



USAID | **LIBERIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Working with Liberians to Lift
Liberia

Matters

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Food For Peace launches two new programs

USAID's office of Food For Peace recently hosted a ceremony to officially launch two new multi-year assistance programs.

The ceremony was hosted in conjunction with Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI) and ACIDI/VOCA, the two organizations who will be implementing the programs over the next five years. It's significance was demonstrated by the attendance of representatives of the Government of Liberia, notably the Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Gender, Acting Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, Superintendents from Grand Gedeh and River Gee, representatives of the US Government and USAID, and other members of the international donor community.



*Minister of Agriculture
Chenoweth makes remarks at
the launch.*

The two programs, Health, Agriculture, Nutrition Development and Sustainability (HANDS) and Liberian Agricultural Upgrading, Nutrition and Child Health (LAUNCH), will focus on addressing the root causes of food insecurity that are affecting vulnerable populations in four counties within Liberia. **cont. on page 3...**

ArcelorMittal and USAID/PMI partner to protect Yekepa

The town of Yekepa sits at the foot of Liberia's Nimba mountain range, just a stone's throw from the Guinean border. Home to about 7,500 people, Yekepa is located entirely within what used to be the Liberian American Mining Company (LAMCO) concession from the 1950s until 1990, when operations halted at the beginning of Liberia's first civil war.

Today Yekepa is a shadow of its former self. The enormous swimming pool lies stagnant, the airstrip overgrown, the tennis courts in disrepair, and the theatre stands as an imposing monument to the glorious past of "Paris in Liberia". And yet as much as there are signs of the past in Yekepa, there are clear-cut signs of the future too.

In 2005 Mittal Steel negotiated the 25 year concession with the Government of Liberia (and then renegotiated in 2007 as Arcelor Mittal Steel), becoming one of the first major foreign investors in post-conflict Liberia. While mining activity is yet **cont. on page 2...**

**ArcelorMittal & USAID/PMI partnership
cont. from cover page...**

to start in the concession, pending repair of the railway from the concession to the port of Buchanan, the town is showing signs of improvement. Roads have been repaired and the encroaching brush has been trimmed back. ArcelorMittal has re-opened the hospital in Yekepa and while services are not free to non-offered at a subsidized rate. Only about two thousand Liberians are currently employed by the steel giant, but that number is expected to increase once the mines are re-opened and mining starts.

One area ArcelorMittal have committed to making a marked improvement is in tackling Yekepa's malaria prevalence. Like many places in Liberia, Yekepa's malaria burden is high.

In September USAID Malaria Initiative (PMI)

malarsia effort in collaboration with Arcelor Mittal that involved distributing bednets to residents in Yekepa, and mobilizing community volunteers and Arcelor Mittal employees to conduct Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) in all of the houses in Yekepa.

IRS involves spraying a non-toxic insecticide on the inside walls of houses that kills mosquitoes when they land on the walls inside the house. The insecticide lasts from six to nine months when properly applied, and can be an important tool in reducing malaria prevalence in a given area.

Although only about 1,500 of Mittal employees, the company agreed to provide IRS to the houses of all 7,500 residents. USAID and PMI supplied the equipment as well as training for Arcelor Mittal employees selected to be sprayers. Throughout the spraying program USAID and PMI continued to provide technical assistance to ensure its success while Arcelor Mittal provided the manpower and community mobilizers who participated in the program.

Arcelor Mittal are to be commended for their foresight in approaching USAID/PMI to setup the private-public partnership and for being leaders in corporate social responsibility in Liberia, particularly in light of the planned foreign investment increases in Liberia in the near future.



ArcelorMittal sprayers take a break from the heat.

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A sprayer in action.

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LIFE will be implemented by OICI and will operate in Grand Gedeh and River Gee counties, whereas LAUNCH will be implemented by ACDI/VOCA and will operate in Bong and Nimba counties.

By using innovative, integrated approaches combining agriculture, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, microfinance, and education activities, these two programs are expected to significantly contribute to efforts to reduce food insecurity in Liberia.

During the ceremony, Minister of Agriculture Florence Chenoweth gave impassioned remarks reminding the audience of the severity of the food insecurity situation in Liberia, and of the potential of the two programs to make a difference.

ACDI/VOCA and OICI each presented their programs to the attendees, highlighting the research that shaped the design of the programs, and the methodologies that will be used to achieve the desired results. Each presentation was followed by an opportunity to ask questions which many of the attendees seized, asking probing questions and prompting considered answers from the presenters.

The attendance of so many high level representatives, the interest in the presentations, and the high level of participation in the question and answer sessions all point to the strong belief being placed on these USAID programs to deliver significant results in the fight against food insecurity in Liberia.

IBI recognized for role in implementing GEMAP

On September 9th members of the international donor community joined USAID in recognizing the role that International Business Initiative played in the success of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP). The event also featured the first public viewing of a documentary produced by USAID to highlight the GEMAP model and successes.

Five years previously, on September 9th 2005 GEMAP was signed into existence. GEMAP was co-signed by the Government of Liberia and its international partners including USAID, IMF, World Bank, African Union, ECOWAS, EU and the UN. The overarching objective of GEMAP was to help Liberia's government institutions and state owned enterprises recover from decades of mis-management and crisis to create an environment of fiscal responsibility.



PA's Rib House was the venue for the event.

In her prepared remarks, USAID Liberia Mission Director Pam White highlighted the many successes of the GEMAP program, and lauded the Government of Liberia's foresight in making the difficult decisions to handover signatory authority for financial transactions in the State Owned Enterprises. Mission Director White also pointed out that GEMAP is now recognized as an effective model for rebuilding post-conflict societies, and referenced a recent African Union conference that examined the potential of GEMAP-styled interventions in other African countries.

Finally, Mission Director White congratulated the International Business Initiative for their professionalism and perseverance in implementing the USAID portion of GEMAP, saying they would be missed and that their efforts had created a legacy that would benefit Liberia for years to come.

Liberian youth to get apprenticeship opportunities through USAID/Ministry of Youth and Sports memorandum

USAID has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Liberian ministries of Youth and Sports, and Education, to help provide Liberian youth with training opportunities to enhance their marketability.

Signed through the Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY), the memorandum will target an initial one hundred and fifty Liberians, and then follow with a further three thousand, providing them with apprenticeship training at local businesses and workshops for up to 10 months after which time the trainees will remain on the job as salaried employees.



Janet Torkolon reads her prepared remarks as Minister Gongar and Mission Director White look on.

The signing ceremony was held during USAID's Education Week 2010, and was a well attended event with Minister of Education Dr. Gongar, a representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and USAID Liberia Mission Director Pam White all making remarks.

In her remarks, Mission Director White pointed to the scale and scope of the program as exactly the kind of intervention needed in Liberia, saying "this program is what Liberia needs to empower the youth", before going on

to affirm USAID's commitment to helping Liberian youth through non-formal programs such as the program being signed into effect that day as well as USAID's assistance to the Ministry of Education in developing the new non-formal education curriculum for youth and adults. Minister of Education Gongar echoed Mission Director White's comments, saying that the need for Liberian youth to acquire marketable skills cannot be overemphasized, that empowering the youth with useful skills was one of the Government's major challenges, and thanked USAID for their assistance, adding that all assistance to that end was highly appreciated.

The most poignant remarks of the day were made by Janet Torkolon, a graduate of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) that now forms part of CESLY. In her remarks Janet reminded the audience of the real impact these programs have on Liberians.

"I am very happy that I am able to read and write after graduating from level three of the ALP program in Liberia. Before entering this program I never know how to do any of the above" read Janet in halting, but clear English, continuing "Thank God that this program is in our country that is helping us who were not able to enter school as a result of the war in Liberia."

Per the memorandum, the Ministry of Youth and sports will provide initial packages of materials to the businesses in the program as well as materials to the apprentices upon completion of the program, while USAID will provide monthly stipends to the apprentices while the Ministry of Education through CESLY project will provide career readiness training for the apprentices.



USAID Liberia's Julia Richards addresses the gathering.

RBHS presents promising preliminary results to stakeholders

On August 4th, USAID's Rebuilding Basic Health Services (RBHS) program hosted stakeholders in an all-day conference at PA's Rib House.

The objectives on the day were to explain current and future program priorities as well as present data on the objectives, successes, and challenges. Stakeholders were also encouraged to provide their feedback on the direction the program is taking.

Stakeholders invited to attend the conference included representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW), other Government agencies, USAID, RBHS implementing partners, and RBHS collaborating partners.



A baby is weighed in River Gee's Tuobo Clinic

Of particular interest during the conference was the presentation of RBHS' preliminary data that paints a picture of where RBHS is successful.

Although RBHS Chief of Party Rick Brennan was careful to stress that the data from the last quarter (April-June 2010) is preliminary pending verification, the presentation is cause for celebration.

The data is gathered from the 105 health facilities supported by the RBHS program in seven counties, and on the administrative level, RBHS points to the increase in timely reporting from the health centers, and the number of facilities where staff is paid on time. When the program started in July 2009 less than 30% of the RBHS supported facilities reported statistics back to RBHS in a timely manner, compared to over 80% now. In the same timeframe the number of facilities where staff are being paid on time has risen from just under 50% to a full 100%.

More importantly for the Liberians who depend on the health facilities are the data showing increases in delivery of health services. Family planning has been a major success story, with RBHS supported facilities seeing a 201% increase in Family Planning counseling since July 2008. Also

supporting the family planning efforts of Liberians are the 62% increase of couple years protection available at health facilities (a measure of the availability of contraceptives).

Moreover, Liberian mothers have embraced the RBHS supported health facilities wholeheartedly and as a result there has been a 134% increase in the treatment to prevent malaria during pregnancy (ITP2), a 134% increase in the number of mothers who visit the health facilities the recommended four times during pregnancy, and an 81% increase in the number of baby-deliveries at health facilities instead of at home. Lastly thanks to the efforts of RBHS, the MoHSW awarded River Gee County the title of "Most Improved County" at the recent National Health Review for increasing its score in the MoHSW Accreditation Survey from 44% to 86%.

USAID funds the \$60 million RBHS program which supports 105 MoHSW health facilities, providing health services to an estimated 1,030,000 Liberians. The 105 facilities are concentrated in Bomi, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Montserrado, Nimba, and River Gee counties.