



West Africa Regional Economic Bulletin | May 2023

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

We bring you tidings from West Africa and updates on our recent activities. This month, we share highlights of our work with our partners to promote food security and sustainability; protect and preserve wildlife; improve power and energy systems; and advance business sustainability. Our partnerships help support conservation efforts, increase business opportunities and improve livelihoods.

You can view this month's edition on our website as well as stay abreast with [previous editions](#).

Enjoy, and continue to stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Matthew Anderson

Office Director

USAID/West Africa | Regional Economic Growth Office (REGO)

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THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

Training the Next Generation of Young African Leaders



Deputy Mission Director Gregory Howell (middle, in suit) with young leaders from West Africa. Photo credit: Oswald Suonbai-kyi, USAID

Accra, Ghana, May 15, 2023: USAID/West Africa Deputy Mission Director, Gregory Howell welcomed 108 young African leaders to Accra, Ghana to undergo training in leadership, entrepreneurship, and civic advocacy as part of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). Following their three-week intensive training hosted by the YALI Regional Leadership Center, Accra, these young leaders will join over 7,500 YALI alumni trained in Accra who are now making strides in agribusiness, production, health, education, IT, development, and public policy across the continent.

YALI creates a space where visionary young African leaders can thrive - a space where great minds are nurtured to impact even more Africans across the subregion.

“This is an incredible opportunity for you to connect to that young leader who may need your support, may need your insights and could benefit from your experience. This is an opportunity to show up as a leader - impactful, inspiring, and transformational”, Deputy Mission Director Gregory Howell noted.

Through community engagement funds and chapter matching grants, USAID continues to provide funding for alumni and alumni chapters to implement their community initiatives and annual activities. USAID also supports the annual alumni homecoming and alumni excellence awards.

About YALI

The United States Government launched YALI as a signature effort to invest in the next generation of African leaders. The Regional Leadership Center (RLC) for West Africa is one of four YALI RLCs (Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa). The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) serves as the host institution in Accra. The Accra RLC offers an innovative leadership training program to young leaders from nine West African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Togo). Since its inception in 2015, the Center has trained over 7,500 young Africans from nine countries within the sub region. These alumni are engaged community leaders focusing on public policy, civil society, and entrepreneurship.

The Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) Supports Permanent Secretaries to Manage Climate Change



Representatives at the Training. Photo credit: CILSS

April 21 to 29, 2023, Saly, Senegal: The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel, CILSS), with funding from USAID West Africa, organized two training sessions for the Permanent Secretaries of CILSS National Committees (SP/CONACILSS) of the thirteen member states. The training, a combination of theoretical, software-based, and applied learning focused on the [GlobWetland Africa](#) (QGIS), [Google Earth Engine](#) (GEE) and CLIMPROSPECT toolkits.

The training was designed to provide the SP/CONACILSS with the basic understanding and tools for monitoring wetland habitats and surface water dynamics. This will support multiple issues related to climate change and sustainable development. It will also lay a foundation for broader integration of Earth Observation (EO) technology into CILSS monitoring and evaluation of its strategic areas, including natural resource management, climate change, and water control.

The participants were also trained on the CLIMPROSPECT tool for integrating climate change considerations into development initiatives and policies. The CLIMPROSPECT tool provides robust science for increased efficiency and effectiveness of climate risk resilience processes. These training sessions are part of CILSS' efforts to strengthen the skills of the SP/CONACILSS and conclude the series of three integrated training courses that were scheduled in the 2022-2023 operational plan.

The Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) holds Consultations on Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security



Participants at the regional consultation. Photo Credit: CILSS

March 29 to 31, 2023, Bamako, Mali: The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) held a regional technical consultation on the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa, in collaboration with its partners. The meeting aimed to update the food and nutrition situation in order to propose appropriate responses and intervention measures to assist vulnerable populations.

It brought together delegates from Cameroon, seventeen West Africa and the Sahel countries, representatives of subregional and international organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The delegates focused on validating the revised balance sheets for the 2022-2023 agricultural season, updating the food and nutrition situation, and identifying mitigation measures for vulnerable populations of the Sahel and West Africa for the 2022-2023 consumption year.

Participants noted that the Sahel and West Africa region is facing an alarming food and nutrition situation caused by climate, security, and economic effects. This situation is reflected in the difficulties households have in accessing sufficient, healthy and nutritious food, leading to a resurgence of malnutrition in several countries. Analyses of the Cadre

Harmonisé (CH) have shown that from March to May 2023, nearly 30 million people are food and nutrition insecure, which might increase during the next lean season.

The consultation formulated recommendations including the rapid development and implementation of response plans, food, and humanitarian assistance interventions to protect livelihoods and save human lives. Partners are encouraged to support States in the development and implementation of these plans, strengthen food and nutrition security information systems and mechanisms, and support the efforts of States and organizations in mobilizing funding to address food and nutrition crises.

The summary conclusion can be accessed [here](#).

USAID Municipal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (MuniWASH) Facilitates Knowledge Sharing in Waste Management in West Africa



Panelists at the Event. Photo Credit: MuniWASH

February 23, 2023, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: The USAID Municipal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (MuniWASH) Activity organized a dialogue to improve sanitation sector performance and give WASH sector experts the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience. The event discussed the issues, challenges, and opportunities of the autonomous

sanitation subsector in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire. MuniWASH facilitated a direct dialogue between leading fecal sludge management (FSM) stakeholders with panelists from national agencies in charge of FSM in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal. The dialogue included DELVIC Sanitation Initiatives, a successful private operator in the regional sanitation sector, and the Association des Vidangeurs Professionnels du Benin (Association of Vacuum Truck Operators in Benin).

This dialogue brought government agencies together including Direction de l'Assainissement et de la Voirie Urbaine (DAVU) in Benin and Office National de l'Assainissement et du Drainage (ONAD) in Côte d'Ivoire to reassure the private sector about ongoing reforms in their respective countries to improve the transport and treatment of fecal sludge.

The meeting discussed the desludging reforms underway in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, the challenges of private emptying professionals, and potential avenues to attract funding opportunities. Participants advocated for tax relief and the establishment of a regulator between themselves and the national agencies. The panelists urged all actors to take bold steps to improve the sector's financial sustainability with particular attention to the valorization of sanitation by-products and activities.

**USAID West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH)
Grantee, ReelFruit, Markets Products in the United States**



Affiong Williams, CEO of ReelFruit, meeting with various partners and distributors in the U.S. Photo Credit: ReelFruit

[ReelFruit](#), currently the largest fruit snack production company in Nigeria, is making strides towards the export of their products to the United States. ReelFruit was awarded a co-investment grant of approximately \$500,000 in September 2021, through the USAID-funded West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH), to help boost the company's business and supply chain. Through a co-investment partnership, Reelfruit is supporting 250 smallholder farmer networks across five states in Nigeria by providing them with training on good agronomic practices and direct purchasing of their fresh fruits.

Reelfruit has been working to expand its market and meet the necessary requirements for exports under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). To this end, Affiong Williams, CEO and Managing Director of ReelFruit (also known as Nature's Bounty Health Products Ltd.), embarked on a WATH-supported market entry trip to the United States in February 2023 to meet prospective U.S. distributors and retailers.

The trip included meetings with prospective clients and partners, which has yielded significant results for ReelFruit. The company successfully sold two pallets of dried fruits, generating a revenue of \$5,000. Additionally, ReelFruit has signed offtake agreements with two distributors (Bluestar Direct LLC and Nightingale Bakery) and Adelina Sales, a broker, for a commercial shipment of dried fruits.

By the end of the three-year activity, Reelfruit hopes to create 140 new jobs and acquire international certifications to export to the U.S.

Private Firm Begins to Operate Gbarnga-Ganta Grid built by USAID/Power Africa



The Chairman of the Board of Directors for LEC, Monie Captan (in white) and the CEO of JEP, Floyd Tomahafter signing the franchise agreement along with Bong County Superintendent (far left) and Commissioners of the Energy Regulator on the far right

The Power Africa/USAID-built Ganta-Grbanga Electricity grid in Gbarnga, Bong County, Liberia took an important step toward sustainability with the signing of a franchise operations agreement between the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) and the new local operator, Jungle Energy Power (JEP), on March 10, 2023, through a public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement. The grid provides energy to thousands of residents in the county. To date, JEP has added more than 2,000 additional connections to the system, increased customer satisfaction, and decreased distribution losses. Additionally, JEP provides operations, maintenance, and management services in partnership with LEC, who still maintains the medium-voltage power distribution lines. The privately operated system is also a source of reliable revenue for LEC. In her remarks at the signing event, the Bong County Superintendent thanked LEC, JEP and USAID/Power Africa for “bringing light to Gbarnga after 45 years of darkness.”

Over the past year, Power Africa has supported the LEC and energy sector regulators to reform service delivery guidelines and to provide competitive business opportunities for private sector operators, through USAID. Given the success of the Bong County model, LEC has applied the same model to different grids in Liberia. Power Africa aims to continue development of utility operation reforms using a similar model in other countries across the region.

The West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED) Program Supports Forest Landscape Restoration Programs in Liberia and Sierra Leone



The Mano River runs through the Gola Forest. Credit: WABiCC

The West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development ([WABiLED](#)) program is exploring forest landscape restoration and community land use and management opportunities in the Greater Gola-Foya transboundary forest landscape between Sierra Leone and Liberia using a comprehensive assessment tool. This aligns with its objective to reduce deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss as well as to support low emissions development strategies by building on the efforts of its predecessor, the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change ([WABiCC](#)) program.

WABiLED recently produced a consolidated Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) report, which identified 250,851 hectares of land area with restoration potential and recommended the need to integrate nature education into government policies, among other priority interventions. The report proposed a comprehensive strategy for restoring degraded landscapes, conserving biodiversity, and supporting local livelihoods. ROAM will support Liberia and Sierra Leone to further develop forest landscape restoration programs and strategies to conserve their rich biodiversity and promote climate-resilient low emission development.

Read [more](#).

USAID Drives Sustainability and Economic Empowerment Through Shea



Shea 2023 event banner Photo Credit: GSA

USAID is supporting *Shea 2023*, the annual shea industry conference, whose theme is 'Building Resilient Supply Chains.' The event, which will take place June 12-14, 2023, at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, will be headlined by Her Excellency Jessica Davis Ba, the U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire.

Shea 2023 will provide a platform for industry experts, stakeholders, and professionals to share insights, strategies, and innovations to foster resilient supply chains within the shea industry. With a strong focus on sustainable development and economic empowerment, the event aims to shape the future of the shea sector.

USAID's partnership with the Global Shea Alliance (GSA) drives transformative change under the \$8.4 million Sustainable Shea Initiative (SSI), which has so far empowered over 250,000 women shea collectors and processors, established over 300 storage facilities and increased collector incomes by an average of 30-35 percent. These achievements demonstrate the positive impact of USAID's commitment to fostering sustainable economic growth and resilience in the shea sector.

USAID is also enhancing the shea industry's performance by improving integrated trade routes. With shea traveling through multiple West African countries, the effectiveness of transit corridors plays a vital role in ensuring the sector's success. The event will provide a platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities to optimizing trade routes, further strengthening the shea industry's resilience.

To register or read more, [visit this site](#).

The Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS) Hosts Module Two of Virtual Workshops on Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) and Communication



ASSESS virtual workshop banners . Photo Credit: ASSESS

April 26-27, May 03-04, 2023: An average of 65 daily participants benefited from the second module of the virtual Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) and Communications training held for implementing partners of the Regional Economic Growth Office (REGO) of USAID/West Africa. The training, organized by the Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS) project, brought together staff from various projects and programs in Burundi, Benin, Mali, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Ghana.

The communication workshop sessions explored behavior change communication (BCC), communication strategies, and technical writing. The participants shared experiences from their projects, worked in groups to simulate communication strategy documents, and wrote sample reports on their projects.

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) sessions reviewed data management, data collection methods, the use of mobile technology in data collection, and data cleaning and transformation. Participants also discussed descriptive and inferential statistics, data visualization, and how to use results for decision-making. The facilitators demonstrated the various topics with datasets and practical examples.

Participants were positive about the interactive sessions, indicated that their expectations had been met, and looked forward to the next modules.

This series of virtual workshops complement existing USAID training initiatives aiming to strengthen implementing partner skills. The ASSESS team is hosting the third Communication Workshop May 30-31, 2023 and the MEL Workshop June 7-8, 2023.

Click [here](#) for more information.



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