filed.”

Automation has also allowed for faster communication and the

identification of weak areas that need to be addressed. CMS can generate reports on a daily basis, and allows court personnel to react to problems quickly.

At the same time, with online access to the case docket sheet, the public now has access to a listing of all case events occurring within a commercial court case, saving time for the parties involved as well as court staff since the information is readily available.

“This system makes a vital contribution to bringing the Serbian Commercial Court System to international standards—an efficient commercial court system is essential for a strong and dynamic economy,” said Michael Harvey, USAID director in Serbia.

“The CMS makes it easy to be on the move,” said Emir Jasarevic, a lawyer with JNP & Partners. “This is the best innovation adopted by the Serbian judiciary in the past 20 years.” ★

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Forest and Soil Conservation Is Protecting the Panama Canal

PANAMA CITY, Panama—A 40,000-ton container ship makes its way through the Panama Canal, a 50-mile journey taking 10 hours from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

But urban growth and activities such as cattle ranching threaten to erode the hills and pour silt into the lakes that feed the canal system—damage that USAID and Panama have teamed up to fight.

Some 52 million gallons of fresh water flow into and out of the locks that raise and lower the freighter in a series of steps—up and down as the freighter exits into the Pacific.

As water drains from the locks, the ship moves lower and this fresh water is flushed out to the sea.

All the water to operate the canal, Panama's most important economic resource, comes from the canal watershed, which feeds the streams as well as lakes Gatun and Alhajuela.

But urbanization, deforestation, and sedimentation threaten Panama's biodiversity and the ecosystems that form the canal watershed. Proper management of water resources and biodiversity conservation are now critical to Panama's long-term economic and social well-being.

Starting in 2003, USAID and Panama have partnered to protect the canal watershed by reducing biodiversity loss and erosion. The Agency provides technical assistance and training and helps residents establish farm plans, increase incomes, and create jobs while conserving resources and biodiversity.

Over the past two years, USAID trained 500 canal watershed residents to set up live fencing, reforest with native species, protect the riparian forest, improve pasture species, protect soil, improve soil fertility, and prepare organic manure.

Monitoring for water quality is underway at 18 sites in partnership with Panama's National Environmental Authority.

To conserve biodiversity in the Chagres and Soberanía National Parks in the canal watershed, projects promote sustainable agriculture and cattle ranching, conservation of deciduous forests, alternatives to illegal hunting, biological monitoring by community



Forests protect the banks of the Panama Canal from erosion and water pollution leading to excessive vegetation growth.

members, and development of an information system for parks management.

In addition, USAID is working to improve the visitor management and entrance fee collection system of the parks. To date, 150,000 hectares are under improved management. USAID also provides extensive technical support to local environmentally-friendly businesses such as nurseries and apiaries—from business planning to innovative agricultural techniques and products that help businesses grow. As a result, threats to the watershed's biodiversity and the integrity of protected areas and natural ecosystems are being significantly reduced.

Bee production is one environmentally-friendly way for people to earn money.

Dulcelinda Ortega de Alfonso has built an apiary, her first step toward building her own beekeeping business, after taking a two-week workshop that taught every aspect from the breeding process to honey collection.

"I found a wild bee nest next to my house one day and that gave me the idea to start a new line of business to help my family," she said.

Another resident, landowner Raquel Santana, enrolled her small nursery in a project teaching seed identification, raising native plants, and producing organic fertilizer as well as business planning and marketing. Within one year, Santana's

business produced large numbers of plants for local reforestation and ornamental plants for a major construction company.

Rita Spadafora and Eliana Stanziola of USAID's office in Panama, and Joan Ablett of International Resources Group contributed to this story. ★



Park guard learning water monitoring techniques in Soberanía National Park.



The fact that Reinaldo Rodriguez has only one arm has not held him back. He farms his own land, runs a nursery in La Concha, Chilibre, and often works as a mechanic. Now, thanks to USAID's bamboo workshop in Panama's Nuevo Ocu region, he is learning to become a skilled bamboo furniture carpenter. Bamboo is indigenous to Panama and flourishes in the climate, protecting the land from erosion and helping to retain both water and soil quality. Future entrepreneurs learn new techniques to build, create, and sell hand-made furniture and other products, all made from readily-available bamboo.



Business owner Raquel Santana is part of the effort to protect the Panama Canal Watershed.