



VEGA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HEADS TO AFRICA



Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) Executive Director **Earl Yates** will be traveling to Africa on September 5th. He will be visiting VEGA projects in **Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and South Africa**, as well as conduct outreach activities in **West Africa Regional Program Office in Ghana, Liberia**, and other African countries. VEGA thanks all member organizations that participated in the African Economic Growth Roundtable on August 24th. Information was shared on member projects in the selected African countries and on present and future economic growth projects in the Africa region to which VEGA might provide needed technical services. The information and contacts provided will help prepare Mr. Yates to reach Missions in-country more effectively during his upcoming outreach trip to Africa.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT—CQI



Coffee Quality Institute®

The **Coffee Quality Institute (CQI)** has been an active member of VEGA since 2004. Its mission is to improve the quality of coffee and the lives of the people who produce it. Through its programs, CQI is working collaboratively with stakeholders

throughout the coffee industry to create a common language for coffee quality and by doing so has helped thousands of farmers raise the quality of their coffee and better compete in the world marketplace, allowing them to make investments in their business as well as in their communities.

One of their core programs, Coffee Corps, is a unique private-public partnership that matches experts in the industry with farmers and associations at origin seeking technical assistance. To date, over 105 volunteer experts have completed assignments in over 25 countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Madagascar, Zambia, Colombia, and all of Central American countries.

In addition to Coffee Corps, CQI developed and currently manages the **Q Coffee Program** and the **Women in Coffee Leadership Program**. CQI also supports other NGOs and organizations and is actively working on programs focused on delivering cupping training to Columbian producers and exploring new genomic technology for improving the coffee plant.

Margaret Swallow, former-VEGA Board member, will be retiring from CQI effective September 1 and **Ted Lingle** will succeed her as the new Executive Director for CQI. Ted and **David Roche**, Chief Technical Director will represent CQI on all VEGA-related matters. For more information on CQI and its programs, please visit www.coffeeinstitute.org

COURTESY CALL AT USAID

On August 1, VEGA staff members **Van Nguyen** and **Earl Yates**, along with member organization International Executive Services Corps (IESC) representatives, **Sujeewa De Alwis** and **Erin Webster**, met with in-coming USAID/South Africa Economic Growth Director **Tina Dooley-Jones**, Joan Lawrence's successor, and USAID Africa Regional Desk Officer **Lorie Dobbins**.

The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: first, to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Dooley-Jones, and second, to update her and Ms. Dobbins on the **South Africa APS Grants Administration (SAAGA) Project**. VEGA looks forward to working with Ms. Dooley-Jones and Ms. Dobbins on its activities in South Africa.

**INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING AND
SERVICE INITIATIVE
PREPARES LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**

At an August 24 meeting at the **Brookings Institution**, VEGA staff and member organization representatives joined Brookings and other NGO colleagues in advancing preparations for the Brookings Institution **Initiative on Volunteering and Service Leadership Summit** to be held on **December 5, 2006**. Chaired by Project Director, **David Caprara**, the meeting included presentations and discussion of policy and monitoring and evaluation issues related to the overall Initiative. It also previewed agenda and communications issues related to the upcoming Leadership Summit.

VEGA member organization and staff representatives were: **Malcolm Butler** and **Matt Clausen**, Partners of the Americas; **Amanda MacArthur**, Citizens Development Corps; and **Earl Yates**, VEGA.

AMED FLEXIBILITY RESPONDS TO MISSION'S EVOLVING PROGRAM NEEDS

Notwithstanding critical changes in strategic approach and project goals, the **Agricultural Markets and Enterprise (AMED) Program** has remained responsive to the South Sudan's evolving development needs. **VEGA** recently submitted a revised program proposal for services designed to address re-defined development priorities. In an August 1 meeting at the Washington-area offices of **Winrock International**, VEGA's Prime implementing organization for AMED, newly assigned Chief-of-Party **Greg Olsen** briefed USAID's Cognizant Technical Officer **Gary Alex** and Winrock and VEGA home office support staff on plans for implementing the revised program as required by USAID/Sudan. A central element of the new plan is that the operations of VEGA project staff, along with those of USAID staff, will be based inside the South Sudan, rather than in Kenya.

VEGA WELCOMES NEW STAFF TO THE TEAM

On August 1, **Lee Warren** joined VEGA as the new Project Management & Support Officer. Bringing to VEGA more than six years of experience in project management in international development in the private sector, in multilateral institutions, with USAID contractors, and with USAID Missions. He served as Chief of Party for a private sector development project in Montenegro. His expertise ranges from developing and managing privatization programs and consulting projects in areas of finance, operations, marketing, accounting, and staff development. As **Project Management & Support Officer**, Lee will work closely with USAID Missions or Bureaus and implementing organizations in providing management support and backstopping to projects under VEGA Associate Awards, including project monitoring and evaluation as well as ensuring program compliance per Associate Awards and Sub-Agreements.



Michelle Mowery, a graduate of the college of William and Mary, joined VEGA as an **Administrative Assistant** on August 21, 2006. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government with a minor in International Relations. Before coming to VEGA, Michelle worked at Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. She is familiar with USAID and the projects that it supports. Michelle is well versed in supporting the administrative needs of large and small staff. A valuable asset to VEGA, Michelle will provide to the Executive Director and other VEGA staff members clerical, office administration and maintenance support, as well as assistance in developing and implementing VEGA's programs.

Please join VEGA in welcoming Lee and Michelle to the team. Lee can be reached at lwarren@vegaalliance.org and Michelle can be reached at mmowery@vegaalliance.org.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT



VEGA/BTD SUPPORTS CMMI CERTIFICATION IN BULGARIA

VEGA/Business and Trade Development (BTD) supports the implementation of a **Capability Maturity Model® Integration (CMMI)** certification system in Bulgaria, one of its major long-term project. The CMMI system was recently developed by the **Software Engineering Institute (SEI)** at the Carnegie Mellon University, and is recognized as the most valuable model for software process improvement in developed markets all around the world. In many cases, it is a prerequisite for subcontracting with multinational corporations and government administrations. The CMMI system is oriented towards continuous improvement along maturity levels. As a company moves from one maturity level to another, it improves the quality of its processes and becomes more and more competitive. For that reason many Bulgarian companies are interested in CMMI certification in order to become more competitive and to be able to apply for participation in different projects.

The project is developed and implemented by the Bulgarian branch of the **European Software Institute (ESI)**, which is one of the world's leading independent authorities on software process improvement. Established in 1993, with its headquarters in Spain, ESI is a non-profit organization providing consultancy and training services, which are supported by a highly qualified team of experts and an extensive network of international alliances. In June 2003, ESI Center Bulgaria Foundation was established as the **Regional Software Engineering Excellence Center of the European Software Institute**, designed to become a major driving force for increased industry competitiveness in South Eastern Europe.

To date, there are no companies certified under CMMI in South Eastern Europe. However, ESI Center Bulgaria Foundation has selected four Bulgarian information technology (IT) small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which will be the first CMMI certified companies in the region at the end of the project. The first part of the CMMI implementation project involved planning and the preparation, followed by an awareness building campaign. Though many companies applied, only four were selected to go through the process of certification. At present, ESI Center Bulgaria Foundation is working closely with these companies to prepare individual development plans and trainings, which at the end of the process, will result in their certification. The process is time consuming and costly, making it difficult for these small companies to afford obtaining the CMMI certification. As a result, **VEGA/BTD** will financially support ESI Center Bulgaria Foundation and help these four companies in completing the certification process.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT (CONTINUED)



Marula oil processing facility at Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa

VEGA/SAAGA SUB-GRANTEE ESTABLISHES LONG TERM PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY

VEGA/South Africa APS Grants Administration (SAAGA) sub-grantee **Mineworkers Development Agency (MDA)** has partnered with **Technoserve** to provide technical assistance over the next four to five years to support MDA's project involving **Marula Natural Products (MNP)** based in **Bushbuckridge, South Africa**. The core business of MNP is to process marula nuts into oil for consumption and cosmetic production. TechnoServe, which receives funding from the **South African Business Trust**, will assist MNP in implementing a turnaround strategy to improve overall management and productivity and thereby increasing incomes for the communities supplying marula for processing. Beginning in September, an extensive training program will be conducted for women entrepreneurs who harvest and supply marula fruit to MNP. They will be trained in their English speaking skills as well as basic business management skills.

MDA will continue to develop avenues to create sustainable employment opportunities for the women both during and out of the marula season. MDA is also exploring alternative processing equipment and facilities in order to improve overall productivity.

VEGA PROVIDES ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH SUDAN CUSTOMS

At the end of June this year, VEGA fielded a Volunteer Expert to assist the South Sudan Customs in Yei. Customs is the primary source of income for the Government of South Sudan, next to oil revenues. With the declaration of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the beginning of reconstruction in South Sudan, imports of commercial goods of all kinds have shot up remarkably. The overwhelming bulk of these goods pass through the customs headquarters station in Yei.

VEGA Volunteer Expert **Ashok Sadhwani** has extensive experience in customs issues. He has worked as a customs consultant for both the public and the private sector. Ashok provided two weeks of training to 30 members of the South Sudan Customs in Yei. The training covered issues such as tariff rates, international customs agreements, import and export procedures, and customs documentation. Ashok also visited the Kaya customs post on the borders with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This is the most active import portal in South Sudan.

A number of issues were identified that will need to be addressed in the future. Primary among them is the issue of harmonization of customs regimes within Sudan as a whole. At the present time, Sudan is operating under two distinct customs schedules – one for the Government of National Unity (GNU) and one for the Government of South Sudan (GOSS). Ashok briefly touched upon this issue during his assignment. He noted that the GOSS customs regime is much more closely aligned with international customs agreements and norms than that practiced in the North.



VEGA/AMED Volunteer Expert Ashok Sadhwani with some of the workshop participants from South Sudan Customs Department personnel.



VEGA/ETT ACTIVITIES PROCEED IN MOROCCO

On July 26 and 27 this year, VEGA conducted the first of three **Export Trade Training (ETT)** workshops in Morocco. Volunteer Expert **Michael Grisdale** facilitated the workshop, *Introduction to International Trade*, in two half-day sessions in Casablanca, Morocco. The workshop drew 62 private sector participants from a variety of sectors. VEGA/ETT will offer additional technical services to the participating companies.

The next training workshop will be taking place in November in Morocco. The workshop, *Import/Export Management and Marketing*, will be presented by VEGA/ETT implementing partner International Executive Service Corps (IESC) Volunteer Expert, **Gary Mutz**. The third workshop, *M-Commerce/E-Commerce and Services in the Global Market*, is scheduled to take place in early 2007 also in Morocco.