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Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance

## AGRICULTURAL MARKET & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - FINAL REPORT



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Ismail Limbo (far right) helps prepare fishing net while visiting family in Wau, South Sudan. After 27 years, Mr. Limbo, a Sudanese Diaspora living in Cairo, returned to his hometown under the VEGA/AMED Program to conduct a VEGA volunteer assignment to provide computer literacy training in Juba and Wau on computer basics, typing skills, and use of software such as Microsoft Word and Excel to private and public-sector participants. Participants are now able to produce typed documents, create tables, and organize their desktops. Mr. Limbo also held a separate session on computer networking and maintenance, including syllabus development, for 10 IT trainers at the Juba Computer Training Institute. He has now moved permanently to South Sudan to support the development and growth of the country. Mr. Limbo is one of 12 Sudanese Diaspora that volunteered their expertise under the VEGA/AMED Program.



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VEGA recruited Mr. Amos Mwasi, a regional volunteer with extensive experience in managing milk processing plants in Kenya. Mr. Mwasi spent two weeks with the NICODO team and several extension agents from the Central Equatoria State Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources to improve the effectiveness of the NICODO milk processing. Although a number of milk processing topics were addressed, the trainees were most interested in learning cheese-making. The farmers have improved logistical support for better milk collection and transport and they are now using more electricity in their pasteurization process as compared to use of firewood in the past. Prior to the assignment, NICODO's annual net income was only US\$2,475 (SDP 500,000). After receiving technical assistance, annual net income had doubled to US\$4,950 (SDP 1,000,000). NICODO employs 18 personnel.

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Margaret Achen Alfred, a cook at a Women Self Help Development Organization cafeteria, practices making chicken chasseur. Ms. Alfred was one of five women who attended a VEGA training on preparing different food menus. For this training, VEGA tapped the expertise of local Sudanese cook, Hassan Bakumba. Mr. Bakumba, a professionally trained chef who regularly cooks for VEGA, provided 10 days of training to the five women participants. He covered food variety, provided one-to-one demonstrations, and gave the women opportunities to prepare the food themselves. One of the women quickly introduced a new food item in her cafeteria menu: samosas. The response was very favorable and clients requested more, a clear indication business will continue to grow. Another participant added: "Sincerely speaking, all we have learned are very new knowledge and skills to us which we believe will make a difference in our business." WSHDO cafeterias are now providing catering service, and have increased their client-base at their present locations as a result of menu expansion, thus increasing revenue. The trainees are now capable of extending the training to colleagues in their respective locations.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Sudan from Civil War to Peace

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, bordering nine countries with a population estimated at 40 million. An estimated 4 million Southern Sudanese have been displaced, internally to Northern Sudan and, as refugees, outside the country. Since independence in 1956, Southern Sudan has suffered from civil war with only a decade of troubled peace from 1972 to 1983, and an estimated two million people have died.

Southern Sudan is characterized by years of underdevelopment, war, famine, drought, and flood, producing a crisis of enormous proportions across the region and resulting in the devastation of the South's economic, political, and social structures. Vital statistics for health, education, and infrastructure are among the lowest globally. In addition to the loss of lives, unrealized opportunities, and destruction of infrastructure, the war displaced families and divided communities. Since the mid-1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), and multilateral/bilateral agencies offering humanitarian relief have become the prime providers of an array of much needed services.

After decades of civil war, Sudan's warring parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005. Since that time, the country has taken giant steps toward peace, reconciliation, and good governance.

# VEGA/AMED Program

The goals and objectives of the Agricultural Market and Enterprise Development (AMED) Program, implemented by the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA), evolved over the life of the project in response to changes in the USAID/Sudan Strategy. Initially, the VEGA/AMED program was designed to support Strategic Objective No. 8 of USAID/Sudan's 'Fragile States Strategy' to *establish the foundation for economic recovery* through 1) capacity building in agriculture and natural resource systems, 2) direct support to the private sector, 3) support to governmental and non-governmental agencies that facilitate recovery, and 4) support to the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) policy and support systems. In 2006, the program was redesigned in support of Strategic Objective No. 10 to *promote stability, recovery, and democratic reform* of USAID/Sudan's 2006-2008 Strategy. The redesigned program had two primary objectives: 1) increase private sector opportunities in select urban areas, and 2) enhance the capacity of local community, county, and state level government and civil society institutions. The VEGA/AMED program was modified once more in late 2007 to expand the size and scope of the program to strengthen the nascent private sector on a broader and deeper level. Though the program continued to support Strategic Objective No. 10, program activities were refined to focus on micro-enterprise development in selected urban areas and on agricultural marketing and processing activities. VEGA's primary method to impact change in these areas was through the provision of volunteers for technical assistance. The program utilized the expertise of 136 short- and long-term volunteers from the U.S., Sudanese Diaspora, and the East Africa region, as well as that of paid consultants, and technical staff.



VEGA/AMED staff with clients.

VEGA drew upon skills and capacities of its five member alliance in Southern Sudan to source and deploy volunteers with skills specifically required to meet client needs and to implement the VEGA/AMED Program. Winrock International served as the lead organization under VEGA and provided overall program management, management of training activities, and monitoring and evaluation. Winrock also led training and support activities in various sectors as well as recruitment of Sudanese Diaspora. ACDI/VOCA helped develop marketing associations, cooperatives, and a price information system, and strengthened the production and marketing of fruits and vegetables, perennials, and other high-value crops. Citizens Development Corps provided long-term volunteers through the MBA Corps, which provided business skills, enterprise development training, and support to entrepreneurs and small enterprises. Citizen's Network for Foreign Affairs (CNFA) provided volunteers to support agricultural development with a focus on staple food crops. International Executive Service Corps (IESC) also recruited volunteers to establish and strengthen chambers of commerce, industry associations, and business development.

VEGA/AMED strove to build capacity of local institutions, focused on market development and served as an information and technical resource to private enterprises, local institutions, and GOSS agencies. VEGA's approach to implementation focused on developing plans for promising sub-sectors and industry clusters; to provide capacity building assistance and value chain understanding towards both regional and domestic markets; complement economic infrastructure reconstruction, and programs facilitating trade; strengthen the technical and managerial capacity among entrepreneurs; strengthen NGO and GOSS institutions; when possible drew upon Sudan's Diaspora for technical and training support.

Agricultural and marketing organizations and cooperatives have also been a mechanism where existing and improving businesses gained market advantages and grew. Marketing associations provided a mechanism for assembly of marketable volume of produce, share market costs, and provided resources to members that facilitated access to information and markets.

VEGA/AMED supported key industry clusters to strengthen associations to provide services and support to members. VEGA provided support for associations to organize and form appropriate structures and training for association managers, assisted associations to identify and develop services for members and strive to develop income generating activities. Associations have provided essential linkages between GOSS and the business community to develop public private partnerships, and have assisted in the development of a pro-business private sector approach and real public-private partnership. In addition to associations and chambers of commerce, VEGA/AMED assisted local business support organizations in strengthening business in the community. This included primarily business skills training and consulting to assist growing entrepreneurs.

Of course a primary focus of VEGA/AMED was capacity building. Training activities were provided directly to businesses, associations, cooperatives, industry groups, farmers, GOSS personnel, and local support organizations. The program utilized volunteers who then worked with all of these institutions at each level to support and enhance private enterprise development, economic policy, trade, and economic development support services.

# AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture is the backbone of the Sudanese economy, and a revitalized agriculture sector is the straightest path to broad-based, sustainable economic growth in Southern Sudan. It is also the quickest way to deliver visible dividends of peace and to support the integration of returnees and ex-combatants. In 2001, the agricultural sector contributed about 39% of gross domestic product (GDP) and it continues to be a major export sector. About 80% of the population is rural and depends on agriculture for food and income. In some areas, the nomadic herders and smallholder farmers coexist alongside each other; nevertheless, in other areas conflict over grazing land is a common feature between groups. Across Sudan, about 60% of all crop production depends on irrigation, and 33% is rain-fed.

The agriculture potential of Southern Sudan is high; however, rain-fed, shifting cultivation, and subsistence farming are common agriculture practices, limiting the potential of the region. Local agricultural human resources are needed to promote better farming practices among the communities. The major constraints that affect the development of the sector include unfavorable weather conditions, inadequate policies to support farmers, lack of access to capital, low-level agricultural technical efficiency, and lack of skills in production, marketing, and business management. Despite the numerous constraints, Southern Sudan has bountiful natural resources and the potential to be a major producer of a wide range of agricultural commodities. Largely untapped livestock, fishery, and forestry resources, adequate rainfall, fertile land, and water availability in particular areas all point to the agricultural potential of Southern Sudan. For example, Sudan's rainy seasons enable farmers to harvest most of their crops twice a year (July and November), rather than once.

The following section summarizes technical assistance and training VEGA/AMED provided to Sudanese farmers to enable them to capitalize on opportunities in the agriculture sector.

# Farmer Cooperatives and Associations

Prior to the most recent north-south conflict, farmer cooperatives were organized and regulated by the Sudanese government. However, these farmer cooperatives and groups were disrupted by the war. Agricultural cooperatives provide a form of enterprise development most suitable for the rural community. Given the dominance of subsistence agriculture, farmer extension through associations taught, “farming as a business” and discussed steps to meet marketplace requirements such as quantity, quality, storage, value-added processing, and packaging/branding. VEGA/AMED’s support to agricultural cooperatives improved the livelihoods of many producers and their families.



Mr. Makhapila (standing in middle), Dairy Expert with VEGA/AMED and company staff testing the quality of VEGA client – NICODO’s -- new yogurt product.



VEGA/AMED long-term volunteers Ryan Betters and Marty George, serving as business development consultants in Yei, work with representatives from two farmers groups – the Gire Farmers Development Association and the Lasu Progressive Farmers Association to provide business skills training.

Throughout Southern Sudan, people have become very familiar with the basic concept of a cooperative. Although many Sudanese were not previously familiar with the concept, the VEGA/AMED program worked to expose many to the concept and principals of cooperatives, and groups are now putting the principles into practice. Furthermore, it is evident that business people in Southern Sudan have retained and understand the importance of banding together and joining forces to achieve goals that would otherwise be impossible to achieve as individuals.

VEGA/AMED used international and regional volunteers, Sudanese Diaspora, and in-house expertise to provide support to farmer cooperatives and associations with training and technical assistance throughout the agriculture value-chain in areas such as input supply, production, processing, and marketing. The program had a special focus on agriculture livelihood development and employment generation, working with local level institutions whose actions had immediate impacts on livelihoods and the reintegration of persons affected by the war. Assistance also focused on areas of Southern Sudan receiving, or expected to receive, high numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, including selected urban areas of Juba, Yei, and Wau and the surrounding areas that serve as market centers with a focus to absorb these returning IDPs.

VEGA/AMED identified the following constraints in Southern Sudan relevant to cooperatives which provide a good basis for lessons learned under the project.

**Human Capital:** Often under the current conditions in Sudan, community members struggle to meet their basic needs and do not have the time or energy to engage in activities that do not contribute to their immediate well-being. Cooperatives generally require a significant dedication of time by the initial community organizers (especially in a grassroots, bottom-up effort) and future leaders (as directors and active members). In limited-resource communities, cooperative members may have limited business and leadership experience. To develop the capacities of the public sector, VEGA/AMED conducted two workshops for the Western Bahr el Ghazal State Ministry of Cooperatives to help create an enabling environment for successful cooperatives. One was for senior officials at the Ministry on management skills and another was for cooperative development officers on how to promote effective cooperative development. A total of 37 people benefited from the two workshops. On the private-sector side, VEGA/AMED trained farmers to put together projected income statements and analyze costs and returns to maximize profits.

*“From the training conducted by AMED, I learned how to carry out proper farm management including costing my expenses and calculating profit and loss. Previously, I use to work randomly but now I am more organized. I have even built a small hut for the farm worker at the garden so that they can maximize time spent tending to the crops.”* NFA member, Ali Osman.

**Social Capital:** One effect of the recently ended civil war in Southern Sudan is that rural networks are severely eroded. Access to local institutions, such as schools, churches, or service organizations has diminished. Community members have reported negative experiences in working together and facing critical challenges together have often become contentious rather than collaborative in Sudan. As a result, the ability to organize a cooperative becomes more difficult and time-consuming because basic community organizing activities must take place first to begin building community relationships. Cooperatives (group leadership) spend a lot of time arriving at group consensus. The willingness of people to cooperate and trust each other is a fundamental building block in a cooperative development strategy. Communities with established networks and relationships (civic communities) build trust and make organizing efforts easier. VEGA/AMED and its partners embarked in promoting such a strategy. The program led 36 members of Mongalla Pyam Development Association in a strategic planning

workshop to assess and develop goals and activities for the newly formed CBO. The strategic plan was ultimately developed and implemented.

**Financial Capital:** By definition, cooperative members are required to own a portion of their organization, however, equity constraints are a challenge for all cooperatives and this is more severe for cooperatives in limited-resource communities such as Southern Sudan where members do not have the surplus financial resources to invest in a business venture, cooperative or otherwise. Since the success of producer cooperatives is often dependent upon weather conditions especially for the rain-fed farming system, the lending community views them as risky and often denies access to credit or loans, making member equity more of a necessity. Members may also have limited access or be unable to acquire their own loans to cover their equity investment. In addition, if the venture fails, a large portion of the community's financial capital might be lost, thus jeopardizing existing and future community enterprises. For faster improvement of the producer cooperatives, there is a need to provide integrated assistance comprising training on management and leadership skills, technical skills, and legal issues supplemented with grants or access to loans. Another best-practices approach, from a financial and economic perspective, is to develop effective ways of mobilizing member capital. This should help to create a genuine sense of ownership while at the same time enabling the cooperative to perform better as a commercial entity. Better business performance is essential because markets are increasingly competitive and grants and other forms of assistance are diminishing. In November 2007, a short-term regional volunteer from Kenya, conducted training for 25 members of the Terkeka Women Self-help Group (TWSHG) on "Basic Business Skills and Marketing" in Terkeka County, Central Equatoria State. Most of this group went on to form themselves into another market-oriented group known as the Savings and Loan Group (SLG). Each member contributes 2 Sudanese Pounds everyday to a member with a purpose of raising capital. The group now has a membership of 53 individuals.

**Stigma of "Dirty Work":** There is a general negative attitude towards "dirty work" among the Southern Sudanese communities. Stigmatized trades/professions include farming and fishing. Farming is perceived among many as a trade of last resort and one with very limited promise for increased income generation. Many youth and educated individuals have moved into towns and cities to seek an easier life. Farmers were inculcated with high expectations by the SPLM/A during the years of the guerrilla war that once the conflict was over they would realize opportunities to apply modern and mechanized farming systems; these expectations for the majority remain unrealized. VEGA/AMED has worked to change such beliefs among the members of producer cooperatives and associations by appreciating the benefits and importance of agriculture and aquaculture through training and continuing education programs.

**Limited Agricultural Extension Services:** Most farmers do not receive extension services, or if they do, the services are not always adequate, nor the information reliable. The government has not deployed enough personnel to adequately address extension needs. Moreover, the community-based extension workers have little incentive to deliver services, as they are often not paid. Government and other players need to diversify the trainings offered to accommodate community extension workers. VEGA/AMED sought to do just that and offer trainings to community extension workers. VEGA/AMED conducted 'Farming as a Business' training of trainers (ToT) courses at the state and county levels so that extension workers would be able to train grassroots extension workers to carry out the training.

**Follow-up is Essential to Success:** It is common to find farmers' organizations with valuable machinery sitting unused. NGOs in Southern Sudan are notorious for delivering equipment without the basic training in use or maintenance to assure that the "beneficiaries" from the capital investment derive long-term benefits. This follows for provision of training as well. Follow-up in the form of regular impact

surveys not only helped VEGA/AMED in its monitoring and evaluation exercise, but also served to remind the host organization of the project's continued presence and support. Impact surveys provided the opportunity to reinforce volunteer recommendations with the host agency, to make firsthand observations on whether improvements had been made, and to continuously build upon volunteers' contributions to the development of Southern Sudan to make them long-lasting and durable.

The VEGA/AMED project made significant impacts in agricultural development during its three years of implementation. The program delivered agricultural training and technical assistance to more than 1,200 individuals (25% women) with host organizations consisting of agribusinesses, cooperatives and associations, and government bodies who were introduced to improved agricultural practices including new technologies and research, improved methods of production, processing, marketing, survey methodologies, organizational design, management, and leadership.

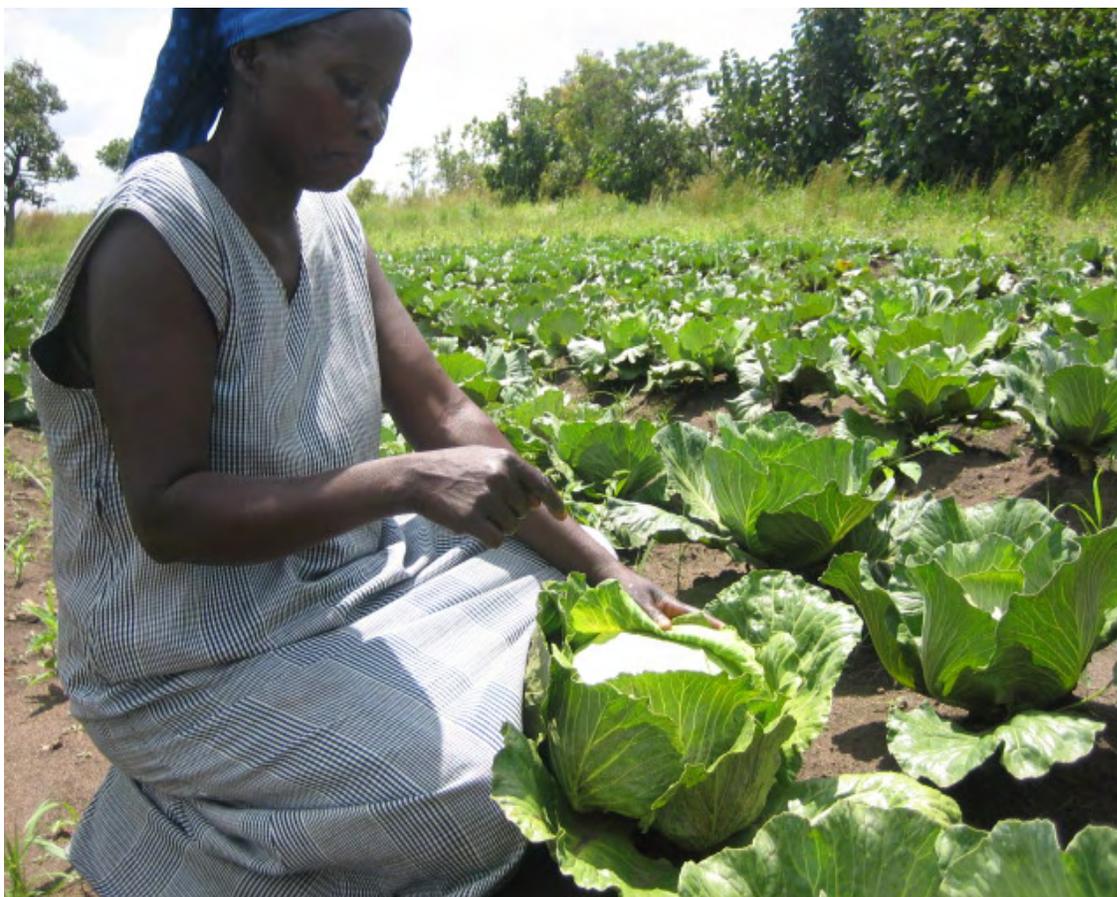
An important client VEGA/AMED in the agriculture sector was the indigenous NGO, Nile Community Development Organization (NICODO) based in greater Juba. The primary activity of NICODO was buying milk locally produced by farmers, processing and selling it in Juba. Previously, the NGO relied on processed milk and sold it fresh or made sour milk in three distribution centers including the Juba Teaching Hospital, former Customs Market, and Kator Business Center. Daily activities are managed by 12 staff who are overseen by a fifteen-member Board of Directors. Apart from the milk business, other services NICODO offers include medication, agriculture, restocking of Lobonok IDPs, rural financial support services, and renting tractors to community members. Money from the sale of milk is used to pay the maintenance cost of the tractors.

VEGA/AMED found agricultural organizations such as NICODO could engage in dairy processing but the quality of products was not very good, and did not have the capacity to process and store milk in forms that can last (to increase shelf life). The organization used to incur losses that could have been otherwise avoided or minimized. VEGA/AMED responded to a need to train NICODO staff on improved dairy processing technology, which would help the organization's product compete in the local market. Given the existing market competition of milk products, each organization had to look at how to diversify its products and cope with the market conditions. For NICODO, this included expanding into cheese processing. An impact survey completed approximately 9 months after NICODO received technical assistance, reported that sales increased by approximately 25%. VEGA/AMED also provided training to NICODO in improved yogurt processing and storage, including a demonstration of processing yogurt with culture. Trainees had previously not been exposed to this method of processing, but were convinced after experiments that processing with culture improved quality.

VEGA/AMED also worked with the Lasu Progressive Farmers Association (LAPFA), a producer cooperative which has 22 registered members operating in Yei County. LAPFA faced enormous challenges. A majority of the group's members lacked business and marketing skills and they did not have the ability to develop business plans, mobilize resources, improve productivity, create markets, supervise and guide farmers, create jobs or increase incomes. In an effort to diversify farming, apiculture captured the interest of the group. In response to the needs of LAPFA, VEGA/AMED provided training packages aimed at bridging the business and marketing skills gap. As a result, members improved in record keeping, planning, and marketing, and they can now monitor the market for their produce and make informed choices. The association facilitated a contract farming scheme for about 180 farmers in the area who grew cereals (maize, sorghum, and groundnuts) after receiving seeds and tools on loan from the association. The association provided extension support to contract farmers to ensure healthy production and later bought the harvest, sold it and repaid the farmers less the cost of the seeds and tools. Most associations in South Sudan are rudimentary at best so this is seen as a monumental achievement for LAPFA.

VEGA/AMED also found that a lack of beekeeping and honey handling skills led to much of the value of honey being lost to beekeepers. In addition to poor harvesting, honey was usually extracted by boiling the combs with water stored in bottles or plastic canisters. In many cases the product -- mixed with wax, pollen, dead bees, and other foreign matter -- was bought either in the village or in town by traders who further sell locally without any refining or processing. LAPFA received training on beekeeping and honey production and several Top Bar Hives became visible features in Lasu village.

Upon the close of the VEGA/AMED project, VEGA worked with numerous agriculture-related groups in Juba and the surrounding area including Luri & Kabo, Rajab East, Lulu Works, Mugwo, Morobo, Gire, Lasu the groups to craft a sustainability strategy to enable them to continue their activities despite the end of VEGA assistance.



VEGA/AMED and NPA collaborated to carry out FaaB training for farmer groups in greater Yei counties. NPA provides basic agriculture training to approximately 25 agricultural extension agents every four months at farmers' training centers in six counties within Southern Sudan, and also supports self-help groups which deal with farming as well as cooperatives. NPA asked VEGA/AMED to assess the mechanisms through which the current training methodologies can be enhanced to include farming as a business. VEGA assisted in developing a commercialization plan for the model farm at Yei Agricultural Training Center. Four out of the 6 units at the center turned a profit after 6 months.



**VEGA/AMED worked closely with the Yei Crop Training Center (CTC) on a proposal for two tractors and related equipment to be used by the CTC to establish a tractor lease / mechanized farming business to serve the Yei farming community. The anticipated impact in Yei and surrounding community includes:**

- **Increased agricultural production of 80 farmers serviced by the CTC tractor by 50%**
- **Tremendous savings in man-hours (253,440) for approximately 80 farmers and their households, freeing up time for education (especially for women and children) and the pursuit of other income-generating activities**
- **Revenue generated in the amount SDP 128,000 for area farmers, which will have a trickle-down effect.**

**The tractors were delivered in November 2008 and are now being used by CTC and the local farming community.**

## Farming as a Business (FaaB)

Learning from experience on other projects in Eastern Africa, VEGA/AMED cultivated Farming as a Business (FaaB). An assessment carried out at the beginning of the project indicated that the majority of actors in government and also farmers had little knowledge and experience of how farming can be a business. However they did appreciate the potential for profitable farming in Southern Sudan especially in the Equatoria Region where the climate is most favorable.

FaaB is an important component of making a successful transition from relief to development in agriculture. The concept of FaaB is often overlooked in a setting like Sudan where the needs for relief are overwhelming. At the same time, there are communities that are establishing profitable farming with the advent of peace. It is important to support these communities to adopt best practices for profitable farming since they will create the food basket for the nation.

Following consultations with the GOSS Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), VEGA/AMED facilitated trainings for senior ministry officials on how to create an enabling environment for FaaB. Fifteen high ranking officials attended a joint VEGA/AMED-MAF workshop, setting up a foundation for FaaB. The workshop marked the beginning of a sustained effort by VEGA to improve the government's capacity to carry out FaaB, and resulted in the MAF's incorporation of the FaaB strategy as centerpiece of their agriculture development strategy for Southern Sudan. The FaaB training of trainers (ToT) course was conducted at the state and county levels so that extension workers would be able to train grassroots extension workers to carry out further trainings. Wide scale adoption of the FaaB has been one of the successes of work under VEGA/AMED. At the end of the program, a total of 175 extension workers (134 male, 41 female) had been trained on FaaB. The FaaB training was delivered at various levels starting from the central government level all the way down to the local government and vocational training institutions.

VEGA's approach served to build support for FaaB at the highest level of government and as a result, was incorporated as part of the GOSS strategy for agriculture development in Southern Sudan. VEGA facilitated FaaB training for agriculture extension workers at the state ministry level as well as the county level. A total of six counties in three states of Central Equatoria, Western Bahr Ghazal, and Lakes State benefited from the FaaB training.

Throughout the program's tenure, VEGA continued promoting FaaB coupled with technical assistance for development of farmer associations. The cooperative movement in Southern Sudan was strong before the war but collapsed during the prolonged conflict. However, associations present an optimal avenue for increasing agriculture productivity since they enable smallholder farmers to increase economies of scale. At the same time, VEGA has vast experience and expertise in cooperative development and this was used to reach as many farmers as possible through associations. VEGA/AMED developed a step-by-step methodology for building capacity of targeted farmer groups. The methodology is geared towards establishing business-minded associations that have a business plan as the basis for farmers getting together as opposed to the traditional approach whereby farmers come together so they can get hand-outs from development programs. Each farmer group targeted by VEGA was first assessed to analyze the potential of the business opportunity that would form the platform for the association. VEGA then provided training and technical support to farmer groups to enable them to flesh out their business plan and get implementation underway.

The Natabo Farmers Association (NFA) in Wau has been an excellent example of the progression desired in upgrading the capacity of farmers towards profitable farming. Developing business-minded associations in an environment where there are few associations to start with, and where communities

have long depended on hand-outs from development programs is a challenging prospect and one that requires consistent application of best practices over a reasonably long timeframe. VEGA/AMED assisted in the formation and registration of NFA, and members have reported increased sales by an average of 250 percent since forming. The average returns for group members rose from around US\$1,200 per season to around US\$3,000 for the 2007/2008 season. This was achieved primarily through better farm management and timely marketing of produce. As a result, the group members have been able to take advantage of the high demand for fresh vegetables in Wau, where there has been a continuous influx of returnees as well as NGO and UN workers.



**Natabo Farmers Association is helping increase the diversity of vegetables available at the local market in Wau hence improving nutrition as well as incomes.**

Also, VEGA/AMED learned that a critical element of developing successful associations is to provide incentives for farmer groups to enable them to achieve their business goals without over-subsidizing the implementation of their business plans. This is where small grants are important as a partial infusion of capital to help farmer groups realize their upgrading strategy. It is important that farmer groups contribute a significant portion of any capital required for the farming business, be it buying irrigation equipment or leasing a new piece of land. Farmer groups in Southern Sudan are extremely limited in their capacity to contribute towards capital investments for upgrading production. In agriculture, NFA was awarded a grant of approximately \$10,000 and although small in size, the grant made a big difference and enabled NFA to create real change in the association. NFA members' contributions made up 75 percent of the budget for the group activities in 2007/08. The additional grant of \$10,000 went toward capital investments such as establishing a demonstration plot where members of NFA would learn and practice best farming practices, and at the same time allowing other farmers in the area to also participate in learning.

Throughout the course of the project volunteers proved to be very effective in Southern Sudan. The primary reason was that there was a vast need for training and capacity building which can be delivered through volunteer assignments. However, another lesson learned was that it is important to couple volunteer technical assistance with more sustained forms of technical assistance since a volunteer tends to carry out short-term assignments. This adjustment made the program even stronger.

The FaaB concept and the tools necessary to apply the methodology were widely understood by extension workers in the target counties. It is expected that as state and county level agriculture departments become more established and as market-oriented farming in Sudan takes root, the FaaB approach will continue to contribute to the profitability of the industry. It should be noted however that at present, state and county level extension workers are constrained by a lack of resources, e.g. transport and budgetary support, to do effective outreach and this continues to be a limitation to the broader dissemination of the FaaB methodology.

VEBA/AMED facilitated the development of an FaaB training manual for Southern Sudan, in conjunction with the GOSS MAF, the Crop Training Center, and the Yei Agricultural Training Center. The tailored manual can be used by trainers and extension workers to promote the FaaB approach. The Crop Training Center in Yei is expected to be the first local institution to offer a FaaB course in Southern Sudan.

It is commendable that the GOSS has shown keen interest in adopting the FaaB concept and that many local governments are also embracing the approach. Even as the VEGA/AMED project ends, there is need to sustain the efforts to promote wide-scale adoption of the FaaB approach as the key to profitable farming and increased food security in Southern Sudan.

# MICRO-ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The private sector in South Sudan faces major challenges in terms of a largely unskilled workforce, the difficulty of obtaining start-up and working capital, inadequate infrastructure, and a regulatory climate that impedes enterprise development. Presently, the best paying and most stable jobs are with NGOs or the government. The best-skilled workers have little motivation to develop businesses when they have the option of a less risky occupation that also is respected by the community. Continued support – through workforce development, business-friendly government policies, and investment – is critical to the expansion of the South Sudanese private sector and its micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).



The Director of Private Sector Development from the GOSS Ministry of Commerce addressing the Juba Dealmakers Private Sector Development Forum hosted by the VEGA/AMED Program. In April 2008, the forum resulted in commitments to form a construction industry association and a strong interest in forming a food and beverage association. A presentation from a microfinance institution (BRAC) informed attendees on getting access to financing for their business. Additionally, two construction contractors negotiated a business deal to build a walkway for a hotel.

Due to the extended conflict, very little has been accomplished regarding the establishment and maintenance of basic infrastructure (e.g., roads, electricity, and water supply) and government systems. As a result, the region's business environment has not had the opportunity to develop. VEGA/AMED learned many of the challenges that face small businesses include:

- Cash flow shortages, including limited access to initial capital funding;
- Low levels of education, financial planning, and awareness of entrepreneurship;
- Lack of supporting government policies and guidelines;
- Lack of clarity on land and property rights;
- Limited access to market outlets;
- Lack of effective border control;
- High cost of starting new businesses;
- Lack of currency denominations below 1 SGD discourages small transactions and results in large % increase in prices;
- Overlapping GOSS and state level taxes;
- Limited access to reliable market research and information.

Agribusiness across South Sudan is largely limited to subsistence farming by poorly educated farmers with few business skills and limited access to markets due to poor infrastructure and the high cost of transportation. Whereas South Sudan has the natural resources to produce a wide variety of crops and foodstuffs, it currently imports the vast majority of these from neighboring Uganda, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mechanized farming in most of South Sudan is non-existent; consequently, South Sudanese spend millions of person-hours digging fields, planting, and harvesting by hand. This has a ripple effect both socially and economically.

The time required to manually raise crops tends to keep many South Sudanese on the farm – especially women and female children – when they could otherwise be pursuing an education or other livelihoods. The lagging agricultural sector also encourages rural to urban migration. Those leaving the villages for cities often find few opportunities, and these growing urban environments are home to larger numbers of unemployed, able-bodied youth with few job skills and qualifications.

Despite these challenges, Southern Sudan has promising growth potential for economic development, with great opportunities such as strategic location, access to fertile land, water, natural resources, and support of the international aid community. There have been significant developments in MSME's, progress that is visible month-by-month. Particularly in Juba, construction of residential and commercial buildings has been robust, retail businesses are increasing rapidly, and the service sector has started to take hold. However, the growth is not without flaws.

For example, the boom in Juba is largely fueled by the influx of international aid agencies and international investors. This has unfortunately contributed to distorted market dynamics and inflated prices which will not be sustainable after their departure. It is also questionable to what extent the recent economic development is benefiting the lives of local Southern Sudanese residents. Many businesses are owned and operated by foreign nationals since a large percentage of Southern Sudanese returnees lack the skills to compete in the new environment.

On a positive note, South Sudan has concluded a number of agreements to produce various crops for export. Arable lands in South Sudan are a largely undeveloped resource capable of supporting Sudan as well as a regional export market. The related industries involving food processing – grinding mills, hullers, shellers, presses for juices and oils, and other processing equipment – are also highly

underdeveloped. VEGA/AMED noticed a disturbing pattern involving the donation of some equipment such as this to local cooperatives. The machinery was found to have rusted and gone largely unused, partly due to a lack of training and partly due to competing priorities. The cooperatives in many cases prioritized the efficient use of the machinery for profit below their short-term needs for operating expenses. A systematic approach to developing this promising industry requires investment, the proper equipment, but most importantly, training on how to use the equipment in a business-like fashion. Shortfalls in this industry play a role in dampening demand for certain agricultural products. Rice, for example, although many studies have shown it could be a viable cash crop, is not farmed more widely due partly to insufficient hullers in communities across South Sudan.

Construction is a very promising sector across much of South Sudan, and it is perhaps most noticeable in areas like Juba. Whereas in other parts of the country, the first wave of government construction of offices and facilities has abated, the construction industry is beginning to see increasing activity in the private sector – the construction of private homes, commercial real estate, and continued spending for NGO and foreign government compounds.

VEGA/AMED provided technical assistance and training in the construction sector from furniture to large scale carpentry and masonry, to road construction. One short-term volunteer provided carpentry and masonry training to instructors at the Vocational Training Center in Akot, for a program geared to focus training on ex-combatants and orphans. Another provided guidance to carpenters building furniture at the Forestry Training Center in Kegulu. Long-term MBA volunteers assisted carpenters in Wau to form the Carpenters Society of Low Income association, and provided training on marketing, finance, management, and operations. Workshop attendees are now able to track profits and losses, and have begun using a small inventory management system. Still output remains constrained by the use of manual tools, but the carpenters are now working to start a Carpenters Cooperative, a workshop where power tools will be available, and have plans to soon begin branding furniture of their own. VEGA assisted Eco-Builders Ltd, a small Sudanese-owned construction company focused on being one of Southern Sudan's premier ecological and economical construction companies, with business planning, and to implement a marketing strategy, by creating business cards, t-shirts, flyers, and large signs that can be posted outside their main office and project sites. VEGA also suggested building a network with relevant contacts from NGO's and the Government of Southern Sudan to increase awareness and attract customers. Eco-Builders Managing Director reported that the company achieved an increased level of name recognition and positive reaction from potential customers following assistance from VEGA. A VEGA/AMED volunteer later provided a 2-week training course in the use of computerized software (Turbocad, Autocad) for architectural graphics and design. The business and technical training provided by VEGA recently assisted Eco-Builders in winning a proposal for a large-scale road construction project implemented by Louis Berger. It is anticipated that the awarded bid will result in 10-20 new employees for Eco-Builders. Additionally, a VEGA/AMED long-term MBA volunteer mentored shareholders of the Supiri Construction Company through the process of developing a business plan and a constitution that defines management structures and profit sharing.

VEGA/AMED, provided two days of training and technical assistance on basic business principals at the request of Louis Berger Group, a U.S.-based infrastructure contractor, to a group of seven road construction contractors and an additional 18 road construction supervisors (government employees designed to oversee road construction contracts). The training modules covered introduction to business plans, job costing and pricing, sales and marketing, basic record keeping, managing working capital, and managing inventory. After the training, each road construction contractor was awarded a US\$75,000 contract to build 10 kilometers of feeder road in rural areas of Southern Sudan

Hospitality and services industries are expanding noticeably in South Sudan's urban environments, but there is much room for improvement in these areas, not to mention the oft-neglected rural areas where services tend to be extremely limited. The return of many refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs), coupled with an influx of expatriates has fueled a boom in the construction and maintenance of guest houses, restaurants, and bars. However, the levels of service, product quality, and hygiene vary widely among establishments. Demand for other services – consulting (human resources and management consulting, for example), legal services, health care, and education – are only expected to grow due to a combination of factors. These include an increasing number of local businesses as well as foreign companies looking to enter the local market, the continued return of South Sudanese to their homes coupled with rural to urban migration, and high birth rates.

VEGA/AMED completed numerous training sessions on hospitality management and profitable hotel management with locally-owned companies in Yei, Rumbek, and Juba over the life of the project. One such two-week training activity was delivered to 25 female Sudanese restaurant owners and managers affiliated with WSHDO that benefited from grant support from VEGA/AMED to upgrade restaurant business premises throughout Juba. The training, which covered key topics in modern food safety practices and customer services, was part of a long-term scheme aimed at enabling the emerging female entrepreneurs to tap into the lucrative expatriate market that they have not been able to penetrate previously due to concerns over food safety and poor customer care.

Beginning in February 2008, VEGA/AMED began hosting monthly meetings of the Juba Deal Makers, a business forum established to facilitate the development of public and private partnerships. The purpose of the forum was to provide a platform for those interested in promoting private enterprise in Juba to discuss and share business ideas. The first event was a unique opportunity for approximately 30 members of local businesses, NGO's, and the government to come together and discuss ways to improve Juba and Southern Sudan. As a result of the first forum, *Juba Business Week*, a biweekly business newsletter, was launched; Eco-builders; a South Sudanese-owned construction company mentored by VEGA won a contract from the USAID-funded STEP Program to build dams in Yei through contacts made during the forum; and the director of private sector development in the government of Southern Sudan announced an open business plan competition award worth \$20,000 for start-up of a business in Southern Sudan. The Deal Makers Forum concept was later replicated by VEGA in Wau and Yei.

VEGA/AMED offered targeted training to IDPs and returnees, including training in bread making to 17 women IDPs in conjunction with WSHDO; business skills training for 17 participants (50% women) in the first Reintegration & Development Center (RDC) project for developing skills of IDPs and returnees; and a training course entitled 'skills to protect your business' for 63 entrepreneurs (75% women) from an IDP camp near Jebel Kujur. The latter assignment introduced the concept of HIV/AIDS within a business environment. Videos and stories were presented to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, including STDs, transmission, symptoms, and management. Training was also provided on profit and loss, marketing, and generating a business idea. As another example of program support to IDPs and returnees, VEGA/AMED trained 83 workshop participants in coordination with Swedish Free Mission (SFM). SFM provides technical and vocational training for returnees and low income dwellers of Juba on carpentry and joinery, plumbing, electrical wiring, metal works and metal fabrication, and building and construction works.

Lack of access to financing is a key deterrent to MSME development. The existing microfinance institutions lack the capacity to adequately service and follow up on the MSME client base. They also lack basic information systems necessary to monitor the business and conduct risk assessments. VEGA/AMED found that as of September 2008 in the Yei area, for example, the only formal lending institution is the Sudanese Microfinance Institute (SUMI). (Please see the text box report on page 19 for further information and work related to improving operations at SUMI.) SUMI has faced cash shortfalls, serious management concerns, and the task of educating the greater populace on the responsible use of credit. The Bangladeshi NGO BRAC provides some additional funding to would-be entrepreneurs; however, BRAC focuses largely on the most impoverished segments of the population to the exclusion of MSMEs. The only commercial bank in Yei, Nile Commercial Bank, had once offered loans but abandoned these efforts due to poor management of the outstanding loans. Difficulty in obtaining capital has further served to dampen the local economy, and future economic expansion will require a dynamic banking and finance sector to support start-ups and MSMEs as they grow into larger companies. The further development of the banking and finance sectors are expected to play a key role in South Sudan's economic development.



A primary role of VEGA's long-term MBA volunteers was to provide business skills training for MSMEs. Throughout the life of the VEGA/AMED project, such trainings were conducted in Rumbek, Yei, Juba, Wau, and the surrounding areas. Volunteers also provided one-on-one pro bono business consultant as requested to workshop participants.

## **VEGA/AMED Assistance to the Microfinance Sector in Sudan**

VEGA/AMED long-term MBA volunteers initially provided business skills training for Yei branch loan officers of the Sudan Microfinance Institute (SUMI) but ultimately extended the assistance to a more intensive reform of SUMI as a whole.

VEGA/AMED developed a Management Information System for loan-related information that has now been implemented at all five branches (Yei, Juba, Rumbek, Yambio and Maridi). The consultants also devised an improved accounting system for all branches. The MBA volunteers trained and mentored the upper management in everything from loan procedures to Excel use.

SUMI had been maintaining all of its loan records in handwritten ledgers. Partly due to high staff turnover and large portfolios, the information has not been updated accurately or in a timely fashion.

Long-term MBAs developed a management information system (MIS) for SUMI based on its specific needs for independent reports and easier operability. The MIS allows for all loan records to be kept digitally in Excel spreadsheets. Each branch is divided into separate portfolios by loan office and locations. All payments and dates are recorded for each loan and allow loan officers to know the outstanding balance of any loan along with the portion of the balance that is late.

The MIS allows the user to choose the dates of interest to determine pertinent information, such as the disbursements in any given week or repayments in a month. As a result, we now know that the amount of loans that are late (in arrears or in default) is over 50% while the previous system reported this figure at less than 10%. With proper accounting and a loan management system, SUMI is now better able to manage every aspect of their institution. Reconciliations for cash and between departments/branches have begun to exhibit large inconsistencies that can be rectified. Proper accounting also allows SUMI to acquire more funds from international donors and recoup losses from bad loans and mismanagement. SUMI has 65 employees and 6,000 clients. Each of the clients represents families and sustainable business development in Southern Sudan.



**USAID asked VEGA to be their representative partner for the Economic Livelihoods portfolio during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Solidarity Week in Juba in April 2008. VEGA and USAID organized the event and arranged for the US Consul General and the GOSS Minister of Commerce to visit two of VEGA's clients. Both the Consul General, Chris Datta, and Minister Makana highlighted the support of the US government to GOSS.**

VEGA/AMED provided assistance to Lulu Works to transition from a humanitarian-funded activity to a sustainable private enterprise. VEGA/AMED helped Lulu Works develop a business plan, conduct a marketing survey, and ultimately launch a successful 'Opening Day' event in Juba, which resulted in more than US\$1,500 in sales in just three hours.



One of the most highly marketable products in Southern Sudan has been Shea butter (called Lulu in Sudan). Over the years there have been numerous attempts to support the production and marketing of shea butter products. In 2000 Lulu Works was started by MEDIC International, which established shea butter processing units in South Sudan through women's groups. Lulu Works' mission is to become a profitable business producing world-class shea butter products. Donor funding was necessary to subsidize operational expenses since the inception of the business.

While the product was exciting, the full potential of the product was hampered by marketing difficulties, packaging and production constraints. In 2008, VEGA/AMED long-term MBA volunteers identified the obstacles and provided technical assistance to Lulu Works to expand sales in the Juba market. Working with the sales manager and operations manager, VEGA conducted market assessments, assisted with financial analysis and budgeting, formulated a marketing plan and advised on the overall business strategy. This resulted in the highly visible grand opening of a Lulu Works retail store in Juba targeting an international clientele and in an increase in sales during the set up phase of 15%. This also reduced the subsidy for running the Juba office by 24%. Projected sales growth is an average 30% per month for the first year.

Altogether poor roads, rising fuel prices, informal customs duties and other issues contribute to the high cost of doing business and purchasing goods in Southern Sudan. The (GOSS) has expressed strong commitment to creating an enabling environment to encourage private sector development. They outlined their targets for private sector development in three phases: short-term, medium-term and long-term. The plan is to focus on micro enterprise, construction and trade in the short-term, to expand to urban services, agro industry and light industry in the medium-term, and to prepare for sizable industrial development in the long-term. VEGA/AMED conducted training in market surveys in Wau through the Directorate of Commerce and Supply. As a result, 462 surveys were conducted in the three major markets in Wau to provide recommendations on improving the business environment. In addition, GOSS is looking to improve and simplify the business registration and licensing process which are currently unclear and prohibitively expensive for MSME's. VEGA/AMED long-term MBA volunteers researched registration and taxation issues for Juba and Yei, and provided assistance to entrepreneurs in understanding and complying with registration laws in South Sudan. Promoting public-private dialogue will be critical to ensuring that policies and laws meet the needs of the MSME community. Formation of industry associations and other collective bodies will be to facilitating this dialogue. The development of the private sector will be a key factor in the ongoing reconstruction efforts for Southern Sudan. While significant progress has been made in reducing external economic dependence since the signing of the CPA, there remains much to be done going forward.

# Strengthening Chambers of Commerce

During the early stages of the program, VEGA/AMED targeted chambers of commerce and other associations to build capacity of local organizations to assist private enterprise. VEGA/AMED learned that most chambers were dormant or non-existent since the civil war. Chambers of commerce act as Business Service Providers and a source of training to MSMEs of Southern Sudan.

The South Sudan Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (SSCCIA) received more than 14 weeks worth of technical assistance from VEGA/AMED over the life of the program. This assistance focused primarily on creating an organizational structure, developing a strategic plan, hiring, and training an Executive Director and other SSCCIA key staff, increasing membership and providing business training for the members. VEGA/AMED played an integral role in the formation of the first democratically-elected state chamber of commerce in Western Bahr el Ghazal in April 2006, and in the formation of the Upper Nile State Chamber of Commerce in Malakal. Approximately 150 business persons (including 60 women) attended the two-day formation meetings. The Western Bahr el Ghazal State Chamber of Commerce is in its infancy; however, the business community, especially in Wau, is ready to move forward to create a strong business (mainly trading) regional center.



VEGA instructing on the importance that business associations and chambers of commerce play in the strengthening of the micro, small and medium enterprise development in the economy.



Volunteer Fred Whiting and SSCCIA Chair Ngor Ayuel conduct a meeting with members. Volunteers acted as support mechanisms providing knowledge and expertise.

As a business service provider, the SSCCIA was formed in October 2005 with the understanding that the private commercial sector in Southern Sudan needed to be developed and strengthened in order to help the worn-torn region build an economic base which would in turn create economic development and prosperity for the marginalized people of Southern Sudan. SSCCIA is formally registered and is the only umbrella organization recognized by the GOSS Ministry of Commerce, and is therefore a key institution for the organization of the private commercial sector in Southern Sudan. The assistance provided by VEGA/AMED played a key role in facilitating future economic development and coordinating the development of decentralized, independent chambers of commerce in South Sudan. The SSCCIA focuses its programs on small- and medium-sized enterprises to drive future growth.

VEGA/AMED supported the SSCCIA by assisting them with the initial phase of planning, contact between the central administrative organization, and the establishment of locally-organized chambers of commerce to provide a base for longer term development and dialogue. The executive officers of the SSCCIA needed training on how to structure, strengthen, and/or form new chambers of commerce that will serve private businesses and act in an advocacy role when dealing with the Ministry of Commerce on both the state and national levels.

In late 2005, VEGA/AMED facilitated a focus group session in Juba for chambers of commerce from Yei, Rumbek, Yambio, and Juba. The workshop provided important revelations on the state of chambers of commerce within Southern Sudan. VEGA arranged for two representatives from the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry to volunteer their time to contribute to the workshop. They provided valuable insight into some of the challenges and opportunities experienced over the years.

VEGA/AMED was instrumental in guiding the SSCCIA with the state chamber formation process. The program guided newly elected officers on the role of the chambers of commerce in the business community, their responsibilities to chamber members, and management/committee issues that would need to be addressed. In addition, an introductory strategic planning session was conducted that focused on the objectives.

VEGA volunteer, Fred Whiting, a state senator from South Dakota, trained the executive officers of SSCCIA in organizational management. Mr. Whiting reviewed the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association (bylaws) of the SSCCIA and discussed with the Chairman several bylaw revisions. These revisions included specifying the fiscal year of the SSCCIA, providing for the offices of Secretary and Treasurer of the national SSCCIA, defining the duties and responsibilities of the officers, clarifying parliamentary procedures to be followed, specifying the date of the annual general meeting, and conforming the structure of the national, state and local chapters.

The SSCCIA officially selected its executive staff on October 31, 2006. However to enable it function effectively, SSCCIA needed hands-on training from a seasoned executive who will act as an interim Executive Director until it starts collecting membership dues and hire a permanent Executive Director. To accomplish this task, VEGA/AMED recruited and deployed volunteer Richard McAfoos, an entrepreneur who founded and successfully managed several businesses in the U.S. Mr. McAfoos acted as the interim executive director of SSCCIA for a period of two months.

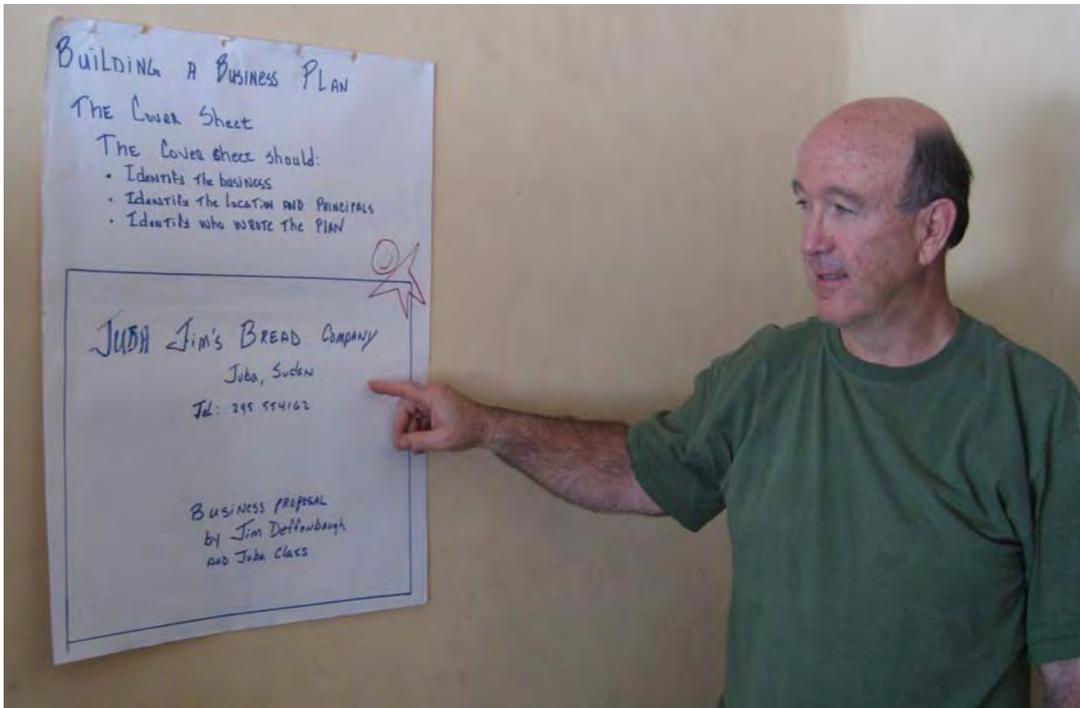
To increase SSCCIA membership, VEGA reached out to local and international businesses including some of the camps who are registered businesses in Southern Sudan. VEGA/AMED also assisted the SSCCIA to develop a quality membership application form, membership ID cards and certificates of membership. VEGA also concentrated on creating a chamber website – as an essential tool for marketing and information dissemination on business and the private sector in Southern Sudan - and ensured that was updated regularly by SSCCIA management.

Training was provided to SSCCIA members in bookkeeping, accounting, inventory assessment, and business planning for micro and small business owners. The training was attended by owners of various types of businesses including bread making, tea services, restaurants, tailoring, construction, and pharmaceuticals. More than 90% of the participants were women.

In Wau, the VEGA team participated in the founding ceremonies of the Western Bahr el Ghazal state branch of the SSCCIA, interacted with the newly elected directors and officers, as well as members of the state branch and met with the Governor and other officials of the state. With VEGA assistance, on October 31, 2005, the Western Bahr el Ghazal State Chamber of Commerce was formed. VEGA/AMED facilitated a formation process that attracted approximately 200 small business owners. Then 162 small business owners participated in the elections of the chamber officers and executive council officers. As a result, VEGA/AMED set a framework in place for nominating the chamber officers.

The Western Bahr el Ghazal State Chamber of Commerce is in its infancy; however, the business community, especially in Wau, is ready to move forward to create a strong business (mainly trading) regional center. A group of women business owners expressed an immediate interest in creating a women's business club to represent their interests at the state chamber of commerce. In early 2007, VEGA/AMED assisted the women in the formation of the Wau Women Business Association. A VEGA volunteer helped the women to establish the WBA, define its objectives and goals, and elect its leadership. Thirty-four founding members held democratic elections for committee seats and set goals - to improve their businesses and families, to improve Wau, to promote a tourist-friendly environment, to have a single voice for the women business community, and to empower members by continuous education, networking, and grant writing.

Despite early successes, including the establishment of a national chamber and state chambers, it was decided the VEGA would discontinue direct support to the chambers of commerce in 2007 due to insurmountable challenges regarding leadership, management, and financial stability. In VEGA/AMED's experience the chamber network demonstrated an unwillingness to share responsibility, accountability and decision making equitably among members, which led to the coordination of all VEGA assistance efforts through a few individuals. Such efforts have not always proven beneficial to the host or made the best use of project resources.



Volunteer James Deffenbaugh provided basic business training to SSCIA members in bookkeeping, accounting, inventory assessment, and business planning for MSMEs. Mr. Deffenbaugh successfully conveyed his message of improving a business and developing a business plan by using a life example of a bakery that makes bread bowls from a basic roll of bread. The class quickly accepted the idea of the bread example and started to contribute their own experiences to fill in details to create a fictitious company as a case study. The found it beneficial to have an edible bowl to hold their traditional stews and soups. Once they really understood the product they offered ideas of their own marketing the bowls in Juba. Finally, one participant asked if they could apply the same principals to other products. It was at this point that Juba Jim's Bakery really became the template for their own business plans. When asked about Juba Jim's Bakery, William Warigo, one of the participants said, "...it is a great teaching tool and helped make the learning of the business concepts fun. We got to be creative while learning. Juba Jim's Bakery made it easy to see how I can apply what we learned to my business."



**Women of Western Bahr el Ghazal are at the forefront of commercial traders among Southern Sudanese. The SSCCIA by-laws reflect the importance of women in business by mandating at least 25% female representation in the Chamber Executive Officers and Chamber Executive Council. The charismatic Ms. Athieng Ngot Riny (pictured) was unanimously elected as the First Vice Chairperson. A woman was also elected as the General Secretary.**

## Women in Business – Sudan’s Business Service Providers

An estimated 60% of Southern Sudan’s population is women. VEGA/AMED consultants conducted a gender assessment to define key constraints for women and men in the program’s target sectors, and to develop recommendations for VEGA/AMED to address these constraints, based on lessons from Sudan and elsewhere. Gender-based economic disadvantages include women’s limited access to and control over productive resources such as land, credit, and other assets, and illiteracy. Many families do not send girls to school at all, and those who do enroll in early grades usually drop out after a few years to be married. (Marriage of daughters is a key source of wealth, since families receive dowries, often in the form of livestock.) Women are still often viewed as property of their husbands and families. For example, once widowed, the woman is inherited by next of kin who takes control of her and property previously held by the husband. Women therefore lack collateral required to access loans in institutions such as banks. Because many women are illiterate and often operate within a narrow radius, they fail to remain competitive in a fast moving world where information about consumers and competitors is crucial. VEGA/AMED empowered women with trainings on bookkeeping, marketing, and how to manage their small businesses in sectors such as food & beverage services and general merchandizing. To increase the reach and sustainability of these efforts, VEGA/AMED strengthened fifteen women’s business associations.

It should be noted in particular that previously in Southern Sudan, women were not considered to be players in private sector development. However, experience of the VEGA/AMED program proved that women and various women’s groups can be key players in the private sector development for the country.

## *Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO)*

Started in 1975, the Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO) was formed in Western Equatorial with the assistance of GTZ. GTZ continued its support to WSDHO until 1996. In 1997 the German Leprosy Relief Association took over funding responsibilities until November 2003, and since December 2003, the Juba WSHDO has operated independently.

WSHDO is a local women's organization with a vision to promote grassroots women in Southern Sudan. WSHDO is a cross-community initiative consisting of twenty-seven districts, with each district representing a self-help group. A district chairwoman represents each district and is a member of the Board of Directors. The structure of WSHDO promotes inter-organization cooperation amongst the groups and communities it serves.

To achieve its vision, WSHDO engages in activities to improve the livelihoods of their women members and address issues such as socio-economics, gender dynamics, women and children's rights, health and HIV/AIDS, adult literacy, girls' education, peace building, agriculture, and environmental protection.

Since the start of VEGA/AMED, the program worked closely with WSHDO to identify its needs and the type of technical assistance required to enable goal achievement and improved service to its members. VEGA held numerous meetings with WSHDO management and members to assess areas of greatest need and address those areas. Based on the findings from this assessment, VEGA focused its technical assistance on 1) Capacity building and leadership training of WSHDO management, 2) Improving WSHDO's cafeteria services, and 3) Handcrafts training for WSHDO members. This type of technical assistance has been important as it contributes to overall objective of the VEGA/AMED program by empowering women of Southern Sudan and enabling them to have a larger role in developing the local economy.

Technical assistance was necessary in the area of handcrafts due the poor quality of clothing that was being produced by WSHDO members. VEGA led hands-on demonstrations for 18 women in sewing and dyeing techniques as well as machine maintenance and repair. Competition came mainly from clothing imported from neighboring countries, which was generally higher in quality than locally produced product. VEGA trained the participants in new skills such as batik, low emersion, and tie dyeing, creating natural dyes, and scrap quilting, as well as using a new sewing machine to create decorative stitches. As a result of new sewing and dyeing techniques, three of the participants made changes to their businesses. Two of them have doubled the prices of their products due to the increase in their quality and were able to sell them in Juba and beyond. A third participant has decided to use the newly acquired expertise in producing tailor-made clothing.

VEGA led trainings for WSHDO in leadership and institutional management, business administration, and bookkeeping. Twenty-seven district chairwomen attended the trainings to learn how to improve their managerial skills. The program covered leadership and management issues, work plans, mission development and organizational policies, and organizational bylaws. WSHDO staff members were able to use the bookkeeping skills they learned (and a \$39,000 grant received from VEGA), to buy office supplies and keep individual reports that are clear, easy to understand, and transparent. Accounting records have improved, profit/loss statements are clear, an updated organizational chart was developed, and vision statements/objectives are now up to date.

VEGA improved the hygiene, sanitation, and general food service operations at the three cafeterias operated by WSHDO located at (WSHDO Center, UNMIS compound, and UNDP compound). Trainings included: Causes of food poisoning and other illnesses in food service; personal hygiene and its importance in the food service business; and methods for staff to incorporate sanitation into their daily operations. VEGA also taught employees cutting techniques and how to prevent cross-contamination, suggesting some marketing ideas such as expanding the menu, using menus with prices that are visible to customers and strategic placement of flyers for maximum publicity. As a result of this training each cafeteria installed hand washing stations, dishwashing stations above the ground, and sanitation buckets in the kitchen. And, five cooks from WSHDO cafeterias learned through one-on-one demonstrations new cooking skills and how to cook a variety of food foods. Topics included beverage & starters, main dish menu, and specialty menus.

Due to VEGA/AMED interventions, WSHDO is now well recognized among international NGOs and UN agencies in Juba for its ability to provide catering services and identify eligible women for training opportunities and other activities.

WSHDO (Juba) currently manages three cafeterias that serve local Sudanese meals along with traditional tea, coffee, and cold drinks. The cafeteria located at the WSHDO compound caters to local workers including state government staff and the general public. The other two cafeterias are located at United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) headquarters compound and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) compound. A VEGA/AMED grant has transformed these cafeterias into profitable enterprises.



Prior to the interventions from VEGA volunteer experts, Connie Friermuth and Hassan Bakumba, the most profitable WSHDO cafeteria netted an average of US\$150 per month. After the improvements that were made on their menu and hygiene and sanitation, the cafeterias started to net an average of that same amount per day. Also the average income of their workers has increased from US\$85 per month to US\$123 per month. WSHDO was also asked by the GOSS and UNMIS to open more cafeterias in different areas and the Consulate of Norway even requested that WSHDO manage and operate their kitchen.

## *Gondokoro Women Association (GOWA)*

Seventy-five women on Gondokoro Island, near Juba, organized themselves into the Gondokoro Women Association (GOWA) to participate and share in the socio-economic development of their local community.

Faced with many challenges such as low income, poor infrastructure, and lack of business knowledge, GOWA provides small business training to its members in an effort to increase income, diversify resources, and strengthen knowledge within their community. GOWA targets rural women, school (girl) dropouts, young mothers, and pregnant women. The members work in small business activities such as fishing, livestock rearing, handcraft development, and cultivation.

As a supplier of goods to the Juba market, Gondokoro Island is faced with increasing competition from importers of vegetables, livestock (goats, chickens), and fish products. Through discussions between GOWA and VEGA field staff, it became apparent that the organization needed professional business assistance to help them manage the organization and train their members on becoming more competitive in the local market.

The objective of VEGA's work was to augment the management, leadership and proposal/grant writing ability of the executive committee members of GOWA; deliver basic small business training to members or participants identified by GOWA; and evaluate and recommend ways for VEGA to provide additional assistance to GOWA.

VEGA took on the task of building the capacity of GOWA through targeted organizational management and grant writing training as well as providing firm level assistance to its women members. On organizational development, members of the executive body of GOWA participated in the training which included topics on the responsibilities of GOWA's management, developing a mission statement and creating job description for each position in the organization. Grant writing was also discussed in depth starting from defining what a grant is, to writing a grant proposal.

On firm level assistance, the volunteers visited the sites of 12 women-owned businesses ranging from bread baking to managing rental properties. They discussed with the business owners the problems and opportunities that exist in each case and provided advice on their specific needs --- as well as advice on common issues including access to finance, increase profitability, and business expansion.

GOWA was very receptive to expert recommendations and almost immediately participants started implementing their organizational procedures including job descriptions, election of officers and grant-writing responsibilities. Also a grant writing program was started by GOWA officers and new ideas and programs were introduced to enhance organization activities. Business owners were similarly enthusiastic and started developing their own business plans and discussing financial and marketing activities that would improve their businesses.

## *Central Equatoria Women Widow Association (CEWWA)*

The Central Equatoria Women Widow Association (CEWWA) was created in 1993 by women who lost their husbands during Sudan's Second Civil War (1983 – 2005). CEWWA is well organized and works collectively in advocacy, family welfare issues and finding alternative employment opportunities. Most of CEWWA's 100 women members reside in Juba and work as small traders. As single, female-headed households, they have encountered numerous challenges threatening their survival.

The primary economic activities for CEWWA members range from trading and collecting to selling of grains/cereal and firewood. The average member earns less than \$1 USD per day and this income is not sufficient to support the basic daily needs of their households, which average 5-10 persons. Although approximately 75% of CEWWA's members have no formal education and are illiterate, they tend to be quite business savvy and committed to their work.

Opportunities for CEWWA exist in the trading of consumable goods in Juba. This is a result of the increase in demand caused by the rising population, improved income level of salaried staff, increased availability of goods (and imports), and the opening of roads leading to neighboring countries.

A major constraint for this group of women is the need for capital and lack of basic business skills and financial resources, which could help sustain and grow their businesses. Members often buy goods from the market at exorbitant prices, leaving them a small profit from their sales. Assistance from VEGA was provided to CEWWA's businesswomen offering formal business training, and focusing on basic ideas of costing of products, savings and budgeting, bookkeeping and alternative options for capital.

VEGA conducted basic business training for members of CEWWA. The training focused on improving the individual businesses of the members of the organization by providing them with the know-how to create a business plan, identify current business problems and resolutions, determine present and future risks and means to minimize them as well as financial needs and access to capital. Field visits to various businesses took place after the training to try and help the woman resolve their individual business issues. Volunteers analyzed problems associated with each business and presented owners with action plans.

## *Women's Business Association (WBA)*



Outside view of the WBA cafeteria located in Wau which received a grant from VEGA/AMED and also received training in hygiene and sanitation members as well as menu development and snack preparation.

The Women's Business Association was formed to provide a resource for women-owned businesses in their local community to speak in one voice and promote good business practices, networking, and education. Through VEGA, the association was looking for various types of assistance such as organizational management. WBA was in urgent need for assistance to create a structure, mission, and business strategy on how to best assist their individual members.

To help achieve this objective, VEGA provided a number of interventions by volunteers who could address these various aspects of the organization's needs, and also issued a grant to assist WBA. VEGA worked with WBA on identifying their needs and prioritizing them as short, medium and long-term. The immediate needs were to create a business plan, elect a chairperson and board members and define the roles of each position while also addressing individual member problems. On the medium term, WBA needed funding for the organization to help it become sustainable. And then from a long-term perspective WBA was interested in helping Wau become a tourist attraction.

As a result with VEGA assistance, WBA was able to elect a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Officer and Information Officer. WBA was also able to draft and vote on the organization

mission statement and draft a strategy for the next two years. VEGA also helped in defining WBA services, legal structure, competitive advantages, and promotional strategy. The association was also interested in learning from the experiences of other women's' associations, especially in relation to networking and grant writing. For example under support from VEGA/AMED, Lucy Alphonse, the chairperson of the Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO) in Juba, traveled to Wau and worked with WBA on developing their organization -- sharing the experience of WSHDO.

Through support provided by VEGA, Alphonse's objective was to work with management and provide organizational advice to WBA leadership. She held a session with WBA members sharing lessons learned from working/leading women associations, and discussed possible areas of collaboration opening a door for continued Juba-Wau association partnerships.

Getting local organizations to work together and share their experiences proved to be a huge success under VEGA. For example, WBA and WSHDO were able to talk the same language about issues ranging from handcraft exchanges and HIV/AIDS prevention. For example, Lucy Alphonse, the chairperson of the Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO) in Juba, traveled to Wau and worked with WBA on developing their organization -- sharing the experience of WSHDO. Through support provided by VEGA, Alphonse's objective was to work with management and provide organizational advice to WBA leadership. She held a session with WBA members sharing lessons learned from working/leading women associations, and discussed possible areas of collaboration opening a door for continued Juba-Wau association partnerships.

WBA received a grant from VEGA/AMED to start a cafeteria in the town of Wau. VEGA also delivered a training course for WBA on hygiene and sanitation for the cafeteria. The results of the intervention were immediately felt by the local community and the international NGO's working in Wau. On the official opening of the cafeteria by the Deputy Governor, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education, Science & Technology for Western Bahr el Ghazal State, they appreciated the food the women prepared and offered to buy food for all who attended the opening ceremony.

## *Central Equatoria State Women Union (CES Women Union)*

The Central Equatoria State Women Union (CES Women Union), formerly affiliated with the Sudanese General Women Union in Khartoum, was reformed in May 2007. The association seeks to promote the role of women in the state and throughout the country. The CES Women Union provides a venue for training, literacy, mobilization, and support.

During Sudan's Second Civil War (1983- 2005), the CES Women Union was constrained by political, religious and tribal favoritism. With the signing of the peace agreement, Southern Sudanese women from the Central Equatoria State (CES) returned to Juba and raised their concerns to the Governor about the need to change executive and council leadership in the CES Women Union.

The governor responded by issuing a state order in 2006, dissolving the former CES Women Union committees and appointing a caretaker committee in July 2006. The caretakers were tasked with the responsibility of holding a general assembly meeting, electing new executive and council committees, and amending the CES Women Union's constitution. The general assembly meeting, which brought together 120 delegates from the six counties in CES, was held in May 2007 and resulted in the election of the new executive and council for the organization. The new committee lacked the skills in organizational management. As well, the objectives of the organization were not clearly defined and there was no experience in attracting membership or applying for funding from donor organizations.

VEGA delivered trainings on organizational management and strategic planning that included a clear definition of CEWU objectives and goals, and stressed the importance of a strong leadership and the existence of a job description that clearly defines the role of each member of the organization. A three-year strategic plan was drafted which was broken down into workable areas requiring stakeholder input. The work plan suggested the amendment of ten Articles in constitution that was then discussed, voted upon, and finally implemented in concurrent with trainings on grant proposal writing and budgeting.

## *Loka Women's Association (LWA)*

The Loka Women's Association (LWA) was created in 1999, in an effort to foster sustainable development through equipping women with skills and knowledge so as they can participate in the development of Southern Sudan. LWA is located in the Loka Boma, Lainya county which is 40 kms north of Yei. The association has five centers spread throughout the Loka Boma region (Kenyi, Goromo, Lokurbang, Loka Round, and Loka West). In each these centers there are 30 registered women members

The women in Loka practice farming and small-scale trade. For these women, business and farming are the only viable opportunities for them in their region. However, they lack basic business skills thereby inhibiting businesses growth.



Women gathering for a Loka Women's Association meeting.

In order to leverage and contribute to the efforts of Loka Women Association, VEGA recruited volunteer experts to conduct training workshops on basic business skills and income generation. VEGA delivered structured training on small business management skills for LWA. The program also introduced participants to the concept of a "Village Saving Bank" as a viable source of local financing and advised them on how to initiate and manage such an endeavor. VEGA provided guidance to members on resolving their individual business issues through working with 11 businesses owned by the group of trainees. VEGA held one-on-one discussions with each of them and provided recommendations on how to apply their newly acquired skills in daily business activities. An evaluation at the end of the training showed that 90% of the participants clearly understood the concepts presented during the training and indicated they are now in a better position to manage their businesses and market their products.

## *Sudanese Women HIV/AIDS Awareness Providers (SWAAP)*

The mission of the Sudanese Women HIV/AIDS Awareness Providers (SWAPP) is to encourage a working relationship with governmental and non-governmental entities and thereby best facilitate support and training for women who have been infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

In such an effort it is essential to understand the importance of health when it comes to keeping and protecting the business from collapse when impacted by the issues of HIV/AIDS. Southern Sudan, and Juba in particular, has begun reintegration of IDPs, refugees and Diaspora who might have been exposed to HIV/AIDS and who do not know about the disease or its impacts. As these people are reintegrated into the community, the risk of spreading the disease will increase exponentially. Educating the business community on the potential impact (financial and health) of HIV/AIDS has become increasingly important.

VEGA assessed the HIV/AIDS situation in Southern Sudan to determine if the BizAIDS concept was applicable in such an environment. The BizAIDS model allows for adaptable training to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS on businesses by providing basic business training to micro and small businesses in concert with HIV/AIDS education and access to Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) as well as treatment providers. The model helps business owners, employees, and dependents prepare for absenteeism or the loss of a business owner(s) and/or key employee(s) through training in recordkeeping, last will and testament development, legacy planning, saving, and profit/loss analysis.

VEGA/AMED worked in Juba, Rumbek, Malakal, and Nuba Mountains to identify indigenous NGOs that could host BizAIDS training or recommend TOT trainers. VEGA/AMED identified organizations that teach HIV/AIDS awareness and provide VCT to collaborate with them. There was a high demand for BizAIDS training in South Sudan.

Furthermore, 63 entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs (75% women) from an IDP camp participated in VEGA's "Skills to Protect Your Business" training. VEGA/AMED presented videos and told stories to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, which included information on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), transmission, symptoms, and management. To ensure sustainability, VEGA also worked with the Director of SWAAP, went through the HIV/AIDS information and teaching tools available, and offered guidance on how to enhance the profile of SWAAP.

One of the most significant improvements on the business skills component was an increased awareness of business expenses and the difference between income and profit. On the HIV/AIDS awareness component, there was an increased awareness of (STDs) and an increased acceptance of HIV/AIDS sufferers.

## *Bahr el Ghazal Women Development Centre (BWDC)*

The Bahr el Ghazal Women Development Centre (BWDC) is an organization funded by women to address development and legal issues affecting women in the Lakes State. BWDC is located in each of the 22 districts within Lakes State and has approximately 50 members and seven permanent staff. BWDC's main activities include: empowerment training (income generation activities), vocational training (tailoring, carpentry, etc.), and educational training for girls and illiterate women.

VEGA's assistance to BWDC was in the form of basic training in administration, management, and accounting to their staff and members. VEGA identified that most staff and members had been conducting business without formal training and were interested to learn about business. As a result, BWDC women understand that education and training is integral to their success not only for them but their children.



**A Group of Women from Northern Bahr el Ghazal formed the first Women's Business Association in the State. Today the Association holds over 126 members and is active and thriving. This was formed with the assistance of the VEGA/AMED Program.**

BWDC staff identified several training needs for their organization including capacity building for BWDC staff and members in the areas of administration, finance, and accounting. VEGA helped BWDC design and distribute a member survey to the districts in order to create a member profile and be better able to determine skills training and assistance needs. VEGA/AMED trained staff to use financial data to create budgets, program projections, and cost accounting. They were also trained in collecting market data and assessing market share with the aid of a competitive analysis.

It was noticed that there was a miscommunication between the Board and BWDC's staff and VEGA/AMED provided guidance on methods to improve the Board decision-making process and its working relationship with BWDC's administration. VEGA also delivered a workshop in cost accounting, and business generation.

The most pressing issue in terms of business generation appeared to be finding ways to occupy the mostly-vacant Tukul accommodations built on the organization's property. Until the GOSS relocated from Rumbek to Juba, the accommodations were offered to local people from the district coming to Rumbek to attend various meetings and workshops and served as a steady income stream for the center. For example, later a VEGA volunteer helped the staff market the Tukul accommodations by designing a brochure for distribution to the NGOs, UN and other organizations, as well as the local ministries.

# CAPACITY BUILDING of GOSS, STATE, & LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Throughout the life of the VEGA/AMED project, capacity building of Southern Sudanese institutions remained an important aspect of the program. VEGA provided training and technical assistance to GOSS and state-level ministries, as well as to country and payam-level institutions in the areas of finance and budgeting, human resources, strategic planning, information technology (IT), and also assisted with conducting needs assessments, baseline surveys, and feasibility studies.

The concept of the VEGA/AMED project was designed in 2004 prior to the implementation of the CPA and was intended to set the stage for economic development in Southern Sudan. It was a tumultuous time in Southern Sudan and the needs on the ground were significant and numerous. Project start-up in 2005 coincided with the appointment of GOSS Ministers who were assembling in Rumbek to establish the government and their Ministry offices. The newly appointed Ministers arrived without any resources and little idea of the steps required to establish their respective ministries. The VEGA/AMED team met with these newly appointed officials of the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture and assisted them in prioritizing training needs and inputs required for technical support. While this capacity building was initially envisioned as a small portion of the VEGA/AMED project scope, USAID and project leadership quickly realized the importance of being responsive to this unmet need. In addition to the original vision of “setting the stage for economic growth”, numerous training programs were conducted during the first year of the program at the state and national level to support the emerging administration. This support provided visible technical and moral support to the people of Southern Sudan. In subsequent years, this ability to provide flexible targeted programming proved to be critical, as the USAID approach shifted and on the ground realities emerged.



**VEGA volunteer Ashok Sadhwani has extensive experience in customs issues. He has worked from both sides, as a customs consultant for governments and the private sector. Mr. Sadhwani provided training to 30 members of the South Sudan Customs in Yei. The training covered issues such as tariff rates, international customs agreements, import and export procedures and customs documentation. Mr. Sadhwani also visited the Kaya customs post bordering Uganda and the DRC, the most active import portal in South Sudan.**

During the early stages of the VEGA/AMED program, the GOSS Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Supply (MCTS) was identified as the program's primary government counterpart. VEGA provided numerous training activities to MCTS including 1) a workshop to outline the duties and practices of commerce department officials that was facilitated by a volunteer from the U.S. Department of Commerce, 2) assistance in designing an institutional plan, 3) the development of an implementation plan, 4) guidance in designing draft trade acts, and 5) IT-related assistance in computer skills training, networking, and troubleshooting. VEGA/AMED also assisted the MCTS in developing six acts to help expand trade and establish private sector development, and developing new trading licenses at reasonable rates resulting in 100 new import licenses worth \$150,000 in just over six months, and resulting in over 750 Sudanese becoming indirectly employed as importers, construction workers, and ministry staff.

In Southern Sudan, many GOSS and state ministries, indigenous non-governmental organizations, and private individuals cannot afford to own computers and printers. Those who manage to make the expensive purchases are further burdened by the lack of constant and reliable electricity and often do not know how to properly use and care for the equipment. An information technology (IT) assessment was needed to determine the needs of the IT sector in Southern Sudan. The assessment called for a person that was not only an expert on the technical side, but was also familiar with the different private and public bodies of Southern Sudan.

VEGA recruited a member of the Sudanese Diaspora to conduct the IT needs assessment in Southern Sudan, to assess the specific needs and capabilities of GOSS and state ministries, as well as the skills and interest of local business owners. Looking at existing computer venues, software applications, and meeting with locals, there was a demonstrated need, and desire, for computer literacy training at all levels. Computer maintenance, networking, and advanced training in specialized software packages were deemed essential.

Following the assessment, VEGA provided targeted computer skills training to through volunteer experts in Juba and Wau. The sessions covered topics in computer basics, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and typing skills. Participants from the public and private sectors benefited from the training in both cities. Diaspora volunteer Ismail Limbo conducted computer literacy training in Juba and Wau. The two four-week sessions covered topics such as computer basics, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and typing skills. Participants from the public and private sectors benefited from the training in both towns. Mr. Limbo first divided the students into two groups. One for beginners and the second for Trainers of Trainers (TOT). The TOT students were composed of 87 persons, of which were 32 were females. The participants were from government ministries, chamber of commerce, individuals, women groups, and computer training centers as well.

Juke Mabior fled Southern Sudan during the war as a boy and lived in a refugee camp in Ethiopia before relocating to the U.S. where he obtained his GED and a later a college diploma. He returned to South Sudan, after 20 years of being away, and seized the opportunity provided by VEGA/AMED to apply his IT skills to providing training with the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife Conservation, and Tourism in Juba. Upon completion of his volunteer assignment with VEGA, Mr. Mabior launched a private IT consulting business, and also establish a bi-weekly business newspaper called *Juba Business Week*.

In October, 2006, long-term volunteer and Sudanese Diaspora, Juke Mabior was assigned to the GOSS Ministry of Environment for a 6-month assignment in liaison with the USAID-funded STEP Project. He trained a total of 28 Ministry staff in basic computer skills and GIS operations as well as developed automated systems for the Ministry. (See text box on this page for more on Mr. Mabior's personal story.)

A similar-type volunteer assignment was conducted with GOSS MCTS for two months to set up a computer network and provide computer trouble-shooting and related services.

VEGA carried out numerous studies and assessments in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) including a value chain study of the groundnuts industry in collaboration with the and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) to train participants how to assess an industry and identify development interventions ; a commercially oriented livestock assessment; and the assessment of a soil research laboratory in Wau.

VEGA/AMED augmented the capacity of the Fisheries Directorate of the GOSS Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries (MARF) to develop an appropriate fisheries strategy. VEGA fielded aquaculture specialist Dr. John Grover to carry out a feasibility study on aquaculture potential in Southern Sudan and to provide his findings to VEGA and MARF. Dr. Grover's draft report shed light on the fishery sector which to date has been characterized by lack of credible data upon which to make informed decisions. During the same assignment period, Dr. Grover also provided technical assistance and structured training to various government employees in the fishery sector on how to develop the aquaculture industry in Southern Sudan. The Directorate will conduct a trial survey of fisheries in Juba County, a first for Southern Sudan.

VEGA was asked by USAID to support three of South Sudan's agriculture training centers for a one-year period with grants and technical assistance to assist them in transitioning from USAID funding to GOSS support. The Fisheries Training Center in Padak, the Crop Training Center in Yei, and the Agricultural Technology Training Center in Nzara were selected by USAID for VEGA's assistance. Each training center was eligible to receive up to US\$100,000 in grant support upon completion of an approved transition plan. Both the Fisheries Training Center and the Crop Training Center successfully completed their transition plans and received the full balance of grant funding. The Ag Technology Center elected not to work with VEGA to complete a transitional plan and thus did not receive grant support. The grant funds were reallocated to the VEGA program upon USAID's approval after the one-year transitional support period had closed, and the Training Center had shown little interest in complying with terms of the transitional support.

Over the life of project, VEGA/AMED maintained good partnerships with the Crop Training Center, Fisheries Training Center, and Forestry Training Center and provided numerous training activities and technical assistance. VEGA volunteers assisted the Forestry Training Center to develop an institutional and a strategic plan. Diaspora volunteer Joseph Bartel worked with the MAF to establish an agreement on the long-term status of the Training Center. He later leveraged his work under VEGA/AMED to obtain a three-month consultancy with United Nations Environment Program where he continued to advise the MAF on forestry policy. The Crop Training Center was a close partner, and received assistance from VEGA/AMED in business planning and human resource development. VEGA volunteers also worked in conjunction with the Center to conduct a study of producers along the Yei-Arua corridor. After the end of the civil war, this border between South Sudan and Uganda was reopened, and with it came expanded markets and increased demand for agricultural products. The Crop Training Center took the lead in assisting farmers around Yei to engage in the emerging market opportunity, and requested VEGA's assistance to gain a better understanding of trade flows, anticipated gaps, key players, price trends, volumes, etc. in order to be able to better assist Southern Sudanese producers and agribusinesses.

The VEGA/AMED program was intended to explore relevant and successful options and approaches in a war-torn region. The flexibility of the model was a chief asset and allowed the program to respond to the needs on the ground for increased capacity. As a result, VEGA was called upon to help when opportunities arose for the program to assist local institutions. Among these, two long-term MBA

volunteers were placed on extended assignments with the Southern Sudan Center for Census, Statistics, and Evaluation (SSCCSE) to help build the capacity of the newly created institution to ultimately assist with carrying out a full-scale population census. (See text box on page 45 for more information about VEGA's work with the SSCCSE.) VEGA also worked with the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) to develop a reintegration strategy for returns to Juba County in conjunction with the nascent Reintegration Development Center. In late 2005, VEGA responded to an urgent request from the Western Equatoria State Government to assist with developing a state budget to submit to the central authorities. VEGA/AMED quickly responded and worked with a 10 person team, including the State Minister of Finance to develop a budget. As a result Western Equatoria was the first state to produce and submit a budget to the GOSS. VEGA also worked in collaboration with the USAID-funded STEP Project on implementing a pilot recycling project for the GOSS in the capital city of Juba. The recycling project was based on a model developed by a VEGA/AMED long-term MBA volunteer. The project successfully identified a local partner through Juba Dealmakers Forum and entered into an agreement to implement the recycling pilot project. The project is expected to create employment and business opportunities for collectors, transporters and compressors in Sudan and neighboring Uganda. VEGA worked in collaboration with the USAID-funded STEP Project on implementing a pilot recycling project for the GOSS in the capital city of Juba. The recycling project is based on a model developed by a VEGA/AMED long-term MBA volunteer. The project successfully identified a local partner through Juba Dealmakers Forum and entered into an agreement to implement the recycling pilot project. The project is expected to create employment and business opportunities for collectors, transporters and compressors in Sudan and neighboring Uganda.

### **VEGA Volunteers Prepare Center for National Census**

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) created the Southern Sudan Commission for Census, Statistics and Evaluation (SSCCSE) to conduct a full-scale population census in conjunction with its Northern counterpart. The information gathered will help the nation in planning and distributing key developmental services including educational facilities, road work projects, aid funds, oil revenues, and other natural resources.

VEGA fielded two long-term MBA volunteers to the SSCCSE between February 2006 and April 2007. Their primary objectives were to provide organizational and financial management assistance to enable the Commission to supervise and manage the array of census activities already underway. Alexandra Lepionka focused on organizational development and succeeded in creating a functioning organizational chart that helped guide the SSCCSE as it expanded from a 30-person operation to more than 200 employees. She was instrumental in the creation of job descriptions and hiring processes. Her assistance with job application review and training on interviewing techniques helped expedite the process of staffing the Head, Sub and 10 State Offices. She was also instrumental in the creation of the employee policy manual.

Kirk Manhin worked with the finance department to optimize business processes. He strengthened risk management by identifying controls points in the Commission's financial procedures, and assisted with implementation of a Financial Management Information System. He documented financial and operational procedures to promote standardized processes and sustainable systems across the institution, and participated in budget planning. In addition to financial management systems, Kirk helped launch the SSCCSE website – [www.scccse.org](http://www.scccse.org).

VEGA/AMED assistance in developing the organizational structure, human resources, and financial management has strengthened one of the critical functions of the Government of Southern Sudan—to collect and analyze data about its citizens to improve planning and decision-making..

# CONCLUSION

The VEGA /AMED program provided critical tangible and intangible support to the people of Southern Sudan. It was a bold initiative for an environment still in the midst of conflict. Technical assistance and moral support in the form of volunteers provided hope to a population with minimal resources and a history of desperation. The successes in the form of women's organizations, businesses, and associations remain as examples of what is possible. Over the final year of the program, there have been numerous examples of these businesses and organizations sharing their technical expertise with others in the Juba and Yei area and other states. These business leaders and entrepreneurs have laid the foundation for expanded economic growth that will continue to be driven by local economic opportunities. Moving forward, the opportunity to replicate these successes and build upon their example and accomplishments will be critical to expanded economic opportunity in Southern Sudan.

Following the signing of the CPA, USAID-funded development activities implemented by VEGA and others were initially directed primarily toward Equatoria. These activities sparked the interest of constituents there, and raised individuals' expectations. The majority of USAID-funded development assistance has since shifted to the border areas, and left Equatoria with a decreased level of assistance. By 2008, economic growth had begun to quickly gain momentum in Equatoria, and the environment is now primed for an extensive agricultural initiative which focuses on production and marketing in addition to technical assistance focused on business development.