

Nigeria Allows Polio Vaccines

ABUJA, Nigeria—The Islamic government of Kano state has dropped its objections to the use of polio vaccine and will allow vaccinations to begin, the *New York Times* reported May 27.

Polio has already spread from Kano state to nine other countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Togo, and Botswana. The World Health Organization plans to immunize all children in Nigeria to contain the outbreak.

Kano leaders had said the polio vaccine might make girls infertile but then agreed to use vaccine made in Indonesia.

U.N. Says GM Crops Aid Poor

ROME—Genetically modified (GM) crops help poor farmers and have posed no negative health or environmental effects so far, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said in a report May 18.

The FAO said the biggest problem with GM technology is that it has not spread fast enough to small farmers and has focused on

crops mostly of use to big commercial interests. Transgenic technology has great potential for increasing crop yields, reducing costs to customers and improving the nutritional value of foods, the FAO said.

"FAO believes that biotechnology, including genetic engineering, can benefit the poor, but that the gains are not guaranteed," said Hartwig de Haen, assistant director general of the FAO's economic and social department.

Nonprofit to Fight Diseases

SAN FRANCISCO—The Biotechnology Industry Organization, after receiving \$1 million from the Gates Foundation and \$100,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, said it was launching a nonprofit institute to fight disease in the developing world. The institute, called BIO Ventures for Global Health, plans to work with biotechnology companies to deliver vaccines and medicines to poor countries. The new institute announced June 8 it aims to arrange deals with biotechnology companies and charities to develop and deliver drugs for unprofitable markets in the developing world.

USAID: \$2.5 Million to Nutrition Program

WASHINGTON—USAID is contributing \$2.5 million to the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), established to improve the nutritional status of at least 600 million people in up to 40 developing countries. The announcement comes on the heels of a \$10.7 million grant award from GAIN's international alliance to support vitamin and mineral country programs over the next three years in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Mali, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan. USAID funding will help support grants to bolster country food programs.

Volunteer Program Commemorated

WASHINGTON—USAID commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Volunteer Programs in Economic Growth and Agricultural Development (VEGA) May 18. VEGA members have assisted in the implementation of over \$770 million of USAID-funded technical assistance projects over the past 40 years. VEGA's member organizations have deployed volunteers to more than 50,000 overseas assignments in

148 countries, serving in every USAID mission. Earlier this year, USAID granted VEGA \$2.5 million, which will help volunteers work directly with USAID missions to design, develop, and rapidly implement technical assistance projects to address the host countries' programs.

Arab Press Briefed on U.S. Aid

WASHINGTON—About 30 Arab and Arab-American journalists and activists had a full day of briefings provided by senior U.S. diplomatic and aid officials at the State Department and USAID headquarters May 7.

Speakers discussed efforts to promote democracy in Iraq and other countries through aid programs. Administrator Natsios said USAID was opening missions in Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries as part of increasing U.S. aid to the region.

Some participants said U.S. information needs to go beyond the traditional elites and target the "street," where extremists have been able to recruit followers.

Borlaug Cites Africa's Need in First USAID George C. Marshall Lecture

Norman E. Borlaug, the agricultural scientist who won the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for creating miracle or high-yielding wheat, delivered the first USAID George C. Marshall Distinguished Lecture on International Development May 20 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Borlaug spoke of his early efforts crossing plants to improve yields in the 1940s, working with the Rockefeller Foundation and training scientists at CIMMYT, the wheat and corn research station outside Mexico City where he has lived the past 60 years. At 90, he still travels the world seeking to improve production of wheat, corn, cassava, and other staple crops.

Borlaug's wheat is said to have saved up to 1 billion people.

"I worked in East Pakistan as well as the Pakistan of today and, later, Bangladesh and India," he said of his work in the 1960s. "There were huge food deficits. Had it not been for PL 480 and similar assistance from Canada and Australia, the death toll would have been enormous."

The Green Revolution—so named by USAID Administrator William S. Gaud March 8, 1968— took Borlaug's dwarf wheat varieties and doubled or tripled yields across Asia.

"There is no magic in the variety alone," he explained. "If you restore soil fertility, you have to control the weeds and plant at

the right time. All of this crop management is part of the package.

"When you show differences, as was done in that time, from less than a ton per hectare of wheat to four or five—and when large numbers see this—they are not conservative if the policies permit them to adopt these."

Borlaug endorsed new biotech food varieties that can grow in harsh conditions and resist insects. But he said that much more food could be produced with current technologies.

Much of Africa still fails to use enough fertilizer to get the maximum from fields. He called for "credit for the little farmer to buy that fertilizer before planting and to pay

for it at harvest and to get the ceiling off the price control."

New seeds and techniques may permit food production on acidic soils in Brazil and parts of Africa, he said, and zero tillage—farming without turning the soil each year—could save 30 percent of irrigation water worldwide.

Borlaug said he dreams of taking the resistance to rust—a plant disease—from rice and adding it to wheat. And he wants to take the ability to store protein from wheat and place it in rice.

"We still have to dream," he said. "If we can move those genes, it won't happen in my lifetime. It will happen in the next generation." ★

Colombian Activists Request Protection

Since 35 of them were assassinated over the last five years, women peace activists from Colombia have called on USAID to continue and expand its human rights protection program to include them. They also asked that the Agency consult them when designing and evaluating its programs.

More than a dozen women peace and human rights activists came to Washington, D.C., on a visit organized by the U.S. organization Women Waging Peace. The delegation included women from rural areas, academics, state officials, and a parliamentarian. It made its recommendations May 13 at a meeting with the Agency's Office of Women in Development.

The group spoke about its efforts to end the decades-old civil war, in which leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary, and drug traffickers affiliated with both sides have been fighting with central government forces and each other for control of territory in the vast Latin American country.

Women's organizations have negotiated

for food and medicine to be delivered to villages cut off by illegal armed groups. They organized more than 40,000 demonstrators in 2002 to push for renewed peace talks, and met locally, regionally, and nationally to agree on an agenda they want addressed in the next round of peace negotiations.

Ana Bernal, who organized a nonbinding referendum for peace in 1997 that garnered 10 million votes, said women did not want to be depicted as victims but as actors pushing for a peaceful society. She said that "civil society is a buffer to the war," and asked for USAID support.

Other activists spoke about the country's large number of internally displaced people. Crimes against the internally displaced often go unpunished, including growing sexual violence against women, said Claudia Mejia, a founding member of the National Network of Women. A large number of children are displaced, out of school, and vulnerable to prostitution and trafficking, said a third activist. ★



Boys from border regions of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan played soccer May 11 with an Arlington, Va., team on a USAID-sponsored trip to the United States.

Sports tournaments, health education, and cultural exchanges are organized by the Central Asia Mission's Sports and Health Education program to bring communities divided by borders together in multiethnic Central Asia.

Asi Associates

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"It was [Marshall's] ideas that permeated and set up the predecessors of what is today USAID and all of the contributions it has made to improving world well-being in different parts of the world."

Dr. Norman E. Borlaug
Nobel Peace Laureate, delivering first
USAID George C. Marshall Lecture,
Washington, D.C., May 20, 2004.

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Haiti Seeks Aid

Haiti's Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who visited USAID headquarters in Washington May 6 seeking help to turn on electric power and clean the streets of Port-au-Prince, returned home to face devastating floods three weeks later.

As many as 2,000 were feared dead in Haiti and the Dominican Republic by May 28, after heavy rains on deforested hillsides unleashed mud slides.

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President Bush Names 16 MCA Aid Countries

President Bush announced May 10 that the first 16 countries eligible for Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) aid are: Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu.

"The Millennium Challenge Account encourages all nations to embrace political and economic reform," Bush said at the White House.

"The United States has pledged to increase its core development assistance by half, adding \$5 billion annually by 2006. To be eligible for this new money, nations must root out corruption, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law.

"They must invest in their people by improving their healthcare systems and their schools...opening up their markets,

removing barriers to entrepreneurship, and reducing excessive bureaucracy and regulation. The 16 nations represented here today have done all this and more."

Congress appropriated \$1 billion this year for the account and Bush asked for \$2.5 billion for the next fiscal year.

Administrator Andrew S. Natsios told a House Appropriations panel May 13, "In general, we do not see USAID missions closing in MCA countries."

"Many of the problems we work on, like democracy and governance, agriculture, health, environment, and HIV/AIDS, are long-term problems. It does not make sense to turn such assistance on and off. The MCC [Millennium Challenge Corporation] has to be free to adjust its funding up or down based on partner country performance...but our assistance will be longer-term."

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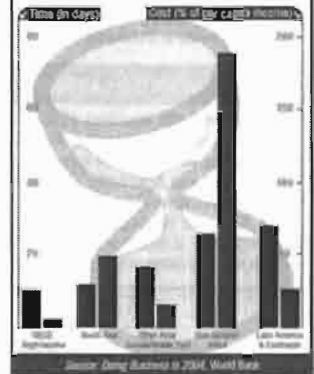
REACHING FOR BETTER CORN



A workman adjusts irrigation on a patch of experimental corn growing in a greenhouse at the international research center for corn and wheat—CIMMYT—in Texcoco, an hour's drive from Mexico City.

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Time and Cost for Setting Up A New Business, by Region



Sudan's Darfur Crisis Deepens

Sudan's government allowed USAID relief workers in late May to enter the Darfur region where 1 million people have been displaced by violence. Many are so weakened they could die in June rains.

"When people have been displaced at least six months it takes a toll on a person. When people are weakened and have no shelter, no sanitation in the rain, that's when you get the body count," said Roger Winter, Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, at a June 1 press conference.

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Herbal Medicine Fights Malaria

A growing number of African countries where drug-resistant malaria is spreading are turning to artemisinin, an extract from sweet wormwood that has been used as herbal medicine in China for more than 1,000 years.

An estimated 30 million malaria cases will be treated in 2004 with artemisinin-combination therapy or ACT, and demand is expected to rise to 180 million by 2006, according to the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which has provided some poor countries with the drug.

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