

# USAID Developments

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## USAID and Peace Corps reaffirm partnership

To commemorate their continuing partnership, the Peace Corps honored the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and staff at a special ceremony at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington in January.

USAID expressed its appreciation when Administrator Brian Atwood presented a plaque to Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan recognizing the thousands of Peace Corps volunteers who have furthered USAID's goals by helping people help themselves.

"The work we are doing reflects the best of our [American] values," Atwood said. "Peace Corps and USAID efforts are based on America's belief that the words 'all men are created equal' in the Declaration of Independence meant not just us, but everybody in the world."

Atwood told the audience of USAID and Peace Corps staffs that the collaborative USAID-Peace Corps projects demonstrate at the local level what participation in society means, how democracy works and how a society can help itself and create an environment where "development will occur."

More than 300 USAID employees are former Peace Corps volunteers or staff members, including 19 mission directors and 60 senior staff.

Gearan, in presenting a plaque to USAID, recalled the two agencies have existed since the inception of both in 1961, but the relationship was only formalized in the early 1980s.

"A lot of things can be said about

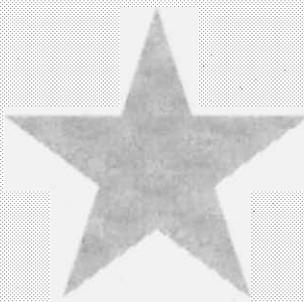
the contributions that Peace Corps volunteers and staff and our friends and colleagues at USAID have made to sustainable development," Gearan said, "but if there is one central point to be made, I believe it is that everyone associated with our agencies has at least one common goal: to help improve the lives and lift the hopes of people in developing countries."

Atwood and Gearan also signed a joint communique to USAID mission directors and Peace Corps country directors conveying the importance of continuing this partnership. USAID and the Peace Corps currently participate in interagency cooperative programs in more than 70 countries, involving more than 2,500 Peace Corps volunteers and 10 interagency agreements.

The communique states: "These agreements strengthen the programs of both agencies in microenterprise development, forestry and natural resources, disaster relief, micronutrient programs, child survival, youth development, Small Project Assistance, Farmer-to-Farmer [programs] and HIV/AIDS education. As the Peace Corps and USAID prepare for the challenges of the next century, we congratulate field staff for your successful efforts, which demonstrate again that the best thinking about development occurs in the field. While the Peace Corps and USAID have different missions, our collective thinking and collaboration, where appropriate, can serve to enhance sustainable development around the world." ■



USAID's Peace Corps liaison Arnold Baker (center) receives a plaque and congratulations from Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan (left) and Administrator Brian Atwood for his dedicated years of service in promoting partnership between the two agencies.



UNITED STATES AGENCY  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

## Upcoming conferences

# Lessons Without Borders' International Women's Business Conference - Maine

**B**usinesswomen from around the globe will gather at the Civic Center in Augusta, Maine, from April 29 to May 1 for a Lessons Without Borders' conference focusing on women's business and trade opportunities.

More than 600 businesswomen from New England and 200 from developing countries are expected to attend. The conference will include workshops, roundtable discussions, presentations by prominent businesswomen, mentoring and cyberspace centers, a walk-in business clinic and an international market trade show.

The conference theme is "Micro-enterprise Development, Growth and International Trade."

This event will be a working conference. There will be ample opportunity for networking, discussions, marketing one's products and services and learning more about business from prominent, successful businesswomen.

In addition to USAID, sponsors include Maine Women's Fund; Maine Centers for Women, Work and Community; the Maine International Trade Center; Small Business Administration; Women's EDGE

(a Washington, D.C., group); and International Development Advantage.

Lessons Without Borders, a USAID initiative, began in 1994 to bring home lessons learned in more than 30 years of work in international development worldwide. The program was launched by Vice President Al Gore and USAID Administrator Brian Atwood.

For more information, contact Tracy Scrivner at (202) 712-4014; fax (202) 216-3237; E-mail [tscrivner@usaid.gov](mailto:tscrivner@usaid.gov). ■

# International conference on girls' education - Washington, D.C.

**F**irst lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will be honorary chair of an upcoming conference on girls' education co-sponsored by USAID, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Commission, UNICEF and the Lewis T. Preston Education Program for Girls.

The conference will be held at the International Trade Center in Washington, D.C., from May 6 to May 8.

The goal of the conference is to strengthen the partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society and their commitments

to increase girls' school participation worldwide.

Participants in the conference will include:

- leaders in government, business and religious organizations in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and the Near East;
- private sector, academic and philanthropic organizations, foundations and other non-governmental organizations;
- media organizations; and,
- international agencies.

All sectors of society — business, religion, the media, academia — in

collaboration with the government can make a difference in the education of children, particularly girls. Over the past decade, numerous interventions to increase girls' school attendance, completion and achievement have been tested, and promising strategies have been identified. The critical issues of the long-term effectiveness of these interventions and the responsibility for sustaining them over time have not been adequately addressed.

For additional information on this conference, contact Susie Clay: phone (202) 712-0570; fax (202) 216-3173; E-mail [sclay@usaid.gov](mailto:sclay@usaid.gov). ■

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# Getting Egyptian girls into school

**T**he evidence from research around the world is mounting: Investments in basic education for girls have among the highest returns of all economic development programs. Educated women have fewer and healthier children. They are more likely to send these children to school, have higher earnings, understand and defend their rights in their interactions with civic society and be better able to take care of the environment. In short, their lives are transformed.

The government of Egypt has recognized these findings and has articulated, if not fully realized, a most progressive policy agenda. President Hosni Mubarak has declared education to be the nation's highest priority. The national budget for education has grown threefold in the last decade. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has launched an initiative bearing the name of Egypt's first lady to build and generously equip 3,000 one-room schools just for girls in deprived areas.

But change comes slowly to a country that measures its history by millennia and among a population that spent most of that time resisting the influence of one foreign conqueror or another. An estimated 52 percent of Egypt's female population and 39 percent of its men are illiterate, and the public school system struggles to cope with a host of serious challenges, from population pressures to inadequate infrastructure and incentives for teachers. Most of the problems are interconnected and will require complex and multifaceted solutions.

An experiment began five years ago when a prescient UNICEF education officer saw the promise that the community school model developed in countries like Colombia and Bangladesh held for Egypt. She ventured into hamlets of Upper Egypt far removed from regular



*This Egyptian girl and others like her will benefit from President Mubarak's commitment to make education the nation's highest priority.*

public schools to ask the villagers if they would be willing to donate an existing structure that could be transformed into a school for their children. Four communities were excited by the notion, and from this small beginning 120 schools have grown.

The achievement of such successes in some of the most deprived areas of the country has been remarkable enough to persuade USAID that expanding this approach on a large scale just might help regenerate the Egyptian primary school system. One of USAID/Egypt's strategic objectives is to increase girls' participation in quality basic education.

In the UNICEF model, the communities organize school committees to support children's participation and identify local young women to become facilitators of the children's learning. The Ministry of Education provides textbooks and teaching supplies, and UNICEF organizes comprehensive training programs to prepare and support the facilitators and school committees in their new roles.

The children in these community

schools learn how to study, how to think creatively, how to present a project with poise and how to answer questions with courtesy. They also pass the standard government exams at a higher than average rate.

USAID will continue to expand upon this foundation. In partnership with the MOE, USAID will adapt the existing primary school curriculum to a multigrade setting and enhance it with self-directed, active learning materials and will develop an intensive teacher-training program. An interactive radio instruction program to teach the required English language curriculum also will be created.

The target is to create 1,000 classrooms in the villages of El Minya, Beni Suef and Beheira, the three governorates in which UNICEF operates, and in urban slums of Cairo, where the community school model will be adapted to conditions where space is at a premium and regular schools operate on double shifts and serve 100 students per classroom.

Together, these and other diverse interventions could have a profound impact on Egyptian education. ■

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The following excerpts are taken, with permission, from an article in *The Washington Post* on March 6 by Judy Mann, *Washington Post* columnist.

## Aid for women who mean business

Sunday [March 8] is International Women's Day, which makes this a good time to take a look at some of the U.S. foreign aid initiatives that help improve the lives of women in developing countries.

USAID's Women's Political Participation and Legal Rights Initiative helped a coalition of women's organizations in Nepal successfully challenge laws preventing women from inheriting property, a major cause of female poverty. A USAID-sponsored voter education project in Bangladesh reached more than 3 million eligible female voters (at a cost of less than a penny per voter) and resulted in a 77 percent turnout of women in the subsequent elections, a higher turnout than among men.

USAID has targeted the education of girls as one of the most effective ways of improving a family's standard of living. Worldwide, seven of 10 illiterate people are women, often as a result of cultural practices and beliefs that discourage women from remaining in school.

In 1995, Hillary Rodham Clinton announced a 10-year effort by USAID, the Girls' and Women's Education Initiative. More than \$100 million will go to improving girls' schooling by providing scholarships, recruiting female teachers, training teachers, helping communities develop schools and helping overcome fears about girls' safety in school.

Some measures of success: In Bangladesh, foreign aid money provided 6,000 scholarships for girls in secondary school, and girls' enrollment increased almost 60 percent within three years. The dropout rate fell from 15 percent to 3.5 percent.

USAID's microenterprise programs have put special emphasis on helping women earn money, because they often pay for the health and education of their children.

One person who understands and appreciates the help USAID has been giving female entrepreneurs is Lucia Quachey, a consultant on microenterprise

who owns a clothing factory in Ghana. USAID brought her to the United States in 1990 to learn about American practices. With a small group of Ghanaian female business owners who recognized the need to expand into international markets, she formed the Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs in 1993. It now has 150 member companies in 28 sectors of the economy, including pharmaceuticals, timber, deep sea fishing, accounting, food processing, publishing and banking.

With \$100,000 from USAID, the association put together the first Global Women's Trade Fair and Investment Forum in Africa, held in Accra in June 1996. More than 1,500 female entrepreneurs participated. A second forum is planned for Addis Ababa in October and a third in the United States in 2000.

"This would not have seen the light of day without USAID. Everyone else was saying it's impossible," [Quachey said]. ■



U.S. Agency for International Development  
Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs  
Washington, DC 20523

**Assistant Administrator for  
Legislative and Public Affairs:**

Jill Buckley

**Chief of Multimedia Communications:**

Suzanne H. Chase

**Editor:** Betty Snead

**Web Page Address:** [www.info.usaid.gov](http://www.info.usaid.gov)

**Questions:** [pinquiries@usaid.gov](mailto:pinquiries@usaid.gov)

**Phone:** (202) 712-4810

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