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**Training Impact Evaluation  
Benin Training Program**

An Assessment of the Results and Impact  
of USAID/Benin's Long Term Training Program

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## **Executive Summary**

- ◆ Overall the long term training program is successful and achieving intended results
- ◆ Over 96% of the participants, and most of USAID staff and key informants were satisfied or very satisfied with the program
- ◆ Over 34% of the participants did not receive a predeparture orientation and over half felt they were only somewhat prepared for their US program
- ◆ Participants learned from their US experience, have gotten promotions, increased responsibilities and/or increased incomes because of the training program. Many have started private firms and NGOs since their return to Benin
- ◆ Many participants and some of their supervisors gave examples of ways the participants have personally done something to improve the performance or the capacity of their organizations
- ◆ Eighty-eight percent of the participants have formally or informally shared their knowledge or experience on the job or in their communities. On average, over 150 colleagues and 230 community people were formally reached by each participant who provided the team with estimates, usually in a training or workshop setting
- ◆ Impact and results seem more obvious and/or more achievable in the private sector than in the public sector. This is probably because, in the public sector, the preconditions for being able to apply participants' skills and knowledge are missing, especially a conducive "climate". There is also the fact that, in large work settings with many people, about 400 per work unit on average in the public sector, there is no critical mass of trained returnees. One person has a hard time having an impact at an organizational level in such situations unless they hold a very senior position
- ◆ It is difficult to assess results when training objectives are stated as involving improvements in leadership, technical and professional capacity of participants in order to improve the ability of their organizations to plan and promote sustainable development
- ◆ Nonetheless, those people surveyed generally perceive positive changes at the individual, community and organizational level
- ◆ It is also reasonable to say that there are definite associations between the training program and results at the national level and on the future of sustainable development in Benin

## **Section One Introduction and Overview**

### ***A Purpose of the evaluation***

**Objective** to determine the results and relevance of USAID/Benin funded training from October 1991 to present (from contract Scope of Work)

### ***B Purpose of the training being evaluated***

The Mission has used three long-term training projects since 1970 to fund training for Beninese

- The ATLAS program replaced **AFGRAD**, African Graduate Fellowship Program  
*AFGRAD Purpose* See below for ATLAS
- **ATLAS**, African Training for Leadership & Advanced Skills  
*ATLAS Purpose* to strengthen leadership and technical abilities and enhance the professional performance of individuals serving in African public and private sector entities, including universities, research centers and other key development institutions
- **HRDA**, Human Resources Development Assistance  
*HRDA Purpose* to strengthen the capabilities of African development institutions and private sector entities to promote economic growth

#### **What are we measuring?**

A combined goal statement for these programs is to strengthen leadership and technical abilities and enhance the professional capacities of individuals serving in key development units in the public and private sectors, in order to improve the ability of Beninese institutions and organizations to plan and promote sustainable development

Therefore, we are measuring the impact of long term training as people perceive it on participants' **leadership, technical abilities, and professional capacity** as it relates to **improved organizational abilities** to support sustainable development

### ***C Evaluation process and components***

This activity was contracted for on October 15 and provided about five days of preliminary work in the US before arriving in Benin. In country work was carried out during the 15 days from October 28 through November 13. Actual team work began on October 31, giving the full team 13 days to gather data and information.

The lead consultant, Ron Grosz, hired a team of returned participants who then worked together to design the methodology and carry out the information gathering and preliminary data coding. Team members were

- Michel Dognon, Executive Director, Africa Consulting Group (a private marketing and management firm) and professor of marketing at the National University of Benin
- Eliane Kouton, Health Education Specialist, Medical Care Development International (a USAID funded health education project)
- Apollinaire Datondji, Senior Technical Advisor, Ministry of Mines, Energy and Hydraulics and Secretary General of the Benin AFGRAD/ATLAS Alumni Association (B4A)

**The “opportunity” sample** USAID/Benin provided the team with a list of 79 participant trainees who had completed their programs. An “opportunity sample” of 32 people was drawn from this list. The sample was actually every individual returnee that team members could locate who were willing to participate in the survey. The team used a self-administered questionnaire and focus groups for gathering information from returned participants.

Thirty four percent of participants surveyed were female and 66% were male. Of the four AFGRAD participants surveyed, one was female. Of the 24 ATLAS participants surveyed, 10 or about 42% were female. All four HRDA participants were male.

Sixty-two and a half percent of those surveyed work in the public sector. Of the rest, 12.5% are self-employed and the remaining 25% work with NGOs.

**Focus Groups** To corroborate and expand on the information gathered from the self-administered questionnaires, the team also invited returnees to participate in two separate focus group meetings. The focus groups dealt with

- program purpose and the selection process
- non-returnees
- results and impact
- suggestions for USAID

**Participants’ Supervisors** The team designed a questionnaire to be used during one-on-one interviews with as many of the participants’ supervisors as they could reach in the time they had.

**USAID Staff** The team designed a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to USAID staff to gather information on their perceptions and understanding of the participant training program.

**Key Informants** The team contacted and interviewed several “key informants” about their perceptions of the impact/results of the long term training program and the non-returnee issue. They were also asked if they had suggestions for USAID about improving or strengthening the training program. Key informants were considered to be people who knew about the program and were professionally concerned about the impact of long term training on Benin.

### Components of the Assessment

Element	Number	Comments
Participants	32	All returnees who could be located and who agreed to participate in the assessment
Supervisors	7	All participant supervisors who were located and willing to be interviewed
Key Informants	4	1 Bick Riley, Director, AFRICARE 2 Taho Saibou, Planning Ministry, Office Chief of Scholarships 3 Bob Fadegnon, Education Advisor, American Cultural Center 4 Omer de Souza, Director of America Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
USAID Staff	6	Staff involved with training program, directly or indirectly
Focus group #1	5 (plus 3 assessment team members)	5 returnees and the 3 Beninese survey team members participated
Focus Group #2	3	3 returnees responded to questions and participated

#### ***D Assessment model***

Insofar as it was feasible, we followed, loosely, one of the better known models used for assessing the results of training by looking at any information we could find on the following Kirkpatrick<sup>1</sup> "levels" of evaluation

- **Reaction** How well did the participants like the training program?
- **Learning** Did the participants learn the content of the training program?
- **Behavior** Do the participants apply the knowledge/skills in doing their work?
- **Results** Does the organization from which the participants come benefit from their having undergone the training program?

<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick, Donald L. Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. San Francisco 1996

According to Kirkpatrick, "The four levels represent a sequence of ways to evaluate programs. Each level is important. As you move from one level to the next, the process becomes more difficult and time-consuming, but it also provides more valuable information." (page 21)

**Reaction** Kirkpatrick sees reaction as the measure, on this first level, "of how those who participate in the program react to it," and calls it a measure of customer satisfaction. He

Positive reaction may not ensure learning, but negative reaction almost certainly reduces the possibility of its occurring. Kirkpatrick, page 22

feels it is critical to get a positive reaction for two reasons. The first is that the training program would likely be terminated if the reaction were negative. The second is that participants are unlikely to be motivated to learn if their reaction is negative. "Positive reaction may not ensure learning, but negative reaction almost certainly reduces the possibility of its occurring." (page 22)

**Learning** The second level is defined as "the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skill" because of the training program.

**Behavior** This level is defined as "the extent to which change in behavior has occurred" because of the program. Kirkpatrick posits four conditions that have to occur in order for a trainee to change behavior because of the training. The person must

- 1 have a desire to change,
- 2 know what to do and how to do it,
- 3 work in the right climate, and
- 4 be rewarded for changing.

The training program can accomplish conditions one and two in the first two levels of this model. Condition three deals with the trainees' supervisors and colleagues. "The fourth condition, rewards, can be intrinsic (from within), extrinsic (from without), or both." Feelings of pride, satisfaction and achievement are intrinsic rewards while praise from superiors and colleagues, recognition by others, increases in pay or bonuses for good performance are extrinsic rewards.

Kirkpatrick makes a powerful point often overlooked in assessing the impact and results of training programs. "It becomes obvious that there is little or no chance that training will transfer to job behavior if the climate is preventing or discouraging. It is important to evaluate both reaction and learning in case no change in behavior occurs. Then it can be determined whether the fact that there was no change was the result of an ineffective training program or of the wrong job climate and lack of rewards." (page 24)

**Results** The fourth level is defined as "the final results that occurred because the participants attended the program. The final results can include increased production, improved quality, decreased costs " and so forth. He goes on to say that some training program objectives are much less tangible and, therefore, "it is difficult if not impossible to measure final results for programs on such topics as leadership, decision making, or managing change. We can state and evaluate desired behaviors, but the final results have to be measured in terms of improved morale or other nonfinancial terms " (page 26)

The evaluation team used this model as a framework, loosely applied, for designing, implementing and reporting on the Benin long term training program

## **Section Two Building Technical and Professional Capacity and Leadership Potential**

This section assesses perception of the long term training program's capacity for

- building participants' technical and professional capacity,
- enhancing their leadership ability and potential, and
- expanding or influencing their attitude about their personal, organizational and national future

Capacity building is defined as the acquisition of skills and knowledge which permit returned participants to find employment and/or community engagement in new areas and to apply what they have learned Leadership is an attitude as well as a function and is gauged by participants sense of self, their perception about their role in their organization, their community and/or their nation and their actions and behavior regarding the people they work with, formally and non-formally

Individuals are considered leaders if they contribute positively to the motivation and resources (economic, informational, procedural) available to others, help formulate and implement activities which accomplish objectives, and facilitate the process and the resources people need to initiate and manage the process of change and development

### ***A Predeparture Selection and Orientation Setting the collective agenda and expectations***

- ◆ Were participants fairly and well selected for long term training in the US?

*A qualified yes* Two groups were surveyed about the selection process, the participants and USAID staff During two focus group sessions with participants, they felt, in general, that the pre-selection process as applied to them was fair and just They did suggest some areas for improvement to assure a more fully open and honest selection process There was a general feeling, however, that they did not really know enough during the process to make careful and considered choices They also felt that too often they were forced by circumstances on arrival at their host university in the USA to change and compromise their learning goals and objectives

All of USAID staff surveyed knew about the selection criteria and felt, as did the participants, that they were transparent and followed However staff were split, in our sample of six, with half feeling participants were selected to fill gaps in their organizations' performance The others said they felt participants were not selected for this reason Most of the staff felt participants were either directly involved in identifying and stating the purpose of their training Indeed, during the focus groups with participants, they explained the process well and said that they each were required to develop a clear statement of the reason they wanted to go for training and the purpose they hoped to achieve with their new knowledge and skills on their return to Benin

- ◆ Were participants of the long term training program well prepared for their US training experience?

*Somewhat* Fifty-three percent of the returnees surveyed said they felt somewhat prepared for their training in the US. One quarter said they were prepared while three percent said they were very prepared. Two participants, or slightly over six percent felt unprepared.

Sixty-six percent of the participants surveyed had received a predeparture orientation while almost 34% had not. The orientations ranged from a single day all the way up to six months with an (albeit skewed) average of a month.

When asked what was included and how useful each item was, well over half said they had received no orientation about follow-on programs, application of their training to their work or application of their training to the realities in Benin. Thirty-eight percent had also not received any orientation on the objectives or contents of their training program before they left for the US. And 43% weren't briefed on the activities they would experience in their training programs in the States. Orientation topics that were felt to be the most useful, when included, were training program objectives, program activities, program follow-on and life in the US. Participants seemed to most value predeparture orientation on living in the US with over 95% of those receiving such orientation calling it somewhat useful, useful or very useful.

None of the participants' supervisors had taken part, in any way, in the predeparture process.

### **Suggestions for improving the selection and predeparture orientation**

#### 1 Selection Process

- Several participants felt the announcement seeking candidates needs to be more effectively and broadly disseminated
- Participants and two key informants want USAID to offer more scholarships
- Some participants think USAID needs to assure a better fit of the program with the needs in Benin
- Several participants suggest the need for written "test" and/or more extensive interviews with candidates
- Two of the participants saw the need to target more carefully candidates who are very clear about what they need/want in their training and why they want it
- Focus group discussions revealed the feeling that candidates home ministries should not be involved in deciding someone's candidature
- Some participants and one of the key informants felt USAID should, once again, offer scholarships for PhD as well as Master's Degrees

## 2 Predeparture Preparation

- Make sure an orientation is included covering topics such as training program objectives, contents and activities, life in the USA (geography, seasons, society, campus life, etc ), what to expect on returning, why it's important to return
- One participant suggests including an "equipment" allowance so participants can, for example, get a computer to use during their studies
- The focus groups suggested USAID use former participants in the predeparture orientation since they know about the program and life in the US
- One participant suggests getting the alumni association involved in the orientation sessions

### ***B Assessing Long Term Technical Training Were you satisfied? Was it what you expected?***

As described above, the model used to help structure this assessment activity posits four levels. Level one assesses participant trainee **reaction** to the program and ascertains how well they liked it. Level two looks at whether participants **learned the contents** of the program and the third level asks whether they change their behavior and, in fact, **apply what they learned** in their work or lives. Finally, a fourth level assesses **results at the organizational level**, somewhat more difficult to evaluate. Here we'll look at participants' reactions to the program and the implied level of learning. The other levels are assessed in following sections of this report.

**Participant reaction** Normally participant reaction to a training program is assessed either during or immediately after the training. In our case, we asked some questions in the survey and during two focus group sessions.

- ◆ Were participants satisfied with the long term training program? What did USAID staff and others think about it?

*Yes* Ninety-seven percent of participants said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their training program (66% satisfied and 31% very satisfied).

When USAID staff were asked, as the originators and managers of the long term training program, whether they were satisfied, in general, with the program, five out of six said they were satisfied and one was neutral. One staffer felt that people are better prepared to face work challenges and pointed out fluency in English and new computer skills as being especially helpful. Another was impressed that some returnees have been able to set up their own businesses which they seem to be managing well.

Several of the key informants interviewed also offered their opinions about the program in general saying it was effective, well managed and that they were satisfied with it and hoped for its expansion and continuation. Supervisors of returned participants also gave indirect evidence of their satisfaction with the program by generally agreeing that returned trainees in their employ shared their knowledge and skills in the organization,

had done something personally to improve the organization, took initiatives, often on their own, and saw an increase in both responsibilities and salaries because of their US training program

In particular, the substantial majority of participants ranked the program as useful, somewhat useful or very useful in

improving my professional abilities	97%
learning new skills/techniques	94%
preparing for a career	91%
improving my leadership abilities	97%

Ninety-four percent of the participants would recommend the long term training program to others

◆ Was the training what participants expected?

*Pretty much so* The response here is a qualified yes since 50% of the participants said that the training program was the same as they'd expected while about 41% said it was better than expected. Only one person (three percent) felt the program was worse than they'd thought it would be.

**Participant learning** In the case of the long term training program it isn't feasible to directly determine whether participants learned the contents of their courses (skills and knowledge). It is generally felt, for degree training programs, that passing the courses and completing other program requirements that earned participants their degrees is the most compelling indicator of learning. Indirectly one can look at specific examples of behavioral change in applying course contents, the next level we'll look at, as a surrogate for learning.

Interesting and perhaps revealing comments from the focus groups had participants declaring that the most powerful "learning" they got was not from the contents of the classes they completed while in the US but rather from having lived in another culture, experiencing a different learning and problem-solving paradigm (as compared to the French system). Several participants said they could have gained the "book learning" right at home in Benin but that they would not be as self-assured, as willing to take risks and try new things, as effective and efficient had they not lived and studied in the States. Change in attitude is one major measure of learning in the Kirkpatrick assessment model.

***C Broadening Experience, Changing Attitudes and Building Leadership Potential***

One of the stated objectives of Benin's long term training program is to improve participants' leadership and professional capacity so they can be applied to improved organizational abilities in support of sustainable development. The implication here is

that participants who come back will be motivated people who actively use their training on the job, in their lives and share it with others. Assessing changed attitudes and leadership potential is somewhat difficult but we've looked at peoples' perceptions of these measures. Directly attributing these and other hoped-for results to the training program is not possible (see Kirkpatrick under **Results** above). However, reasonable people can make reasonable associations between the program and measures of leadership or attitude change. Assessing motivation is important too, but a little more elusive to observe.

◆ Did the US experience broaden participants' experience?

*Yes* While in the US, a majority of the participants occasionally or frequently visited with a US family (97%), interacted with the private business sector (56%), were involved in community activities (78%) or attended cultural events (91%). And well over 80% attended church, participated in recreational activities, traveled within the US or were involved in university activities. So participants did not simply stay on campus and work at the library. They gained exposure and experience that theoretically expanded their horizons and gave them new ideas and perspectives, elements of attitude change and leadership potential.

◆ Do participants feel like leaders or identify skills in themselves associated with leadership?

*Yes to a great degree* Using a scaling technique called the Leadership Development Scale, developed in a USAID training impact assessment in the Latin America region, participants ranked their level of agreement that US training increased their skills in the following areas:

Percent n=32	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	No Response
a Self esteem	40.6	50	6.25	3.1	0	0
b Self reliance	43.8	50	0	0	0	6.25
c Ability to communicate with others	37.5	43.8	15.6	0	3.1	0
d Ability to get along with others	18.8	40.6	28.1	9.4	0	3.1
e Ability to tolerate change	21.9	37.5	31.25	0	0	0
f Willingness to take risks	28.1	59.4	9.4	3.1	0	0
g Ability to speak in public	15.6	46.9	25	6.25	0	6.25
h Willingness to try new things	50	53.8	3.1	0	0	3.1

When asked if they thought their expectations and plans for the future had changed because of their training program, 72% said yes. Over 50% felt their lives had changed somewhat and another 38% said they'd changed a lot because of their participation in the program.

- ◆ Were participants positive about the future and motivated to improve their situations?

*Yes, definitely* In terms of their motivation and expectations about the future, fully 75% expected to occupy a top-level management position within the next five years. Currently about 28% are in top-level positions and another 63% are in middle management positions.

Another assessment of participants' expectations or hopes for the future was done using a concept called "the ladder of life" which asked them to compare how well they expected to be doing in both their lives and in their work five years from now. They ranked the future quality of their lives and then their jobs from a low of zero to a high of ten. Over 71% placed themselves on rungs nine and ten on the ladder in five years while only 10% were on those rungs today. The majority placed themselves currently on rungs seven and eight.

Using a similar ladder to rank how well they'd be doing on their job in five years, more than 74% said they'd be on rungs nine and ten while today they placed themselves, again, on rungs seven and eight (75%).

## **Section Three A look at the impact and results of the long term training program**

### ***A Overview of the program***

The main purpose of the evaluation was to determine the degree to which the program is perceived as successful in achieving its objectives. The objectives are

*to strengthen leadership and technical abilities and enhance the professional capacities of individuals serving in key development units in the public and private sectors, in order to improve the ability of Beninese institutions and organizations to plan and promote sustainable development*

The 13-day research effort therefore, was organized as described above and focussed on getting information on the following major questions

- 1 What impact did the long term training program have on individual participants' employment?
- 2 Did participants share their knowledge and skills at their workplace? What results can be seen on leadership, motivation and initiative at work and in the community?
- 3 Do people think organizations' abilities have been improved because participants applied their training to their work?
- 4 What can be said about a broader level of impact on Benin in general resulting from the long term training program?

The reader is reminded of the assessment model used for this activity. In this section we are basically working with levels three and four which deal with information on returnee behavior and results

- **Reaction** How well did the participants like the training program?
- **Learning** Did the participants learn the content of the training program?
- **Behavior** Do the participants apply the knowledge/skills in doing their work?
- **Results** Does the organization from which the participants come benefit from their having undergone the training program?

## Preconditions for Impact and Results

When assessing the impact and results of a training program, three preconditions apply

- First, participants must receive training that effectively builds their knowledge and skills and fosters an attitude that motivates them to work towards personal, organizational and national development goals
- Second, participants must return to Benin in order to apply their acquired knowledge and skills so it can impact their own lives, their organization and their nation
- Finally, participants have to be employed after their return to Benin

**Was the training seen as effective?** The analysis of the US training in the previous section concluded that the program is generally providing participants with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes so they are positive about their capabilities and are at least predisposed to feel and act like leaders and/or use what they've learned on the job and in their lives

**Do participants return to Benin?** *Yes, for the most part* The research effort took a careful look at the non-returnee issue by asking participants, USAID staff, and key informants to discuss the situation in Benin. We were not able to talk to non-returnees themselves

**a From participants--**One of the topics discussed during the two focus group sessions was the issue of non-returnees. Participants generally felt it was a problem, even though

"Non-returnees didn't get funded to stay in the US. They got scholarships so they could complete their programs and come back to Benin! It's wrong to stay for whatever reason. And it is a waste of both US and Beninese resources!"

the estimated percent of non-returnees in the Benin program was about twelve percent. At least one participant didn't really think it was an issue for the Benin program while the majority felt rather strongly that it was. The primary reason given for viewing non-returnees as a

problem was a mix of ethics and economics. Participants felt it just wasn't right to accept a scholarship, agree to return, and then not return, for whatever reasons. Both the nation and the US lose or waste resources when people don't return.

Focus group participants gave the following reasons for why people don't come back to Benin

- one person went for training because of his political affiliation and when the political situation changed, he couldn't come back so he's a non-returnee
- Non-returnees see, for example, a colleague who has been back for over eight months and still has no position as promised in the public sector where he worked before he left. So he had to start a private firm in order to live while the government figures out what to do with him
- if you don't do well in your studies, some don't return because they are ashamed
  - some feel that they don't want to go back because they won't really get a good job where they can put their skills to work
  - some stay because they want a PhD. They know that if they return, they'll never be allowed to do more training for the PhD level (note there is a big bias for PhDs as opposed to Masters and the new ATLAS program doesn't do PhDs). Non-returnees who stay for their PhD are probably the biggest percentage
- a few are non-returnees because they get married while in the States and their spouses don't want to return
  - some get used to what they see as a higher quality of life in the US so they don't want to return

Participants at the focus group sessions provided these suggestions for ways to reduce or eliminate the non-returnee problem

- Can we make some concrete arrangements at the level of the work unit so all "partners" benefit from the returnees education and gain from it, including supervisors and colleagues?
  - More needs to be done with the follow-up after someone comes home to make sure returnees have something suitable to do. Otherwise the investment is not used to the fullest
- If we can establish a strong local support network, we'll be able to help each other. When I came back from the US, there were very few people who had studied in the States so I was very happy to meet the B4A (Alumni). But it needs help to move into being a self-sustaining organization
- In the long term, we need to focus on developing the private sector which is where the best jobs will be. In fact, before 1993, the government policy assured people a job on their return and this is no longer the case. So let's not always wait for the government
  - USAID needs to increase its own involvement with and support of returnees, encourage the use of alumni, help place them in positions and so on. Other donors do this. (The implication was that the US free enterprise system that lets people on their own should be modified in Benin to help people over the initial startup phase on their return. This may be more appropriate here in Benin than it is, of course, for US students after their education.)

**b From USAID**--Most USAID staff, four of the six who were surveyed, felt that the non-returnee issue was a problem and that it had to be reduced. Two people felt that the

average non-returnee rate in Benin was better than in most other countries. One of the two just didn't see it as a problem worth spending time or budget on.

Asked what the major reason was for not returning to Benin, one person said non-returning participants lacked motivation to help their own country and were also encouraged to some degree ("complicity" was the word used) by the training partner(s) to stay for more education. Another stated simply that Benin is a poor country that lacks many amenities of life. Students get used to life in the US which they perceive as better, and they just don't want to return.

USAID staff ideas on how to reduce the incidence of non-returning participant trainees were

- both trainees and the training partners (those contracted to implement the program in the US) should be sensitized on the program objectives and be held accountable for the program's success (this from a staffer who felt one reason why participants don't return is some level of "complicity" with the student to stay in the States for more education)
- we have to maintain pressure on the government to put the skills acquired by alumni to good use by promoting returnees on their return (the implication is that then participants would have a good incentive for coming home)
- other staff said there just had to be more dialogue and education before departure and while in the US about the benefits to individuals and to Benin of coming home and using their education in their own country

**c From Key Informants**--Four of the five key informants discussed the non-returnee issue as one of the topics covered during the interview with them. One had nothing to offer on the topic.

What causes people to stay in the US? Mr. Taho at the Ministry of Plan (see table of key informants in Section One III above) thought most of those who don't come home are people who generally had problems before they left. He implied, therefore, that they were the type of person likely to do something like this. Others, he felt, did poorly and were reluctant to return. This reason was also cited by participants during the focus groups. Mr. Taho said the Ministry was concerned about the issue but that they just don't get information from USAID about participants once the selection process is completed, so they really aren't able to study the issue and see what, if anything, can be done about it.

Mr. Fadegnon of the American Cultural Center said there are two things that should be considered on this question. One is the fact that some Beninese do, in fact, return home but then leave after only a few months to pursue better jobs and lives in the US or other developed countries. They are frustrated on their return and disappointed by not getting jobs that meet their expectations or that they feel correspond to their newly acquired qualifications. Add to this the culture shock of re-entry and they're inclined to seek their futures elsewhere.

On the other hand, there are those who don't come back in the first place. Among the reasons he gave for this are the politicization of the public administration on one hand and better job opportunities (by participants' perception at any rate) in the US. So those who are inclined in this direction have pressure on both ends to stay in the States. He suggested better focused education about how best to be a change agent, living within and not outside a system, in order to contribute to development. He considers non-returnees as "deserters."

Mr. de Souza at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said there is a problem when participants don't return but he was less concerned about the long term effect on Benin. He said that in another 10 years, everyone will return once they figure out that, by staying in a huge and developed country like the US, they have to compete heavily for their careers and their standard of living. They'll see that their colleagues who return to Benin are well-positioned in the labor market, have better opportunities for higher stature positions, have relatively high incomes, and are able to access their familial support structures. He was basically describing the relativity in the sizes of fish and ponds in the US and Benin<sup>2</sup>.

**Are participants employed on their return to Benin?** *Yes.* One hundred percent of returnees are now employed. Most were also earning an income before their US studies. About 60% now work in the public sector, 25% work in non-profit organizations in the private sector (NGOs), and 12% are self-employed and operate a small business with four or fewer employees. A fact to keep in mind here is that at least 28% of the participants surveyed hold more than one job or source of income. While the majority work in government jobs, some have private sector jobs in addition.

## ***B Impact within the Labor Sector***

There are two levels that can be assessed here. One is the effect of the training program on individuals and the other in the impact on the work organization.

- ◆ What impact did the long term training program have on the employment of individual participants?

*Quite a bit.* Half of the participants have changed jobs since their training although 44% do still hold the same job they had before being trained in the States. When asked if they changed jobs because of their US education, 72% said yes. And three-quarters of those who changed jobs said their current job was better than their previous one. Nineteen percent said their new job was about the same as the one they had before and slightly over six percent said it is worse.

In order to apply what they learned or to share their knowledge, participants have to be working in the same field in which they were educated. Over 90% of those surveyed work in the same area in which they received their training.

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<sup>2</sup> As in the US expression about little fish in a big (USA) pond and big fish in a little (Benin) pond.

They generally feel they're doing well today in their jobs, an indicator of their willingness and ability to apply what they learned. Whereas almost 75% put themselves equally distributed on rungs five, six and seven of the job ladder (zero being the lowest and 10 the highest rung) before their education, 56% put their current job satisfaction on rung eight so there is a shift upwards in satisfaction today

- ◆ Did participants apply their training and/or share their knowledge and skills at their workplace?

*Yes with some qualification* A returnee may be willing to apply what was learned but the work environment must be conducive to doing so. That is the qualification on this response by participants

Almost 69% of those surveyed said they have been able to apply "a lot" or "a great deal" of what they learned on their current jobs

Twelve and a half percent of the respondents said they'd not been able to apply anything and a few said "only a little". For 40% of those who said nothing, a little or some, the major reason given was that they don't have the authority to put their training into practice. Another 20% said they don't have the support of their supervisors or superiors to do so. Thirty percent responded that their current work just doesn't require them to apply what they learned in their US program

- ◆ What have participants done to apply their learning to their jobs?

On the positive side of this inquiry, 50% said they had personally done something to improve the performance or the capacity of their organization. However, while about 97% were satisfied or very satisfied with the training program, 85% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their ability to apply what they learned on the job, a significant drop in the level of satisfaction

A large amount of information was gathered on the subject of applying participants' training on the job. Below are some of the specific examples provided by participants of what they've done

- I've helped improve customer service
- I've put a "team work" concept into practice
- I wrote a book for students on business mathematics and have published many monographs on teaching that are used in seminars
- I've done a restructuring proposal for our company and have done internal audits on some of the company functions with suggestions for improvements
- I've run training sessions and seminars
- I'm involved in curriculum development for the educational reform program
- I have designed new ways of organizing our training sessions in order to save money while being more effective on training follow-up

- I've introduced the use of computers for routine jobs, saving time and money
- The strategic program I designed was a cost-saving model for my organization
- I send my employees for training
- I gave training to all the sales department employees I advised the director to require that all departments have an activity plan for this year
- My daily responsibilities have me designing educational materials which are used in training NGOs on how to promote good health behavior among primary school students
- I introduced geophysics as a subject at the National University of Benin and translated a basic text from English to French so it could be widely used here

Impact and results were looked at not only in the participant survey questionnaire but also during the focus groups, interviews of key informants and on both the supervisors' and USAID staff questionnaires

USAID staff, who are generally satisfied with the long term training program (see above) were somewhat less satisfied with on-the-job application of what participants have learned. While four people said they were satisfied, two said they felt job-application was most obvious in the private and less so in the public sector. One of these four said, while generally satisfied, in order to see results, participants have to be promoted into senior management positions, which most were. The one person who was dissatisfied said their feelings stemmed from the fact that returnees are not well positioned in the public administration, where more impact was needed. The results are more obvious in the private sector where people get a better chance to apply their education.

Among participants' supervisors who were interviewed, six of the seven (86%) said that the participant shared their skills and knowledge on the job with four asserting this happened on the participants' own initiative and four stating it was because they were asked to do so by the supervisor. Seventy-one percent of the supervisors said the returnee had personally done something to improve the organization's performance. One participant leads a working group in the organization responsible for marketing and has done a strategic plan for this function. Another helps the organization at staff retreats and still another said the returnee runs seminars and discussions for the organization. Finally, one supervisor said the returnee was put in charge of one of the fields of study at his (educational) organization and has done a good job with it.

Key informants were asked a more general question about the impact and results they've observed or feel are occurring in Benin. Mr. de Souza from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that people who get US degrees, he has observed, tend to be clearer, more honest, run their work with less corruption and are better managers than those trained in other systems. He felt there was a big impact of the US training program on Benin because of returnees' ability to apply what they've learned in their work.

◆ Were Participants' responsibilities increased and/or were they promoted?

Yes One indicator of capacity for improving an organization by applying what has been learned is the degree to which returnees have more responsibilities and/or have been promoted to higher position In looking at the level of management, for example, of participants before and after the training, one sees a definite move from lower to higher positions as the following table demonstrates

N=32	% Before Training	% Now	% In Five Years
Top Management	6 25	28 125	75
Middle Management	46 875	62 5	6 25
Front line Management	43 75	6 25	0
No Response	3 125	3 125	18 75

Sixty percent of the returnees surveyed consider themselves policy makers in their organization and of these, 74% believe they are policy makers because of the training they received in the US Thirty-eight percent said they'd been promoted since their return All said the promotion was due to their participation in the US program Forty-seven percent said their responsibilities on-the-job have increased and the majority, 87%, attribute that increase to their long term training in the States

Motivation to "make a difference" is provided by such advancement and, of course, by improvements through the rewards of increased responsibility, including better salaries with, one assumes, improved living conditions Over 53% of the respondents said their incomes have increased since they came back to Benin from the States, 88% feeling the increases are directly attributable to their new skills and knowledge About one quarter of those surveyed said they've not received an income increase and another quarter said the question didn't apply to their situation

◆ Do participants share their experience and/or their knowledge?

Yes Eighty-eight percent said they have either formally or informally shared their experience and knowledge with colleagues or in their community Participants were asked to estimate the number of people with whom they've shared their experience or their knowledge (Note Share refers to teach, relate experience, discuss) While these are at best rough estimates, the numbers give some idea of the spread effect of the US program through the returnees

Formal sharing, through seminars, courses and discussion sessions was estimated at an average of 153 people on-the-job and 232 people at the community, friends and family level Informally, people said they'd shared with 55 people on average while on-the-job and about 69 people among family, friends and their community

- ◆ Do people think organizations' abilities have been improved because participants applied their training to their work?

Information that helps answer this question, from sources other than the participants, is indirect at best. Sixty-six percent of the participants feel they are better managers which, one could surmise, leads to better organizational performance. Job promotions and increased responsibilities are only surrogates for improvements at the organizational level. And overall satisfaction with the training program only thinly relates to improved organizational ability.

There is a general feeling among participants, USAID staff and key informants that private sector organizations (NGOs and firms) perform better because of the involvement in them by returnees. That general feeling also states that it is very hard to see organizational improvement in the public sector. In fact, one key informant claimed that a measure of the "goodness" of the USAID training program was the fact the people leave the public and move to the private sector!

Much of the difference lies in the fact that, in order to have impact, the ratio of trainees to the total size of the organization has to be higher to attain a "critical mass" and, with it, an impact. It's obvious that this "critical mass" is easier to obtain in an NGO or small firm of four to 20 people and much less easy in a governmental organization with on average over 400. Add to this the existence of procedures that have been long established and are, perhaps, hard to change.

Nonetheless, gauging by the types of specific changes brought to their organizations by participants, the numbers of people reached by participants in sharing their knowledge and experiences, the higher positions held by returnees, and the increase in their job responsibilities, it is reasonable to say that some organizations have improved because of the long term training program. Informal discussions also revealed a possible impact on the National University of Benin and the Economics Institute it houses. Texts have been translated and, more importantly, instructors and professors tend to apply a more "American" pedagogy with their students, leading, some maintain, to a more effective learning process and resulting application by students. Again, this is not proof let alone "evidence" but useful anecdotal information.

### ***C Impact and Results in the Community***

The survey questionnaire took a brief look at participants' involvement, both while in the US and once back in Benin, in various community activities. Community involvement stands as a rough indicator of how committed participants are to longer-term change in Benin and how they put their education to work on society in general. While it is difficult to draw clear conclusions from the information gathered in this section of the participant questionnaire, the survey team felt strongly that community activities also were an indicator of democratization and participation in Benin and of increasing the capacity and performance of participants at the community level.

We've touched on participants' perceptions of themselves as leaders and policy makers on the job in sections above. Here we'll look at involvement in community activities.

- ◆ Did participants change the level or nature of their involvement in community affairs once they received a US education?

*No, not significantly.* The figures are interesting because they indicate an actual drop in the level of community involvement after US training. Seventy-eight percent were involved before and 75% after. Participant comments showed that those who are less involved now are just too busy with increased responsibilities or higher management jobs than was the case before they participated in the program.

When asked how much of their US experience and education they can put to use in community programs, 30% said only a little, 38% said some, and 17% said a lot. About eight percent felt they could apply a great deal.

Sixty-six percent of those surveyed said that their US training has helped them be more efficient as a community leader or a work-place manager while over 20% said they didn't know if it had had an impact or not. Within the community context, participants were asked if they considered themselves a leader at least some of the time. Seventy-two percent said yes, 19% said no and the others didn't reply.

- ◆ What do participants do at the community level?

The following table shows what participants are up to in their communities.

<b>n=24</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
a Attending meetings	22	91.7
b Helping to plan activities/events/projects	17	70.8
c Participating as leader/director/coordinator of events/activities/projects	13	54.2
d Training others	14	58.3
e Participating as a group representative in activities outside of the community	8	33.3
f Assuming formal leadership or administrative roles	11	45.8
g Other	2	8.3

At the civic or political level, participants provided the following information on how they are involved

<b>n=32</b>	Count	Percent
a Voting in government elections (presidency, mayoral, representatives, etc	19	59.4
b Voting in non-government elections (company, union, association)	15	46.9
c Participating in governmental political campaigns	5	15.6
d Participating in non-governmental campaigns (company, union, association, etc )	9	28.1
e Running as a candidate in non-governmental elections (company, union, association, etc )	6	18.8
f Running as a candidate in governmental elections (towns council member, mayor, representatives, etc )	2	6.3
g Other	3	9.4

When asked to give specific examples of what they do as community leaders, they said

- I take on responsibilities when called on
- I plan and organize activities and am the treasurer of a group that started a school
- I have better communications skills and use that in team work
- I'm the co-secretary general of a political party
- I am a member of several national commissions that have to do with delimiting national borders, protecting civil rights and so on
- I'm good at organizing people and events I can write a project proposal and get it funded
- I work with a commission that provides surveillance of prisons and helps underprivileged people
- I do community training, programming activities and evaluations to correct potential problems
- I coordinate groups, lead meetings
- I'm a leader in several church activities
- I manage people, plan activities, create new things
- I lead policy design for my NGO and the NGO network here in Benin

Participants were asked if, since their return, they had started a private business or a non-governmental organization. Thirteen participants (41%) said they had. This fact can be used to assess the impact on the labor market and on the community. The organizations that participants started on their return from the US are

- ADDS, Association pour le Developpement durable par la Sante (Health for Sustainable Development), a project
- Technical Training and Adult Education School, a night school

- An Environmental Management NGO
- COMATRIN, Computer and Management Training Institute, a private business of computer-based management training in both French and English
- GRAPES, Groupe d'Appui pour la Promotion Economique et Sociale (Support Group for Economic and Social Progress), an organization that works to reduce violence during and after elections, wages war against hunger and promotes assistance for deprived persons
- Women's organization for energy and the environment, assists rural women restore degraded environment to improve their lives
- Commission Beninoise des Droits de l'Homme (Benin Commission on Human Rights), defense, protection and promotion of human rights in Benin
- Africa Consulting Group, a firm specializing in marketing and management
- A firm specializing in management, accounting, auditing, tax advice and studies
- CJEB, Commission des Jeunes Entrepreneurs du Benin (Benin Commission for Youth Entrepreneurship), an NGO
- AMET, Africa Management and Technology Experts
- An adult education and children's schooling NGO
- Vision 2000, a group devoted to democracy and governance in Benin

During the focus group sessions, participants observed that, with so many returnees starting small firms and NGOs, the impact is felt in the job market since they were hiring assistants, secretaries and other employees, renting or buying equipment and office space, engaging people to maintain that equipment and space, purchasing telephone and electricity services and so on. They also pointed out that not all impact was measurable, either because the measurement was difficult or dispersed or because it was something psychological such as self-confidence, pride, or a more smoothly operating organization.

#### ***D Perceived Results at the National Level***

The goal statement cited early in this report links individual education to organizational performance which is, in turn, linked to sustainable development in Benin. As has been stated already, some things are measurable and some are not, even at the "perception" level. A training impact evaluation can not pretend to assess results at a national level nor can it actually survey something called sustainable development, by nature a complex and long range process and outcome.

- ◆ What can be said about results at the national level in Benin of the US long term training program?

As has been said in earlier sections of this report, Benin now has 13 new organizations that it did not have before participants went to the US for their training. Twenty-five percent of the participants work with non-governmental organizations in areas such as youth entrepreneurship, health, human rights and the environment. While there is a general perception that there has been little impact on the public sector and/or that impact is, at any rate, hard to measure there, the fact that 60% of long term US-trained

participants do work in government means, as was repeatedly said during the focus groups sessions, that subtle changes are occurring US-trained government workers, it was said by participants and key informants, solve problems more directly, take on hard tasks and expose themselves to risk more readily, tend to be involved in less corruption, manage at least their own time and resources more efficiently and, one suspects, more effectively

Can this be measured? Not easily and not during a 13-day assessment effort

Can it be stated that there are, nonetheless, results at the national level or in the government? The reader can decide at what level they feel such results exist But until there is some critical mass of returned participants, especially in governmental units, measuring results at the national level would not be cost effective However, reasonable people could assert that there are results such as more people hired, more services paid for, less time used in getting work accomplished, a bit less corruption, more effective activity in community and civic organizations and so on

Certainly there is a perception among those surveyed and interviewed, participants, supervisors, USAID staff, and key informants, that the program is generally good and is having positive results Perhaps at a national level, that is what can be stated

But some of the examples provided above, of how individuals have taken actions since their return, lead us to believe there are definite results at the national level as well as at the individual and organizational levels One returnee wrote a textbook being used to teach others Another translated an English text so it could become part of the regular curriculum Pedagogic approaches are shifting as US trainees take on the education and training of others Returnees are engaged in some donor-funded development activities which will be, in their turn, evaluated for impact and which will feed into the strategic objective and results frameworks of USAID and other development partners Peoples' positions on the job have improved, their responsibilities and incomes increased and their attempts to share and apply are documented and somewhat visible The average number of people in participants' organizations is 256 so if they influence only a few of them, there will be some spread effect from the US training program

Organizations that participants work for do a variety of things in Benin, from working on diplomatic issues defending human rights, helping micro-entrepreneurs get loans, promoting personal hygiene in elementary schools, developing and delivering curricula, teaching adults and children, conducting research, providing electricity and water, assisting with educational reform, training others in management and marketing, strengthening civil society and the like Results? Impact? We suggest yes Perhaps not easily or directly attributable to the US long term training program But reasonably connected with and influenced by it nonetheless

It is likely, then, that there is an extant impact now and that there will be more impact in the future, which leads to the next question

- ◆ Will returned participants have an impact on Benin's sustainable development?

*Again, we can offer a qualified yes* As with direct attribution of results and impact at the national level vis-a-vis the long term training program, it is not possible to "measure" results on sustainable development But what can reasonably be stated or at least suggested about the causal relationship or the "likelihood" of sustainability?

The general level of motivation and positive feelings about the future is obvious from participants' expectations about it as we've seen above They are, by and large, aiming at higher level management positions This can be used as an indicator of improved potential for the future Participants are active, as we have seen, in the private sector and thus are involved in producing new economic growth for themselves and their employees and colleagues Several work with NGOs promoting human or civil rights, health, and diplomacy, again contributors to sustainability None of these are sufficient but all are needed for a sustainable future

While only 18% of returnees have formally continued their studies since their return, over 40% have participated in seminars or other short courses This can be taken as contributing to future development in Benin Seventy-two percent have joined an organization since their return Many belong to the Benin Alumni Association (B4A) There seems to be a commitment, then, to keeping a "head of steam" on their education even though the association has problems being effective (from discussions with participants and USAID staff) Certainly the comments of participants during the two focus groups indicated a strong desire to have their alumni organization and other follow-on activities strengthened This was a major theme throughout discussions

Others belong now to human rights and environmental organizations and those promoting economic and social development, again a visible commitment to the future There is a group of economists who meet to discuss sustainable development in Benin and what they can do about it Some participants have either started or have joined community development organizations One belongs to an association of women devoted to development

Whether these "indicators" of commitment to future development result in sustainability in Benin will be judged by the future They are proffered here for our consideration as we look at the actual and potential impact of the long term training program

## **Section Four Suggestions and recommendations**

### ***A From the Participants***

During the **Focus Group sessions** participants engaged in a role play in which each person, acting as a training and education consultant, was to provide advice and/or suggestions to the USAID/Benin Representative about improving the long term training program. Each person had an absolute maximum of two minutes to talk to the Representative who was off to catch a plane and could not spend more time with the consultant. After spending some time reflecting on what they wanted to say, participants provided the following suggestions.

#### **Predeparture**

- 1 Improve the selection process and you will improve the non-returnee issue
- 2 Do better predeparture training/education
- 3 Get a broader range of universities and programs involved. Too few choices
- 4 Participants need to know opportunities in their field of study. We are making decisions with too little information and knowledge
- 5 Make the training program psychologically more human. Too much is done that treats us like a “file”
- 6 Reduce the paper work

#### **In the USA**

- 1 Nearly 70% of the participants have their program changed after they arrive in the US from what was planned as their goal. Let the students get to their stated goals without unintended changes in their program
- 2 We need a better/more effective communication program while we're in the US
- 3 Include a “practicum” or an internship or apprenticeship in our programs in the US

#### **Follow-on to training**

- 1 Strengthen participatory approach to the program and add a follow-up subprogram to the training program
- 2 USAID has so many projects being funded and we can't get jobs with them without a fight. They need to support us when we apply for work with one of their projects
- 3 Help people do a PhD in their home country (if the program is available) if they do a good proposal
- 4 Help people do research for those who want to do it. The country needs the research results
- 5 Can USAID “force” the government to use human resources generated by the program in a better/more effective way? For loans, we have “conditionalities” established which the government has to meet. Why not for this big investment?
- 6 I underline the need to impose conditionalities on the government and to provide better follow-up support

### **Alumni Association**

- 1 Help the alumni association “grow up ” It needs to have some reinforcement Help it conduct some conferences, get more stature etc
- 2 Let alumni participate in decisions about the future of the training program as an advisory group
- 3 Design a specific and meaningful program for and with (WITH) the participants
- 4 Reinforce the Alumni Association as a support base for the USAID training program It is an integral part of the program and not something on the side
- 5 Give some administrative support (e g , pay for a secretary)—help with some equipment and an information system (e g , a network so we in the association know what is happening to whom and where they are so we can help each other)
- 6 Help B4A, for example, set up a loan fund to help returnees start businesses
- 7 Support B4A to develop the network idea so alumni don't feel so isolated So if there are training programs, for more training that USAID wants to do in country, hire first from B4A before going out looking elsewhere Use your investment!

### **General**

- 1 Focus more on measuring impact over the long term
- 2 To have wider visible impact you need more trainees
- 3 Review USAID policies “with a human face” vis-a-vis stipends, visas for visiting spouses, paperwork process, etc
- 4 If you want things to change here in Benin, we need more and more Americans involved in the private sector, in business We need to learn there is a better way to do business—the US style
- 5 There needs to be a public education campaign to educate Beninese so they know about the levels of equivalence of US training compared with the French system so they understand and don't refuse to think as highly about our education or to use us

Participants also provided suggestions on the **questionnaire form** Their suggestions for selection and predeparture procedures have been given in Section Two A above Suggestions for the rest of the training cycle follow

### **Help while in the US**

- 1 The Mission needs to be more aware of how participants are doing, what their problems are, and find a way to offer help
- 2 One suggests advising participants to try their best to save money to help with re-entry problems, which sometimes come as a shock to returnees
- 3 Several feel they are treated like “numbers” and hope for a more “personal touch” all the way through the program (predeparture, while in the US, upon return), with less “rigidity,” especially regarding financial management
- 4 A participant suggests making it possible, if need arises, for participants to get psychological counseling while in the States
- 5 General communications was a theme on the questionnaires and in focus groups, asking for better information on conferences and seminars relevant to study areas, travel opportunities and so on

- 6 Several comments were made during focus groups that the academic program be expanded to include a real-life "laboratory", apprenticeship or practicum to help students apply their learning in the real world
- 7 A few participants expressed a wish that family could visit them at least once or that they could come home once during the course of their studies

### **Re-entry into Benin**

- 1 A few participants suggest help with a larger baggage allowance for returnees
- 2 Many, both on the questionnaire and during the focus groups, want help either as individuals or through their alumni organization, with locating appropriate employment or with business start-up loans, project start-up help
- 3 Several participants suggest re-entry workshops

### **Follow-up programs or activities**

- 1 Participants feel quit abandoned on their return and hope for help both with re-entry (above) and with some follow-up so USAID knows how they're doing in their work and lives in terms of using their education effectively
- 2 There is a general desire, both from participants and at least one key informant, to help returnees by assisting the alumni association to become more solid and active
- 3 Many feel the need for periodic workshops or seminars to update and/or sharpen their knowledge and skills as they enter the workforce and apply their education
- 4 Some participants want USAID to help them in their work setting so supervisors and colleagues are more able to make best use of them and their new capacity

## ***B From USAID Staff***

Open ended comments on the survey questionnaire for USAID staff follow

- ◆ What works best about the participant management training process?
  - 1 The whole process is good It's transparent
  - 2 People from both the public and private sectors participate in the selection process
- ◆ What can be improved in the participant management training process?

### **Planning**

- 1 We need to encourage more consultation with the (SO) teams to review areas of focus
- 2 We could improve the PIO/P process and do more strategic planning for training

### **Selection**

- 1 Participants should be given a written test on their vision for Benin and what their contribution to it will be
- 2 We need to try to select participants based on their organizations' needs
- 3 We need to include more women

### **Predeparture preparation**

- 1 Every Strategic Objective Team should organize a briefing session with participants
- 2 Place more emphasis on a contract for job-related results upon participants' return and involve supervisors in the contract process
- 3 Organize an orientation/reception for the participants with returnees and other Beninese who have lived in the US

### **General**

- 1 Shorten the process

### **C From Key Informants**

Key Informants were asked for their input in three areas, the impact/results they see of the US training program, the non-returnee issue, and suggestions for USAID about the training program. The first two questions were covered in earlier sections of this report. The last question concerning suggestions for USAID follows. These comments are taken directly from the interview notes which appear as an annex to this report.

#### **Mr J B Bob Fadegnon, American Cultural Center**

- 1 Increase the number of participants
- 2 Encourage and help the USAID trainees to create alumni associations. These associations can do a lot of things regarding the sustainable development of their country.
- 3 Organize frequent regional, sub-regional and international seminars, conferences and workshops for USAID trainees so that they share individual and collective experience and exchange ideas on various topics related to Africa's development.
- 4 Plan for more short term training for all returnees who are contributing to the improvement in performance of the organization they are working for.
- 5 Assist the USAID alumni association to set up NGOs and/or firms so they can get involved in development projects financed by USAID or other international organizations.

#### **Mr Saibou Taho, Ministry of Plan**

- 1 USAID should grant more scholarships. We don't understand why the number decreases each year. Why have the programs changed? We need to know because we are the ones "attacked" by other government people wanting to know why the level has dropped so dramatically. And we don't know the answers.
- 2 USAID should allow people to get PhD degrees like they used to. But before granting a PhD scholarship, must know that the degree will be useful. Does the organization really need that training to support its organizational development and performance? And what will the organization do to make that degree most useful? May need some work with the organization, the supervisors and the candidates colleagues to increase potential impact.

- 3 We need more communication between the Mission and the government. We need to know all about the selection, the training, the re-entry and follow-up. At present, we are disconnected from the participants once they are selected. We are very interested ourselves in evaluating training programs, not just the USAID ones but all of them. We have a database ready to receive information from USAID throughout the whole training cycle but we don't get the information. If we did, we could begin to carry the burden of doing the training impact evaluations ourselves. We need better more regular information before, during and after to help with this evaluation. We may even do specific follow-up surveys as the French have suggested doing. But we need communications with and information from USAID to do our job better.

**Mr Omer de Souza, Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

- 1 We would like to have some of our diplomats trained in the US system, that's how much we regard a US program.
- 2 It would be a good thing to have a project similar to the one David Miller (from Corporate Council on Africa) has to build schools and training centers in Benin and do the training here. The USAID Mission would get more results by using limited scholarship money to fund people to be trained in-country instead of always sending people directly to the US. They could go to the US for additional training if their professions require it after they get their local training/education.

**Mr John Bick Riley, AFRICARE**

- 1 I hear mixed reviews in terms of the administration of the program in the US. Students are feeling frustrated because they are not well placed and the system doesn't meet their expectations in terms of their personal goals developed before they left. Note that my sample is small, 10-20 students that I've spoken with. The training wasn't what they really had wanted and planned during pre-departure, but they have to make the best of it. They planned (and thought) to go in one direction but once in the US, the administration had them going in some other direction vis-a-vis their studies. So that end needs to be tightened up a bit.
- 2 As with USAID, in AFRICARE we have shifted the program from a focus on the training of lots of individuals to also working with the organizations. We now do a debriefing of the organization and prepare it on how to bring the skills into the organization most effectively. We do more with follow up activities to help the organization make best use of what they do with the returned trainee. We hold regular "review to improve" activities with the returnees and their organizations. Perhaps this is an area worth looking into for USAID as well.

## ***E From the Supervisors***

Participants' supervisors were asked, at the end of their interview, whether they had any last comments to make. Some commented on their employees and two of them had suggestions for USAID.

- 1 USAID should set up follow-on programs and assess whether participants' professional skills need to be enhanced in the specific areas in which they end up working. Sometimes their academic training needs reinforcement in specific areas.
- 2 Participants should be given the opportunity to go to the US to learn English and to have contact with the US diplomatic system and learn about US overseas policies (from a supervisor of a HRDA trainee who received diplomatic training in a third country in Africa).

## ***F From the Assessment Team***

**1 Get involved in participants' job site.** Given the shift during the USAID re-engineering from a focus on results/impact at the individual level to results/impact at the organizational level, USAID may want to reprogram the training program so that it also carries out some minimal effective activity at the returnees' organizational unit, both before the participant leaves, on his/her return and then periodically thereafter. Especially in the public sector where there is a perception of a lack of results/impact, leveraging the skills, knowledge and attitude of the returnee by involving supervisors and colleagues in predeparture planning for the return, the actual return and then subsequent interventions as needed may improve visible, measurable impact at that organizational level. As it stands now, heavy investment is made in the individual and, when they don't have the desired impact on their return, perhaps USAID reduces the long term training funding, assessing the program as lower priority because of perceived lower impact. Some simple interventions at the work unit level, involving members in planning what they'll do upon the return of a trainee could have positive results. Preparing the supervisor and the participants' colleagues in the work unit about what to expect when the trainee returns can assist everyone on re-entry. And some reasonable follow-up to uncover problems and jointly work on solutions could have very positive results with a minimum of investment. One key informant from AFRICARE has instituted such refocused effort in their training program so USAID may want to talk to them about what works and what doesn't.

**2 Get B4A over its "organizational hump."** A general theme in the focus groups and some comments from key informants had to do with strengthening the alumni organization through some coaching, training and possible financial support. The assessment team sees the returned alumni as a rich resource that USAID could make excellent use of in its re-engineered formation. Alumni, either as an organization or as individuals, could become more active in USAID's strategic objective team work as core

members and frequently included partners. This looks like a win/win situation, giving the Mission input from Beninese who know the US educational program and culture and giving the alumni increased stature and possibly motivation to get the organization functioning more effectively. This is seen as a "seeding" effort to help the organization become self-sustaining.

**3 Adjust selection criteria a little** One of the selection criteria for those from the private sector requires the participant to obtain a guarantee by an employer that they'll hire the participant when s/he returns to Benin. This criterion is easily abused, not easily monitored, and is seen as relatively meaningless since participants look for and find employers willing to do this just to fill the requirement. There are also occasions in selecting public sector candidates where the system could be made more transparent by avoiding initial selection by the candidate's own ministry, since favoritism can rear its head. Participants feel that once candidacies reach the Ministry of Plan, the system is fine. So USAID should either find a way to monitor for favoritism on the home-ministry level or find a way around this step.

**4 Solve the problem of "program focus shift "** There is inconsistency between developed education goals in the predeparture process and actual education program implementation once the participant reaches the US training institution. Among seven participants who discussed this issue during one of the focus groups, one said the program ended up as intended, one changed the program intentionally but the other five said their programs changed from what they'd planned before leaving for the US. They attribute the changes to a) a lack of information about options at the various universities in the program, and b) too few universities to choose from so they're forced to change their programs based on what those few universities have to offer AFTER they get to the US (an unpleasant surprise). One key informant from AFRICARE also noted this as a problem that needs some attention.

**5 Help institutionalize monitoring and evaluation of training in Benin** The Ministry of Plan, the ministry ultimately charged with the educational program on the host country side, is interested in and willing to take on a regular monitoring and evaluation program. It is actively and adequately involved in the predeparture program. However, once a candidate is selected and leaves for the States, Ministry of Plan says they are cut off from any communication or information about the participant, his/her program in the states, his/her return and any follow-up activity such as where they end up working. The Ministry has a database and the capacity and willingness to input data and run a monitoring and evaluation program of all training of Beninese, not just US-based training. But the USAID Mission will have to communicate and coordinate data and information passing to the Ministry of Plan on a regular and ongoing basis. The Ministry sees this as a way to institutionalize a sustainable training M&E system for Benin with minimum burden on USAID and other training providers.

**6 Conduct and/or improve predeparture orientation and re-entry** Participants do not feel prepared when they leave Benin for their US program. They also do not feel supported upon their return. USAID may want to strengthen the predeparture orientation

program and establish a re-entry program to reduce the "interference" caused by unprepared participant trainees. If they are/feel better prepared upon departure, they may undergo less waste of time and resources. If they have a re-entry program (see suggestion # 1) they may be able to have a greater impact on their organizations, especially in the public sector. Several suggestions for improving the predeparture orientation (such as using alumni as resource people during orientation sessions) have been made above. Some see like they would be reasonably cost-effective.

**7 Wring more useful information from the data and institutionalize a regular mini-assessment process** The amount of data and information gathered by the assessment team over the 13-day in-country period is large. Because of time constraints, more analysis could be done using that data and information than is provided in this report. USAID may want to pass this report and the accompanying annexed spreadsheets and information to the alumni association, encourage them to provide additional analysis and recommendations to USAID. This could be combined with periodic "mini" follow-on assessments to regularly inform association members and the Mission about the on-going effectiveness and results of the training program. The alumni are vested in the results of their education, interested in knowing about it, and capable of assisting USAID in helping their fellow returnees. It is possible that the association could become the "owners" of a USAID-focused M&E program, perhaps in concert with the Ministry of Plan suggestion (see suggestion # 5 above). Again, in terms of assisting the association, this could provide one focus for it and improve its self-confidence and its capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

Overall the long term training program is successful and achieving intended results. Going back to the training evaluation model that was used to loosely guide this assessment activity, we can conclude the following:

**Reaction** How well did the participants like the training program?

- ◆ Were participants satisfied with the long term training program? What did USAID staff and others think about it?

*Yes* Ninety-seven percent of participants said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their training program (66% satisfied and 31% very satisfied)

When USAID staff was asked, as the originators and managers of the long term training program, whether they were satisfied, in general, with the program, five out of six said they were satisfied and one was neutral.

Several of the key informants interviewed also offered their opinions about the program in general, saying it was effective, well managed, and that they were satisfied with it and hoped for its expansion and continuation. Supervisors of returned participants also gave indirect evidence of their satisfaction with the program.

**Learning** Did the participants learn the content of the training program?

In the case of the long term training program, it isn't feasible to directly determine whether participants learned the contents of their courses (skills and knowledge). Whether and how well they apply their education on their jobs and in the community are surrogates for this level. But since these are "behavioral" indicators, see the next level for details. Change in attitude is one major measure of learning in the Kirkpatrick assessment model. We've seen the tremendous change in attitude among participants, their positive outlook for the future, their determination to achieve higher level positions, the willingness to take risks, the fact that they now see themselves as leaders, and so on.

Interesting and perhaps revealing comments from the focus groups had participants declaring that the most powerful "learning" they got was not from the contents of the classes they completed while in the US, but rather from having lived in another culture, experiencing a different learning and problem-solving paradigm (as compared to the French system).

**Behavior** Do the participants apply the knowledge/skills in doing their work?

Remember that, at this third level of assessment, participant trainees must

- 1 have a desire to change,
- 2 know what to do and how to do it,
- 3 work in the right climate, and
- 4 be rewarded for changing

These are preconditions for applying learning through behavioral change on the job or in the community

**Precondition 1** On the first point, desire to change, we have seen a very positive attitude by returnees who feel they are better prepared to face challenges, take risks and be leaders

- ◆ Were participants positive about the future and motivated to improve their situations?

*Yes, definitely* In terms of their motivation and expectations about the future, fully 75% expected to occupy a top-level management position within the next five years. Currently about 28% are in top-level positions and another 63% are in middle management positions

**Precondition 2** And judging from the fact that, for all but a few, they've returned to Benin carrying this positive risk-taking attitude and a degree (or two!), we can reasonably believe precondition two generally applies to these returnees. Participants are also satisfied or very satisfied with the training program, giving them the motivation to apply their knowledge and skills

**Precondition 3** Working in the "right climate" is a bit less positive as a fulfilled precondition for being able to apply learning. This seems to be, by most peoples' perception, truest about those participants who work in the public sector

Twelve and a half of the respondents said they'd not been able to apply anything and a few said "only a little". For 44% of those who said nothing, a little or some, the major reason given was that they don't have the authority to put their training into practice and another 20% said they don't have the support of their supervisors or superiors to do so

Some participants and key informants felt that conditions conducive to applying skills and knowledge were somewhat constrained by the work climate in the public sector. Some felt returnees weren't "put to the test" there. And some actually blamed this non-conducive climate as one reason contributing to the incidence of non-returnees. Non-returnees see, for example, a colleague who has been back for over eight months and still has no position as promised in the public sector where he worked before he left. So he had to start a private firm in order to live while the government figures out what to do with him

**Precondition 4** Are participants rewarded for changing? Yes if we use promotions, increases in responsibilities and income as well as positive feedback on the job as indicators that this forth precondition is generally in place among returnees in Benin

- ◆ What impact did the long term training program have on the employment of individual participants?

*Quite a bit* Half of the participants have changed jobs since their training although 44% do still hold the same job they had before being trained in the States. When asked if they changed jobs because of their US education, 72% said yes. And three-quarters of those who changed jobs said their current job was better than their previous one.

- ◆ Were Participants' responsibilities increased and/or were they promoted?

*Yes* One indicator of capacity for improving an organization by applying what has been learned is the degree to which returnees have more responsibilities and/or have been promoted to higher positioning. In looking at the level of management, for example, of participants before and after the training, one sees a definite move from lower to higher positions as the following table demonstrates.

<b>N=32</b>	<b>% Before Training</b>	<b>% Now</b>	<b>% In Five Years</b>
Top Management	6 25	28 125	75
Middle Management	46 875	62 5	6 25
Front line Management	43 75	6 25	0
No Response	3 125	3 125	18 75

And now, given the above, do participants apply what they've learned on the job and in their communities?

Almost 69% of those surveyed said they have been able to apply "a lot" or "a great deal" of what they learned on their current jobs.

Fifty percent said they had personally done something to improve the performance or the capacity of their organization.

USAID staff, who are generally satisfied with the long term training program were somewhat less satisfied with on-the-job application of what participants have learned. While four people said they were satisfied, two said they felt job-application was most obvious in the private and less so in the public sector.

Among participants' supervisors who were interviewed, six of the seven (86%) said that the participant shared their skills and knowledge on the job with four asserting this happened on the participants' own initiative and four stating it was because they were

asked to do so by the supervisor. Seventy-one percent of the supervisors said the returnee had personally done something to improve the organization's performance.

Eighty-eight percent of the participants said they have either formally or informally shared their experience and knowledge with colleagues or in their community. Formal sharing, through seminars, courses and discussion sessions was estimated at an average of 153 people on-the-job and 232 people at the community, friends and family level. Informally, people said they'd shared with 55 people on average while on-the-job and about 68 people among family, friends and their community.

**Results** Does the organization from which the participants come benefit from their having undergone the training program?

We have no pre-training indicators at the organizational level to use in this assessment as a benchmark for comparison. Nor have we defined organizational indicators at all other than that the long term training program is intended to strengthen **leadership and technical abilities** and enhance the **professional capacities** of individuals serving in key development units in the public and private sectors, in order to **improve the ability of Beninese institutions and organizations to plan and promote sustainable development**.

Remember here the caveat from Kirkpatrick. He says, "it is difficult if not impossible to measure final results for programs on such topics as leadership, decision making, or managing change. We can state and evaluate desired behaviors, but the final results have to be measured in terms of improved morale or other nonfinancial terms."

Taking this into consideration,

- ◆ Do people think organizations' abilities have been improved because participants applied their training to their work?

*Yes, certainly in the private sector.* Information that helps answer to this question from sources other than the participants is indirect at best. Sixty-six percent of the participants feel they are better managers which, one could surmise, leads to better organizational performance.

There is a general feeling among participants, USAID staff and key informants that private sector organizations (NGOs and firms) perform better because of the involvement in them by returnees. That general feeling also states that it is very hard to see organizational improvement in the public sector.

- ◆ What can be said about results at the national level in Benin of the US long term training program?

As has been said as it relates to earlier sections of this report, Benin now has 13 new organizations that it did not have before participants went to the US for their training.

Twenty-five percent of the participants work with non-governmental organizations in areas such as youth entrepreneurship, health, human rights and the environment. While there is a general perception that there has been little impact on the public sector and/or that impact is, at any rate, hard to measure there, the fact that 60% of long term US-trained participants do work in governments means, as was repeatedly said during the focus groups sessions, that subtle changes are occurring. US-trained government workers, it was said by participants and key informants, solve problems more directly, take on hard tasks and expose themselves to risk more readily, tend to be involved in less corruption, manage at least their own time and resources more efficiently and, one suspects, more effectively.

- ◆ Will returned participants have an impact on Benin's sustainable development?

*Again, we can offer a qualified yes.* As with direct attribution of results and impact at the national level vis-a-vis the long term training program, it is not possible to "measure" results on sustainable development. But what can reasonably be stated or at least suggested about the causal relationship or the "likelihood" of sustainability?

The general level of motivation and positive feelings about the future is obvious from participants' expectations about it as we've seen above. They are, by and large, aiming at higher level management positions. This can be used as an indicator of improved potential for the future. Participants are active, as we have seen, in the private sector and thus are involved in producing new economic growth for themselves and their employees and colleagues. Several work with NGOs promoting human or civil rights, health, and diplomacy, again contributors to sustainability. None of these are sufficient but all are needed for a sustainable future.

## **Annexes**

- 1 Scope of Work**
- 2 People Contacted**
- 3 Focus Group Session Notes**
- 4 Key Informant Interview Notes**
- 5 A Few Acronyms**

## **Annex 1**

### **Scope of Work**

#### **Global Training for Development/Benin Training Program Training Impact Evaluation Scope of Work**

The objective of this study is to determine the results and relevance of USAID/Benin funded training from October 1991 to present

The evaluation will involve three USAID/Benin projects AFGRAD, ATLAS and HRDA. The Mission has used these funding mechanisms to sponsor long-term training for Beninese since 1970. About one hundred (100) government as well as private sector employees have benefited from USAID/Benin's long term training scholarships. Benin has participated in the African Graduate Fellowship Program (AFGRAD) since 1970 and the African Training for Leadership and Advanced Skills (ATLAS) project when it replaced AFGRAD in 1991. The Human Resources Development Assistance Project (HRDA) funded 10 long-term participants for degree programs and 2,500 participants for short-term technical training programs in Benin, the U.S. and in third countries. The goal of these training projects is to strengthen leadership and technical abilities and enhance the professional capacities of individuals serving in key development units in the public and private sectors, in order to improve the ability of Beninese institutions and organizations to plan and promote sustainable development.

The Evaluation of a sample group of participants and Beninese institutions will include

- Collection and review of documents related to training activities listed above, paying closest attention to long-term training in the United States

- Based on the Mission's participant selection criteria, assess whether the criteria were followed. Verify if participants were selected to fill gaps in performance in their organizations? If yes, were the participants involved in identifying and stating the purpose of their training? If not, did the Mission and their institution make them aware of the purpose of their training and how their new expertise would be used? And why the criteria were not followed? Assess participants perception on the purpose of training

- Using input from Mission management, participants and their organizations, look at the management process and assess it in terms of results. What do participants and managers think worked and didn't work or could have been improved? Did participants feel they got the support they needed and/or wanted to prepare for their education and/or training, for travel to the U.S. and entry into the education and/or training setting, for management of subsistence and administrative issues while they studied, for returning to Benin? Did program managers feel they had the administrative, management and personal support tools they needed to select, field, and support participant trainees? Which areas could be improved? What work seemed unnecessary or could have been streamlined? Were roles and responsibilities clear?

- Assess the participants' links to the Mission following training What mechanisms were set up for this purpose?
- Discuss the non-returnee and drop-out rates and provide suggestions for prevention of non-returnees, given that the project's objective is to promote Benin's sustainable development through human resources capacity building
- Describe the participants' and employers' assessment of the contributions USAID-funded participants have made to their places of employment in both the private and public sectors as a result of their training programs,
- Review the participants' assessment of the effect of training on their professional and personal life Did the participants return to the same employment or did they have difficulty finding jobs after training?

#### **The Mission will**

- Arrange timely meetings with Training Staff, SO and SPO Team members,
- Select a sample group of readily-accessible USAID/Benin alumni and employers to be surveyed with their contact information,
- Furnish selection criteria used by the Mission from October 1991 through the present,
- Provide guidance to the evaluator in an effort to make the report of the greatest use to the Mission

#### **The AED Impact Evaluator will**

- Meet with the USAID Mission training staff and SO and SPO teams to confirm the evaluation specifications,
- Refine survey documents,
- Survey participants and employers,
- Analyze data and information gathered,
- Write Report and submit to AED for transmission to the USAID Mission

#### **Milestones for consultancy**

- Prior to travel to Benin, correspond with Mission regarding clarification of expectations
- By the end of first week in Benin, hold meetings with SO and SPO Teams and complete survey documents for use with participants and employers
- By end of second week in Benin, meet with most of sample groups of participants and employers,
- By end of third week in Benin, complete meetings with focus groups, assess information gathered, and shared preliminary results with Mission Training staff
- Within one week of return to the U S , submit evaluation report to AED
- Within one week of return, submit travel expense report to AED

## Annex 2 People Contacted

**Tableau 1 Participants Who Responded to Questionnaire**

NOM	PRENOM (S)	TITRE	ADRESSE	TEL
AHOSSI	Clement	USAID	01 BP 4049 Cotonou	30-05-00
BOUKARY	Alma	Projet CLEFF USAID	BP 1893 Porto- Novo	office (229) 21-33-27 home 22-25- 13
DATONDI	Apollinaire	Conseiller Technique Ministere des Mines	03 BP 1547 Cotonou	office 31-29- 07 home 32-04- 28
ODAH	Aubin	Librarie Nationale (Librarian)	BP 1974 Cotonou	office 22-25- 85 22-51- 67
SAGBOHAN	Job	Consultant Independant (Public Health)	06 BP 423	office 33-23- 56 home 30-61- 48
GOHOUNGO	Norbert	Intercom	04 BP 1387	32-17-70
BIBI	Antonine	Ministere de l'Interieur	MISAT Cotonou	30-11-06
AHOUISSOUS SI	Nicolas	World Bank Benin	03 BP 2112	office 31-52- 69 home
VIGNON	Joseph	Contrôleur de Gestion (AGETUR)	01 BP 2780	31-36-45 32-28-30
DAN	Yvette	Ministere du Plan	BP 342	30-00-30 30-05-41
DJINADOU	K Alice	INRAB	01 BP 884	office 30-02- 64 home 31-14- 68
ENIANLOKO	B Gisele	Projet CLEFF	03 BP 1090	31-02-60
HOUNGBEDJI	Antonin	Conseiller Pedagogique DETP (Ministere de l'Education)	01 BP 2422	32-14-77
GBADAMASSI	Mounirou	Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres	BP 318	30-04-00

NOM	PRENOM (S)	TITRE	ADRESSE	TEL
KIKI	Albert	Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres	BP 318	30-04-00
AGOSSADOU	German	Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres	BP 318	30-04-00
AHO	Janine	SBEE	03 BP 3531	31-21-45
HOUNYO	Leon	Professeur Assistant Institut National d'Economie	06 BP 135	33-25-89
CHOUBADE	Aminatou	Medecin Sans Frontiere	See B4 A	
NAKA	Bill	Assistant, Loterie Nationale du Benin (LNB)	BP 998	31-15-29 31-43-00
MONGBO	S Jeronine	-	See B4A	
DOGNON	Michel	Directeur Executif Africa Consulting Group (ACG)	01 BP 4552	office 30-64-36 30-20-54 home 30-47-20
KOUTON	Eliane	MCDI	04 BP 1472	30-56-07 30-56-06
KOUKPAIZAN	Paul	Direction des Impôts (Ministere des Finances)	BP 369	30-16-29
LANHA	Wilfrid	CNERTP	BP 1270	33-09-78 32-17-48
ADITE	Alphonse	Enseignant	08 BP 0234	36-05-13
YEKPE	Ursule	PADME	BP 8088	office 31-17-06 home 30-36-33
HOUNSOU	Remy	Professeur Assistant UNB (Universite Nationale du Benin)	03 BP 1090	30-41-68
LADJOUAN	Rachidatou	SBEE	03 BP 3531	31-21-45
DEKADJEVI	Dangero	Self Employed	03 BP 1886	31-43-28
AKPATCHA	Ambrose	CJEB (ONG)	03 BP 1485	30-50-93
HOUINATO	Maxime	AFRICARE	BP 1105 Parakou	61-02-36 30-47-78

## FOCUS GROUP N°1 ET N°2

NOM	PRENOM (S)	TITRE	ADRESSE	TEL
HOUNSOU	Remy	Professeur Assistant (UNB)	03 BP 1090	30-41-68
AKPATCHA	Ambroise	CJEB (ONG)	03 BP 1485	30-50-93
KIKI	Albert	Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres (Diplomate)	BP 318	30-04-00
YEKPE	Ursule	PADME	BP 8088	office 31-17-06 home 30-36-33
DAN	Yvette	Ministere du Plan	BP 342	30-00-30 30-05-41
HOUNGBEDJI	Antonin	Conseiller Pedagogique DETP (Ministere de l'Education)	01 BP 2422	32-14-77
LANHA	Wilfrid	CNERTP	BP 1270	33-09-78 32-17-48
HOUINATO	Maxime	AFRICARE	BP 1105 Parakou	61-02-36 30-47-78

## KEY INFORMANTS

NOM	PRENOM (S)	TITRE	ADRESSE	TELEPHONE
RILEY	John Bick	AFRICARE Representant Resident	01 BP 3142	(229) 30-43-78 (229) 30-53-12
TAHO	Saibou	CNABES Ministere du Plan	BP 342	(229) 30-00-30 30-11-68
FADEGNON	Bob J B	Centre Culturel American Cultural Affaires Assistant and Educational Advisor	01 BP 2012	(229) 30-03-12 home 30-06-51 E-mail Bob FADEGNON Hotmail Com
de SOUZA	Omer	Directeur Amerique/Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres et de la Cooperation	BP 318	(229) 30-04-00

## USAID CONTACTS

NOM	PRENOMS	TITRE	ADRESSE	TEL
ZIZINDOHO UE	Pascal	Public participation specialist	01 BP 2012	30-05-00
JOHSON	Ruben	Team leader democracy and Governance	01 BP 2012	30-05-00
OGOUNCHI	Charles	Results and Resources specialist	01 BP 2012	30-05-00
DONHOSSO U	Helene	Training Assistant	01 BP 2012	30-05-00

## SUPERVISORS

NOM	PRENOM(S)	TITRE	ADRESSE	TEL
AZOCLI	Rene	PADME Directeur General	08 BP 712 Tr1 postal	(229) 30-30-47 30-20-92 E-mail PADME @ bow intnet bj
RILEY	John Bick	AFRICARE Representant Resident	01 BP 3142	(229) 30-43-78 30-53-12
GNONLONFOUN	Toussaint	MISAT DAE	MISAT	(229) 30-11-06
LOKO	Francis	MAEC Directeur Afrique Moyen Orient	BP 318	(229) 30-04-00 30-13-84
HOUNDEKINTO	Georges	MAEC Directeur Adjoint Afrique Moyen Orient	BP 318	(229) 30-04-00 30-13-84
FAGNISSE	Simeon	INE Directeur	05 BP 815	(229) 30-41-68

**Annex 3**  
**Focus Group Session Notes**

**FOCUS GROUP #1**  
**NOTES FROM FLIPCHART**  
**10 NOVEMBER 1998**

**AGENDA**

- INTRODUCTION (PEOPLE, PROCESS, PURPOSE) --10min
- Question #1 Selection Process and Purpose of Program (see SOW for detailed question which I read to the group) --25 min
- Summary #1 --5 min
- Question #2 12% nonreturnee rate Why and how minimize? 25 min
- Summary #2 --5 min
- Question #3 What is the impact/results? (see “what are we measuring? Impact of the long term training as people perceive it on leadership, technical abilities and professional capacity for improved organizational ability to support sustainable development) --25 min
- Question #4 Make suggestions to USAID director (role-play you only have two minutes because he’s got a plane to catch)
- Summary #4 --5 min
- Finish, wrap-up, thanks

**Question #1 Selection, purpose of program**

- 1 Good process
  - 2 In USA, people worked hard so they were well selected
  - 3 The selection process is really geared to people already in an organization
  - 4 In 1993 there was a special program for women Otherwise I would not know of the program and would not have applied Was NOT an OPEN program announcement process I was, however, chosen because of myself not because of someone I knew
  - 5 But it is announced on the radio—so maybe you missed the announcements?
  - 6 May be able to improve the announcement process so people don’t miss it
  - 7 The process could be improved through the more participatory involvement of the participant6 candidates Full involvement using a participatory approach could be improved
  - 8 The process is fair, just
  - 9 Our expectations were different between when we were in Benin and when we got to the USA
  - 10 If I were more involved in the programming process for my training, then may have had my own expectations better fulfilled
- My program changed somewhat
  - My program changed a lot from what was planned in Benin
  - My program changed because I chose to change it
  - Three of us felt we needed better focus on what we wanted but it just wasn’t available in our universities

- My program was as I intended it to
- 11 Participants should have better involvement in the program design and in the choice of schools that can carry out that program
- 12 There are so few actually going through the program so it is critical that we do the best job in the process, predeparture, support, return, etc we need better information and the chance to make better choices using that information

### **Question #2 nonreturnee**

- 1 with only 12%, perhaps it's not really an "issue"
- 2 There are always some nonreturnees Can never eliminate it as a problem
- 3 Participants may feel they won't find a good job on their return
- 4 Jconditions may be better in the USA than they know they'll have in Benin
- 5 May have a better social relationship in US and even marry someone there who might not want to return
- 6 Nonreturnee is an issue based on the purposes of the program in the first place—to support organizational abilities for sustainable development
- 7 What guarantees do we have in place so all partners benefit (including the work unit and the supervisor etc)? Can we make some concrete arrangements here so people come back (government and private partners)? To assure returnees are used to the fullest
- 8 Some participants have to "resign" their jobs in order to go for training and have no guarantee of a job when they return
- 9 Follow on program is needed to assure that participants have something good/suitable to do when they return
- 10 One returnee came back and has been unemployed for 8 months Wanted to work and government needs his/her skills but s/he just can't get a position
- 11 We know of people who are nonreturnees because they feel they must have their Ph D and ATLAS does not do Ph D degrees They usually do come back after they manage to get their Ph D
- 12 I know of 3 nonreturnees who are doing their Ph D
- 13 Pre-1993, the government policy assured a job But the government isn't recruiting any more
- 14 We really need to focus on the private sector and get it developed That's where the jobs will be for returnees Let's not always wait on the government!
- 15 One way to minimize nonreturnee issue is for USAID to increase its own involvement and support of returnees, encourage the use of alumni, help place alumni, better followup for this expensive investment

### **Question #3 Impact and results**

- 1 The program is having a BIG impact---but some of it is not so visible
- 2 Personally my self-esteem and self-confidence have increased For example, I've become more precise when I analyze something I know more and more what I need to do I can plan my future and my job better
- 3 Even if I didn't learn anything regarding the "contents" of my program, I learned a different way of life I look at the world from a different point of view I can do what I want!

- 4 Some things are NOT measurable that you gain from training in another country  
Most of the technical stuff I could have learned here in Benin from Books
- 5 I think my impact would have been better if I ALSO had had some practical  
experience in the US instead of only the book learning
- 6 I've only been back for 3 months and I can see an impact already on my organization  
For example, my organization did not have a strategic program Now we did a three-  
year strategic program and we're already seeing some results But it is still early
- 7 Because I learned about doing a business plan from my training, I feel I can do my  
own Business Plan here and explain it better to my colleagues and supervisor And I  
can send my ideas to my colleagues, ideas which are not part of the current way of  
operating in Benin
- 8 Without the training, would not think of being a consultant But now I am because of  
what I learned
- 9 Cultural impact is greater than the book learning Can still do the book learning at  
home but the cultural impact comes from being in the US
- 10 One big impact is what we're doing right now We're sitting here in Cotonou working  
in English
- 11 A different process is used in the American Education system American's get to the  
point, French system is long and round about before finally getting to the point
- 12 I use the American process in my university courses and the students get more work  
done and like it better
- 13 When I got back, we only had certain textbook used in a class that was in English So  
I took the time to translate it into French and now we have wider use of that  
knowledge in the University system
- 14 The global culture is anglophone so our English is a real impact/asset for Benin
- 15 A critical mass needs to be developed before we will be able to see clearer impact  
My work unit can't follow me easily But if we were three or four there, we'd get it  
done and help each other do it (the job)
- 16 Warning—sometimes the direct (American) approach can close doors!

#### **Question #4 Suggestions**

- 1 Follow-up Strengthen participatory approach to the program and add a follow-up  
subprogram to the training program
- 2 To have wider visible impact you need more trainees
- 3 Improve the selection process and you will improve the nonreturnee issue
- 4 Make the training program psychologically more human Too much is done that treats  
us like a "file"
- 5 Nearly 70% of the participants have their program changed after they arrive in the US  
from what was planned as their goal let the students get to their stated goals without  
unintended changes in their program
- 6 Reduce the paper work
- 7 Do better predeparture training/education
- 8 Get a broader range of universities and programs involved Too few choices
- 9 We need a better/more effective communication program while we're in the US
- 10 Include a 'practicum' or an internship or apprenticeship in our programs in the US

- 11 Participants need to know opportunities in their field of study We are making decisions with too little information and knowledge We also need to be able to go to more seminars and conferences in our field of study We're too limited in what we can do in addition to our formal program
- 12 Can USAID "force" the government to use human resources generated by the program in a better/more effective way? For loans, we have "conditionalities" established which the government has to meet Why not for this big investment?
- 13 Follow-up USAID has so many projects being funded and we can't get jobs with them without a fight They need to support us when we apply for work with one of their projects
- 14 Follow-up Design a specific and meaningful program for and with (WITH) the participants
- 15 I underline the need to impose conditionalities on the government and to provide better follow-up support
- 16 Help people do a Ph D in their home country (if the program is available) if they do a good proposal
- 17 Help people do research for those who want to do it The country needs the research results
- 18 Follow-up Help the alumni association "grow up" It needs to have some reinforcement Help it conduct some conferences, get more stature etc
- 19 Focus more on measuring impact over the long term
- 20 Review USAID policies "with a human face" vis-a-vis stipends, visas for visiting spouses, paperwork process, etc
- 21 Let alumni participate in decisions about the future of the training program as an advisory group

**FOCUS GROUP #2  
NOTES FROM FLIPCHARTS  
11 NOVEMBER 98**

**Question #1 Selection and purpose of program**

- 1 there is a difference between public and private sector re selection process
- 2 when you are selected to go, the private sector "boss" won't wait for you to return, even if they say they will They hire someone else while you go for training and you have no job on your return with that boss
- 3 In private sector—one criterion for selection was you were required to have a firm say that they will hire you when you complete your studies But this is just on paper and not really enforceable So this may not be a good selection criterion
- 4 Public sector—different because you know you will have a job when you get back But the question is "where" will you work and how will they use you
- 5 In fact when you come back, they are afraid of you—you are seen as a threat to them
- 6 It is as if there is a more numerous coalition of French trained people to whom US-trained people are seen as a threat—so they don't facilitate your work
- 7 Even though people (supervisors) make some commitment BEFORE you leave, when you return it is as if they had made no commitments

- 8 I know that my return with my master's degree was a very very bit problem to them So that's why they didn't know what to do with me They sent me to France for another certificate
- 9 Problem is the difference between the French and US training systems But we see the French-trained people getting support (through, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Cooperation) But US side—we feel alone and unsupported
- 10 Preselection is OK At the ministry of plan level it seems fair They don't know your name But at the level of your organization (or your home ministry), they know you If you don't have "friends," they can kill your candidacy But once you get through that and are at the Min of Plan level—it's OK This may not apply to other governmental people since this may be specific to my (min of education) ministry
- 11 The USAID process is good because it skipped my own home ministry and went directly to ministry of plan Before, I never got anywhere when I had to try to get a scholarship by working strictly with my own ministry (of public works) The USAID process skipped that and I got my scholarship

### **Question #2 Non-returnee issue**

- 1 there are 3 people in my group who are nonreturnees so it's a problem
- 2 one person went for training because of his political affiliation and when the political situation changed, he couldn't come back so he's a nonreturnee
- 3 if you don't do well in your studies, some don't return because they are ashamed
- 4 some feel that they don't want to go back because they won't really get a good job where they can put their skills to work
- 5 Some stay because they want a Ph D They know that if they return, they'll never NEVER be allowed to do more training for the Ph D level (not there is a big big bias for PhD's as opposed to Masters and the new ATLAS program doesn't do PhDs) Nonreturnees who stay for their Ph D are probably the biggest percentage
- 6 When I came back to the US there were very few people who had studied in the US so I was very happy to meet the B4A organization to help with a support network
- 7 If you have a good strong local support network we could help each other
- 8 Some people stay because they get married and their spouses don't want to return with them so they have serious pressure to stay in the US
- 9 Nonreturnees are a loss for the country
- 10 People often leave public sector (unless they are part of the political system) to a) apply what they learned elsewhere (public sector it's hard to apply what you learned) and b) to improve their quality of life and get a better salary

### **Question #3 Results and Impact**

- 1 I'm in the public sector and personally I just don't see my impact I am not at the level or doing what I wanted to be/do
- 2 Regarding contents of the training—could have gotten it in Benin The contents aren't the biggest impact on us It is what we learned as a way of thinking and of making decisions
- 3 Your impact may be at a level you don't even realize You may be being too hard on yourself

- 4 One impact is that, since my return, I'm in a position to be able to hire people, e.g., a secretary. And I also rent space. All this is impact on the labor market and in the private sector that may not be measurable.
- 5 We know how to manage money better so now I hire people. And I take risks and hire more people than I did before my training, even though I'm at the same salary. I'm a better manager and I think differently.
- 6 We are more practical, we waste less time. It seems the French system has a way of spending lots of time on circuitous discussion before we get to the point. The US system goes straight to the point.
- 7 Impact—how to run a meeting, to set an agenda, to keep on time, who is doing what, etc. All these things are impact resulting from our US training (indirect perhaps) and may not be very visible, even to ourselves. There's an impact at the organizational level because of this but how to measure it?
- 8 To judge impact one has to look at the short, medium and long term.
- 9 I help people, even though, since my return, they don't have a position (in public sector) for me. I help them get their work done.
- 10 I learned how to manage even in difficult situations so I'm not so scared anymore as I used to be before my US experience.
- 11 I began a consulting group on the side because I know how to manage better than I did. I started the Computer Management Institute.
- 12 I see people struggling to get a job done by hand, for example. But because I learned how to use computers and software, I help them set up a spreadsheet or a template and they do the job in a couple minutes.
- 13 I'm a language translator now because I learned English which is becoming a global language for certain things.

**Question #4 Make brief suggestions to the USAID representative**

- 1 Reinforce the Alumni Association as a support base for the USAID training program. It is an integral part of the program and not something on the side.
- 2 Give some administrative support (e.g., pay for a secretary)—help with some equipment and an information system (e.g., a network so we in the association know what is happening to whom and where they are so we can help each other).
- 3 If you want things to change here in Benin, we need more and more Americans involved in the private sector, in business. We need to learn there is a better way to do business—the US style.
- 4 Help B4A, for example, set up a loan fund to help returnees start businesses.
- 5 Support B4A to develop the network idea so alumni don't feel so isolated. So if there are training programs, for more training that USAID wants to do in country, hire first from B4A before going out looking elsewhere. Use your investment.
- 6 There needs to be a public education campaign to educate Beninese know about the levels of equivalence of US training compared with the French system so they understand and don't refuse to think as highly about our education or to use us.

## **Annex 2**

### **Key Informant Interview Notes**

#### **Key Informant**

**Mr J B Bob Fadegnon Cultural Affairs Assistant and Educational Advisor,  
American Cultural Center**

#### **Question 1, impact of the US training program**

There is a certain gap in the French educational system. The American educational system provides highly qualified professionals such as the Benin USAID trainees. The impact of this training on the technical abilities and professional capacities is evident. The majority of the Benin USAID trainees are in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors.

#### **Question 2, the non-returnee issue**

There are several causes of the non-return of some Benin USAID trainees. Some Benin USAID trainees returned upon completion of their degree, stayed for a few months and went back to the US or went to other developed countries to seek better jobs and better lives. They were frustrated and disappointed when they did not get jobs (or good jobs) at home which corresponded to their qualifications. Sometimes they are underpaid for the level of their qualifications. They suffered a kind of culture shock on their return.

Others did not return at all upon completion of their degrees because of the politicization of the public administration. Or they got a good job in the US. Of course there are other reasons why people don't return.

I don't agree with the non-returnees. They have to come home and get involved in the development of their country. They have to know that the best way to improve a system is to live within it and not be outside it. I consider non-returnees as deserters.

#### **Question 3, suggestions for USAID**

To improve the USAID training program, USAID must

- 1 Increase the number of participants
- 2 Encourage and help the USAID trainees to create alumni associations. These associations can do a lot of things regarding the sustainable development of their country.
- 3 Organize frequent regional, sub-regional and international seminars, conferences and workshops for USAID trainees so that they share individual and collective experience and exchange ideas on various topics related to Africa's development.
- 4 Plan for more short term training for all returnees who are contributing to the improvement of the performance of the organization they are working for.

5 Assist the USAID alumni association to set up NGOs and/or firms so they can get involved in the development projects for Africa financed by USAID or other international organizations

**Key Informant**

**Mr Saibou Taho** Office chief of scholarships, Ministry of Plan, and President of CNABES

**Question 1, impact of the US training program**

From what I know, most ATLAS returnees always find their way. Once back home, they find good jobs because organizations (mostly international) require their skills. For instance, most of the ministry employees who are ATLAS fellowship returnees left the ministry for better positions with international organizations. That means USAID has a good program! It produces people with needed skills and knowledge even though the public sector loses them.

**Question 2, the non-returnee issue**

I think non-returnees are generally people who had problems before they left. Also, some have not done well in their studies and so are reluctant to return. We don't get any systematic information from USAID once participants are selected and leave so we don't know why they don't return. Maybe USAID has more information on this topic. I know of two non-returnees myself.

**Question 3, suggestions for USAID**

1 USAID should grant more scholarships. We don't understand why the number decreases each year. Why have the programs changed? We need to know because we are the ones "attacked" by other government people wanting to know why the level has dropped so dramatically. And we don't know the answers.

2 USAID should allow people to get PhD degrees like they used to. But before granting a PhD scholarship, must know that the degree will be useful. Does the organization really need that training to support its organizational development and performance? And what will the organization do to make that degree most useful? May need some work with the organization, the supervisors and the candidates colleagues to increase potential impact.

3 We need more communication between the Mission and the government. We need to know all about the selection, the training and the re-entry and follow-up. At present, we are disconnected from the participants once they are selected. We are very interested ourselves in evaluating training programs, not just the USAID ones but all of them. We have a database ready to receive information from USAID throughout the whole training cycle but we don't get the information. If we did, we could begin to carry the burden of doing the training impact evaluations ourselves. We need better more regular information before, during and after to help with this evaluation. We may even do specific follow-up surveys as the French have suggested doing. But we need communications with and information from USAID to do our job better.

**Key Informant**

**Mr Omer de Souza** Director of the Americas, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Question 1, impact of the US training program**

US training is beginning to be the one that everybody wants, even Europeans. I have a friend who works at the European Union in Benin. He told me that he wants to go to the US in order to earn a US degree.

People who have been trained in the North American system have better impact in our country. Those with US training tend to be clearer and more honest, with less corruption in what they do. They are better managers. They have a big positive impact. And we anticipate more.

We need more scholarship assistance from the USAID Mission. For instance, recently the Canadians gave us some scholarships. We advertised them to young students who just earned their high school diplomas. They were about 1000 who applied. Almost 300 were qualified but, unfortunately, there was not enough funding for all of them.

**Question 2, the non-returnee issue**

Those who do not return regret it in the end. Indeed, US life is more difficult and complicated than Benin's so it is very hard to survive there. Moreover, there is no way they can have an impact in the US. There they are small people with lots of competition. In their home country there are more opportunities for them to succeed. They are more recognized and there is less competition for those with advanced degrees. The ones who don't return always envy their colleagues who return because those people make an impact, build their houses or do other things that they can not do by themselves in the US. Here they have their whole social and familial support structure. In 10 years you'll see everyone coming home to Benin.

**Question 3, suggestions for USAID**

We believe that the program is well managed on the US side. It's the Beninese side that has the problems and was the cause of some (\$13 million?) funds being returned because we didn't react quickly or in a well-organized way.

We would like to have some of our diplomats trained in the US system, that's how much we regard it. Also, it would be a good think to have a project similar to the one David Miller (from Corporate Council on Africa) has to build schools and training centers in Benin and do the training here. The USAID Mission would get more results by using limited scholarship money to fund people to be trained in-country instead of always sending people directly to the US. They could go to the US for additional training if their professions require it after they get their local training/education.

**General dialogue** (de Souza was joined by Madame Loko who is in charge of the US/North American division)

We were asked by Loko why the number of scholarships has dropped so dramatically, from 1992 with some 14 down to only 4 today. Was it because the US is dissatisfied with progress in Benin toward democracy?

She felt it is time Benin recognized the benefits to the country of a US education and that it is better than what we end up with from the French system

**Key Informant**

**John Bick Riley Resident Representative, Africare**

**Question 1, impact of the US training program**

I've been here 10 months and have observed a few people from the long term training program. I've seen some successes among people working for NGOs or USAID. But have seen some problems too.

a) one person now with (named a government organization) was gone for 3 years, speaks beautiful English. They put him/her back in the same post and the person is now a "lost opportunity" for impact and results. He/she is very frustrated and is now looking for work elsewhere and will be a loss to the organization.

b) One person went for a 3 month certificate program. He/she is in a mid-level position in (named a government organization) where he/she could have lots of impact if only put to the test and given the opportunity. Seemed like a good selection. Person is hard working, works with charitable organization as a volunteer to set up financial systems. One of the problems the person has may result, in part, from jealousy. But there is also the French/American bifurcation and it remains to be seen if he/she will get the responsibility merited.

Impact is apparent when one looks outside the government. It is not so apparent inside the public sector.

**Question 2, the non-returnee issue**

Nothing to contribute.

**Question 3, suggestions for USAID**

1. I hear mixed reviews in terms of the administration of the program in the US. Students are feeling frustrated because they are not well placed and the system doesn't meet their expectations in terms of their personal goals developed before they left. Note that my sample is small, 10-20 students that I've spoken with. The training wasn't what they really had wanted and planned during pre-departure, but they have to make the best of it. They planned (and thought) to go in one direction but once in the US, the administration had

them going in some other direction vis-a-vis their studies. So that end needs to be tightened up a bit.

2. As with USAID, in Africare we have shifted the program from a focus on the training of lots of individuals to also working with the organizations. We now do a debriefing of the organization and prepare it on how to bring the skills into the organization most effectively. We do more with follow-up activities to help the organization make best use of what they do with the returned trainee. We hold regular "review to improve" activities with the returnees and their organizations. Perhaps this is an area worth looking into for USAID as well.

**Annex 5**  
**A few Acronyms**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Projet CLEF	Children Learning Equity Foundation
Intercom	International Communication
AGETUR	Agence d'Execution des Travaux Urbains
INRAB	Institut National des Recherches Agricoles du Benin
DETP	Direction de l'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel
SBEE	Societe Nationale d'Electricite et d'Eau
MCDI	Medical Care Development International
CNERTP	Centre National d'Essais et de Recherche des Travaux Publics
CJEB	Commission des Jeunes Entrepreneurs du Benin
CNABES	Commission Nationale d'Attribution de Bourses, d'Etudes et de Stages
MISAT/DAE	Ministere de l'Interieur de la Securite et de l'Administration Territoriale/Direction de l'Administration d'Etat