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THE U.S. AND BENIN SIGN \$32 MILLION ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

On Wednesday, November 25, the United States of America and Benin renewed their partnership by signing an Assistance Agreement for fiscal year 2009.

At the signing ceremony, Mr. Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Minister of Foreign Affairs, represented the



U.S. Ambassador to Benin, James Knight, compliments M. Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Benin Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the conclusion of the Assistance Agreement signing ceremony.

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Imams Support Girls Education

On October 7, 2009, imams from the Alibori region in northern Benin met in the regional capital of Malanville at the initiative of USAID-funded Girls Education and Community Participation project. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss how

mama register the lowest rate of school enrollment in Benin. For the 2007-2008

nin where the USAID primary education project intervenes. In Malanville and Kari-

mama, USAID works in partnership with World Education to support the participation of communities, parents and mothers associations in school management, and to increase girls enrollment and completion of primary education.

Located in the north of the Republic of Benin, the population of Malanville and Kari-mama is predominantly Muslim. For many years, self-styled leaders and teachers of the Koran have convinced



Imams of Alibori commit to promote girls' education

“The Koran supports girls’ education”

best to promote girls’ education in these communities.

The municipalities of Malanville and Kari-

school year, the gross enrollment rate for girls was only 38 percent, which is less than half the rate of other regions of Be-

teachers of the Koran have convinced

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USAID Hands Over to UNICEF the Leadership of International Health Partners

On October 22, 2009, at a meeting held at USAID, Ms. Janet Schuman, Acting USAID Director, handed the leadership of Benin's health donors coordination group to Dr. Souleyman Diallo, Country Representative of UNICEF, after a unanimous vote by partners.

In 2008, health partners had voted USAID to the leadership position to coordinate and facilitate donors' assistance in support of the Ministry of Health. USAID's leadership lasted fifteen months.

While thanking partners for the trust they have demonstrated USAID during its leadership tenure, Ms.



USAID Family Health Team Leader, Pascal Zinzindohoué shared an emotional farewell moment with colleagues. Acting USAID Director, right, listens.



Ms. Janet Schuman, Acting USAID Director, left, handed the Health Partners leadership to Dr. Souleyman Diallo, Country Representative of UNICEF.

Schulman extended her best wishes for Diallo's success. Schulman also encouraged the newly appointed leader of health partners to help the Ministry of Health overcome the numerous challenges that the partnership faces.

"Above all we must continue to support the Ministry of Health in addressing primary health care as a priority concern for meeting the health care needs of the Beninese populations" Schulman said.

The meeting concluded with a farewell by health partners to Pascal Zinzindohoué, USAID Family Health Team Leader, who leaves Benin to assume new responsibilities with USAID in Washington, D.C. ■

(Agreement, continued from page 1)

Government of Benin. His Excellency Mr. James Knight, Ambassador of the United States of America in Benin, and Janet Schulman, Acting Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), represented the U.S. Government.

The Assistance Agreements, worth \$32.8 million, defines common objectives in primary education, family health, and the fight against violence against women. U.S. funding will support development programs and reinforce the progress Benin has achieved over the last decade in political, economic and social reforms.

The cumulative total of U.S. contributions since 2006 under the Agreement amounts to \$89.9 million.

"The American and the Beninese people expect us to make a wise and efficient use of the resources that they are entrusting us." Ambassador Knight said. ■

USAID Partners Support World AIDS Day

On December 1, a parade through Cotonou to the Friendship Stadium officially launched the 22nd celebration of the World AIDS Day campaign. On site, PSI hosted an information booth to inform the population of activities in HIV/AIDS prevention that USAID and partners support in Benin.

In Benin, the AIDS campaign will last fifteen days, during which public and private sector organizations and civil society associations will intensify their efforts to inform the public about the disease and how to prevent it.

USAID radio partners, for example, will broadcast a series of talk shows focusing on the central

theme of "Equal Access and Human Rights". U.S. Ambassador James Knight highlighted the contribution of the American people in the fight against the disease in an op-ed which featured predominantly the Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and USAID programs in Benin.

Minister of Health, Professor Issifou Takpara, right, at the USAID-funded HIV/AIDS information booth.



A highlight of the campaign was the participation of the Ministry of Transportation. They hosted an interactive session for their employees, which included demonstrations of how to use the male condom correctly. Positive response from participants led to the replication of this activity in the various branches of the Ministry. ■

Presidents Malaria Initiative News from the Field

Malaria Diagnostic Kits in Operation at Municipal Health

USAID procured 30 malaria microscopy kits to support the Government of Benin's efforts in controlling malaria. Each kit contains a microscope and accessories to prepare slides.

The new laboratory equipment will contribute to improving malaria diagnosis in peripheral health facilities. USAID expects that the effective use of the diagnosis equipment will result in appropriate testing and management of cases of fever. The equipment will enable laboratory personnel to differentiate between fevers that are caused by malaria from fevers that are not caused by malaria. The correct diagnosis and treatment of fevers will help reduce the cost to the public health system of providing basic health care to vulnerable populations.



Mrs Evelyne Araye, Lab technician in Kouande Zonal Hospital, satisfied with the performance of the new PMI-funded microscope.

By delivering the kits in priority to public health facilities at the district and municipal-levels, USAID is supporting the objective of the Ministry

of Health to facilitate and increase access to quality health services and products by vulnerable Beninese populations. ■

(Imams, continued from page 1)

parents in rural areas not to send their children to secular schools. Instead, parents enrolled their children in Koranic schools.

After consulting with local education authorities, USAID set out to meet with the recognized imams of Karimama and Malanville to seek their views on secular education and to rally their support for their children's education. The imams helped prepare for the gathering by sending out invitations. A total of 71 imams and seven teachers of the Koran attended. "Nowhere in the Koran is it forbidden to send children to school"

the imams said unanimously. Citing religious sources, the imams stressed that Islam "makes it an obligation for both boys and girls to seek knowledge." "Islam", they said, " supports education. However, school schedules should accommodate for religious education."

Further exchanges with the imams and secular school participants indicated that Koranic students develop strong capacities to acquire knowledge, which is very helpful to school performance. In short, participants agreed that secular and Koranic education can coexist and be mutually beneficial.

Imams pledged to devote part of their

teaching to mobilizing communities to send children to school. They also committed to play an active role in promoting girls' education. Finally, the imams expressed hopes that commitments taken at the meeting with public education authorities, the mayors, parents associations, and USAID will result in support for the teaching of French and mathematics in Koranic schools.

USAID will continue discussions on the feasibility of introducing the teaching of French and mathematics in a pilot number of Koranic schools . ■

Submitted by
Latifou Yesoufou, World Education

Staff News

USAID Benin Celebrates End of 2009 Fiscal Year

On October 8, 2009, at a garden party hosted by Ms. Janet Schulman, Acting USAID Director, public and private sector implementing partners and USAID/Benin staff gathered to celebrate the end-of-fiscal year 2009.

"I am extremely proud to lead such a strong team as the one our USAID/Benin and development partners form in Benin" Schulman said. "On behalf of USAID, and on my behalf, I congratulate you warmly for the excellent work you have provided and I thank you very much."

Of the many results USAID Benin and partners achieved through their efforts during the year, Schulman highlighted a few:

- A record budget of more than thirty two million dollars to fund projects in primary education and health;
- Notable progress in promoting the status of women;
- The sustained delivery of nine hundred thousand mosquito bednets and more than one million ACT treatments to fight against malaria;



Janet Schulman, Acting USAID Director, right, entertains implementing partners: Dr. Souleymane Diallo, UNICEF Country Representative, left, and Dr. Franz Simeon, Chief of Party, center, USAID Family Health Integrated Project (PISAF).

- Two rounds of insecticide spraying of over a hundred and forty thousand houses in Ouémé
- Improved access to health services by pregnant women and young children;
- Ten thousand community teachers in training;
- More than three hundred seventy associations of mothers formed to support education for girls. ■