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 **Headway**
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MCC Partners Exchange Best Practices in Maximizing Poverty Reduction

An increasing number of countries partnering with the United States' Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) are finding that sharing best practices is helpful to effective poverty reduction programs. This is the case of Benin, Mali and Georgia, three countries in different stages of implementing their MCC programs that recently organized visits for key staff to exchange knowledge in the areas of management, procurement, financial reporting, and monitoring and evaluation. By increasing capacity in these areas and sharing their experiences, these countries are hoping to enhance both the transparency and the efficiency with which they implement compact programs.



Latifou Soumanou (left), Monitoring and Evaluation Director for MCA-Benin, and Rufus Jose Zanklan, MCA-Benin Data Management Officer during their visit to MCA-Georgia.



As part of MCC's compact with Benin, MCA-Benin will undertake improvements to the Port of Cotonou's management, port security and overall infrastructure. The MCA-Benin team is in regular communication with other MCAs to exchange lessons learned and improve ways to implement and manage these poverty reduction programs.

Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)-Georgia started implementing programs two years ago (April 2006) and MCA-Benin a year and a half ago (October 2007). By contrast, MCA-Mali began implementation a little more than six months ago (September 2007). Countries at the beginning of the process have found it extremely useful to establish contact with their counterparts who are farther along in implementation. These relationships not only help answer questions about the process of implementing MCC grants, but open a channel to exchange best practices and ideas on how to allocate resources efficiently in the fight against poverty.

"There is no point in reinventing the wheel," says Dominique Ekon, Procurement Director for MCA –Benin, when asked about the importance of regularly exchanging information among countries. "We'll gladly share any

knowledge or experience we have acquired in the implementation process with other MCAs who would benefit from it.”

Ekon travelled to Mali in mid-April at the invitation of MCA-Mali to share procurement best practices with the Malian team and his counterpart. “Because of his experience in procurement, Dominique was able to provide us with practical, day-to-day advice on how to enhance productivity across sectors while ensuring ‘ownership’ of the program within the local partners,” says Gautam Ramnath, MCC’s Deputy Resident Country Director for Mali.

During his visit, Ekin also talked about MCA-Benin’s lessons learned in the areas of general management and organizational efficiency, providing MCA-Mali staff with valuable insight in these key areas.

This visit proved useful for local counterparts as well as MCC staff helping to implement these programs in the country. According to Jon Anderson, MCC’s Resident Country Director for Mali, “this meeting had a ‘you are not alone’ impact for both us and the Malians. It made us aware that there are others out there dealing with the same types of issues – we have a tremendous amount to learn from each other.”

Ekon’s visit to Mali is not an isolated case for MCA-Benin. These information-sharing visits have gone beyond African frontiers. Experts from MCA-Benin recently travelled to Georgia to learn from their colleagues about the latest, most efficient methods of monitoring project progress and how to take full advantage of information management systems in addressing poverty reduction.

Mamuka Shatirishvili, Director of Monitoring and Evaluation for MCA-Georgia states that, thanks to MCA-Benin’s visit, he learned that “MCA-Georgia’s monitoring plans are universal and can be applied in other MCA countries to track project impact and efficiency. We have the capacity to share our knowledge.”

A global problem, such as poverty, demands a global response among friends. The MCC is proud to be at the heart of these conversations that have introduced new ideas and helped forge new friendships among colleagues who are working to build a better future for their peoples.



Photo by Marc Tkach

Mali’s compact with the MCC includes grants for the modernization of an irrigation system to improve farming conditions and farm productivity in Mali’s Alatona region. MCA-Mali is in touch with colleagues in MCA-Benin to gain insight and learn how to best implement MCC programs that will help reduce poverty.

