

STATE

Family Day

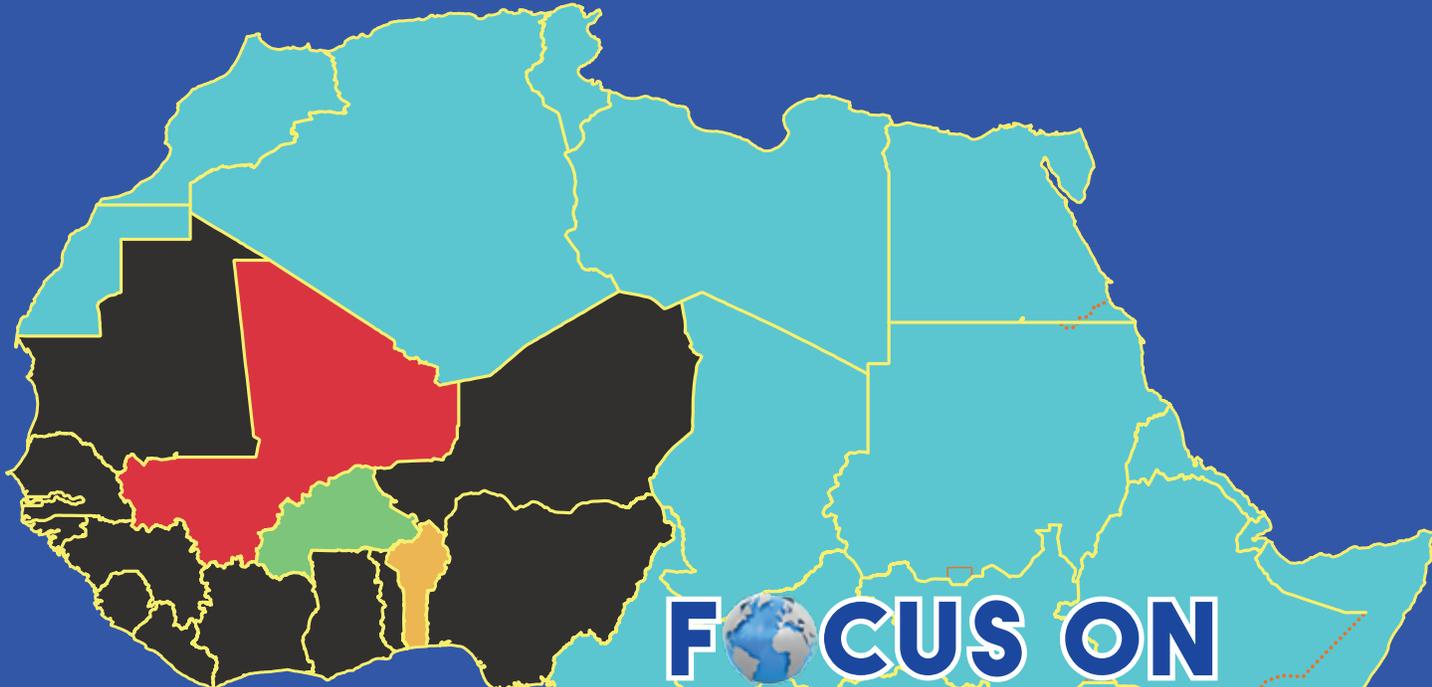
Kids Thrive at Take Your Child to Work Day Event in D.C.

Remaining Engaged

Foreign Affairs Day Marks a Milestone

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June 2015

MAGAZINE



FOCUS ON

WEST AFRICA

Part two of *State Magazine's* two-issue series highlighting unique challenges and opportunities at AF/W posts

Mali | **Burkina Faso** | **Benin**



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Submissions

For details on submitting articles to *State Magazine*, request our guidelines by email at statemagazine@state.gov or download them from <http://www.state.gov/statemag>. *State Magazine* does not purchase freelance material.

Deadlines

The submission deadline for the July/August issue is June 15. The deadline for the September issue is July 15.

State Magazine (ISSN 1099-4165) is published monthly, except bimonthly in July and August, by the Bureau of Human Resources at the U.S. Department of State. It is intended for information only and is not authority for official action. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of State. The editorial team reserves the right to select and edit all materials for publication.



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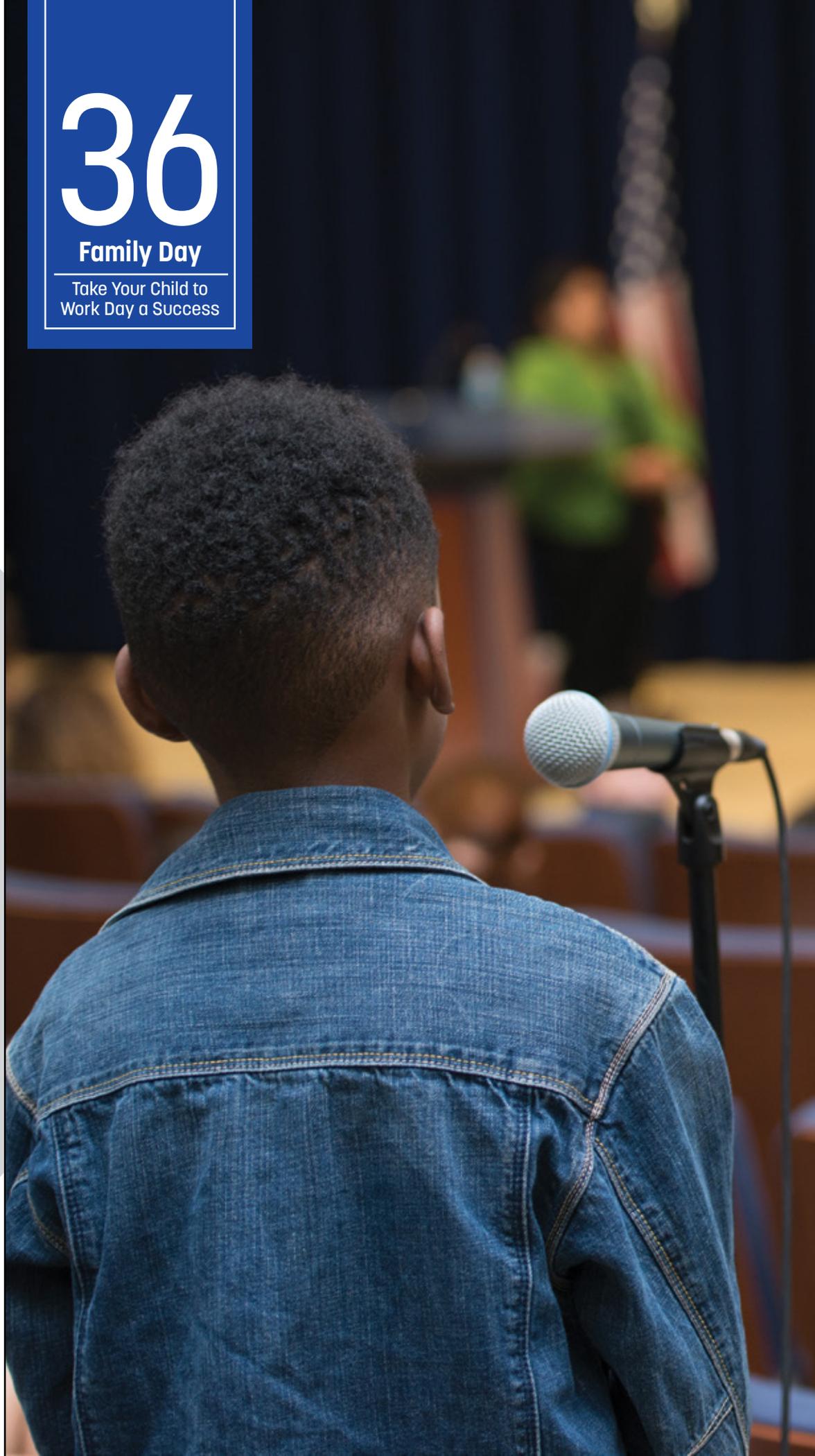
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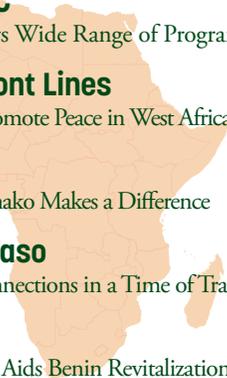


Photo by IBMR & MAM



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Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco



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Photo by Panormus



HR Analyzes Women's Advancement

The Bureau of Human Resources, in partnership with the employee group Executive Women@State (EW@S), recently analyzed data on the advancement of female Foreign Service generalists and specialists and female Civil Service employees, examining the period from 1994-2014.

The data, presented in March by Heather Hurley and Pamela Parker of HR's Office of Resource Management and Organization Analysis, show that women have been increasingly promoted to high ranks, but they do not equal male representation in senior leadership. In 1994, women comprised 10 percent of the ranks of chiefs of mission and 24 percent of deputy chiefs of mission. By 2014, those figures had grown to 35 percent and 29 percent, respectively. For generalists, the number of women increased at every senior and mid-level grade during the 20-year period from 27 percent to 40 percent of total officers. This percentage is expected to grow to 42 percent by 2024.

Among the FS job cones, public diplomacy has overtaken consular as the one in which women are most represented; they now make up 54 percent of PD officers. The political cone has remained the least-represented cone for women, but female representation has risen from 19 percent to 34 percent for political officers.

Women in the Civil Service also made gains in professional occupations, growing from 8 percent in 1994 to 23 percent in 2014. The HR/RMA data from 2009 through 2013 show that female FS generalists retire at lower rates than men, but leave their jobs for reasons other than retirement more frequently. HR/RMA says plans are underway to institute exit surveys for all categories of employee by late 2015 to find out why women are leaving the Department.

Some factors that may impede women's advancement came to light during a recent series of focus groups hosted by the Office of Civil Rights. The groups had more than 60 participants, including those from EW@S, which was founded, in part, to determine why women lag behind men



Among those involved with the focus group and data analysis efforts were, standing from left, Heather Hurley of RMA, Monica O'Keefe of EW@S, Ruth M. Hall of S/OCR and Vicky Bonasera of the Balancing Act. Seated, from left, are Julianne Paunescu of EW@S, S/OCR Director John M. Robinson and Barbara Thomas of the Balancing Act. Photo by James Pan

in senior leadership roles, and from the Balancing Act, an employee organization promoting work-life balance policies.

S/OCR Customer Service Representative Ruth M. Hall, who convened the groups, said many participants reported caregiver burden and caregiver bias still affected female advancement and that women were leaving the Department, in many cases, for work-life reasons, as they often shoulder a greater share of caregiving responsibilities for children and elders. Women may require more flexibility at different points over their careers, she noted.

Women in the focus groups also told S/OCR they experience such gender biases as the "imposter syndrome," in which female employees may not advance because they feel unworthy to compete for opportunities or higher positions; the "queen bee" syndrome, in which they see others as threats; or the "double bind," in which competence and niceness are seen as mutually exclusive in women.

In other cases, focus group participants spoke of feeling marginalized, and expected to do office "housework." These patterns of workplace gender bias were also described by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant in a series of articles in *The New York Times*. However, focus group participants said awareness can help overcome gender stereotypes, and that having support from mentors, peers and supervisors can help develop women's leadership skills and strengths, and frame their accomplishments for advancement. ■

Post Facilitates Cabinet Secretary's Visit

The U.S. Consulate in Calgary, Canada, showcased the traditions of Canada's Stoney Nakoda people during a March visit to the area by U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan. The post also set up a visit by Duncan to Nakoda Elementary School, located on the Morley Reserve in Alberta, Canada. There, Duncan participated in a sharing circle on aboriginal education and heard from students about their challenges and how excited they are to be graduating high school.

Other participants included U.S. Consul General Peter Kujawinski, Alberta Education Minister Gordon Dirks, chiefs of the Stoney Nakoda Nation, representatives from Canadian government offices of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Also involved were students from the four schools of the Stoney Educational Authority.

At a visit to the Glenbow Elementary School in Cochrane, Alberta, Maureen McLaughlin, the Education Department's director of International Affairs, met with students, alongside Consul General Kujawinski.



Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, center, poses with students from four schools on the Morley Reserve for indigenous people in Alberta, Canada, during his March visit.

Photo by Casey Bohn

They sipped traditional rosehip tea, ate bannock prepared by the students, and heard students tell of the success of a student-driven project that raises funds for an aboriginal food bank through the sale of cards featuring student art. ■

First Alumni Conference Held in Abidjan

At the first alumni conference in Abidjan, Ambassador Terence McCulley addressed participants as high-quality leaders who “can help explain America to Ivoirians and help us realize our objectives in Côte d’Ivoire.”

The March 18 gathering brought together 85 alumni from approximately 12 different exchange platforms, including the Fulbright and Humphrey programs, International Visitor Leadership Program, Mandela-Washington Fellows, Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI), Sports Visitors and the African Women’s Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP).

Dr. Kouadjo Hilaire, a professor at Felix Houphouet-Boigny University in Abidjan and a 2009-2010 Fulbright alumnus, said, “it was really great to bring so many who benefited from these programs together to start thinking of what they might do together.”

Ambassador McCulley told the group of this year’s U.S. priorities in Côte d’Ivoire, and the alumni asked about such matters as human rights, eliminating AIDS, entrepreneurship, English language study, cultural promotion, and increased embassy-alumni interaction. He said this is the year the United States “will evaluate the progress the country has made post-crisis.” (Côte d’Ivoire experienced a major upheaval following a disputed presidential election in 2010.) McCulley said he was optimistic that “Côte d’Ivoire will regain its place [as an economic engine] in the region.”

At the event, alumni sessions focused on grant writing, managing alumni organizations and using social media. Ekponon Agathe, a SUSI 2013 program alumnus, spoke of having learned to submit a grant proposal and looked forward



Ambassador Terence P. McCulley speaks to the 2012 Pan-African Leaders Youth Leaders Program. Photo by Yacouba Soro

to being invited to future events. Anna Coulibaly, a 2014 SUSI alumna, said the conference was especially useful because, through networking with other alumni, “we can see the big picture and what is possible for us to do in the future.”

Via a Skype link from the offices of the Africa Regional Services in Paris, attendees engaged with Professor Lex Paulson, an attorney and international consultant, who has worked with nongovernmental organizations across Africa and spoke about organizing lessons learned from the Obama presidential campaigns. His experience as a U.S. congressional aide encouraged alumni to lead in the political development of their own country. ■

E Bureaus Hold Leadership Day

The Department’s effort to advance critical U.S. economic interests and trade agreements got a boost in April when Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment Catherine Novelli convened the fifth annual Economic Leadership Day to highlight officers’ contributions to U.S. economic, energy and environment diplomacy. The “E family” bureaus of Economic and Business Affairs, Energy Resources, and Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, as well as the Office of the Chief Economist and economic and science advisors in regional bureaus, came together to sharpen their skills and learn how to communicate about complex national security issues and achieve policy objectives.

Secretary of State John Kerry told the gathering of the importance of trade and job creation, particularly where violent extremism and conflict remove opportunities for prosperity. He said U.S. energy and climate diplomacy are inextricably linked, and the shift to cleaner energy markets benefits everyone.

General Electric’s vice president and senior counsel for global government affairs and policy, Karan Bhatia, explained how her company became more global after the 2008 financial crisis, increasing its presence in emerging markets and calling on employees to “be global, be local.”

Under Secretary Novelli and Bhatia also discussed strategies for communicating in large organizations, with Novelli calling for messages to be kept simple. “Brevity is a gift,” she said.



Secretary of State John Kerry speaks to Economic Leadership Day 2015 attendees in Washington. Photo by Michael Gross

Presentations also highlighted how communication tools such as Econ@State, Corridor, Haver Analytics and Twitter can help Foreign Service officers carry out their responsibilities.

Meanwhile, several posts abroad did their own activities for the day, including Tri-Mission Paris, where economic officers from the embassy, along with U.S. Missions to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO, gathered at OECD headquarters to discuss using social media to amplify economic messages. ■

Post Educates Immigration Attorneys

During the March conference of the Bangkok chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, staff of the U.S. Embassy in Manila participated in panel discussions, answered questions on embassy procedure and showcased its streamlined immigrant visa process. The visiting attorneys learned of the immigration challenges facing Filipino nurses, fiancés and investors, among others, and heard from the Bureau of Consular Affairs' chief of advisory opinions and from officials of the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai (via videoconference) and the Department of Homeland Security's United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The conference's approximately 40 attorneys also toured Embassy Manila's grounds and participated in a "visa applicant for a day" exercise in which they gathered in the consular section's waiting area and picked up their mock identities, passports, confirmation sheets and ticket numbers. They then proceeded to the security checkpoint and walked through the steps in applying for a visa.

The embassy's revised application process uses streamlined prescreening and biometrics, and has shaved at least one hour off a typical applicant's



At the immigration lawyers conference, Consul General Donna Blair, right, answers questions from visiting attorneys.
Photo by Harold Peter Elviña

wait and processing time. The visiting attorneys said the experience helped them to demystify the immigration process, better assist clients and facilitate legitimate travel.

Consul General Donna M. Blair then answered post-specific questions, further promoting transparency in the visa application procedures. She said the visit with Bangkok district attorneys "helped to clarify the respective roles of immigration lawyers and consular officers in the execution of U.S. immigration policy and visa services to better serve the public." ■

Post Supports NASA Administrator's Visit

The U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires in February hosted NASA Administrator and former astronaut Charles Bolden, Jr. on his four-day visit to Argentina. The visit included the signing of an agreement with the government, several outreach events and an excursion to a town in the Andes where he met with representatives of an Argentine high-tech company that has cooperated with NASA on the construction of several satellites.

The NASA delegation, along with Ambassador Noah Mamet and other embassy personnel, first met with the host nation's ministers of planning and foreign affairs, and officials of NASA's Argentine counterpart, with whom they signed the agreement providing Argentine assistance with data downlinks and analysis for two NASA probes that are studying Earth's radiation belts.

Bolden gave presentations on NASA's vision for reaching Mars and his personal experiences as an astronaut to audiences totaling more than 700 attendees at the Buenos Aires Planetarium, San Andres University and the National University of La Plata, which is helping to develop Argentina's space launch vehicle program. He also hosted a lunch with 10 science and technology experts from the government and private sector, spoke at an embassy-hosted reception with 80 of the embassy's closest S&T contacts and met with the embassy's eight Marines.

In the Andean town of Bariloche, the NASA delegation and the ambassador met with officials of CONAE, the Argentine Space Agency contractor, which cooperates with NASA. At the contractor's site, the group toured the satellite integration and testing facilities, and Bolden spoke to the company's engineers.



Ambassador Noah Mamet, right, and NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, left, meet with youth ambassadors.
Photo by Jorge Gomez

Bolden's visit received extensive, positive coverage in traditional and social media, and helped Ambassador Mamet highlight the bilateral relationship and the promise of continued NASA-Argentine cooperation. ■

Protocol Promotes Understanding of Japan

In advance of the official visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Office of the Chief of Protocol partnered with the Embassy of Japan to host a cultural exchange for Washington, D.C., area schoolchildren. Third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students from the National Cathedral School in Washington, the Japanese Language School and an Arlington, Va., school converged at Washington's Japan Information and Culture Center to learn about Japanese culture and traditions.

Chief of Protocol Peter Selfridge and the wife of Japan's ambassador to the United States greeted children, and Ambassador Selfridge spoke of the nations' enduring bonds. He told attendees that his work involves meeting interesting people and facilitating official engagements, but that he keeps in mind that "the motivation behind the meetings, schedules and formal introductions [is] to strengthen our relationships with our allies all over the world."

The children learned about Japanese table etiquette and the correct way to hold chopsticks. They also modeled traditional Japanese festival wear and participated in a photo shoot in their outfits. They also tried Kendama, a Japanese game that involves catching a small ball



Noe Steady of the Japan Information and Culture Center teaches Washington, D.C., schoolchildren how to eat with chopsticks during the Protocol event.

Photo by Jessica Andrews

in a cup, and learned about Origami, creating a host of paper cranes. There was also a sushi snack—a surprising taste for some, but one that most found enjoyable.

The visit showcased the strong U.S.-Japan friendship, with the children themselves saying they knew the event was keyed to Prime Minister Abe's coming White House visit. ■

Immigration Outreach in Mexico

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City kicked off its third annual temporary worker outreach campaign last fall with a new approach and theme. Aimed at a younger Mexican audience than prior efforts, this outreach looked to link campaigns against visa fraud and predatory labor recruitment practices to more accessible graphics and local events.

The campaign's slogan was "Oyeme Cuate," or "Listen to me, buddy!" offering friendly warnings against "coyotes" and making clear the consequences of irregular immigration. A campaign caravan traveled to 15 municipalities in central and southern Mexico, holding events in town squares promoted by local radio announcements and colorful posters at bus stops and shopping centers. Flyers distributed before the caravan's arrival were redeemable for Department-branded soccer balls throughout each weekend event. At the events, staff led children in songs and games reinforcing the "No to Coyotes" message, and at dusk attendees viewed an immigration-themed movie and an animated short film in the "Oyeme Cuate" style.

Event staff polled attendees to learn about the factors driving irregular immigration and its long-term impact on lives. More than 14,000 people responded, offering insight into the lives and travel patterns of people in rural Mexico.



The anti-coyote campaign's staff hosts an event in Tehuacan, Mexico, during week three of the outreach.

Photo courtesy of Veopix and Selfie Marketing

Megan Phaneuf, a consular officer involved in planning the outreach, said, "the project was unique due to its accessibility; it really touched people on the personal level, in the places where they live and work in Mexico." Attendees' questions showed they had little knowledge of the visa process or even the location of their local consulate or embassy, factors that could render them vulnerable to perpetrators of fraud.

Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations officials praised the campaign during the U.S.-Mexico Consular Dialogue in Washington, D.C., in January; meanwhile, Embassy Mexico City plans to conduct another campaign against fraud and coyotes later this year with Mexican government involvement. ■

Embassy Jazz Jam Highlights Art Form

To celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM), held annually in April to celebrate this original American art form, the U.S. Embassy in Mbabane held two major events, including one in which Ambassador Makila James and the Public Affairs Section (PAS) hosted government officials, civil society leaders, members of the business community, artists and musicians for an evening of live jazz on April 18.

The event highlighted the talent of Swazi female vocalists, who performed a combination of American jazz standards as well as a few of their own jazz-influenced pieces. The event also highlighted the importance of freedom of speech and expression. In addition to encouraging corporate support of the arts, the ambassador and PAS leveraged this forum to draw attention to the high-profile arrest, conviction and ongoing detention of a local magazine editor, Bheki Makhubu, and human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko, who were sentenced to two years in prison for contempt of court after publishing articles critical of the judiciary. (Their cases were also highlighted as part of the Department's "Free the Press" campaign this year.)

To reach an even wider audience, PAS also awarded a small grant to a local arts promotion organization to raise awareness of jazz as an art form and promote creativity, independent thinking and free expression, especially among Swazi youth. As part of the grant, students from four local high schools were trained in jazz performance and the history of jazz. The project culminated in a free public concert at a local theater



Swazi artist, Khole, performs at the Jazz Appreciation Month event at the chief of mission residence in April.

Photo by Nomfundo Msibi

on International Jazz Day (April 30), during which the students performed jazz standards and other jazz pieces of their own choosing. This "Youth Jazz Sessions" concert featured emerging young jazz artists (one of whom was only 12 years old) and some of Swaziland's best professional jazz artists.

The audience was also treated to a brief segment of Ken Burns' documentary "Jazz" to give it more background about the history of this uniquely American art form. The theater was filled to capacity and the U.S.-funded project received very positive media coverage afterward. As one high school student in the audience exclaimed, "I had no idea I loved jazz!"

Embassy Mbabane has focused on arts programming and outreach efforts to reach Swazi youth to support its messages on HIV/AIDS prevention, democracy and human rights promotion, entrepreneurship opportunities and enhanced understanding of American culture. ■

Groundbreaking Held for Data Center

The Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) in April held a groundbreaking ceremony for construction of a future modular data center (MDC) at the Beltsville Information Resource Center (BIMC) in Beltsville, Md.

The MDC is a self-contained, ultra-efficient data center that is constructed to use a fraction of the energy of traditional brick-and-mortar data centers while achieving 10 times the information technology (IT) capacity. The MDC will be the Department's first to support the data center capabilities of the Enterprise Server Operations Center (ESOC) as part of IRM's Systems Integrations Office.

Attending the ceremony were Keith D. Miller, deputy assistant secretary for Operations in the Bureau of Administration; Dr. Glen Johnson, deputy chief information officer for Operations in IRM; Jasper R. Daniels, director of IRM's Systems Integration Office; and Larry Wingfield, general project manager for the vendor providing construction and implementation services for the MDC.

The MDC will support the Department's policy to increase virtualization environments across data centers, maximize resource use and gain the benefits of consolidation.

Supporting the MDC project's management, oversight and final commissioning is a joint project team involving ESOC, Business En-



Taking part in the groundbreaking are, from left, Larry Wingfield, Keith D. Miller, Dr. Glen Johnson and Jasper Daniels.

Photo by Kristopher C. Munch

gagement Center, Enterprise Networking Management, the A Bureau's Real Property Management and Facilities Management units, and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. ■

Direct from the D.G.

ARNOLD CHACON,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE



Bilateral Work Agreements Mark 35th Anniversary

On June 12, 1980, the first bilateral work agreement was signed between the U.S. and Canada. Now, 35 years later, I'm pleased to report that we have bilateral work agreements with 120 foreign countries.

Bilateral work agreements are established through a formal exchange of diplomatic notes between the United States and another country. They foster family member employment by helping to expedite the work permit process for U.S. family members who are seeking employment on the local economy overseas while under chief of mission authority.

While these agreements may vary from country to country, the key goals we strive to attain in each are: 1) no work permit fees, 2) permits that are valid for the duration of the sponsor's assignment (accreditation), 3) timely processing of work permits (the United States processes permits within three to four weeks), 4) no job offer required to receive a permit requirement and 5) involvement of a government-to-government process.

In addition, the Department permits the waiving of civil and administrative rights pertaining to the employment activity but not the criminal immunities of the family members. This is because we have a long-standing obligation to provide our employees abroad with the maximum possible protection from potential judicial problems.

The Family Liaison Office (FLO) works in tandem with Protocol and the offices of Legal Adviser and Foreign Missions to ensure that established agreements are truly bilateral and reciprocal. Meanwhile, we continue to seek new, solid agreements.

In countries where bilateral work agreements do not exist, family members may still be able to obtain work permits. If a host country issues a work permit to a family member of a U.S. government employee assigned to that mission overseas, then the precedent is established, and the country is added to the list of those having de facto work arrangements. There are currently de facto arrangements with 38 countries.

Increasing employment opportunities for family members is important to the Department. It's no surprise that employment outside the mission varies significantly post to post. In many locations, American and international schools, local and international businesses, and NGOs all provide established sources for family members seeking employment. Increasingly, virtual work, telework and self-employment are viable options. While not all local economies offer equal opportunities, FLO draws upon eligible family member (EFM) successes to share best practices with post management, CLOs and fellow EFMs to stay abreast of options for family members.

FLO is committed to increasing awareness of opportunities outside U.S. missions and assisting family members in building skills, such as networking. FLO programs and resources support family member employment at U.S. embassies and consulates, on the local economies and for those returning to the United States. Currently, about 36 percent of EFMs are working either inside or outside the mission.

Family members are an integral part of our Foreign Service community. We recognize that it is in our interest to increase overseas employment opportunities because they contribute to the retention of our talented employees.

For more information on programs and resources to help support family member employment, please visit the FLO website. ■

Arnold A. Chacon

Diversity Notes

JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS



Avoiding Per Se Reprisal

I bet you're thinking: "Another article on retaliation?" But trust me, this topic is worthy of a great deal of discussion.

As you might remember from a previous Diversity Notes, retaliation or reprisal (the technical term) is the most frequently alleged basis of discrimination each year. In fiscal 2014, one out of every five Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints filed by Department employees contained an allegation of reprisal.

Reprisal refers to adverse workplace actions taken against an individual because he or she engaged in the EEO process. The scope of involvement can include those who seek EEO counseling, file complaints, serve as witnesses and even those who publicly oppose workplace discrimination (e.g., speaking out at a town hall meeting). The guidelines of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) specifically prohibit singling out staff, ridiculing them, demoting them or denying them training opportunities in retaliation for participation in the EEO process.

One form of reprisal is called per se reprisal, which one can easily commit without realizing it. Many people who engage in acts of per se reprisal are hardly aware at the time that they are, in fact, breaking the law.

Per se reprisal is any statement or action that in and of itself expresses contempt for, distrust of or disapproval of EEO activity and has the reasonable potential to deter employees from using the EEO process. In other words, it's any statement or action that would make someone think twice about using the EEO process, or that creates a "chilling effect." The law also protects employees who oppose what they believe is a discriminatory policy or practice. Management may engage in per se reprisal in numerous ways, including:

- Making derogatory or disapproving remarks about the EEO process, especially in an open forum, and
- Discouraging someone from participating in the EEOC process.

Participating in the EEO complaint process is a right provided to employees by U.S. civil rights laws. Anyone who wants to exercise this right should feel free to do so without fear of having to "pay for it" down the road with lost career opportunities, damage to reputation or other professional repercussions. Administrative judges at the EEOC have such a low tolerance for per se reprisal that generally, even if an underlying complaint of discrimination lacks merit, an employee may prevail in cases in which there is sufficient evidence of per se reprisal.

Supervisors and managers should understand that reflexively striking back against employees who've filed EEO complaints is not only illegal, but could also be costly to the Department. The best way for supervisors and managers to prevent committing reprisal is to support, without exception, participation in the EEO complaint process and to abstain from gossiping or commenting on EEO activity. Additionally, supervisors and managers must be very careful not to allow the fact that an employee has chosen to use the EEO process affect how they interact with the employee.

The Department strives to maintain a workplace that is free from discrimination and harassment, including acts of reprisal, which may derail productivity and weaken morale. We all play an important role in fulfilling this mission. For questions regarding your rights and responsibilities under EEO laws, contact the Office of Civil Rights or visit <http://socr.state.gov/OCR/>. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



AMERICA
THE
BEAUTIFUL

Windmills rise up along the landscape surrounding the Columbia River Gorge in eastern Oregon.

Photo by Gord McKenna



The Special Issuance Agency

Supporting the global mission

By Robert Kris, consular officer, Special Issuance Agency, Bureau of Consular Affairs
Photos by Ed Warner

On any given day, a Foreign Service officer may arrive at the Special Issuance Agency (SIA) to apply for an initial diplomatic passport and visa for a newborn, so the entire family can return to post. A White House courier may also drop off passport applications for staffers planning to accompany the president on an official trip—and want the passports by day's end. And the agency may get a call from a government department, such as Health and Human Services, requesting expedited passports service for employees heading to assist in the Ebola response.

Each week, SIA receives thousands of applications for special issuance passports (official, diplomatic and no-fee regular) at its main office and two public counters at Main State and the Foreign Service Institute. The applications come in the mail from U.S.

embassies, consulates and military bases, and from employees of more than 200 federal agencies and offices. SIA also handles individual applicants who've been referred by their congressional representatives.

Christine Harold, SIA's director, said she and the more than 100 employees of SIA—a mixture of Civil Service, Foreign Service and contractors—are proud of their work. "Every day we positively impact

the varied and critical missions of our colleagues throughout the federal government—it's an exciting challenge and a great feeling," she observed.

SIA has a "unique clientele, from the White House to the general public," elaborated Battie Stewart, a passport supervisor who has been with SIA since it separated from the Washington Passport Agency in 1994.

SIA is one of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' 29 domestic passport agencies and centers, part of the Directorate of Passport Services. However, much about SIA's operations differs considerably from CA's "fee" passport program. The general public, for instance, contacts the National Passport Information Center for all passport-related questions. But SIA operates its own call center and email inquiry box, staffed by skilled communications representatives, noted Customer Service Manager Sarah Dirck. SIA's three customer service managers train and support the 1,640 no-fee passport acceptance agents stationed at U.S. military bases and at such federal agencies as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Marine Mammal Commission.

SIA's passport specialists are trained on procedures and required documentation for every type of passport, from a no-fee



Members of SIA's customer service operation include, from left, Vanessa Seher, Nick Velez, Samantha Danfora and Laura Nelson. The team provides logistical support for federal and DOD passport agents.



Visa Unit Supervisor Christopher Pressey takes a phone call in the SIA offices.

regular passport for a Peace Corps volunteer to a diplomatic passport for a member of the Foreign Agricultural Service. SIA responds to urgent travel needs and prioritizes workflow based on the applicant's travel date, always ready for last-minute requests. SIA's processing team enters the applicant's data, then prints and performs quality control on the more than 125,000 passport books issued by SIA's Washington, D.C., office each year.

SIA's Adjudication Manager Blanchie Gerrald said that when new initiatives and global events require an applicant to travel immediately, such as for the funeral of the late Nelson Mandela, SIA's team works expeditiously to issue the necessary documents and assist with visas.

A key aspect of SIA's work that separates it from CA's traditional fee-based passport program is its focus on whether the applicant is entitled to the passport he or she seeks. Passport specialists at SIA don't just verify an applicant's U.S. citizenship and identity, but also whether the applicant meets such factors as the correct employment status and type and length of assignment to merit a particular type of passport. They also assess the validity of the applicant's documents and determine the



Adjudication Manager Blanchie Gerrald looks up from her work.



Holding an informal meeting in Passport Specialist Liane Williams' cubicle are from left Passport Specialist Kelly Nilan and one of SIA's three customer service managers, Sarah Dirck.

passport endorsement that's appropriate.

Passport Specialist Regina Greene said consular officers and Locally Employed Staff play a vital role in assembling the necessary documents SIA needs to process no-fee passport applications without delay. "Always keep in mind our goal is to be helpful," Greene said.

SIA Assistant Director Michael Ma said it's important to verify an applicant's entitlement, because "issuing the book to people who are not entitled harms the status of the book." In several instances, special issuance passport holders have misused them or engaged in inappropriate actions, damaging U.S. bilateral relations. Those with special issuance passports must use them responsibly. Thus, SIA only issues them to those who are properly entitled.

With that in mind, SIA Entitlement Manager Danny White said SIA wants to provide the "best customer service in the world, 24/7."

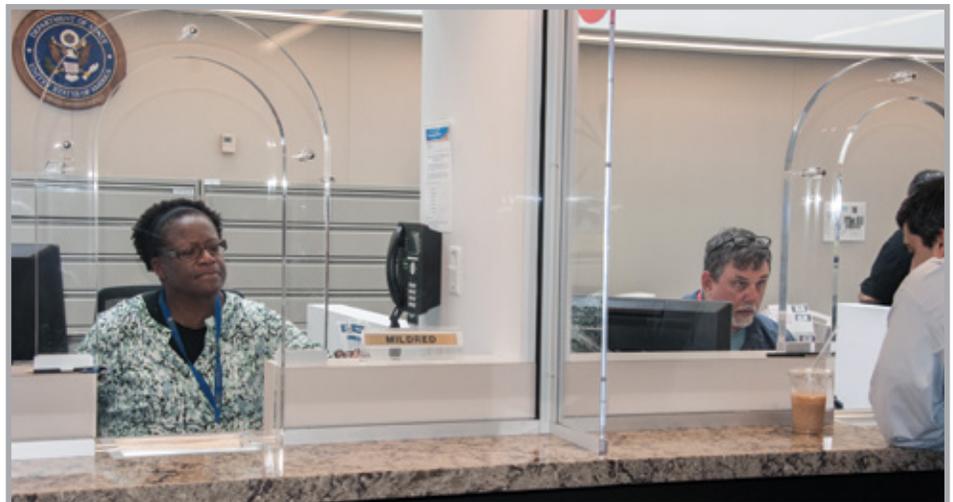
In addition to its passport issuance role, SIA also contains a Visa Unit that obtains foreign visas for Department of State employees and eligible family members. The unit also assists desk officers, post management officers, Congress, the Supreme Court, White House and roughly 150 federal agencies to procure official and diplomatic visas from 140 different foreign embassies. This year, the Visa Unit expects to handle 13,000 visa application requests and process an additional 30,000 official letters for federal employees who submit their visa applications directly to a foreign embassy.

The Visa Unit handles all requests for any U.S. government traveler going to Russia on official business. (Special events like a global summit, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi or a presidential visit to Moscow can spark urgent requests for hundreds of Russian visas.) SIA works to gain a strong rapport with all foreign embassies, helping enhance their readiness to deal with visa requests. For instance, SIA also arranges all visas for temporary duty assignments to Iraq. Visa Specialist Robert Dickerson said submitting applications to the Iraqis used to take a considerable amount of time, but "through good communications with the Iraqi Embassy, they now use SIA as the model for government agencies." SIA also works with the Department of Defense's Casualty Assistance Offices to

provide prompt passport services to family members of U.S. servicemen and women who are severely injured or killed abroad.

SIA Communications Representative Jennifer Holley packages all completed passports being sent overseas. She says she likes helping travelers and handling the final step of the passport issuance process.

More information on SIA is available online. Its office is at 600 19th Street NW, South Entrance, Washington, D.C., where the counter is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. SIA's counter at the Employee Services Center at Main State is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. The counter at FSI is open every Tuesday in Room E5125 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. ■



Working SIA's main passport application counter are Passport Specialists Mildred Alexander and Rin Musser.



Remaining Engaged

Foreign Affairs Day marks a milestone

By Michael Hahn, associate editor

May Day is a day of rites and commemorations. This year it represented a moment both solemn and festive for the Department—the 50th celebration of Foreign Affairs Day—a time to salute employees and retirees for their dedication and service, and honor those whose lives were lost on duty overseas. The day’s events, hosted by Director General Arnold Chacon and co-sponsored by AFSA and DACOR, also provided a venue for far-flung former colleagues to reconnect. Acknowledging the occasion in a special White House message, President Obama said, “every day we wake up to a world that is more secure and more peaceful thanks to dedicated Americans in the U.S. Foreign Service . . . Your tireless work advances the causes of freedom and opportunity, and your devoted service reflects an unwavering commitment to our nation’s founding ideals.”

Highlighting the day was a special tribute to two fallen diplomats, David Collins and Rayda Nadal, whose names were unveiled by AFSA President Robert Silverman on the memorial plaque in the Department’s main lobby. With Silverman presiding, family and colleagues gathered for the AFSA Memorial Dedication Ceremony as a military honor guard stood at attention. Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy spoke about the honored

heroes: “Their lives, their character, their ideals and their joy touched all they served with and highlight the best of the Foreign Service.”

Collins, a financial management officer at the U.S. Consulate in Lagos, Nigeria, died on April 28, 2013, after rescuing his wife from drowning at an embassy outing. Nadal, an office management specialist serving in Moscow, died on May 26, 2014, due to injuries sustained in her apartment after a gas explosion.

Opening the plenary session of Foreign Affairs Day, Director General of the Foreign Service Arnold Chacon praised the Department’s workforce for making the institution an “exceptional” place. Today’s challenge, he noted, is a rapidly changing demographic with nearly a third of all employees becoming eligible to retire within the next five years. “The skills and competencies that have marked Foreign Service excellence will be in greater, not lesser, demand,” Chacon said. He hailed foreign affairs veterans who continue to be engaged in foreign affairs and advocating for more resources, recruiting talented people, informing the public and Congress about the Department’s vital work.

Under Secretary Kennedy spoke about pressing concerns on the management front: reduced budgets and tightened security, and coping with a new range of threats that have recently headlined the news, such as Ebola and cybersecurity. The Department remains

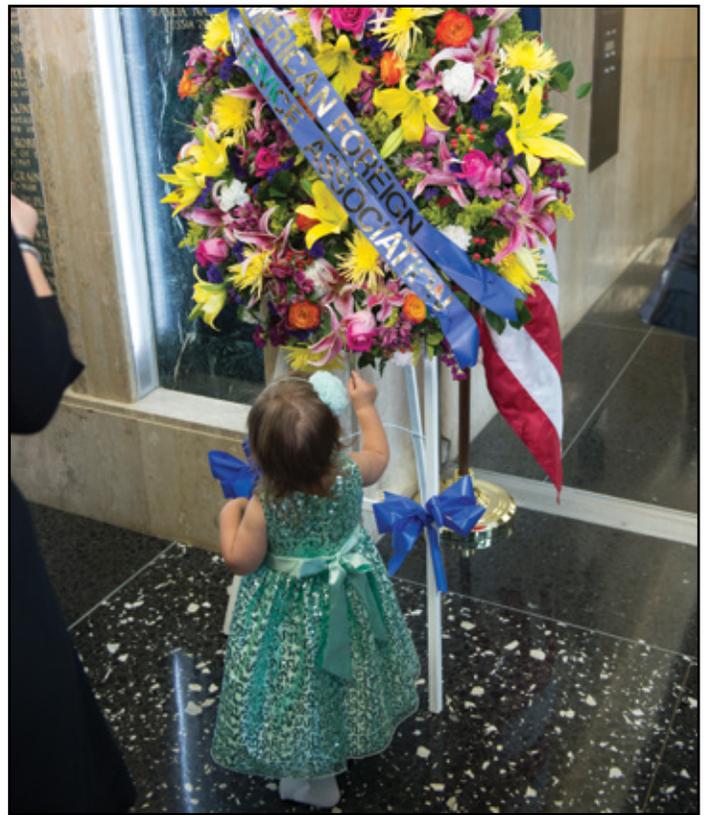
At the podium U/S Patrick Kennedy eulogizes David Collins and Rayda Nadal. AFSA President Robert Silverman stands beside flag.
Photo by Robert Stewart

vigilant and ready to take charge in times of crises, he said.

In addition, specialized training for personnel and infrastructure improvements continue apace. Since 1999, more than 32,500 employees, nearly half of the Department’s personnel, have moved into newer, safer and upgraded buildings. On another upbeat note, Kennedy cited a recent Forbes magazine ranking of best employers nationwide in which the Department of State was ranked the highest among federal agencies, and 34th among all U.S. employers, ahead of John Deere and Stanford University.

The morning session’s keynoter, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson, offered a survey of progress in that region and the valued partnerships—on education, energy and economic issues—that keep the U.S. actively engaged. When she turned to Cuba, she expressed hope that U.S. openness will encourage the Cuban government to follow suit, especially on human rights and democratic practices.

In his videotaped message to attendees, Secretary John Kerry saluted the Department of State family for ensuring “that our country does the right thing for other people in other parts of the world in a smart way,” adding a touch of wit: “The State Department is still the perfect place for sleep-deprived patriots to hang their handbags and hats. We work hard



Clockwise from top: Secretary of State John Kerry addresses Foreign Affairs Day attendees. *Photo by Robert Stewart;* Eloise Spalla gazes at the wreath commemorating her grandfather, David Collins, who died in Lagos in 2013. *Photo by Robert Stewart;* “The most striking changes I see at the Department today are the ones brought about by new technologies,” according to Kevin Ellison, a former public diplomacy officer. *Photo by Ed Warner;* From left, Gwyn and Jim Creagan, former ambassador to Honduras who is now professor at the University of the Incarnate Word in Austin, and Tibor Nagy, who served as ambassador to Guinea and Ethiopia, now vice-provost at Texas Tech in Lubbock. All three are active in recruitment and mentoring students about life in the Foreign Service. *Photo by Ed Warner;* Retired Ambassador Cynthia Efrid says that “remaining committed” is no different from her active career days. She sits on the boards of the Public Diplomacy Council and Public Diplomacy Alumni Association. “Look us up and check out our websites,” she said. *Photo by Ed Warner*

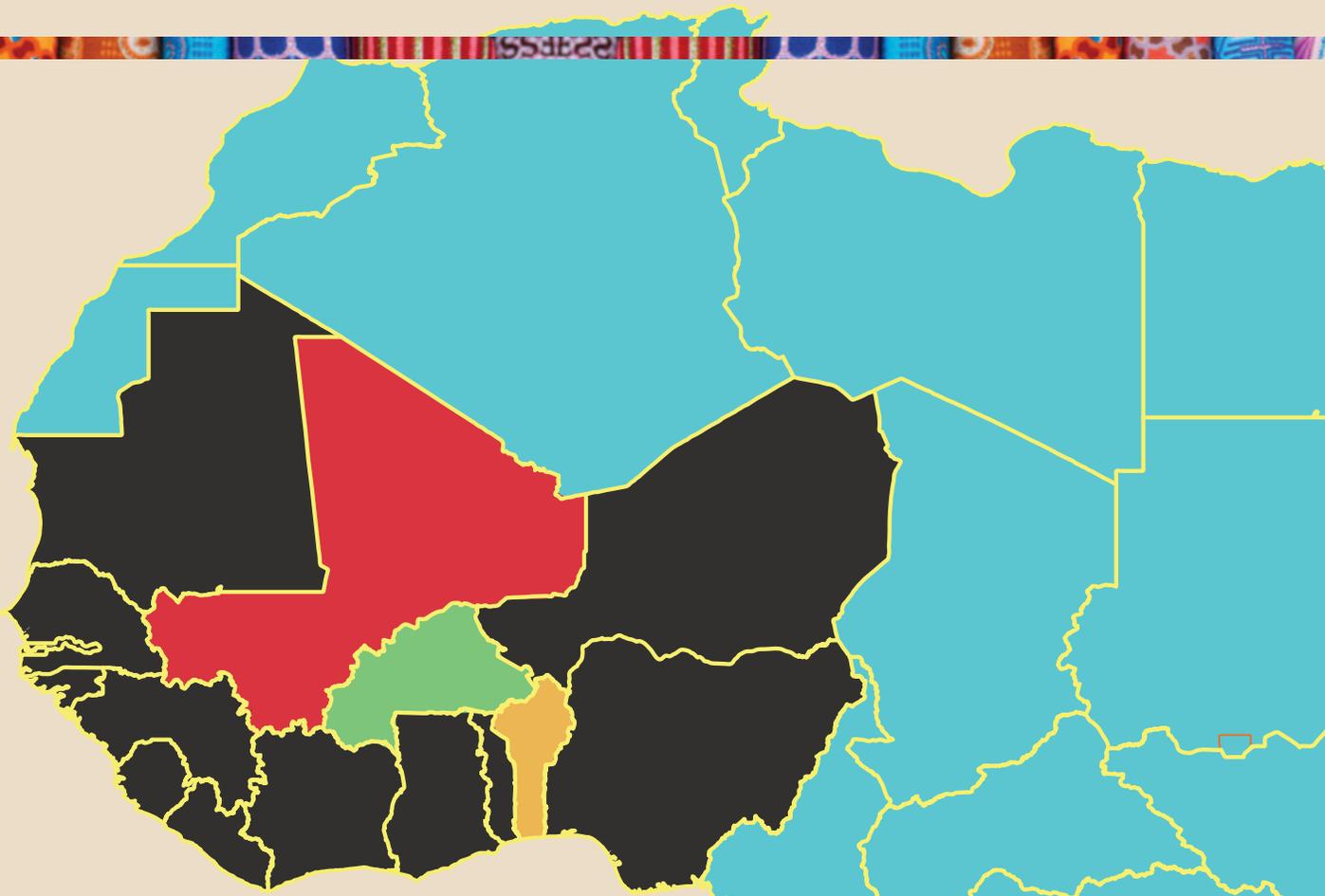
every single day and many, many nights, and we do have each other’s backs.” He reminded all that the recruitment of young talent is a continuing need.

Connecting with friends and former colleagues is at the heart of Foreign Affairs Day, and this year’s edition did not disappoint. In between the seminars and speakers, attendees reminisced and recharged. Michael Orlansky may have left Washington, D.C., for the Green Mountains of Vermont (his last assignment before retiring in 2011 was as program officer in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs), but he still advocates for the Foreign

Service by promoting careers in diplomacy among high school and college students in Burlington, VT. assisting with adult education programs for two local nonprofits and serving on the Vermont Council on World Affairs. Another former FSO, Greg Crouch, now lives in Arkansas, volunteers for the Ozark Literary Council and lectures on diplomacy at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

From solemnity to festivity, Foreign Service Day 2015 was capped by the awarding of the Director General’s Cup to outstanding former employees. The winner of the Civil Service Cup was Donna Scali Bordley, director of the

special “K Fund” for emergencies for 25 years, and of the Foreign Service Cup, Ambassador Cresencio (Cris) Arcos, who served as chief of mission to Honduras and assistant secretary in the newly created Department of Homeland Security. Both were applauded by the event’s 300-plus colleagues and invited guests. The DACOR Foreign Service Cup award was presented by DACOR President Marty Hurwitz to former Ambassador Ron Neumann, currently president of the American Academy of Diplomacy. ■



FOCUS ON

WEST AFRICA

PART II

Active IRC

Center offers
wide range of programs

By Gabrielle G. LaFavre, intern,
Public Affairs Section, Embassy Ghana

When it comes to engaging local students and their teachers about American culture and education, entrepreneurship and other topics, the Information Resource Center (IRC) at the U.S. Embassy in Accra, Ghana, uses hands-on experiential methods.

“This approach underscores the importance of engaged and effective presenters,” said Public Affairs Officer Danny Fennell. The IRC, he continued, “prioritizes effective learning results, and has seen success on an impressive array of topics.”

The teaching sessions are often led by Information Resources Officer (IRO) Stephen Perry, who sees the IRC as an “informal learning environment outside of school or work, where people can study, ask questions, in an unstructured and enjoyable way.”

Through engaged learning, the IRC teaches “soft skills” such as entrepreneurship, and offers English as a second language (ESL) instruction and other academic programming, and classes in website development. For its course on entrepreneurship, the IRC taught women



In cooperation with the post’s political section, PAO Daniel Fennell informs students about think tanks and governmental policy.
Photo by Andrew Ekuban

in the African Women’s Entrepreneurship Program how to create their own business websites and use e-commerce applications like PayPal to sell online to a worldwide clientele. The women learned to set up, run and maintain their new websites and PayPal accounts, which broadened their commercial reach.

For budding entrepreneurs, the IRC stages boot camps on topics ranging from how to write a business plan to using Twitter and LinkedIn to grow a market. The instruction, Perry said, always includes a focus on applying the information, to ensure experience enforces theory. He asks students to create a sample

**“[The IRC] prioritizes effective learning results, and has seen success on an impressive array of topics.”
- Danny Fennell, Public Affairs Officer**

business plan that “must address a social or economic issue in their home country,” so that they can envision the impact of their mock companies on a national scale and pivot from a profit focus to finding real-world solutions. By wrapping every lesson in a game or activity having relevancy to everyday life, students respond more enthusiastically.

The IRC provides intellectual property rights (IPR) and piracy information that Fennell said is important for young people hoping to enter into international commerce. “By demonstrating how U.S. companies operate in the IPR environment, our IRC plants important seeds for the next generation of Ghanaian businesspeople and fosters a useful exchange on this hot topic,” Fennell explained.

The training also ensures that Ghana will continue to

be a bastion of democracy and free speech in Western Africa.

Another important IRC program is ESL education. Although Ghana is an Anglophone country, many students speak a local language at home. “The presence of traditional dialects can complicate learning proper, grammatically correct English,” IRC Director Rita Awuku said. The IRC offers webinars and assistance from Regional English Language Fellows, and highlights the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ American English website, which offers grammar rules, free downloadable texts, quizzes and other resources.

The IRC also collaborates with other sections of the embassy and local schools, and the political section, for which it helped explain how think tanks contribute to government policy in Ghana and in the United States. It also collaborates with the EducationUSA office to present educational search strategies and the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to further learning. In tandem with the regional environmental officer, the IRC promotes environmental preservation and climate change programs in Ghana. These partnerships improve learning and promote opportunity and development for all Ghanaians.

The IRC’s success can be measured in student and learner membership, which Perry said has increased by over 150 percent since 2011. “Ghanaians love the programs, and often request presentations for additional audiences,” said Fennell. With a validation like this, IRC Accra seeks to broaden its course offerings using the experiential approach. ■



IRC Assistant Jennifer Yeboah leads a Boot Camp for entrepreneurs.
Photo by Andrew Ekuban

ON THE FRONT

EMBASSIES PROMOTE PEACE IN WEST AFRICA



While the 16 countries of West Africa boast some of the fastest rates of economic growth in the world, they also face myriad challenges to peace and security that threaten to undermine progress and destabilize the region. These challenges range from threats to national security, such as the continuing insurgency in northern Mali and the specter of violence in the run-up to the March 2015 elections in Nigeria, to regional threats such as wildlife trafficking and violent extremism. Therefore, U.S. embassies have been deeply engaged in promoting peace and security in the region, focusing on conflict prevention and resolution, counterterrorism and security sector cooperation.

West Africa is developing from a region marked by violent transfers of power to one where democratic principles and practices are the norm. U.S. efforts have helped this transformation, especially in countries that have experienced recent conflict or electoral violence, such as Nigeria. Africa's most populous country and home to its largest economy, Nigeria has long suffered from internal conflict, and its 2011 polls were marred by allegations of fraud and postelectoral violence. In preparation for the

presidential election in March, the United States developed a robust interagency strategy to help the Nigerian government conduct credible elections and promote the peaceful resolution of conflict throughout the electoral process.

Political officers at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, such as Dan Joyce, had important roles in implementing this strategy on the ground. Weeks before the election, Joyce traveled to the city of Kaduna, the site of the worst postelectoral violence in 2011. Employing his Hausa language skills, Joyce engaged with local religious, political, law enforcement and civil society leaders, and conveyed the U.S. desire to see peaceful, free and fair elections. On election day, he led a four-person observer team in northeast Bauchi state. Mission staff who worked for months to encourage transparent and peaceful elections found election day to be memorable. Of his tour in Abuja, Joyce said, "It's the kind of work that I envisioned: classic bilateral diplomacy. And it's a great way to start out my career in the Department."

American diplomats in West Africa have long worked to bring conflicts to an end. The U.S. Embassy in Bamako's engagement in Mali, for example, has been integral to making progress toward a peaceful resolution

of the crisis that began in 2012 with a coup d'état and rebellion, followed by a terrorist takeover of much of the country's north. In 2013, Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard called on indigenous armed groups to condemn human rights abuses perpetrated by the terrorist invaders. This helped the armed groups distinguish their cause from that of the terrorists, leading to dialogue on the issues driving the conflict, such as underdevelopment in the north.

Diplomats at Embassy Bamako continue to foster this dialogue through engagement with Mali's government and the armed groups on both sides of the conflict. Political officer Josh Morris and several embassy colleagues travelled to Algiers as informal members of the international mediation team facilitating peace negotiations. Morris was also posted to Nouakchott and considers himself extremely fortunate to have had such interesting postings around the world.

"But my relevance," he added, "my individual contribution, has never been greater than my time in West Africa."

U.S. diplomats in West Africa also work on crucial security issues, including illegal fishing, piracy, violent extremism and trafficking in narcotics, persons and wildlife.

LINES



By Danielle Bayar, foreign affairs officer, Bureau of African Affairs



Wildlife poaching and trafficking has, in fact, become a U.S. priority due to its impact on iconic and endangered species such as elephants and rhinos, and its connection to organized criminal networks. First-tour economic officer Mich Coker and the U.S. Embassy in Lomé played instrumental roles in encouraging the government of Togo to act against ivory traffickers.

In doing so, the embassy helped make history. Six tons of ivory caught in a huge seizure in Malaysia in December 2012 were traced to Togo, prompting Coker and other embassy officials to meet with government and civil society representatives to learn more about the local trade in ivory. When the U.S. television show “Nightline” used a hidden camera to show the identity and location of a notorious ivory trafficker in Lomé, Coker went to work with Togolese authorities to secure the trafficker’s arrest. Embassy Lomé’s partnership, with Togolese law enforcement and anti-wildlife trafficking NGOs grew, as did their successes. In January 2014, Togolese law enforcement made its first seizure of an outbound ivory shipment on African soil: two massive containers containing more than four tons of ivory. Secretary of State John Kerry congratulated Togo’s president and Embassy Lomé.

“Starting my career in Togo was the most rewarding thing I could have hoped for,” Coker said. The U.S. mission continues to support Togolese efforts to stop wildlife trafficking.

Junior and mid-level embassy officers are often at the forefront of the U.S. response to sudden events in West Africa. The U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, for example, has one political officer and one economic officer who have been covering the dramatic events in Burkina Faso since October 2014, when mass protests forced the nation’s president to step down after 27 years in power. Political officer Johanna Fernando attended the first meeting in January of the international group for monitoring and supporting the transition in Burkina Faso, and continues to attend these meetings and report on the political situation and preparations for elections in November. Economic officer Martin Vaughan also stepped in during the uprising to write 12 award-winning cables on unfolding developments.

With help from the embassy, the transitional government has also sustained its engagement on counterterrorism and is preparing to send peacekeepers to the United Nations missions in Mali and Sudan to help battle violent extremism. Fernando said that, at a small post like Ouagadougou, “You end

up working on more than just your portfolio; you are really exposed to a range of issues.”

As Assistant Secretary Linda Thomas-Greenfield wrote last issue in her introduction to this series on the nations of West Africa, the region offers opportunity for professional development and the chance for officers to have substantive portfolios early in their careers and cover issues outside of the normal scope of their positions. ■

Left: Members of the Embassy Abuja Election Observation Mission stand in front of a polling unit in Bauchi where results are being announced. From left to right: Derrick Tolliver, Victor Atuchukwu, Dan Joyce, Musa Mohammed, Friday Mudi, Linda Parker and Yakubu Ahmadu.

Photo by Reuben Odum

Center: Bystanders celebrate and domestic observers take notes as an election official announces the results of presidential elections at a polling unit in Bauchi state in northeast Nigeria on March 28.

Photo by Dan Joyce

Right: Ambassador Robert Whitehead, at right, and Economic Officer Mitch Coker inspect a shipment of ivory seized by Togolese authorities in January 2014.

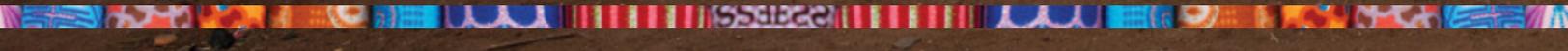
Photo by Noriko Horiuchi

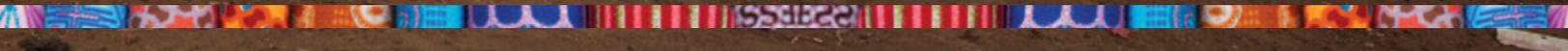


Mali

Embassy Bamako Makes a Difference

By Nadiya Ruppelius, Community Liaison Officer,
U.S. Embassy in Bamako







FOCUS ON WEST AFRICA

Mali is at the forefront of U.S. policy interests in West Africa: restoring democracy, promoting peace, fighting terrorism, combating violent extremism and advancing economic growth. Its capital, Bamako, located in the transitional eco-region of the Sahel, is a surprisingly comfortable place to live and work, offering impressive professional and personal rewards.

With a thousand-year tradition of hospitality and tolerance and a 20-year record of democracy, Mali was a model of stability until 2012.

Following a coup and the seizure of two-thirds of its northern territories by separatist and extremist groups, Mali endured a disruptive and painful period. But since January 2013, with intervention by France and other members of the international community, the country is back from the brink. The establishment of the U.N.'s Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) and the success of presidential elections allowed for a peaceful transfer of power, the lifting of U.S. aid restrictions and the return of the Peace Corps in 2014. When Ebola reached Mali in November last year, disaster was averted thanks in part to the U.S. Embassy in Bamako's swift coordination of all sections and agencies

to assist the Malian government. Mali was declared Ebola-free in January.

Today, Mali is in transition as bilateral engagement is re-energized, and the U.S. mission works to support the country's efforts to consolidate democracy, promote national reconciliation and build a foundation for long-term stability in the region.

An assignment in Bamako can be challenging and rewarding, fulfilling several professional requirements under the Career Development Program. Staff members often take on greater responsibilities than at a larger post, handling VIP visits and innumerable events regardless of cone or grade. Even junior personnel can find themselves working directly with senior officials representing U.S. interests. "Mali is dynamic and challenging; you live and work in a country whose issues are at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy with folks inside and outside the embassy who are tireless, creative and sharp," said second-tour political officer Ketura Brown.

The embassy's front office values personal and family time and actively encourages staff to leave at close of business. Today, the U.S. mission presence consists of six government agencies and more than 75 direct-hire Americans, housed in a complex completed in the fall of 2006. According to USAID Deputy Director Erin Pacific, this has been an intensive year, since USAID/Mali is restaffing and mapping its five-year strategy while navigating security constraints and containing Ebola. The post's cross-sector strategy calls for supporting Malians to secure a democratic, resilient and prosperous future through \$120 million in annual appropriations. The prospect

of a peace accord with the North adds positive momentum. "Mainstreaming governance and resilience principles into our traditional health, education and economic growth programming will make our work environment even more dynamic," Pacific said.

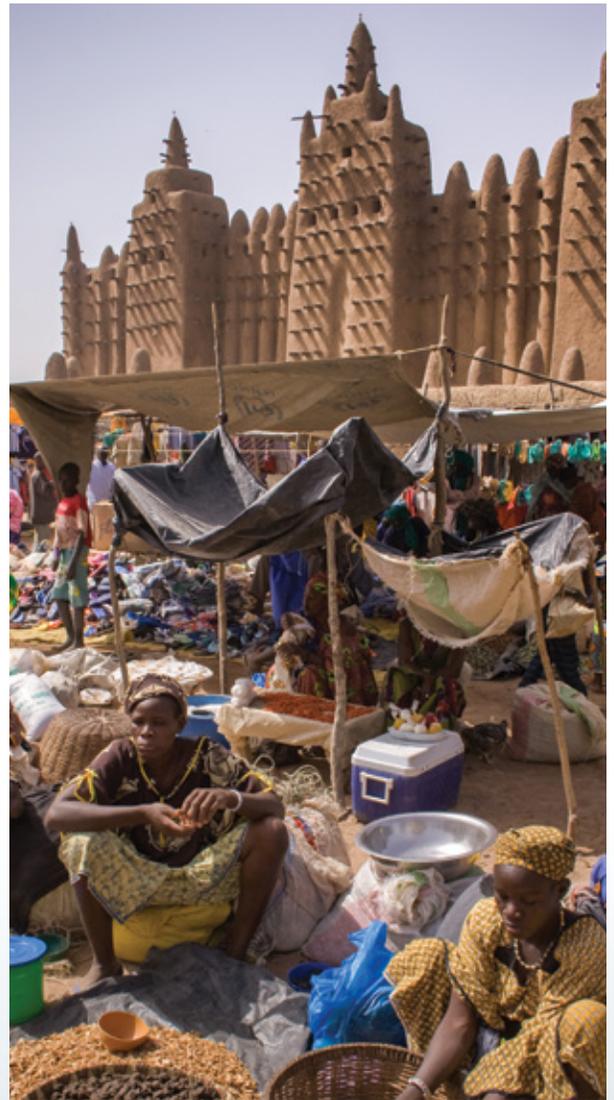
A Rich and Varied Culture

While the Malian empire encompassed, from the 7th-14th centuries, parts of what are today Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso and other nations, it fell into decline by the 15th century's end. The empire's legacy, though, lives on in some 500,000 ancient manuscripts held in public and private libraries and four UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the mosques and shrines of Timbuktu. With international partners, the embassy is helping to reconstruct parts of Timbuktu that were destroyed by extremists.

While Mali has an old history, it has a decidedly youthful demographic, with more than two-thirds of its population under 25 years of age. With youth comes creativity and vitality, and Mali's musical tradition is one of the greatest in the world. Many Americans will recognize in Mali's music some of the roots of U.S. musical traditions, particularly blues, jazz and rock. The music is part of a culture of exuberance and hospitality.

"As soon as I arrived in Bamako I was struck by the friendliness of the Malian people," remarked David Linfield, a second-tour officer working in the consular section. He said schoolchildren in the ancient Islamic site of Djenné will cheerfully take a break from their dutiful study of the Quran to show visitors





Clockwise from top left: A member of the musical group “Kora Mansa” (Kings of Kora) holds a studio session in Bamako as he sits among koras, Malians’ answer to the guitar, and plays a gourd drum. *Photo by Mauro Demy;* Villagers ply their wares in a market near the mud mosque of Djenné. *Photo by Sara y Tzunki;* Children actively participate in the classroom in Mali by raising their hands to respond to the teacher. *Photo by Michelle Mesen*

Opening spread: A boy rides a bicycle in front of the Great Mosque of Djenné, designated a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1988 along with the old town of Djenné, in the central region of Mali. *Photo by UN Photo/Marco Dormino*

Below: Boatmen guide a pirogue full of traders across a waterway as they depart from Djenné at the end of the market day. *Photo by Jurgen*





around and share their heritage. He added that the Peace Corps “has also done wonders for our reputation here. I find the most common reaction when someone suspects I’m American is, ‘Hey, are you Peace Corps? I love you guys!’”

Whether one is camping in the Utah-like terrain just south of Bamako or taking a canoe ride down the mighty Niger River, serving in Bamako has a whole lot going for it, Linfield said.

A city of contrasts, Bamako has luxury hotels and high-rise modern buildings, even as many streets remain unpaved and full of bumps and potholes. There are also colorful beat-up taxis and public transport vans, the “sotramas,” that share the roads alongside flashy SUVs, swarms of motorcycles, bicycles, pushcarts, donkey carts and livestock.

Although most houses in the capital have little or no electricity, there are grand mansions and houses with modern amenities along the river and in developing areas of town. Women can be seen washing their dishes and clothes by the side of the road or in the river while children bathe in buckets on the street. Bamako is a fully accompanied post, and there are many families in the mission community with children varying from 8 months to 18 years old. The newly renovated American

Club at the old Marine House has a bar, exercise suite, tennis court, swimming pool, volleyball court and a well-equipped and secure playground. Bamako has a growing number of diverse restaurants and a few semi-western-style supermarkets. Embassy housing tends to be spacious and most homes have swimming pools. Residences are spread throughout the city. Because the capital is relatively isolated, in-country travel and international airfares tend to be expensive. Additionally, security considerations at this high-threat post limit internal travel.

The American International School of Bamako boasts a high-quality faculty and has 166 students enrolled this year. It offers instruction from pre-K through the 12th grade and is housed in a modern building that opened in 2011. The school’s large, secure campus is approximately four kilometers from the downtown.

Employment opportunities for eligible family members are excellent, and most family members who wish to work are able to do so. Some knowledge of French (or the local language, Bambara) is important; to get the most out of one’s experience in Mali, the embassy offers a language program in both languages that’s open

to all employees and eligible family members.

According to Chargé d’Affaires Andrew Young, “Morale is high in Bamako because our team works on fascinating issues critical to our national security in a place where they can also immerse themselves in a rich West African culture and enjoy fun activities like sports, cruises on the Niger River or exploring a world-class music scene.”

Most people assigned to Mali enjoy their experience and are sad to leave. In addition to a tight sense of community, the post offers the rewards of serving and making a difference in a consolidating democracy. That strong sense of inclusiveness and purpose among those at Embassy Bamako can really bring out the best in a Foreign Service tour. ■

Clockwise from top left: The Bandiagara in Dagon country in Mali is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. *Photo by TREE AID;* Young drummers perform along the roadside in front of a Baobab tree on the road to Djenné. *Photo by Mauro Demony;* A resident of Sibi-Sibi performs the famous Dogon Mask Dance to mark the opening of a USAID project. *Photo by Doug Brack;* A boy inscribes verses from the Qur’an on a wooden tablet. *Photo by Mauro Demony;* Chargé d’Affaires Andrew Young speaks to press outside Timbuktu’s Grand Mosque during a recent visit to the city. *Photo by Tim Poudiungo.*



At a Glance Mali

Capital: Bamako

Government Type: Republic

Area: 1,240,192 sq km

Population: 16,455,903

Languages: French, Bambara, Ffulde, Dogon, Maraka, Malinke, other indigenous languages

Religions: Muslim 95%, Christian 2%, Animist 2%

GDP per capita: \$1,600

Export partners: China, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand

Import partners: France, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, China

Currency: West African CFA franc

Internet country code: .ml



Burkina Faso

Building connections in a time of transition

Story and photos by Isaac D. Pacheco





FOCUS ON
WEST
AFRICA

Last October, Burkina Faso made international headlines when its citizens deposed then-president Blaise Compaoré in a violent uprising after his political allies attempted to amend the country's constitution so he could run again as president (despite having already held the office for 27 years). Although tensions ran high in the initial days following the change of power, the country's interim leaders jointly stabilized the government and quelled citizens' fears about a military junta. Burkina Faso's current transitional government has pledged to heed the voice of the people when they vote in democratic elections this October and has promised that the process will be fair and transparent.

"The [government] established a biometric registration system during the last election cycle in 2012, so the results are pretty accurate," said Souleymane Boly, political assistant at the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou. "Obviously, it's a process and there are still many issues, especially on governance, justice, corruption and things like that. We haven't had a democratic transition since 1967."

As a result of the recent upheaval, most news reports out of Burkina Faso have focused on events in and around the nation's capital, Ouagadougou, and its second-largest city, Bobo-Dioulasso. However, the hectic urban pace in Burkina Faso's major cities is the exception in a country that otherwise prides itself on being attached to the land (more than 80 percent of Burkinabe work in agriculture). Nowhere is this attachment more evident than in small towns and villages along the highways and rural byways of this landlocked West African gem.

This is the "land of the upright people" for which the country is named. Locals are quick to offer warm smiles and greetings in French or one of the nation's many tribal languages. People here are proud of their unique cultural histories and eager to share their stories with visitors. Food, tribal affiliations, architecture and art can vary appreciably from one region to another, particularly between the country's arid northeast and tropical southwest. These differences are reminders of the nation's



diversity and are part of the unique cultural fabric that makes Burkina Faso so special.

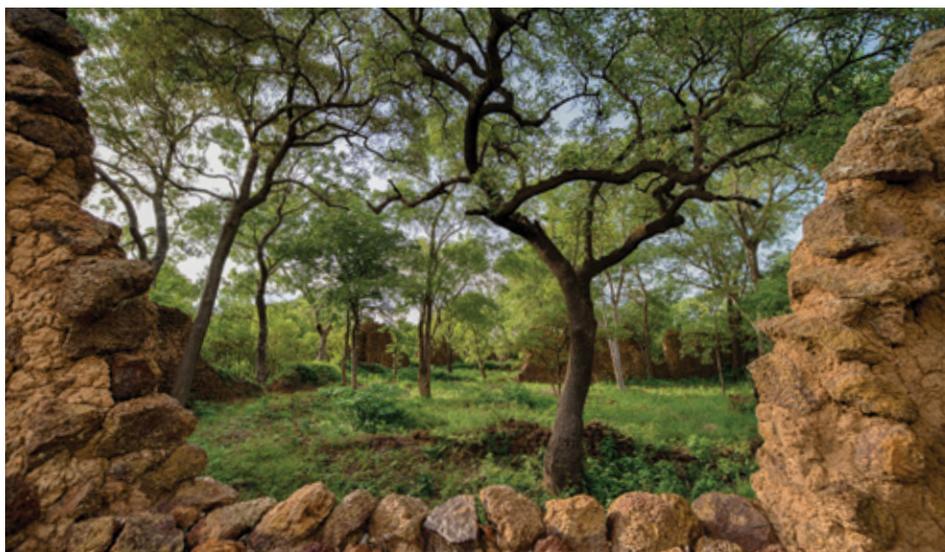
"It's a really fascinating place to work. It's a place where not a lot of people can say they've been, and the kind of chances that you have for cultural interactions are really unique because this is a place where people are very genuine," said Martin Vaughan, Embassy Ouagadougou's economic and commercial officer.

In his first overseas tour, Vaughan is the sole American officer responsible for monitoring and reporting on the country's economic issues. His office promotes U.S. business interests and investment, and assists the Burkinabe with developing an economy that has shown promising signs of growth in recent years.

"One of the things that we are doing in a place like Burkina Faso, where there hasn't been a history of major engagement with the

U.S. business community or companies, is building foundations," he said. "We're laying groundwork and strengthening ties so that there is potential for investment and for export here in the future, particularly as the economy grows."

Since Burkina Faso currently ranks near the bottom of the U.N.'s Human Development Index, the embassy emphasizes initiatives that empower some of the country's 17 million residents to take an active role in improving their lives. One notable success is the self-help program, which provides communities with small grants and promotes entrepreneurship. The program's microloans have been used for a variety of ventures, from building a grain mill to buying sewing machines and purchasing supplies for a factory that makes shea butter soap.





Clockwise from left: Bobo-Dioulasso boasts several interesting landmarks, including the 19th Century-era grand mosque, which is a well-preserved example of the Sudano-Sahelian architectural style; The Monument aux Martyrs towers above Ouaga 2000, an upscale neighborhood on the southern fringe of Ouagadougou that is the site of many hotels, embassies, courthouses and other government buildings; In the country's southwest corner, two riders navigate the singular dirt road connecting the cities of Banfora and Gaoua; A glimpse through a break in the stone walls at the Ruins of Loropéni, Burkina Faso's only UNESCO World Heritage site, shows a now-verdant interior that a millennia ago was a bustling town and strategic stopping point along the trans-Saharan gold trade route.

Opening spread: A group of boys make playful faces at a large street market in Bobo-Dioulasso.

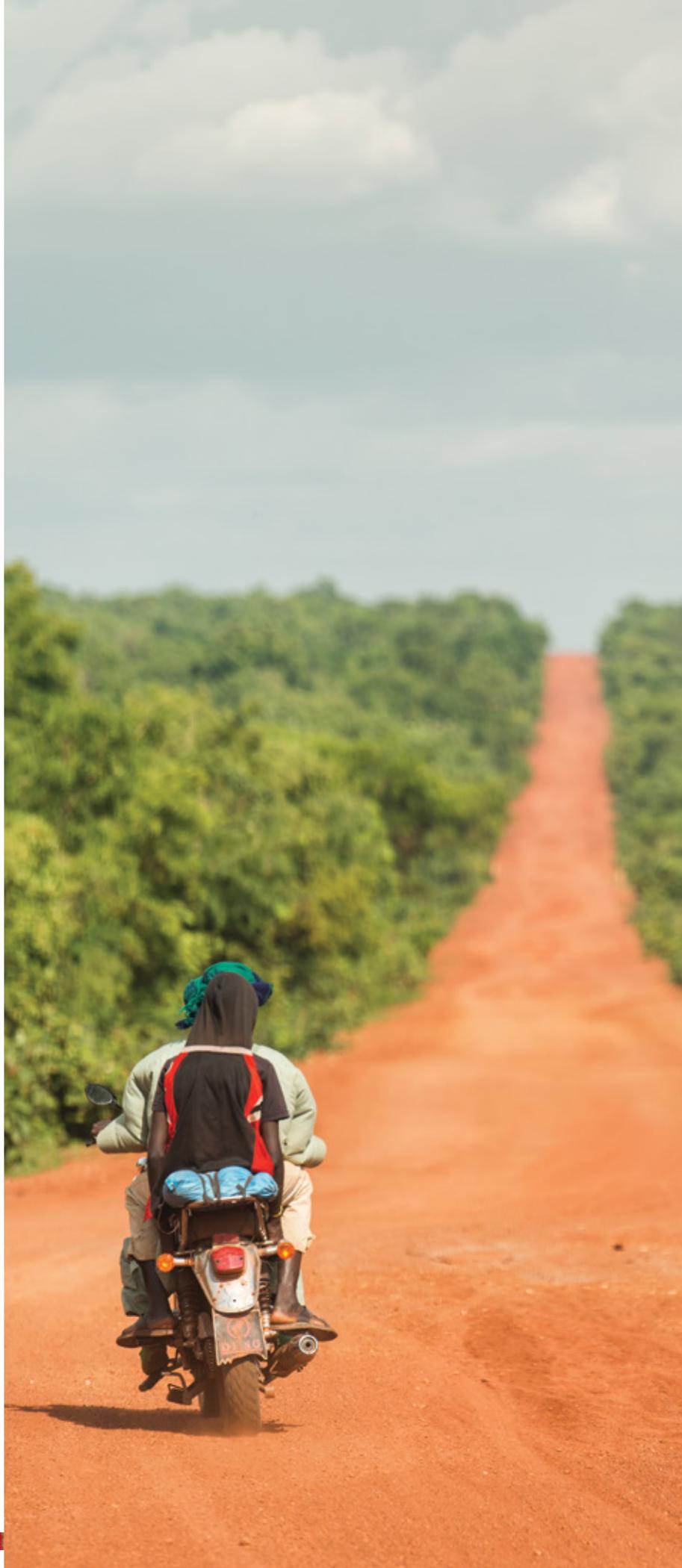
"It's not a huge sum of money, it's like \$4,000-\$5,000, but it's something these communities can take to build something that will improve their way of life and bring in a little more income," said Vaughan.

"As the standard of living improves, it's going to be more and more important for U.S. companies to be here, and so that's what we're trying to create, solid relationships that we can build on."

Another aspect of development that has shown great success in Burkina Faso is the embassy's anti-malarial campaign, spearheaded by USAID. With more than seven million cases reported annually—many of which are repeat infections—malaria is a major public health problem in Burkina Faso that contributes to increased morbidity and mortality. The dramatic need for resources has placed the country on the fast track to becoming a malaria focus country, a distinction that would enable the mission to play an even greater role in educating residents and combating the spread of the disease.

"I think our malaria work has had the most impact. That's where our strongest card is and where we are best positioned," said Jim Parys, Embassy Ouagadougou's USAID representative. "We sit inside the national malarial control programs offices and keep the finger on the pulse of what they need. By filling in the country's frequent gaps in lifesaving commodities such as bed nets and medicines, we have contributed to the drop in the malaria mortality rate over the past years. We are moving on now to expand our interventions to underserved rural areas that suffer from being far away from a health post."

Along with development projects, the embassy focuses on promoting regional security, good governance and human rights. Ambassador Tulinabo Mushingi sees the country's partnership with the United States as one of the





most vital bilateral relationships in the region, and actively encourages embassy staff to engage with the Burkinabe on issues that are important to both nations.

“We think Burkina Faso is the place to be, not only for the geopolitical location of the country, but also because the Burkinabe people are eager to work with us,” he said. “Security cooperation in this region, in Burkina Faso, is a very important policy objective of ours, and given that we still have their good will and the Burkinabe are willing to work with us, it has been really a good place for trying to push out our agenda on security cooperation.”

The embassy views the country’s large youth population as a key demographic for maintaining regional stability and security, and sponsors a youth council, exchange programs and alumni outreach presentations for

citizens between the ages of 25 and 35. These programs encourage entrepreneurship, and help develop business, leadership and English language skills so that the country’s young leaders will have the tools to succeed in the international marketplace.

“The work here is very engaging and at times difficult, but it also reaps the greatest rewards because you can physically see the response of the people,” said Brenda Soya, Embassy Ouagadougou’s public affairs officer. “Partners and community members are so warm and express deep appreciation for what we do. I think that makes up for all the long hours or some of the challenges that come with a lack of infrastructure.”

For FSOs, the challenges of working at a smaller post in a developing country are numerous. But for many, including Soya, the tight-knit community feeling and dynamic opportunities to engage on issues outside of one’s cone or specialty, make service at Embassy Ouagadougou a worthwhile endeavor.

“We are all involved in setting up the mission goals, and assessing our mission’s progress,” she said. “So, for an entry-level officer, it’s a great experience because you get to really see what is happening in a broader embassy context. For a mid-level officer, there

are real chances for leadership and to really develop professional skills.”

The mission’s family-friendly community, high-quality international schools and myriad job opportunities for eligible family members (EFMs) also highlight the embassy’s focus on work-life balance for employees.

“Management works really, really hard to try and accommodate each EFM [who] wants to work,” said former Community Liaison Office Coordinator Ima Essien-Jones. “It’s a magnificent place for kids. For me, I couldn’t ask for more.”

As the mission continues to support Burkina Faso during its political transition, Ambassador Mushingi said it’s important for embassy employees to maintain their strong sense of community and shared purpose.

“We have here one team and one mission philosophy that has been accepted, and everybody is pushing in the same direction,” he said. “All of us within the embassy, all the teams, have to be able to speak with authority about what the U.S. government stands for, what the U.S. government is doing. Whether we are talking about our Sahel strategy, the Feed the Future initiative or Trade Africa, we have an island here in Burkina Faso where we can push those policies forward.” ■



At a Glance Burkina Faso

Capital: Ouagadougou

Government Type: Parliamentary republic

Area: 274,200 sq km

Population: 18,365,123

Languages: French, native African languages belonging to the Sudanic family

Religions: Muslim 61%, Catholic 19%, animist 15%, Protestant 4%

GDP per capita: \$1,700

Export partners: China, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Turkey, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana

Import partners: Côte d'Ivoire, France, Ghana, India, China, Togo

Currency: West African CFA franc

Internet country code: .bf



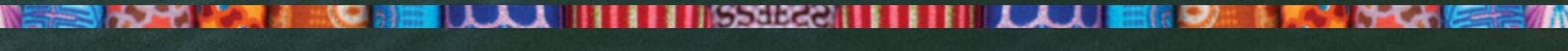
Clockwise from top left: Workers laugh and talk during a shift change at a mango processing facility near Banfora that provides job opportunities to Burkinabé women in the community; A girl carries a basket of grain atop her head at a market in Bobo-Dioulasso; Pamela Lee-Pow Ayoung serves meals to girls at the Sic Gira Imana orphanage with help from Kalie Soya (a Daisy scout volunteer), right, and GySgt. Randy DeLeon (former MSG detachment commander), back center; Where there is flowing water there is erosion, and one spectacular example is located several kilometers outside the city of Banfora. The Dômes de Fabledougou are 1.8 billion-year-old sandstone formations, carved of wind and water erosion into rounded pinnacles that jut out of the landscape like giant termite mounds. Visitors are allowed to climb up to the top of many of the domes, which provide breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside.



Benin

U.S. Mission aids Benin revitalization

By the Public Affairs Section, U.S. Mission in Benin







Known for three centuries as part of Africa’s “Slave Coast,” what is now Benin has a deep, rich culture. French predominates among the more than 50 languages. Its economic and de facto political capital, Cotonou, holds about 15 percent of the nation’s 10 million people, including entrepreneurs from around the world and a smattering of diplomats.

Benin’s more recent story is one of peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy by way of internal consensus-building and internationally-lauded elections. A nation of ethnic and religious diversity, Benin is also incredibly youthful. Two-thirds of its population was not alive to witness Benin’s democratic transition 25 years ago, but these youths are well aware of their nation’s chronic underdevelopment. They want economic prosperity and commercial dynamism.

The U.S. Embassy in Cotonou shares that vision. Engaging with youth is a key mission priority. Some of Benin’s most prominent young civil society and business leaders, and a few of its most popular performing artists, fill the ranks of the Ambassador’s Youth Council, providing insights on mission programs and initiatives.

The embassy community brims with civic-mindedness. Recently, Assistant Public Affairs Officer Stephanie Peterson and her husband found themselves in a morning embassy caravan to a beach, where she and other mission volunteers joined hundreds of young Beninese who had answered a mass text from the embassy, announcing a first annual beach cleanup. The event, co-sponsored by Mission Cotonou, its Youth Council and Benin’s



Ministry of Environment, was “actually where I met the ambassador for the first time,” Peterson remembered. It was her second day of work, her suit traded for ratty jeans, ready to hunt for garbage.

At the cleanup, Benin’s Minister of Environment Raphael Edou (an International Visitor Leadership Program alumnus) and more than 600 Beninese youth rid a central Cotonou beach of its litter, some of which was turned into art by young women artists for display at the American Cultural Center. “It’s a familiar theme in Benin: taking something that many would write off and giving it new life,” Peterson said.

The mission’s youth partnership continues to diversify and fortify. Entrepreneurship training reaches as many as 2,200 young Beninese at a time. The post’s financial independence summer camps give disadvantaged youth marketable skills and lasting livelihoods. At the post’s concerts and performances, headlined for free by some of Benin’s most prominent recording artists, thousands of young Beninese hear messages of economic and political empowerment. Under mission auspices, young Beninese teach other youths how to protect and

cherish the constitutional rights that Benin and the United States hold in common.

The U.S. mission also protects and cherishes Benin’s ecology. The Pendjari-Arli-W National Parks complex has West Africa’s largest concentrations of elephants and lions, plus antelope, hippopotamuses, buffalo and hundreds of species of birds. Yet these populations are threatened by encroachment, poverty, criminality and climate change. The mission’s interagency environmental working group works closely with key conservation NGOs, Beninese officials and other partners to promote stronger oversight and sustainable commercialization for one of Benin’s most compelling natural resources.

As Benin has limited resources overall, a population with unmet nutritional, educational, and health needs, and a surrounding region rife with religious extremism and transnational criminality, the U.S. mission is active in these areas as well. It works with Beninese authorities, NGOs, other diplomatic missions and Benin’s dynamic population to enhance the country’s capacity to advance politically, socially and economically.



Helping a nation that's a model for tolerance, human rights and democracy is directly relevant to U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives, is rewarding work and gives the U.S. mission team a sense of purpose.

Driving outside the capital, it's hard to miss the lumbering iron arms of Cotonou's economic engine: the Port of Cotonou, which

daily supports as many as half a million people through its economic activity. Benin's management of the port is one of its most promising, if complex, commercial endeavors, accounting for 40 percent of Benin's annual budget. Lashing together the interests of Benin and its neighbors with more than half its cargo destined for neighboring Niger and Nigeria, the

port's vitality is a direct result of a \$160 million investment in Benin's future by U.S. taxpayers via the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the success of which has spurred well over \$1 billion in subsequent private sector investments in the port. The nation's continued good performance on economic, social and political indicators has earned it a second round

Top left: Two young fishermen smile as they fish at the mouth of the lagoon connecting Cotonou to the ocean.
Photo by Soazic Gardais

Above: The rust and gray-blue color palette of a home in Porto Novo provides a vibrant backdrop for a car parked in front of the residence.
Photo by Adam Cohn

Right: A herd of elephants crosses a path in Pendjari National Park, located in northwest Benin.
Photo by Soazic Gardais

Opening spread: Boats rest at anchor in the lagoon in Cotonou, Benin. Cotonou is the economic capital of the small West African country and is located on the coastal strip between Lake Nokoué and the Atlantic Ocean. The city is cut in two by a canal, the lagoon of Cotonou, which connects the Lake to the Atlantic.
Photo by Mark Fischer





FOCUS ON WEST AFRICA

of MCC financing, this time to address Benin's energy shortfall through sectoral reforms and investments in green, renewable energy.

Benin is also a place offering rewards for adventurous travelers. Well west of Cotonou's port is the entry to Bab's Dock, a quaint place marked by a humble sign. From here, covered with woven palm fronds and jutting into a hidden lagoon, a five-meter skiff takes visitors into a winding tract of mangroves and onto a wide lake. A dock on the far side leads to a resort of sorts where a tiny sailboat, a weathered sea kayak, a sagging volleyball net, low-slung lounge chairs and cold La Beninoise brews constitute all that is necessary for an in-country R&R.

There are other attractions elsewhere in Benin. Near the capital are historical sites such as The Point of No Return and Tree of Forgetting, around which slaves were forced to march in the belief that doing so would cause them to forget and therefore not haunt their enslavers. Just up the road, the town of Ouidah offers a no less engrossing look at the roots and vitality of voodoo, practiced here before anywhere else. The town of Ganvié—the Venice of Africa—is a living village dating back hundreds of years to a time when building a city on stilts over a lake was a workable defense against invasion.

Travelers who are hungry need only sit down at any of Cotonou's many buvettes for a plate of peanut sauce on mashed yams, a bottle of West African suds, and if they're lucky, Chelsea Blue battling on the pitch.

Throughout Benin, change is underway. Recently, residents of neighborhoods adjacent to Cotonou's airport called their neighbors to come see the charming if bizarre phenomenon of an orphaned jetliner being rolled seaward by a team of enterprising local businessmen. They'd convinced someone to allow them to finally remove that old carcass from the runway and park it for good on a nearby

beach, promising to clean it and renovate it as Cotonou's hottest new nightclub.

The truth may often be stranger than fiction here in Benin, but visitors will do well to reserve judgment until after happy hour with their colleagues, perhaps one day in a grounded first-class seat, peering out the fuselage window as night sets in on the Gulf of Guinea. This is Benin—a dynamic, ever-changing, quirky country that continues to capture hearts and provide some pretty incredible stories along the way. ■

Clockwise from left: The Fulani tribe, or Peul in French, are known for their intricate facial tattooing. This photo was captured on the ambassador's recent trip to the north, outside the village of Sinendé. *Photo by Stephanie Peterson;* Villagers outside of Sinendé welcome Ambassador Michael Raynor with dancing as he visits the farm site of a Peace Corps volunteer. *Photo by Stephanie Peterson;* Beninese youth come out in droves to participate in the second annual International Coastal Clean-up Day beach cleanup, organized by the public affairs section. *Photo by Erik Peterson;* The Basilica of Ouidah in Benin was built in the early 20th century and dedicated on November 9, 1989. *Photo by Victorillen;* Petrol, or gas, is sold on street stands like this beside a colonial-era Beninese house in Ouidah. *Photo by Shubert Ciencia;* Dugout canoes rest beside another fishing boat on the banks of the Lake Doukon near Lokossa. *Photo by jbdodane.com*



At a Glance Benin

Capital: Cotonou

Government Type: Republic

Area: 112,622 sq km

Population: 10,160,556

Languages: French, Fon, Yoruba, other indigenous languages

Religions: Catholic 27%, Muslim 24%, Vodoun 17%, Protestant 10%, other (Christian and indigenous) 22%

GDP per capita: \$1,900

Export partners: Lebanon, China, India, Nigeria, Niger

Import partners: China, India, U.S., Malaysia, Thailand, France

Currency: West African CFA franc

Internet country code: .bj



FAMILY DAY

Kids Thrive at Take Your Child to Work Day Event in D.C.

By Ed Warner, deputy editor

The State Department's annual Take Your Child to Work Day continues to grow in popularity, attracting a record 914 registrants, according to Human Resources Bureau's Work-Life Division, which organized the April 23 event. The Dean Acheson Auditorium was filled to capacity for the opening ceremony, however, the impressive turnout wasn't the only reason the day was a memorable one.

Laughter filled the auditorium as the children were treated to a visit by a member of the Department's extended family—Ben, the yellow Labrador retriever and “DiploMutt” owned by Secretary of State John Kerry—who burst into the room and immediately jumped up on the secretary, searching for a treat hidden inside his pocket.

The frisky 2-year-old canine set the tone for a day in which the kids not only got to hear an ambassador talk about life in the Foreign Service, but have the secretary laud them for, in some cases, speaking not one foreign language but two or three.

“Those languages are going to serve you” in your life and careers, Secretary Kerry said.

When one child asked how he could become secretary of state, Kerry offered career encouragement, saying there's nothing someone cannot do, if they want it enough.

“Do what you do well,” he urged.

Secretary Kerry also praised the children's parents, branding them “ambassadors of the United States” regardless of their official job title, or employment in the Foreign Service, Civil Service, Diplomatic Security Service or at USAID. They represent U.S. values: justice, fairness and democracy, and promote U.S. interests.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian Pacific Affairs, Ambassador Kristie Kenney, echoed this in her keynote speech. “Imagine, be curious, learn from your teachers, your friends,” she said, adding that it was her friends who urged her to take the Foreign Service exam, though she'd never been out of the United States before in her life and hadn't dreamed of a career in diplomacy. She's since been ambassador to three nations.

Kenney showed a film on Foreign Service work that quoted young officers while on



assignments in Argentina and Haiti, and told of how she uses social media to keep in touch with distant friends. She said she texted with a friend in the Philippines just that morning to commiserate over the Washington Nationals' loss and would also text about Take Your Child to Work Day.

The youths then set forth for a day that was divided into workshops and demonstrations hosted by the Department's bureaus and offices. The Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships, for instance, hosted two innovation-themed sessions in its cubicle-free offices with their clustered desks and colorfully painted walls that resemble a Silicon Valley startup's headquarters. The

highlight: S/GP let youngsters try out virtual reality headsets from Oculus Rift and Google Cardboard. The goggle-like devices let users “see” a computer-generated 3-D world that's unique for its 360-degree view that changes instantly, whichever way the user turns his head.

The Department isn't using the gear yet, said a staffer as he helped students adjust the goggles, but the U.N. has used it with 360-degree video of a Syrian refugee camp, to provide users a “tour” without having to travel to the scene.

S/GP also had a photo booth where youths could get their picture taken while wearing odd adornments—the stuffed penguin was a hit—and a partnerships brainstorming workshop



Clockwise from opposite left: Secretary Kerry answers youths' questions at the day's kick-off event. *Photo by Ed Warner;* A fife and drum corps performs in the Dean Acheson Auditorium. *State Department Photo;* James Thompson, director for innovation at S/GP, leads S/GP's anti-bullying workshop. *Photo by Ed Warner;* Jennifer Froetschel prepares to take digital fingerprints of Behson Safavian, son of Seemak Safavian, a DS engineer. *Photo by Ed Warner;* Jack Day, right, uses Oculus Rift virtual reality goggles provided by S/GP, as Aidyn Yerkin, son of Zhomart Yerkin of OES, looks on. *Photo by Ed Warner;* A Diplomatic Security K-9 handler introduces Atticus J. Pacheco to bomb sniffing dog, Cooper, at a meet and greet. *Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco.*



focused on the topic of bullying, where facilitators Jim Thompson and Aldrinana Leung wrote youths' suggested responses directly on the room's dry-erase walls.

Elsewhere, the children met the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's bomb-sniffing dogs and built "tin can men" out of piles of beads, wire and empty Altoids tins. The Office of Facilities Management Services (FMS) hosts the activity each year to reflect its role as the central processor of recycled materials at Department headquarters, said FMS staffer Julie Sobelman.

The Ralph J. Bunche Library offered a Cocoa Around the World theme, with chocolate treats served in its Cocoa Café. Attendees painted dried leaves to decorate a faux cocoa tree, toured cocoa-growing countries via Google Earth, got information on "fair trade" and designed their own candy wrappers. They also saw a staff member who's a magician make chocolate milk disappear before their eyes. More than 90 children attended.

There was a new major activity, a 6-kilometer Walk for Water that began at the C Street

entrance of the Harry S Truman Building. It featured speeches by senior Department officials, plus appearances by former Atlanta Falcon Ovie Mughelli and a former National Hockey League star, Pat LaFontaine. Ambassador-at-Large for Women's Issues Cathy Russell told of how millions of women daily spend a total of 140 million hours worldwide getting water for their families from wells and rivers.

Freeing women from this burden by making clean water more accessible can expand opportunities for women and girls, she said. ■

Strife-Resilient PD

Center connects with Bangladeshi youth

By Calvin Hayes, cultural affairs officer,
U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh

For Bilkis Irani, a Bangladeshi law student and online news reporter aspiring to study in the United States, the nearly two-hour journey to the American Center in the capital city of Dhaka by bus and rickshaw presents a degree of uncertainty. He is never sure if a general strike will close the Center before he arrives. However, he often makes the trip anyway, to meet with like-minded young people at the Center looking for information resources, safety and a diversion from Dhaka's political turbulence.

Irani dreams of speaking English fluently so he can study at an American law school. "The environment at the American Center enhances my education and offers a haven for learning," he said.

Bangladesh's prolonged general strikes leave young people with few places to go, but thousands have braved the ongoing political violence to visit the Center, a hub of safety and activity. They're drawn here for such offerings as free English language practice sessions, EducationUSA advising, library resources and cultural programs. The venue also allows them to voice frustrations and concerns about the political situation.

Shahina Sultana, the American Center's deputy library director, said she's "delighted to engage our audiences in a secure space." The recent turmoil, she said, has "built our resilience, challenged our creativity and helped us build bridges with Bangladesh's youth population by making them aware of our many program offerings. We had to learn the importance of adapting, remaining positive and using social media and text messaging to keep our users alert."

The American Center's English Club is wildly popular; its meetings are regularly packed—even an unadvertised one drew 83 young Bangladeshis, far more than the usual 50. Through the club, the embassy facilitates collaboration between teachers, students and members of civil society, while helping participants gain the improved English skills needed for better job opportunities and learn to speak their minds freely.

"We believe in turning obstacles into opportunities," observed American Center staff member Bimol Nokrek. He said the "current situation is a perfect opportunity to engage new audiences and



The author leads a discussion at the American Center focusing on Black History Month and the history of nonviolent protest in America. *Photo by Robert Rebeiro*

strengthen existing relationships. We've depended on long-standing partners and worked more closely with embassy Foreign Service officers during this time to host the English Club."

Other American Center Dhaka initiatives include:

- "Chat with a Diplomat," a lecture series in which FSOs and eligible family members lead discussions about U.S. culture and policy;
- A lecture series in which law students learn about U.S. diversity, respect for human rights, tolerance and non-violence as a means for promoting social change;
- The Music Club, a creative outlet for participants to voice their feelings by writing songs—and improving their English and critical thinking skills;
- The Cinema Club, which screens popular American films and serves as a catalyst for conversational English;
- Next Level Hip Hop Exchange Program, through which thousands of young Bangladeshis saw 60 young hip hop artists during a 12-day workshop on using music and dance for cultural expression;
- "American Center: Building Friendships," the public affairs section's (PAS) primetime television show, which reaches thousands of viewers monthly;
- Poetry master classes, led by a Foreign Service spouse, to inspire students and provide a platform for creative writing.

The American Center has also hosted EducationUSA's South Asia Tour, with help from two Fulbright English language fellows. The education fair with U.S. university representatives also involved U.S. exchange program participants, who hosted essay and interview workshops, as youths digitally participated in advising sessions via Skype. More than 1,000 students attended the three-day fair at the embassy's American Space, located near Dhaka's university district. (The space attracts approximately 5,000 visitors every month to a range of programs tied to themes such as business development, human rights awareness, education, youth and women's empowerment, and artistic expression.)

The PAS team, explained American Center Director Ann McConnell, "reflects the warmth of the Bangladeshi culture and represents an extended family that benefits from fantastic interagency collaboration and often sees spouses, members of household and expat Americans leading programs on all kinds of topics related to the United States."

The best way to respond to the constraints of living in Bangladesh, she continued, has been to "collectively channel our energies to the positivity inside," and that, she added, has been made easier by how "our youthful Bangladeshi audiences are enthusiastic and appreciative learners." ■



Next Level Hip Hop Exchange participants dance before an audience of 1,200 at the Shilpakala National Academy. *Photo by Anshul Gupta*

New Solutions

Competition promotes entrepreneurialism

By Kathryn Pharr, manager, Science, Technology, and Innovation Program, OES

Entrepreneurs in the Department's Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) are working to create innovations that could warn people about fires in their shantytowns, provide affordable textbooks for students and help farmers turn vegetable waste into a commodity. GIST, run by OES, uses science, technology and innovation to solve local and global problems, combat violent extremism, and empower youth and women.

Worldwide, there exists a large population of unemployed 15- to 29-year-olds, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Educated but jobless youths have engaged in civil unrest, even violent extremism, but some channel their energy more creatively, using strong science and technology backgrounds to generate startups that solve problems and create jobs.

Many of these youths from around the world will join President Obama at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) in Nairobi, Kenya, at the end of July. Since 2011, the finals of GIST's annual global Tech-I competition have been an integral part of the GES.

GIST Tech-I winners from Africa have included Tonee Ndungu, whose father wanted to start a village school but had no money for textbooks. He and Ndungu came up with the idea for the startup Kytabu, which allows families to purchase digital lessons individually, rather than buy whole textbooks. They can study the lessons on digital tablets and mobile phones, with the texts priced affordably. In 2013, Ndungu met Secretary of State John Kerry at the GES



Tech-I's Best Female Entrepreneur of 2014, Cynthia Ndubuisi, works on a project. *Photo courtesy of AAAS*



Tonee Ndungu, who came up with an idea to reduce the cost of textbooks, speaks at a GIST meeting. *Photo courtesy of CRDF Global*

and won Tech-I's Startup Stage, when he already had 60 users in Kenya.

Ndungu credits GIST with giving him great global and local exposure, but he's also persistent: He spends most of his time traveling to villages throughout Kenya demonstrating the product and making direct sales. Today, most of his 1,327 customers are actually in refugee camps in the north, where, without Kytabu, children would not have access to educational materials.

Tech-I's Best Female Entrepreneur of 2014, Cynthia Ndubuisi, grew up in Nigeria where cassava is a staple food crop. Farmers there sell cassava but burn the peellings, resulting in 10 million tons of toxic carbon monoxide annually. Her startup, KPC, created an environmentally friendly process to turn cassava peellings into nutritional livestock feed that farmers can sell, increasing their revenue. Ndubuisi is now working with an agricultural engineer to decrease the drying time from three days to one hour and is reinvesting in her community. Her CAMY Foundation has mentored more than 450 aspiring young businesswomen in Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

Last year, David Gluckman of South Africa won the Startup Stage of Tech-I with his company, Lumkani, which addresses the needs of urban shantytown settlements. There, the smoke from controlled fires used for cooking, lighting and heating prevents traditional smoke detectors from distinguishing the uncontrolled, fatal ones that often occur. Homes in the shantytowns are so close together that fire spreads quickly, destroying lives and property. Lumkani's detection

device measures the rate that a home's temperature is rising, not the ambient smoke or heat, allowing it to detect a fire more accurately. Devices for use in individual shacks within a 60-meter radius are linked together as a network, so that when a fire is detected, all network devices sound the alarm, creating a community-wide response to the fire within seconds. Lumkani sells directly to NGOs and also works with them on cofinancing to ensure communities can afford the devices. Gluckman has launched an Indiegogo campaign to allow people around the world to buy these devices for the shanty communities in South Africa.

GIST entrepreneurs' innovations keep coming—more are expected from the 2015 Tech-I finalists, to be announced June 15, as well as through other GIST activities. ■



David Gluckman of South Africa won the Startup Stage of Tech-I with a company that addresses urban shantytowns' needs. *Photo courtesy of AAAS*

WEAmericas TechCamp

Promoting women-led business growth

By Diane La Voy, foreign affairs officer, Office of eDiplomacy, IRM, and Stefanie Fabrico, economic inclusion officer, Office of Economic Policy and Summit Coordination, WHA.

Women's participation in the workforce has cut extreme poverty by 30 percent in Latin America in the last decade. One reason: Women promote regional prosperity by reinvesting up to 90 percent of their earnings in their communities and families.

The Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas) initiative, launched by President Obama in 2012, seeks to harness this potential by increasing women's access to markets, capital, capacity building and leadership opportunities. WEAmericas' more than 40 public-private partnerships are expected

to reach at least 20,000 women throughout the region by the end of 2015 and upwards of 100,000 women by 2019.

In one of the initiative's latest partnerships, the Department and local partners conducted a series of four TechCamps for women entrepreneurs in Argentina, Bolivia,



During a "speed geeking" session, technology trainer Rodolfo Salazar offers female entrepreneurs digital strategies for growing their businesses.

Photo by Juan Quintero



"Which dance is better, the tango or the merengue?" asks emcee Nelson Ayala, as he gets participants to their feet during the ice-breaker at the WEAmericas' TechCamp in San Salvador.

Photo by Juan Quintero

Colombia and El Salvador. The WEAmericas TechCamps seek to promote gender equality and involve WHA, the Office of eDiplomacy, U.S. embassies in those nations and a local partner with long-standing ties to networks of women entrepreneurs.

Since 2010, the Department has used more than 40 TechCamps to connect civil society organizations, journalists and other rights activists across the globe with low-cost, easy-to-use technological tools and concepts. However, the WEAmericas TechCamps are the first to focus on women entrepreneurs. At each event, the participants work with technology experts to co-create solutions that offer new ways for women entrepreneurs to overcome barriers when starting and growing small- to medium-size enterprises. Nearly 400 women entrepreneurs have participated, opening new doors for themselves and their businesses.

The first WEAmericas TechCamp, in October 2014 in Cali, Colombia, was a two-day event involving a “speed geeking” session in which rotating groups of 10 participants moved from one table to the next in five-minute intervals. Experts at each table explained the technology on display, such as crowdfunding, e-commerce website development, mobile applications and social media. The event offered interactive training and brainstorming sessions and opportunities to work with technology experts in groups to develop solutions to challenges. These were later presented to the whole group at the event’s end.

The women at the Cali event learned to sell their products online and create crowdfunding campaigns. They also developed digital media strategies, posting descriptions of their products on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter; purchased a domain name; and built a website before the end of the TechCamp. At the second TechCamp in the WEAmericas series, held this year in San Salvador, participants learned of new opportunities for jump-starting their businesses, including a comprehensive approach to enhance the international branding of Salvadoran handicrafts through the use of “green” seals of approval and organic certification. Some women applied digital tools to organizing their business responsibilities to achieve a better work-life balance.

At the third WEAmericas TechCamp in Bolivia, volunteer technology trainers from the Colombia camp helped in other ways. In

one case, a budding entrepreneur learned to use the short messaging service function on smartphones to conduct a marketing poll of fellow participants, who played the role of her customers and expressed interest in products she had advertised online.

At each WEAmericas TechCamp, participants promoted their products and offered information about their services, and networked to make connections or find opportunities to source materials and services from each other. They remain in contact with one another through a WEAmericas TechCamp Series Facebook group, which has more than 400 active members, many of them sharing best practices daily and making valuable business connections.

TechCamp’s expert technology trainers have continued to provide participants with advice long after each TechCamp has ended. Local Chambers of Commerce are also involved by their presence at many of the TechCamps and helping introduce the women entrepreneurs to potential customers.

Private-sector partnerships are at the core of the WEAmericas initiative. For instance, through the Department’s partnership with Ernst & Young (EY), local affiliates in each of the four countries hosting the TechCamps awarded business mentorships to participants. A Bolivian representative of a European software firm was so impressed by EY’s follow-on support,

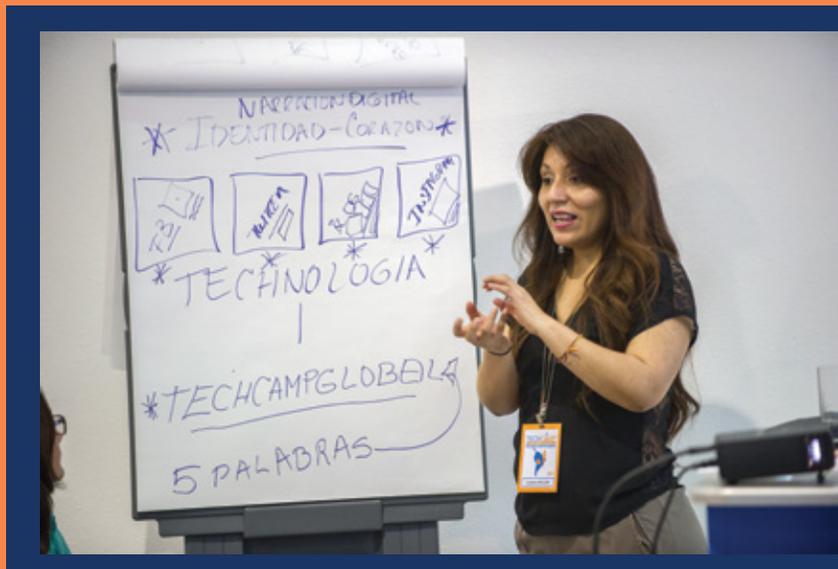


Four of the technology trainers introduce themselves to participants at the WEAmericas TechCamp in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. *Photo by Samaruddin Stewart*

his company offered impromptu awards to five camp participants for tech mentoring and support in developing software applications.

A follow-up assessment conducted six months after the TechCamp in Colombia impressed Economic Officer Victoria Cedeño, who found most participants were inspired “to rethink their entire business and general marketing strategy—redefining their clientele and redesigning their logos—before launching their online stores.”

“The TechCamp has changed lives,” agreed Economic Specialist Camilo Cardozo. He recalled how one participant had been injured after the camp and was unable to conduct sales visits with clients. Nonetheless, he continued, “She took the tools learned in TechCamp and now 80 percent of her sales are online and her business has been able to survive through her injuries.” The final TechCamp in the WEAmericas TechCamp series took place May 7 and 8 in Argentina. ■



Veteran WEAmericas technology trainer Cynthia Hellen teaches women entrepreneurs in Bolivia about digital storytelling. *Photo by Samaruddin Stewart*

After Hours

BLADE JUDGER

FSO is panelist at skating competitions

By Sandor Galambos, senior investment specialist, U.S. Embassy in Bern

By day, I'm a Locally Employed Staff member in the Commercial Service, promoting foreign direct investments through the president's SelectUSA initiative. Outside of work hours, I'm an internationally ranked figure skating judge, representing the International Skating Union (ISU) at international competitions all over the world.

When I was younger, my siblings and I were competitive skaters, but even then I wanted to be a judge. I got my chance to enter judging after the 2002 Winter Olympics, during which a figure skating scandal forced the ISU to implement rigorous requirements that opened the field to new and aspiring judges. When the Swiss Skating Federation sought candidates for training as a type of judge called a technical specialist (TS), I put myself forward. Once accepted, I began judging a multitude of regional and national competitions in Switzerland. And then, in 2008, I was nominated by the Swiss Skating Federation to take part in the annual ISU seminar in Frankfurt, after which I could pursue an international career.

After an arduous training week in Frankfurt, deepening my knowledge and practicing with colleagues from around the world, I passed the rigorous ISU exam and was certified to officiate in international competitions. Before being eligible to judge for Junior Grand Prix and Senior Grand Prix competitions, European Championships, Junior World Championships, World Championships and the Olympics, I had to undergo a waiting period of two years, all the while gaining additional experience in international competitions.

Finally, I was eligible to take the exam to be a TS, knowing that only a handful of applicants were likely to pass. I immersed myself in the world of skating, though, and when I passed, I became an officially accredited international skating judge.

In the simplest terms, a TS judge sits on the technical panel assessing a skater's performance, awarding marks during competitions. The panel—a TS and his/her assistant and a technical controller (TC)—judges each element of a skating routine, with the TS calling a specific element for marking by the panel. The technical panel then uses instant replay video to make verifications, for instance, to determine the skater's exact foot position at takeoff and landing of a jump or variations in the spins and level of difficulty of the step sequence. The panel then determines the routine's final score. If there are disagreements within the panel, the issue is resolved by majority vote.

There's only a short time for judging after a skater finishes his or her program, and the technical panel must make decisions in seconds. At one European championship, my judging colleagues and I faced numerous tough decisions because we had to review the routine in slow-motion video after the skater had finished. In judging, you know that you are up against the time, chiefly because TV stations have a rigorous broadcasting schedule. In this instance, I knew the time we had available affected who would be among the top three skaters.



The technical panel of the men's event at the World Championships in Shanghai in March included, from left, Kelly Cruickshank, assistant technical specialist (Canada); Ranko Hirai, video replay operator (Japan); the author, technical specialist (Switzerland); Alexander Lakernik, technical controller (Russia); Alexander Kuznetsov, data replay operator (Russia).

Photo courtesy of the International Skating Union

I served in my first ISU appointment at a Junior Grand Prix in Innsbruck in 2011 and received three high-level ISU appointments the following season. This led to my participation on a panel at the World Championships in Canada in March 2013. I was humbled and honored, since I'd be working with some of the finest ice skaters in the world. At the World Championships, the Olympic gold medalist from the Vancouver Olympics in 2010, Kim Yuna from South Korea, returned to competitive skating after sitting out two seasons, but faced stiff competition. Nonetheless, she won her second gold medal in the World Championships by a landslide.

More recently, I returned from judging the men's competition at the World Championships in Shanghai at the end of March. In China, I was impressed by the skaters as they did dizzyingly fast spins and some of the most difficult tricks ever attempted on ice skates, including quads, triple axels and triple/triple combinations, all with ease and grace. Their most astounding feat was the speed they picked up going into the triple jumps, executing those tricks with huge, often dangerously long trajectories.

TS judges must be good team players, deeply knowledgeable about all facets of skating, able to work under time pressure and having the highest moral standards. When competition gets underway, all judges must stay focused, remain calm and concentrate on the task at hand, regardless of who is performing.

But it isn't all work, stress and pressure. Being on judging panels in international competitions also lets me interact with colleagues from all walks of life and many countries. In my judging, as in my work at the embassy, I apply the same rules to everyone, using my best judgment to accomplish the task at hand. In skating, one must make quick, good decisions based upon technical knowledge, understanding of the rules and experience.

My success as a judge, I believe, comes from my commitment to advocating and practicing the highest degree of ethics and fair play. I always say to myself, "I am doing it for the sport and the skaters," and I do my best at practice and during every competition to give something back to the sport of figure skating.

So if an international skating competition is coming to your country, don't hesitate to look me up—I just might be at the judges table, and I'm always happy to meet friends and colleagues from the greater U.S. government community. ■

ALL BOW DOWN TO THE
PANTHEON
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DEPARTMENT
DEITIES!

THE FEARSOME MORDROR JOHNSON, WHO CAN ONLY BE
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GENERALIST OFFICERS

IS THIS A BAD TIME
TO APPLY FOR A
SKILL CODE CHANGE?



MIGHTY MELCHEEZNIK, DEFENDER OF THOSE WHO
JUST CAN'T GET IT WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGES

(HELLO. HOW
ARE YOU?)

UH... (ME TICKLE
HONEY BADGER
HIP HOP?)



GREAT KREDENZA, GRANTER OF THE MOST
DESIRABLE POSTINGS



LUGNUTZ, DARK UNDERLORD OF TRAVEL
VOUCHERS AND RELATED REGULATIONS

YOU NEED TO REROUTE
THROUGH BISHKEK,
BANGUI AND BRUNEL...



BUREAUCRATICUS, ACTING DEPUTY
ASSISTANT DEITY

HAS UNDERWORLD
AFFAIRS CLEARED ON
ASSIGNING THE
MOLE MENTO
CONSULAR?



in brief...



Players Inspire Saudi Female Athletes

In March, Mission Saudi Arabia hosted a week of basketball clinics and speaking engagements featuring NBA International Operations Officer Becky Bonner and former WNBA player Ruth Riley, under the Sports Envoy program. Posing with Saudi female athletes during the program are, at rear, from left, Jeddah United Girls Basketball Team Coach Deb Packwood, Becky Bonner, Ruth Riley and Jeddah Consul General Todd Holmstrom. On March 22, Riley and Bonner delivered to Saudi female basketball players several boxes of WNBA merchandise during a reception at the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah.

Photo by John Elliott

CAO Visits Cameroon's North

Inaugurating a hand-pumped well in Badjouma Radier, Cameroon, are, from left, the secretary general of the nation's North Region, the director of the NGO Counterpart International, traditional ruler Lamido de Dey, the deputy mayor of the Pitoa Council and Merlyn Schultz, cultural affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé. On March 5-6, Schultz visited two North Region towns for outreach with youth, interfaith groups and women, affirming the region as a top U.S. priority, given insecurity arising from Boko Haram's attacks in the adjacent Far North region.

Photo by Ernest Nassou



Quilt Highlights ADA's Anniversary

State affiliates of the VSA, the international organization on arts and disability, made squares for this quilt celebrating the 40 Days Around the World Festival. The festival commemorates the 40th anniversary of Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith's founding of the VSA (formerly, Very Special Arts), which sponsors arts education for people with disabilities. The Disability Action Group, a Department employee affinity and advocacy group, is sponsoring an exhibition of the quilt in June at the Harry S Truman Building as part of its 25th anniversary celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Photo by Tiffani Bing

Department Top-Ranked as Employer

Forbes magazine has ranked the Department of State as one of America's best employers for 2015, the only federal agency the magazine ranked in the top 50 this year. The rankings were based on a survey of more than 20,000 American workers at large U.S. employers. Respondents were asked how likely they would be to recommend their employer to someone else. The Department recently also ranked second in an assessment of innovativeness among all large federal agencies. The assessment was based on data from the Partnership for Public Service.

Photo by Luis A. Jimenez, Jr.



U.S., Japan Honor War Dead in Palau

U.S. Ambassador to Palau Amy Hyatt walks ahead of the memorial wreath at the April 9 commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II on the Palauan island of Peleliu, site of one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific theater. She is followed by U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Bette Bolivar and, behind the wreath, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan. Also attending were the presidents and first ladies of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

Photo by John Thanner



Department Supports Model UN

Amara Manoogian of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs shows her support of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs' Model U.N.'s (MUN) social media campaign on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, part of the Department's involvement in a Model U.N. Conference that brought together more than 700 students and guests in April. The campaign targeted MUN students and alumni, and focused on a conversation about the U.N.'s value. The Department provided a photo booth for photos of employees with MUN experience and students attending the conference.

Photo by Yuna Jacobson

Retirements

Civil Service

Allen, Florence D.
Cramer, David P.
Gandle, David Lamont
Goodsell, Gene S.
Lash, Fred Curtis
Lee, Mary P.
Millard, James J.
Mitchell, Stephen Eric
Ohi, Kamran
Peterson, Robert B.
Sawchyn, Peter
Silva, Michael A.
Taylor, Marsha R.
Tomchik, Stephen J.
Tontz, Brenda Kay
Wels, Calvin Lee
Wiles, Dean Eric
Williams, James E.

Foreign Service

Davis, Lisa A.
Feingold, Russell Dana
Gagne, Lise M.
Leonard, Ruth E.
Meehan, Niall E.
Mussomeli, Joseph A.
ONeal, Adrienne S.
Power, Daniel J.
Rajkovich, Kathryn M.
Ruddy, Francis M.
Scollan, Michael T.
Valdez, Alejandra
Waller, James Michael

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 USC 3685)

1. Publication title: State Magazine.
2. Publication number: 08-0110.
3. Filing date: May 7, 2015.
4. Issue frequency: Monthly, except combined July/August issue.
5. Number of issues published annually: 11.
6. Annual subscription price: N/A
7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: State Magazine, U.S. Department of State, HR/ER/SMG, 2401 E St. N.W. SA-1, Room H-236, Washington, DC 20522
8. Complete mailing address of the headquarters or general business office of publisher: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Resources, 2001 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20520.
9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Isaac D. Pacheco, State Magazine, U.S. Department of State, HR/ER/SMG, 2401 E Street, NW, H236, Washington, DC 20522.
10. Owner: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Human Resources, 2001 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20520.
11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
13. Publication title: State Magazine.
14. Issue date for circulation data: October 2014.
15. Extent and nature of circulation: See information below.
16. Publication of statement of ownership: Publication required. Will be printed in the June 2015 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: Isaac D. Pacheco, Editor, State Magazine, 5/7/15.

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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2. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on form 3541 (include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	N/A	N/A
3. Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS®	15,365	16,584
4. Paid distribution by other classes or mailed through the USPS (e.g., first-class mail®)	N/A	N/A
c. Total paid distribution (sum of 15b[1], [2], [3], and [4])	20,480	22,200
d. Free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside the mail)		
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2. In-county copies included on PS form 3541	N/A	N/A
3. Copies mailed at other classes through the USPS (e.g., first-class mail®)	N/A	N/A
4. Distribution outside the mail (carriers of other means)	N/A	N/A
e. Total free or nominal rate distribution (sum of 15d[1], [2], [3], and [4])	N/A	N/A
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g. Copies not distributed 0 0		
h. Total (sum of 15f and 15g)	20,480	22,200
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Ethics Answers

Q: We are gearing up for our July 4th National Day event and have several questions about the solicitation process, including where we need to report the gifts and how extravagant an event we may hold. Is there any guidance about what we can and cannot do?

A: Yes. The policies surrounding our National Day events are set forth at 2 FAM 962.8, which has been recently revised. These policies are intended to ensure that our National Day events remain focused on the purpose of this important representational event. For example, the FAM provision explains the factors posts should consider before soliciting a donor, to avoid conflicts of interest, and directs posts to target U.S. companies and only certain foreign companies. It also instructs posts to consider the scale of an event in relation to the current economic conditions of both the United States and the host nation. The FAM also includes the policies concerning donor recognition, entertainment and many other topics. Further, an exhibit to the FAM (2 FAM Exhibit 960(B)) contains a nonexhaustive list of clauses that may not be included in a donor agreement. For accounting and reporting procedures, please review this year's Fourth of July cable.

Ethics Answers presents hypothetical ethical scenarios Department employees might face. For help with real ethics questions, email ethicsattorneymailbox@state.gov.



Photo by Arne Hoel / World Bank

Preventing the Spread of Malaria

By Melissa Jefferson, medical provider, M/MED/FSHP

Protecting Department employees and their families from malaria, and raising awareness throughout the foreign affairs community about the disease, is an ongoing priority for the Office of Medical Services (MED).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated in 2013 that 198 million cases of malaria occurred worldwide and 500,000 people died. Most of these cases were in Africa, and most deaths occurred in children. In 2014, U.S. embassy health units reported 27 confirmed cases of malaria among our diplomats and family members. All were in Africa. At least 14 occurred in West Africa, and nine were children and adolescents.

Keeping our workforce and families malaria-free is a shared responsibility. Malaria is a potentially fatal infection that is entirely preventable by following MED's prescribed course of action. The CDC, Peace Corps Office of Medical Services and MED agree—and research shows—that the benefits of taking anti-malarial medications far outweigh potential side effects or the risks associated with infection. And with several medications available, there is a “fit” for almost everybody.

Malaria infection is caused by a parasite that is transmitted through the bite of the female Anopheles mosquito. Of course, not all mosquitoes are infected with the parasite, and there is no way to tell from the bite alone whether the parasite is present in the insect's saliva or which strain of the illness might lead to infection. Incubation periods vary and often the infection is heralded

by flu-like symptoms. Bites typically occur between dusk and dawn—during social events, dining out, garden parties or even inside homes. In last year's cases reported by posts' health units, the patients were either not taking anti-malarial medications or not taking them correctly. Malaria is most severe in people who have never been infected before, including tourists, expatriates and children. Acquired immunity occurs among native populations in countries where malaria is endemic, after multiple, repeated infections over many years. Unfortunately, deaths still occur among Africans who return home after living abroad and assume that they are still immune.

Malaria prevention includes, first of all, protecting yourself and your children from infection by taking anti-malarial medications for the duration of a tour at a post in a malaria-affected nation. These drugs are prescribed at MED's travel clinics in Washington, D.C., FSI and at overseas health units. Anti-malarial drugs should be started before leaving for the malaria-affected area, so as to arrive with a protective level of medication. The drugs also must be continued for a variable period after leaving the malaria-affected area. There are many misconceptions about malaria medications, so open communication with health providers is critical in selecting the right one, understanding potential side effects and changing medications if needed. Malaria risk is posted on HR's Bidding Tool, and MED recommends that anyone unable or unwilling to take anti-malarial drugs should avoid high-risk countries.

Second, prevent mosquito bites by using an approved insect repellent such as 35 percent DEET on exposed skin. Limit exposed skin by wearing lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and pants after dusk. Clothes that are treated with repellents such as permethrin add an additional barrier to mosquitoes reaching the skin. Since mosquitoes can transmit a host of other infections besides malaria, regular use of repellents is widely recommended as an essential preventative measure. Third, reduce indoor nighttime bites by using approved, insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets that tuck under the mattress and are carefully inspected for holes.

Mosquito repellents are available at outdoor and camping supply stores and can be ordered online. Sprays are available as pumps, mitigating the concern about shipping aerosols through diplomatic mail. Posts are encouraged to provide mosquito nets and stock recommended repellents, so check before you move!

For more information, see Preventing Malaria in Mission Communities (13 STATE 115618), a comprehensive and excellent review of MED's recommendations and a must-read for anyone posted in a country with malaria. In collaboration with the Peace Corps and the CDC, MED produced the video “Know Malaria,” in which medical officers from the three agencies, including MED's Chief of Infectious Disease and Tropical Medicine, Dr. Greg Martin, discuss the disease and prevention. The video also highlights three victims of malaria, including a Peace Corps volunteer who died in 2013. We encourage everyone to watch the DVD, which is available at post health units, at the MED office in Washington and the FSI Transition Center. ■

Obituaries



William Quinn Beardslee, 44, a former FSO, died March 24 at home in Arlington, Va. He joined the Department in 1998 and served in consular positions in Frankfurt (twice), Mexico City and Washington, D.C., alongside his tandem spouse. A trained attorney, he moved

to the Civil Service in 2010 to continue his work as an attorney-advisor on immigration issues at State and the departments of Labor and Homeland Security. He is fondly remembered by visa office colleagues as dedicated, creative and generous. He enjoyed turkey hunting and hiking with his children, and visiting every beach he could find.



David H. Ernst, 94, a retired FSO, passed away on Jan. 19 in Orleans, Mass. He served in the Army during World War II and joined the Department in 1948. His postings included Cairo, Athens, Bombay, Paris, Suva and New Delhi. Retiring in 1978, he returned home

to Massachusetts where he was active on numerous boards and committees, was a member of the Cape Cod Commission and helped establish the Wellfleet Conservation Trust. He put most of his property in conservation with the Audubon Society. He enjoyed sailing and shellfishing.



Mary S. Gaber, 89, a retired Foreign Service secretary, died March 4 in Whittier, Calif. A Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana before working for the Department, she was posted from 1984 to 1991 to Berlin, Managua and Panama City. She then became a librarian for the Hawaii State

Libraries before retiring in 2002. Volunteering was a big part of her life, with more than 50 years as a member of Girl Scouts. She was an avid bird-watcher, a member of the Audubon Society, enjoyed hiking and belonged to the Hawaii Trail and Mountain Club.



Louis C. Hebert, 89, a retired FSO, died Nov. 2 at his home in Baton Rouge, La. He served in the Army during World War II and the Korean War, receiving a Purple Heart. During his 35-year career, he served at posts in Belgium, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Spain, Germany,

France, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Egypt, Russia and China. Retiring to Louisiana in 1990, he enjoyed gardening, substitute teaching at Louisiana State University, church activities and keeping in touch with friends and relatives throughout the world.



Monty Jomeruck, 85, wife of retired security officer John Jomeruck, died Jan. 10 in Las Vegas, Nev. She accompanied her husband on tours to Frankfurt (twice), Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Pretoria and Beijing, after which they retired in Las Vegas. Once there, she held board positions in a variety of clubs and was an active volunteer at two hospitals.



Raymond C. Jorgenson, 76, a retired FSO, died March 16 in Sandy Spring, Md., of Alzheimer's disease. Inspired by President Kennedy's call to service, he joined the Foreign Service in 1965 and served in Port of Spain, Panama City, Lusaka, Tokyo and Monterrey.

After retirement in 1993, he became a full-time caregiver to his granddaughters and volunteered as a teacher, helping immigrants seeking citizenship.



Betty Harriet McCutchan, 62, a retired FSO, died March 8 in Houston, Texas. After working as an assistant district attorney in Texas, she joined the Department and served as a consular officer in India, Chile and Turkey. She then was DCM in Guyana and regional director of the Office of Foreign Missions in

Houston before retiring in 2010. She was a member of the American Association of University Women, PEO Sisterhood, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Chi Omega sorority and Memorial Drive United Methodist Church, where she sang in the choir.



Anthony (Tony) Pawlicki, 89, a retired Foreign Service secretary, died March 2 in Tucson, Ariz. He served in the Marine Corps in the South Pacific and China during World War II. He joined the Department in 1982 and was posted to Brussels (NATO), Bogotá, Tegucigalpa and La Paz before retiring in 1990.



Karl Spence Richardson, 76, a retired FSO, died March 21 in Colorado Springs, Colo. After serving in the Marine Corps, he joined the Department in 1964 and was posted to Venezuela, Vietnam, Japan (several tours) and Seoul (twice). He was a Japanese language instructor at the Air Force Academy, then a

political advisor to the Commander of Space Command in Colorado Springs. After retirement in 1997, he helped with efforts to control North Korean nuclear weapons programs. He loved the blue skies and the broad spaces of Nebraska's Pine Ridge country.



Herman T. Skofield, 93, a retired FSO, died March 14 in Keene, N.H. After serving in the Army during World War II, he joined the Department in 1950. His postings included Berlin, Karachi, Vienna and Bern. Before retiring in 1971, he served as deputy director of the Office of European Affairs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.



Alan White Trick, 92, a retired FSO with the Foreign Agricultural Service, died April 3 in Olympia, Wash. He served in the Army in Italy during World War II and was awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. His federal government service began in 1957, and his overseas postings included Hamburg, Bern, Warsaw, Moscow and Jakarta. He retired in Olympia in 1983 and enjoyed skiing, fishing, reading and feasting on his wife Janet's exquisite cooking.



Janet Norwood, 91, wife of former FSO Bernard Norwood, died March 27 from Alzheimer's disease in Austin, Texas. As an economist in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, she rose to become commissioner for more than 13 years. Appointed by Presidents Carter and Reagan, she spearheaded BLS' independence from political pressures. She was the first female president of the Cosmos Club, helping break a male-only tradition in Washington's professional society. Married 71 years, she accompanied her husband in his early career to posts in Luxembourg, Belgium (USEC Mission in Brussels) and for shorter assignments in Geneva (GATT trade conferences).

El Salvador



Palau

End State

El Salvador Pg. 40



A woman prepares pupusas at an outdoor pupusería near San Salvador in the town of Tonacatepeque.

Photo by Robert Easton

Palau Pg. 44



A group of divers explores Blue Hole, a popular diving destination near Koror.

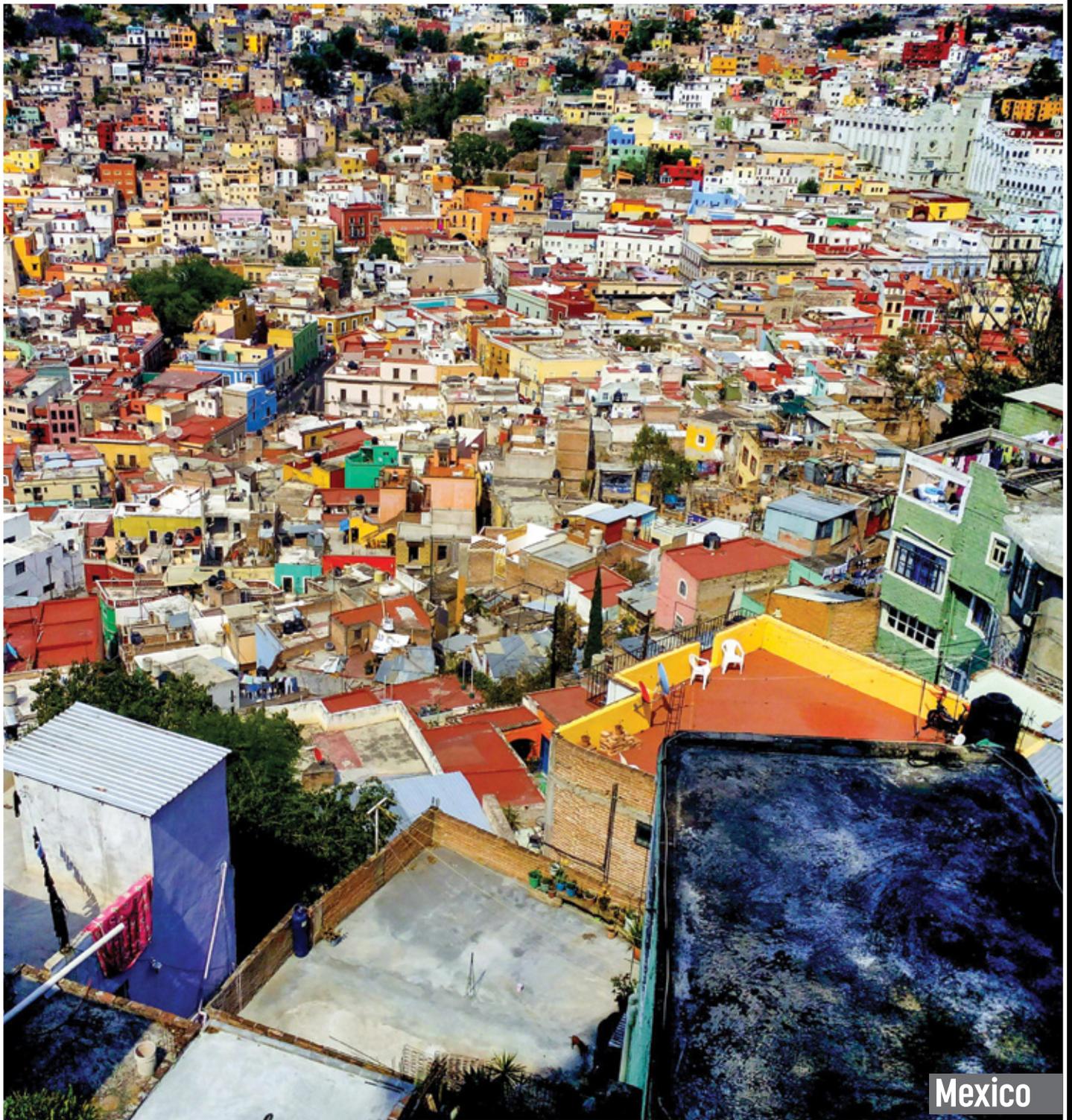
Photo by Klaus Stiefel

Mexico Pg. 5



Businesses and residences in Guanajuato, Mexico, create a colorful mosaic as seen from the surrounding hillside.

Photo by Marcos Fernandez



Mexico



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