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VOLUME VI ISSUE 2 JUNE 2015



FEEDING



AFRICA'S



HUNGRY



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At the time of publication, USAID was working closely with Government of Nepal officials and partners to help distribute relief supplies for victims of the April 25 earthquake. Our thoughts are with the people of the Nepal as they recover. For information about USAID efforts in Nepal, see <http://www.usaid.gov/nepal>.

To highlight the Water Strategy's focus on Africa and water for food, two pieces in this issue examine how we're helping farmers become more resilient there. Eric Postel, Associate Administrator of USAID and Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Economic Growth, and Environment and Assistant to the Administrator for Africa, gives his perspective on the importance of improving agricultural water management across the continent. He addresses the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all solution in water scarce regions. He also points out that smarter management of natural resources can make transformative change that lasts. Our Real Impact piece zeros in on this issue in Ethiopia and Senegal by exploring the R4 Rural Resilience Project's work to help farmers get insurance, pool savings, and better manage water and other natural resources.

The On the Waterfront story looks at our partnerships with the governments and people in the Lower Mekong to boost resiliency through cooperative action. We are working with the region's scientists, public officials,

farmers, and other stakeholders to find socially and environmentally sustainable ways for them to adapt to climate change and safeguard their key resources.

Lack of sanitation is another problem that threatens people around the globe. This issue's In Focus piece looks at our new Sanitation Service Delivery Program, which is working with banks, micro-finance institutions, and local and multi-national companies in Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana to build a sustainable, business-fueled sanitation model for one million city dwellers. We have been impressed by the vibrancy of the private sector and its potential to transform sanitation in one of the world's most underserved regions.

Finally, as a follow-up to our last issue, the Water Office is hosting public webinars with an in-depth look at the five key topics highlighted in the Water and Development Strategy. These online sessions look at how the Agency defines and will approach WASH and nutrition, sanitation, agricultural water management, sustainability of WASH services, and water quality. The webinars are available for viewing on USAID's website. To learn more about our approach to water and development, take a look and share the link.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

The Water Office
waterteam@usaid.gov



HELPING FARMERS THRIVE: USAID's *Projet Croissance Economique* trained farmers in Senegal, including Souleymane Baldé and his wife Dianke, above, to increase their rice yields through improved farming practices.

Photo Credit: Stéphane Tourné, Engility

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Feeding Africa's Hungry

By Eric Postel, Associate Administrator of USAID and Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Economic Growth, Education, and Environment

We all know water is essential for human life. But we must not forget that it fuels all life. Water powers the crops we grow and the livestock we raise. Without it there are no fruits, vegetables, meat, or milk.

As USAID's Associate Administrator and the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Economic Growth, Education, and Environment, I oversee USAID's Office of Water, which implements the Agency's 2013-2018 Water and Development Strategy. The Strategy stresses the importance of managing water for agriculture in a more sustainable and productive way. This premise underlies our efforts to enhance food security through the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative.

Until recently, I served as Assistant to the Administrator for Africa, where food security problems are particularly acute. Half of the population lives in extreme poverty, one-quarter

is undernourished, and one-fifth endures severe water scarcity. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence of hunger of any region in the world.



There are a number of reasons for this, but water is chief among them. Because most farms in sub-Saharan Africa are too far from rivers to make irrigation a sustainable solution, 95 percent of agriculture depends solely on the moisture from rain that is held in the soil. Rain-fed agriculture is a risky business – it depends upon rainfall that is becoming increasingly erratic due to climate change.

Staple food production is increasingly precarious, while Africa's need for food is only rising. Its population is set to more than double by 2050 to almost 2.5 billion. Current agricultural systems will be unable to grow enough food to feed all of Africa's people.

FOCUS ON FOOD: In Kenya, Feed the Future works to teach smallholder farmers, including the women above, how to improve their food security.

Photo Credit: Fintrac, Inc.

We cannot increase the rainfall across Africa, but we can improve how it is managed on farms. Restoring and maintaining the soil's capacity to absorb the rainwater and facilitating more efficient management of the water stored in soils is integral to achieving the greater productivity needed to feed the hungry. In particular, we need to focus on water storage for supplemental irrigation (irrigation for critical periods in the crop cycle) to help Africans produce the food they need.

The Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia, one of our Feed the Future focus countries, is an example of a food security program that helps farmers adapt to unpredictable rainfall. The Government of Ethiopia, supported by a consortium of donors including USAID, began the program in response to recurring droughts and predictable lean periods affecting large numbers of chronically food insecure families. The public works projects implemented in the PSNP program have introduced water harvesting, water catchment, and small irrigation systems and rehabilitated watersheds to restore water tables. Seven million Ethiopians per year benefit directly from the PSNP but the improved water management infrastructure from the public works benefits the entire community.

But what works in Ethiopia will not necessarily work elsewhere in Africa. Although the entire continent is plagued by flood-drought cycles, the equatorial belt sees high rainfall while the north, south, and horn are arid or semi-arid. And in each place we go, there are different governments, economies, and cultures that influence how best we can partner and support programming.

USAID is investing in research and demonstrations to learn the right solutions for each local situation. The Agency-supported Feed the Future Small-Scale Irrigation Innovation Lab sets out to learn the best techniques for small-scale irrigation and combine them with conservation agriculture and drip irrigation for the best results. The Africa RISING project collaborates with this Innovation Lab on irrigation and rain-fed systems with a variety of stakeholders across the region.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. We must consider all the factors and stakeholders to understand what people and their crops need to thrive. We do, however, know that if we don't address water management, we will fail. By connecting water, food, and development, we have a fighting chance to end hunger in Africa.



BOOSTING YIELDS: USAID agricultural water management programs in Africa are introducing soil management and water saving techniques that increase yields.

Photo Credit: Fintrac, Inc.

FARMING RAIN or SHINE

Helping Africa Withstand Climate Shocks

The fortunes of farmers throughout Africa go up and down based on the presence or absence of one thing: rain.

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change in the world. Because more than 96 percent of cultivated land in sub-Saharan Africa is rainfed rather than irrigated, extreme climate events like droughts and floods pose a severe threat to food security and nutrition. UN projections show that by 2020, yields from rainfed agriculture in some African countries could be slashed in half due to climate change.



FARMERS ADAPT TOGETHER: Farmers in Senegal build stone bunds to protect their rice fields. By removing sand and constructing these bunds (enbankments), farmers have been able to limit erosion.

Photo Credit: Azzurra Massimino, WFP

Farmers are feeling the pinch. In Kalbiron, Senegal, Binta Ndao and her husband earn a good living growing millet, groundnuts, cowpeas, and sesame on their two hectares of land. But this livelihood depends on steady rainfall. “Sometimes there is rain but it is not well distributed,” said Binta. At these times, she said she feared she would be unable to feed her seven children.

But Binta’s income is becoming more reliable even as rainfall becomes more erratic due to the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative, a program that works to improve the ability of food insecure farmers who rely on rainfed agriculture to withstand increasingly frequent and intense climate shocks. The initiative began in Ethiopia in 2011, as a strategic partnership between the World Food Programme (WFP) and Oxfam America. It built upon the success of HARITA (Horn of Africa Risk Transfer for Adaptation), an integrated risk management framework developed by Oxfam America, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), Ethiopian farmers, and other national and global partners. In 2012, USAID and WFP provided funding for the program to expand to Senegal, where it is building the capacity of governments

to manage climate risks and giving farmers the financial and agricultural tools to thrive in the face of unpredictable climate events.

BUILDING A SAFETY NET

“R4 uses a comprehensive risk management approach to achieve its goals,” said Fabio Bedini, WFP’s Senior Program Advisor for R4. “The program takes into account each country’s and region’s specific needs and potential.”

Central to this approach is building a safety net for farmers. Insurance is a key component of this safety net. R4 has introduced new insurance plans that allow poor farmers to trade their labor for weather-index insurance. It also works with the Columbia University International Research Institute for Climate Society to train the national insurance company and larger insurance community on how best to provide this type of insurance. When droughts or other natural disasters occur, these farmers are compensated for their losses. For smallholders, this makes a tremendous difference. A project evaluation showed that the insured farmers save more than twice as much as





WORKING TOWARD RESILIENCE: R4 teaches farmers new production methods to help them cope with climate change.

Photo Credit: Geoffrey McCarney, IRI



THRIVING FAMILIES: R4 has reached more than 26,000 farmers in Ethiopia and Senegal.

Photo Credit: Olivier Asselin

uninsured farmers, invest more in productive assets, and have up to triple the grain reserves of uninsured farmers. These farmers are expected to eventually graduate to paying for this insurance with cash.

R4 also helps farmers form village savings groups in which they pool their savings so they can invest together, take care of emergency needs, and access small loans. Savings and credit access enable farmers to purchase tools to grow their businesses, respond better to emergencies, and diversify their livelihoods.

The program boosts resilience by helping farmers adopt more climate-sensitive production methods. Using a watershed approach, R4 shows farmers how to make the most of increasingly variable natural resources.

In Senegal, R4 focuses primarily on rehabilitating low-lying lands for rice cultivation. By removing sand and constructing reinforced stone bunds, farmers there have been able to limit erosion. In addition, the construction of small dams and embankments has helped prevent runoff and improve soil moisture. These interventions have not only boosted rice productivity, but they have also improved groundwater recharge, which has led to increased water levels in village wells and improved productivity of mango trees.



RAIN OR SHINE: Mula-Birkan Mehari, an R4 beneficiary, checks a rain gauge.

Photo Credit: Eva Lotta Jansson, Oxfam America

ENSURING LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

As R4 battles the impacts of climate change in Africa, it makes sure to take a far-sighted approach. After all, the regional climate will remain volatile long after the program ends and R4 wants farmers to have the tools they need for the long run. “We strive to make the program sustainable at every step,” said Mr. Bedini. “Community-based participatory planning and education and training ensure community engagement and contribute to the program’s longevity over time.”

R4 has reached more than 26,000 farmers in Ethiopia and Senegal and is currently in the process of expanding to Malawi and Zambia. These farmers have a newfound sense of security. One of them, mother-of-four Zemada Kebeb, said that R4’s financial and natural resource management initiatives have transformed her village. “We have more water, we planted more trees, and we have less heat than before,” she said. “Now, we have no fear.”

C. Zeilberger

More Information

[R4 Website](#)

[Watch a Video About R4](#)

[USAID/Senegal Website](#)



A PLENTIFUL HARVEST: R4 interventions have not only boosted rice productivity, but have also improved groundwater recharge.

Photo Credit: Bruno Déméocq, Engility

CURRENTS

Water and sanitation professionals work tirelessly to improve health, promote food security, and boost livelihoods. To further USAID's knowledge sharing goals, the Water Office holds learning events that present solutions and challenges common to water programs. In Currents, we share the solutions discussed at the events and other venues. Email us at waterteam@usaid.gov if you would like your project to be considered for *Global Waters*.

WORLD WATER FORUM HELD IN SOUTH KOREA

The seventh World Water Forum took place from April 12-17, 2015, in the cities of Daegu and Gyeongju, South Korea. The largest water-related event in the world, the World Water Forum is a major international conference that takes place every three years and brings together water stakeholders to discuss global water challenges and solutions.

This year's World Water Forum included members of academia, the development community, government officials, and the private sector from 170 countries. The attendees from USAID consisted of the Agency's Deputy Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment and Global Water Coordinator Christian Holmes and staff members from three different offices. Mr. Holmes spoke on multiple panels while in Korea including: America's Closing Regional Session on climate change, The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation: The Power of Partnerships through RAIN, the USA Pavilion on the Implementation of USAID's Water and Development Strategy, and Innovation in Water Smart Agriculture: Working From the Ground Up.

"In 2015, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take coordinated, effective international action to ensure water security and promote better water governance," said Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD. "I am confident that, with the best evidence at your fingertips, a lot of political will, some



financing, and some time, we can deliver better water policies for better lives."

For more information, visit the World Water Forum [website](#).

COCA-COLA INCREASES INVESTMENT IN REPLENISH AFRICA INITIATIVE

On April 14, 2015, Ahmet Bozer, Executive Vice President and President of Coca-Cola International, announced the expansion of The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation's (TCCAF) Replenish Africa Initiative (RAIN) at the World Water Forum. TCCAF is pledging an additional \$35 million to RAIN, bringing its total investment level up to \$65 million. With this new commitment, RAIN will bring safe water and sanitation to 6 million people across Africa by 2020.

RAIN is a public-private partnership led by TCCAF with 140 partners including USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor. It currently works in 37 African countries to improve

water and sanitation, promote hygiene and health, and empower the continent's most vulnerable people. Its activities include building a water kiosk and distribution network in Lusaka, Zambia; training local women to lead water enterprises in Rwanda; and improving water services in cities in Kenya, Madagascar, and Mozambique.

“Through the efforts of RAIN, we are reinforcing the incredible progress made to date with our many partners and are pledging to do even more,” said Dr. Susan Mboya, President of The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation. “We must continue the progress made from the Millennium Development Goals to set these economies up for success.”

To learn more, visit the RAIN [website](#).

SUWASA PROGRAM HOLDS CLOSEOUT KNOWLEDGE FORUM

One hundred and thirty-nine people from 23 countries gathered from May 11-13 in Kampala, Uganda to participate in the Knowledge Forum of the six-year, \$40 million USAID's Sustainable Water and Sanitation in Africa (SUWASA) program.

The Forum, entitled “Path to Financial Sustainability of Urban Water and Sanitation Services in Africa,” focused on sharing experiences and solutions in the design and implementation of programs aimed at delivering sustainable urban water and sanitation services. The main objective was to provide a platform to discuss how to build momentum and steer the urban water sector towards financial sustainability. Participants included policy makers, chief executives and senior managers of water utilities, regulators, civil society, current and former SUWASA team leads, and USAID representatives.

SUWASA, a regional initiative launched in September 2009 and ends this September, was active in nine countries across Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia. The program's ultimate goal was to improve and expand the delivery of water and sanitation services in urban and peri-urban settings, on a financially viable basis.



Photo Credit: USAID/Pakistan

For more information on SUWASA, visit the [website](#) and watch a short [video](#) on SUWASA's pathways.

SECURING WATER FOR FOOD SUPPORTS FIRST-EVER SALT-RESISTANT POTATOES IN PAKISTAN

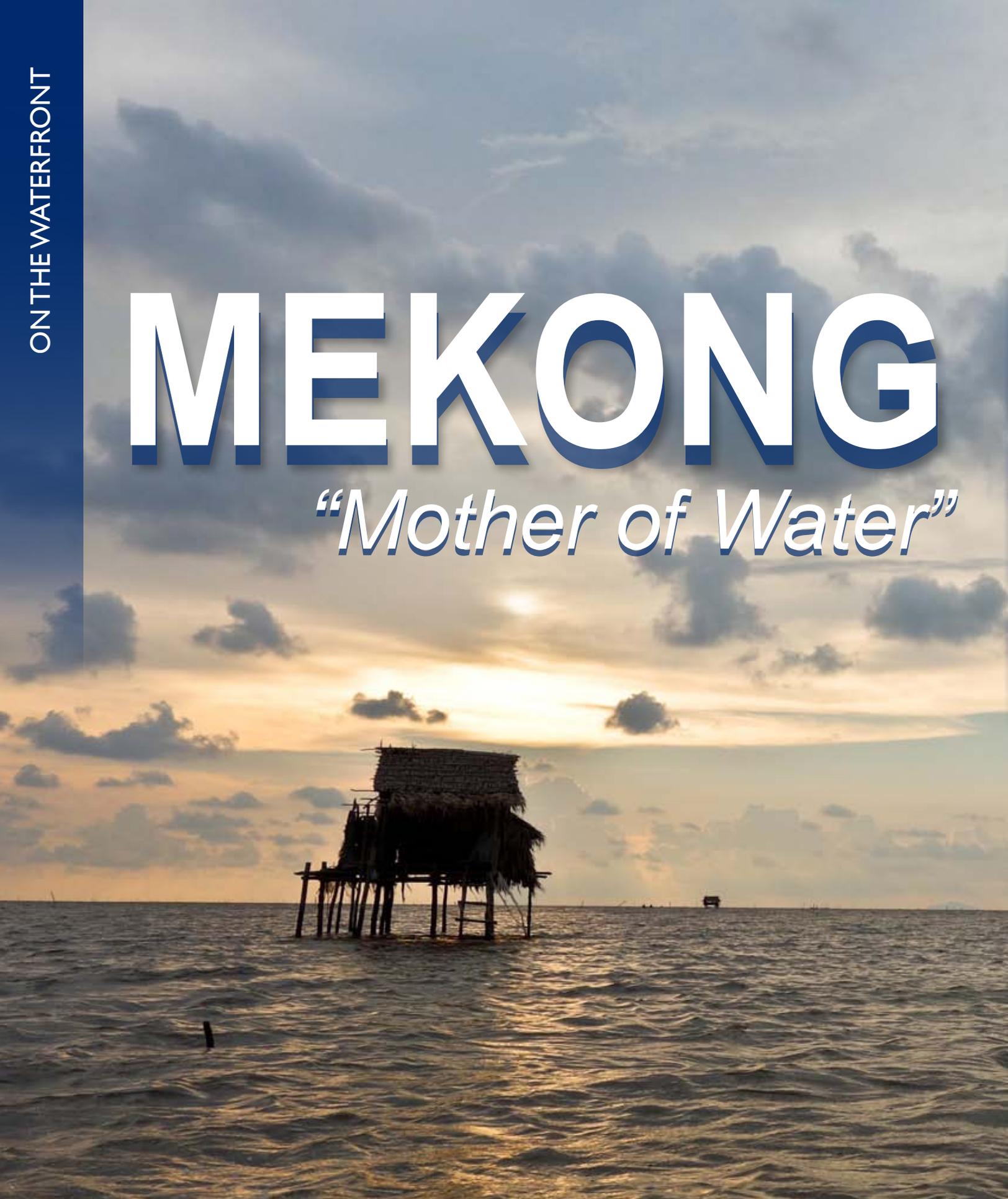
In April 2015, Pakistanis were thrilled to witness the first-ever harvest of salt-resistant potatoes in the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. This new variety will yield an expected 20 tons of potatoes per hectare. The trials of this variety were made possible by funding from Securing Water For Food (SWFF), the USAID Grand Challenge for Development which supports innovations that improve agricultural water management. SWFF is also supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The new variety of potatoes has the potential to increase food security beyond Pakistan's borders. At least 1 billion hectares of land are affected by salinity, and the world loses at least three hectares of arable land each minute due to salinization. The potatoes, which were developed by Jaffer Brothers, MetaMeta Research, and Salt Farm Texel, thrive in salt-affected areas, do not require freshwater irrigation, and are four times more salt tolerant than regular potato varieties. On the heels of these successful trials, the partners plan to test the potatoes in more locations throughout Pakistan.

To learn more, visit the Securing Water For Food [website](#).

MEKONG

“Mother of Water”



MOTHER OF WATER: The Mekong River Basin is home to more than 60 million people who depend on it for water, food, and livelihoods.

Photo Credits (left to right): Pakprim Oranop na Ayuthaya; Richard Friend; USAID/Vietnam

Mekong means “mother of water” in the Thai and Lao languages, an apt term for the seventh largest and second most biodiverse river in the world. With its headwaters in China, the river flows 4,200 kilometers downstream through Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, where it makes its way through an extensive delta into the South China Sea. More than 60 million people live in the Mekong River Basin, relying on its water for drinking, growing food, catching fish, and providing energy.

But the region’s resources are in jeopardy as the Lower Mekong’s climate becomes wetter, hotter, and more unpredictable.

Climate change is resulting in extremes. In many parts of the region the dry season is expected to become even drier, increasing the annual period of drought despite an increase in annual rainfall. To complicate matters further, the average temperatures are expected to rise in the range of 2 to 4 degrees Celsius with the most extreme temperature rises in the southeast portion of the Mekong basin. Cooperative management of the watershed’s resources is necessary to ensure the food security and livelihoods of the more than 60 million people who live there.

In 2009, the U.S. Government spearheaded the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) to facilitate the joint resource management of the Mekong. A number of USAID programs support the LMI objectives by working with the region’s scientists, public officials, and other stakeholders to promote socially and environmentally sustainable growth.



“Science does not stop at the border or at the water’s edge.”

Jessica Robin,
program director for PEER
for the National Science Foundation



PROGRESSING SUSTAINABLY: USAID encourages Mekong River stakeholders to make sustainable choices as the region undergoes rapid growth and climate change.

Photo Credit: Richard Nyberg, USAID

Cross-Boundary Scientific Innovation

Transboundary cooperation means more access to data and greater utilization of science and technology. Last year, USAID and NASA jointly launched the 5-year, \$7 million SERVIR Mekong project. SERVIR – which means “to serve” in French and Spanish – provides satellite-based Earth observation data and science applications to help countries assess environmental threats, understand changes in weather patterns that could affect crops, and respond to and assess damage from natural disasters. The program aims to facilitate data sharing, develop tools, and train decision makers to protect lives and livelihoods.

“SERVIR gives us an opportunity to open the floodgates for data sharing to improve decision making on the ground,” said David Ganz, chief of party for the USAID SERVIR Mekong project.

To ensure its work addresses local needs, SERVIR Mekong has been planning and holding meetings with government officials across the region, including members of country ministries of forestry, agriculture, and environment, to create what Dr. Ganz called “a demand-driven project.”

The project is building on models that have been developed elsewhere in the world. To help the Mekong countries reduce losses from flooding, SERVIR Mekong is looking into adapting a flood forecasting and warning system originally created for Bangladesh. It is also exploring other models that use publicly-available remote sensing and hydrological data to enable, for example, farmers to select the optimal time to harvest their crops.

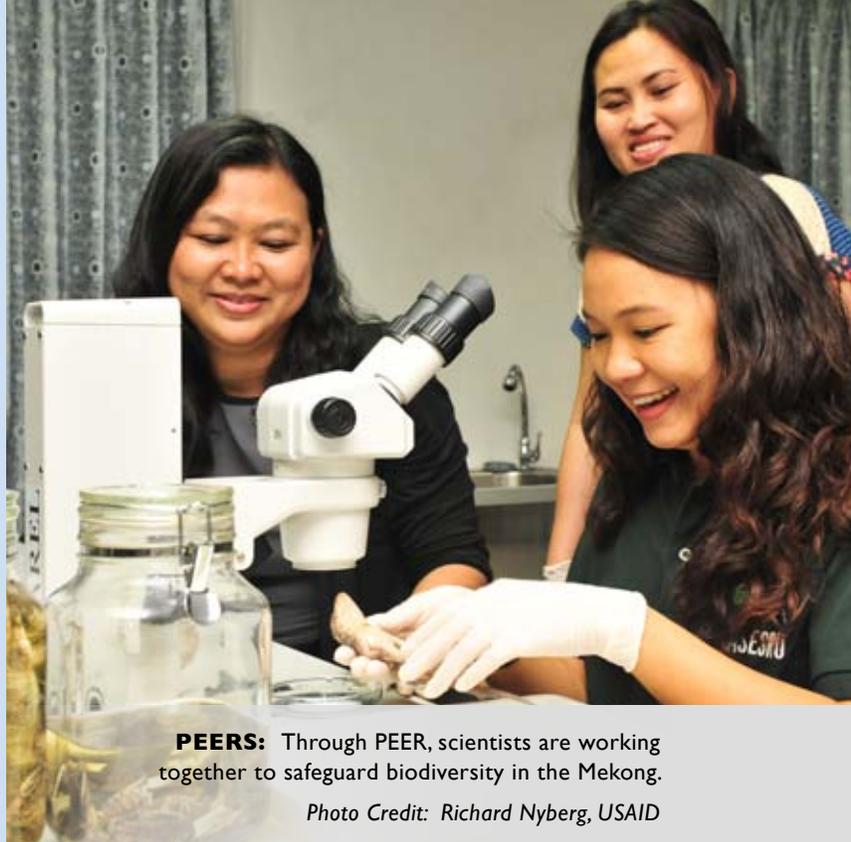
USAID is further supporting technological cooperation through Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER), its engagement with the National Academies of Science that provides grants to scientists in developing countries who partner with U.S. collaborators. PEER is supporting scientists from LMI countries who are working together to find scientific solutions to the region’s problems.

“Science does not stop at the border or at the water’s edge,” said Jessica Robin, program director for PEER for the National Science Foundation, a partner in the effort. “As PEER continues to grow, both the U.S. scientific community and our foreign partners benefit.”

One of the PEER-supported projects in the Mekong will create a network of scientists who use advanced genome mapping to classify and catalog aquatic species. Its goals include enabling scientists to monitor species abundance and diversity, identifying ecological barriers to healthy species development, and zeroing in on illegally trafficked wildlife.

Promoting Multi-stakeholder Solutions

All the scientific progress in the world, however, would be meaningless if the resulting discoveries did not find their way into the hands of decision makers. Two additional LMI programs, Smart Infrastructure for the Mekong (SIM)



PEERS: Through PEER, scientists are working together to safeguard biodiversity in the Mekong.

Photo Credit: Richard Nyberg, USAID

and the Mekong Partnership for the Environment (MPE), share the goal of encouraging key stakeholders to make sustainable choices as the region undergoes rapid growth.

Launched in late 2013, SIM matches technical expertise to governmental requests. The program will provide \$1.5 million over the next year to a variety of projects, including ones focused on designing fish passage systems for dams and improving watershed management in the region.

“This program has turned our normal way of doing aid upside down,” said Alfred Nakatsuma, director of environment for USAID’s Regional Development Mission for Asia. “Instead of creating a project and implementing it based on what we think should be happening, it’s about listening better and providing the government and the people with what they are asking for – providing, of course, it’s a sound course of action.”

MPE also seeks to inform development decision-making, emphasizing the active participation of everyone with a stake in development – government, private sector, and civil society. The four-year, \$15 million program is acting on growing calls for greater regional cooperation to reduce the impacts of the rapid pace of investment and development in the Lower Mekong region. By supporting efforts to improve environmental and social impact assessment as a means to inform project planning, MPE is encouraging inclusiveness in decision-making in order to reduce the negative impacts of development projects. The hope is that when new infrastructure projects, such as dams, are proposed, all affected stakeholders will be able to constructively participate and achieve equitable outcomes.



COMING TOGETHER: Mekong ARCC helps families throughout the region to adapt to climate change.

Photo Credit: Montakan Tanchaisawat, USAID

Wetter and Hotter

Teaching decision makers how to adapt to climate change, manage development, and make sustainable choices is just one focus of the U.S. government's work in the Mekong region. USAID's Mekong Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change (USAID Mekong ARCC) program works on these same issues amongst the millions of ordinary villagers who also struggle with managing scarce natural resources. The program is working to improve water storage, management, and distribution systems, and to equip villagers with the knowledge and tools they need to be resilient in a changing climate.

USAID Mekong ARCC and its partners are holding on-the-ground trainings to share knowledge and providing tangible assistance to help locals manage rising temperatures and saltwater intrusions from rising seas. In January 2015, experts from USAID, the Asian Management and Development Institute, and the Vietnam Red Cross led hands-on demonstrations of salt-tolerant rice, salinity monitoring, and shrimp nurseries that can speed the sale of shrimp to market. These interventions have led to significant leaps in awareness of adaptation strategies among villagers.

Le Hoang An, a farmer from Thuan Hoa commune in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, said these workshops were immensely helpful. Mr. An had previously tried to bar himself from the impacts of climate change by hedging

his bets and farming rice for half the year and cultivating shrimp the other half. But he was nevertheless unprepared when he saw his rice crop fail for the first time in 15 years. "We didn't get enough rain to wash the salt from the field, so the rice died when its roots hit the salty layer in the soil," he said.

At the trainings, Mr. An learned ways to prosper despite unexpected climate events. "The trainings helped me to understand how salt-tolerant rice can cope with different weather and soil conditions," he said.

The coordinated efforts of the various USAID projects will help millions of stakeholders from different countries to safeguard the all-important Mekong, improve the management of natural resources, and boost incomes. More importantly, now stakeholders are cooperating for a Mekong that is worthy of the generations to come.

K. Unger Baillie

More Information

[LMI Website](#)

[LMI on Facebook](#)

[USAID Asia Regional Website](#)



BUILDING CAPACITY: USAID brings together provincial forestry officials of the Lower Mekong countries including Vietnam, pictured above with their flag, to improve social equity and benefit sharing in forest management.

Photo Credit: Suphasuk Pradubsuk, USAID



Sanitation to Enliven West Africa's Economy

Ima of Kumasi, Ghana, gives new meaning to the saying, “The shoemaker’s children go barefoot.” This mother of four works as a public toilet attendant but lives in a house that lacks even the most basic latrine. Because of safety concerns, she and her family cannot walk to the public toilet after dark. They are forced to relieve themselves in plastic bags and dispose of them outside, a common practice that can spread disease. Ima is one of millions in West Africa whose lives are made more vulnerable by poor sanitation.

But now, USAID’s Sanitation Service Delivery Program (SSD), launched in October 2014, is increasing access to sanitation while helping people throughout the private sector to become sanitation entrepreneurs. The \$15.8 million program is working to create a self-sustaining, private sector-fueled sanitation market in urban and peri-urban areas of Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire, and Benin. The goal is to bring first time sanitation to one million people within five years. It is one of the most ambitious programs to date in a region with an ever-growing need.

Fostering a Sanitation Macro-Environment

More than three quarters of people in Cote d’Ivoire and nearly nine out of ten people in Ghana and Benin lack access to improved sanitation. Most people rely on public toilets, which may be inadequate and unsanitary. Those with limited access to public toilets often resort to indis-

criminate defecation in open spaces, dumps, and drains. This contributes to the spread of water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, which is one of the leading causes of death of children under 5 in sub-Saharan Africa.

Programs that provide infrastructure and mobilize people to build latrines through subsidies or trainings have seen results, but have struggled with sustainability. Oftentimes, the latrines break or gather dust from lack of use within just a few years. Additionally, methods such as community-led total sanitation, which have worked well in rural areas, have so far been less effective in urban areas with their large, segmented populations.

The Sanitation Service Delivery (SSD) program is taking a new approach to improving urban and peri-urban sanitation by helping businesses in a range of industries – everything from banking to construction – to discover a largely untapped market. The program will show these businesses how they can profit from sanitation, help them enter the market, and forge connections between them, donors, and the government.

“Let’s say we have people who produce cement, we will work with them to find a way they can produce it for latrines for mass use,” explained Georgette Yarboi-Quayson, Environmental Policy Adviser at USAID/West Africa. “The aim is to foster a thriving macro-environment for sanitation enterprises.”

A PROMISING APPROACH: USAID is partnering with Unilever to market sanitation in schools.

Photo Credit: Yakubu Salifu, WSUP

A Self-Sustaining Market

Convincing a range of private sector companies that it is in their financial interest to enter this stigmatized and largely untested market is a formidable task. To facilitate this process, the program is drawing on the knowledge of the nonprofit Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP), which has experience working with private businesses on sanitation issues in Ghana. WSUP is part of the program's implementing coalition, which also includes Population Services International (PSI) and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH).

The program is leveraging WSUP's knowledge of businesses in the region to make tailored appeals to them. "There is a lot of competition between banks and other businesses in this region so they are increasingly looking for unconventional products and markets, and we show them how sanitation can be a lucrative business," said Musah Issaka Balima, WSUP Country Program Manager.

The approach is working. Unilever is already on board to ramp up efforts to market sanitation and hygiene in low-income areas of Ghana, and Fidelity Bank and the microfinance institution HFC Boafo have signed on to develop a platform for providing loans to finance sanitation.

Building on this success, the program is now working to convince private sector actors to not only invest in sanitation, but to invest in sanitation for the extreme poor. "The extreme poor live day-to-day, so we must create a payment system that fits that while remaining profitable for the private sector," Mr. Balima said.

SSD is working with sanitation suppliers to devise efficient, low-cost products that suit this challenging market. In addition, the program is working with governments to offer subsidies to businesses that provide sanitation for the extreme poor. The hope is that these subsidies will eventually become unnecessary as companies perfect their business models.

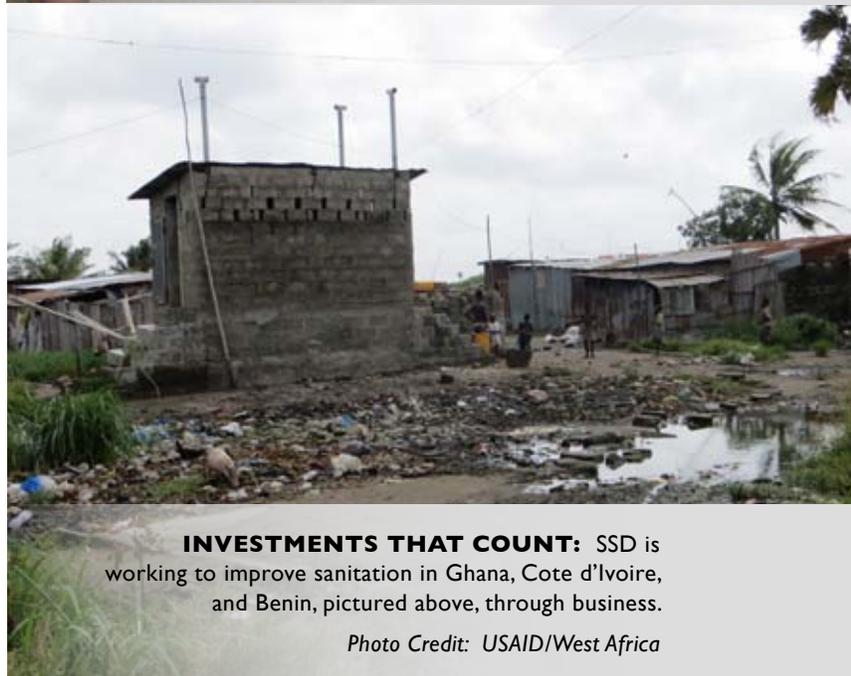
The program's staff is optimistic that over time, this new market will alleviate this health crisis in a sustainable way and impact many people beyond the initial target of one million. SSD hopes to boost the incomes of everyone from executives to sanitation workers like Ima by making their businesses more lucrative and creating new opportunities. "Public-private partnerships are the most effective way to solve sanitation issues," said Mr. Balima. "The private sector in these countries is vibrant and with their input, this sanitation market will become self-sustaining."

C. Zeilberger



BOOMING BUSINESS: SSD helps businesses enter the sanitation market.

Photo Credit: WSUP



INVESTMENTS THAT COUNT: SSD is working to improve sanitation in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and Benin, pictured above, through business.

Photo Credit: USAID/West Africa



A NEW APPROACH: SSD is working with sanitation suppliers to devise efficient, low-cost products.

Photo Credit: Yakubu Salifu, WSUP

More Information

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