

FRONTLINES

www.USAID.gov

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011



TWO SUDANS

THE SEPARATION OF AFRICA'S LARGEST
COUNTRY AND THE ROAD AHEAD

- > A GLOBAL EDUCATION FOOTPRINT TAKES SHAPE
- > EGYPT SHAKES UP THE CLASSROOM
- > Q&A WITH REP. NITA LOWEY

Sudan & South Sudan/Education Edition



INSIGHTS

From Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah

THE WORLD welcomed its newest nation when South Sudan officially gained its independence on July 9. After over two decades of war and suffering, a peace agreement between north and south Sudan paved the way for South Sudanese to fulfill their dreams of self-determination. The United States played an important role in helping make this moment possible, and today we remain committed to supporting the people and Government of South Sudan build a peaceful, prosperous nation.

Also on July 9, we opened a full USAID mission in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, to strengthen the progress we have made across the region in partnership with local communities. We have helped provide a million people access to clean water, and financed the construction of roads, bridges, and health clinics. Perhaps most important, we have helped expand school enrollment rates from 25 percent to 68 percent.

A few weeks before South Sudan's day of independence, I had the opportunity to visit the region and meet a group of children who were learning English and math in a USAID-supported primary education program. The students ranged in ages from 4 to 14. Many of the older students have lived through a period of displacement, violence, and trauma. This was likely the very first opportunity they had to receive even a basic education.

When you see American taxpayer money being effectively used to provide

education in a way that improves the lives of these children and contributes to the peaceful founding of a new nation, you get a genuine sense for the significance and long-term impact of this work.

Our goal is to improve equitable access to quality education,

particularly in crisis and conflict environments. The challenge

is steep. An estimated 70 million children—more than half of whom are girls—are not enrolled in school. Many of those children who do attend school are not achieving basic

skills, making it more likely they will eventually drop out.

These failures leave developing nations without the human and social capital needed to advance and sustain development. They deprive too many individuals of the skills they need as productive members of their communities and providers for their families.

Across the world, our education programs emphasize a special focus on disadvantaged groups such as women and girls and those living in remote areas. In rural Liberia—where less than 2 percent of people have electricity—new solar-powered classrooms enable teens and mothers to study at night after finishing a day's work.

In Afghanistan, we have assisted the government to dramatically expand the number of children enrolled in primary school—from 750,000 boys enrolled under the Taliban in 2001 to approximately 7 million children today, nearly 35 percent of whom are girls.

There is no more powerful tool for creating healthy, prosperous, stable societies than education. We need to continue to seek evidence-based approaches and innovative solutions to providing engaging learning opportunities for the world's most vulnerable children. ■

Our goal is to improve equitable access to quality education, particularly in crisis and conflict environments. The challenge is steep.

LEARN MORE AT:
www.usaid.gov/frontlines



"I realize that there are among us those who are weary of sustaining this continual effort to help other nations. But I would ask them to look at a map and recognize that many of those whom we help live on the 'front lines' of the long twilight struggle for freedom—that others are new nations posed between order and chaos—and the rest are older nations now undergoing a turbulent transition of new expectations. Our efforts to help them help themselves, to demonstrate and to strengthen the vitality of free institutions, are small in cost compared to our military outlays for the defense of freedom."

—John F. Kennedy, Special Message to the Congress on Foreign Aid, March 13, 1962

FrontLines is published by the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs
U.S. Agency for International Development

David Barth, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs

FRONTLINES STAFF:

Kelly Ramundo, Managing Editor
Claire McIntyre, Production Editor
Angela Rucker, Writer/Editor
Patricia Adams, Photo Librarian
Marquita Wise-Williams, Human Resources Coordinator and Employee Liaison
Alexandra Wise, Intern
Taylor Nelson, Intern

CORRESPONDENTS:

AFGE – Willy Hardin; **AFR** – Susan Quinn, Diana Harper; **AFSA** – Francisco Zamora; **ASIA** – Jan Cartwright; **CFBCI** – Heather MacLean; **DCHA** – Rebecca Gustafson, Sven Lindholm; **EGAT** – Jane Stanley, Elisa Walton, Ranta Russell; **E&E** – Michael Hathaway; **OCRD** – Gloria Blackwell; **GC** – Harmony Wade; **ODP** – Todd Kirkbride; **GH** – Sandra Jordan, Chris Thomas, Jessica DiRocco; **IG** – Debra Scott; **LAC** – Maxine Hillary; **LPA** – Barbara Bennett; **M** – Lauren Gabler; **ME** – Hope Bryer, Jan Cartwright; **SEC** – Dwayne Moore, Lorraine Meehan

Submit notices, story ideas, feedback to *FrontLines* articles, and requests to be added to the mailing list to FrontLines@usaid.gov.

Go to www.usaid.gov/frontlines



2 Two Sudans: The Separation of Africa's Largest Country and the Road Ahead

- 10 Reinforcing a Tenuous Peace as South Sudan Rises to Statehood
- 14 Darfur's Window of Opportunity
- 16 South Sudan's Greenbelt
- 18 Q&A with Bill Hammink, Former Mission Director to Sudan
- 20 Baby Steps in One of the Worst Places for Mothers
- 22 Centuries-Old Wildlife Migration Untouched by Decades of War

See the online version of *FrontLines* for links to additional reading and videos.



**LEARN MORE/
VIDEO ONLINE AT:**
www.usaid.gov/frontlines

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



32 Early Education Sets Nicaraguans on Path to Success

- 28 Message from USAID's Education Chief
- 30 USAID's Global Education Footprint Takes Shape
- 36 Egypt Shakes Up the Classroom
- 38 Mobile Phones, eBooks Turning the Page on Education
- 40 Higher Education Partnerships
- 42 Q&A with Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.)
- 44 Talent Broker
- 46 In a New Nation, Building the Education Basics

Cover: National Anthem singers at the Dr. John Garang memorial site in Juba, South Sudan, celebrate Independence Day, July 9.

Photo by Jenn Warren





TWO

THE SEPARATION OF A

By Angela Stephens

South Sudan Independence Day celebrations, July 9



SUDANS

AFRICA'S LARGEST COUNTRY AND THE ROAD AHEAD

ON JULY 9, after decades of civil war and the loss of more than 2 million lives, South Sudan seceded from Sudan and became the world's newest nation—a peaceful and democratic breaking-in-two of what was Africa's largest country.

The event brought joy to the streets and dusty roads of South Sudan, where nearly 99 percent of citizens who voted in the USAID-assisted referendum on self-determination chose secession last January. The mood was

more somber in Khartoum, where the feeling among many was uncertainty about their suddenly smaller country's economic future, since most of Sudan's oil—the lifeblood of the economy—is in the south.

Because of the severe human toll and destabilizing consequences of conflict in Sudan—not only the north-south conflict, but also the tragedy of the Darfur conflict that began in 2003—Sudan has for years been the U.S. Government's highest priority in Africa.

The division of Sudan has brought changes for the U.S. Government as well. USAID's Sudan mission, which was reopened in 2006—14 years after USAID's international staff had evacuated Juba and four Sudanese USAID staff were executed by Sudanese military intelligence—became the USAID mission in South Sudan on July 9, and the U.S. Consulate became a U.S. Embassy.

Despite the pride and exhilaration Southern Sudanese felt in achieving independence, the challenges their

new nation faces are daunting. A landlocked country with oil resources but without its own pipeline to transport and export the oil, South Sudan is still negotiating with Sudan on revenue sharing or fees Juba would pay Khartoum to enable export of oil through Port Sudan.

SOUTH SUDAN'S ECONOMY is exceedingly oil-dependent. As the country approached independence, 98 percent of Government of South Sudan revenues came from oil, as part of revenue sharing agreed to in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the north-south civil war. This almost total reliance on a single revenue stream makes the country vulnerable to economic shock from fluctuations in the price of oil or any disruptions in production.

Additionally, the severe lack of infrastructure in South Sudan has hindered economic growth.

“In most developing countries that come out of conflict, you talk about

reconstruction, but in South Sudan, you're really talking about construction. They had very little to start with,” said William Hammink, who was USAID mission director in Sudan from 2009 to 2011.

“In 2005, Juba was still a garrison town that armed forces of the north controlled. All the various infrastructure, such as sewers, electricity, roads—dated to the British colonial days of the 1950s. So not only is South Sudan starting from scratch in terms of government institutions, but also its infrastructure,” he said.

South Sudan also faces a severe challenge in terms of human capital—shortfalls in the number of educated and trained workers needed to run the government of the new country, where the literacy rate is only 27 percent, one of the world's lowest. The rate is even lower among women, so USAID is providing scholarships to help girls enroll and remain in school, and training opportunities for women, including teacher training.

South Sudan also faces the challenge of integrating into productive employment hundreds of thousands of recent returnees who have come back to their ancestral home areas after years or decades living in northern Sudan. Since October 30, 2010, more than 370,000 Sudanese have returned to South Sudan and the Three Areas—the Abyei Area and Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

When the CPA was signed in 2005, it created the autonomous sub-national Government of Southern Sudan—an institution on paper only—with no buildings, equipment, or personnel. USAID helped transform the concept of this institution into a functioning government, with ministries, transparent budget systems, a tax administration, and a central bank.

SINCE 2005, USAID's strategy for assisting Sudan had been based on implementing the CPA, which expired with South Sudan's independence. In June, USAID released a two-year transition strategy for the new nation with the overall goal of making it more stable in the post-CPA period.

“In developing our strategy for assistance to South Sudan during this critical transitional period, we built on four key objectives—mitigating the whole range of potential conflicts in South Sudan; building a sound system of governance for the new state; ensuring the provision and further development of basic services; and helping South Sudan expand its opportunities in agriculture,” said Jim Parys, supervisory program officer, who led the team that drafted the strategy.



The South Sudanese National Guard greets VIPs on July 9 as they arrive in Juba for celebrations of independence for the new Republic of South Sudan.

Photo by Jenn Warren

One of the goals of agriculture development is to reduce the vulnerability that comes with overreliance on oil by diversifying the economy and tapping one of South Sudan’s most valuable resources—fertile land (see article on page 16).

While the new strategy guides how U.S. Government funding will be invested to help stabilize South Sudan, USAID is also providing leadership in the international community by securing commitments from the Republic of South Sudan in four key pillar areas critical to the new nation’s long-term viability—creating an environment that enables promotion of private investment; bolstering the agriculture sector to become the engine for South Sudan’s economic growth; developing a common platform and institutional structure for the international community to invest in South Sudan; and building the human capital necessary to govern and deliver services.

“South Sudan is unusual among our development partners,” explained Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa Raja Jandhyala. “In the short term, it will be financially vulnerable as it puts in place macroeconomic systems and reaches agreement with the Government of Sudan on sharing of oil revenues or user fee arrangements. In the medium-to-long term, it will have national revenue from oil that exceeds development



For larger image, go to www.usaid.gov/frontlines.

SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN FACTS

Sudan

Population: 30.9 million (Source: 2008 Sudan Population and Housing Census)
Land size: 1,861,484 square kilometers – 16th largest in the world
Literacy: 77.5 percent of adults (Source: UNICEF)

South Sudan

Population: 8.26 million (Source: 2008 Sudan Population and Housing Census)
Land size: 644,329 square kilometers – 42nd largest in the world
Literacy: 27 percent of adults (Source: South Sudan Center for Census, Statistics, and Evaluation)

resources, as the foreign assistance funding levels for the United States and other major donors are under significant pressure. Considering this new economic dynamic, our role is to use our leadership, political capital, and experience to

help the Republic of South Sudan, as well as the Government of Sudan, to make sound choices in the public interest with the resources they have, and to help facilitate investments from others, particularly the private sector.” ■

One of USAID’s key efforts to help South Sudan engage with the international community, including the private sector, on its development priorities is an International Engagement Conference to be held in Washington later this year.

The U.S. Government will sponsor the conference with the African Union and Turkey, and with the participation of bilateral and multilateral government partners, including the European Union, United Nations, African Development Bank, and World

Bank, as well as private sector organizations including Citibank and the Corporate Council on Africa.

The conference will allow the new nation to present its development vision to the international community and to present its key policy commitments over the next two years while reaching consensus with the international community on a framework for coordination of development initiatives.

USAID ACCOMPLISHMENTS

IN SOUTH SUDAN 2005–11

As part of its efforts to strengthen peace in Sudan and support the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which the United States helped negotiate to end the north-south war, the U.S. Government provided nearly \$10 billion in humanitarian and development assistance to Sudan during the CPA, from 2005-2011. Major achievements during this period include:

Government of Southern Sudan

USAID provided technical and functional support that helped transform the autonomous Government of Southern Sudan from a concept to a functioning government. USAID was the lead donor in establishing the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, which included instituting transparent budget systems and a tax administration. USAID assistance is creating a fully functioning Central Bank, including advice on issuing a new currency. Strategic assistance to several other key government institutions has been critical to its readiness for independence.

Constitution

USAID worked with the Government

of Southern Sudan to draft the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan (which was in place 2005-2011), and provided technical assistance for drafting of, and public outreach on, the South Sudan Transitional Constitution, which was approved July 7, ahead of South Sudan's independence, and will be in place until a permanent constitution is adopted.

Census

USAID helped the Southern Sudan Center for Census, Statistics, and Evaluation conduct its portion of the 2008 nationwide census required by the CPA.

Elections

USAID provided comprehensive assistance (election administration, civic

participation, and domestic and international observation) for the April 2010 nationwide elections, Sudan's first multiparty contests since 1986 and a requirement of the CPA.

Referendum

USAID provided comprehensive assistance for the January 2011 Referendum on Self-Determination for Southern Sudan, through which the southern Sudanese people voted to secede from Sudan and form an independent nation.

Combating Corruption

USAID assisted in implementing transparent and accountable systems in Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning functions, including modern tax collection processes and a Financial Management Information System for public budget and expenditure (also implemented in Ministries of Finance in all 10 states).

New Currency

USAID provided technical support to help South Sudan successfully launch a new currency shortly after independence.



1. A southern Sudanese woman registers last November to take part in January's USAID-supported referendum (Photo by Tim McKulka, AFP). **2.** Southern Sudanese rally on the streets of the southern capital Juba on Dec. 9, 2010, marking the one-month countdown until the landmark independence referendum (Photo by Peter Martell, AFP).

Infrastructure

USAID has removed landmines, repaired dilapidated and dangerous bridges, and improved hundreds of kilometers of roads, including the crucial paved 192-kilometer Juba-Nimule road that connects South Sudan to Uganda, a key trade partner; and the gravel-surfaced 262-kilometer Yambio-Tambura and Diabio-Ezo roads in Western Equatoria state. These road improvements enhance transportation, economic opportunity, delivery of government services, and security. USAID provided more than 75 percent of funding for emergency road repairs implemented by the World Food Program between 2005 and 2007, opening 1,500 kilometers of roads in southern Sudan to facilitate humanitarian support in areas where food deliveries were previously made by airplane.

Electricity

USAID developed South Sudan's first electrical cooperative in Yei, benefiting more than 16,000 people, and expanded

electrification in 2011 to Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria and Maridi in Western Equatoria. USAID has also funded technical training for staff of the Ministry of Energy and Mining, South Sudan Electrification Corporation, and the Yei, Kapoeta, and Maridi utilities.

Land Policy

USAID assisted in drafting South Sudan's first comprehensive land policy to facilitate equitable access to land for agricultural development; encourage long-term, economically sustainable land use; prevent land grabbing; and aid the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin or other areas of secure settlement.

Microfinance

In 2003, when there were no financial services in South Sudan following decades of war, USAID launched the region's microfinance sector so that entrepreneurs could access credit to start and expand enterprises. Microfinance services have since spread throughout the south, enabling some

45,000 borrowers to launch or expand businesses.

Increased School Enrollment

With USAID assistance, primary school enrollment in South Sudan increased from approximately 20 percent of children in 2005 to 68 percent in 2010.

Built and Rehabilitated Schools

USAID built or rehabilitated 140 primary schools and four secondary schools, improving the learning environment for more than 80,000 students, and supported the rehabilitation of five regional teacher training institutes.

Improved Learning

USAID provided literacy instruction through radio, reaching nearly 100,000 students and 445,000 youth and adults who did not have access to regular school instruction because of conflict and displacement. USAID helped to revise and unify the teaching curriculum and supplied 36,089 textbooks and materials to enhance school instruction.

>>



3. Sudanese singer Mary Boyoi holds a flag of southern Sudan on December 19, 2010, at the Keyz recording studio in Juba while recording songs for her new album, which focuses on referendum issues and was funded by USAID (Photo by Trevor Snapp, AFP). **4.** Traditional dancers in South Sudan's Central Equatoria state (Photo by Jenn Warren).

Better Access to Health Services, Clean Water, and Sanitation

More than 2 million South Sudanese have improved access to high-impact maternal, child, and family planning services as a result of USAID efforts since 2005. USAID has improved access to potable water in southern Sudan through the construction of boreholes and urban water treatment facilities, and the distribution of chlorine tablets for household-level purification. As a result, more than a million southerners now have access to safe water.

Disease Prevention

USAID has collaborated with the Government of South Sudan and other partners on polio immunization campaigns and, by 2010, helped immunize 99 percent of children. USAID also increased routine childhood immunization from less than 20 percent to 71 percent.

Food and Other Emergency Relief

USAID provided more than \$648 million in food aid in Southern Sudan and the Three Areas (Abyei, Blue Nile, and Southern Kordofan) and approximately \$355 million in non-food assistance (including basic hygiene, cooking, and shelter materials and livelihood activities) in Southern Sudan to people affected by emergencies including conflict, floods, and drought between 2005 and July 2011.

Support for Returnees and Displaced Persons

USAID is providing life-saving assistance to tens of thousands of Southern Sudanese displaced and impacted by conflict, including the Abyei crisis, helping Sudanese of southern origin returning from northern Sudan to reach their home areas and begin new lives in the south with livelihoods support, and providing essential services, including food security, shelter, water, health, and sanitation in states with the highest returns of southerners.

UNRESOLV

Border Demarcation

The north-south border is not yet demarcated, with five areas along the border other than Abyei in dispute. The two sides have agreed in principle to soft border arrangements, including no required visas for the movement of people, facilitation of grazing rights, and joint efforts to promote cross-border trade and development. However, they have yet to reach agreement on the specific details and mechanisms for these soft border arrangements. They have agreed to a demilitarized zone along the border and requested that the United Nations provide monitors and force protection to monitor the zone.

Abyei

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement provided that the residents of Abyei—a resource-rich and contested area 4,000 square miles—vote in a referendum on whether they would remain part of northern Sudan, or become part of southern Sudan,



1. National Anthem singers at the ceremony marking the Declaration of the Independence of the Republic of South Sudan, in Juba, South Sudan, July 9 (Photo by Jenn Warren). **2.** The USAID-funded Granville-Abbas Girls' Secondary School in Kurmuk, Blue Nile state, includes classrooms, dormitories, a library, theater, cafeteria, and learning center with computer training and Internet access (Photo by Rebecca Dobbins, USAID).

ED ISSUES

irrespective of the results of the January 2011 referendum on self-determination, which resulted in South Sudan's secession and nationhood. The CPA stipulated that the two referenda were to happen simultaneously, but the CPA parties—the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement—were unable to agree on Abyei residency requirements. USAID provided comprehensive assistance to the CPA parties to implement the southern referendum, and stands ready to provide similar assistance for a referendum on Abyei if an agreement can be reached to hold the referendum and name a commission to oversee the process.

On May 21, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) took control of Abyei following an outbreak of fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army and SAF. An estimated 100,000 people have been displaced from Abyei as a result of fighting. On June 20, the parties signed a temporary arrangement in which the U.N. would deploy a peacekeeping

force, and on June 27, the U.N. Security Council established the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Deployment of Ethiopian peacekeepers to Abyei is underway. An early setback occurred Aug. 2 as four peacekeepers were killed and seven injured when their vehicles detonated a landmine.

Popular Consultations

Popular consultation is a political process under the CPA that gives the people of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states—areas in Sudan bordering South Sudan that suffered heavy fighting during the civil war, with control of their territory divided between northern and southern military forces—the right to express their opinions about whether the CPA has met their aspirations. The process also empowers their democratically elected state legislatures to negotiate with the central government in Khartoum on any shortcomings in the constitutional, political, and administrative arrangements of the CPA.

USAID has been helping the two states prepare for the popular consultations since 2008, with a broad range of technical and logistical support, including civic education campaigns to inform citizens about the process and their rights. Earlier this year, in one of the most impressive displays of democratic participation ever seen in Blue Nile state, more than 70,000 citizens attended public hearings in communities across the state to voice their opinions about the CPA and many aired grievances.

The Southern Kordofan process was far behind schedule because a dispute over the state census delayed elections needed before the popular consultation process could begin. After violence erupted in Southern Kordofan in June, insecurity has prevented any progress on popular consultations. Sudan's National Assembly extended the Popular Consultation Act beyond the CPA interim period, giving the two states additional time to complete this key political process. USAID continues to support the process as conditions allow. ■



3. A flag raising ceremony takes place in Washington, D.C., July 9 as the Government of South Sudan rededicated its mission to the United States to an official embassy (Photo by Susan Quinn, USAID). **4.** A photo released by the U.N. mission in Sudan (UNMIS) shows homes burning in Abyei on May 23 (Photo by Stuart Price, UNMIS/AFP). **5.** Amid their belongings, a Southern Sudanese woman and her children await transport from Khartoum to Bentiu, Unity state, April 14 (Photo by Christy Forster, USAID).



REINFORCING A TENUOUS PEACE AS SOUTH SUDAN RISES TO STATEHOOD

By Jennifer Shaw

A Southern Sudanese woman in Khartoum tells USAID staff she is eager to return to Bentiu, Unity state, April 14.

IN 2005, THE Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) ended nearly 22 years of civil war with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). But the peace that has held between northern and southern Sudan remains fragile.

Violence engulfed the disputed, resource-rich Abyei Area on the north-south border and the northern state of Southern Kordofan in the weeks ahead of South Sudan's July 9 independence, raising fears of renewed north-south conflict. Internal strife also continues to affect large parts of both countries outside the state capitals, denying communities the security and development envisioned in the CPA.

Since 2005, USAID has been working with local government and civil society leaders to confront the country's legacy of political conflict, violence, and instability. Through this conflict mitigation program, the Agency is working to counter threats to stability and seize opportunities to consolidate peace in South Sudan and along the volatile north-south border.

The "Three Areas"—Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states and Abyei—are located along the political, ethnic, religious, and geographic fault lines of the civil war, and to this day are strategically important to the CPA's signatories.

War-affected communities in these areas have been skeptical of peace, posing one of the greatest threats to its consolidation.

"The way we started," explained Ken Spear, the head of USAID/Sudan's Office of Transition and Conflict Mitigation in Khartoum, "was to identify local, reform-minded actors who, with just a few additional resources, would be able to make significant progress in addressing historical grievances in areas most prone to return to violent conflict."

In 2006, USAID helped turn the tide away from renewed conflict in Blue Nile by empowering the state minister for health and Kurmuk

County authorities to counter marginalization in the southernmost part of the state. The town of Kurmuk, in particular, was widely viewed as one of the border areas most likely to derail the peace process. The state government's presence was nonexistent, signs of peace and development were absent, and communities were heavily armed and disillusioned by the outcome of the CPA.

USAID helped authorities extend essential services including health and education to Kurmuk and other underserved areas of southern Blue Nile. In 2010, USAID opened the Granville-Abbas Girls' Secondary School in Kurmuk, which is named in honor of USAID employees John Granville and Abdelrahman Abbas Rahama, who were killed in Khartoum in 2008. The school is a model for girls' education in the region. USAID-sponsored health training facilities in Kurmuk and Bau are helping to build a cadre of trained local health-care professionals.

"It is important that productive change agents are given credit for such transformations," said Spear. "It strengthens their legitimacy, and that is what we want."

USAID'S ACHIEVEMENTS in helping mitigate conflict in the transitional areas have been matched by an array of challenges and setbacks.



A boy from Abyei at Eyat camp outside Wau town, June 2011

Photo by Christy Foster, USAID



Photo by AECOM International Sudan

USAID is supporting training in Debab, Southern Kordofan, including how to cultivate with donkey plows, to help this largely Misseriya town improve livelihoods and reduce conflict on the Sudan-South Sudan border.

Efforts to stabilize Abyei, including, for example, establishing an office complex for the nascent Abyei Area administration, have been frustrated by repeated outbreaks of violence in the area. Fierce fighting between forces loyal to the Government of Sudan and the SPLM recently forced the suspension of conflict-mitigation activities in much of Southern Kordofan and Abyei.

The violence here is of particular concern to pastoralist groups who rely on a cross-border existence, such as the Misseriya of Southern Kordofan. Without clear arrangements on the movement of goods and people across this new international boundary, the Misseriya fear they will lose access to

essential grazing land and water in Abyei and South Sudan.

In response, USAID helped construct or rehabilitate 17 water yards—elevated water-storage reservoirs—along key migration corridors to reduce the Misseriya's movement into South Sudan, and lessen the likelihood of resource-driven conflict. The Agency is now creating opportunities for the Misseriya to improve their livelihoods by involving youth in marketable activities, rehabilitating the meat and vegetable market in Muglad, and providing households with agricultural assistance such as training in the use of donkey plows, which can potentially double the amount of land a family is able to till.

ACROSS THE BORDER in the new Republic of South Sudan, USAID launched a conflict-reduction initiative in 2009 following a worrisome spike in inter-ethnic conflict.

Through this effort, local government bodies are working to improve community security in some of South Sudan's most remote and volatile areas such as Akobo, Pibor, Mayom, and Panyijar counties. U.S. aid helped the municipalities purchase highly visible office spaces and communication and transportation equipment, which in turn has enabled county and *payam* officials, as well as traditional authorities, to communicate and coordinate responses when there is tension or an outbreak of hostilities.



Photo by Christy Forster, USAID

Internally displaced persons from Abyei receive government-donated food rations at Eyat camp, June 2011.

The change is striking.

“From a place like Panyijar, which can’t be accessed by road for about half the year, we’re suddenly getting e-mails from the county commissioner,” said Adam O’Brien, who was field program analyst for AECOM International, a USAID partner in the initiative.

In 2011, at least three potential conflicts were averted in Unity, Warrap, and Jonglei states when local authorities learned about planned cattle raids and were able to thwart the attacks using USAID-funded communications equipment.

THE INITIATIVE IS also providing activities and training for youth who

have witnessed few positive changes in their communities during their short lives. Many young people living in zones of high conflict remain caught in a culture of war, accustomed to cattle looting and banditry to earn money.

With USAID support, youth have received block-making training in Akobo and Pibor in Jonglei state, Nasir in Upper Nile state, Panyijar and Mayendit in Unity state, Tonj East in Warrap state, and Rumbek North in Lakes state. In addition to providing the youth with equipment to start their own businesses, they have been hired to produce blocks for USAID-funded infrastructure projects in the region.

“The sense of pride is palpable,” O’Brien said. “When you visit a place like Akobo, the people say, ‘We built this ourselves!’”

At a ceremony launching the refurbished Akobo County headquarters in October 2010, Commissioner Goi Jooyul Yol said, “[This] is not only a sign of stability, but a sign of hope for many youth who used their energy to mold blocks rather than engaging in cattle rustling.”

“We are really digging deep into our soil,” said one young man who worked on the project, “and building peace in Akobo now.” ■

DARFUR'S WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

By Angela Stephens

Eight years ago, Darfur was one of the most unstable corners of Sudan—and the world. Though insecurity continues in some areas, USAID is now capitalizing on pockets of opportunity where security and access permit its partners to support a wide array of community-led, early-recovery activities to help Darfuris rebuild their lives.

SINCE CONFLICT erupted in Darfur in 2003, between 1.9 million and 2.7 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Now, in some areas, many are returning home.

Individuals displaced from Nyoro, West Darfur, began voluntarily returning in early 2011. To assist their reintegration into their communities, USAID, since early April, has supported returnees with building materials for shelters and household latrines, while educating the community about proper hygiene.

The Agency is also supporting training for returnees to acquire skills such as masonry—providing valuable expertise that can be used immediately in rebuilding the war-torn region.

“Life as a displaced person is difficult, we brought nothing,” said one mother of five children. “We were forced to depend on others for food and other necessities for survival. Now we have returned back to our village, Nyoro, and everything has been destroyed.” USAID’s partner organization, she explained, “has been here

to help us rebuild our shelters and help us build our own latrines.”

As a leading donor, USAID has provided more than \$2.7 billion in emergency food and other lifesaving assistance in Darfur since the conflict began in 2003. And although insecurity and violence continue in parts of Sudan’s vast western region, relative stability in



A woman carries water in Abu Shook camp for internally displaced persons near El Fasher.

others has allowed the Agency to expand support to community-led, early-recovery programs. Defined as the stage between humanitarian relief and long-term recovery, early-recovery activities—in agriculture and food security; shelter; economic recovery; and water, sanitation, and hygiene—help Darfuris rebuild livelihoods by giving them the tools they need to increase their economic independence.

“Armed clashes, generalized insecurity, and bureaucratic impediments continue to restrict access to parts of Darfur,” said Tahir Ali, USAID’s senior humanitarian adviser in Sudan. “But there are other areas, including in and around the major urban centers, where the great majority of internally displaced persons are located, that are stable, secure, and accessible for humanitarian and development workers. We can make a real difference by seizing opportunities in these parts of Darfur to assist people to re-establish productive and self-sufficient lives, helping them recover from the negative impacts of conflict, and avoid dependency on relief aid.”

TO IMPROVE food security while supporting the development of a local seed market, USAID partners have moved from direct distribution of seeds to the promotion of seed fairs, where farmers use vouchers to buy from local vendors. This allows them to obtain seeds for planting while supporting the local economy.

Through humanitarian partners, the Agency stimulates markets by rehabilitating critical transport roads and providing support to micro-entrepreneurs. This includes vocational training in computer and mechanic skills that are in high demand in the area.

To increase the resiliency of Darfuri livestock owners and improve the health of their herds, USAID partners train community animal-health workers and help them build water troughs for animals.

USAID is exploring a variety of ways to support water projects in Darfur. At the United Nations-sponsored Darfur International Conference on Water for Sustainable Peace in Khartoum in late June, Ambassador Dane Smith, the U.S. senior adviser for Darfur, announced that USAID intends to contribute a further \$2 million for water projects in the region on top of approximately \$14.9 million in fiscal year 2011 funding for programs supporting improved access to clean water.

While water has been a significant source of conflict and contributes to population movement in Darfur, experts stress that the problem is not a lack of water, but rather that water is often not where people need it. Conflict displaced much of Darfur's rural population, shifting thousands of people to towns where water demand is now concentrated, but where there is too little water for the people's basic needs.

USAID has helped construct hand-dug wells as water sources for household and livestock use, *hafirs* (reservoirs) for agricultural use, and sub-surface dams where access to safe drinking water through boreholes or hand-dug wells is limited. USAID is also rehabilitating water yards—organized, fenced locations with boreholes, pumps, tanks,

taps, and troughs—providing individuals and livestock access to safe water.

Communities are taught how to harvest rainwater, and how to repair, rehabilitate, and maintain boreholes, hand-dug wells, and hand pumps. Other partners have connected urban water systems to outlying rural areas in need of a regular source of clean water.

USAID IS ALSO exploring possibilities for boosting the gum arabic industry in Darfur. Gum arabic, the dried sap of the *Acacia senegal* tree, is used in

that produce gum arabic, annual crops, and livestock can be financially and environmentally sustainable family enterprises. The report derived from a request by the governor of South Darfur, who was seeking ways to rehabilitate the gum arabic production in his jurisdiction—the center of the Darfur region's gum arabic industry.

It is initiatives like this that comprise a new USAID focus on community-led, early-recovery programs and activities for the region, where pockets of stability, and hence, opportunity,

have begun to appear. They come eight years after war between armed opposition groups and Sudanese government forces and allied militia created a humanitarian crisis affecting more than 4.7 million people.

“While USAID remains committed to providing basic services and goods to Darfuris tragically affected by fighting and conflict, we are also actively pursuing the growing windows

of opportunity to help jumpstart livelihoods and invigorate markets, where security conditions and the capacity of humanitarian partners to support community efforts are strong,” said Christa Capozzola, USAID deputy assistant administrator in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. “We want to focus these efforts to help the people of Darfur to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development.” ■



Photo by Oumar M'bareck, USAID
A woman uses a hand pump in a Kassab camp for internally displaced persons near Kutum.

pharmaceutical, industrial, and food products, including soft drinks and confections. It keeps sugar uniformly suspended in carbonated drinks, binds newspaper ink to paper, and is used as a coating on medications.

On June 26 in Khartoum, USAID, the World Bank, and South Darfur's Ministry of Agriculture and Forests held a workshop to discuss a new report financed by USAID and the World Bank, which concludes that medium-sized farms in South Darfur



Esther Dima Kidden, an agriculture extension officer in Yei County, South Sudan, uses her foot to measure correct spacing between newly planted maize crops for the Ngakoyi Farmers Group.

Photo by Redento Tombe

By Astrid R.N. Haas and Sarah Armstrong

DESPITE SOUTH Sudan's severe poverty, lack of infrastructure, almost total economic reliance on the oil sector, and a nearly complete absence of private sector employment, the new nation has a very important and promising asset—vast amounts of uncultivated, arable land with excellent potential for agricultural productivity.

Though larger in land mass than France, only 4 percent of South Sudan is currently being cultivated, according to Anne Itto, South Sudan's caretaker minister of agriculture and forestry.

Agricultural yield per hectare for cereals (maize, sorghum, millet, and rice) averages only approximately 0.5 metric tons in South Sudan. In comparison, the average yield in Africa is more than 1 ton per hectare, and more than 2.3 tons per hectare in South Africa and South Asia.

By improving productivity and expanding the area under cultivation,

SOUTH

Can tapping

the new government aims to raise annual staple-food crop production from 700,000 metric tons to more than 1 million metric tons by 2013, which would enable South Sudan to reach near self-sufficiency. Neighboring Uganda produced 1.3 million metric tons of maize and 0.5 million metric tons of sorghum in 2009.

Both the South Sudan Government and USAID see agriculture as one of the keys to diversifying South Sudan's economy, raising household incomes, and improving food security. And the agriculture sector is one of the Agency's priorities for investment and collaboration with the South Sudanese, other donors, and the private sector.

"Agriculture will increasingly be a focus of USAID assistance to South Sudan going forward," said USAID/South Sudan Mission Director Kevin Mullally. "The potential is great for this assistance to transform South Sudan's economy and bring many people out of poverty because South Sudan remains an agrarian society, with the vast majority of the population engaged in agriculture to some extent."

What's more, he says, is that agriculture assistance can ensure a sustainable domestic food supply, reducing the need for expensive imports and international aid.

APPROXIMATELY 85 percent of South Sudanese rely on agriculture for

(approximately \$262 million), half of which was fresh vegetables that could be grown locally.

The agriculture sector's potential has not been fully harnessed for several reasons.

Farmers often had to flee their homes during the nearly quarter century of fighting, so traditional farming knowledge that would have been passed down to the next generation was lost. Moreover, large-scale or commercial farming never took root.

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that officially ended the war between northern and southern Sudan brought more than 2 million South Sudanese refugees home, but uncertainty about security and the investment climate continued to hamper investment in agriculture. Additionally, the vast majority of South Sudanese farmers who are growing only enough food for their own families lack quality seeds and tools and have limited knowledge about farming techniques, irrigation methods, and how to reduce post-harvest losses.

economic growth team leader, "are to begin laying the groundwork for a transformation in agricultural practices. Current practices are extremely rudimentary. Many farmers do not even have access to an ox plow, and very few have any experience with quality seeds, soil fertility practices, or pest management. This is due in part to a near-complete lack of a functional agricultural private sector.

"We therefore hope to first introduce the concept of utilizing commercial farming inputs, then work to facilitate the establishment of seed companies, agro-dealers, commercial farmer-based organizations, and consolidators who can both provide inputs to improve productivity and serve as extension agents."

To do so, the program is training farmers and working with farmer associations and agriculture extension officers. In addition, in February 2011, USAID distributed 75 metric tons of improved maize and sorghum seeds to 132 of these farmers' groups, benefiting 19,000 people.

"This is just the first small step in a much broader program that we hope

SUDAN'S GREENBELT

agriculture assets become the new nation's economic elixir?

their livelihood, yet almost all are subsistence farmers. Hence, much of the food found in South Sudan's urban markets is imported from Uganda, Kenya, and other countries, resulting in higher food prices for the population. In the last three years, South Sudan imports of agricultural produce averaged 700 million Sudanese pounds

In May 2010, USAID launched a program to revitalize South Sudan's "greenbelt" zone of the three Equatoria states—Western, Central, and Eastern Equatoria. These states have high agriculture potential with two reliable rainy seasons and fertile soil.

"The goals of the program," said David Gosney, USAID/South Sudan's

will help address issues ranging from key policy reform, development of needed research and human capacity, establishment of agribusiness, and outreach to farmers," Gosney says.

USAID will help lay the platform for transforming the agriculture sector and increasing agricultural trade, which in

continued on p. 26

Q&A with Bill Hammink, Former Mission Director to Sudan



Photo by USAID

Bill Hammink was USAID's last mission director to a unified Sudan. He held the post from March 2009 to July 2011, just after South Sudan became the world's newest country. Hammink is a career Senior Foreign Service Officer with more than 30 years at USAID working on international development and humanitarian programs. His previous posts include stints in USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade as deputy assistant administrator and in the Office of Food for Peace as its director. He also served as mission director in Ethiopia from 2003 to 2006. In late August, he began a new post as mission director to India.

FRONTLINES: What makes Sudan unique from the other places you've lived and worked?

BILL HAMMINK: Sudan, which is, of course, now two countries, was a truly unique experience because you had a situation where after almost three decades of civil war, there was an internationally accepted Comprehensive Peace Agreement [CPA] signed and approved by both sides, the north and the south in 2005. The CPA, witnessed by major international powers and international organizations, laid the framework for all of the processes leading up to the elections and the southern referendum, and the outcome of the referendum, which was an independent South Sudan.

And so it was a situation where we were working both diplomacy and development to implement the CPA. And at

the same time, we were working closely with the government in the north on implementing the Darfur peace agreement and trying to find ways to support a peaceful settlement in Darfur and expand our assistance from solely humanitarian to recovery programs.

What made Sudan especially unique was the fact that, under the CPA, there were two governments and two systems within one country. There was one USAID mission, although we had two big offices working with two separate governments.

FL: Looking back on your more than two years as mission director in Sudan, what do you see as USAID's main accomplishments there?

Hammink: I would say the major accomplishment for USAID was a peaceful, on-time, and internationally

accepted referendum for the people of South Sudan.

And the main instrument in the peace accord, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, was in fact the right of the people of Southern Sudan to decide what their future would be. It was a process of self-determination. That was a true highlight.

At the same time, USAID managed a major development program in the South since the CPA was signed in 2005, and we had some really exciting accomplishments as an agency. One was in building the capacity of the Government of Southern Sudan, which basically started from scratch in 2005.

In 2011, when the CPA came to an end and the referendum was held, it was a government with ministries with a legal framework and procedures—very nascent, but which had started from scratch.

USAID contributed a lot in capacity building, institutional development, building procedures, all working toward international standards. For example, USAID supported the Ministry of Finance to establish a Financial Management Information System, which allowed accountability and transparency across the board for their budget.

FL: What do you think it means for the United States and for Africa that this referendum went through so peacefully?

Hamminck: In the '70s and in the '80s in Sudan, there were peace agreements that were signed between the south and the north, but each time they broke down. So for the United States and for Africa, this was both an end of a decades-long process, not only of civil war but of a peace process. It was also the end of six years of working together under the CPA and reaching a point where you not only had the peaceful and on-time referendum, but agreement by all sides and the international community on the outcome and legitimacy of the referendum.

FL: How has USAID responded to conflict that erupted in Abyei in May, and in Southern Kordofan in June, displacing tens of thousands of people?

Hamminck: First a little background: As part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it was agreed that there would be a similar referendum for self-determination that would happen concurrently in Abyei—a small area right between the north and the south that has been under dispute for decades, even under the British.

Unfortunately, the north and south could not agree on who could vote. So after the referendum in the south, the situation in Abyei had gotten worse due to uncertainty. There were a few unfortunate incidents between the militaries of the two sides. The Sudan armed forces sent their forces into Abyei, and the people of Abyei fled to the south, leaving a very large number of internally displaced people, or IDPs, in Southern Sudan.

There wasn't a lot of fighting, but the population was hugely affected. USAID quickly mobilized and provided support to the U.N. agencies and to local and international NGOs working in support of those IDPs.

Luckily, those actors had prepositioned a lot of emergency assistance in that general area, including food aid, tents, tarps, and other types of emergency assistance. So within a week, they had gotten out there, and a lot of that assistance came from USAID.

FL: Some people have expressed concern that with South Sudan's independence, attention has been lost on Darfur, where conflict continues more than eight years after it began. Does South Sudan's independence change the situation for Darfur, and is USAID's approach to Darfur changing?

Hamminck: Darfur presents to the United States a very complex and difficult situation and USAID's position vis-a-vis Darfur is definitely changing. Since last year, I think there's more emphasis on supporting recovery-type programming in Darfur ([see article on page 14](#)) and not solely humanitarian assistance or life-saving support for

people in camps, even though ensuring that internally displaced people in camps have the necessary humanitarian, life-saving support is still a focus.

FL: Could you just give a few brief examples of what type of recovery programs we are talking about?

Hamminck: Yes, we're talking about agriculture; talking about seeds; talking about support for new technology; fixing schools and water points. Where it makes sense and is the right thing to do, we're talking about supporting local reconciliation and local groups that want to work together. We're talking about fixing local clinics so that people can have access to health care. So it's a broad range of recovery development programs, but it's still very basic because there's just very little there now.

FL: Along those lines, can you describe the base line at which we are developing in South Sudan?

Hamminck: There's a major need for infrastructure across the board in South Sudan. Most countries, when they come out of conflict or post-conflict, you talk about reconstruction, whereas in South Sudan, you're really talking about construction. There was so little investment there over the decades since independence, that they have almost nothing.

USAID is building the first major tarmac road in all of South Sudan. South Sudan is about the size of France, and if you can imagine no tarmac roads outside of a few of the cities... The road we're building is 192

continued on p. 27

BABY STEPS IN ONE OF THE WORST PLACES FOR MOTHERS



Photo by Cliff Lubitz, USAID

The most critical intervention for safe deliveries in South Sudan is ensuring a competent health worker is present at every birth. Pictured: a South Sudanese midwife.

By Erin Polich

SUZANNA ILE is a 26-year-old woman from Lokiliri Payam in South Sudan. She lost her first two babies in childbirth. During her third pregnancy, a community midwife at the Lokiliri Primary Health Care Centre, a facility supported by USAID, diagnosed her high-risk pregnancy after identifying her contracted pelvis.

Without access to emergency services and a facility capable of performing a Caesarean section, the midwife knew Ile would likely lose her third child as

well. A contracted pelvis often results in obstructed labor, fistula, postpartum hemorrhage, or the death of the infant or mother.

Labor complications like Ile's are common throughout South Sudan, which is one of the world's most dangerous places to become a mother. With 2,056 maternal deaths per every 100,000 live births, according to the 2006 Sudan Household Health Survey, South Sudan's maternal mortality ratio is among the highest in the world.

Few pregnant women have access to adequate antenatal care and labor-and-delivery services in the fledgling

nation, which represents little change from the years before South Sudan gained independence in July. The single most critical intervention for safe motherhood is ensuring a competent health worker is present at every birth. Yet, many midwives and other maternal and neonatal care providers in South Sudan lack the training required to identify high-risk pregnancies and to perform simple lifesaving procedures at the time of delivery.

The next most critical intervention is the supply of appropriate drugs. Shortages of essential medicines and health supplies are common at South

Sudanese health facilities, including drugs for antenatal care and for controlling bleeding during and after delivery. Having emergency obstetric care in place and the transport to get there are the final steps to saving lives. However, in South Sudan, only the most fortunate women are able to reach emergency obstetric care services due to the country's dearth of good roads and public transportation. Because basic and emergency obstetric care is so lacking, less than one-half of one percent of pregnancies are delivered via Caesarean section—the lowest rate in Africa.

Without skilled birth attendants, life-saving drugs, transportation, or accessible emergency obstetric care, many women have no options if their deliveries become perilous.

ALTHOUGH DECADES of civil war badly degraded much of South Sudan's health care services, efforts in the past six years by the Ministry of Health and its health development partners such as USAID have improved infant and child survival rates.

Even before independence, over the past five years USAID/South Sudan's health programs concentrated on a small set of high-impact maternal and child health services using simple, cost-effective prevention and treatment measures to counter the most common illnesses or causes of deaths. The high-impact child health services translated into significant gains. The under-5 child mortality rate declined by roughly 22 percent between 2006 and 2010.

Sadly, during the same time period, the best efforts of the South Sudanese public health sector and its partners did not result in the same strides in reducing maternal and newborn mortality,

which is defined as death within the first 28 days after birth.

Recognizing this challenge as particularly stubborn, the new Republic of South Sudan has made reducing maternal and neonatal mortality one of its top priorities with a new focus on a basic package of primary health-care services—those that have the highest impact.

Responding to this new focused approach, USAID is partnering with the Ministry of Health and coordinating closely with other health development partners to address the root causes of maternal mortality and newborn deaths. There has been modest progress. By delivering equipment for labor and delivery wards, improving availability of essential antenatal care and maternal health drugs, training health-care providers in detecting high-risk pregnancies and other danger signs, and strengthening the quality of care in health facilities like Lokiliri, USAID is working on behalf of women like Ile to build the capacity of South Sudan's health system.

"Furthering the recent gains made in child health while addressing the root causes impeding improvement of survival rates of pregnant women and mothers is the top objective of the Health Office of USAID/South Sudan, as it is for the new Republic of South Sudan," said USAID/South Sudan Senior Health Adviser Pamela Teichman.

One of those impediments is a wary population's skepticism of such services. In South Sudan, a hospital visit to give birth is an anomaly. Over 85 percent of women deliver their babies at home. And of this great majority, only 10 percent are cared for by skilled health personnel.

"Women's concerns about quality, cleanliness, lack of privacy and cost of

maternal health services are among their reasons for not going to health facilities," said Cliff Lubitz, USAID/South Sudan's health team leader. "Lack of transportation is also a huge barrier to obtaining antenatal check-ups and emergency obstetric care."

On the ground, USAID and its partners are working specifically to address women's concerns. This includes reducing cost concerns by promoting free health services; reducing perceptions of poor service quality by training health-care providers and ensuring drug availability; and mobilizing and educating the community by enabling community leaders and health officials to take the lead in generating demand for more and better health services.

In practice, it works like this: Worried about losing a third baby, Suzanna Ile learns about alternative delivery options during an antenatal care visit to a USAID-trained midwife working at the Lokiliri Centre. Acting on the advice of the midwife, she chooses to deliver by Caesarean section at Juba Teaching and Referral Hospital, and her son, Modi, is now a healthy 2-year-old.

Offering advice to other women in her community, Ile says: "To the ones who prefer delivery on their own, [a hospital delivery] is their chance [for a safe delivery if complications arise]."

USAID/South Sudan now intends to intensify its use of high-impact, low-cost, evidence-based interventions for better maternal, neonatal, and infant health outcomes.

The Agency is joining with the South Sudan Ministry of Health to meet its goal of reducing maternal and under-5 mortality by 20 percent within the first three years of statehood by more aggressively addressing the main killers of mothers and newborns. ■

A herd of white-eared kob runs across an expanse of what is now South Sudan.

Photo by Paul Elkan, Wildlife Conservation Society



Centuries-Old Wildlife Migration Untouched by Decades of War

By Angela Rucker

Elephants, giraffe, buffalo, and the white-eared kob have roamed South Sudan's bucolic regions in vast numbers for years. Last year, a USAID-backed mapping project revealed that their centuries-old migration was untouched by 22 years of war. The finding has also helped to dramatically raise the country's wildlife profile.

WHILE THE people around them battled in Sudan's 22-year war, the white-eared kob followed the seasonal migration corridors that their ancestors likely pounded for centuries. And that is what saved their lives.

Elephants, giraffe, buffalo, and antelope species like the white-eared kob have roamed South Sudan's bucolic regions in vast numbers for years. But it wasn't until a USAID-backed mapping project—that began in 2007 and

whose results were published in 2010—that anyone knew for certain that those animals survived a war that killed an estimated 2 million people.

Many did. Now the challenge is keeping them alive.

“The irony is that, during the war, some of the animal natural resources actually fared OK,” said David Gosney, team leader for economic growth at USAID/South Sudan. “But as South Sudan starts to develop, the threats are going to increase.”

Now that South Sudan is a newly independent country, it is facing monumental challenges. And while protecting wildlife may not seem like a top priority compared with other weighty issues, the subject has nonetheless attracted high-level interest – and support.

“South Sudan relies almost entirely on oil revenue to fund its budget and all its expenditures,” Gosney said. “Over time they really need to capture and develop their resources in other areas, and this includes South Sudan’s rich biodiversity.”

On July 6, just three days before the country celebrated its independence, USAID, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the South Sudan government opened new headquarters for Badingilo National Park in Central and Eastern Equatoria, just two hours’ drive from the capital of Juba, which will serve as a showcase for South Sudanese wildlife. It was just late last year that wildlife and development experts along with South Sudanese officials discovered just how impressive that habitat remains.

WCS calls the 200,000-square-kilometer Boma-Jonglei landscape in South Sudan the largest, substantially intact wildlife habitat in East Africa. In addition to animals, the region includes high altitude plateaus, wooded and grassland savannas, and wetlands. It has the potential to rival the famed Serengeti of East Africa, says James Deutsch, executive director for Africa Programs for WCS.

WCS partnered with USAID and South Sudan on the mapping project.

The three-year, \$14 million effort documented the numbers and types of wildlife in the Boma-Jonglei landscape—first with men in trucks, then airplanes, and eventually satellites and GPS tracking equipment—creating a road map for conservation and land use.

The region is home to what many believe is the world’s greatest mammal migrations. Many feared war would decimate this age-old cycle, but the project estimates that today there are 1.2 million white-eared kob, tiang, Mongalla gazelle, reedbeek, and other animals and birds roaming the region.

The USAID-funded Boma-Jonglei-Equatoria Landscape Program now is turning its focus to find the best ways to protect the region’s plant and animal life, and to provide for as many as

17 ethnic groups that rely on the region for their livelihoods. It is looking at ways to strengthen national and local government offices, civil society organizations, and local community groups to manage the landscape sustainably, reduce conflict, and improve security.

ably, reduce conflict, and improve security.

“This is a great window of opportunity to address the root causes of many of the threats to land, security, natural resources, and biodiversity,” said Daniel Wani, South Sudan’s undersecretary for the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism.

“It is critical,” he added, “that pragmatic conservation, land-use planning, and sustainable development objectives and approaches be integrated into the reconstruction and development

agenda. This will help us achieve peace dividends and long-lasting benefits for the people of South Sudan.”

WCS’s Deutsch agreed that South Sudan’s wildlife and natural resources are “vital” to the country’s future, but added that the risks to those natural resources are “significant and increasing.”

Oil and timber companies are eager to come into the country and exploit the natural resources. Not only would they extract or cut the products they need, the companies would need to build roads and other infrastructure in or near the landscape.

“Across Africa we have seen an escalation in the illegal international trade in ivory over the past few years, and this has escalated the poaching threat to elephants immensely,” Deutsch added. “Meanwhile, the rehabilitation of Southern Sudan’s infrastructure, returning of displaced people, combined with proliferation of small arms, has increased the threat.”

That could bring the kind of trouble to South Sudan’s white-eared kob that it and its animal brothers and sisters were able to avoid for two decades.

The white-eared kob was among the featured animals in National Geographic Channel’s *Great Migrations*, a seven-part series that showed the journeys of a variety of creatures as they follow patterns that ensure their species will survive. The shows first aired in fall 2010 and clips remain available online.

The TV series and article in *National Geographic* magazine that talked about Sudan raised the profile of the country’s wildlife.

“It was largely due to this project,” said USAID’s Gosney, who calls the reams of data the project generated

MORE ONLINE

See the *National Geographic series and a USAID blog at www.usaid.gov/frontlines.*

Photo by Julie Larsen Maher, Wildlife Conservation Society



critical to its success. “The discovery (of animals untouched by war) by the project in a sense really began the process of putting us back on the radar screen.”

Land-use plans developed by the project will help guide the government in its next steps to manage the sensitive areas with care. The project continues to document wildlife in the landscape as well as provide training to rangers and build necessary infrastructure such as ranger housing and training centers.

Another key to protecting the region—the people who call it home—already appears to be in place.

“The people and leaders of South Sudan... have been supportive and

enthusiastic about conserving their natural resources and telling the world about their wildlife even before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005,” said Deutsch.

Gosney tells the story of a USAID colleague who took a flight over Boma-Jonglei with a colleague from South Sudan. The Sudanese man broke into tears. “It was such a sense of pride and ownership in seeing it that it really affected him. It was an area that he grew up in,” Gosney said.

“The idea,” he said, “is to work with the communities around the park to feel real ownership and benefit from its creation. There’s a real desire to do the right thing.”

In addition to agricultural development, ecotourism is the income-generating idea that is moving the fastest. Some high-end tour companies are already making plans to come into South Sudan.

Such efforts have proved successful in other African nations, including in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, and Namibia, said Deutsch.

“The challenge of balancing livestock and agricultural development, petroleum and mineral development, and landscape and wildlife conservation is substantial in South Sudan,” he added, “but we are confident that this ... new nation can learn valuable lessons from the past 20 years in Africa.” ■

South Sudan's Greenbelt

continued from p. 17

turn should lead to higher rural incomes, improved food security, and better economic opportunities for the poor.

James Sworo, chairman of the Julukita farmer association in Kajo Keji, Central Equatoria state, participated in one of the USAID-funded training workshops. When he arrived, he was like most other South Sudanese farmers who traditionally plant numerous seeds—as many as 10 in each hole—due to their low germination rates. During the training workshop, however, Sworo learned the seeds from USAID were of higher quality. They also had been treated with insecticides and fungicides.

Sworo set aside half a feddan (0.42 hectares) to test the seeds and follow the instructions from the training. Two months later, the difference was clear—the maize planted from improved seeds was growing higher and healthier than in the other feddans. The results convinced Sworo to fully adopt the one-seed-per-hole rule next season.

“We can stop importing food from Uganda by increasing the food we produce,” Sworo said. “Then we can start selling food to them.”

Esther Dima Kidden, an agriculture extension officer in Yei County, Central Equatoria state, arrived at a USAID-sponsored training with a newborn baby on her back. Despite the responsibilities of motherhood, Kidden has become one of the most successful extension workers in the program. In the past year, she has worked with more

than 300 farmers in her county, and has cultivated at least half a feddan with other farmers to help them practice the new techniques and best practices she teaches them.

Women are a particular focus of USAID's agriculture efforts as they produce most of Africa's food. “It is



Photo by Redento Tombe

Farmer James Sworo with the maize he planted two months previously in Kajo Keji County, South Sudan.

the smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, who will determine whether or not this effort succeeds,” USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah said during a visit to South Sudan in May.

USAID is promoting women's livelihoods through training and the formation of women's farmer organizations—there are now 10. USAID is also tracking how training is benefiting women.

But for smallholder farmers, including women, to improve their

productivity and income, they need a commercial structure to link to.

In May, USAID, the Netherlands, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, and the International Fertilizer Development Center signed a communiqué agreeing to help develop South Sudan's commercial agriculture sector in collaboration with the government.

Workshops have already been held to craft an outline for a national program to promote commercialization of agriculture and enhanced food security. Plans are in the works to launch a campaign to highlight agricultural opportunities for smallholder farmers and to roll out a voucher program to provide up to 200,000 farmers with high-yielding seeds and fertilizers.

A U.S.-South Sudan partnership in higher education will produce graduates trained in agriculture, support and develop knowledge through research and testing, and create a quality university-based outreach program that addresses South Sudan's long-term agricultural and natural resource-management needs. Participating schools are the University of Juba, Virginia State University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), and Catholic University of Sudan.

“Higher education in agriculture in South Sudan is experiencing tremendous challenges, including lack of equipment and laboratories for soil and water sciences, lack of qualified instructors, and no collaborative research with international and regional partner institutions,” said Ambassador R. Barrie

Walkley, the U.S. consul general in South Sudan. “We must all work together to help address some of these issues, including post-conflict reconstruction and development.”

USAID is also working with Citibank, the International Finance Corporation, the Corporate Council on Africa, and others to help the new nation market and attract private capital and investors in key sectors, including agriculture. The Agency will partner with the World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, and Japan to organize sector-specific private investor conferences, including one on agriculture.

“Developing a vibrant agriculture industry in South Sudan is critical to moving this war-decimated country down the path toward recovery and, eventually, prosperity,” said David Hughes, chief of party of the USAID-funded Food, Agribusiness, and Rural Markets (FARM) Project. “Agricultural revitalization does not entail any single project, but encompasses everything from building farming skills, to securing high-quality tools and materials, to working with the private sector to develop markets, to cultivating a knowledge base and infrastructure to ensure that progress is sustained.” ■

Hammink

continued from p. 19

kilometers between Juba, the new capital of South Sudan, and the Ugandan border.

The Agency also constructed about 262 kilometers of all-weather road in Western Equatoria state which has made a huge impact on the security there, as well as allowing agriculture

products to be marketed. We put in three electrical systems in three different market towns and we contributed significantly to the water system in Juba itself.

Juba, which is now a nation’s capital, was basically still a garrison town in 2005, meaning the armed forces from the north still controlled Juba. And it didn’t change hands to the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) until after the peace agreement was signed in 2005. At that time, nearly all the infrastructure—the sewer system, the electrical system, the water system, and the road system—dated back to pre-independence days before 1956. During the time of the wars and between the wars, there was very little investment there.

So again, not only is South Sudan starting from scratch in terms of the institutions and new government and a new legal framework, but also in terms of infrastructure.

FL: What are some of the most affecting memories or experiences you take away from your time in Sudan?

Hammink: I’d definitely say it was Independence Day when I was up on the stands with other diplomats and VIPs and looking out and seeing over a hundred thousand South Sudanese. When the flag was raised on South Sudan for the first time, you could just feel the earth trembling. People were clapping and shaking and jumping around. And, you know, there was just this palpable excitement in the air.

Another important memory was when Administrator [Rajiv] Shah came and visited some agriculture fields. He was talking to the farmers,

local officials, and the minister of agriculture, making it clear the high level of interest USAID had in supporting agriculture to improve food security but also to diversify the economy and make a transformational change in agriculture. He made it clear to the government and people of Southern Sudan that USAID intended to be a major and transformational partner to expand agriculture in Southern Sudan, which has so much potential.

FL: Are you optimistic for the future of Sudan and South Sudan?

Hammink: I’m cautiously optimistic. Clearly, change is going to take time, especially when only 15 or 20 percent of the population are literate, especially when they have some of the worst health—maternal and child mortality—statistics in the world.

But the Sudanese people are incredibly gracious. They’re incredibly interested in improving their livelihoods, improving their situation, and I think the excitement from the whole referendum, the independence, will now lead over in the south to doing the right thing in terms of the policies for health care and for education, for accountability and transparency, for anti-corruption. But clearly the jury’s out.

It’s a brand-new country, and they’ve only had five years of trying to put in systems and institutions and procedures, and train people to make it work. And so it’s going to take a lot of continued partnership and support from the international community and from USAID. ■

MESSAGE FROM
USAID's Education Chief

READY TO ENGAGE: Agency Education Strategy Set to Take Off

By RICHARD WHELDEN

AFTER 30 YEARS at USAID, one gets the opportunity to participate in dozens of incredible ventures. But it is my newest role as director of education for which I have the highest hopes.

With USAID's 50th anniversary soon approaching, it is exciting to look back at all of the amazing education programs that have been completed, and even more exciting to look forward to the ones we have planned.

The ability to change a life through education is one of the most critical skills that USAID can support. Reading is the single most important skill in early education and provides a child with an opening to a world of knowledge and greater economic and developmental opportunities. Education doesn't stop with literacy: preparing our students for success in the workforce is equally important, as is ensuring that everyone, even those in remote parts of the world or places affected by conflict, have access to education.

In fact, these three ideas—literacy, workforce development, and access to



Richard Whelden is director of the Agency's Office of Education.

education for all—are the three goals of USAID's new Education Strategy. I am proud of the strategy and the hard work done by USAID's education staff across the Agency who made it come to life. The strategy provides us with three critical goals with measurable deliverables expected by 2015. My focus, and that of all the USAID education community, will be to reach these goals.

Additionally, the upcoming launch of the Education Grand Challenge and the Mobiles for Education Coalition (see article on page 38), are two new critical USAID programs that will challenge us to innovate, coordinate, and champion education at USAID.

We will also be concentrating on the creation of an Education Community of Practice both inside USAID and through external opportunities, linking us closer to the global education community, enabling us to work smarter and more effectively with other donors, the private sector, governments, higher edu-

cation, education NGOs, implementers, students, teachers, parents and others to create a community that stimulates thought-leadership, that celebrates innovation, that creates sustainable solutions, and that ultimately helps us reach the ambitious goals we have set for education.

This edition of *Frontlines* was an excellent opportunity for us to showcase just a few of the

MORE ONLINE

For more on USAID's work in education and to read the new strategy see: www.usaid.gov/our_work/education_and_universities/

projects and activities that highlight our new strategy, where it will lead us, and the lives we are impacting along the way. Some of the topics include higher education, mobile technology, and school safety.

For Goal 1, increasing literacy and reading of 100 million children in primary school by 2015, we look at early

grade reading in Egypt and Nicaragua.

For Goal 2, workforce development and higher education, we explore projects in Algeria, El Salvador, and Mexico (see articles on pages 40 and 44).

For Goal 3, ensuring access to education in conflict and crisis countries, we highlight work in South Sudan. Don't miss the amazing additional

articles on education available in the online edition of *FrontLines*, including articles on: Green Schools in Kosovo, workforce skills-building programs in Armenia and Macedonia, and overcoming disabilities in Uganda. Thanks for taking the time to engage in education! ■



Photo by Hugo González, ACME Producciones

A young student at his school in Santa Cruz del Quiché in Quiché, Guatemala. USAID works with the country's Ministry of Education to improve educational quality, particularly for rural, indigenous students.

USAID's Global Education Footprint Takes Shape

By Mitch Kirby and Garth Willis

CHILDREN IN THE developing world often go to great lengths just to go to school, often commuting miles on foot. Dilapidated schoolhouses, tents, the shade of a tree, or even open fields frequently serve as classrooms. They struggle to finish homework by candlelight—hoping they can find the paper and pencil to finish assignments. Other children cannot attend school due to armed conflict or natural disasters.

So it stands to reason that these courageous efforts to obtain an education should result in becoming literate and having more opportunities. But, the evidence often shows otherwise. Improving access alone does not necessarily lead to improved learning, future opportunities, and career success.

USAID's new Education Strategy, released in February 2011, commits the Agency to ensuring that its education programs deliver measurable and sustainable results and focus squarely on measureable achievement

in the early grades, access to education that has been disrupted due to conflict and crisis, and support for higher education and workforce development.

The five-year strategy lays out a way forward for USAID's education activities that depart from past efforts that

took a more broad-brush approach to education programming. In particular, it provides for measurable, time-bound targets.

THREE GOALS ANCHOR the new strategy. The first goal aims to improve reading skills for 100 million children in the primary grades by 2015; the second goal supports higher education and workforce development to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development; and the third goal seeks to provide equitable access to education for 15 million children and young adults by 2015.

Today, more than 70 million children do not go to school. But there are many millions more who attend school

but are not learning the basic education skills they need to survive in a modern, globalized world. The statistics are jarring. Recent studies found that more than 70 percent of primary school children in Mali, Pakistan, and Peru still cannot read at grade level after having

regularly attended classes. Studies in Mali and Uganda revealed that more than 50 percent of students at the end of grade two could not read even a single word.

"Such problems need to be identified and corrected far earlier," said

Richard Whelden, the new director of USAID's Education Office within the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade. "The new Education Strategy challenges USAID and the donor community to focus not on inputs to school systems," Whelden said, "but on the key outcomes education investments are meant to produce. This principle guides our new strategy as well as the rest of USAID's development agenda."

Rather than focus on getting students to class, the first goal of the strategy addresses the quality of the lessons those children receive as measured by student achievement.

"At the end of the day, to achieve the first goal, the number of teachers we train, the classrooms that get renovated, and the textbooks that get delivered are inconsequential if they cannot be shown to result in children learning," said David Barth, the former director of USAID's Office of Education who helped design the new strategy.

The second strategic goal supports higher education and workforce development, ensuring that students obtain relevant skills as they become adults and go in search of work and careers. As globalization creates an increasing demand for higher-level skills, a growing number of young people in developing countries find themselves without the relevant assets to realize their potential and fully participate in and contribute to economic development.

USAID wants to expand student access to the kinds of skills they will need, particularly by strengthening host-country institutions; improving the relevance of education, training, and applied research; fostering strategic partnerships between U.S. and host

MORE ONLINE

For more on USAID's work in education and to read the new strategy see: www.usaid.gov/our_work/education_and_universities/



Photo by USAID

A teacher in Nicaragua gets involved in the work of a group. She uses materials created by students and hung on the walls of the classroom.

country institutions; and promoting public-private collaborations.

The third goal focuses on providing equitable access to education in environments affected by conflict and crisis for as many as 15 million children and young adults by 2015. Nearly 40 million children do not attend school because they live in countries affected by armed conflict. Millions more have been displaced by either fighting or natural disasters like the flooding that decimated large swaths of Pakistan in the summer of 2010 or the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti earlier that same year. Children who live in lawless and crime-plagued communities also often cannot attend school.

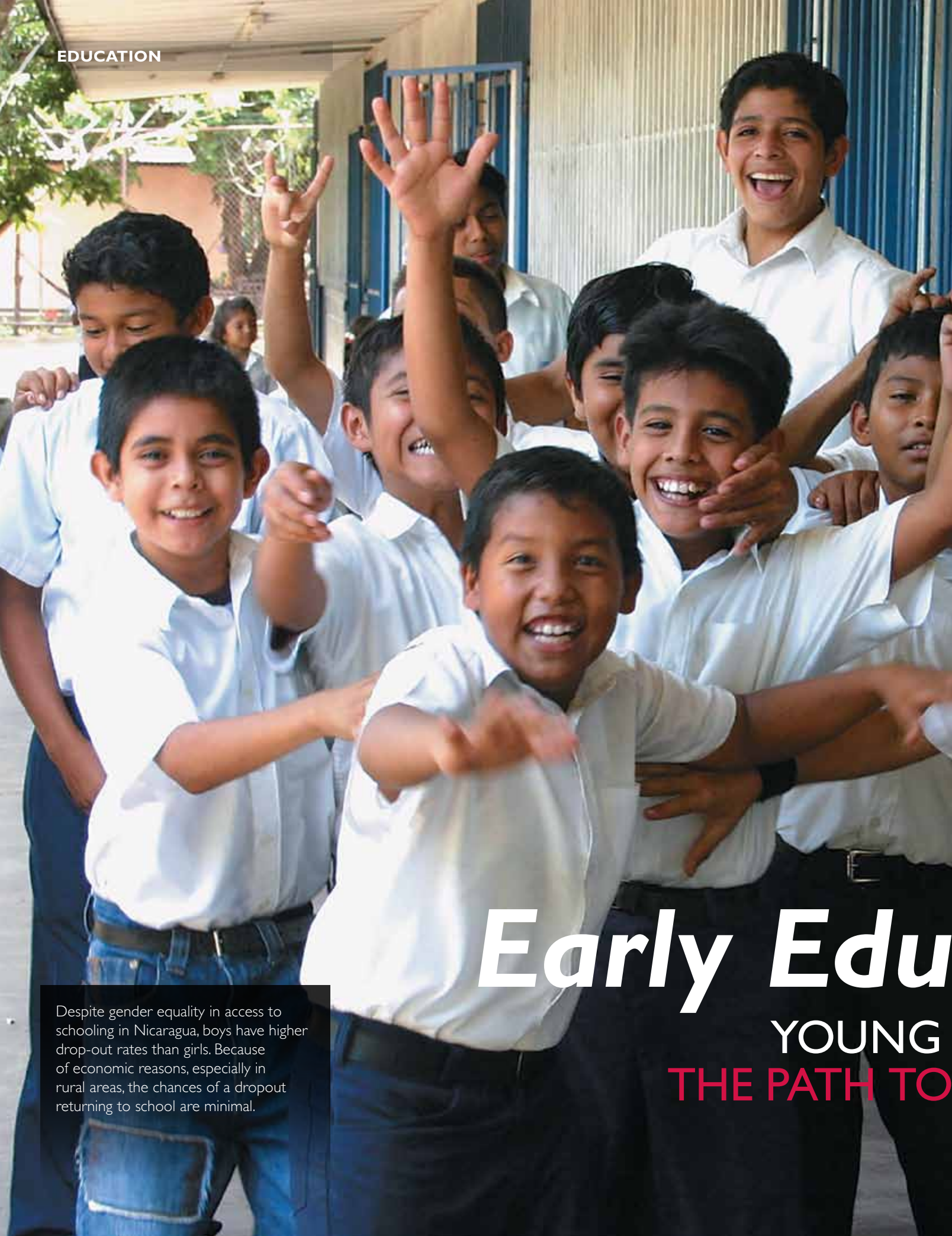
Working directly with these children at the primary or even secondary level of their educations—even in the midst of dire circumstances—has been shown to reduce the likelihood of future conflicts. A growing body of research looking at Rwanda, Kosovo, Nepal, and other countries suggests the inverse—that poor quality education is a contributing factor to outbreaks of conflict.

Improving equitable access represents the commitment of USAID to reach learners in the most challenging and difficult environments and the understanding that it may serve as a first step towards achieving stability. In total, a significant portion of USAID's education programs take place in conflict and crisis-affected

environments. Overall, the new USAID Education Strategy directly responds to the principles of USAID Forward by providing clear focus areas based on evidence of effectiveness.

“USAID's efforts to assess and reshape its education strategy required that we make a number of hard choices regarding program focus. However, I am confident that this more focused strategy, with its increased emphasis on the quality of learning outcomes, equitable access in conflict and crisis contexts, and support for higher education and workforce development will advance the Agency's overall mission to help the next generation in the developing world,” said Whelden. ■

EDUCATION



Early Edu

YOUNG
THE PATH TO

Despite gender equality in access to schooling in Nicaragua, boys have higher drop-out rates than girls. Because of economic reasons, especially in rural areas, the chances of a dropout returning to school are minimal.



Education Sets NICARAGUANS ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS

By Jordi Icaza and Michael Lisman

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD Roberto Rodríguez is trying to read a story about Mary's lost cat. While many of the other kids at his rural school in Nicaragua can easily get through the story and answer questions, Roberto feels like giving up.

The other kids can tell the teacher all about the plot—where the cat was, how they found her, how many kittens she was protecting. Roberto cannot. Unfortunately, Roberto's reading problems are not unique.

While Nicaragua, along with much of Latin America, has made tremendous gains in getting parents to enroll children in school—for example, primary enrollment increased from 75 percent to 87 percent between 2000 and 2009—keeping them there and assuring they learn remain difficult challenges.

The Central American country loses millions of dollars every year due to grade repetition and drop-outs; recent indicators suggest nearly one-third of all Nicaraguan students either repeat or quit the first grade. Research also indicates that illiteracy is closely correlated with these trends. Almost half of Nicaraguan third-graders scored at the lowest levels—earning a 0 or 1 out of a possible 4—on the most recent UNESCO regional literacy achievement test.

Both USAID and the Government of Nicaragua share a commitment to improving reading outcomes in the early grades of primary school.

"Identifying problems in reading and promoting early grade reading is crucial for further educational development," said Richard Whelden, the director of

Photo by USAID



Photo by USAID

A girl in school writes out the words, then draws the concepts. Through fun activities, learning can be made easier.

USAID's Office of Education. "And identifying children who have problems in reading and getting them help before they drop out or fail is the best way to ensure academic success and keep them inside the education system."

As outlined in the new USAID Education Strategy, early grade reading competency is a fundamental building block for retention of students and success in future grades. This is critical for children from poor communities where basic reading skills may be particularly lacking.

According to the strategy, "Early grade reading competency is critical for continued retention and success in future grades.... Children who do not attain reading skills at the primary level are on a lifetime trajectory of limited educational progress and therefore limited economic and developmental opportunity."

USAID's Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) project, which ran from

2007 to 2010, supported Nicaraguan efforts to improve the quality of primary education by helping to detect and correct early grade reading problems that could follow students through school and beyond.

EGRA used a simple written and oral test to assess the extent to which young students learn to read. The assessment identified specific reading challenges—from identifying letters of the alphabet to reading and listening comprehension—and indicated remedial work necessary before the end of the school year. This, in turn, made the crucial difference in learning to read at grade level and helped minimize the risk for repetition or dropout.

Vanessa Castro from Centro de Investigación y Acción Educativa Social, or CIASES, a USAID implementer on education projects, explained: "Reading is key in the learning process; it is key as a social tool to communicate with one

another; it is key to continue learning and have fun and to understand other classes in school."

Over the course of the three-year project, almost 7,000 students in second, third, and fourth grades were tested in Spanish in 126 schools throughout the country using the EGRA tool. While it's not appropriate to directly attribute prevented dropouts to EGRA, the hundreds of Nicaraguans trained in the methodology agree that it provides a critical tool for early identification of children most at risk for falling behind or dropping out.

The Nicaraguan Government also agrees. Throughout the implementation of EGRA, the Nicaragua Ministry of Education worked to integrate its survey tools into its own operations. This included commissioning EGRA-related teacher training workshops and best-practice videos to ensure that primary school teachers used EGRA in the classroom. These tools will help provide an educational safety net to thousands of young Nicaraguan students moving forward.

The Nicaraguan Government has a long tradition of promoting reading improvement at all levels and has recently prioritized early grade reading in its strategic plans and long-term goals, including with its *Batalla por el Primer Grado*, or Battle for First Grade, a campaign designed to have all children reading at grade level by the end of their first year of primary school.

At the 2010 International All Children Reading by 2015 workshop held in Washington, D.C., the Nicaragua Ministry of Education unveiled plans to make EGRA a part of the national assessment system and to train all first-grade teachers to conduct and use EGRA.

Even earlier than EGRA, in 2005, USAID/Nicaragua launched the four-year EXCELENCIA program. The project stressed modern teaching practices, child-centered educational techniques, and community participation to increase student retention and promotion rates at nearly 3,000 schools. At least one school in every municipality in the country, including 100 schools in the underserved, multiethnic autonomous regions on the Atlantic Coast, participated in the project.

Rather than focusing on repetition as a learning base, as is common in many schools in Nicaragua, the EXCELENCIA program used the “Learn, Practice and Apply” method—*APA* in Spanish, which relies on building students’ competencies through applied learning rather than memorization. On any given day, children in EXCELENCIA schools might be conducting experiments with household goods, learning about the environment

by visiting a local river, or improving math skills by simulating market visits.

The project, which worked with over 3,000 grade schools and covered nearly half of grade school students—established a mentoring program whereby schools successfully implementing the program were paired with non-participating schools to assist them in applying the same methodologies.

According to the closing report from the EXCELENCIA Project, data suggest notable gains in cognitive ability amongst children enrolled in EXCELENCIA schools, as well as an increase in primary completion rates compared to national averages: An estimated 62 percent of students in well-established EXCELENCIA mentor schools, who started primary school in 2002, graduated from sixth grade in 2007. This compares with an average of only 40 percent for students in primary schools nationwide.

The private sector is also helping convert children to early and successful readers. In December 2009, several private companies kicked off the reading campaign *Todos a Leer*, or “Everyone, Let’s Read.”

Inspired by EGRA, the campaign developed reading contests for first graders and awarded prizes to students and teachers who met certain reading benchmarks. A second campaign in 2011 attracted participation from six NGOs and private companies, including Save the Children and communications giant Telefonica.

USAID is currently working with 190 Nicaraguan schools through its 2010 Alliances 2 project, with plans to expand that figure to 350 by engaging the private sector. The project aims to expand access to quality education and health services—including work in nutrition, maternal and child health, and HIV/AIDS—by leveraging private investment, and will focus on increasing reading with fluency and comprehension.

“USAID/Nicaragua, through its innovative and targeted education projects, has laid the groundwork for students’ successful schooling careers,” said Kirk Dahlgren, acting mission director. “The challenge ahead is to ensure that the knowledge and skills gained by teachers and administrators in the EGRA and EXCELENCIA projects continues to benefit the children of Nicaragua.”

That could mean students like Roberto Rodríguez will have a better chance of catching up to their better-read classmates, giving them an early start on a lifetime of reading, learning, and preparing them to contribute to the global economy. ■



Photo by USAID

Kids in the EXCELENCIA schools are encouraged to work together. The smiling boy, center, was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up. “An honest man” was his answer.

Phonemic awareness—the ability to identify letter sounds—is a key to decoding and reading new words, and became the focus of a USAID-supported reading instructional package for Egyptian teachers.

Photo by USAID



EGYPT SHAKES UP THE CLASSROOM

With one revolution on its streets, another is transforming its schools. A USAID-supported education program is helping teachers replace antiquated learning methods with active methodologies. Early results are extremely promising.

By Peter Cvelich

UP THE NILE RIVER and far from Tahrir Square, a quiet revolution is stirring the schools of rural Egypt. Thousands of teachers, intent on invigorating their classrooms, are

shaking off stodgy practices and gender stereotypes—and both girls and boys are reaping the benefits.

“I started teaching Arabic 12 years ago,” said Ibrahim Salah, a preparatory school teacher in Beni Suef governorate. “I simply followed the same teaching patterns that I grew up seeing teachers apply; mostly depending on inculcation, without giving students much opportunity to actually participate and to express themselves inside the class.”

Many of Egypt’s schools have promoted the same techniques, with predictable results: disinterested students, frustrated teachers, and low levels of learning, particularly in Arabic reading.

The Egyptian Ministry of Education has recognized such classroom

challenges and how they affect enrollment, attendance, and achievement—particularly for girls—in grades one through nine in underserved, rural parts of the country.

To assist the Ministry of Education in responding to these challenges, USAID is working to re-energize thousands of teachers like Salah in their pursuit of educational excellence by injecting an active-learning approach and enhanced reading instruction into the classroom. The flagship initiative, dubbed the Girls’ Improved Learning Outcomes (GILO) project, is currently active in four Upper Egypt governorates.

Since its inception in 2008, the project has trained nearly 9,000 teachers in 340 schools in instructional methods

such as dialogue, brainstorming, and role-playing—active learning methods—that move beyond the traditional lecture style to truly engage students. Training has included enhanced classroom management methods such as arranging the classroom to facilitate group work, developing a code of conduct with students to promote a collegial atmosphere, and creating a safe learning environment for girls.

Students have responded.

“Most notably, those who had been performing really poorly—cases I had thought hopeless—their participation increased and their interaction significantly improved,” said Salah.

He noted the case of Salima, a very timid, disengaged 14-year-old girl who he nudged to take part in role play. “She responded very positively to my encouragement and prepared her role [so] well that she astonished her class and me with her performance,” he said.

A 2010 assessment showed the USAID-sponsored training had improved teachers’ application of active-learning practices and classroom management by 68 percent in schools supported by the project over an 18-month period. These practices, in turn, have translated into a livelier learning atmosphere and better attendance—particularly for female students.

Ninth-grade Arabic teacher Attia Awad immediately noticed a difference: “The number of girls attending my class increased notably. Students and I spend the class time in a very energetic and fun atmosphere. The students discover by themselves the new words and their meaning, the ideas in the passage.”

In support of the work GILO has done with teachers over three years, it has also trained nearly 2,300 school

supervisors in the same teaching techniques and has empowered the most successful teachers to become coaches or trainers for their peers.

“I was one of the teachers objecting to active learning at the beginning,” said Asharf Samir, an Arabic language teacher in Beni Suef. “But I’m now one of the vocal advocates of these strategies after applying it in my classes and witnessing the impact on students.” Samir joined the first corps of peer trainers in active learning techniques.

“The local community, realizing the change in the attitudes of teachers, students and administrators, has developed respect for the school,” he said.

A little fun and games can go a long way in transforming the learning experience. But, within the active learning framework, the Ministry of Education still has to address one of the

biggest deficits in Egypt’s schools: poor performance in Arabic reading.

“We have a lot of evidence that our kids in grades one, two, and three—even grade four—are illiterate,” said Reda Abouty, first deputy to the minister of education. “It is a huge complaint all across the country that students are not able to read and write properly.”

In 2010, the GILO project conducted an early grade reading assessment in Arabic in grades two through four in Upper Egypt. The oral assessment, conducted one-on-one with individual students, revealed that while nearly half of second graders met the benchmark for identifying letter names, 50 percent of those tested could not identify a single letter sound.

Identifying letter sounds is more crucial to decoding words than knowing the letter names. Consequently, more than

continued on p. 48



Nearly 9,000 Egyptian teachers received training from USAID to promote active learning and a respectful atmosphere in their classrooms.

Photo by USAID

Mobile Phones, eBooks Turning the Page on Education

By Scott Kipp

IN THE DEVELOPING world, a quiet revolution is taking place in education: mobile devices are multiplying by the minute and bringing with them unprecedented access to educational resources.

Students in rural Africa are downloading eBooks while sitting in classrooms that scarcely have electricity. Newly literate girls in Pakistan's distant Punjab districts are stretching their reading and writing skills by participating in text message-based discussion forums. As network coverage continues to expand and reach more of the world's population, the possibilities seem endless for delivering truly incredible volumes of rich academic content.

This revolution is upending history, where progress is often hinged on the availability and affordability of resources. Over the last decade, however, mobile technologies have helped people living in the most resource-starved environments leapfrog over old barriers.

Entrepreneurs, public sector leaders, and field practitioners are on the lookout for the best and most cost-effective ways to take advantage of the new mobile environments. So is USAID.

In collaboration with a diverse international stakeholders group, the Agency is launching the m4Ed4Dev Alliance (Mobiles for Education for

Development Alliance), which will serve an important role in the exchange of knowledge regarding mobiles for education in developing countries for project implementers, researchers, and leading thinkers. The actors will share practices in the use of mobile technologies for education, discuss the successes and lessons learned from these projects, consider the future of mobiles in the evolving education panorama, and provide an opportunity for USAID staff to explore potential projects that align with the goals of the Agency's new education sector strategy.

"At USAID, we're enormously excited by the opportunities that mobile technologies and devices can provide for supporting quality education outcomes," says Anthony Bloome, an education technology specialist with USAID's Office of Education who is coordinating the creation of the m4Ed4Dev Alliance, and symposiums, research roundtables, and monthly seminars on the topic.

"There is perhaps no more single important development intervention that has taken hold over the last 15 years than the mobile phone," said Administrator Rajiv Shah at an August symposium in Washington, D.C.

Broadly defined, the range of mobile technologies includes cellphones, tablets, PDA devices, micro-projectors, and eReaders, among other technologies.

A recent m4Ed4Dev seminar highlighted the iRead project being implemented by Worldreader in several schools in Ghana. More than 500 students of various ages in six primary and secondary schools in Kade and Adeiso are already using their Amazon Kindle 3s in the iRead project. These eReader devices, available in schools and for students to check out to share with their families, are provided with approximately 80 reading titles already loaded; through cellular networks and wireless systems, students can download more than 1,000 additional titles. Children are also provided with reading lights so they can use their Kindles after the sun goes down.

"The Worldreader (iRead) students are reading more than in our wildest dreams," said David Risher, president and co-founder of Worldreader, a charitable organization whose mission is to bring books, and thus promote literacy and a culture of reading, to children and families in the developing world.

The current cost is just over \$200 per Kindle, which includes the e-reader, case, light, and loaded textbooks and storybooks (and access to many more.) The per-student cost is coming down quickly: e-readers cost \$400 two years ago, and the price is expected to halve again in a year. Students often share the e-reader with friends and family, increasing the cost effectiveness even more.

"If we can figure out how to put in the hands of every single child everywhere around the world the capacity to have all the information they need to learn and grow, at no or low cost, we will have created a breakthrough that will last for generations," said Shah.

Today, USAID/Ghana is working to evaluate and more thoroughly understand the impacts of the iRead project as it progresses. For example, the mission is looking at reading improvements and the relative costs of supplying and using reading materials in print versus electronic media. Officials admit they are pleased with what they see so far, calling it a shining example.

THE ISSUE OF access to resources is particularly critical in places like the rural districts of Pakistan's Punjab province, where UNESCO and local mobile network operator Mobilink are supporting a literacy project run by the Bunyad Foundation. This award-winning initiative provides girls and young women with cell phones, which are used to link the girls into reading comprehension and discussion forums, all of which takes place through text messages paid for by Mobilink.

"The cell phone holds the key to social development by its very nature and we want to make sure that women are part of this revolution," says Rashid Khan, president and CEO of Mobilink.

The text messages are delivered in the local Urdu language—implementers learned from previous efforts that English content is neither as accessible nor as engaging.

Indeed, education projects using mobile technologies are evolving quickly and learning from each other all over the globe, as has been the case

with the USAID-supported Bridgeit initiative now using mobile technologies to provide educational content to teachers in places like the Philippines and Tanzania.

The Bridgeit program in Tanzania brings together the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, USAID, Nokia, The Pearson Foundation, and The International



An iRead student at a primary school in Ghana gets to know his new Kindle and the dozens of books that come with it.

Youth Foundation. By providing primary school teachers with cell phones and a rich catalog of educational titles for download, the program offers locally relevant educational videos and other media for schools that would otherwise have extremely limited access to such material.

There still remain, of course, many challenges to making mobile education projects successful. Concerns over the costs of electricity, costs of network use, and the constant risks of theft and damage to mobile devices are all reasonable

threats to project sustainability. In spite of these challenges, tumbling device costs and stronger mobile networks everywhere are two key factors that represent the unprecedented opportunities for public sector leaders, private sector operators, and project implementers to come together and make substantial progress on education in the developing world.

"By exploring appropriate, accessible, and scalable models for mobile technology use in education, we can make profound improvements on the administrative end of the educational process," says Bloome. "For example, quickly and efficiently tracking student progress and teacher attendance, or using text messages for administrative alerts and updates to improve parental involvement in the educational process would be valuable resources for promoting greater transparency and accountability."

Many countries across the developing world are also now using mobile technologies

to increase and improve communication and monitoring that take place between a school and its local government. This is especially valuable for rural and isolated schools with only one teacher, but also for overcrowded urban schools facing difficulties in monitoring vulnerable children.

"The more projects in this field emerge, the more the possibilities seem endless for using mobile technologies to improve many aspects of the educational process," says Bloome. ■

Higher Education Partnerships

Lift up Students, Small Businesses

*By Kellee Edmonds,
Lynn Simmonds, and
Julia Sobel*


BILEL BOUTADJINE had big dreams of working as an engineer in his native Algeria following graduation from the University of Mentouri, Constantine (UMC). But as his matriculation ended, Boutadjine knew his employment outlook was bleak.

Gainful employment doesn't come easy in his home country, which has an unemployment rate of 10 percent, and where 23 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Boutadjine decided that enrolling in the new Career Center at his school would help him improve a number of basic skills, make him more marketable to potential employers, and eventually secure him a good job.

Created in 2009, the Career Center is the result of a USAID-supported university partnership between the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan and UMC. Also known as RESUME (Recruiting Employable Students at the University with Management Education), this partnership aims to make a difference in the lives of more than 4,000 Algerian college students who, like Boutadjine, have earned a bachelor's degree and are in need of career counseling.

During his time at the center, Boutadjine strengthened his public speaking and networking skills; attended career fairs that put him in direct contact with potential employers; and gained access to resources that shaped



Bilel Boutadjine, an engineer and former University of Mentouri Constantine (UMC) student, is pictured at his job at KIS Co. Bilel credits the UMC Career Center for helping him find the job.

Photo by Narelem Dekhil

his career plan. Armed with those skills—as well as a healthy dose of confidence, he found his dream job at an industrial construction company soon after graduation.

“I [now] work as an engineer [at] KIS company, one of the Career Center’s partners; an interesting and stimulating job which I would not have been able to find without the help of the center,” Boutadjine said.

His is not the partnership’s only success. In less than two years, that one center has helped more than 230 students secure internships, and nearly 60 students secure permanent full-time positions. Because of its success, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education has announced plans to establish 18 more throughout Algeria based on the UMC model.

The partnership is one of 69 managed by Higher Education for Development (HED), an organization that works closely with USAID and the six major U.S. presidential higher education associations (American Council on Education, American Association of Community Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Association of American Universities, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities) to support U.S. university and other higher-education institutions’ involvement in international development.

The HED partnership program supports a key component of USAID’s

education strategy, namely, improving the ability of host-country higher-education institutions and workforce-development programs to produce a skilled workforce that will facilitate their country’s development. Improved career counseling and mentoring are seen as important steps in achieving this goal.

Several other higher-education partnerships are working to advance entrepreneurship and small-business development, including two separate efforts between U.S. and Mexican universities: one between the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara (UAG), followed by another between UTSA and Universidad Veracruzana.

“These higher education partnerships with funding support from USAID are connecting small-business owners to the global marketplace—helping small- and micro-entrepreneurs create jobs, and improving the overall competitiveness of the Mexican economy,” says Robert McKinley, UTSA’s associate vice president for economic development.

Back in 2003, the UTSA/UAG partnership, supported under the U.S.-Mexico Training, Internships, Exchanges and Scholarships program, created more than 40 small business development centers (SBDCs) located throughout Mexico based on a successful U.S. model.

Subsequently, the UTSA/Veracruzana partnership expanded the initial effort by creating a network of

Mexican SBDCs that engaged higher-education institutions throughout Mexico and leveraged federal government resources. As a result, more than 4,000 Mexican business owners received professional training, and more than 1,000 SBDC professionals from every Mexican state have graduated from its Counselor and Director Diplomado Training Program. The network now has 101 centers throughout Mexico.

A key factor in its success has been an online, multi-lingual trade platform that assists small businesses from both Mexican and U.S. SBDC networks to connect and make deals. Launched in 2010, SBDCGlobal.com enables clients to find pre-qualified international suppliers and buyers to create sales and growth.

“Small businesses have had a difficult time benefiting from globalization,” said Cliff Paredes, director of the UTSA International Trade Center. “This will help tens of thousands of businesses by connecting them to one another and by providing online tools and information that they need to grow their businesses.”

Gabriela Esparza is the owner of one such business. Her printing and design company is benefitting from this online tool. Esparza says with the support of the university, she’s learning the importance of having a business plan and making smarter decisions about her investment strategy. “We are certain to succeed,” she added.

All told, since the start of the program, more than 750,000 U.S. SBDC clients have had the opportunity to connect with Mexican businesses to

continued on p. 43

MORE ONLINE

For more information on Pathways to Prosperity, see www.pathways-caminos.org.

Q&A with Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.)



Rep. Nita Lowey is a 12-term congresswoman from New York, and among her many leadership roles, holds that of ranking Democrat of the House Appropriations Committees' State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee. A stalwart champion of education both at home and abroad, she also serves on the Appropriations Committee's Homeland Security Subcommittee, and the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee.

FRONTLINES: With all the challenges the world faces, how does support for education in developing countries fit with our country's strategic goals?

REP. NITA LOWEY: Education is not just a building block, but the cornerstone of free societies. No country has reached sustained economic growth without achieving near universal primary education. Education lays the foundation for sound governance and strong institutions, and gives the next generation the power to harness new ideas and spur economic growth. Today more than ever before, education is also a national security issue. Education can turn back the disruptive forces of violence, disease, and poverty. It is one of the easiest ways we can counter terrorism and make societies less vulnerable to fanaticism. This is why, even in these tough economic

times, it is so important that we continue investing in education throughout the world.

FL: What is your vision for U.S. support for USAID education programming in the future?

Lowey: Throughout my time on the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, I have worked to increase the funding for USAID's education programming because these programs are absolutely essential.

I also recently introduced the Education for All Act, which would bolster the United States' leadership role in the march for access to education worldwide. The bill lays out U.S.

policy that includes working with other countries, international organizations, and civil society to help developing countries strengthen

Young people face all kinds of pressures to leave school, and one of our biggest challenges is empowering them to overcome those pressures.

their educational systems; to assist NGOs and multi-lateral organizations that work to expand access and quality; and to promote education as the foundation for community development. Schools can serve as the centers of communities, bringing together parents, students, teachers, and government

officials through services that support and lift up families and societies. Sustainable and lasting change

requires the resolve of the U.S. Government to centralize and coordinate our efforts.

FL: What would you say to a young person in a developing country facing multi-faceted pressures to drop out of school early?

Lowey: Young people face all kinds of pressures to leave school, and one of our biggest challenges is empowering them to overcome those pressures. I would tell a student she is not alone and urge her to get a mentor—a teacher, a relative, a friend, a faith leader—to help find ways for her to stay in school or continue education in an alternative setting. Children faced with the choice of staying in school or entering the workforce to support their families, or working on the family farm in order to feed their siblings, should not have to face those choices alone.

FL: It wasn't too long ago that women were not expected to work or go to college. Do you have any memories of your grandmother, mother, or other female relatives breaking through this ceiling? How were they able to do this?

Lowey: My mother was very forward-thinking in her parenting approach. She made sure I had a good education and exposure to the many options available to women, including through my internship in college at the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee. She laid a solid foundation for me to explore opportunities at a time when most of my college classmates were focused

singularly on getting married and starting a family upon graduation.

FL: Investing in education, home and abroad, is a long-term project. As a legislator, how do you reconcile that in a climate that often demands immediate gains?

Lowey: Slow and steady wins the race. Real, effective change takes time, but gradual gains are both possible and essential to sustain investments in education. All kinds of measures should be used to determine effectiveness including traditional test scores and literacy rates, or more progressive measures like community and parental involvement and enrollment of girls in school. We must also be vigilant in expanding successful strategies and scaling back those that don't show strong results over time.

FL: Do you prefer e-books or print? How can USAID and the U.S. Government use technology/classroom alternatives to expand education options in developing countries?

Lowey: I'm still learning to use my iPad! But I guarantee my grandkids know how. New technologies may provide effective and efficient ways of reaching young people and can be used both in traditional school settings as well as in classroom alternatives. Working with local communities and governments to ensure that whatever tools we utilize are accepted and effective in each setting and aimed at that nation's plan for achieving education for all is paramount. ■

Higher Education

continued from p. 41

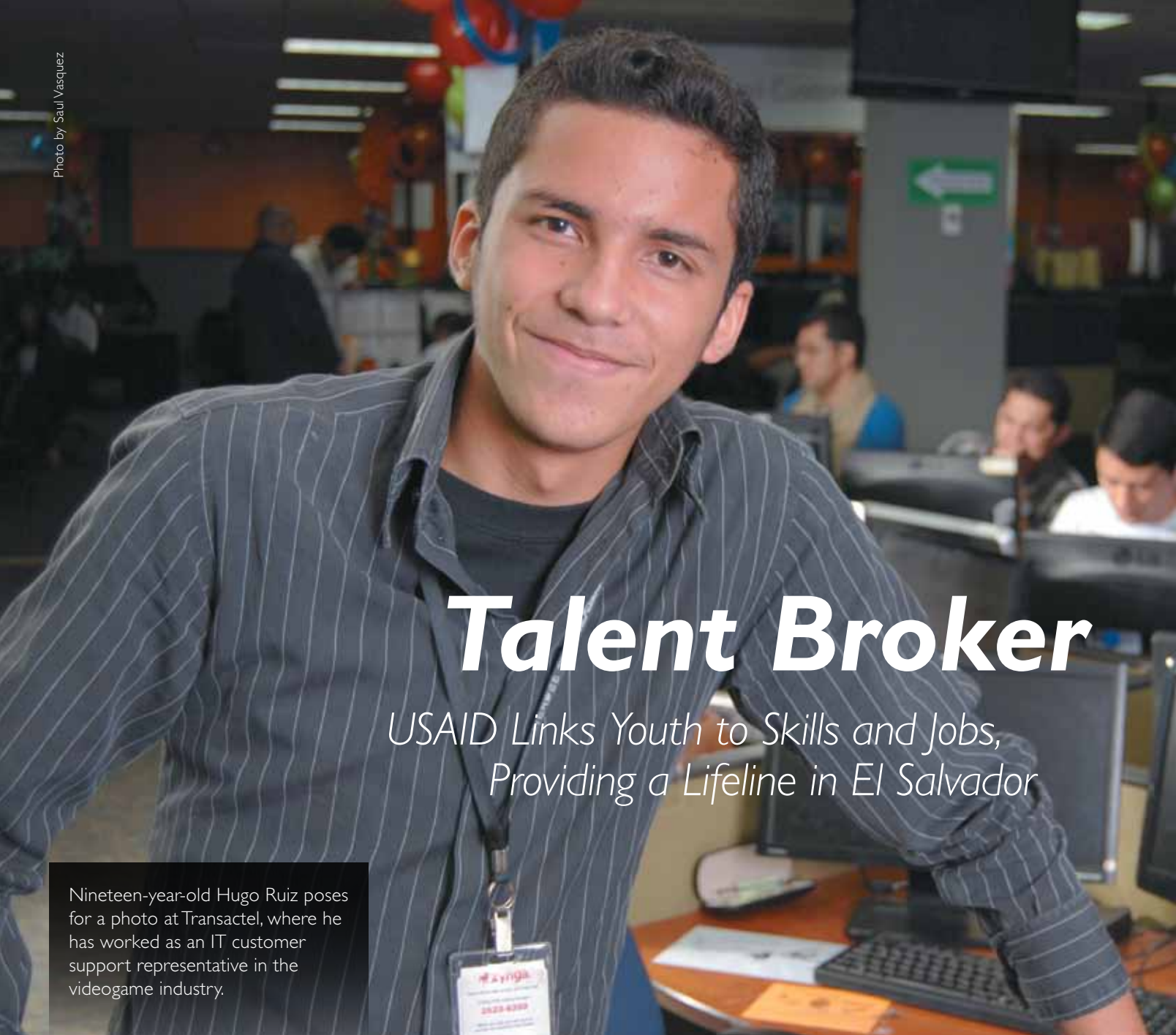
create bilateral trade opportunities.

"This mutually beneficial network will enhance our U.S. small business sector, creating jobs here at home by strengthening professional connections to neighboring countries and their communities in one of the highest and best uses of foreign assistance funding," said Tully Cornick, HED's executive director.

Several other Latin American countries have expressed interest in adopting the SBDC model in their countries. El Salvador, a country that was recently announced as a focus of a new economic growth partnership in Latin America, already has eight centers in operation, with a total of 14 slated to be in operation by year's end. Three centers are planned for Colombia.

Development of an SBDC network in Central America, set to launch in late 2011, will be a key action item in the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative as it will help create jobs and promote greater regional economic integration and stability. Pathways is a State Department-led, policy-level dialogue that allows countries to share ideas and initiatives for economic growth to more broadly benefit all citizens.

"An SBDC expansion of such size and scope would solidify the role of U.S. higher education and its host-country institution partners in providing the resources needed to empower thousands of individuals to become full participants in the global economy," Cornick added. ■



Talent Broker

USAID Links Youth to Skills and Jobs,
Providing a Lifeline in El Salvador

Nineteen-year-old Hugo Ruiz poses for a photo at Transactel, where he has worked as an IT customer support representative in the videogame industry.

*By María Teresa Dávila,
Patricia Guardado, and
Cynthia Almansi*

WHILE IN high school in Santa Tecla, El Salvador, not far from the capital city, Hugo Ruiz excelled in his studies—even earning a three-year scholarship to learn English. But when he graduated, higher

education had to wait. His family was in debt, and Ruiz had to join the workforce to make sure his two younger sisters could stay in school.

Despite his English studies, the 19-year-old failed the language entrance exam for the job he wanted: assisting online video gamers at Transactel, one of many new call centers in El Salvador. Ruiz's case was hardly unique—while analyzing emerging fields in El Salvador, USAID found

that the call-center industry was poised to hire thousands of workers but couldn't find people with sufficient skills in English, computers, and customer service.

Yet job applications are plentiful, particularly from youth. The Facebook page for USAID's Improving Access to Employment Program was full of comments explaining that call centers are desirable employment because they offer flexible hours,

built-in training, money for college, and proximity to other young people.

Luckily for Ruiz and thousands of other unemployed Salvadorans, USAID is stepping into the labor force breach with a new market-driven approach. After selected businesses identify the skills they need to fill their positions, the USAID program partners with them to develop relevant training courses. The firms share the costs of the trainings and then hire the graduates.

USAID, in this sense, acts as an unbiased broker, matching eager young job seekers first with the skills and then with the companies looking for talent. The Agency is demonstrating an approach better suited to market realities, uniting employers and schools to craft courses combining technical and practical skills lacking in El Salvador's highest-demand industries: Information technology (IT), customer service, tourism, and aircraft maintenance. In the program's first 16 months of operation, over 3,100 Salvadorans have completed at least one of these courses, helping them find jobs or secure better positions with a new skill set.

TRANSACTEL IS ONE of 18 firms so far that have agreed to the arrangement: the call center helped develop a course called "English for Work" and encouraged Ruiz to take it. After he finished the 38-day course with accolades, Transactel hired him, promoting him after the first month for good performance.

"It's the best job I ever thought I would have," said Ruiz. "They have been very patient with me and found what I am able to do and have given me the tools to grow [professionally] and improve my English.... The [only]

thing that frustrates me is that I have to wake up at 4 a.m.," he jokes.

Ruiz's initial difficulties underscore a painful problem in El Salvador, where traditional education and training often fail to prepare new workers for today's jobs, and where youth need particular attention to find sustainable work. Unemployment in this group, defined as age 15 to 24, is just under 14 percent, almost double the national average.

In response, USAID is also rolling out initiatives like Youth360—a Web-based platform that acts as a virtual marketplace for interns and businesses. It brings together students who want to intern after college graduation and companies that need interns for particular projects. The USAID program is conducting a broad outreach to industry and educational institutions to create an alternative pathway to employment and a national internship program.

Moreover, in addition to computers and office furniture, USAID is providing training in job counseling to the Ministry of Labor's Career Centers to open opportunities for job seekers and recent college graduates. After training 250 career counselors this past year, the Agency may expand the program to train and certify high school career counselors.

All of these initiatives to boost El Salvador's economy reflect a tightening of the U.S.-El Salvador relationship as underscored by President Barack Obama's official visit there in March. Prior to the visit, El Salvador was named as one of the first four countries that will participate in the "Partnership for Growth," a new set of initiatives seeking to drive economic progress in selected countries.

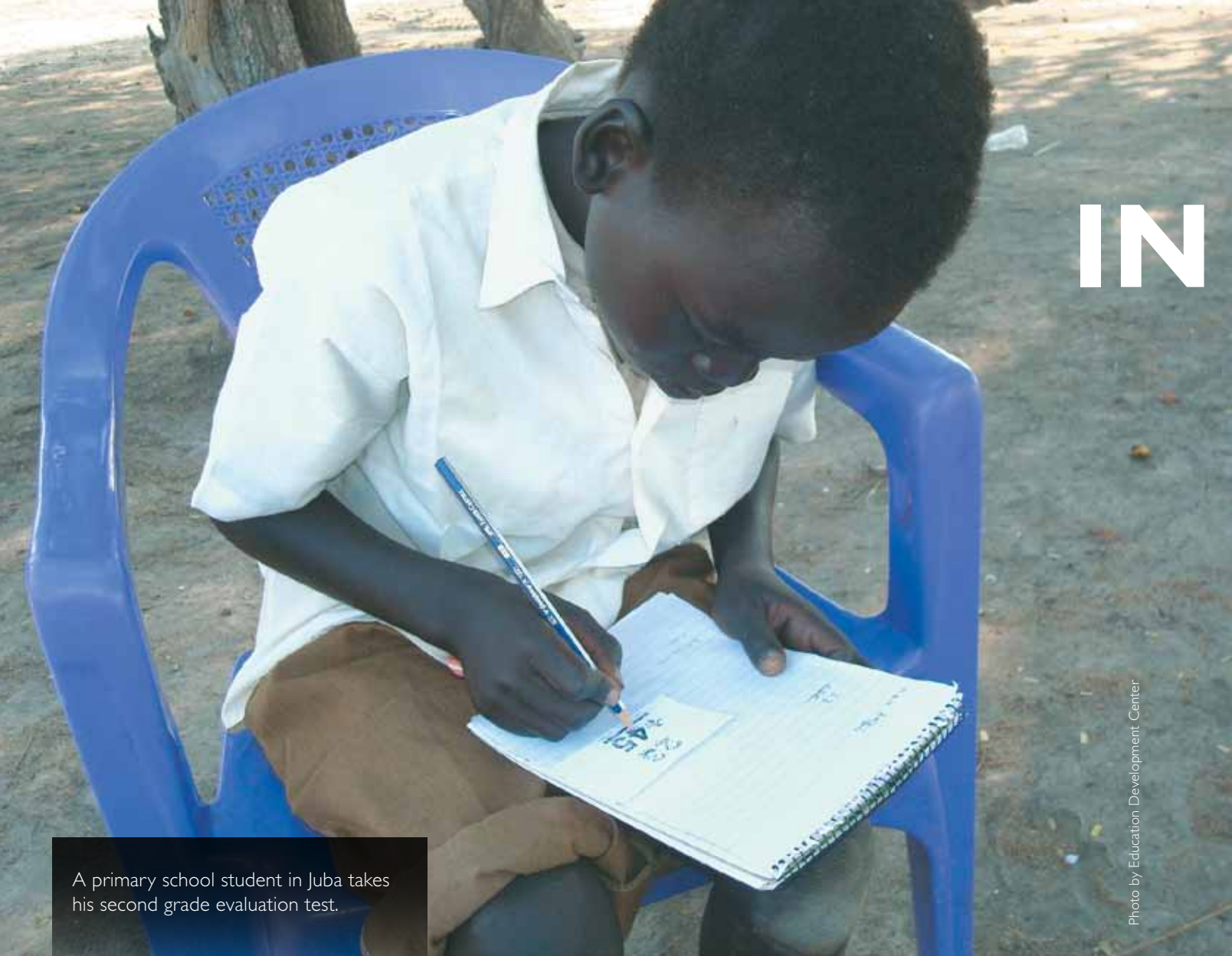
The White House has said the pilot program would bring private investment, provide jobs, and increase trade in the country. Job stimulation would allow Salvadorans—of which, roughly one of four resides in the United States—to remain with their families in their homeland.

"Instead of the old donor-recipient model, we're working as partners, with El Salvador in the lead, to confront the hurdles to growth and development. As El Salvador's largest trading partner, we'll help identify reforms that can mobilize private investment, increase trade, and create opportunities for the Salvadoran people. And one of the most important steps is to foster collaborations between government and the private sector, because both have so much to gain when people are lifted out of poverty and contribute to their country's prosperity," said Obama during his visit.

Meanwhile, Hugo Ruiz is already reaping the benefits of U.S. assistance. Now finishing his fifth month at Transactel, he answers e-mailed questions from video gamers in India, Egypt, China, Portugal, and the Netherlands. He continues to pitch in with his family's general expenses, including putting his young sisters through school. Whatever is left, he saves for his own future studies—and volunteers teaching English on the side. His job fits in perfectly with his career plans, he explained.

"I am planning to study graphic design and learn another language, as well," Ruiz said. "If I continue working at Transactel, I will have both the knowledge and the support to achieve my goals." ■

The authors are with CARANA Corp.



A primary school student in Juba takes his second grade evaluation test.

Photo by Education Development Center

By Jane Namadi and Ezra Simon

ON A CONTINENT that already faces significant challenges in education, those confronting South Sudan are especially severe. For decades South Sudanese have been fleeing conflict, fighting, sheltering in refugee camps, or simply struggling to survive in their villages and towns as a result of war throughout Sudan that plagued the south since before Sudan

gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1956.

While delivering education services in this environment was possible in certain areas, entire regions missed out on these opportunities. According to the Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics, and Evaluation, only 27 percent of South Sudanese adults today are literate. This puts South Sudan around the bottom of the list of world literacy and presents an enormous challenge both for the

Government of South Sudan and for USAID and other organizations seeking to help South Sudanese to recover.

Many schools were reduced to rubble during wartime, and when an accord was reached through the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), South Sudanese children commonly attended lessons held outdoors and taught by teachers who lacked formal training and a standard curriculum. Even now, 72 percent of the 19,872 primary level learning locations

A NEW NATION,

Building the Education Basics

across South Sudan are under a tree or other non-permanent structure rather than in a schoolhouse, with children of various ages learning together. In many cases, students have no books, writing materials, or desks, and a teacher's equipment is typically limited to a small chalkboard and chalk.

The obstacles to quality education do not stop at classroom logistics. Of more than 26,000 primary school teachers in South Sudan, 84 percent are not certified to teach, and only 12 percent are women. In a post-conflict economy with limited public revenue and almost no sources of private sector employment, three-quarters of the national budget goes to public salaries, while 6 to 7 percent is spent on education. The lack of literacy hinders South Sudan's capacity to govern—nearly one in four civil servants in the country lacks a formal education.

DESPITE THE MANY roadblocks, significant gains in education have been achieved since 2005. With USAID assistance, primary school enrollment in South Sudan has increased from approximately 300,000 students in 2000 to 1.4 million in 2010. USAID supported the construction or rehabilitation of 140 primary schools and five secondary schools. To improve teachers' skills, the Agency

supported the rehabilitation of four regional teacher training institutes and is encouraging women to become teachers. To address lower literacy and school attendance among girls, USAID has awarded over 9,000 scholarships in the past five years to girls and disadvantaged boys who are unable to pay school fees. Secondary school fees range from \$28-\$50 per school term.

Sylvain Sumurye, of Kajo-Keji County in Central Equatoria state, received one of USAID's scholarships. Previously, she had dropped out of school due to an early pregnancy and was abandoned by her husband.

"Barely three months after I gave birth, my husband got another woman and started beating me and eventually abandoned me with a small child of six months," said Sumurye, now 25. "Helplessly, I decided to go back to my parents. After the signing of the CPA, I went back to school and forgot about my husband. I studied hard and successfully completed my secondary education and joined Kajo-Keji Teachers College in 2009."

The Teachers' College has benefited from a USAID school improvement grant. These funds are generally used for rainwater harvesting and storage, dining hall dishes, and helping to improve the skills of school governance bodies.

As part of its efforts to improve school attendance among girls and young women, the USAID scholarship includes "comfort kits" for female students comprised of sanitary pads and other hygiene supplies. "During my periods, I used not to attend class because I did not have money to buy sanitary pads. I pretended that I was sick and opted to remain in the dormitory for three to four days. Thanks to USAID, I was given comfort kits, which helped me a lot because I could attend all my classes without worry until I completed my school and graduated in 2010," Sumurye explained.

To support young women like Sumurye to continue their education even after they have children, female dormitories are fitted with separate rooms for mothers to attend school with their children.

After graduation, Sumurye was hired as a fifth-grade geography teacher at Kiri Primary School. With the money she now earns, she can afford to pay for her daughter's school fees and uniform as well as better housing. "Education is the key road to success," Sumurye said. "I advise all South Sudan women to go to school so that they are not deprived of their rights."

USAID/South Sudan Mission Director Kevin Mullally, who previously

continued on p. 49

Egypt Shakes Up the Classroom
continued from p. 37

half of these students could not read a single word in isolation. In grade four, things did not improve: Nearly a third of students could still not read a single word.

“When you have students that are not able to read in grade four, you have something wrong with the approach,” said Abou Serie.

In Egypt’s primary school classrooms, the textbook drives instruction, which focuses on learning letter names and rote memorization of vocabulary words.

“I was always taught that when students know the names of letters they will learn how to read,” said Mansoura Mohamed, a primary school teacher in Minia governorate. “I worked hard on teaching them letter names.” Consequently, progress was slow.

To address this common weakness in most classrooms, GILO designed a package of reading lesson plans that improved the teaching of phonics. The training was rolled out to selected teachers in all four project-supported governorates before the 2010-2011 school year.

“This was a radical change in my understanding and professional experience,” said Mohamed after receiving the training. “Now I know that a main problem in my students’ learning to read is my method of teaching.”

USAID’s GILO project conducted a follow-up early-grade reading assessment at the end of the school year to measure the impact of the enhanced teaching method on student learning, assessing all of the same schools from the first testing round, including a set of control schools.

Before the intervention, students in the GILO-supported schools performed at roughly the same level as their peers in the control schools. A year later, preliminary analyses indicate that students in GILO-supported schools identified an average of 19 more letter sounds per minute at the end of the school year, an increase of nearly 200 percent over baseline.

Meanwhile, students in the control group gained just two letter sounds per minute, an increase of only 21 percent over baseline. The impact of the instruction on students’ reading fluency was also dramatic: an average of 10 more

Literacy in the Arab States*

From UNESCO’s 2011 Education For All Global Monitoring Report:

- The average literacy rate for women in the region was less than four-fifths that for men in 2008.
- Egypt had the region’s highest number of illiterate adults (18 million) in 2006 and accounted for nearly 30% of the regional total.
- Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait and Yemen have increased their adult literacy rates by at least 20 percentage points in the past 15 to 20 years.

*Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, occupied Palestinian territory, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen

words read per minute—an increase of 82 percent over baseline—compared to three more words read per minute among the control group.

And this notable progress came in spite of the fact that the students were out of school for six weeks in the spring semester during the Egyptian revolution.

“[The teachers] told me the phonics method was easy to use, is having a real impact in short time, and that the students enjoy learning in this approach,” Abou Serie said. “It is impressive and that is why we are going to scale it up immediately in the four governorates that GILO is already working in, with plans to roll out training to all schools nationwide.” ■

Staff from the GILO project contributed to this article.



Photo by USAID

Second grade students who received GILO reading instruction improved their Arabic reading skills much faster than their peers who received standard instruction.

Building the Education Basics

continued from p. 47

served as mission director in Senegal and Rwanda, noted that girls' education is a priority for USAID.

"Research has shown that educating girls offers a tremendous return on investment in a developing country. It leads to healthier families, which are a critical component for future growth and success," he said, adding that education can also aid South Sudan recover from war. "Education provides disaffected girls and boys with the confidence that they can move forward in their lives, in spite of what the people of this country have experienced."

Former child soldier Gilaso Odong, of Torit in Eastern Equatoria state, is among the young men who received USAID scholarships. He was abducted at age 10 and forced to fight, losing an arm to a gunshot wound. He became a refugee in Kenya before returning to South Sudan three years ago.

"My parents cannot afford to pay my school fees," Odong said. "I thought, 'I am back home, but still in a miserable life.' I lost my arm during the struggle and I thought, 'the peace has come, I will have free education,' but still I did not see any changes in my life." Now age 19, he was able to continue studies he began as a refugee with the help of a USAID scholarship and has one year left until he graduates from Torit Secondary School.

ONE OF USAID'S MOST important tools in raising literacy and improving learning in South Sudan is radio—the medium that reaches the broadest segment of the population of more than 8 million. USAID uses radio-based learning not only to



Gilaso Odong, 19, lost an arm as a child soldier but now receives USAID support to study at Torit Secondary School in Eastern Equatoria.

provide teachers with lessons they can present to their students but also to reach non-traditional, generally older students who may not have had the opportunity to attend school.

In 2010, USAID's radio-based learning programs have reached nearly 100,000 students and 445,000 youth and adults who did not have access to regular school instruction. The USAID-supported South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction has broadcast over shortwave, FM, and through MP3s since 2005, programming that also includes civic education programs. Community radio stations that USAID supports also broadcast the Agency's radio-learning programs.

USAID is reaching out to communities to support educational access in a variety of ways. For example, the Agency is helping parents contribute

to decisions that affect their children's education, while local authorities become better informed about their constituents' priorities. To help county education officials in remote parts of South Sudan inspect far-flung schools and interact with their employees and students, USAID has provided motor-bikes so education inspectors can make regular visits.

With education among the highest priorities for citizens of South Sudan, USAID is working to ensure the quality and availability of education services, improving opportunities for Southern Sudanese as they build their nation.

As South Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit said in a speech to the South Sudan National Assembly on Aug. 8, "We must now focus on the delivery of basic services to meet the expectations of our people." ■

By Joseph Ayela, Winrock International

U.S. Agency for International Development
Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20523-6100
Penalty for Private Use \$300
Official Business

PRSR1 STD
Postage and Fees
PAID USAID
Permit No. G-107



Photo by Ben Edwards, USAID



Schoolchildren in southwest Haiti