



# BAM!

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the Bamako AID Mission

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## Welcome to BAM!

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the newsletter of the Bamako AID Mission – BAM! We picked the name to refer to the quick blasts of information, free of technical jargon, we intend to offer for your information four times a year.

Mali is a large, hot, and dry country in West Africa. More than half desert, it may seem quite remote from the interests of the United States. But in reality that's not the case.



**Mission Director  
Pamela White**

Mali has many positive things going for it that many of its more affluent neighbors lack. These include a government based on two consecutive democratic elections, a tradition of stability and tolerance, and an absence of civil strife.

Though mostly Islamic in faith, Mali is not home to radical elements; multiple ethnic groups get along through playful ribbing, rather than violent conflict; and HIV/AIDS is not a simmering cauldron about to boil over.

The new government, installed after a peaceful election in 2002, is primarily concerned

*(Continued on page 2)*



Photo: Elise DeLancey

**FIGHTING HIV**—A medical technician (right, in gloves) takes a blood sample from a high-risk worker (left) as an amused assistant looks on. The survey, funded by USAID, will help Mali fight AIDS. See story page 7.

## Pedal Power Primes Water Pumping Project

*More efficient water points will stimulate village economies*

**BAMAKO**—USAID has developed a new initiative that will utilize a simple technology to bring water more efficiently into Malian villages and spur economic development with a new kind of pumping and storage system.

The key to the project is an innovative way to extract water from deep underground and store it in large water towers using lower technology equipment that can operate maintenance-free for up to five years.

With a design inspired by the Global Development Alliance approach, USAID formed a partnership with the West Africa Water Initiative, the private sector, the Malian government, and local communities.

The alliance approach fosters a new way of conducting business through institutional synergy to ensure excellence, programmatic innovation, and long-term financial, social, and environmental sustainability in water resources management.

To launch the initiative, USAID and the task force collaborated with communities to develop a pilot project whereby a newly designed solar- and pedal-operated water pump will be installed in bore holes in eight villages. Later, this will be duplicated in water-scarce areas of the country.

A conventional solar pump requires an engine and electric transformer that

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# School's 'in' for Malian Village Children

## *USAID helps local leaders formulate new tax plan to support primary education*

**SAMA MARKALA**—School's out for 10-year-old Aminata. As she left the classroom at her *école communautaire* for the last time in June this year, she gave her teacher Monsieur Sacko a hearty handshake.

"*A bientôt!*" she said with a smile. See you soon.

Aminata is happy because she knows that Sacko, who was born in Sama Markala, will be back teaching again next year. In the four years since the school opened, that never could be taken for granted.

While collecting taxes to maintain a community school may seem a basic function of a sub-district, it's a challenge for this association of villages near Segou, which are still adapting to a newly implemented decentralized system of local government.

At the school's inauguration in 1998, parents were initially willing to pay a few dollars annually to fund teacher salaries, but after several years feeling the consequent economic hardship from the contributions, they started to dry up.

Recently, USAID support from both its Education and Democratic Governance programs, in partnership with World Education, provided local leaders the necessary expertise to keep the school functioning, trained school administrators, teachers and parent associations to develop a plan for

the school year and present it to the town mayor with a funding request. The burden is now shared by the entire community, which pays the school through the local tax system. Because of a clear budget representing the school's needs put forth by the parents' association and a new transparent system of tax collection and distribution, community members now know where their taxes are going. Previously, the school had three grades and 110 students; it now boasts five grades and 210 students.



Photo: Alexandra Huddleston

**HAPPY STUDENTS**—For children like Aminata and her friends in Sama Markala, a new tax plan assures this school year won't be their last.

"This is among the first instances where a community school has taken a coherent plan to the local authorities, who have responded in an appropriate manner," commented USAID Mali's Education Officer Jo Allen Lesser. "The commune has taken control of its responsibilities using a new transparent tax system."

While the state constructs schools and pays teachers, it cannot afford to serve all the eligible children. Community schools, sustained by local income, have begun to fill the gaps as decentralization moves from a concept to a viable system of government.

Rather than funding school construction and paying teacher salaries, USAID focuses on training administrators and municipal leaders in the methods of decentralized governance. This puts sustainable mechanisms in place that allow Malian taxpayers to see precisely where their money goes. Formerly, tax revenues were disbursed in a piecemeal, sometimes arbitrary fashion.

"People are often skeptical that schools can manage themselves," Lesser said. "This is just one instance showing that little by little, capacity building is working." —ZT

## Welcome . . . (continued from Page 1)

with the *people* of Mali, not just the country's visibility. The new government's priority is to assure its citizens have enough to eat and clean water to drink, a literate population, and a functioning health care system. Mali faces enormous challenges. Dependent on imports, the country suffers when conflict in other countries pinches supply lines. Infant mortality is still extremely high, adult literacy is too low, and per capita income is less than \$275 per year.

Despite these challenges, this is a good time to be in Mali. A dynamic new team of ministers is focused on attracting foreign investment and better exploitation of natural resources such as sugar and gold. Agricultural innovations are making more efficient use of the country's unique inland delta, and the wealth of cultural tradition and natural historical treasures make Mali a fascinating destination for tourists seeking adventures off the beaten path. USAID/Mali has just launched a new 10-year strategy, among the first in the agency's history. We will implement our programs through new, vibrant partnerships that will slice the development pie into well defined pieces, allowing the Mission to clarify its expectations and closely monitor progress.

As Mission Director, I feel a tremendous responsibility overseeing disbursement of American tax dollars to these projects that will play out this next decade. It is with this in mind that we launch our newsletter, to provide all who are interested an idea of what we are doing way out here in Mali, and the good we think it's doing for a country with real potential, if offered a fighting chance. —**Pamela White**

## USAID Signs Agreement for \$36.7 Million with Government of Mali

**BAMAKO**—To mark the launch of programs designed under a new 10-year strategy, USAID/Mali has pledged more than \$36.7 million in support to the Malian government over the next decade through its strategic objectives. At a recent ceremony, Deputy Director Kevin Mullally noted that the partnership between the United States and Mali has never been stronger. “It is collaboration, openness and friendship that

mark our relationship, and it can only get better,” he said. “Mali should not be near the bottom of the UNDP human development index. We must get more girls in school, reduce infant and maternal mortality significantly, produce more food and increase household incomes.” Mullally added he looks forward to building a healthier, prosperous, and better educated Mali together with our partners, led by the host government.



Photo: Sana Guindo

**VISIT**—Members of Congress and Ambassador Huddleston with USAID Deputy Director Kevin Mullally (2nd left), Democracy Officer Kojo Busia (4th left) and Com-Dev Team Leader Dennis Bilodeau (2nd right) meet President Toure of Mali (center).

### Congressional Delegation Visits

**BAMAKO**—A three-member Congressional delegation visited Mali as part of a four country swing through Africa. The delegation visited a USAID field site as well as the historic city of Timbuktu, hosted by US Ambassador to Mali Vicki Huddleston.

Led by California Reps. David Dreier and Grace Napolitano, and Rep. James Moran of Virginia, the group met with President of Mali Amadou Toumani Touré. The delegation also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Lassina Traore and Minister of Defense Mahmane Khalil Maïga.

Among the topics addressed during the cordial discussions were the Millennium Challenge Account, agricultural subsidies, and the fight against terrorism. The trip served to follow-up and reinforce President Bush's recent tour of the continent, Rep. Dreier said at a reception marking the end of the visit.

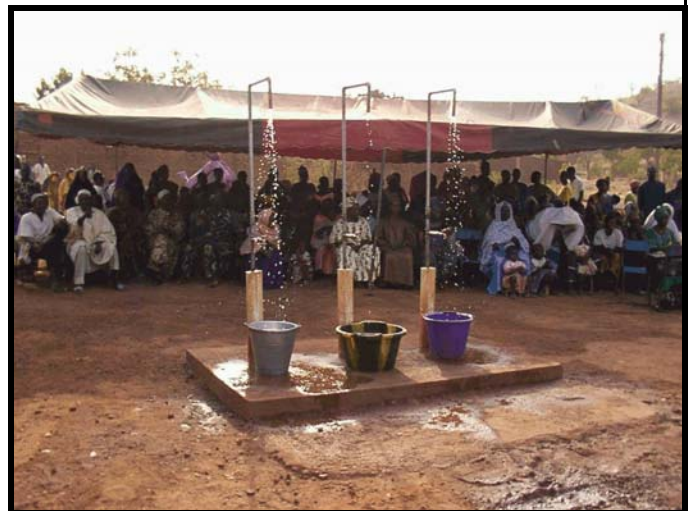
### Pedal Pumps . . . (Continued from page 1)

may break down without specialized regular maintenance, leaving the water point nonfunctional, cutting off a village's supply of clean water. This obliges mostly women and children to seek other sources of water, which is often stagnant and far away from the village center. By contrast, the pedal pumps have no engine and use no electricity. If the solar function of the pump stops or night falls, a few hours working the pedals (which bring water as quickly as five hand pumps) will fill 15 cubic meter towers, assuring a constant water supply.

The system also purifies and pressurizes the water for drinking, cooking, and washing. Villagers access the water by paying a small fee, and use it not only for domestic purposes but also for crop irrigation and animal husbandry, as well as gardening and other economic activities that help empower women. A water user group oversees distribution of the water, and may use its income for a host of community development projects. Several villages hope to connect the supply to health clinics and schools.

Pilot sites were chosen based on a community's ability to link the new pumps with income generating projects at water points, and more importantly, a willingness to make a contribution to the initiative with whatever resources, financial or human, they may have available. After the pilot cycle, USAID will bring the pumps to villages with more serious water needs, making necessary adjustments identified along the way. In these villages, where hours every day are usually spent fetching water, women may have more time to focus on economic activities and more children will go to school. USAID is funding the eight pumps at about \$15,000 each, and the host government will provide drilling equipment to bore the holes.

Sinergie, S.A., the local representative of Moving Water Industries, the Florida-based maker of pumps, will oversee their installation and maintenance training for the users. World Vision will facilitate creation of the water users groups and conduct management training to assure community involvement is maintained. —ZT



**PEDAL POWER**—A new pumping system that augments solar power with a pedal function assures villages a constant



# Malian Democracy: 'Irreversible in many ways'

## *Decentralization is key to sustaining elected governments*

*In late 2002, Mali's democratically-elected President Alpha Oumar Konare ceded power to the winner of the latest election, Amadou Toumani Toure (known as ATT). USAID/Mali played a strong role in organizing and observing this election and the peaceful transfer of power, a rarity in African politics. USAID/Mali's Democracy Officer Kojo Busia, who was intimately involved in the process for two years prior to the poll, recently took some questions from BAM! on the state of democracy in Mali.*

**Mali is one of just four countries in West Africa to have undergone a peaceful transition from one elected civilian government to another. But does that make a democracy?**

Though Mali has passed the first test in the consolidation of its democracy, elections are only the beginning. But Mali has all the ingredients that should sustain it. There is a high degree of tolerance and acceptance of different ideas coming from the various parties, and a high degree of consensus amongst its diverse ethnic groups, which is uniquely Malian and precedes colonialism. There is an inherent cultural value system that was repressed by the two post-colonial authoritarian administrations that ruled Mali for three decades that has been rediscovered as the foundation for democratic governance. This is why I believe democracy is irreversible in Mali.

**How would you characterize last year's election on democratic terms?**

The election was for the most part free, fair and transparent. It was conducted in an atmosphere of trust and confidence-building. The real challenge was the logistical aspect. Mali is an enormous country with very limited resources. Despite all the effort, it was not possible to have an administratively perfect election. To evaluate an election, you don't just look at Election Day, but the 18 months preceding it. I credit the former administration with keeping the donors involved at every stage, which added to the election's credibility. They truly did try their best against all odds.

**What was USAID's role in the election?**

We were the leader in terms of donor coordination. We put together a technical group that met regularly to review the state of electoral preparedness. USAID and the American Embassy also led other Missions in terms of dialogue with the Minister in charge of the elections. We supplied more than 100 monitors, including some prominent Americans, among them a state governor and several ex-congressmen. We organized all other Western Missions for a briefing two days after the election to compare our observations across the country. Then-US Ambassador Michael Ranneberger was highly engaged and was looked to for leadership throughout the election period. As Secretary of State Powell rightly said when he visited Mali in 2001, Malian democracy is an example to the rest of the developing world, and we helped to ensure that it remained as such.

**Assess the quality of the political debate prior to the poll.**

That was the weakest element in the process. Malian parties are not strong institutionally in that sense. Debate on the issues facing the country was not as well focused as it could have

been. USAID helped the various parties to focus on the key issues they wished to present. We also funded a televised debate among the principal candidates. If Malian democracy is to flourish, it needs institutionally strong political parties. Most of them are built around personalities (although surprisingly, ethnicity is not a big factor for support) and they need to increase their institutional capacity to campaign and offer alternatives.

**What kind of president is ATT compared with Alpha Oumar Konare?**

Well, Konare was a man of ideas and governed as sort of a philosopher-king. He was a very good international salesman for Mali. He was also a pan-Africanist of sort, having invested a lot of time seeking and promoting peace and security in the sub-region, and was respected among African, Muslim and Western countries alike. [In July, Konare was elected as the first president of the African Union-Ed.] As a former soldier, ATT is more of a pragmatist. He has a very strong grassroots appeal, and an egalitarian approach to development, if you like. Both are equally dedicated to democracy and both have good leadership qualities.

**African democracies are notoriously vulnerable to coups that can undo years of progress in one fell swoop. Is Malian democracy as fragile as that?**

No, I think Malian democracy is irreversible in many ways. In a national conference held after the departure of the dictator in 1991, Malians categorically chose to govern themselves democratically under a Constitution. Malians would rather die in defense of democracy than betray it. I cannot imagine Malians allowing a *coup d'état* in the foreseeable future.

**What's the greatest challenge to keeping democracy flourishing in Mali?**

As I said, the country is institutionally weak to build a properly functioning pluralistic democracy. If democracy means following the rules of the game in a philosophical sense, then Malian democracy is very strong for the reasons I have already mentioned; however, democratic governance depends on the quality of the institutions and how they are able to affect the well being of citizens. This is why decentralization is the basis of democracy in Mali, because it is the only means of ensuring sustainable development. Mali cannot afford to have decentralization fail, because it provides the legitimacy for democracy. The principal threat to democracy in Mali is the peoples' disillusionment with decentralization as a system of legitimate local governance.

*(Continued on page 5)*



Photo: Dramane Coulibaly

**KUDOS—Kojo Busia receives an award from USAID Director Pamela White for his work on the Malian election.**

# CLICs Connect Remote Mali to World of Information

**DJENNE**—“Communications are at the very heart of development today,” announced Alassane Diallo, prefect of this historic Malian city, at a recent public forum. USAID agrees. So much so, in fact, that the Mission’s Communications for Development team is developing a series of Community Learning and Information Centers (CLICs) in more than a dozen provincial towns far from the capital Bamako.

Providing communities the information resources needed for local educational, economic, social, cultural and personal development will accelerate growth, reduce poverty and raise standards of living – touching on all the Mission’s objectives.

Each center will link remote towns to the world through the Internet, as well as telephone, fax (where available), and WorldSpace radio. Computers with CD-burning capability will supply useful information to villagers, as will TV-VCRs. The centers will also serve as multi-purpose training, learning, and meeting hubs, and teach resource utilization and management of the centers.

CLICs could, for example, help health workers find information and training on the latest techniques and treatments, give teachers access to the latest information on methodology and curricula, provide multimedia programs on women’s issues, and give the population opportunities to correspond with family members around the world.

USAID Communications Activity Manager Martine Keïta strongly believes Africa has an acute need for widespread Internet access, as the continent generally lacks the rich variety of information sources elsewhere.

“If we are to fill this information gap,” Keïta contends, “Internet must be made accessible to as many Africans

as possible. In spite of the many obstacles to accessing technology here, many Malians already use the Internet when they can afford it, but many more need to. Imagine what we could do if these CLICs help more people overcome those obstacles.”

Amadou Camara, of Djenné’s Cultural Mission, thinks CLICs can help Mali create a stronger presence on the web, exposing the country’s many treasures such as his town’s historic mosque, the legendary Timbuktu, and the spectacular cliffs of the Dogon plateau, to the tourist world.

Abdoul Karim Maïga, president of an NGO in Djenné, said the potential for pooling so much information will facilitate cooperation amongst development agencies and make information much more accessible—particularly to local youth and women.

“We have been waiting for something to help us to disseminate reliable information,” local educator Alidji Maïga said. “We are ready to help any way we can.”— ED



Photo: Elise DeLancey

**INFORMATION CENTER**—*The Bandiagara City Hall will house one of the new USAID-designed Community Learning and Information Centers planned across Mali.*

## Election . . . (continued from page 4)

### What is your assessment of the decentralization process at this point?

We are on the right path in terms of instituting and sustaining decentralization. The structures are in place, and the elected leaders taking on their various roles. Associations of mayors and other groups of elected officials are trained in their roles and functioning as they should. Civil society is strong and aware of its rights and responsibilities, as well as its role in the democratic process. The upcoming local elections will serve as a sort of referendum on how the process has gone thus far. A high rate of return of sitting officials will indicate that the public supports the direction in which the government is taking the country.

We should be optimistic that the process will continue to unfold successfully. I long to return to Mali ten years down the road to take a look at Malian democracy and I think I would be proud to see that progress has been made as a result of our new strategy. I feel fortunate to have been able to make a modest contribution to Malian democracy over the last three years. I have enjoyed working with a skilled and dedicated Democratic Governance Team. They’re simply the best.—ZT

# Sugar Partnership Promises Economic Boon

*New refinery could earn \$2 million a year in exports and create 5,000 jobs*

**SEGOU**—With a design based on the Global Development Alliance approach, USAID/Mali has taken an unprecedented step of developing a private-public partnership with the host government and independent investors to help boost the national economy and reduce Mali's dependence on imports.

The \$216 million sugar production and processing enterprise, being developed in partnership among USAID, the government of Mali and the Louisiana-based firm Schaffer & Associates is also expected to attract more foreign investment here.



**ECONOMIC HARVEST**—*The new sugar plantation near Segou is expected create as many as 5,000 new jobs.*

The project consists of developing newly irrigated land, planting fields with high quality, modern sugar cane varieties, and building a new factory near Markala. The factory will have the capacity to process 8,000 tons of raw sugar

cane per day, resulting in an annual production of 170,000 tons of refined sugar. The plant, which will provide up to 5,000 new jobs, will be constructed on land to be developed with river water from the Markala Dam reservoir near Segou. About 3,000 of the new jobs will be permanent and 2,000 will be seasonal.

USAID is contributing \$892,000 to the project to support Mali's National Agricultural Research Institute in upgrading its sugar cane research program to identify and test the most productive varieties. This amount is being matched by the Malian government and Schaffer & Associates.

"The agency's contribution will be limited to financing preliminary sugar cane research on varietal trends, topography and irrigation," USAID/Mali's Program Officer Mervyn Farroe explained. "This will have a catalytic effect, helping Schaffer and the government to sell the project to the strategic investors and lending institutions necessary to finance the plant."

The project is expected to stimulate Mali's economy through import substitution, employment and exports. The increased sugar production should completely satisfy domestic demand, and may generate a surplus for sale in nearby West African markets, generating up to \$2 million per year in export earnings. The project will also develop a plan to effectively utilize byproducts of sugar production as a source of energy for both households and industry.

The Mali Mission sees the project as a huge potential success that will stimulate further foreign investment. The project has the highest level of support from the government of Mali, which is so enthusiastic that it has already begun constructing the irrigation canals with its own funds. —ZT

## Community Radio Effective as Development Tool

**KANGABA**—USAID Mali has been investing in the community radio sector since 1996, under its information and communications special objective. Today, Mali boasts nearly 150 private radio stations, the most in the region.

USAID has taken advantage of these radio stations to disseminate development information via radio campaigns. These have included programming on the recent presidential and legislative elections, HIV/AIDS and educational issues. Training sessions provide radio producers with skills required to produce radio messages on those topics.

In 1996, USAID Mali launched its new seven-year country development strategy, which included a special objective called Information and Communica-

tions. This aimed at enhancing access to and improving the use of information by providing funding and technical support for Internet, community radio and telecommunications policy activities in Mali.

The first activity undertaken in the radio sector was a roundtable meeting of donors, local and international NGOs and government agencies on the topic of radio and development. USAID soon discovered



Photo: Dennis Bilodeau

**COMMUNITY RADIO**—*URTEL president Fily Keïta (center) and two assistants pause during a radio show in Kangaba.*

that there was virtually no coordination of donor and international organization ac-

*(Continued on page 7)*



# Taking the Fight Against AIDS to the Streets

## *Survey seeks to close 'bridge' between high-risk groups and general population*

**BAMAKO**—Professional sex workers, street vendors, maids, truck drivers, and ticket-touts throughout Mali were interviewed in this year's Integrated STI and HIV Behavior Survey (ISBS), a US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) survey financed by USAID and performed with the help of the Malian Health Ministry.

"These high-risk groups," said Aïda Lö, USAID/Mali's AIDS specialist, "are of particular concern in Mali's fight to keep its comparatively low infection-rate from rising." Due to their high mobility and the nature of their professions, these five groups have high exposure to STIs and are considered "bridging populations."

Their relations with regular and non-regular partners facilitate the passing on of HIV and other STIs to non-infected populations. It is for this reason that the CDC believed it important to track behavior trends and the impact of behavior-change communication activities in Mali.

By finding effective methods of creating awareness about prevention among these high-risk groups, the government hopes that Mali will be able to maintain its cur-

rent low prevalence and perhaps even reduce it.

"It is vital," contends Lö, "that we find ways to attack the HIV problem in Mali *before* prevalence reaches such dire levels as those that we find in Central and Southern Africa. Through awareness programs and other methods of prevention, we can avoid such dire situations."

The first anonymous survey took place in 2000, and will be repeated every three years. The survey consists of a questionnaire, and blood and urine samples. Both of the samples are voluntary. The questionnaire researches sexual behavior and condom use, and the samples will be tested for HIV, syphilis, and other STIs. Tests will be matched with the questionnaires, and participants can get the results for free, if they so desire. They also

may receive free post-test counseling if they so choose.

Participants were given condoms and a tube of lubricant for their time and efforts. "We really hope that the results of these surveys will help us find better, more efficient ways of creating awareness about HIV and STIs in Mali. The results will bring us one step closer to winning the fight against AIDS in this country," said Lö —**ED**



Photo: Elise DeLancey

**QUESTIONS**—An ISBS survey worker (right) poses a series of questions about AIDS awareness to a Bamako bar girl.

## **Community Radio . . .** (Continued from page 6)

tivities in the sector, and that indeed, most organizations working with radio as a development tool knew very little about what others were doing.

In response, USAID created a Radio and Development Coordination Committee, which meets regularly and now includes 19 member organizations (including all the major donors, several UN agencies, and many local and international organizations). This committee provides a venue for exchanging ideas and collaborating on common programs.

USAID then concentrated on strengthening the nascent association of private FM radio stations, URTEL. USAID provided institutional support by training senior staff of URTEL in organizational and financial management, advocacy and outreach. USAID then awarded several grants to URTEL for training of member radio station staff and other radio and development-related services.

Mali has an impressive number of private FM radio stations (144 as of early 2003), but has no easy way of getting information to these stations, or of sharing and exchanging information. To alleviate this shortcoming, USAID/Mali is fund-

ing a national radio program, using WorldSpace technology. This is a digital broadcasting system using satellites to diffuse signals throughout Africa. A WorldSpace receiver picks up audio signals from the satellite, which are then rebroadcast on the FM band. The system also allows broadcasting of multimedia content (in the form of a web page), which can be downloaded to computers in areas having no telephone service.

To take advantage of this system, USAID has distributed about 60 WorldSpace receivers to radio stations throughout Mali. Starting soon, a weekly radio program in local languages will be broadcast over the network to these radio stations. The program will be devoted to development themes (health, family planning, HIV/AIDS, education, agriculture, natural resource management, governance and democracy, etc.), and will be hosted by a different community radio station each week.

The program, which will be produced by a professional radio producer, will include drama, comedy, music, story-telling and other radio communication techniques designed to attract listeners. URTEL (the Malian association of private FM radio stations) will produce and distribute the material. This weekly program will be open to development organizations, including Peace Corps Mali. It will offer volunteers a unique opportunity to provide information on their activities to a national audience. —**Dennis Bilodeau**

# USAID Joins in 103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Malian Festival

*Mission marks traditional Niger cattle crossing with support of new market*

**DJALLOUBE**—For countless centuries, the nomadic herdsmen of Central Mali's Niger River fought bloody ethnic clashes amongst themselves for control of the region's grazing land, its vast agricultural flood plains and other natural resources.

But by the early 1800s, one chieftain emerged strong enough to bring the combative tribes to live in harmony in the mighty river's vast inland delta.

In 1821, Sekou Amadou, leader of the Peul tribe, finally brought peace to the region. Calling a general assembly of the various ethnic groups known as a *dina*, chieftains developed strategies for cooperative sharing of the land and livestock management under Sekou's leadership.

Using their Islamic faith as a communal base, the delegates divided the region amongst the herdsmen, fishermen and farmers, established land use protocols and standardized fees to be levied by the respective "masters" of water, land and pasture.

Each year at the start of the hot season, the vast cattle herds would come together to cross the Niger River near the town of Djalloube so they could graze in the fertile fields near Lake Debo.

Eventually, this annual crossing became a symbolic and festive time, when ethnic groups celebrated their diverse cultures, fraternity and economic cooperation. During the festivals, herders would share ideas and information to help improve the economic situation for all.

The first official festival, known as the *Degal Diali*, was held in 1900 and has



Photo: Oxfam

**CATTLE CROSSING**—*The traditional livestock crossing of the Niger River at Djalloube dates back centuries, and has been occasion for an annual festival celebrating the ethnic harmony of Mali's people for more than a century.*

continued ever since. At this year's annual celebration, President Amadou Toumani Touré attended the ceremony, the first time for an elected Malian leader. Guests of honor included US Ambassador to Mali Vicki Huddleston and USAID Director Pamela White.

Keeping the tradition of marking the event by efforts to improve the efficiency of livestock management in the region, the trio laid a cornerstone for a new cattle market building in Djalloube.

USAID donated \$25,000 to the project, which will be matched by the local commune. The new cattle complex will include a vaccination center, loading ramp, veterinarian pharmacy and an ani-

mal feed warehouse.

"The benchmarks laid by the Dina are socio-historical assets of inestimable value," noted USAID Livestock Management Specialist Cheick Drame, who recently researched the event. "This market will remain an eloquent testimony of the American government's involvement with Mali's economic and social development," he said.

For more than a century, the spectacle of the river crossing, where thousands of cattle enter the water at once, has remained a vivid symbol of the ethnic harmony amongst Mali's cultural mosaic: an example of the fraternity binding the country together, diverse yet unified.

—ZT

## USAID/Mali

***"Reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth through partnerships."***

**Pamela White**, Mission Director  
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**Mervyn Farroe**, Program Officer  
**Steve Cowper**, Executive Officer  
**Marcus Johnson**, Acquisition & Assistance Officer  
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