

# FRONT LINES



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

OCTOBER 2005



President Bush addressing the United Nations General Assembly at the U.N. Headquarters in New York City.

## Bush Tells U.N. to Fight Poverty

**NEW YORK**—President Bush told the 60th summit of the U.N. General Assembly here that the world body must fight poverty, alleviate suffering, and “work to spread freedom.”

He thanked “more than 115 countries and nearly a dozen international organizations” for offering Hurricane Katrina assistance, which is being coordinated by USAID (*see related story on this page*).

Bush’s speech leaned heavily on the importance of international development to improve chances of peace. He said fighting poverty,

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## Battle Widens as Avian Flu Spreads

As U.S. experts assist Southeast Asian countries hit by avian flu—culling poultry and searching for a vaccine for human flu victims—the disease spread in August to Russia, possibly carried by migrating birds.

It is feared that the disease will soon be carried to Europe, India, and Africa as well.

The human form of the disease has killed about half the 112 people it infected in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia since the disease was discovered in December 2003.

However, if and when the virus changes so it can be transmitted from human to human, experts believe the lethality will fall from half of those infected to only two or three percent of those infected.

That way, the virus ensures it does not kill so many of its hosts that it kills itself in the process. But even at the lower death rate, up to 180 million deaths could occur worldwide before adequate vaccines and medicines are developed and distributed or humans develop resistance.

In May, President Bush signed a \$25 million emergency bill to fight the H5N1 virus that causes avian flu. Funds go for surveillance to detect outbreaks of the

disease, quick diagnosis, containment of infected animals and humans, and clinical management and care, said Dennis Carroll, a senior USAID expert with the Office of Health, Infectious Diseases, and Nutrition.

“We are also looking at preparing countries for a pandemic,” said Carroll, who led a team of USAID and other U.S. government experts to Asia to plan a strategy to battle the disease.

Carroll said that “forecasts predict from 5 million to 180 million deaths” if the virus causing the disease mutates into a form that can be spread easily from human to human.

There is a strong likelihood the virus could combine with other human flu viruses and then adapt the ability to spread from person to person, he said.

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Villagers and domesticated ducks rest in a backyard farm in Kampot Province, southern Cambodia, where the country’s four confirmed human cases of H5N1 have occurred since January 2005.

## Agency Channels Foreign Aid for Hurricane Katrina Victims

USAID experts who traditionally work on disasters abroad have been sent to

deal with an American emergency—the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The Agency has established an operations center for foreign offers of assistance to the half a million people from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama whose homes were destroyed or flooded in the Aug. 29 storm and the subsequent collapse of levees in New Orleans.

“USAID experts are also working at the Department of Homeland Security’s Emergency Center, drawing on their experience in working disasters around the world,” said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

“We are doing everything we can to help those in need here at home in America, and we are also working closely with other governments to help them locate and assist their citizens,” she told reporters at the State Department Sept. 2.

Foreign governments and overseas private organizations have pledged more than \$700 million in cash and other aid to storm victims.

Relief supply planes have been landing in Little Rock, Ark., since Sept. 5, loaded with tents, water purification units, kitchen units, and medical supplies donated by Britain, France, Italy, Russia, China, Spain, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and Israel. International organizations such as UNICEF, NATO, and the European Union are also contributing.

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### AFGHANS VOTE

**AFGHAN ELECTION:** An Afghan woman holds her identification card as she participates in the country’s first free parliamentary election Sept. 18. Elections were peaceful, despite threats by Taliban militants. More than 5,700 candidates competed for 249 seats in the lower house of parliament and on 34 provincial councils that select delegates to the upper house. USAID support included training for 34,000 candidates’ agents, training the Joint Electoral Management Body, a conference for women candidates, and support for election monitors.

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**GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS**  
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**FOREIGN SERVICE NATIONALS** make up a significant portion of USAID’s workforce, their accomplishments varied and notable. See pages 4–5 for descriptions of FSNs, past and present, who have lent their skills to the Agency.

## Agency Channels Foreign Aid for Hurricane Katrina Victims

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The Netherlands, Azerbaijan, the Philippines, El Salvador, Australia, and Turkey are also among the 120 nations that have extended help. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police were some of the first law enforcement officers to arrive in devastated areas to support police patrols; South Korea sent in two tons of disposable diapers.

U.S. ambassador in residence at Tulane University, Joseph Sullivan, who is coordinating aid from foreign donors out of a State Department response center in Baton Rouge, said at a press conference Sept. 10 that USAID is working with the Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) “to make sure that the needs are identified clearly, that they’re transmitted to foreign governments, the right type of assistance comes, and is put to use quickly.”

Nearly 50 experts from the Agency’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the United Nations are coordinating relief efforts with FEMA and the Department of Defense from a Washington-based response management team.

Other USAID staff are working with the group from offices in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, and Texas.

FEMA, the Red Cross, and other organizations are distributing beds, blankets, first aid kits, baby food, tents, and rafts. They are also dispatching rescue teams.

Vehicles from a USAID warehouse in Miami—stored there in case of natural disasters in Latin America—have been used to transport non-ambulatory evacuees and personal effects.

USAID has also provided the National Guard with latex gloves, safety coveralls, masks, goggles, earplugs, first aid kits, germicidal wipes, hand sanitizer, and water testing kits.

Foreign contributions range



Cots and tents being unloaded from a NATO airplane in Little Rock, Ark. NATO was one of numerous international organizations to donate supplies to hurricane-ravaged areas.



Orville “Hoss” Gilbert of Stafford, Kansas, loaded his truck at Little Rock Air Force Base on Sept. 16 with international commodities for the people affected by Hurricane Katrina. He has made the run four times, and trucked camp beds from Slovakia and blankets from Luxemburg nine and a half hours down the road to a Louisiana distribution warehouse. “I have hauled just about everything you can imagine behind this truck, but this stuff means something to me,” he said. “To know this stuff is going to do some people some good is a good feeling. I would hope these countries would do the same if it were my family down there.”

from \$25,000 in cash from Sri Lanka, itself a victim of the deadly earthquake and tsunami last year, to \$100 million in cash and \$400 million in crude oil from Kuwait.

Financial donations are going to nonprofit organizations, including the Red Cross, or are being directed to a special fund at the State Department or the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund.

Sullivan said an elderly Lithuanian woman “remembers the assistance that the United States provided to her country...and she has

sent her life savings of 1,000 euros [about \$1,290] to assist people affected by the hurricane.”

“I’ve worked in the U.S. Foreign Service for 35 years,” Sullivan added. “So I’ve been part of much of U.S. assistance to people who have been starving, displaced, hungry. And I know that, when we provide that sort of assistance, it’s very much appreciated now that things have turned around and others are assisting us, and we are very, very grateful for that.” ★

## Hurricanes Predicted to Set Record in Atlantic

USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance has been on heightened alert monitoring hurricane activity this year, after the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicted a hyperactive hurricane season, which runs from June 1 through November 30.

Regional advisors have been holding hurricane preparedness briefings for missions in hurricane-vulnerable countries and conducting other preparedness activities.

The U.S. government provided more than \$116 million to the Caribbean in the wake of the 2004 hurricane season.

Already this year, USAID has given assistance to Haiti and Grenada in response to hurricanes Dennis and Emily, and is prepared to assist countries affected throughout the hurricane season. USAID has also been implementing disaster risk-management programs to reduce vulnerability to hurricanes in the region.

In July, Hurricane Dennis claimed 43 lives in Haiti and 16 in Cuba, and affected over 1 million people in the region with its heavy rains. One week later, Hurricane Emily swept across the Caribbean, and is being blamed for seven fatalities in Grenada, Jamaica, and Mexico.

In August, Hurricane Katrina, among the worst natural disasters in U.S. history, devastated New Orleans and areas along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and South Florida. In support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Emergency

Plan, USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance coordinated offers of international assistance from over 80 countries.

As of Sept. 9, 16 storms, seven hurricanes, and three major hurricanes—those with wind speeds exceeding 112 mph, or categories 3 through 5 on the Saffir-Simpson scale—were observed in the Atlantic Ocean.

Forecasters predict that the 2005 hurricane season will result in 18 to 21 tropical storms, nine to 11 hurricanes, and five to seven major hurricanes.

In an average hurricane season, about 10 tropical storms, six hurricanes, and two major hurricanes are expected in the Atlantic basin.

NOAA says atmospheric and oceanic conditions favorable to hurricanes—such as warmer than normal sea-surface temperatures, low wind shear, and low surface air pressure—are expected to continue during the peak months of hurricane season from August through October.

While NOAA cannot predict where and when a hurricane will make a landfall, historical records indicate that one to two hurricanes make landfall in the Caribbean region between August and November during hyperactive hurricane seasons.

Additional information on hurricane outlooks, forecasts, and warnings can be found at the NOAA National Hurricane Center website. ★

[www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov)

## Agency Employee Volunteers at Louisiana Shelter

When Roman Napoli of USAID’s Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) heard about the need for help at shelters in his native Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, he decided to use a week of vacation time to help out.

“I was a volunteer coordinator at the Cajundome in Lafayette. We had 2,500 people sleeping on cots on the basketball court,” said Napoli.

“I coordinated volunteers distributing clothes, preparing and serving meals, providing information, and registering people into the shelter. Communication was poor, with cell phones and regular phones not working so well. There were rampant rumors and fear of disease.”

Lafayette was spared devastation, and most children in the shelter were sent to area schools. Other children were tutored by teachers from the community.

The majority of the displaced were African Americans, poor and without relatives in the area.

Unlike the chaotic situation in New Orleans in the first three days after the hurricane Aug. 29, there was no violence in Lafayette. But instead, said Napoli, “there was depressive apathy that settled on people; they showed little motivation.

People were wiped out emotionally.”

“The people came from the three hardest-hit parishes in New Orleans. Very few of them went back there.”

The volunteer work was a far cry from his usual duties at LAC in Washington, where he works on budget, strategy, and performance evaluation.

“I felt like I was able to accomplish a lot and had a significant impact on what was going on,” the 27-year-old staffer said.

“There was a lack of leadership—a short supply of people able to take charge. I was able to step in.”

Napoli and his wife, a lobbyist who also used her vacation time to volunteer, stayed with his family in Lafayette, which is the heart of Acadiana, an eight-parish region of Cajun culture.

He said that his southern accent—largely lost during schooling in California—returned during his stay and proved helpful in building “instant credibility” among the southerners he worked with.

In addition, he noted that the Red Cross, which coordinated assistance at the shelter, also coordinated security provided by National Guard troops from northern Virginia and other forces. ★



# Nicaragua



## MISSION OF THE MONTH

### Challenge

Nicaragua is Latin America's second poorest country, with 48 percent of its population living below the poverty line. Agriculture is the main livelihood of nearly half of Nicaraguans, most of whom farm low-value crops such as beans, corn, or sorghum in regions that are highly vulnerable to droughts and floods. Even with high-value export crops such as coffee, poor quality control and global price fluctuations keep Nicaragua's small producers at subsistence levels.

Free trade agreements offer Nicaragua a chance to break out of poverty. But to do so, the country will have to better compete in the marketplace at home and abroad.

### Innovative USAID Response

For years, the Agency aided small-scale farmers by introducing them to better farming methods, improved seeds, and access to credit. Now USAID has shifted its approach to focusing on farmers who demonstrate potential for promoting change in the agribusiness sector.

"We have learned that it is not enough to just improve farming methods. A farmer might be doing everything right, like using environmentally sound practices or better seeds, but if there is no market for the product or very low sales value, that farmer remains poor," said Enrique Urbina of USAID/Nicaragua's Food Security Office.

While environmentally safe farming methods and better techniques are still part of all USAID agricultural projects, these practices are linked to growing a wider variety of higher-value crops and meeting the quantity and quality demands of the market. Farmers are learning business savvy in supply and demand, what it takes to meet international quality standards, and the importance of establishing long-term relationships with buyers.

USAID's trade and agribusiness program, which works with more than 13,000 small farmers, is concentrating on helping producers enter specialty niche markets by exporting products that are not grown in the United States—including plantains and other tropical fruits—and certain dairy products, specialty coffee, and organic meats. The program is also helping farmers take advantage of the winter market by exporting onions, squash, and okra during the months when U.S. farmers cannot fill the demand.

The program is also helping small-scale farmers gain a foothold in supplying domestic supermarkets with fresh fruits and vegetables. Central America's supermarket sales have doubled

in less than a decade. Nicaragua now has 43 supermarkets, up from five in 1994. Three supermarket chains are expected to build another 17 stores over the next two years.

### Results

Sales of fruits and vegetables have totaled more than \$10 million since the agribusiness project began less than a year ago, and some 19,000 new jobs have been generated. Two years ago, 10 percent of Nicaraguan supermarket produce was supplied by local farmers. Now local farmers are supplying more than 70 percent of the produce.

"For the first time, I have a steady monthly income for my family," said Calixta Herrera, a farmer in the Tomatoya community. USAID financed drip-irrigation systems to grow vegetables here all year long, enabling the farmers to supply a major supermarket chain year round.

Specialty coffee farmers are also seeing benefits. In a partnership with the Cooperative League of the United States of America, USAID financed 21 mini-labs for quality control that have been highly praised by international buyers for helping Nicaraguan coffee become recognized as among the world's best.

Specialty coffee exports from USAID-assisted farmers have increased by 1,500 tons since 2003. Through a USAID coffee program with faith-based organizations, Starbucks has become a major purchaser and a provider of technical assistance to the farmers.

Every year, many of these farmers are among top winners in the annual International Cup of Excellence, which was first held in Nicaragua four years ago.

This year's first-place winner, Vicente Colindres, lost his 2-acre farm to Hurricane Mitch in 1998 but rebuilt it through USAID's Food for Work program. He now uses one of the mini-labs to help him understand and control the quality of his coffee. Colindres sold his coffee at 69 cents a pound last year. After his win this year, he sold his coffee at an internet auction for \$8.05 a pound. His profits have helped replace the dirt floor in his home with cement. He also invested in a mill on his farm and sent his daughter to college.

"This is what USAID is really all about," said USAID/Nicaragua Mission Director Alex Dickie. "When farmers and entrepreneurs become successful and no longer need our help, we know we have done our job." ★

*Jan Howard contributed to this article.*

## Notes from Natsios

★★★★★★★★



### Foreign Aid Must Spur Economic Growth

In September 2000, the United States and 188 other nations adopted the Millennium Declaration to fight poverty, illiteracy, hunger, lack of education, gender inequality, health disparities, and disease in poor countries. Five years later, many of those leaders reconvened at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to measure the early results.

And while the accomplishments thus far and the challenges that yet remain will continue to be debated, the mere fact that these issues are attracting a wave of high-level attention and action is a success.

The UNGA meeting, which kicked off Sept. 14, is only the latest event. In August, \$200 million was pledged to spur trade in African countries during the African Growth and Opportunity Act conference in Senegal. June brought word that the Group of Eight would call for debt relief to 18 poor countries. And that followed the announcement that the United States would top off the \$1.4 billion it had already committed to humanitarian emergencies in Africa with another \$674 million.

The common denominator in these efforts is something USAID has emphasized for more than 40 years: economic growth. As the first-ever bilateral development agency—and still the largest—USAID can speak with authority about what works and what does not.

Without economic growth, there will be no increase in tax revenues. Without revenues, social services are not sustainable. Unless foreign aid contributes to economic growth, it fails to achieve its primary mission. Humanitarian assistance is part of the package, too. The failure to respond to food emergencies can only lead to further instability and erode the development gains already made.

Dollars help. But achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration is far too important to reduce to a check-writing exercise. While foreign aid funding is important, good governance and sound policies are more important.

The Agency is helping countries put in place the institutions and practices needed to make them eligible for Millennium Challenge Corporation funding, which goes to countries that rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom.

USAID uses a unique authority granted by Congress to provide partial credit guarantees on local currency lending in developing countries. The Development Credit Authority allows USAID to provide the full faith and credit of the U.S. Treasury to share credit risk with private financial organizations. Over \$1.2 billion in local currency lending has been made available to entrepreneurs through the use of this authority.

And in Africa, USAID is supporting New Partnership for Africa's Development, a

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Starbucks representative Stephane Erard (left) and Vicente Colindres, first-place winner in Cup of Excellence, taste local coffees, a process called "cupping coffee" by industry experts and aficionados.

# Foreign Service Nationals Go On to Top Jobs

El Salvador's first woman vice president, **Ana Vilma de Escobar**, has come a long way since the 1980s, when she was a USAID foreign service national, or FSN.

De Escobar, elected last year, is one of a growing number of FSNs who find that their jobs with USAID were springboards to higher positions inside and outside the Agency. There are currently 4,900 FSNs employed by USAID, 79 percent of them overseas.

"FSNs, as a whole, are a remarkably accomplished group and, subsequent to their service at USAID, many have achieved some of the highest offices in their respective countries," Administrator Andrew S. Natsios said in a July executive notice. He designated 2005 as the "Year of the FSN" to recognize their importance.

He cited people like de Escobar, who worked for USAID for nine years. She managed a \$50 million project that promoted non-traditional exports, encouraged foreign investment, and supported the development of small and medium business as a tool for economic growth. De Escobar also played a critical role in USAID's support for the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development, a think tank whose policy recommendations helped two successive governments design the country's economic reform program.

After her work at USAID, de Escobar worked in El Salvador's banking sector and was named to the board of directors for the ARENA Party. She was asked to join the cabinet of former President Francisco Flores as head of the country's National Social Security Institute, a department with over 11,000 employees and 200 service centers.

In 2003, then-presidential candidate Tony Saca recruited her to serve as his running mate. A record 67 percent of El Salvador's eligible voters turned out, handing Saca and de Escobar victory.

**Yulia Shevchenko** is another FSN who headed for a top position. She recently left the USAID mission in Moscow to become the senior project manager for CitiFinancial in Russia, a subsidiary of the credit card company Citibank.

"Being a part of the Agency is a big luck, but you need to prove that the Agency made a right choice selecting you," she said. "So continue learning, improve your professional skills, and never give up."



Svetlana Gorodetskaya

**Svetlana Gorodetskaya**, now with the United Nations, also started her USAID career in Moscow in 1994. She later moved to posts in Serbia and Montenegro (Kosovo), Indonesia, and the United States. "USAID

helped me to start a career I have never thought about before, which proved to be a very successful choice," Gorodetskaya said.

She initially wanted to be a medical doctor, completed degrees in international economic relations and international relations, and worked in human resources at USAID and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

She heads the human resources unit within the Global and Inter-Regional Division of the U.N. Office for Project Services.

Her friends say the experience has made Gorodetskaya "very, very cosmopolitan." She has learned about people from several different countries and cultures, she said.

"And the most amazing thing: in every country I was assigned to during the last five years—Serbia and Montenegro, Indonesia, and the United States—I met people I had met in USAID/Russia," Gorodetskaya said.



Marlène Charlotin

**Marlène Charlotin**, who now works with the International Finance Corporation at the World Bank, started her career with USAID back in 1977 as a junior secretary in the Haiti mission's Health, Population, and Nutrition Office.

"Although I did not understand a lot about development when I joined USAID," she says, "I realized early enough that it was worthwhile working for an organization whose main objective was to alleviate poverty around the world."

"Furthermore, the health office professionals I was working with were so involved and so anxious to really make a difference that I could not be indifferent," said Charlotin. "Before I knew it, I went back to school to complete a BS in business administration."

Charlotin also moved up the ranks and shifted from administrative work to a professional position in the health office. Despite working in one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, Charlotin said: "We were making a difference in the lives of the Haitian population. Institutions started to become accountable, the health programs were moving forward, immunization rates increased, malnutrition was decreasing, fertility rates were decreased."

Charlotin was a member of the Agency's FSN Working Group before she left USAID this year for the World Bank.

**Amal Mahmaz**, the deputy executive officer for USAID/Morocco, started working there in 1993 as a secretary, but only reluctantly. She'd just completed an undergraduate degree in linguistics at Rabat University. "I



Ana Vilma de Escobar, former FSN, is El Salvador's first woman vice president.



Amal Mahmaz

had no intention to work; rather, I wanted to start a master's degree," Mahmaz said.

But her friend convinced her, selling her on the fact that she'd be able to practice her language skills and get paid. Soon she was offered a job as a lead secretary in the mission's management office.

"I was supposed to screen documents, mainly checking their formatting and passing them on to the office chief," Mahmaz explained. "But that was not enough for me. So I started paying attention to the content of the documents, checking regulations, offering my help to all my colleagues, asking them to give me part of their work to do, filling in for some of them when on leave."

This informal education covered the gamut of the mission's offices and prepared her for the job she has now.

"Diplomas are important," she says, "but if you show that you have an excellent potential, if you have a very good experience and the know-how, USAID will encourage you to join its ranks."

"My advice to anyone considering joining USAID: If you are really eager to enter, don't be blocked by looking for a position that suits

your background and qualifications. Any position is fine. Just have your foot on the first step and then be sure you will be given the opportunity to move upward."

Here are some details about other FSN "graduates":

- **Bonaventure Nyibizi** was a senior economist at USAID/Rwanda in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1997, he became the country's minister of industry and commerce, and has headed national commissions on privatization and foreign investment. A Tutsi, Nyibizi barely survived the genocide in his country. When the liberating Tutsi Army took Kigali in 1994, Nyibizi was swapped by the Hutu to the Tutsi forces for some captured fighters. Within days, Bonaventure climbed into the wrecked USAID compound, got on a satellite phone to Washington, and single-handedly reopened the USAID mission. Bonaventure was recognized for his acts of bravery and outstanding performance by the Agency that year.
- El Salvador's Minister of Foreign Affairs **Francisco Lainez** worked with the mission from 1989 to 1991. He managed several multimillion-dollar projects that focused on economic growth, insurance, and trade credits to banks for importation of goods and services. After leaving USAID and before being named to the cabinet, he ran his family business.
- El Salvador's Minister of Education **Darlyn Meza** worked with USAID from 1991 to 1993 on a project that focused on education curriculum reform.
- El Salvador Deputy Technical Secretariat **Annabelle de Palomo** worked with the USAID Economic Growth Office between 1993 and 1996 on privatization, pension, and social policy issues. ★

Inna Bashina contributed to this report.

## Traditional Dancer, Non-Traditional Driver—An Interview with ‘Mrs. Bean’

BY JONATHAN ADDLETON, USAID/Cambodia mission director, and SUZANA SORINCHAN, USAID/Cambodia information specialist

**PHNOM PENH, Cambodia**—York Bean Tan, ordinarily referred to as “Mrs. Bean,” defies stereotypes. A survivor from the Khmer Rouge, she spent nearly 12 years as a traditional Khmer dancer. For the last decade, she has served as the only woman driver for USAID/Cambodia.

The two strands of her dual careers—first as a classical dancer and then as a driver—can both be traced back to her childhood.

“My father taught me to drive, and I got a driving license during King Sihanouk’s reign during the 1960s,” she said.



York Bean Tan (right) and her daughter dance a Khmer traditional step, Tep Monorom, during a party at the home of Susan Merrill of USAID/Cambodia in June 2005.

As a child, Mrs. Bean also learned traditional Khmer dance. Her mother taught dance at the Royal Palace, so Mrs. Bean started to dance at age 6. She even performed at public ceremonies involving the king.

Like so many families in Cambodia, Mrs. Bean’s was broken up between 1975 and 1979, during the Khmer Rouge rule, and in the unsettled years that followed.

Pol Pot’s regime had no use for classical Khmer culture. But, during the 1980s, Mrs. Bean’s skill as a dancer was put to use when she joined a cultural affairs unit within the Cambodian army.

“I will always remember my first job as a traditional dancer with the military,” she said. “However, my salary was very low and people valued me only when I danced on stage. The Cambodian dancer or artist was poorer than the dancer or artist in a Western country.”

Still, she was able to develop her skills as a dancer. She studied ballet in Hanoi for 18 months, choreographed a dance called “The Female Messenger Soldier,” and performed a number of times in neighboring Laos and Vietnam.

By the early 1990s, the downsizing of the Cambodian military marked the end of her army career. Jobless for a time, she sought work as a driver for the United Nations.

“I saw a foreign woman with a uniform drive a big truck,” she remembered. “That helped make me think that I could also become a driver.”

After working for the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia for a year, she interviewed with USAID/Cambodia for a driver position and got the job. She is now one of 10 drivers in the Phnom Penh motor pool, which USAID/Cambodia manages on behalf of the U.S. Embassy.



York Bean Tan, a former Khmer traditional dancer, now works as a driver for USAID/Cambodia.

“I am very proud of my job,” Mrs. Bean said. “I have never gotten in an accident or had a problem with my driving.”

Reaction from other drivers in the motor pool over the years has varied.

“Some male drivers were happy to see me as a driver, but some were not so happy,” she recalled. “Sometimes they flirted with me, and a few male drivers tried to discourage me. Whatever the reaction, I didn’t care—I committed myself to perform my job better.”

Driving has helped pay the bills and allowed Mrs. Bean and her family to live comfortably. And it has not put an end to her dancing career.

“A lot of people knew me through dancing and as a teacher,” she said. “When USAID or the embassy has a party, the organizers try to find out who can perform.”

Since joining USAID in June 1995,

Mrs. Bean has performed on a number of occasions, including at Khmer New Year celebrations and at farewell events organized for a departing ambassador and USAID mission director. Sometimes she is joined by her daughter, who followed in her mother’s footsteps as a ballet dancer and now teaches dance at the Art Department within the Ministry of Defense.

“I will keep my good fame until I retire,” said Mrs. Bean, who recently turned 52. “I will let USAID know when I can no longer drive because of my age or because I can no longer see clearly.” ★

*FrontLines* encourages mission directors and other staff to submit articles about their foreign service nationals.

## Average USAID Contract Specialist Handles Record \$48 Million

By the end of the fiscal year, Charis Nastoff, a contract specialist in USAID’s Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA), will have obligated \$53 million through 65 awards or modifications. Her other duties include traveling to regional and mission offices and training colleagues.

In comparison to Nastoff, whose workload is typical for USAID contract specialists, her counterparts in other federal agencies obligate an amount about four times smaller, usually without international travel involved. And a recent article in *Government Executive* noted that the recommended ceiling amount for contracting specialists is \$10 million.

USAID’s workload per contract specialist averages \$48 million, which is large and complex because it includes contracts and grants performed in developing countries, said Lynn Kopala, deputy director of OAA.

One of the major causes of the larger workload for USAID contract specialists is budget limitations that prevent it from hiring more staff. But USAID has been finding ways.

“The Agency’s contracting specialists are mentored, trained, and encouraged to be more involved in development and relief program activities than their counterparts in other agencies,” said Kopala. “USAID contract specialists must be versed in both

contracts and grants, while other agencies usually rely on more specialized personnel.”

Nastoff, who has traveled extensively to provide support to regional offices and missions, said: “I spend long hours at the office because working in development is important to me. The work moves smoothly because I have a good relationship with the tech office. We’re a solid team, and that works to our advantage to get the services they need when they need them.”

The Agency is also tapping into new hiring mechanisms. Through the Contract Specialist Intern Program, 21 workers have been hired over the last two years. Another 15 contracting officers have been hired through the New Entry Professionals program. They’ll be expected to help fill gaps both here and abroad.

Staff at OAA’s Management Support offices have also shrunk as contracting officers from that desk moved to work on Iraq and Afghanistan portfolios.

Other agencies have a large policy staff to provide support for contracts and another large staff for grants. But USAID’s limited policy staff handles both.

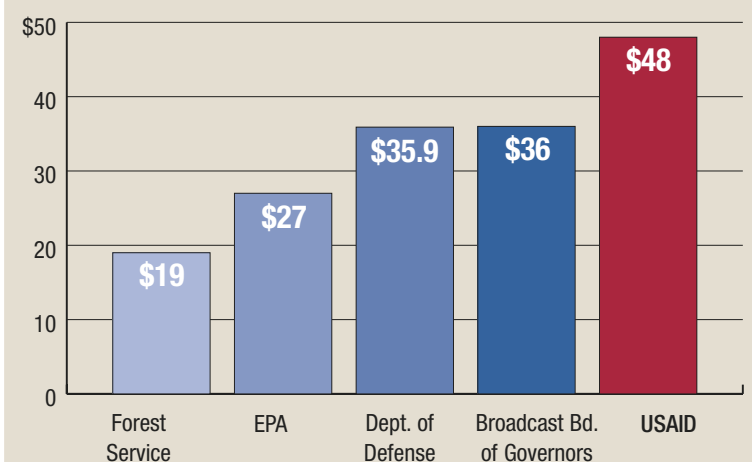
For the last few years, the Policy Division, comprising just seven people, has been addressing day-to-day policy questions on

contracts, assistance, and other issues, as well as working on broader issues associated with USAID’s increasing work, particularly in war zones. Most staff get up to 50 requests a day for policy guidance from around the world. The division is also taking steps to improve responsiveness.

Diane Howard is responsible for policy interpretation associated with billions of dollars of contract awards.

“Working on acquisition policy has provided me with the chance to be involved in a broad range of issues that are integral to the Agency’s development mission because acquisition—with a capital A—is such a significant part of that mission,” she said.

### AVERAGE MANAGED FUNDS PER CONTRACT SPECIALIST (IN MILLIONS)



Source: Agency websites, Office of Personnel Management’s FedScope, and the National Finance Center (for USAID personnel)

“I hope that I’ve helped USAID contracting staff to better understand both federal and Agency regulations so they can do their jobs more effectively, with the challenges we all face.” ★

Michael Walsh contributed to this article.

## GLOBAL HEALTH

## Training Improves Healthcare



A nurse stocks up a medicine cabinet in a Nicaraguan health clinic. A USAID-funded project has provided management training and improved monitoring of the health system.

**MANAGUA, Nicaragua**—Reina Margarita Maltez has often visited the clinic in the rural town of Tisma, 25 miles southeast of this capital. Having five children has seen to that.

“Sometimes the staff would not even raise their heads to greet me, and that made me feel bad. It was terrible,” she said. “When your child is sick, you are already anxious, and if the staff does not even care, it makes you even more anxious.”

But in recent years, Maltez found the attitude of clinic health workers had changed after a series of projects funded by USAID to improve health services.

The projects include management training, leadership courses, monitoring the health system, and institutionalizing successful efforts. As a result, the medical staff is more attentive and courteous to patients.

“Traditional leadership development programs...show you what the characteristics of a good leader are,” said Violeta Barreto, director of human resources at the Ministry of Health, which worked with USAID contractor Management Sciences for Health (MSH).

“The program is made for public-sector organizations and NGOs, and recognizes the importance of leaders who are managers, who all have important objectives, and who must prioritize those objectives in light of scarce resources,” she said.

Some 80 percent of Nicaraguans—who live in the second poorest country in the Western hemisphere—depend on public clinics.

In Boaco, a rural area north of Managua, health directors recently met—on a day when a power outage left them in the dark—to discuss monthly health statistics and identify gaps in service delivery.

Just a two-minute walk from the regional office where health services are budgeted and managed, a local health post treats about 300

patients per day. Its health providers depend on administrators like Dr. Armando Incer, the regional medical director, who helps ensure they have the tools to offer quality service, monitor that service, and treat patients well.

“We knew that how we treat patients is important. However, many of our staff did not keep this in mind,” Dr. Incer said. “They did not know our mission or our vision for health services in the region.”

The leadership program began in July 2001 in the poorest of Nicaragua’s 17 regions. After an assessment identified problems in the workplace climate, MSH and the Ministry of Health produced leadership development training modules directed at the biggest deficiencies.

“Before, we had no common vision. Our staff had attitude problems...and did not see how their actions negatively impacted services,” said Rosa Martines, municipal health leader for the Masaya region, which was one of the original project sites. “As a team, we’ve improved our communication. The information flows, and no longer stays at one level or with one person or program.”

After training two groups at the municipal level, the program was offered nationally.

In mid-2003, the program began working with senior managers at the central level of the Ministry of Health, focusing on regulatory and policy challenges. Leadership was strengthened, and led to the development of a national health plan.

Now the ministry’s management and operational systems are also being reengineered and improved. ★

*Carmen Urdaneta of Management Sciences for Health contributed to this article. After years of working in Latin America, Urdaneta died in a plane crash in Afghanistan earlier this year, while working on USAID-funded projects in Kabul.*

## GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

## Online Donation Portal for Iraq Allows Broader Participation

**BAGHDAD, Iraq**—USAID is working through a new web site, IraqPartnership.org, to allow American citizens, communities, corporations, and others to participate in the Agency’s massive reconstruction efforts here.

IraqPartnership.org was created by GlobalGiving, an organization that allows donors to give directly to international projects.

In 2003, the Global Development Alliance (GDA) invested \$1.5 million in GlobalGiving, which has generated more than \$2 million to support over 1,000 projects through individual and institutional giving.

“IraqPartnership.org facilitates connections between private American donors and effective development projects in Iraq,” said Mari Kuraishi, president of the GlobalGiving Foundation.

Prospective donors who have visited the organization’s general website—globalgiving.com—range from concerned individuals to a Brownie Scout troop to an employee of a Fortune 500 corporation whose contribution is matched by her employer. They choose projects based on geographic or sector interests, and then contribute directly to the projects they select.

Project offerings on IraqPartnership.org come from USAID/Iraq’s current mission portfolio.

Initial opportunities include the option to purchase desks for classrooms, water pumps for farm cooperatives, and computers for a business center. Additional projects will be added, Kuraishi said.

GlobalGiving was created in 2001 when Kuraishi and co-founder Dennis Whittle left the World Bank to follow through on an idea that originated from the Development Marketplace, a competition they designed while at the Bank to foster innovation in development practice.

GlobalGiving’s approach uses the internet as a marketplace—an “eBay” for development—to provide an efficient, open, and thriving channel for local projects to raise funds.

Today, 63 countries are represented on globalgiving.com. Donations can be as little as \$10.

Previously, the USAID-GlobalGiving partnership supported employee- and customer-giving programs for Gap Inc. and The North Face, leveraging resources through a two-to-one and three-to-one corporate match, respectively.

The IraqPartnership.org website expands on this effort on a much grander scale by connecting USAID’s country rebuilding efforts with what Administrator Andrew S. Natsios terms “the humanitarian instincts of the American people.”

“USAID’s alliance with GlobalGiving increases the resources available to the Iraq mission and brings the American taxpayer closer to the practice of international development,” said Dan Runde, acting director of the GDA Secretariat. “It is a fantastic development model whose success in Iraq can serve as an example for other country missions.” ★

[www.IraqPartnership.org](http://www.IraqPartnership.org)



A new website permits citizens, communities, and corporations to financially support the Agency’s massive reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

## ECONOMIC GROWTH, AGRICULTURE, AND TRADE

## U.S. Helps Energy Reform in Poor Countries



U.S. regulators on a visit to the Jamaica Public Service's Hunts Bay 124-megawatt power plant in Kingston. Jamaica's Office of Utility Regulation is a participant in the U.S. Energy Association's Energy Partnership Program, a USAID-funded initiative working on energy reform in developing countries.

Until recently, when a power outage occurred in Jamaica, people stayed in the dark. But now they can call the Office of Utility Regulation (OUR) and find out why power is out and when it might be back up.

The service was instituted after OUR participated in a project through the U.S. Energy Association's (USEA) Energy Partnership Program, a USAID-funded initiative working on energy reform in developing countries.

Since 1991, USEA, a nonprofit association of 160 private and public energy-related corporations and organizations, has matched American utilities and regulatory agencies with counterparts in the developing world.

U.S. aid finances travel for executives from U.S. utilities and regulatory agencies to countries reforming their energy sectors. It also funds travel for their counterparts to come to the United States.

"When you are talking regulator to regulator, you say: 'Here's the theory, here's the reality. You have political constraints and we do, too.' You want to give them as realistic a view [as possible], including imperfections. That's the virtue," said James Connelly, commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy, who worked with his counterpart in Egypt.

USEA has organized more than 80 volunteer partnerships in USAID-assisted countries to accelerate economic and social development. The program has channeled more than \$57 million of in-kind contributions from U.S. utilities to those in developing countries.

"These partnerships have accelerated energy sector reform, increased the supply and reliability of electric power, improved services to consumers, and made regulatory oversight more transparent," said Juan Belt,

director of the Infrastructure and Engineering Office of the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade.

During the Jamaica exchange, for instance, OUR learned not only about being more accountable to its customers, but also about how upgrading technology can improve efficiency.

Based on recommendations made by the Missouri Public Service Commission and the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission, Jamaica's regulator added personnel to its technology and engineering department.

A March 2003 assessment of USEA's program by Energy Resources International (ERI) found that the Energy Partnership Program is "having positive development impacts on partners' organizations and their countries." ERI found that the partnerships are giving more people in developing countries "better access to energy services and enabling energy resources to be produced more efficiently and delivered more safely and reliably to customers."

Some 80 percent of participating utilities said they improved their knowledge and skills through their partnership with USEA. Another 85 percent reported that they will continue to benefit from their partnership after they end.

Emmanuel Anumaka, senior manager for transmission planning at Nigeria's National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), said this organization "has put in place a new grid metering system and procedures for efficient and effective tracking of the consumption of electricity and enhancing accountability. Revenue collection has soared from 40-50 percent to about 70 percent" since NEPA had an exchange with USEA. ★

## DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

## 10,000 Professionals Volunteer Abroad

After the Indian Ocean tsunami, Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP) worked alongside USA Freedom Corps to respond to hundreds of people throughout the United States who offered to assist in relief efforts.

It is a measure of the growing clout of VfP, a two-year-old initiative that helps Americans volunteer in developing countries, said Jack Hawkins, director of the Office of VfP in the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. He called the initiative "a promising new service opportunity for America's compassionate professionals."

VfP was established by President Bush through executive order in September 2003. It works with leading U.S. nonprofits and companies to deploy American professionals—such as doctors, nurses, and engineers—in volunteer opportunities supporting the United States' global health and prosperity agendas.

Organizations not previously involved in official foreign assistance—ranging from smaller faith-based and community groups to trade associations and corporations—have joined VfP, which now counts more than 200 U.S. nonprofits and companies among its partners.

USAID is the inter-agency coordinator for the initiative, which is also supported by the departments of State, Commerce, and Health and Human Services.

"A senior U.S. business person can spend a two-week vacation helping entrepreneurs in Senegal develop a business plan; or an

American nurse can take a six-month leave of absence from her job to work with peers in Asia treating AIDS patients," Hawkins said. "In both cases, VfP can help connect volunteers with organizations that are doing good work in a variety of sectors and in a variety of places overseas."

At a recent international conference on volunteerism, Hawkins moderated a panel that included senior officials from the Peace Corps, the U.N. Volunteers, and VfP volunteer Chris Strock, a 28-year-old civil engineer from Virginia who helped build a water system for a Nigerian hospital.

"Volunteering always starts with the noble concept of helping someone in need and, ironically, the volunteer may be the one helped out the most," said Strock. "I hope I will continue to grow as a person from my experiences."

The partner organizations, Hawkins said, "represent a pool of talented American professionals now exceeding 50,000."

It is expected that over 10,000 such volunteers will be deployed this year. Partner organizations who use these volunteers also receive special consideration in applications for grants associated with the federally supported initiatives relating to VfP.

The International Roundtable featured presentations from leading national and international experts on volunteerism and service. The conference attendees represented 50 international NGOs and over 15 countries, including the United Kingdom, Nigeria, Bolivia, Nepal, and Israel. ★



Workers build a water system for a Nigerian hospital with the help of a VfP volunteer.

## Ethnic Groups Work Together to Rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina

**SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina**—Bosniaks,\* Serbs, and Croats today live together in peace in this city, which was under siege by Serbs for much of the three-year bloody ethnic conflict that tore up the country between 1992 and 1995.

As the three ethnic groups work to rebuild their country, USAID—with a budget of \$26 million, enhanced by an annual \$12–16 million in loan program repayments—supports the process through economic development programs, promotion of democracy, and assistance to thousands of returnees.

Sarajevo, once a cultural hub in the Balkans, has regained some of its vibrancy, with busy streets full of cafés and shops. But shelled-out and burnt buildings, including the architectural gem of a national library, remain disfigured and closed—a reminder of wounds unhealed.

The most visible changes in Bosnia are the new roads, bridges, and homes. Less noticeable but equally important are changes in the laws, said USAID/Bosnia Deputy Mission

Director Pat Jacobs.

“The laws are business-friendly. We’ve helped rebuild the banking sector, and many new businesses are up and running,” he said.

The next step is to move sovereignty to the federal level, Jacobs added. “We need constitutional changes that make Bosnia-Herzegovina one single country.”

The war began after ethnic Serbs boycotted a referendum to make Bosnia-Herzegovina independent of the former Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs, supported by neighboring Serbia and Montenegro, responded with armed resistance aimed at partitioning the republic along ethnic lines and joining Serb-held areas to form a “Greater Serbia.” The Croats wanted to be part of the newly independent Croatia.

In March 1994, Bosniaks and Croats made peace and created the joint Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Peace talks with Serbs began in November 1995.

The Dayton Accords created a multiethnic and democratic government charged with


conducting foreign, diplomatic, and fiscal policy. But it also recognized a second tier of government comprising two entities roughly equal in size: the Bosniak/Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb-led Republika Srpska (RS). The federation and RS governments were charged with overseeing most government functions.

This partition makes operating in Bosnia difficult at times, said Jacobs.

“Ultranationalist parties make it very difficult to work in [the RS] because a lot of our work there is with minorities,” he said. “And they don’t want them returning.”

The Dayton Accords placed some 60,000 NATO-led peacekeepers in Bosnia to maintain peace. As peace has held up, peacekeeping forces have shrunk. Today, some 7,000 European Union peacekeepers remain. ★

*\*Bosniak has replaced Muslim as an ethnic term, in part to avoid confusion with the religious term Muslim, an adherent of Islam.*



**Capital:** Sarajevo  
**Population:** 4 million  
**Size:** Slightly smaller than West Virginia  
**GDP/purchasing power parity:** \$26.21 billion (2004 est.)  
**GDP real growth rate:** 5% (2004 est.)  
**GDP per capita/purchasing power parity:** \$6,500 (2004 est.)  
**Population living below poverty line:** 25% (2004 est.)  
**Ethnic groups:** Serb 37.1%, Bosniak\* 48%, Croat 14.3%, other 0.6% (2000)  
**Religions:** Muslim 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, other 14%  
**Languages:** Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian

Source: CIA World Fact Book

FrontLines Acting Deputy Managing Editor Kristina Stefanova visited Bosnia-Herzegovina recently and wrote this series of articles.

## Bosnia’s Refugees Return to Restart Lives

**PRIJEDOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina**—On a rainy August afternoon, Said Hamulic made his way home after a day digging a road and helping neighbors rebuild their houses. His wife, pregnant with their third child, smoked cigarettes and waited for him.

This is the life of 23,000 Bosniaks who returned to Prijedor in western Bosnia a decade after they were expelled by Serbs. Unemployment is high, and most everyone is rebuilding destroyed homes, roads, and water and electric systems.

International aid organizations such as USAID provide construction materials and help deliver power and water to new homes. They also give financial aid, seeds, agriculture tools, and livestock to returnees.

Today Prijedor is a Serb stronghold and its returnees are Bosniak; in other areas, the Croats or Bosniaks are in charge and the returnees are Serbs or from other groups.

Prijedor saw some of the war’s ugliest atrocities: Bosniaks were forcefully pushed

out of their homes or arrested and put into concentration camps.

Hamulic was one of the lucky few who escaped. He and his wife Enisa went to Croatia and later to Germany. By 1998, they had two daughters, one born in each country.

The family returned to Prijedor to find their home—like every other home belonging to a Bosniak—burnt to the ground. The livestock was long gone and the cornfield leveled.

The family moved in with neighbors and, over the next two years, got building materials to rebuild their home on its old foundations. They got electricity and clean water as USAID repaired the local distribution systems. Now they have two cows.

At 66, Hamulic has lost all hope of retirement since his 13-year career at the local paper mill ended with the family’s hasty departure from Bosnia in 1992.

“I make 25 convertible marks [about \$18] a day when I get paid,” Hamulic said, extending his calloused, rough hands. “Just look at my hands.”

About half of the 45,000 Bosniaks who left Prijedor have come back, one of the highest rates of return of any refugee region.

“I wanted to be on my own land,” said Hamulic. “Many others were returning, and we wanted to be close to our friends and relatives.”

The sentiment is shared by a Serb in Bojmunti, a village near Livno, some five driving hours away from Prijedor.

“We didn’t go from here of our will, but from our will we came back,” said Vlado Konjikusic, 68, who, with his wife and son, left for Serbia in late 1994, as Livno became the frontline between Serbs and Croats.

Twenty-eight Serb families lived in Bojmunti before the war. Now 13 have come back, all to find their homes and fields burnt.

“We have to start with everything from the beginning: the house, the livestock, agricultural equipment,” said Konjikusic, who



Enisa Hamulic and her 12-year-old daughter Erma sit outside their new home. Bosniaks Enisa and Said Hamulic fled Prijedor before the war. Their two daughters were born while they lived as refugees in Croatia and, later, Germany. The family returned to Prijedor in 1998. They found their home destroyed, but have rebuilt it with international aid. Hamulic is unemployed, and his wife is expecting their third child.



Vlado Konjikusic, a Serb who took his family away from the region of Livno when it became the frontline for fighting between Serbs and Croats in 1994, looks at his beehives. His house was destroyed, but he has rebuilt it and brought his wife from refuge in Serbia. The family lost most of their cattle and equipment. They live off produce from their garden, milk from two cows, and homegrown honey.

received a cow through a USAID project. “In this region we once lived off agriculture, but now we have nothing.”

USAID began supporting returnees by repairing large infrastructure throughout the country so the economy could get up and running again, said Samir Dizdar of USAID/Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Minority Reintegration Development Office. As people began returning, USAID refocused on small-scale community projects to encourage more returns.

In the late 1990s, the Agency repaired hundreds of water and wastewater systems, power plants, schools, and clinics throughout Bosnia. Four border-crossing bridges and a railroad leading to Croatia were rebuilt, as well as one internal highway that was damaged from frequent use by heavy war vehicles.

To repair the Kakanj power plant, about an hour from Sarajevo, the Agency invested \$15 million to fix one generator, replace another, and install filters that reduced fumes by 97 percent. It later invested \$9 million to modernize nearby coal mines that fuel Kakanj.

The plant provides electricity and heating to 350,000 residents in central Bosnia, including 150,000 people in Sarajevo.

“All the major power lines were shelled,” said Dizdar. “The idea was that cutting power lines to the villages would discourage people from returning.”

Sarajevo itself suffered power cuts 10 to 15 days at a time. “And when you got it, it was for two, three hours a day,” Dizdar said.

USAID repaired major transmission lines after the war and is still hooking up distribution lines that were cut off at villages. ★



## Maimed Journalist Writes Painful Truths About Bosnian War

**BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina**—Journalist Zeljko Kopanja lost his legs for telling the truth.

Kopanja's newspaper, *Nezavisne Novine*, was the only publication in the Serb-dominated section of Bosnia and Herzegovina—Republika Srpska (RS)—to write about Serb war crimes against Bosniaks.

Shortly after his article appeared, a bomb was planted in his car. He lost both legs.

Kopanja did not give up, and *Nezavisne Novine*, which USAID has supported through various projects in the last seven years, is still the only paper in the RS that objectively addresses issues like war crimes and local corruption.

The newspaper's investigative reporting has earned it a good reputation. It is the second largest daily newspaper in Bosnia and is widely read by Bosniaks and Croats, as well as Serbs.

In 1998, USAID conducted research that helped the newspaper decide to use Latin rather than Cyrillic letters. That helped it attract Bosniak readers outside the RS.

In 2000, the Agency gave the newspaper a \$500,000 loan to build a printing press. Opened in 2002, it is the only private printing press in the RS, and has been a money-maker for *Nezavisne Novine*. Several local publications, some government pamphlets, and a few Croatian magazines are printed here.

In 2001, a USAID-funded consultant helped the newspaper reorganize its management. The Agency also trained editors, managers, reporters, photographers, and designers.

*Nezavisne Novine's* circulation is about 15,000 on weekdays and 25,000 on week-

ends. Kopanja also owns several magazines and a radio station.

Some 65 reporters work in the Banja Luka newsroom and 26 work in the Sarajevo bureau, which opened in 2000.

"Our staff is Serb, Croat, and Bosniak. We have a mixed hierarchy," said Managing Editor Dragan Jerinic, adding that this helps the newspaper's editorial objectivity.

"Journalists in Banja Luka never printed a truthful story about what was going on during the war," he said. "We needed young people who are not burdened by those prejudices and who would write about anything."

The average age of *Nezavisne Novine* reporters is 26.

In 2001, the foundation stone was being laid to rebuild a mosque in Banja Luka that was destroyed during the war, and many Bosniaks returned to the city for the event. During the ceremony, locals threw stones at the visitors. *Nezavisne Novine* sent an older reporter to cover the story, but he refused.

"He wouldn't admit the reality, couldn't write critically," Jerinic said. "There are many here who are not willing to accept that some other people did terrible things in their name."

After *Nezavisne Novine's* investigative reporting last year, legal action was taken against a forestry company accused of funding war criminals. Reports also led to the restriction of imports of materials used to make synthetic heroin and crack cocaine.

Since 1997, USAID has supported media projects in Bosnia, working with radio and television stations, as well as magazines and newspapers. Of the dozens of outlets originally assisted, about 10 are now at the core of Bosnia's independent media. ★



A printing press worker reviews a freshly printed copy of *Nezavisne Novine*, a Bosnian newspaper that has received assistance from USAID since 1997.

## Bosnian Businesses and Exports Expand Through Loan Program

**DOBOLJ, Bosnia-Herzegovina**—Muharem Salihbasic and his family left this city in 1992, after he was forced out of his job as manager at a large fruit and vegetable processing plant. But he was soon back in business. Salihbasic rented space in a nearby city and hired his family members and a dozen former coworkers to process fruits and vegetables into marmalades and other products.

Now, more than a decade later, and with extensive assistance from USAID, the company sells 200 products under four brands, here and abroad.

"When we started, it was very primitive,"

said Salihbasic's son Edin, who heads the marketing department and has been to the United States for quality control and marketing training three times through USAID. "It was a lot of manual work—like fire cooking in huge pots and much stirring. Many people told my father he was crazy, but he had a vision."

A tomato concentrate and plum butter were the first products sold by the company that the elder Salihbasic named Vegafruit. Around that time, the company's annual production was 200 tons. After receiving several loans and other kinds of U.S. assistance

▼ SEE BOSNIAN BUSINESSES ON PAGE 14

## Bullet-Scarred Hotel Gets Facelift

**SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina**—The Holiday Inn was built to house athletes in the 1984 Olympic Winter Games, but a decade later it was the only functioning hotel and shelter for foreign reporters covering the war.

The unlovely yellow hotel became something of an icon, its battered façade appearing with regularity on television screens around the world, a symbol of the bloody conflict that tore Bosnia-Herzegovina apart.

Last year, on its 20th birthday, the Holiday Inn was privatized, with U.S. assistance. Its new owner, an Austrian consortium, will repair the existing building and add a 22-floor tower with more rooms, a conference center, shops, restaurants, and a parking lot. It will also hire another 800 people.

The Bosnian government tried to sell the hotel in 2001, but offered prices were low and corruption was suspected, so USAID stepped in to help. Starting in 2003, the Agency performed financial projections, prepared all the information for potential buyers, and participated in sale negotiations

lasting almost a year.

Tafro Fahrudin, manager for the hotel's financial department, remembers when the bright yellow, squarish building that still bears many bullet holes and shell marks was under constant attack. Power only came on so that meals could be cooked and so reporters could write and transmit stories to editors abroad.

"We bought everything on the black market—fuel, food. One liter of fuel then cost us about \$15," he said. "Many of our employees were wounded as they came to work, but luckily we didn't lose any of them."

But mostly Fahrudin thinks ahead, envisioning a Holiday Inn that will be outfitted with fast internet connections and feature high-tech information and telephone systems that allow a Japanese guest to dial up and watch Tokyo television programming.

"In half an hour you can drive to the Olympic mountains from here," he said. "This is a small but very beautiful country. Tourism is our future." ★



## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## Spicy Chilies Brighten Bolivian Harvest

**PADILLA, Bolivia**—July 8 began spicier than usual in this rural southern town. It was the start of the Fourth Annual International Red Chili Pepper Festival.

Some 317 tons of red chili peppers were sold at the fair, three times more than at last year's event. Domestic and foreign buyers from Peru and Argentina wanted to buy even larger amounts of the fiery vegetable.

The variety that grows in Padilla, one of the country's poorest regions, is particularly flavorful and sought after. Bolivians consume 4,000 tons of hot chili peppers per year. Demand is much higher than production.

This makes red chili peppers a perfect crop for local farmers, said Jorge Calvo, agricultural specialist with USAID/Bolivia, which has been working with red chili pepper farmers through the Market Access and Poverty Alleviation Project (MAPA).

"The average local annual family income from agriculture is about \$350. Our hot chili pepper growers have experienced a 120 percent increase in agricultural income, on average, by working with USAID to improve their production," said Calvo.

Much of the red chili pepper harvests were previously lost due to inadequate handling, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, and poor marketing skills. But MAPA helped farmers get improved seeds, trained

them in the proper use of pesticides, and taught them how to produce clean plant material through controlled sanitation in seedbeds.

Additional training was provided in post-harvest management, particularly the drying process, to reduce insect damage, loss due to mold, and unsanitary drying methods.

"In the past, we used to sell our products to intermediaries who used to pay us lower amounts than the ones of the markets," said Mario Ávila, 37, who has increased production and grown his income by about 50 percent in recent years.

MAPA relies on experienced growers like Ávila to pass on their newly acquired and improved farming knowledge to other hot chili pepper farmers.

"I'm teaching everything I learned to some 14 families here," he said. "At the beginning, some neighbors did not have confidence in the project. But now they are convinced."

MAPA—which works with tea, coffee, anise, cumin, and oregano, as well as chilies—also helps farmers to get microcredit loans to finance tools, seeds, and additional workers. ★



A Bolivian farmer shows a sample of his hot chili pepper lot, which was sold in the Padilla business table.

## AFRICA

## Combatants Disarm to Rejoin Communities in Congo

**BUTEMBO, Democratic Republic of Congo**—The war ended here two years ago, but the challenges have not stopped for thousands of former fighters.



Jean Kavira Vawite, 51, received an official certificate of disarmament from a USAID reintegration program. Vawite joined the old Zairian army in 1995 and lived in the bush for many years.

"These are people who had nothing and had nothing to do," says Toby Vaughan, who is chief of party for Development Alternatives Inc., a USAID partner working in the Democratic Republic of Congo on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). "We need to give them something to do so that they become positive members of society."

Without something to do, these fighters prey on the local community in order to survive.

USAID-funded reintegration projects have employed 750 ex-combatants in Butembo and its surrounding territories to build a 45-mile road. They have worked on rebuilding and erecting new bridges. Electrical capacity is being expanded, and 47 aquaculture ponds were built in collaboration with the University of Gaben's research center in Butembo.

Butembo, a city of 450,000, is home to more than 1,000 ex-members of

the Mai-Mai militia, and that number could grow to 6,000 if all active militia members around Butembo decided to demobilize.

Though it is considered an economic and cultural hub, the city did not escape the war undamaged. Local infrastructure was decimated and cattle herds stolen. The coffee plantations have been obliterated by disease.

"It is not as easy to make a life here as in the bush," said Muhindo Kanzala, 23, who joined the Mai-Mai when he was 19.

"In the bush, we had guns. What we needed, we took. What we wanted, we grabbed. Many of us are still living that way in the bush, and many nights I think about rejoining the militia," he added.

But there are also people like Jean Kavira Vawite, 51, who has fought and lived in the bush since 1995 and now wants change.

"My wife and I are getting too old for the bush," Vawite said. "We just did not know how to leave that life. Now we will."

Butembo is home to a soft-drink bottling plant, brick factories, foam mattress production, and agricultural processing facilities, all of which could provide employment for ex-combatants, said Vaughan.

Trucks transporting fuel and goods regularly travel to the city along routes that cross through Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

USAID is also sponsoring conflict resolution efforts helping former combatants return to their communities. Through this program, 115 families have opened their homes to ex-

combatants working on the roads project.

"There was never any question of sending them away," said Abbé Jean Marie Paluku Kahisiryo, vice rector of Catholic University of Gaben, who was key in opening negotiations with the Mai-Mai. "These are not really violent people. They are not complicated. They are basically good men and women who had been easily manipulated in the past and very vulnerable."

Established as a Belgian colony in 1908, the Republic of the Congo gained its independence in 1960. Joseph Mobutu took power in 1965, renamed the country Zaire, and ruled with an iron fist until 1997. At that time, a rebellion led by Laurent Kabila toppled Mobutu's regime. Civil war was touched off by a massive inflow of refugees from fighting in Rwanda and Burundi.

Kabila renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. His regime was supported and then later challenged by an insurrection backed by Rwanda and Uganda. Troops from five neighboring countries supported Kabila. A ceasefire was signed in July 1999 by the Congo, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda, Namibia, Rwanda, and Congolese armed rebel groups, but sporadic fighting continued.

Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 and replaced by his son, Joseph. A transitional government was set up in July 2003, following peace accords. National elections are planned for 2006. ★

## ASIA AND THE NEAR EAST

## Shrinking Forests in Bangladesh Get Protection

**DHAKA, Bangladesh**—The Lawachara National Park northeast of this capital is dying—its sambar deer and Kebu bagh leopard have already disappeared—but a new project aims to change that trend.



A member of the Teknaf Reserve looks over tree seedlings. A USAID-funded project helps train community members around Lawachara National Park to produce a variety of seedlings used to restock home gardens and increase local supplies for fuelwood, poles, and nontimber forest products. The seedlings also serve to restore and rehabilitate the park's degraded areas.

Bangladesh has extended land protection rules to a large portion of Lawachara, where land encroachment has been killing

the habitat and its ecosystems.

Lawachara is not the only shrinking forest in Bangladesh. More than half of the country's forest cover has disappeared in the last 30 years, and today even the forests in sanctuaries and national parks are threatened. Land encroachment, mainly for rice fields, is to blame, as is illegal logging for fuelwood and bamboo and cane collection.

Now the forest is gaining protection through a U.S.-funded land management program, the Nishorgo Support Project, in newly protected areas.

A recent report in *The Daily Star* in Dhaka said that forest cover has shrunk by about 15 percent and forest density and abundance of tall trees by 60 percent in recent years. Wildlife species—from small deer to parrots and wild fowl—are endangered.

The Nishorgo project, aiming to halt this destruction, has helped increase the number of staff at Lawachara to halt poaching and illegal logging. The project is providing specialized training in biodiversity conservation to Forest Department field managers and helping them develop management plans.

To meet the needs of nearby villagers for food, fuel, and other necessities, the project is also working with the Forest Department and local communities to improve and manage the working forests that surround Lawachara's protected area.

New policies ensure that revenues and other fees from tourism in the protected forests are shared with local communities, said Philip DeCosse of International Resources Group, which is working on the project through a USAID contract.

To further reduce dependence on forests, USAID is developing alternative income-generating activities, such as cattle rearing, fish culture, ecotourism, and tree nurseries.

"I knew nothing about running a nursery, but I received the Nishorgo training, and now, when I sell my tree plants, I will get cash," said one recently trained Lawachara nursery farmer. "Now I have an income source, my family will be better off, and I can train others—my son, his wife, some of my neighbors."

Shamol Dev Barma was among the first to receive training as an ecotour guide in the Lawachara protected area. "Now I realize that the forests can be a source of income for us. We will live happily only if we can save the protected areas," he said.

Through the Nishorgo project, an international hotel chain was persuaded to invest in conservation awareness campaigns.

The Bangladesh Scouts are also working with the Forest Department to promote hiking, birding, and a greater appreciation of conservation among young people. ★

## EUROPE AND EURASIA

## Kosovo Cities Improve Finances, Build Roads, Parks

**KACANIC, Kosovo**—A new road connects this city near the Macedonian border to several nearby villages. A freshly paved sidewalk runs along the river, and a site nearby has been cordoned off and will soon become a park and children's playground.

These changes took place thanks to property tax collection, a practice that did not exist here before 2002. Since then, a USAID-funded project created the position of a property tax manager and taught municipal personnel how to survey properties, issue tax bills, and collect the money.

Kacanic collects about 65 percent of the estimated potential property taxes, more than most Kosovar municipalities.

"Our citizens are starting to see the benefits of paying taxes," said Kacanic's property tax manager, Xhelal Dema. "Only by paying can we have better roads, schools, or water systems."

Prizren, about 43 miles away, is held up as a model of good use of tax collections. The city's large park, with manicured lawns, is just one of the benefits reaped from instituting property tax collection. A campaign now informs all visitors about how and why the city has built more roads, renovated schools, and started a new park.

Helping cities collect taxes is one way in which U.S. funding for financial governance is moving Kosovo closer to financial self-sufficiency.

On a larger scale, the Agency in 2002

helped set up Kosovo's Ministry of Economy and Finance, which tackles budget development, treasury management, macroeconomic policy, and tax administration.

Advisors provided by USAID have helped the ministry understand its functions. Training and workshops are constantly held for officials, and technical assistance helps the ministry draft and carry out new legislation.

A significant USAID-driven change has been this year's switch from a commitment-based to a cash-based budget.

Before, funds for building a new school in Pristina, for instance, were budgeted for one year, even if the actual construction would take two or three years. This led to financial shortages and mismanagement. Now, the budget allots a specific amount per year toward building a school until the project is finished.

"This allows for strategic budgeting," said Hasan Isufaj, deputy director of the Consolidated Budget Department at the ministry. "This is very important for Kosovo, because last year, for the first time, the budget moved to a deficit, so we spent more than we collected in revenues."

Because Kosovo is not a sovereign country, it cannot apply for international financial institution loans. Having a balanced budget is the only way that Kosovo can cover its expenses, said Kris Kaufmann, a U.S.-funded advisor working on tax reform.

"We have developed transparency at a high level, accountability, and fiscal discipline," Isufaj said. "Also, it's very important to us to have learned to prioritize, because we didn't do this in the past. Projects are now evaluated with more detail, and are selected based on the government's priorities."

USAID invested \$18 million over the past three years improving the institutions and staff of the ministry, which is now on sure footing, Kaufmann said.

"The project really covers a lot of layers of government, so it's very coherent," he said. ★



Arvent Demiri, 10, and Ardit Xharra, 9, bike around a newly built park in Prizren. With paved lanes that run along a creek, the park was built with new income the municipality generated by collecting property taxes through a USAID project.

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## Jon Breslar of Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination Dies

Jon Breslar, 56, deputy assistant administrator at the Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC), died Sept. 2, in Fairfax, Va.

He joined USAID in 1983 and served in Washington, Nepal, Mali, and in Lebanon, where he was mission director.

Breslar graduated from Worcester Academy and Franklin and Marshall College, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. His cultural anthropology thesis on Mayotte, in the Comoro Islands, led the French government to hire him to help create appropriate housing on the Indian Ocean island.

At PPC, he worked on the budget and was renowned as a good negotiator and for his ability to reconcile the Washington perspective with the field perspective. However, as an anthropologist, he loved to be in the field.

His daughter Zoey of Washington followed Jon into development work, and her husband coincidentally joined USAID Sept. 19 this year, the same day Jon joined in 1983.

Other surviving children are Jerusha Sarah, Reuben Samuel, and Tirzah Rachel, all of Fairfax. Jon is also survived by his



*Jon Breslar, 56, was renowned as a good negotiator and for his ability to reconcile the Washington perspective with the field perspective.*

wife, Bonita Suzanne.

In lieu of flowers, the family requested donations be made to the American Lung Association or a charity of choice. ★

*July 24–September 3, 2005*

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## Bush Tells U.N. to Fight Poverty ▲ FROM PAGE 1

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## Notes from Natsios

### ▲ FROM PAGE 3

strategy initiated by five African heads of state that links poverty eradication to policies that promote sustainable growth, trade, good governance, and anticorruption.

Ending poverty and all that comes with it is a serious challenge even with commitments from leaders across the globe. Building effective and equitable economic institutions takes time, persistence, and reform. The good news is that many countries are constructing a new future for themselves, and that USAID has joined an international consensus to improve aid effectiveness and support countries that invest in their people, govern democratically, and have sound economic policies. ★

malaria, AIDS, and other diseases drains the reservoirs of suffering in which despair turns into violent ideologies, such as terrorism.

“The lesson is clear: There can be no safety in looking away, or seeking the quiet life by ignoring the hardship and oppression of others,” said Bush.

“We must help raise up the failing states and stagnant societies that provide fertile ground for the terrorists.... We are committed to...cutting poverty and hunger in half, ensuring that every boy and girl in the world has access to primary education, and halting the spread of AIDS—all by 2015,” he added.

Bush noted that the new U.S. Millennium Challenge Account “increased U.S. aid for countries that govern justly, invest in their people, and promote economic freedom.”

“Across Africa, we’re helping local health officials expand AIDS testing facilities, train and support doctors and nurses and counselors, and upgrade clinics and hospitals,” he added, describing aspects of his \$15 billion, five-year Emergency Plan to fight AIDS.

“Working with our African partners, we have now delivered lifesaving treatment to more than 230,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa. We are ahead of schedule to meet an important objective: providing HIV-AIDS treatment for nearly 2 million adults and children in Africa.”

He also pledged more than \$1.2 billion over five years to cut the death rate from malaria in half in 15 heavily affected African countries.

At a signing ceremony for an antimalaria declaration in New York, held on the sidelines of the U.N. Summit, First Lady Laura Bush said the U.S. initiative “will pay for insecticide-treated nets, it will allow

for indoor spraying against mosquitoes, and it will provide effective new combination drugs to treat malaria.”

The president announced in his speech a new international partnership on avian and pandemic influenza to control the disease (*see related article on page 1*).

He also called on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to finalize an agreement made by the G8 industrial nations recently in Scotland to cancel 100 percent of the debt of the most heavily indebted nations. Bush cited the importance of eliminating tariffs and other barriers to trade as a vehicle for nations to escape from poverty.

Democracy was another Bush theme that has been an important part of USAID’s agenda in recent years, especially as Agency programs for democracy and governance climbed in annual value to \$1.2 billion in 2005.

“In the last two years alone, tens of millions have voted in free elections in Afghanistan and Iraq, in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, in Kyrgyzstan, in Ukraine, and Georgia,” said Bush. “And as they claim their freedom, they are inspiring millions more across the broader Middle East. We must encourage their aspirations.”



First Lady Laura Bush witnesses the signing of a declaration to fight malaria in Angola, Tanzania, and Uganda. Other witnesses include, left to right, American Red Cross Chair Bonnie McElveen-Hunter, UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman, Global Fund Executive Director Richard Feachem, and World Health Organization Director-General LEE Jong-wook. Seated, left to right: First Lady of Tanzania Anne Mkapa, USAID Administrator Andrew S. Natsios, and Ugandan Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Hope Mwesigye.

The president pledged \$10 million to the new U.N. Democracy Fund, noting that “democracy is larger than holding a fair election; it requires building the institutions that sustain freedom.”

At another USAID event held during the U.N. summit, Administrator Andrew S. Natsios announced that the Agency would work to “break the cycle of famine” and build up African agriculture as a means to eliminate hunger, reduce poverty, and promote wealth. Joining representatives of Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania, Natsios said USAID will program approximately \$200 million a year for the next five years for the plan. ★

## Bosnian Businesses and Exports Expand ▲ FROM PAGE 9

—for quality control, financial management, design, marketing, and the like—the company is producing more than 18,000 tons per year.

Vegafruit is one of several hundred companies USAID helped through its Business Development Program (BDP), which has disbursed \$162 million in loans.

These companies today are the backbone of the Bosnian private business sector and account for half of the country’s exports, said Amira Vejzagic-Ramhorst, who managed the project at USAID. Among BDP’s borrowers are manufacturing, forestry, and construction companies. BDP loans have helped create more than 10,000 new jobs, Vejzagic-Ramhorst said.

In 1996, Vegafruit borrowed \$800,000 to build a headquarters and invest in new equipment, packaging, and labeling. A year later, the company took out another \$1.5 million loan to expand its production line. The company expanded from 20 to 260 full-time workers and hires another 100 seasonal workers.

Miles away in southeast Bosnia, another loan recipient, herbal drug maker Pharmamed, has grown in nine years to employ 62 workers.

Pharmamed General Director Sead Medanhodzic headed Bosnia’s association of pharmacists until he and his family became

refugees at the start of the war. His son went to Canada, and he and his wife and daughter settled in Croatia.

In 1996, they returned to Travnik, in Bosnia. Medanhodzic pooled the family savings, borrowed money from friends, and purchased herbs and basic equipment. Soon he, his wife, and daughter—all pharmacists—were making honey- and herbal-based teas and cosmetics.

Two years later, BDP fieldworkers contacted the company. Soon, Pharmamed was developing a business plan, and its two employees were trained in quality control and management. Pharmamed’s first loan went to building a production plant. Meanwhile, sales grew as Medanhodzic drove his company’s products to pharmacies around the country.

By 2002, Pharmamed had borrowed a total of about \$2 million. The company had a state-of-the-art, 16,000-square-foot production plant, along with a dozen vans and trucks to distribute its products.

“Last year, we were certified to sell our products in Europe, and now we are exporting to Croatia and Kosovo,” Medanhodzic said.

Pharmamed also packages and distributes products of Croatian and German drug companies and works with them to distribute some of Pharmamed’s 150 products.

“USAID really gave us a chance to keep

moving ahead,” Medanhodzic said. “We are always invited to meetings where we can meet potential partners, and we really couldn’t be where we are today without their assistance.” ★



Small cucumbers moving through a production line to become pickles at Vegafruit. The company, which has received extensive assistance from USAID, produces more than 18,000 tons of canned vegetables and fruits per year. Pickles are one of its main products.

## Battle Widens as Avian Flu Spreads ▲ FROM PAGE 1

USAID is using \$10 million from the emergency appropriation for an early warning system to help identify and contain infected poultry. So far, 150 million birds have been killed, costing Southeast Asia \$10 billion in losses.

The remaining \$15 million is being used by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to prepare a medical response to human infections.

Additional funds support development of a human vaccine at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., where 150 volunteers are being tested.

While initial results were positive, it may take up to two years before a vaccine is ready for world use, said Carroll.

Thailand, which had both birds and humans infected, has carried out an effective campaign to educate the public on how to identify the disease, Carroll said. But now the situation is "evolving rapidly," he said, referring to the spread west into Russia, where infected poultry and humans have been reported.

"We now are concerned, by looking at the migration paths, the disease will go to the

Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and Africa," said Carroll.

In Holland, poultry farmers have been told to keep poultry indoors to limit exposure to wild birds, which contaminate water with their feces. However, in Asia, most poultry is free to roam in farmers' yards, making it difficult to contain the illness.

The disease is most likely to spread from birds to people in areas such as Asia, where the population is very dense and people live in close contact with poultry, in their yards or in live animal markets.

USAID is supporting vaccination of poultry that has already begun in Vietnam, location of most of the human deaths.

Farmers are not reimbursed if they report infections and their birds—and the birds of their neighbors—are destroyed. As a result, farmers are reluctant to report sickness. Therefore, USAID is working with agriculture companies to possibly provide farmers with an inoculated chick for each bird culled.

"A pandemic is possible if three conditions are in place," said Carroll.

"First, it must be a new disease against which humans have no natural defense. Second, when it replicates in humans there is a bad outcome, such as death. Third, it must have efficient human-to-human transmission, like a normal flu virus.

"The consensus is that the question is not 'if' it will jump to number three, but 'when,'" he said.

To prevent contracting flu, avoid contact with poultry and surfaces it has touched; thoroughly cook poultry and eggs; and wash hands.

While the human avian flu vaccine is not yet ready for use, antiviral medication such as Tamiflu may be effective against the disease. But only 2.3 million doses are on hand now, and about 10 million will be ready by September 2006. ★



On an assessment mission in Kampot Province of southern Cambodia, USAID's Dr. Chantha Chak and Dr. Richard Schieber of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention speak with the family of a woman who died from avian influenza in January, 2005. She was the first of Cambodia's four confirmed human cases to date.

## Natsios Meets Top U.S. Health Officials on Avian Flu Response

Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Mike Leavitt briefed Administrator Andrew S. Natsios and senior USAID staff at a meeting in Washington on Sept. 19 on the federal response to avian influenza.

The meeting took place two days before Indonesia reported two more children died from the flu and said it would begin mass culling of birds.

Leavitt was preparing to visit sites infected by flu in China and Indonesia.

Natsios said that if the avian flu changes into a form that can spread from human to human—as experts predict is likely to take place this winter or next—it could disrupt international travel and trade.

Also at the meeting were top U.S. government public health officials: Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta; Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in Bethesda; Dr. Bruce Gellen, director of the national vaccine program at HHS; and Dennis Carroll of USAID.

During the 1918–19 influenza pandemic,

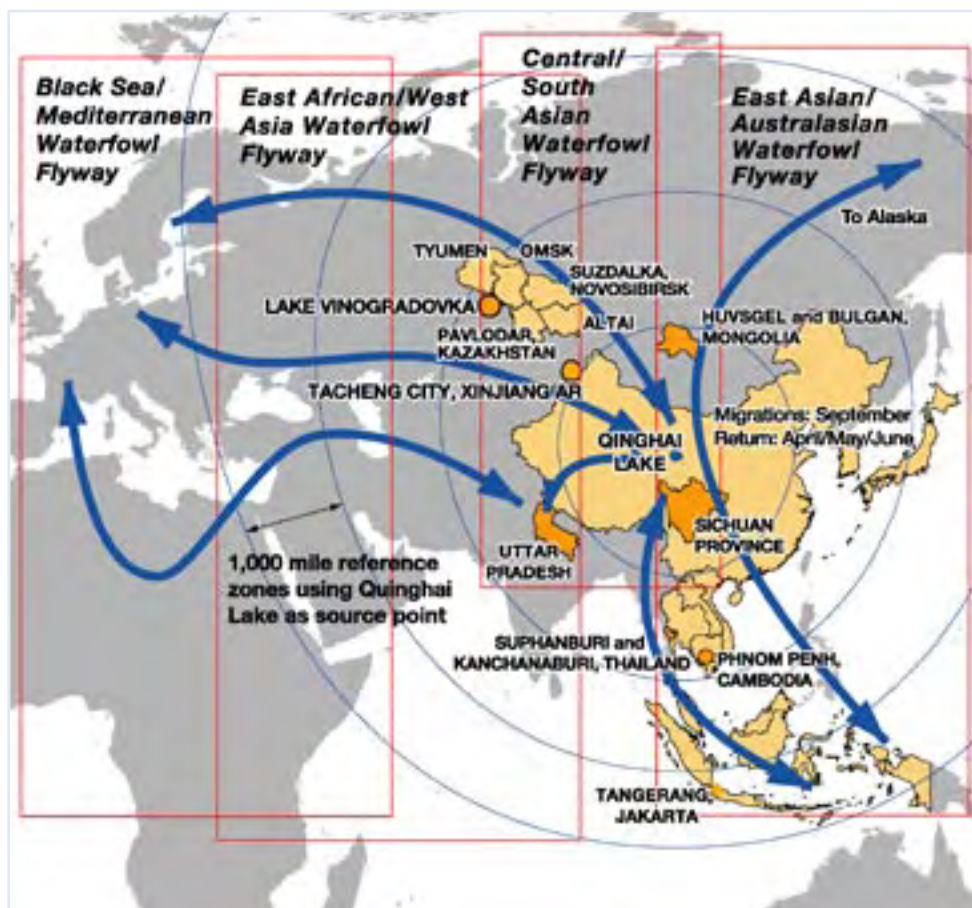
20 to 40 million people died worldwide. To prevent spread of the disease, schools and movie theaters closed. Nevertheless, the flu infected 28 percent of Americans, killing 675,000 of them.

Gerberding said that Natsios' concern about a potential flu pandemic having a devastating impact on world health and development was not exaggerated.

She, Leavitt, and Natsios agreed that it will be critical to arrange clear communications with the public about actions to be taken in response to the disease.

USAID, through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, is positioning medical equipment on the ground in Asia. Some 10,000 sets of personal protective equipment—such as specialized suits, masks, gloves, boots, and eye protection—have already been provided to health officials in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia, to help minimize infection and the spread of the disease by health workers.

The Agency is providing additional funding to the World Health Organization to organize regional coordination meetings. ★



**WATERFOWL FLYWAYS:** Many waterbirds (ducks, geese, swans) migrate between wetlands in the northern breeding areas and southern non-breeding areas and, in doing so, regularly cross the borders of two or more countries. The birds can cover up to 1,000 miles per day.

## What Is Avian Flu?

### What is avian flu?

Avian flu is an infection caused by bird influenza, or flu viruses, which occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the virus in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. However, bird flu is very contagious among birds, and can kill chickens, ducks, and turkeys.

### Do bird flu viruses infect humans?

Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but several cases of human infection with bird flu viruses have occurred since 1997.

### How are bird flu viruses different from human flu viruses?

There are many different forms of type A flu viruses. All can be found in birds, and these are referred to as "bird flu" viruses. Three subtypes occur in humans and are called human flu viruses—H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2. It is likely that some genetic parts of current human flu A viruses came from birds originally. Flu A viruses are constantly changing, and they might adapt over time to infect and spread among humans.

### What are the symptoms of bird flu in humans?

Symptoms of bird flu in humans have ranged from typical flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches) to eye infections, pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases (such as acute respiratory distress), and other severe and life-threatening complications.

### How does bird flu spread?

Infected birds shed flu virus in their saliva,

nasal secretions, and feces. It is believed that most cases of bird flu infection in humans resulted from contact with infected poultry or contaminated surfaces.

### What is the risk to humans from bird flu?

The risk from bird flu is generally low for most people; the viruses occur mainly in birds and do not usually infect humans. However, during an outbreak of bird flu among poultry (domesticated chickens, ducks, turkeys), there is a possible risk to people who have contact with infected birds or surfaces contaminated with excretions from infected birds. The current outbreak of avian influenza A, or H5N1, among poultry in Asia is an example of a bird flu outbreak that has caused human infections and deaths. In such situations, people should avoid contact with infected birds or contaminated surfaces and should be careful when handling and cooking poultry.

### What is the potential global impact of avian flu?

A preview of what could happen if avian flu spreads among humans is offered through the spread of SARS during 2003. Major transportation routes were limited, and the movement of people from contagious countries to others was restricted. This has huge ramifications for the global economy, which interconnects many countries. There are no estimates as to what an avian flu pandemic would cost, but the price tag is likely to be gigantic. ★

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and USAID

**GDA Collaboration Agreement with Belarus**

**WASHINGTON**—The Global Development Alliance (GDA) Secretariat has signed its first collaboration agreement with the Fund for Belarus Democracy. USAID has committed \$500,000 to the fund, which will be administered by the German Marshall Fund.

The initiative will provide \$1.6 million in small grants of \$10,000 to \$25,000 each to grassroots civic groups in Belarus and neighboring states, starting in January 2005.

**Long-Lasting Mosquito Nets Repel Malaria**

**BANGKOK, Thailand**—A factory equipped with new technology that embeds mosquito nets with long-lasting insect repellent to fight malaria opened here Sept. 15.

The mechanized process was developed through a public-private partnership created by NetMark, a USAID-funded program.

Malaria claims a life in Africa every 30 seconds. Worldwide, an estimated 300 to 500 million cases of malaria are contracted every year, resulting in up to 2.5 million deaths, mostly among the very young. In Africa—where 90 percent of malaria deaths occur—the disease is the leading killer of children under 5 years of age.

Based on initial trials, the new treatment process, in development for two years, will bind insecticide to the net for more than 20 washes, resulting in the first-ever mass

factory treatment of finished nets with long-lasting insecticide.

“USAID’s willingness to work with commercial companies and invest in new technologies will result in many more people, including the most vulnerable, having access to life-saving nets,” said Nicolaas Pierson, head of SiamDutch and Tana Netting, the companies that were contracted to produce the nets.

**Polio Campaign to Reach 34 Million Children**

**WASHINGTON**—The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, spearheaded by the World Health Organization and to which USAID is a major donor, began Sept. 13 an ambitious new series of polio immunization campaigns to contain the spread of the disease in the Horn of Africa.

The new plan comes as a polio case was confirmed in Somalia, a country that had been polio-free since 2002, and as cases rose dramatically in the Horn in 2005.

Immunization campaigns aim to reach 34 million children in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, and parts of Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They will be carried out between September and November, with additional campaigns planned for 2006.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, around 95 percent of children under 5 were vaccinated against polio in a recent nationwide cam-

paign, as the number of youngsters paralyzed by the disease continued to rise to 236, Health Minister Siti Fadilah said Sept. 12.

The nationwide vaccination campaign last month reached “around 95 percent” of the 24 million children targeted, a figure she said was “quite successful.”

**Group Focuses on Kenyan Children with HIV**

**NAIROBI, Kenya**—The African Network for the Care of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS (ANECCA) launched its first chapter in Kenya Aug. 10 at the Serena Hotel here. Other country chapters already exist in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Tanzania.

Established in 2001, ANECCA works to promote quality healthcare for children in Africa affected by HIV/AIDS.

USAID’s Regional Economic Development Services Office donated \$780,000 to ANECCA between 2003 and 2005 to help fund its activities.

More than 75 percent of children with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa, and the number of children with HIV continues to grow in Kenya. More than 30,000 Kenyan children were infected with HIV through mother-to-child transmission of the virus in 2004 and 2005. The number of Kenyan children orphaned by AIDS is projected to increase to 1.54 million by 2010.

At the launch, Stephen Haykin, USAID/Kenya’s mission director, emphasized the

“need to put children on HIV treatment agendas to mitigate the devastating effects of AIDS” and pledged that USAID will continue to help Kenyan care centers fight HIV/AIDS.

**Uruguay Gets Disaster Aid**

**WASHINGTON**—USAID will provide an initial \$50,000 in disaster relief to assist victims of a powerful and destructive storm in Uruguay.

On Aug. 23 and 24, a severe and unexpected wind and rain storm struck southern and eastern parts of the country where 70 percent of Uruguay’s population lives, destroying infrastructure in the capital, Montevideo, and in the departments of Canelones, San José, Colonia, and Maldonado. During the storm, winds reached hurricane force of 175 km per hour, demolishing homes, tearing power lines, felling trees, and blocking roads.

According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eight people were killed, thousands of homes lost their roofs, nearly 1,000 families had no access to drinking water, and approximately 20,000 households had no electricity and telephone services.

The storm also damaged communication and security infrastructure, including knocking over two communications towers and tearing the roof off Uruguay’s largest prison. ★

## Year-Long African Rainbow Expedition to Fight Malaria



South African explorer Kingsley Holgate launched a year-long expedition in June to prevent malaria in rural Africa, including Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, and Uganda.

Holgate’s “African Rainbow Expedition” will travel thousands of miles, educating families about prevention of the disease and distributing insecticide-treated nets and information pamphlets. The expedition uses various forms of transportation, including a Swahili sailing dhow named

the “Spirit of Adventure,” Land Rovers, and inflatable boats, to deliver malaria-prevention products.

USAID/Mozambique is providing support during Holgate’s activities in that country.

The Agency has increased its funding for malaria programs from \$22 million in fiscal year 1998 to about \$90 million in fiscal year 2005. ★

[www.africanrainbowexpedition.co.za/](http://www.africanrainbowexpedition.co.za/)