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USAID AWARDS \$1.9 MILLION TO VEGA TO SUPPORT MICROFINANCE IN LEBANON

USAID recently awarded VEGA \$1.9 million to support USAID's current economic growth portfolio in Lebanon by responding to the high demand for microfinance and stimulating an economic revival of poor communities.

The Lebanon Investment in Microfinance program will provide and administer grants ranging between \$350,000 and \$600,000 to capable microfinance institutions, NGOs and other providers of micro-credit loans. These institutions will then disburse the loans to micro-enterprises in the tourism, ICT and agribusiness sectors. To meet the goals and objectives of the program, VEGA's member organization, the [International Executive Service Corps \(IESC\)](#) is leading the program with a mobilized team of member organizations including the [Financial Services Volunteer Corps \(FSVC\)](#) and the [International Senior Lawyers Project \(ISLP\)](#).

IESC will identify microfinance institutions with proven ability to channel loans to qualifying borrowers, monitor and track the loans and collect impact data. These loans

will be utilized to establish new businesses and build capacity in existing businesses in rural and peri-urban areas of Lebanon. The program expects to deliver micro-loans, increase incomes and create jobs within the first quarter of implementation.

In addition to delivering grants, the program will also provide cost-effective technical assistance to MFI sub-grantees, covering topics such as MFI loan officer training and improvement of business development services. Specifically, the Financial Services Volunteer Corps will provide technical assistance on microfinance industry best practices while the International Senior Lawyer's Project (ISLP) will supply assistance on MFI legislative and regulatory issues in order to enhance regulation and cooperation among microfinance institutions in Lebanon.

For more information on VEGA, please visit our website at www.vegaalliance.org. For more information on USAID/Lebanon, please visit <http://www.usaid.gov/lb/>.

ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA INTEREST IN LOCAL INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES GROWS

VEGA's Ethiopia AGOA+ program, funded by USAID and implemented by the International Executive Service Corps (IESC), supports Ethiopian enterprises in increasing exports to the United States under the African Growth and Opportunities Act.

Recently, the AGOA+ program created a new initiative, the Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI) Project, which aims to encourage Diaspora to invest in Ethiopia and assist local women start and grow their businesses by facilitating access to credit. The program has received over 200 interested applicants and has established relationships with banks and financial institutions.

In order to better market the opportunity, the DDI team plans to conduct a seminar for the US based Diaspora community in early summer of 2009. The purpose of the seminar is to increase the visibility of the DDI project among the Diaspora community and stimulate interest in investing in their home country.

The DDI project has:

- Received 54 applications with financing requests of over \$26 million.
- Submitted eleven Diaspora projects to financial institutions for approval, requesting about \$6.5 million in financing. One loan for \$845,455 has been approved and three loans totaling \$1,636,363 are in the final stages of approval.
- Provided training to investors to ensure that applications meet bank requirements.
- Been the source of new business partnerships between local producers and foreign purchasers, particularly in the coffee industry.
- Created opportunities for Diaspora to form partnerships with other foreign investors to produce and market products globally.
- Positively impacted the local community by stimulating the formation of new businesses which create local jobs and producing tax revenues for the government.

RESULTS FROM THE FIELD: ACHIEVING ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN SOUTHERN SUDAN



Valerie Stinger provides training on the Importance of Health in a workshop entitled "Skills to protect your Business"

VEGA's Agricultural Marketing and Enterprise Development (AMED) program was designed to help achieve comprehensive economic recovery and growth in the presently fragile state of Southern Sudan. Member organization, Winrock International led the VEGA/AMED team.

The program objective was aligned with the USAID/Sudan strategy to promote stability, recovery and democratic reform. VEGA/AMED implemented activities in: agriculture, livelihood development, microenterprise development, capacity building and employment generation.

Achievements

The VEGA/AMED project significantly impacted agricultural development, microenterprise development and government capacity building during its three years. VEGA worked with local level institutions whose actions had immediate impacts on the livelihoods and reintegration of persons affected by war.

The efforts of VEGA/AMED enhanced the capacity of local community, country

and state level government and civil society and resulted in increased private sector opportunities. Below are a few highlights of the program's achievements.

Agricultural Development

- Delivered agricultural training and technical assistance to more than 1,200 individuals (25% women) with host organizations consisting of agribusinesses, cooperatives, associations and government bodies who were introduced to improved agricultural practices including new technologies, and improved methods of productions.
- Assisted with the formation and registration of farmers associations whose members have reported an increase of 250% in sales. The average returns for group members rose from around US\$1,200 per season to around US\$3,000 for the 2007/2008 season. This was achieved primarily through better farm management and timely marketing of produce.

Microenterprise Development

- Provided technical assistance and training in the construction sector, from furniture to large scale carpentry and masonry, to road construction. The business and technical training provided to one construction company resulted in the winning of a bid for a large scale road construction project. The bid resulted in creation of 20 jobs for the construction business.
- Trained 83 workshop participants mainly in vocational skills such as carpentry and joinery, plumbing, electrical wiring, metal works and metal fabrication, building and construction work.
- Helped a Shea Butter processing business to develop a business plan, conduct a market survey, and ultimately launch a successful opening day event which resulted in more than US\$1,500 in sales. Additional technical assistance was provided in market assessment, financial analysis and budgeting and marketing plans. This resulted in the business securing clients in the export market and boosting its sales by 15%. The operational cost for running the business decreased by 24%; this was achieved through the cost-benefit analysis.
- Improved the hygiene, sanitation and general food service operations at three cafeterias. Prior to the program involvement, the cafeterias' revenues were US\$150

(average) per month. After the improvements, the cafeterias' monthly revenues increased from US\$150 to US\$4,500 per month. Also the average income per worker increased from US\$85 to per month to US\$123 per month.

Government Capacity Building

- Assisted the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Supply to expand trade, establish private sector development and develop new trade licenses. As a result, 100 new import licenses worth US\$150,000 were issued in 6 months and 750 Sudanese became indirectly employed as importers, construction workers and ministry staff.
- Led training workshops in leadership and institutional management, business administration and bookkeeping. 27% of the district chairwomen attended the trainings to learn how to improve their managerial skills.
- Offered computer skills training to workers in government ministries, chambers of commerce, computer training center staff, women groups and individuals; out of 87 participants, 32 were females.

VEGA's primary method to impact change in these areas was through the provision of volunteer technical assistance. The program utilized the expertise of 136 short-and long-term volunteers from the U.S. Sudanese Diaspora and the East Africa regions as well as that of paid consultants and technical staff.

VEGA LONG TERM BUSINESS ADVISER PROMOTES WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN JORDAN



Participants at the Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED) Conference.
Photo Source: Business Development Center

In 2008, VEGA deployed a Business Linkages and Capacity Building Advisor, Michael Byrne, selected by Implementing Organizations, the Institute of International Education's Emerging Markets Development Advisers Program.

The Business Linkages and Capacity Building Advisor supports Jordan's [Business Development Center \(BDC\)](#), which works to increase the competitive-

ness, productivity, and market outreach of Jordanian private sector firms.

The Business Linkages and Capacity Building Advisor's primary duties entail:

- Business Development, Solidifying partnerships,
- Managing client relationships,
- Developing and implementing action plans, and

- Implementing and assessing the regional Business Conference.

Recent Achievements

Recently, the adviser was instrumental in organizing the Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED) Conference, a three day event that aimed to create linkages, share knowledge and identify support strategies for the Arab region to tap into the potential of its female entrepreneurs.

The BDC co-organized the event, along with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization. The WED conference, which took place from April 27 –29, 2009, was the first of its kind in the Arab region to bring together female entrepreneurs, investors interested in funding female ventures as well as support organizations that stimu-

late womens' businesses in the region.

The conference aimed to identify the main challenges facing female entrepreneurs in both policy and practice, provide networking opportunities, initiate and strengthen existing partnerships and increase women's access to finance.

The conference attracted 170 female participants from 16 countries including Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Canada, the UK, USA, Italy and Switzerland.

Participants developed connections between businesswomen in Amman and the governorates, sparked synergies and created links between female entrepreneurs, support organizations and investors in the Arab region.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Each year National Volunteer Week presents an opportunity for nonprofits to commemorate their volunteers. In 2009, this week took place from April 19-25. This year's theme was "Celebrating People in Action."

Last year, during National Volunteer Week, VEGA recognized volunteers from VEGA and Member Organization projects by awarding them the President's Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) and the VEGA Service Impact Award. The awardees submitted photos from their volunteer assignments in a VEGA photo contest.

The winner, Cathryn Kloetzli, is a Winrock International volunteer who was recognized for her specialized technical assistance in agricultural development and pest management.

She provided assistance to farmers in Kyrgyzstan and Nepal. In Osh, Kyrgyzstan, she worked with small-scale garden and fruit tree farmers belonging to Water User's Associations. WUAs are a self-managing group of community members who manage, maintain and operate the local water supply to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of this resource to reduce

conflict and build social stability. She helped increase yields and profits by streamlining farmers' water use and production techniques and conducting trainings in disease management, alternative pesticides, fertilization and soil health.

In Pokhara, Nepal, she introduced Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques for greenhouse tomato production. Training in IPM techniques addressed problems resulting from lack of crop rotation and fallow periods. The use of these techniques will improve yields and profitability and protect the farmers from sig-

nificant crop loss due to pest damage.

Member Organizations who would like to recognize their volunteers by awarding the President's Volunteer Service Awards can visit the website below for more information:

www.presidentialserviceawards.gov



Cathryn Kloetzli, conducting a seminar in Kyrgyzstan on global agriculture practices.

Director's Corner



In March and April, I conducted outreach trips to USAID field missions in Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Philippines. During my meetings with USAID officials, I promoted the VEGA LWA and the capabilities of VEGA

Member Organizations' efforts to enhance economic growth in the Asia region.

As a result of these outreach trips, we are anticipating receipt of a request for application to provide economic growth support to the conflict areas of Sri Lanka. This \$1.8 million program also includes capacity development at the provincial level. Our anticipated start date is most likely midsummer 2009 and we believe this to be a three year initiative. The final design has been completed and is being processed internally within USAID, prior to its release to VEGA.

Continued growth is a significant focus for us, having completed our fifth year of operations. Shortly, our 2008 Annual Report will be concluded and posted on our web site, www.vegaalliance.org, which I encourage you to visit when you have a moment.

Kind Regards,

VEGA

The 14 member strong Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance has made tremendous progress worldwide. With the support of more than 65,000 volunteer experts and professional in-house staff we've undertaken 17 projects in 21 countries constituting \$48 million of activities that span all USAID regions. VEGA holds a Leader with Associates (LWA) cooperative agreement with USAID through which it provides services of its membership organizations.

VEGA MEMBERS

VEGA members include the best in international development and have substantial experience and records of accomplishment across the spectrum of economic development programs, business sector development in particular.

- ACDI/VOCA
- ◆
- Citizens Development Corps (CDC)
- ◆
- CNFA
- ◆
- Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas, Inc. (FAVACA)
- ◆
- Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC)
- ◆
- IIE/Emerging Markets Development Advisers Program (EMDAP)
- ◆
- International Executive Service Corps (IESC)
- ◆
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
- ◆
- International Real Property Foundation (IRPF)
- ◆
- International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP)
- ◆
- Land O'Lakes, International Development
- ◆
- Opportunities Industrialization Center International (OICI)
- ◆
- Partners of the Americas
- ◆
- Winrock International

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