

MALI HOSTS FIRST SCIENCE, RESEARCH, AND NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT MEETING IN AFRICA



Malian Minister of Health Mrs. Diallo Madeleine Ba and Ambassador Jimmy Kolker from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (right) with U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Peter H. Barlein and USAID Director Rebecca Black (left) at the opening ceremony of the meeting.

On January 23 to 27, 2012, the U.S. Government's (USG) Global Health Initiative (GHI) interagency team in Mali organized a Science, Research & New Technology for Development meeting, hosted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Meeting was closed with a live video address by Lois Quam, Executive Director of the Global Health Initiative.

This gathering of international scientists, researchers and technology experts was the first meeting of its kind to be held in Africa. It served as an occasion to merge the important sectors of science and development in order to explore ways in which the introduction of research, innovation and new technologies can impact development work in Mali. The meeting provided health scientists and public health professionals from the U.S. and Mali the opportunity to align their research and development efforts in order to promote both GHI and Government of Mali priorities. The outcome of this meeting will inform future research and development work, not only in Mali but throughout all of Africa. Lessons learned from the meeting will be shared with other GHI countries to inform similar meetings around the world.

The meeting's opening ceremony was presided by Malian Minister of Health Mrs. Diallo Madeleine Ba and Ambassador Jimmy Kolker from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More than 100 attendees participated throughout the week, including representatives of GHI partner agencies (USAID, CDC, NIH, Peace Corps and U.S. Department of Defense), technical experts from the scientific, research, and public health communities, and local and international development experts.

The meeting featured plenary sessions, presentations on policies and projects, and an inventory of science, research, and development work currently being done in Mali. The meeting also included site visits to the National Public Health Research Institute (INRSP), the International Center for Excellence in Research (ICER), and the Medina-Coura Community Health Clinic, as well as group work on themes such as HIV, malaria, TB, neglected parasitic diseases, and health systems strengthening, including family planning and maternal and child health.

The joint action plan developed by the Governments of Mali and the U.S. based on the working groups' recommendations was presented to Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard, who closed the international gathering by congratulating the participants on the meeting's success. The action plan includes five-year goals for Mali such as achieving zero HIV infections, zero deaths and zero discrimination, accelerating malaria control efforts to achieve universal coverage, and building the capacity of laboratory and blood safety agencies. It also identifies evidence-based activities that will be incorporated into Mali's new national health strategy, which is currently under development.

In order to help continue to bridge the gap between the science and development communities, meeting participants also supported the USG interagency team's efforts with the Government of Mali to create a Science Advisory Council, which, once created, will hold regular meetings to continue the dialogue on research and development and on the development of communication platforms. Additionally, approximately 40 technical experts participating in the meeting volunteered to be part of a database of Malian researchers and scientists who will help the development community address key issues in their area of expertise.