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Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance

VEGA 2007 Quarterly Report 2

(April 1 – June 31, 2007)

**LEADER WITH ASSOCIATE AGREEMENT (LWA)
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Quarterly Report 2 (April - June 2007)

This is the second Quarterly Report submitted to USAID for 2007. This report covers what VEGA has accomplished in the period April through June 2007.

Part I. Governance

Executive Committee Meetings

As charged by the Board of Directors at its October 11, 2006 meeting, the Executive Committee had taken on a larger and more engaged role in guiding and facilitating the work of the VEGA staff and or Member Organization staff, toward the end of carrying out a sustained outreach effort designed to take full advantage of the established contacts, business relationships, and in-country presence that Member Organizations have with USAID Missions. Consequently, Executive Committee members committed to meeting every two weeks to consider VEGA outreach, as well as project management implementation in the field, and project management and support from VEGA and the Member Organization home office staffs: Typically, the agenda of these meetings included such items as:

- Weekly Activity Sheet by the VEGA staff
- Periodic Program Performance Reports
- Periodic Financial/Audit Reports and Issues
- USAID/Client Relations
- Responsibilities/Communications to the VEGA Board
- Planning and Implementation of Outreach Activities/Tracking of the Outreach to the Top Twenty USAID Country Programs
- Governance issues or policies currently impacting on-going outreach and project implementation activities
- Prospective or Pending USAID Requests for Program Description
- Special Events

Executive Committee meetings in this quarter were held on April 11, April 25, May 9, June 1, June 6, and June 20.

Notes for these meetings can be made available by the VEGA staff to Member Organizations and USAID clients upon request.

Part II. Outreach

VEGA staff worked with member organizations to update the Top-20 Target List, see what information is available from selected USAID missions, discuss suggested changes to the List, and find out the Outreach plans that members had. The Top-20 List was modified in May to reflect these talks, and incorporate information from USAID personnel as well as that gleaned from the Congressional Budget Justification from USAID. Additionally, VEGA engaged in active outreach to Missions in Malawi, Sudan, South Africa, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Armenia. VEGA also conversed with the Regional Missions in West Africa and Asia.

Meetings and Representations

Executive Director Earl Yates and Project Management and Support Officer Lee Warren attended the May 23 Public Meeting of USAID's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid (ACVFA). At that meeting, the Committee presented draft recommendation papers that had been prepared for eventual submission to the USAID Administrator by its Working Groups on Economic Growth; Implementation Mechanisms; and Governing Justly and Democratically. The Committee offered the attending organizations the opportunity to comment on these draft recommendations before they were finalized and submitted to USAID.

In response to that offer, VEGA prepared and submitted to ACFVA on June 15 its comments on the recommendation papers on Economic Growth, and Implementation Mechanisms. These reports are available from VEGA staff upon request.

Newsletter Headlines

- *Volunteers Recognized for Services in Promoting Economic Growth*
 - In April of 2007, USAID and VEGA recognized the international service of volunteers by combining the President's Volunteer Service Award with the VEGA Service Impact Award into one event. This collaboration highlighted the work of volunteer technical advisors and their impact on economic development.
 - In this group of accomplished volunteers is Mabor Manyok, one of the Sudanese "Lost Boys" who currently uses his professional Information Technology skills to upgrade the capabilities of the Sudanese Ministry of Environment
- *VEGA Re-introduces Brown Bag Information Sessions (April 2007)*
 - These sessions provide an opportunity for the VEGA staff to meet member organization staff. The VEGA staff makes a presentation outlining the organizations structure, business acquisition strategy and project management. Future sessions will be hosted by rotating member organizations in Washington DC.
- *VEGA Ethiopia Co-Sponsors US Buyers*
 - The US Embassy in Ethiopia, along with VEGA-Ethiopia AGOA+ program assisted about forty female-owned handicraft business in making fruitful contacts with five US buyers.

- *VEGA/BTD Presents its Authentic Bulgaria Project At the SIETAR (Society for International Education, Training and Research) Conference in Sofia*
 - VEGA/BTD assisted a Bulgarian nature conservation Consulting company, EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd. (ELC), in attending the SIETAR congress. ELC advised the SIETAR's management board in identifying opportunities for the next congress to take place in Sofia.
 - At the subsequent SIETAR Congress in Sofia, held for the first time in Southeastern Europe, VEGA/BTD presented the Authentic Bulgaria project in front of approximately 300 international participants. They also distributed some of the recently produced Authentic Bulgaria Guidebooks in English and German.
- *Natural Botanicals Receives Follow-On Grant Under South Africa APS Grant Administration FY 2007 Program*
 - Natural Botanicals, one of five sub grantees under the FY 2007 is assisting the women of the Red Cedar, a small enterprise of six women who make rooibos-based soap products. This year Natural Botanicals and Red Cedar added basket weaving to their soap making program. These will be used as packaging materials when selling the soap to tourists.
 - The Red Cedar group trained a women's group in Aurora, Western cape in soap making techniques. The business now called Aurora Fijnbosch sells soap mainly to guest houses. Both groups were featured in a local newspaper which has resulted in both groups receiving export orders and increased client base and production.

Part III. LWA Deliverables

Monitoring and Evaluation

There was no M&E reporting in this period.

Best Practice Models

Member organizations continue to submit their Case Studies in Best Practices for this quarter. These Case Studies are collected to provide USAID missions with members' Best Practices in utilizing volunteers to assist USAID in achieving its goals in economic growth and development. In order to maximize the value to USAID, member organizations and VEGA, the Case Studies in Best Practices underscore both a regional and technical specialty chosen by the submitting organization, yet each Case Study is linked by the common thread of highlighting the successful use of volunteer technical assistance to implement the core of the program. In addition to the previously submitted Case Studies in Best Practices, this quarter's Case Studies in Best Practices can be downloaded from the Case Studies page at <http://www.vegaalliance.org/best.asp> >> Case Studies.

Part IV. Associate Agreements

Bulgaria BTD

As expected, USAID Bulgaria extended the program until September 30, 2007, and reduced the Total Estimated Amount by \$300,000. VEGA and its implementing partners signed the Subagreements in response to this and planned final activities for the program that was VEGA's first and, to date, longest running. Remaining activities are roll out of the SME Clearinghouse, launch of Authentic Bulgaria, finalizing ICT Certification, and hosting an Investors' Conference.

Sudan AMED

VEGA found a new COP for its AMED program who began in April. Scott Allen has a long history of economic development engagements in the region and his most recent residence was in Nairobi, Kenya. Mr. Allen assumes his position amid continuing activities while actively negotiating with USAID regarding a planned expansion and extension of activities.

Ethiopia AGOA

USAID Ethiopia extended the program 15 months and added \$500,000 to the Total Estimated Amount of the program, obligating the same. VEGA sponsored an informational forum in Washington, DC, for those interested in opening business relationships in Ethiopia with more than 50 local businessmen in attendance. While the forum was open to all and included the participation of US Government trade and development officials, attendance was mostly from the Ethiopian Diaspora interested in hearing about opportunities.

South Africa SAAGA

In June, a new COP, MK Cope, with deep regional experience took the reins of the SAAGA program. While managing continued grant management activities, she opened discussions with the Mission interested in further potential participation of VEGA in their portfolio of activities.

MEPI Morocco/Bahrain

Training programs continued in both locations. This will be the last full quarter of program activities as it moves to its conclusion in September.

Long-Term Business Advisors (LTBA)

LTBAs continue working in Jordan, Indonesia and Armenia. Advisors were found for FY2008 activities at the requests of the Missions in Indonesia and Jordan and VEGA is now waiting for final details from the Mission regarding extending the LTBA activities. USAID Armenia expressed interest in continuing LTBA assignments but are not sure whether funding rates for FY2008, yet to be approved, will be sufficient for this.

West Africa – Improved Access to Credit for SMEs



VEGA was awarded a one-year Cooperative Agreement with the West Africa Regional Mission to provide training to businesses and banks in developing relationships between the two and establishing the internal structures necessary to expand opportunities for both, e.g., business start-up, expansion of product lines, investment in new equipment, etc., for entrepreneurs, and client development and skills training for the banks. IESC is the prime implementer of this program and will be joined by IIE, ISLP, and FSVC.