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Benin and South Africa Unite to Combat Gender Based Violence

Sexual violence and abuse are as serious problems in Benin as they are in South Africa. To deal with this problem, the South

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PHOTO: PIERRE ACHA/USAID

Community teachers in training at Sikè training center in Cotonou, Benin. Read more below.

Meeting the Challenge of Training 9,800 Community Teachers

“Community teachers are very enthusiastic about this training. They will become certified teachers, and the training is giving them new skills to teach better,” said Mr. Augustin Amagbegnon, coordinator of the Sikè training center in Cotonou, Benin. The Public School of Sikè is used as a local training center, hosting 207 community teachers, including 33 women.

In Benin, unqualified community teachers make up more than 50 percent of the primary school staff. During the civil servant hiring freeze in the 1990’s, the teacher training colleges were closed, so communities recruited literate but untrained adults to staff primary schools. In 2008,

the government contracted the community teachers who had a grade ten diploma and teaching experience.

Since 2009, USAID has contributed to this multi-donor effort to

USAID-supported Innovative In-service Teacher Training Gives Promising Results

train close to 9,800 community teachers to become licensed teachers. UNICEF coordinates the project and the Ministry of Primary Education implements the training. Other donors, like

the World Bank, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg have recognized the effectiveness of the model in addressing Benin’s critical need for qualified teachers and are contributing to this innovative initiative.

Training combines lecture-style sessions, distance learning, and on-site coaching. The group sessions are held in 69 centers located throughout the country. They serve to deepen the teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and, more particularly, how to teach the competency based curriculum introduced with

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(Gender-based Violence, Continued from page 1)

African Government created Thuthuzela Care Centers. These are successful models of full-service rape crisis offices that the Government of Benin wanted to evaluate first hand.

In July of 2009, a team of Benin implementing partners of the Women Justice and Empowerment Initiative (WJEI)—a United States Government program that helps countries in Africa to combat gender based violence—traveled to South Africa. The Department of Justice (DOJ), USAID, and CARE International delegation visited the South African Thuthuzela centers.

In October 2010, a WJEI South Africa delegation came to Benin. The delegation comprised the founder of the Thuthuzela centers, the Chief Prosecutor of South Africa’s Ministry of Justice, and two Thuthuzela centers managers. The Chief of party of RTI International, the USAID partner organization also accompanied the delegation. They met USAID/Benin officials, and held discussions with the Benin Ministers of Justice and of the Family about the integrated model for providing services to victims of gender-based violence (GBV).

They also visited the director of the National Hospital of Coto-

nou and talked about making the hospital an integrated service center for GBV. During this coming year, USAID will establish three integrated victim support centers at regional hospitals, based on the South African model.

The exchanges united WJEI Benin and South Africa in a common cause to help GBV victims. Key Benin ministries voiced their enthusiastic support for establishing the integrated Thuthuzela model in this country. Today, the budding WJEI relationship between Benin and South Africa is progressing with an exchange of documents and advice. A follow-up conference is in planning. □

(Challenge, Continued from page 1)

USAID support during Benin’s education reform of the 1990s.

The impact of this innovative in-service training approach is already apparent. The recent mid-term evaluation showed that before the training, teachers had only 20 percent knowledge of the curriculum and only 40 percent of them were able to prepare and teach a class using modern teaching methods. The evaluation also showed that after one and a half years of training, virtually 100 percent of community teachers showed a good knowledge of the competency based curriculum and were able to correctly prepare and teach it.

In short, community teachers are becoming much better classroom teachers.

The most important impact is on

Community teachers are becoming better classroom teachers

students’ learning. After the 2009 final exams, the Ministry of Primary Education conducted a survey on the number of children passing the primary school graduating exam. The survey showed that for the first time, some of

the highest pass rates were from schools where most teachers are community teachers. In these schools, between 68 and 100 percent of sixth grade students passed the exam.

“Next year”, exclaimed one of the teachers, “the training will make us even better teachers and we will work hard to make sure that all primary school children pass the graduating exam.” The program is to conclude next year, when the community teachers are to take the certification exam to become qualified primary school teachers. □

Submitted By Pierre Achadé, USAID/Benin

Coupons Get Relief to Disaster Victims Fast

Odile Koukin has lived in Lokpo, a small village in the county of Sô-Ava in southern Benin, for her entire life. Sô-Ava is situated on a lagoon where the Ouémé River meets the ocean. An unusually long and heavy rainy season flooded her house completely, destroying all of her family's belongings and taking the lives of their goats and chickens. All of the main water sources in Lokpo were flooded, forcing Odile and her

ter; 48,181 livestock perished; and 1,997 hectares of cropland were destroyed.

In response to this natural disaster, Catholic Relief Services partnered with Caritas, Population Services International (PSI), and the Red Cross to provide life-saving services and products. With support from USAID, they organized a series of humanitarian fairs between October 23 and 27, 2010. The fairs

and hygiene demonstration and distribution.

- Lastly, beneficiaries used vouchers worth approximately \$20 each to purchase essential food and non-food items of their choice at a mock market run by thirteen local vendors. Items included corn, manioc, rice, beans, oil, and soap.

"I have never seen a strategy of aid like this one, where I can choose to buy what I know my family likes and



Photo by Jocelyn Farrington/CRS Benin

family of ten to drink water straight from the lake. Other victims left the village to stay with family and friends in neighboring communities. Odile had no choice but to stay on the lake, struggling with her husband to care for her family. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 679,578 people in Benin were affected by this year's floods. In the commune of Sô-Ava, one of the hardest hit areas, the Ministry of Interior reported that 51,269 people were without shel-

served the most seriously affected residents of Sô-Ava and comprised three components:

- First, beneficiaries received a demonstration on how to properly treat and store their water, and when and how to wash their hands properly.
- Then, each beneficiary received the supplies necessary to treat and store water for three months. "Now that I know how to treat my water, my kids won't have to drink dirty water and can avoid getting sick," Odile said about the water

needs," said beneficiary Ibrahim Hounkpe from Dekammey. At the end of each day, local vendors redeemed their vouchers for cash. When the fairs ended, 21,115,900 FCFA, approximately \$46,924, was injected into the local economy and 35.6 tons of grains were distributed to flood victims. Over the course of four days, the fairs served 2,110 households; approximately 10,550 people. "I will never forget what [CRS] has done for me and my family," Ahlonso Agbete from Ganvie, said. □

Submitted by Carla Brown-Ndiaye/CRS Benin

USAID/Benin Marks World AIDS Day



USAID Supports Youth Access to HIV Information, Counseling, and Testing.

On World AIDS Day, December 1, 2010, James Knight, U.S. Ambassador to Benin, and Kevin Armstrong, USAID Mission Director, launched an HIV/AIDS information campaign for Benin youth from the campus of Gasu University, in Cotonou. The Beninese Social Marketing Association (ABMS/PSI) initiated the campaign under the auspices of the National AIDS Control Program and the National Committee to Fight against AIDS, and with support from USAID. A variety of activities including conferences, a caravan, quizzes, information booths on HIV counseling and free HIV testing took place in various schools of Cotonou and its suburbs. The campaign lasted from December 1 to 11. This year, activities focused on encouraging youth to adopt behaviors recommended to pre-

vent HIV infection: abstinence, being faithful, correct and consistent use of condoms, and voluntary testing. Indeed, recent

gaging in sexual activity without the protection of a condom.

The drop in responsible behavior by youth calls for more appropriate strategies and resource allocation. "We need to become smarter about how we're making investments with the goal of saving more lives," said Ambassador Knight, turning to partners and young people assembled in the campus of UATM Gasu University in Cotonou.

Emphasis should be placed on approaches that reach the youth without neglecting other vulnerable groups.

By working with partners, the U.S. Government and the American people, through USAID, intend to persevere in their commitment to building on successes made in fighting HIV / AIDS in Benin. □



Students of Gasu University, Cotonou, act a play that exhorts fellow students to practice ABC and get tested for HIV and other STDs.

statistics point out that more young people than before are exposing themselves to sexually-transmitted diseases by en-

USAID Promotes Excellence in Teachers and Schools

Launch of the Awards Program for Deserving Teachers and Schools.

USAID works in close partnership with the Ministry of Preschool and Primary Education (MEMPE) to strengthen Benin's teacher training colleges and improve the teacher supervision system, as well as to reward deserving teachers and schools.

The goal is to promote excellence in teachers and schools. At the end of 2010 academic year, the MEMPE and USAID's Teacher Motivation and Training Project team will award prizes to the best teachers and schools from the 200 schools selected to participate in the first year of the pilot awards program. The principals of these schools will have been trained in using the performance tracking and evaluation tool.

School principals will use this assessment tool to assess teacher performance in class and select the best performers, who will be vetted by a

tional leadership and dedication help their students earn good grades. Throughout the school year, a media campaign will stress the importance of education and teachers in fostering the development of the country and its youth.

The launch of the Merit Awards program took place in Porto Novo on November 23, 2010. James Knight, US Ambassador to Benin presided over the ceremony with Jules Yèkpon representing the Minister of Preschool and Primary Education (MEMPE).

Kevin Armstrong, USAID Mission Director, and Stefan McLetchie, representing the Education Development Center and project leader were also present. □



Stefan McLetchie, chief of party of USAID's Teacher Motivation & Training project speaking in Porto Novo to primary school principals.

multi-stakeholder committee. This committee will make the final decisions on the teachers to be recognized and rewarded. Schools will also honor teachers whose excep-