



AROUND THE VEGA OFFICE

VEGA Updates Land O'Lakes International Development on Current Operations

The VEGA staff and implementing organization representatives were pleased to update senior staff members of Land O'Lakes on VEGA's past and current operations, and on its plans for the future during a Land O'Lakes planning and training session held in Rosslyn, Virginia on April 1. The presentation was made at the invitation of Tom Verdoorn, Vice President, Land O'Lakes, International Development Division, and of Michael Parr, Director, Technical Resources and Global Support (and member of the VEGA Board of Directors). VEGA Executive Director Earl Yates and Project Management and Support Officer Lee Warren provided information that would enable Land O'Lakes to pursue new business opportunities in which it can become active as a VEGA implementing organization.



The most engaging element of the presentation was the update and question and answer exchange carried out by two member organization representatives who shared their perspective as implementing organizations. They discussed pursuing new business through VEGA as well as providing technical services to USAID Missions as part of a VEGA team. Winrock's Enterprise and Agriculture Group Vice President David Norman shared his organization's business acquisition and project implementation experience as the prime implementing organization for VEGA's Agricultural Markets and Enterprise Development Project in Southern Sudan, currently VEGA's largest project. ACDI/VOCA's Senior Director of Programs Mark Freeman described his organization's experience with the Community Development Agriculture Program in Afghanistan, VEGA's newest project.

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

Development Impact through Citizen Diplomacy: Celebrating Five Years of VEGA

Date: Wednesday, April 30, 2008
Time: 4-7 pm
Place: Rotunda, 8th Floor, Ronald Regan Building and International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue

Scheduled Keynote Speaker: Congressman Christopher Shays
[\(click here to read bio\)](#)

Development Impact through Citizen Diplomacy is a public awareness and volunteerism promotion event and an opportunity to recognize the capabilities of VEGA's member organizations. We will specifically recognize the achievements of our volunteers, and the role they play as citizen diplomats.

We also plan to show an excerpt of the film **"A Partnership for Prosperity: Public Servants in Southern Sudan,"** produced by VEGA's Agricultural Marketing and Enterprise Development (AMED) project in Southern Sudan.

The invited audience includes representatives from Federal agencies including USAID, development professionals as well as congressional officers.

Come learn more about the work of Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance and its Member Organizations.

If you would like to attend, please RSVP to dpayne@vegaalliance.org.

If you are a VEGA Member Organization that has not yet sent a list of people International Development Agency Officials that you would like VEGA to Invite to this event on your behalf, please do so by sending an e-mail to dpayne@vegaalliance.org.



**OTHER
UPCOMING
EVENTS**

National Volunteer Week
April 27—May 3, 2008

VEGA Board Meeting
12:00 –3:00pm, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

VEGA Volunteer Luncheon
12:00—1:30pm, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

ACVFA Public Meeting
Wednesday, June 4, 2008, Atlanta, Georgia

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Diaspora Returnee Brings New Technology to His Old Home

Normally, a corner location in a roundabout on a road passed by many travelers would be a perfect location for a business. But when the business is in non-descript building surrounded by a high-fence with shrubs, with the All Saints Cathedral Anglican Church, one of the largest buildings in Juba, in the background, the place goes from ideal to challenging.

This was just one of many problems facing **Stan Lasu, a Southern Sudanese Diaspora returnee who spent 17 years in the US.**

Though Stan lived in sunny California where the beaches are beautiful and weather is always great, Stan always knew he wanted to come back to his motherland. Stan started Venus Computer and Learning Institute, a learning center that combines computer skills training; internet usage; English; and Juba Arabic training.

Stan was faced with several problems, namely low awareness in the community, lack of tools, and not much diversity in his business. Venus had no recognizable signs outside the building or on the road. The inconsistent power supply provided by the government and his generator caused clients to lose their work when the computer shut-down and damaged his computers.

Stan reached out to VEGA for assistance. VEGA and Venus conducted joint meetings to determine the best route to profitability. Venus has a superior staff that provides personal service, excellent technical skills training, and the latest equipment, but people didn't yet realize this.

The action plan included starting with his base: women in the Mothers Union, owners of the building Venus is located in, and people at All Saints Cathedral Anglican Church. Announcements were made at the Mothers Union meetings and during service at the large All Saints Cathedral Anglican Church. Stan was also overlooking the large NGO population in Juba. Many NGO workers in Juba want to learn Juba Arabic. VEGA provided a flyer and a marketing plan to attract NGOs, which included sending out e-mails on the NGO list serves, posting flyers at camps and restaurants frequented by NGOs, and making face-to face contacts.



Learning institute provides much needed services for Sudanese Nationals and Expatriates

Venus is now offering classes for NGOs, including a recent class for UNDP. They have also been providing Arabic classes for NGOs, including new staff with VEGA who are interested in learning Juba Arabic.

A grant from VEGA also provided power supply units that allow the computers to continue running when the power shuts down. This prevents the computers from being damaged and clients from losing their work. Servers were brought in to network the computers so that programs could be loaded to fit all of the computers. Clients can now also communicate visually with family and friends overseas with the addition of video cameras connected to the computer.

Stan has received new clients from the All Saints Cathedral Anglican Church, and has even advertised on the radio. Clients are now offered cold beverages to ensure their visits are as pleasant as possible.

Stan has many challenges to face, but his goals of offering long distance training will soon be realized, and he is currently making an important contribution to the community.



The VEGA-Ethiopia AGOA+ Program continued assisting enterprises to access market opportunities. During this month, the program, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Textile and Garment Manufacturers Association (ETGMA) organized a half day B2B briefing seminar for leading Ethiopian companies from the textile and garment sector. A total of ten companies engaged in the production of fabrics and apparel participated.

Business-to-Business (B2B) Event

Ethiopian Companies briefed about the upcoming Business-to-Business (B2B) Event which will take place in Pretoria, South Africa, on May 20th and 21st, 2008.

The overall objective of the upcoming B2B event is to pre-match companies that can generate sales, source, outsource or even form joint ventures and initiate investments. Delegates attend to generate business and develop linkages. Invitations will be extended again this year, on a larger and targeted scale to approximately 15 to 20 Retailers and Sourcing Houses from the US, EU and Africa. Selected manufacturers from Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia will also be invited.

The B2B event will be sponsored by the USAID Southern Africa, East/Central Africa and the West Africa Trade Hubs. The briefing was done by Mr. Joop de Voest, MPCs and Textile & Apparel Value Chain Leader SATH (Southern Africa) and WATH (West Africa Trade Hub). If the companies are going to benefit from this 4th B2B event, they should fill out a questionnaire designed for screening purposes. The VEGA-Ethiopia program is helping as many companies as possible to qualify for the event.

THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COMMONS



The GDC Homepage

www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/gdc/

Online Global Knowledge Sharing Presented at the Feb 28, 2008 ACVFA Public Meeting

Current Online EGAT (Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade) funded and supported Development Websites

- www.framework.org
- www.glp.net
- www.microlinks.org
- www.povertyfrontiers.org
- www.businessgrowthinitiative.org
- www.servir.net
- <http://qesdb.usaid.gov/index.html>

The **Global Development Commons**, a new initiative launched by Director of US Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore, aims to use information technology and web communication to unify the development world. It will serve as a network and space for the exchange of ideas and the formation of partnerships.

The official Q&A about GDC distributed by USAID explains how the GDC will work: "The GDC organizes, clusters and links web sites, intranets, and other online development-oriented communities using the latest IT tools to search for information ("Google-like"), facilitate dialogue (Blog and Wiki Q&A-like), and trade or exchange ("Craig's List-like"). The physical components of the GDC — meetings and forums such as the global HIV/AIDS conference and joint donor-recipient country planning processes — will gather relevant stakeholders to discuss and share ideas with members of the commons. When these communities are linked together, they create a landscape of existing development-oriented information sites (both physical and virtual), stakeholders, and practitioners. The GDC works much like a "library, chat-room, Q & A session, marketplace, and conference" all in one."

*USAID does not "own" the GDC, nor does any other agency or organization, rather, there are multiple stakeholders with shared responsibility, some more active than others.

USAID's Official Global Development Commons Q&A

1. What is it?

The Global Development Commons (GDC) is the space where development actors unite — physically and virtually — to gather and exchange ideas and services, communicate and form partnerships.

2. What does it do?

The GDC unites all those with a stake in development — from end-users/beneficiaries to governments, to partners, to citizens — into a seamless and accessible world wide web, both real and virtual, making it easier for developing countries and their citizens to find solutions and resources that match their development needs.

AROUND THE VEGA OFFICE—JOB OPENING

VEGA Seeks Development and Sustainability Officer (DSO)

Responsibilities and Tasks

The DSO will inform and lead VEGA's on-going development and sustainability efforts. This will include planning and management of outreach activities, and acquisition of new business - from present and future clients.

Reporting to the Executive Director and working in close coordination with all other VEGA staff members, as well as with sub-contractor and Member Organization staff, the DSO will advise and support the Executive Director's leadership of VEGA's evolving outreach and business development efforts. Utilizing his/her business development experience and expertise, the DSO will formulate strategies for extending VEGA's business development reach to the full international economic development community, and for securing unrestricted sources of funding for VEGA's operations.

The first undertaking and product of the DSO will be a Sustainability Plan that first assesses VEGA's positioning among its competitors, then formulates a strategy and action plan for making VEGA a more competitive services provider in its present market, as well as in newly-developed markets.

Main Job Responsibility:

- Manage the actions needed to execute the Development and Sustainability Plan - Work with the VEGA staff, Member Organization staff, and with the members of the Outreach Committee of the Board of Di-

rectors to achieve the goal of this Plan, with a view to solidifying VEGA's services delivery capacity and competitiveness to the broadest possible range of development community client organizations, and to implementation periods beyond February 2009

Professional Experience and Skills

Applicants for the Development and Sustainability Officer position should have the following qualifications:

- Minimum of fifteen (15) years of experience in developing, managing and marketing technical assistance, training and related project management services to USAID and other U.S. and international development agencies;
- Experience and demonstrated skill in oral and written communications, and organizational representation;
- Experience and skill in operation of Micro Soft Suite software;
- Advanced or professional degree in business, business management, marketing, economic development.
- Other relevant experience in resource development/fundraising in the non-US Government sector would be a plus

Please forward your resume, cover letter and salary history to eva@flaginternational.com

The full job description is posted on Idealist.org, The Washington Post and Development Executive Group (www.developmentex.com).

VEGA Long Term Business Advisor's Past Assignment in Lebanon

VEGA LTBA/MBAEC Assignment

VEGA Long Term Business Advisers (LTBAs) serve under two Member Organization programs, one of these is the Citizen's Development Corps (CDC) MBA Executive Corps Program (MBAEC)

In the spring of 2005, an MBAEC team in Lebanon was assigned to assess the needs of rural Lebanese communities and citizens and evaluate USAID's efforts at satisfying some of these needs through a service delivery system of contracting with American and Lebanese non-profits. The assignment involved interviewing Lebanese citizens — elected and appointed municipal officials, school system representatives, officials from non-profit organizations, the business community, and others — to learn about their needs and use the knowledge to develop a study of USAID's service delivery initiatives. The main purpose was to identify any gaps between the needs and services. The deliverable was the preparation of a report that the CDC team would draft for submission to USAID for their consideration. CDC contracted José E. Martinez as a Municipal Expert because of his experience as a professional planner and consultant at the local and regional government level for over 30 years.



José E. Martinez (center) conducting a focus group; Ms. Denise Abou Zeid, Arabic translator (far left); Ms. Svetlana Loginova (right) and Mr. Charles Abdallah, Lebanese Economist and Consultant.

Professional Career before LTBA/ MBAEC

José E. Martinez has experience in comprehensive and strategic planning, municipal operating and capital improvement budgeting. He was the Executive Director of a Business Improvement District in Austin, Texas, and in 1996, he started his own strategic planning, program management and facilitation consultancy, José E. Martinez, LLC.

Previous Volunteer Assignments

- OAS, Buenos Aires, Argentina — Conducted presentations to Latin American Government Officials on Civic Engagement.
- Programa Bolivar, Lima, Perú — Conducted a presentation on Strategic Planning Processes and Business Improvement Districts.
- Citizens Development Corps, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Guatemala — Performed a needs assessment of the municipal government in 2004 and assisted in developing a capital improvements budget process in 2005.

What effect did the volunteer assignment have on your relationship with the host country/region?

My assignment in Lebanon has had a great impact on my relationship with the Middle East. I found the Lebanese people in both the rural and urban areas to be very warm and inviting. Lebanon's greatest export to the world is its educated and innovative youth. The universities are excellent and they train countless number of young Lebanese that then have to leave for other Middle Eastern countries as well as countries in the west — Europe as well as North and South America to find meaningful employment. I learned that there are more Lebanese in Brazil, Canada, and the United States than there are in Lebanon!

As a result of my visit to Lebanon I have developed an interest in learning Arabic. My dark complexion caused numerous Lebanese to speak to me in Arabic; that made me feel as if I could blend into the crowd! I intend to enroll in Arabic class, return to Lebanon, and visit Jordan, Syria and other Middle Eastern countries.

What do you remember most about being a Long Term Business Adviser?

One of my major assignments was to conduct focus groups consisting of Lebanese nationals — elected and appointed municipal officials, school system representatives, non-profit organizations, the business community, and general citizens — to determine what their experience was with the ongoing USAID program delivering services to rural Lebanese communities. I was able to guide the group to a factual and critical discussion of the USAID program and was assisted by very capable Arabic-English translators in conducting the focus groups.

How do you think you contributed the most as an adviser?

My roles were Municipal Expert and focus group facilitator. As the Municipal Expert, in a period of just five weeks, I participated in numerous interviews that included national and local government elected and appointed officials, university professors from the American University in Beirut, local school district representatives, non-profit agency representatives, business people, as well as our own Lebanese economist and consultant, Charles Abdallah, who was the source of a substantial amount of valuable information.

Our team came to the collective conclusion that the Lebanese system of government paid insufficient attention to local municipal governments, thereby not fostering essential improvements in local political systems and local economic development. Lebanese local governments, as municipal governments everywhere else in the world, have the responsibility of serving their constituents with essential human services and public utility infrastructure, but have limited tax collection authority making long delays between tax collection and receipt of tax revenues. Furthermore, what is collected is not necessarily equal to the tax revenues the municipalities will receive.

Small Lebanese municipalities usually lack trained personnel and other administrative resources. In rural areas, historical control by specific elite groups of municipal governments and their coffers limit the equitable distribution of services to the population. Rural populations' lack of information about their rights further limits that equitable distribution of municipal services and the control of their municipal governments.

We concluded that greater attention should be paid to strengthening the aggregation of municipalities within each region in Lebanon, or the Ca-

zas, instead of the individual municipalities. This would make the municipal strengthening process more democratic; that is, the improvements would be discussed openly, or transparently, and effected in like manner.

Our group recommended the possibility of community-based organizations taking the lead in orchestrating the provision of some of these services. Such organizations would involve local and regional groups vs. the current control by the national government. Giving the responsibility to local groups would facilitate participation at the local level thereby empowering local participants in government issues. I recommended that some of the empowerment of local representatives could be introduced in the form of strategic planning processes; which would be an excellent means to truly inform and educate local leaders as to their roles as responsible municipal and regional leaders providing for their constituents. By undertaking such strategic planning processes local leaders would gain information about Lebanese laws and regulations affecting rural communities and their constituents — "planning from the outside in." They would also analyze their local strengths and weaknesses — "planning from the inside out." By educating local leaders on the topics of their municipal government responsibilities, such local groups would then be empowered to monitor their local elected officials' expenditures of their local tax revenues and insist on a complete transparency of the local decision-making process.

The greatest contribution was helping to make recommendations about what USAID should do to improve its delivery of services to rural Lebanese communities.



LTBA—Long Term Business Adviser

MBAEC—MBA Executive Corps