

January — March 2008

Shea Works For Women :USAID and Peace Corps Partner to Build Women’s Capacity

BAMAKO, Mali — In Mali, women at the village-level are increasing their capacity and skills of shea nut collection, handling, and marketing thanks to a USAID activity implemented with Peace Corps Mali. The activity’s overall goals are to preserve the Malian Sahelian Parklands while increasing the incomes of rural women.

The parklands are large tracts of integrated tree-crop-livestock systems covering 90 percent of the country. *Vitellaria paradoxa*, also known as *Karité* in Francophone Africa and the shea tree in Anglophone Africa, is the dominant parklands tree species. Rural villagers, primarily women, maintain the shea trees because they extract a high quality oil or butter from its nuts which is used in cooking and as a cosmetic and medicinal ointment.

The sustainable use of the parklands is vital for the future welfare of the country



Photo: USAID

JOINING HANDS — PCVs and Malian women join hands to sort shea nuts thanks to support from USAID.

and, in particular, the rural populations.

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The Mission Director’s Corner



Alex Newton, Mission Director

One of the top priorities of the new Administrator for USAID, Henrietta H. Fore, is fostering partnerships with the private sector, and it’s one of this Mission’s priorities as well. In this regard, USAID recently recognized the Coca-Cola Company with the 2007 Alliance of the Year award for its efforts to promote sustainable water management in developing countries. As part of its efforts in Mali, the CEO Coca-Cola was recently in Bamako to participate in the ground-breaking ceremony for the first water-treatment plant by a major company in the capital city. Unfortunately, Mali can count only a handful of other American companies operating within its borders, one being the Schaffer Global Group, a company that has recently formed an alliance with a South African company, Illovo Sugar. The partnership aims to develop a 15,000-hectare sugar project in the Office du Niger, a large irrigated area developed by the French in the early 1940’s that, unfortunately, has never come close to realizing its full potential. This is another Global Development Alliance (GDA) project supported with USAID/Mali funding for the research com

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Expanding Radio's Outreach: The Story of the Dioumanzana Community School

BAMAKO, Mali — On a dusty road in the Djelibougou neighbourhood in Bamako sits a community school complex. Three primary schools share the complex, each with children in grades one through six. From the roadside, the complex looks like any other large, dusty public primary school campus in Mali. What makes this group of schools different?

One of the schools in the compound — Dioumanzana I, directed by Mr. Traoré — has been, since 2005, an official participant in the USAID-funded Teacher Training via Radio (TTvR) program that prepares and broadcasts in-class radio shows for the 3rd and 4th grades. The first year of his school's involvement, when just the 3rd grade programs were broadcast, Mr. Traoré was impressed with the way in which the shows helped his 3rd grade teacher to apply, in real classroom situations, active teaching methods such as groupwork, brainstorming and role playing. He points out that, as community school teachers, his staff have not had the same preparation for teaching that others might possess. He lauds the radio programming for assisting his teachers to offer quality instruction to the children under their care.



Photo: USAID

TEACHERS AND RADIO — The 3rd and 4th grade teachers of Dioumanzana, who all use USAID/TTvR's radio programs.

This school year, when both 3rd and 4th grade programs were scheduled to go on air, Mr. Traoré decided that it should not just be the 3rd and 4th grade teachers of Dioumanzana I (the only two teachers

that the district office had officially assigned to the TTvR pilot) who benefit from the in-class radio programs. Work-

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ponent, but with potentially huge returns valued at over \$300 million. Illovo recently announced that it has approved a \$208 million investment in the project, helping to finance the proposed construction of a new sugar mill, an ethanol plant and an electricity co-generation unit that will utilize waste biomass from sugar processing to generate all of its energy needs. Should the government give final approval for this project, it stands to be one of the Agency's largest GDA projects.

The "Office du Niger" zone is also the site of the 15,000-hectare agricultural project funded by the USG's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). There, new irrigated lands for rice and other crops will be opened up, and new irrigation canals constructed, eventually affecting the lives of thousands of people of that poor but promising region. The USAID/Mali Mission is supporting several Collaborative Research Support Programs (CRSP) research projects, covering crops such as tomatoes, sorghum and millet, which stand to assist farmers

in the project area in eventually getting access to improved seeds, raising production, and enhancing the viability of the MCC project in general. USAID/Mali is also working with the local flour mill to expand wheat production as a major off-season crop in the "Office du Niger". USAID's role has thus far been in the research area, helping the government's research institute introduce and test new wheat varieties that could help lay the foundation stone for a major expansion of wheat in the area, potentially cutting the country's wheat imports in half. Together, these major USG-supported efforts in the "Office du Niger" stand to help Mali realize a decade's old dream of making that zone the breadbasket of the Sahel and a net exporter while taking advantage of rising cereal prices to boost production and rural incomes significantly.

Finally, the Mission has only been in its new offices at the New Embassy Compound since January. Employees are already well adjusted to the beautiful new environment, and we welcome anyone in the Bamako area to come pay us a visit.

— Alex Newton

Now, It's All About Literacy In Mali!

World Education tells the story of its literacy campaign in Mali

BAMAKO, Mali — World Education's (W.E.) experience in adult literacy came at the forefront following the recent shift by the President of the Republic of Mali to emphasize literacy as a major component in non-formal education. At the opening ceremony of the African Regional Conference on Literacy, held in Bamako, September 10-12, 2007, he pledged to pay particular attention to literacy, a promise being brought to fruition by the new government which was established on October 3, 2007, through the creation of the "Ministry of Basic Education, Literacy and National Languages". W.E. would like to uphold and encourage this initiative by contributing and sharing what W.E. has done thus far, with the funding from USAID.

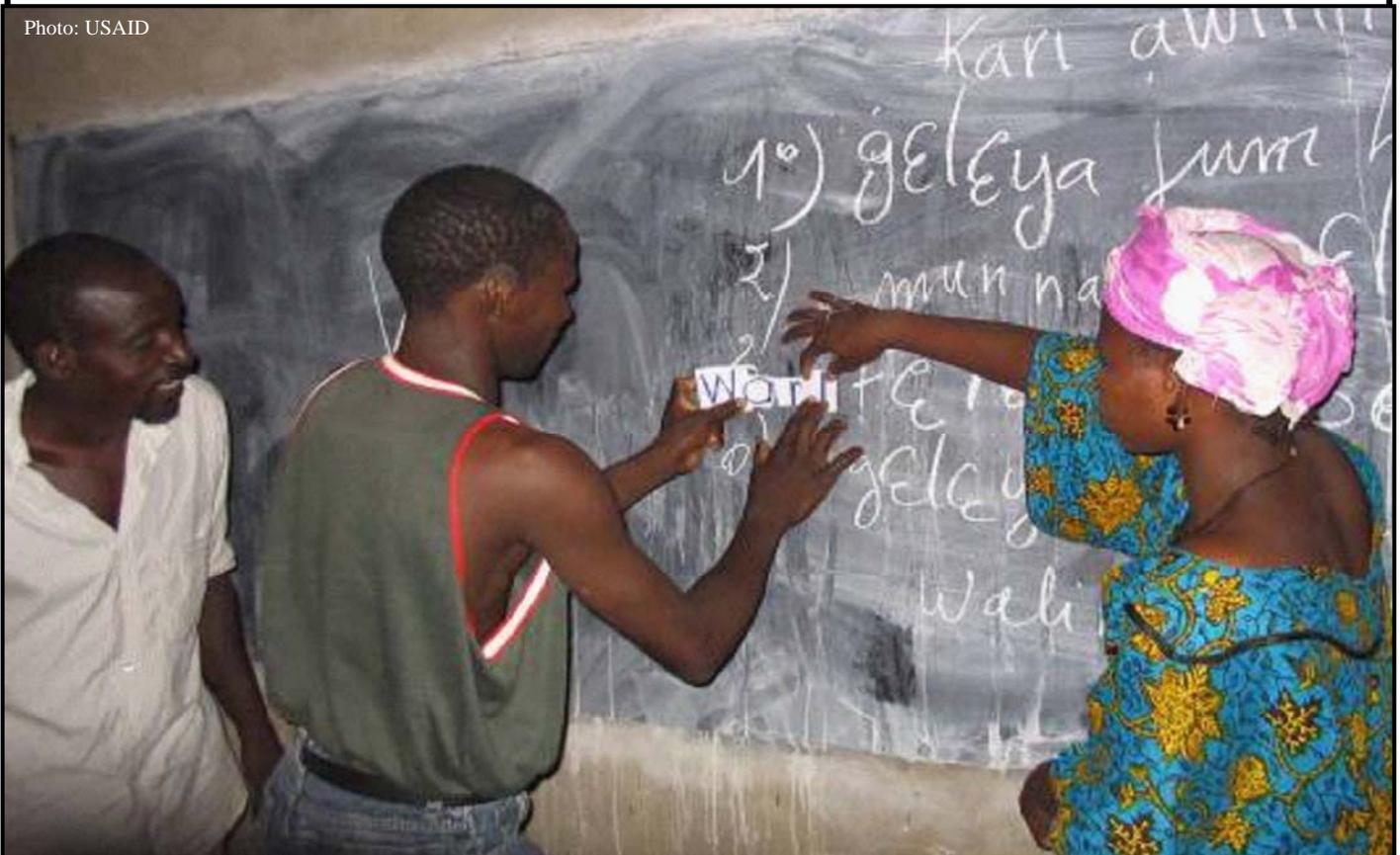
W.E. arrived in Mali in March 1991, just as the country was opening its doors to multi-party politics and democracy. Following a participative

needs analysis, W.E. began adult literacy in the late 1990s as a way to reinforce the community component of education. "We could do a better job to improve the education of our children," the leader of a large community told us, "if we could read and write ourselves." This led to the establishment of a non-formal adult basic education program whose explicit goal was to strengthen formal education. From its inception, the program has been framed as a tool for use by the broader community, not just parents but the entire "village" it takes to raise a child.

"Our (W.E., its Malian partner NGOs and participating communities) literacy program in Mali", said Souleymane Kanté, Chief of Party of W.E., "was developed in response to requests from communities and has had intergenerational impacts. Findings and lessons are shared regarding the process and outcomes", he added. The literacy

component of W.E.'s current Support for the Quality and Equity of Education program provides literacy classes for parents, Parent of Student Associations (PSA) and School Management Committee (SMC) members. Participants gain not only literacy and math skills but also vital content relevant to daily life, educational quality and equity, and the management of the PSAs and SMCs through a method called *Sanmogoya* (taken from a Bambara term meaning a person who has given a great deal to his community). The program is run in 145 villages in Tamasheq, Sonrai and Bambara-speaking regions of Mali. The course is taught in two phases, basic literacy and post-literacy, by volunteer teachers drawn from the community. The PSA and SMC in each community manage the program with training and support from the local NGOs, W.E. and the Education Ministry. The NGOs and teachers themselves have participated in

Photo: USAID



MAKING OUT WORDS — A literacy teacher (left, in white shirt) watches as two adult students try to make up words in a local Malian language.

Women's Access to Micro Credit: A Key to Fostering Rural Development

BAMAKO, Mali — Malian women are extensively involved in informal small businesses, and play an important role in securing a livelihood for their families. The informal sector in Mali makes up 80% of Mali's economy and employs 74% of the labor force in the country. This contributes 20-25% of the country's GDP. Although women contribute considerably to household income, poverty is linked to their limited access to credit. This is an issue that USAID's Women in Governance program addresses.

Women frequently can't grow small enterprises that increase their household income. They are generally self-employed, however during certain periods of the year they work collectively on private fields for minimal wages. The revenue often goes to a collective cash box that is used to celebrate the end of harvest, or to assist their husbands during difficult times. In rural areas in particular, women's income remains relatively low compared to their male counterparts.

The Women in Governance Program initiated a small grant mechanism called the Women's Economic Activity Fund. The basic aim of the fund is to promote women's economic status through credit and training. The activity focuses specifically on women's groups, and strengthens their capacity to develop and manage income-generating businesses over the long run.

Importantly, prior to this program, many of these women would have undertaken small income-generating activities that would have produced low return, and had limited, if any, access to banks or other financial services. Typically poor women count on close relatives, friends, or local moneylenders for small levels of credit in times of emergency and during the lean season. However, very few have access to formal credit and savings ser-

Photo: USAID



MICRO CREDIT BREEDS MUTUAL HELP— An association member (left) who did not originally benefit from the Women's Economic Funds, receives cash from the president of a Women's network (right).

vices. Banks and financial institutions rarely give loans to women without any guarantee of assets like title deeds, which are virtually impossible to come by in rural areas. They culturally have little, if any, control over land, which is the primary economic asset. Financially, men control cash flow within the household, and at the social level, because men are seen as the controllers of money, women are not viewed by banks and other financial institutions as potential clients for receiving loans.

Under the Women in Governance Program, such women were not looked at as credit risks, but were rather perceived as economic potentials. It was believed that when you provide a little cash to a woman, sometimes as little as \$25, you could transform her life and the lives of those living around her. Out of some 850 participating women's groups, around 190 received small grants ranging between \$200 and \$1,000. Some of the recipient groups are members of communal women's networks, which were established under the same program. Beneficiary groups were also provided with

capacity-building training on loan management and business skill development to maximize their long-term revenues and growth.

Thanks to this initiative, many economically disadvantaged women were able to overcome major obstacles and now have a greater role within their communities. Access to the Women's Economic Fund has been catalytic in increasing their confidence and equipping them in overcoming cultural inequalities. With even a small degree of economic power, women can change attitudes and practices which can help communities progress.

Another important result that emerged was the solidarity that increased among these women's groups. Grant recipients who are now making profits have taken the initiative to share with other women's groups that did not get funding. This demonstrates how micro-credit can considerably contribute to women's empowerment, leading to a shift in values and expectations that affect their role in society. — *K. Dienta, USAID.*

USAID and the Capacity Project Initiate a New Approach to Pre-Service Training in Northern Mali: “USAID’s support contributed substantively to human resources development...”

GAO, Mali — The Nursing School of Gao (NSG) plays a vital role in training health workers to serve Mali’s northern zone. Its goal is to address the lack of a consistent supply of well-trained health workers committed to providing services to rural communities, particularly in Mali’s three under-served and challenging Northern regions. To prepare its students quickly and effectively to address the population’s health needs, the NSG and the Capacity Project are applying the project’s “*Learning for Performance*” approach, which helps connect learning to specific job responsibilities and competencies. The guide and workbook are available in French and English.

Using the *Learning for Performance* process can shorten the time required for training by focusing learning on what is most essential for the job, and improving job performance by teaching what is relevant to specific duties. “This approach is focused on the essence of what health workers need in order to do their work in a hospital, a health clinic or a community

Photo: USAID



TRAINED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AT WORK— NSG Alumni organized and performed immunization during prenatal care.

health center,” says Dr. Mohamed Salia Maïga, the school’s director of studies.

“Before, each faculty member deter-
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in curriculum development and in-service training, and on-going support for teachers is provided. Learners’ literacy is evaluated and their perceptions of the program are explored. In the first three years, 24,500 parents were served.

One impact of increased literacy of members of PSAs and Mothers of Students Associations (MSA) is demonstrated by their ability to take meeting minutes, document planning, and provide transparent management. PSAs and MSAs are able to interact with government officials with more confidence; the role of leadership is shared among more people. Increased knowledge of education issues and organizational management for members of PSAs and

MSAs has impacted their ability to set a course, provide vision, and manage issues. There is an increase in understanding, particularly by mothers, of the value of girls’ education. In 2003, school enrollment for girls in our target communities was at 56.6%, and in 2006, it had increased to 65.1%. A related, yet unintended, outcome is the response from non-PSA and MSA members who greatly recognized the work of these organizations in increasing their own involvement in their children’s schooling, via homework monitoring. Enhanced by the shift to convergent pedagogy, where local languages are taught before French is introduced, parents can now read their children’s notebooks instead of just noting that very little has been written where there should be more! Parents have come to understand what it means to go to

school. After being in the literacy class, they now know that they need pencils to write with and time to study, and they also know that their children need the same. As a result, they report purchasing school supplies and relieving school children of chores to give them time to study.

“This does imply everything is easy”, said Mr. Kanté who went saying “Literacy in rural Mali, where the cost of paper and printing is prohibitive and electricity is non-existent, is difficult. It requires sustained investment in materials and training, which was made possible with funding from USAID. Enabling women in rural Mali to become literate can upset the social order; a decision to do so can not be made lightly. Nonetheless, we found it to be worthwhile.” — *S. Kanté, W.E.*

Shea Works For Women :USAID and Peace Corps Partner to Build Women's Capacity (Ctd)

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However, the parklands are becoming increasingly marginalized and are being subjected to considerable degradation from a complex combination of natural, technological, and socio-economic factors.

During a workshop January 16-18, 2008, 19 Peace Corps Volunteers and their village counterparts increased their knowledge and skill on shea tree grafting and parkland protection. The goals of the workshop were to raise awareness of the threats to and encourage protection of shea trees, provide knowledge and skills on the use of tools and techniques to reproduce and improve shea tree stock, and raise awareness of the benefits of reproducing and grafting shea trees.

The workshop was held at the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) and the lead trainer was Brehima Koné, ICRAF Assistant Researcher. The content of the workshop was developed by Mr. Koné based on the training parameters defined by Kristine Hoffer, Associate Peace Corps Director for Natural Resources Management.

Thirteen of the volunteers work in the Natural Resource Management program and six work in the Agriculture program. The participants came from various vil-



Photo: USAID

TRAINED FOR ACTION — With her grafting kit, Djénéba, one of the women who attended the workshop, is now fully skilled to make the best of shea.

lages including Kéniéba and Behon in Kayes region; Madabougou, Sakoro, Soukourani, and Kacerela in Sikasso region; Kamona, Tiby, Samabogo and Niasso in Segou region, and Niagadina in Koulikoro region.

The workshop included visiting ICRAF's model shea plantation where varieties of shea trees from across Africa have been planted. There were demonstrations and

hands-on practice of various shea tree propagation methods, beginning with seed reproduction and advancing to grafting, marking and cuttings techniques. Participants also received instruction on proper tree pruning and parasite removal techniques. The program concluded with each participant receiving a grafting kit, a grafted shea tree, and a certificate for their participation.— *M.L. Carlson, USAID.*

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mined their own content to cover, which led to wide variations of a module from one year to the next and from one faculty member to another. This performance-based approach will enable us to standardize the curriculum with an emphasis on meeting the competency needs of our students," he says. "We have already noted several positive outcomes."

"*Learning for Performance* is an ideal approach for our context," says Dr.

Hamada Maïga, the NSG's executive director. "What I personally appreciated about this approach is its participatory nature. All the participants were involved: the school's leaders, students, trainers and alumni."

Since 1998, the NSG trained 286 nurses, 21 midwives and six laboratory assistants. Ninety percent of these providers currently work in community health centers or district hospitals in the Northern Regions. After their training, they were recruited by the Ministry of Health or communities to provide high-impact

health services to remote populations in these Regions.

The Capacity Project is funded by USAID and implemented by IntraHealth International and partners. "USAID support to improve the NSG contributed substantively to Mali's Health and Social Development Program (PRODESS II), especially the human resources development and district health development components," said Dr. Traoré, the Regional Director of Health in Gao. — *Dr. C.O.Touré, USAID/Capacity Project.*

USAID Funds Capacity of Malian Scientists in Agriculture Production and Processing

BAMAKO, Mali — USAID has contributed to building the capacity of African scientists and technical professionals for many years through the Collaborative Research Support Programs (CRSP). There are nine CRSPs which are primarily centrally-funded through USAID/Washington DC. The CRSP programs were developed under Title XII of the International Development and Food Assistance Act of 1975 to build on the structural strengths of US land-grant universities and collaborative partnerships with international organizations.

It is exciting to note that through one program alone, the International Sorghum and Millet (INTSORMIL) CRSP, 32 mid-career Malian professionals have received U.S. university training over the past 28 years. In addition to the important establishment of US professional contacts and experience with the U.S. research and education systems, these professionals earned a total of one B.S. degree, 17 M.S. degrees, and 13 Ph.D. degrees.



Photo: USAID

Dr. Niamoye Yaro Diarisso (left) and Dr. Mamadou D. Doumbia, two Malian scientists trained under the CRSP.

Why, you might be wondering, are sorghum and millet important in Mali?

Sorghum, for example, is a dietary staple
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ing with financing from the School Management Committee (*Comité de Gestion Scolaire*, or CGS), he photocopied his copies of the 3rd and 4th grade listeners' guides so that every 3rd and 4th grade teacher (a total of six) in the complex could have one. He convinced the CGS to purchase four additional radios and to provide them to the teachers in the other two schools in the complex who were not official participants in TTvR. He and the two trained teachers then met with the four other 3rd and 4th grade teachers, explaining and demonstrating how to teach using the radio. The very next week, six classrooms full of children, rather than the original two, were listening to the programs, practicing their French and math skills while their teachers practiced the active learning techniques modelled on the radio.

Convinced that the issue of purchasing batteries could one day impede the teach-



RADIO PROGRAM ON THE AGENDA — M. Traoré (left) and the president of the SMC discuss school matters, including the USAID-funded TTvR program.

ers from using the radios that the TTvR program had distributed, M. Traoré then began negotiations with the CGS to find a more durable solution to the question of electricity for the radios. With patience

and diplomacy, he convinced the CGS to pay for electrical hook-ups for two out of the three schools in the complex. He is hopeful that a third hook-up for the final
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USAID Funds Capacity of Malian Scientists in Agriculture Production and Processing (Ctd.)

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and the main source of carbohydrates and proteins sustaining the lives of about 85 percent of the population in rural areas. If farmers grow improved sorghum varieties and use improved production techniques, typically they will have higher yields of higher quality sorghum. After family consumption, farmers can increase their incomes by selling their surplus crop in the market for human consumption or to the newly developing sorghum poultry feed sector.

Dr. Mamourou Diourté is an example of the U.S. trained professionals. With INTSORMIL support, Dr. Diourté obtained his M.S. in plant breeding and Ph.D. in plant pathology at Kansas State University. He is currently a research scientist at the *Institut d'Economie Rurale* (IER) and coordinator of the INTSORMIL programs in West Africa. Upon his

return to Mali, Dr. Diourté identified the sorghum genetic lines to be used in seed breeding and developed three sorghum seed lines free from disease.

Another example is Dr. Niamoye Yaro Diarisso who obtained her Ph.D. in entomology from Texas A&M University and is now the Scientific Coordinator for Irrigated Crops and Food Technologies at IER. Dr. Diarisso states that “thanks to my advanced education, I first gained self-satisfaction as woman, and second as a woman scientist.” Dr. Diarisso is proud to be the first female scientific coordinator at IER, and states that she has been successful in increasing the number of female scientists at IER.

A third example of a scientist who obtained a U.S. university degree with INTSORMIL support is Dr. Mamadou D. Doumbia. Dr. Doumbia's M.S. degree in agronomy and Ph.D. degree in soil science were earned at Texas A&M

University. He now holds the position of Chief of the Soil-Water-Plant Laboratory at IER. Dr. Doumbia states that, “Major skills I gained from my studies helped to increase productivity of soils of selected regions of Mali and improve the performance of the analytical soil lab of Mali.”

A further result of the close collaboration between the INTSORMIL CRSP activities and the IER programs has been a strengthening and focusing of Mali's national agricultural research program. Specifically, improved high-yielding sorghum and millet cultivar seed, inorganic fertilization methods, and improved agronomic practices have been researched and are now being introduced on farmers' fields. Therefore, USAID's contribution to capacity building will continue to yield results for years to come. — *M. L. Carlson, USAID.*

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school will be in place next year, enabling all the teachers to plug in the radios to capture the broadcasts. “That way”, he says, “all of the teachers will benefit from the on-air programming and the clear explanations that the broadcasts provide for students in the key subjects of French and math.”

Yes, Dioumanzana is different from the

typical public school compound. Thanks to the leadership of their Director, students can be heard laughing in the courtyard as they repeat dialogues from the radio shows. Teachers are excited to use the radio since the programs make their life at school easier. Each time the broadcasts are aired, they have a pre-prepared lesson to follow. After the broadcast, they are better able to organize student activities and prepare lessons that integrate the student-

centered activities highlighted in the radio programs. Dioumanzana has created a climate of sharing and of learning, and has used radio programming to improve the capacities of their teachers as well as the academic level of their students. The community school complex is truly a gem on that tiny, dusty road in Djelibougou. — *USAID/TTvR*

“Reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth through partnerships.”

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