

SPECIAL EDITION

CROSSROADS

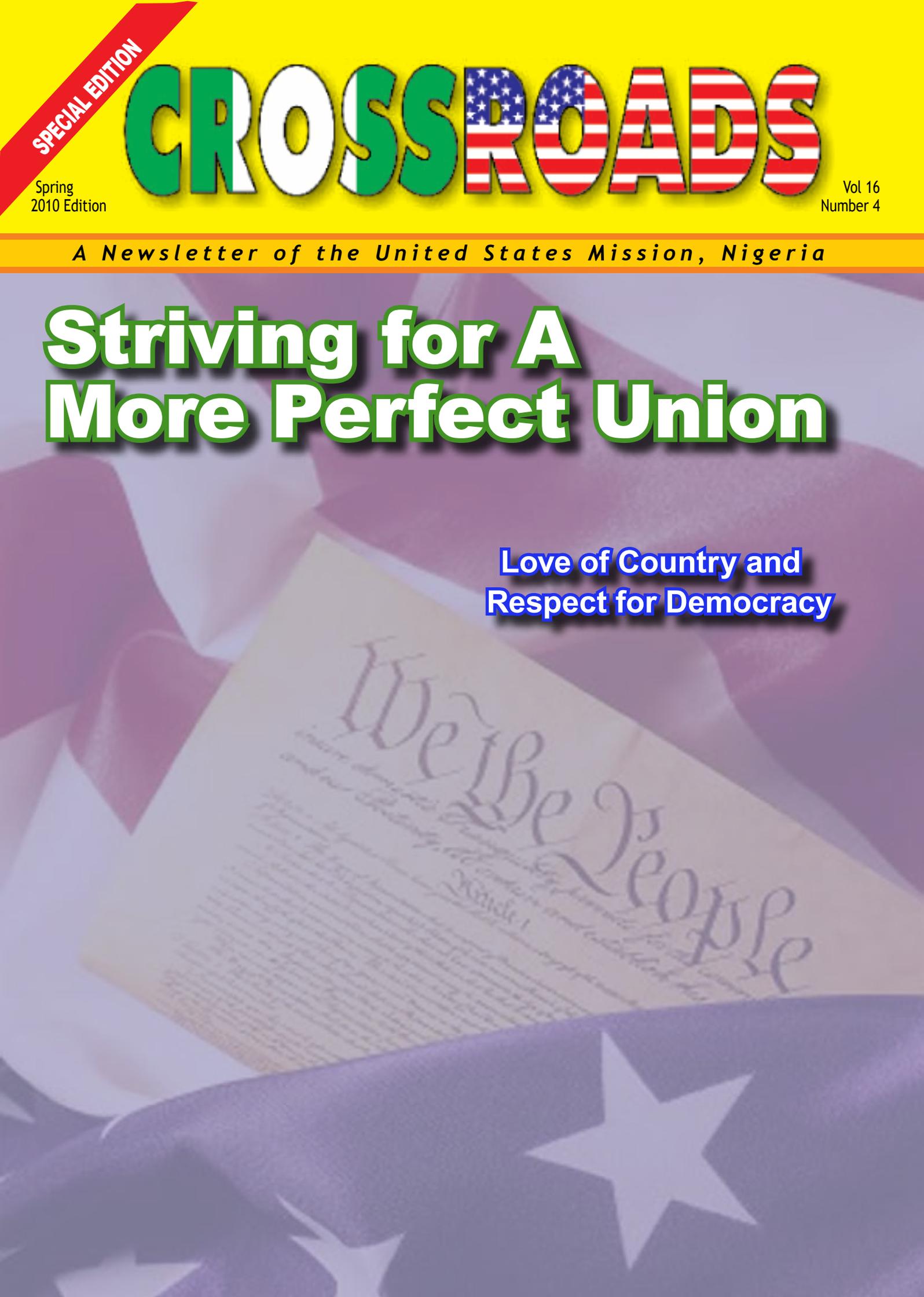
Spring
2010 Edition

Vol 16
Number 4

A Newsletter of the United States Mission, Nigeria

Striving for A More Perfect Union

**Love of Country and
Respect for Democracy**

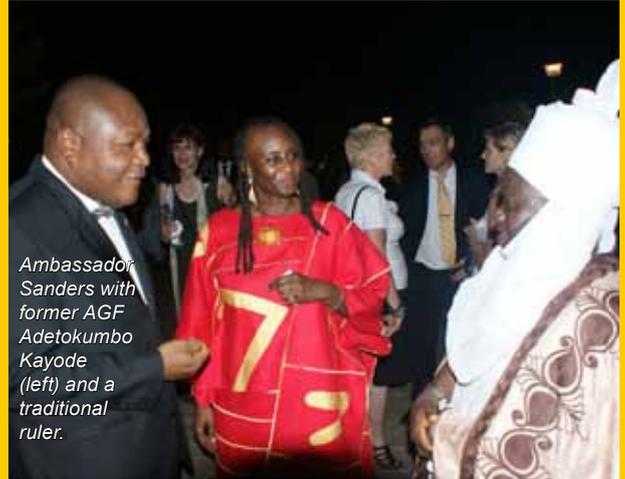


U.S. 234th Independence Anniversary Ambassador Sanders Hosts Guests at National Day Reception

On February 25, 2010, the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria Robin Sanders hosted a National Day reception in commemoration of the 234th Independence Anniversary of the United States. Present at the event were the Secretary to the Government of Nigeria, Yayale Ahmed, senior government officials, religious leaders, representatives of civil society groups and members of the diplomatic community. Photo by **Crossroads** Editor Idika U. Onyukwu.



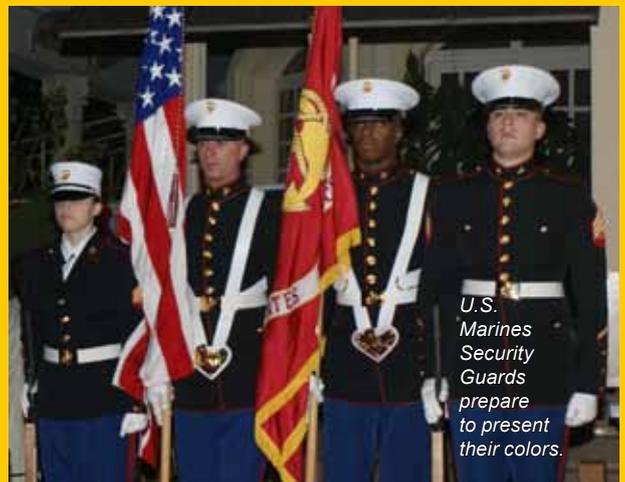
Ambassador Robin Sanders exchanges greetings with Muslim clerics Adebisi Adegbite and Imam Muhammad Ashafa (center).



Ambassador Sanders with former AGF Adetokumbo Kayode (left) and a traditional ruler.



Ambassador Robin Sanders welcomes SGF Yayale Ahmed.



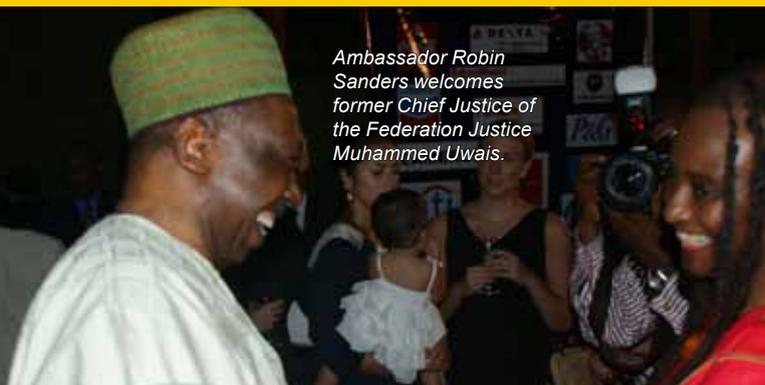
U.S. Marines Security Guards prepare to present their colors.



Ambassador Robin Sanders welcomes Senator Jibril Aminu.



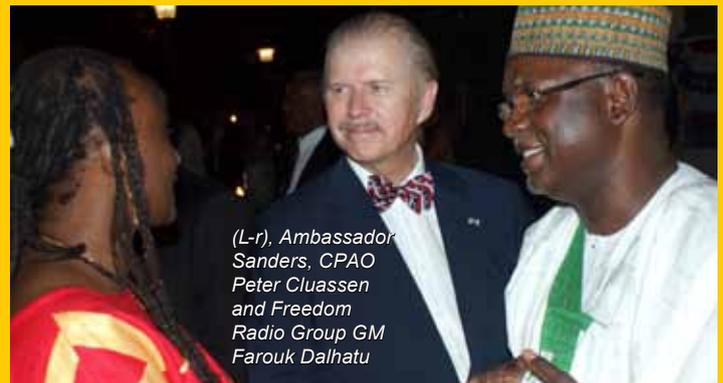
U.S. Navy "Top Brass" Band performing at the National Day reception in Abuja.



Ambassador Robin Sanders welcomes former Chief Justice of the Federation Justice Muhammed Uwais.



Deputy Chief of Mission Dundas McCullough Right, welcomes a guest.



(L-r), Ambassador Sanders, CPAO Peter Cluassen and Freedom Radio Group GM Farouk Dalhatu

Ambassador's Notes



*U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria
Robin Renée Sanders*

Dear **Crossroads** Readers, from the signing of the U.S. – Nigeria Bi-National Commission by Secretary Hillary Clinton with Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria Yayale Ahmed, to Acting President Goodluck Jonathan’s bilateral meeting with President Barack Obama, our message is consistent

America Supports Nigeria’s Aspirations

- America wants a successful future for Nigeria. These recent events demonstrate once again the strategic importance of Nigeria to the United States and Nigeria’s important role as a regional leader. The country’s substantial contributions to peacekeeping missions, highlighted by President Obama, also mark Nigeria as a significant partner. As I have said often, a strong, democratic, prosperous Nigeria is in the national interest of both our countries.

This issue of **Crossroads** highlights the longstanding friendship between the people of Nigeria and the United States and our shared futures. This edition draws particular attention to our shared aspirations for a more perfect union and a robust partnership between our two countries to ensure progress on fighting corruption, and ensuring transparency, good governance, peace and security, and a strong commitment to credible elections in 2011.

Nigeria's agricultural future is vital to its well-being, and I have had the opportunity to see the tangible results produced by public-private partnership initiatives funded by the U.S. Government through the USAID/MARKETS program. One recent example is the Ekha Agro project that is helping over 1,000 Nigerian farmers to produce high-quality glucose from cassava, the first agro-business of its kind in Nigeria and in all of West Africa.

Our economic growth and development program is helping to provide capacity building assistance to the energy sector through the Independent Power Providers Association of Nigeria. This initiative will help Nigeria increase its electricity generation capacity. Finally, this issue also highlights our education and cultural exchanges with Nigeria, tours by a U.S. Navy Brass Band and by “Evidence, a Dance Company.”

Each story is an interesting read. Enjoy!

CROSSROADS

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America's Shared Values *With Nigeria* Striving to Be a More Perfect Union

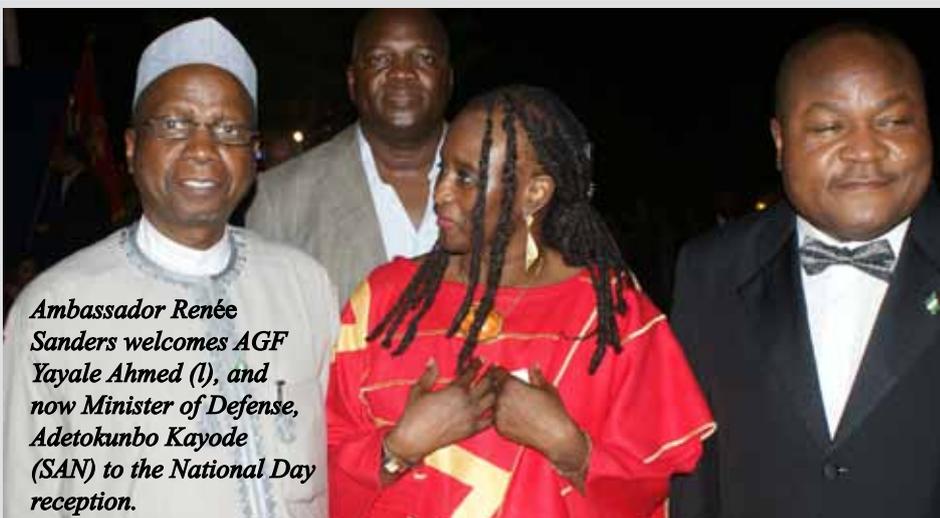
U.S. Ambassador Robin Sanders Underscores Diversity as a Key Element to a Strong Union

The month of February is significant to U.S. – Nigeria bilateral relations because this is the month when the U.S. Mission to Nigeria celebrates its National Day, by honoring the democratic principles set forth in our Declaration of Independence, which have guided the United States of America since its founding on July 4th, 1776.

The 2010 U. S. National Day events from February 25-28 in Abuja and Lagos Nigeria marked the 234th independence anniversary of the United States of America. The events in Abuja were the third to be hosted by Ambassador Sanders in Nigeria. The program featured a presentation of colors by the U.S. Marine Guard and music by the visiting U.S. Navy Band “Top Brass” and Nigeria’s evolving music sensation Age Bika. Guests were served a variety of food, representing America’s diverse culinary culture.

February is also African-American History Month, which President Barack Obama referred to in his 2010 proclamation as “a moment to reflect upon how far we have come as a Nation, and what challenges remain.”

It is in this spirit of America’s enduring struggle to perfect itself that the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Robin Renée Sanders, said the historic month of February reflects the striving of the American people “for good governance, good leadership,



Ambassador Renée Sanders welcomes AGF Yayale Ahmed (l), and now Minister of Defense, Adetokunbo Kayode (SAN) to the National Day reception.

belief in the future, and respect for all humankind no matter the race, no matter the creed, and no matter the religion.” She said that diversity has its key place in any society, in any democracy.

Speaking at her Abuja residence, Ambassador Sanders addressed more than 700 distinguished guests from the diplomatic community and Nigerian citizens, including the Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, Yayale Ahmed, former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Uwais, the Senate Committee Chair on Foreign Relations, Senator Jibril Aminu, the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice (now Minister of Defense), Adetokunbo Kayode (SAN) as well as business leaders, media executives, traditional rulers, religious, community and civil society leaders. Ambassador Sanders, emphasized that she chose the theme “Striving to be a More Perfect Union,” a reflection of the preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America, because of the shared values of the U.S. and Nigeria.

She drew parallels between the United States and Nigeria and told her rapt audience that “in our case in the United States we strive – one step at a time, one moment in time, and as one people to remain faithful to the democratic ideals of our nation: transparent leadership, credible elections, fighting corruption, reducing poverty, and respecting religious differences. We do not have it right all the time, as America is still truly a work in progress, but we continue to strive toward the legacies of our founding fathers.”

Ambassador Sanders said Nigeria is an extraordinary friend of the United States of America, and therefore “we want the best for the nation, for our friend.”

She cautioned, however, that this can only come with transparency not only in governance but in government, particularly now during these uncertain political times when adherence to the spirit of the Nigerian constitution is so important.

The United States and Nigeria Establish a Binational Commission to Set Benchmarks

“We hope that all those in responsible positions during these trying times do the right thing by putting the legacy of the nation first over personal gain,” Ambassador Sanders advised.

The Ambassador posed important questions to Nigeria:

“So Nigeria, in your 51st year, next year, what would you say about your democracy? Will you be able to say that there was transparency in government or that you held credible elections in 2011 or earlier, keeping in mind that democracies do not always get everything right but the point is they strive to do so? They strive to be more perfect nations more perfect unions.”

It is for Nigerians to answer these questions, the Ambassador emphasized. It is for Nigerians to choose, to act, to commit so that the many, many, many generations who will follow will look back at the strong democratic foundations with transparent government and credible elections that citizens laid down in the country’s 50th year, and say “it has been this way in our nation for generations, and so it will be for generations to come.”

“America is your friend, your partner and we are willing to and want to be supportive of your efforts to hold credible elections,” Ambassador Sanders concluded. ❖



On April 6, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Nigerian Secretary to the Government of the Federation Yayale Ahmed inaugurated the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission, a strategic dialogue designed to expand mutual cooperation across a broad range of shared interests. The Commission is a collaborative forum to build partnerships for tangible and measurable progress on issues critical to our shared future.

The United States establishes such commissions with valued and strategic partners. Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation, its largest contributor of peacekeepers, its largest producer of oil and a significant trading partner for the United States.

Secretaries Clinton and Ahmed are forming four working groups to address specific bilateral issues: Good Governance, Transparency, and Integrity; Energy and Investment; Food Security and Agriculture; and, Niger Delta and Regional Security Cooperation. They plan to launch

the Good Governance, Transparency, and Integrity working group first, in light of preparations and reforms necessary to ensure Nigeria’s 2011 elections are free, fair, and transparent.

Secretary Clinton said this new vehicle for cooperation grew out of discussions that began during her visit to Nigeria last August. It reflects the commitment of the United States to this absolutely critical bilateral relationship.

Secretary Ahmed said at the occasion that Nigeria will move forward in a more responsible way to enhance its chance of being a great nation. “I believe that it is more on our side to gain, even though, as you did say with the deepest sense of modesty, you are also going to learn from us,” he stated.

There are several reasons that Nigeria is an important partner for the United States: Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation, its largest contributor of peacekeepers, a significant trading partner for the United States, its largest supplier of oil, and the largest recipient of direct investment by the American private sector in sub-Saharan Africa. So both countries have much to learn from each other and have much to gain from working together. ❖

U.S., Nigeria Pledge Greater Cooperation

President Obama welcomed Nigeria's Acting President Goodluck Jonathan to Washington on April 11 as a participant to the Nuclear Security Summit. Both President Obama and Acting President Jonathan (AgP) agreed to continue to work together to advance global security, particularly nuclear security and international compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The leaders also discussed important security issues, including efforts to combat terrorism.

Recognizing the regional importance of Nigeria, including its role as a regional leader and its substantial contributions to peacekeeping missions, as well as the longstanding friendship between the peoples of Nigeria and the United States, President Obama reiterated that the United States places great importance on the U.S. relationship with Nigeria and the Nigerian people. The President added that a strong, democratic, prosperous Nigeria is in the U.S. national interest.

Acting President Jonathan agreed on the importance placed on the U.S.-Nigerian



relationship and recognized that the recent establishment of the U.S.-

Nigeria Bi-National Commission between the two countries provides an important way forward in addressing mutual strategic goals. Both leaders agreed that such goals include: respecting constitutional law and processes, achieving free and fair elections, building the capacity and commitment to fight corruption, respecting human rights, promoting economic development, and resolving internal conflict. The President urged Acting President Jonathan to use his tenure to make historic and tangible progress in strengthening the Nigerian government's commitment to follow through on countering corruption. The President also said that the U.S. would support Acting President Jonathan in realizing his public promise for electoral reform.

Acting President Jonathan also met with U.S. Vice President Biden, World Bank President Robert Zoellick, and spoke at an event hosted by the Atlantic Council, a foreign policy-oriented nongovernmental organization. Acting President Jonathan also held consultations with the Council on Foreign Relations and the Corporate Council on Africa during his four-day U.S. visit. ❖



Ambassador Sanders welcomes AgP Jonathan.

U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission (BNC) Focus Groups:

- Good governance and transparency — considered essential to Nigeria's democracy and its prosperity.
- Regional cooperation and development — to improve conditions in the oil-rich Niger Delta region with a specific emphasis on broad collaboration on security and counterterrorism.
- Energy reform and investment — while Nigeria has abundant oil, natural gas and other natural resources, it lacks an effective electrical system to support the growing demands of the nation.
- Food security and agricultural development — a program to provide Nigerian farmers with modern tools and methods of farming to feed the nation and to lift rural families out of poverty.

Finding Solutions to Global Problems: **Nigerians and the Rest of the World Engage in Global Conversation**

How do you give voice to the voiceless or collect the opinions of those outside government? And how do we share ideas and create innovative solutions that will build partnerships across borders, strengthen understanding among cultures, and unite the human race in an effort to create innovative solutions to the most pressing social issues of our time? Global Pulse 2010 provided answers to some of these questions. U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria Robin Sanders, met with key civil society leaders at the U.S. Embassy Rosa Parks Center in Abuja to discuss their participation in a live global Internet event called Global Pulse 2010. The three-day, (March 29-31) online collaborative event was open to participants throughout the world; anyone could log on and take part in discussions of 10 pressing social issues that profoundly affect human existence.

Initiated by the U.S. government, Global Pulse 2010 heralds a new era of global engagement that tries to meet the challenges of the 21st century through partnership involving a wide variety of stakeholders. The live discussion program evolved in response to President Obama's speech in Cairo that called for new and different ways to engage the world.

Participants at the Abuja event included leaders from the Youth Action Initiative of Africa, the Climate Change Section of the Federal Ministry of Environment,

The Women Today newspaper, and the head of the Nigerian mission of the International Organization for Sustainable Development. Other participants came from the Center for Transformation of the Underprivileged; the Department of Political Science, University of Abuja; the Society for Youth Education on HIV/AIDs; and the Institute for International Journalism.

As the name implies, the event succeeded in taking the pulse of thousands of multi-country participants on key issues facing communities around the world. Themes for Global Pulse 2010 were divided among 10 social issues within the fields of science and technology, entrepreneurship, gender equality, and human development. The discussions also featured international leaders from government, private industry, and civil society organizations, along with influential individuals, who logged on to moderate the live conversations and to encourage participation.

Global Pulse 2010 was hosted on a virtual platform developed by IBM. ❖



Abuja participants share their contributions with Ambassador Sanders.

Global Pulse Results

According to USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah, Global Pulse attracted over 6,000 participants from over 155 countries who posted over 9,000 ideas, reactions, opinions, and perspectives. Within three days (March 29 – 31):

- 60 percent of participants were from outside the U.S.

- 51 percent of participants were female

- 50 percent of participants were under 35 years old

The benefits of the conversation are not limited to the United States Government alone. The entire conversation was open and transparent and is currently available until at least the end of April to every person and organization that is interested in gaining insight from it.

Over the 3-day conversation, thousands of great discussions formed around a range of topics from expanding democracy, to the connection between religion and women's rights, to the role of microfinance in expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Dr. Rajiv Shah said USAID will be analyzing these conversations over the next several weeks to extract key themes and actionable ideas. “This content will provide valuable input as we shape and assess the strategic direction of our foreign affairs agencies, their programs, and future engagement with stakeholders,” said Shah. ❖

Cassava Raises Farmers Incomes

An innovative public-private partnership between Ekha Agro and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing over 1,000 Nigerian cassava farmers with secure markets, inputs, access to finance, and technical assistance to produce the first glucose from cassava in Nigeria. Small scale farmers will double their productivity and increase their net incomes by over 150 percent thanks to better yields and higher prices. U.S. Ambassador Robin Renée Sanders visited with cassava farmers on Tuesday, March 2, at a processing plant in Ogun State to highlight how U.S. development assistance is improving the lives of Nigeria's farmers.

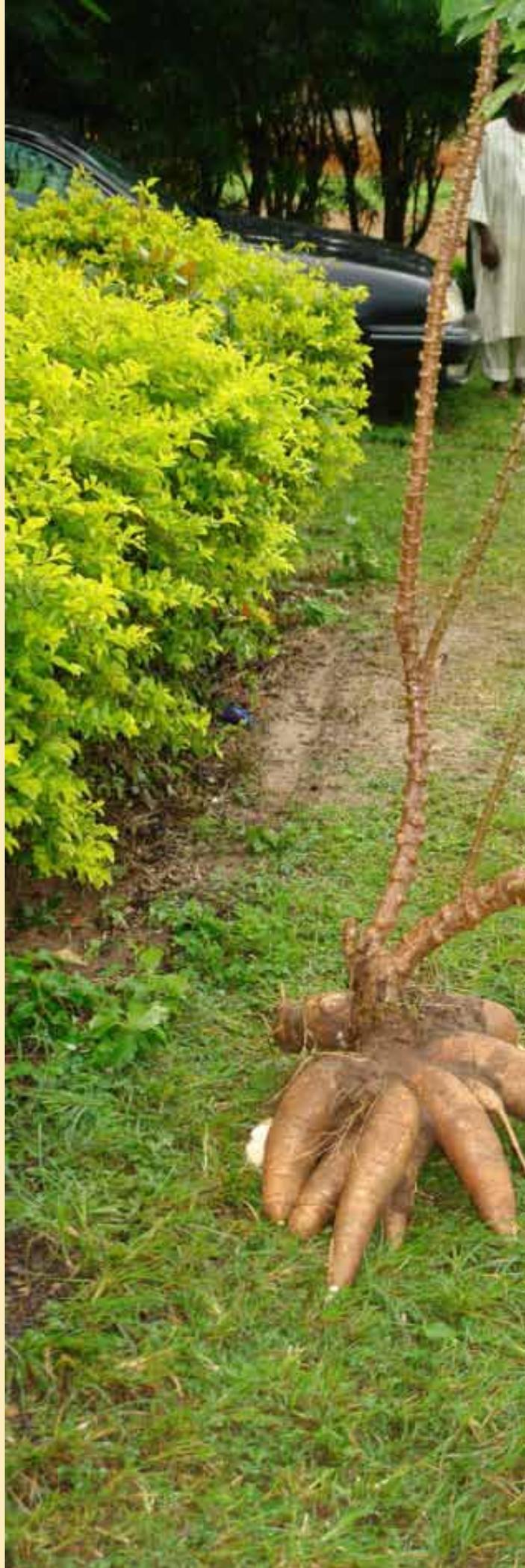
The Ekha Agro-USAID partnership represents cassava farmers, suppliers, buyers and processors. In her remarks to participants, Ambassador

Sanders said this partnership "shows the power that the private sector has to transform Nigerian agriculture, increase food security, and raise farmers' income." Even though Nigeria is the largest producer of cassava in the world, the crop is rarely used in higher-value commercial food processing.

The United States Mission in Nigeria supports economic growth in Nigeria with agricultural assistance that dovetails with the Government of Nigeria's objectives to ensure food security and reduce poverty of its people. The Ekha Agro-USAID partnership is a successful example of American promotion of commercial agriculture in Nigeria through USAID's Maximizing Agriculture Revenue and Key Enterprises for Target Sites (MARKETS) program. ❖



Ambassador Robin Renée Sanders (fourth from left) being conducted round the USAID-Ekha Agro facility in Benin. Right, healthy cassava tubers.



Louisiana Trade Mission Explores Business Opportunities in Nigeria

Lagos lived up to its commercial billing recently when the Commercial Office of the U.S. Consulate General hosted a Trade Mission from New Orleans, Louisiana from March 21-24. The trade mission was organized by the New Orleans District Export Council and the U.S. Department of Commerce's New Orleans U.S. Export Assistance Center. The mission's nine member companies represented oil and gas field equipment, ITC and software, marine vessels, marine electronics, truck sales, and dredging equipment. Louisiana companies participating in the trade mission were Better Machine Products, Beier Radio, Flange Skillets, Dredge Supply Company, Jambon Boat Rentals, Ram Tech Industries, Parish

Trucks, Premier Industries, and Anvil Attachments. The delegation was led by Ms. Brie Knox from the New Orleans U.S. Export Assistance Center.

In total, mission delegates participated in 165 pre-arranged meetings in an intensive two days of business development and networking activities in Lagos. Consul General Donna Blair hosted a well attended reception for the visitors at her residence during which the U.S. Commercial Service honored Ms. Uju Ifejika, CEO of Britannia-U, an indigenous Nigerian oil exploration and production company, for her support in strengthening trade with Louisiana. In the past year, Britannia-U imported from Louisiana into Nigeria five commercial marine vessels for use in the petroleum industry valued

at about \$34 million US dollars.

Mission members, several of whom were on their first visit to Nigeria, were universally positive about the experience, indicating that the quality of the meetings and business opportunities far exceeded expectations. Some reported having located representatives and partners; others reported having concluded sales agreements as early as the first day of the mission. Several mission members also indicated that they had already made plans to return to Nigeria in the near-term to follow up on business opportunities. One mission member, a first time Commerce trade mission participant, said that to get the same quantity and quality of business, it would have cost ten times the mission price if he had to do it on his own from the U.S. ❖

The Louisiana trade delegation pose in a group photo with U.S. Consul General Donna Blair



Nigerian Students Participate in Global Youth Leadership Program

On Monday, March 22 the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, Abuja conducted a pre-departure orientation for five high school students from Nigeria that are traveling to the U.S. to participate in a Youth Leadership program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. The students who hailed from Kano State consist of three young men and two young women. They will be accompanied on the trip by their teacher.

The Public Diplomacy Officer of the Embassy Edward Flynn and three PAS staff were on hand to provide tips on traveling, studying and living in the United States. They explained the social, economic and cultural complexities of the United States that the participants may confront on their arrival and advised them to adjust quickly to the situation and concentrate on the program.

Three alumni of the State Department's exchange programs, including two from the Youth Leadership Program, also took part in the orientation session, and shared their experiences with the group. They advised the participants to be very active in all components of the program and to mix freely with peers from other countries.

Mrs. Christiana Ibe and Ms. Chiamaka Echeta both emphasized the need for openness during interactive sessions. Mrs. Ibe advised the participants to ask questions when they are in doubt. "It is the only way one can get maximum benefit from the program and learn new ways of doing things," she explained.

The objective of the Youth

Five participating students from Kano State for the Youth Leadership program including a teacher pose with Embassy officials before their departure.



Leadership program is to build civic engagement, leadership, respect for diversity, and conflict resolution skills among the participants. It is aimed at exposing young people from the participating countries, namely Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Nigeria, to critical challenges facing African states, and to build their capacities to play an active role in resolving them.

The program consists of

workshops, discussions, networking with local communities, and site visits to enrich the experiences of participants.

The program is administered in Denver Colorado and Washington D.C. by a non-profit group called Critical Mass Leadership Education. Participants will receive a grant from the U.S. Department of State when they return to implement a follow on project in their local communities. ❖



Returnee student Ms. Chiamaka Echeta (second left), with her teacher Christiana Ibe (first left), shares her U.S. experience with the Public Diplomacy Officer Ed Flynn and Education Advisor Sade Adebayo.

Evidence, A Dance Company Thrills Lagos



The dancers lead a group of participants in Lagos in a dance step demonstration.

The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos hosted Brooklyn-based *Evidence, A Dance Company* in Lagos, under the auspices of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' DanceMotionUSA program. The group of ten included eight dancers under the leadership of the company's founder and artistic director, Ronald K. Brown. During their March 5-13 visit, they held workshops with five primary Public Affairs Section partners: the Society for the Performing Arts in Nigeria (SPAN), Terra Kulture, the National Arts Theatre, the University of Lagos and the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON). They also gave two well-attended evening performances at the National

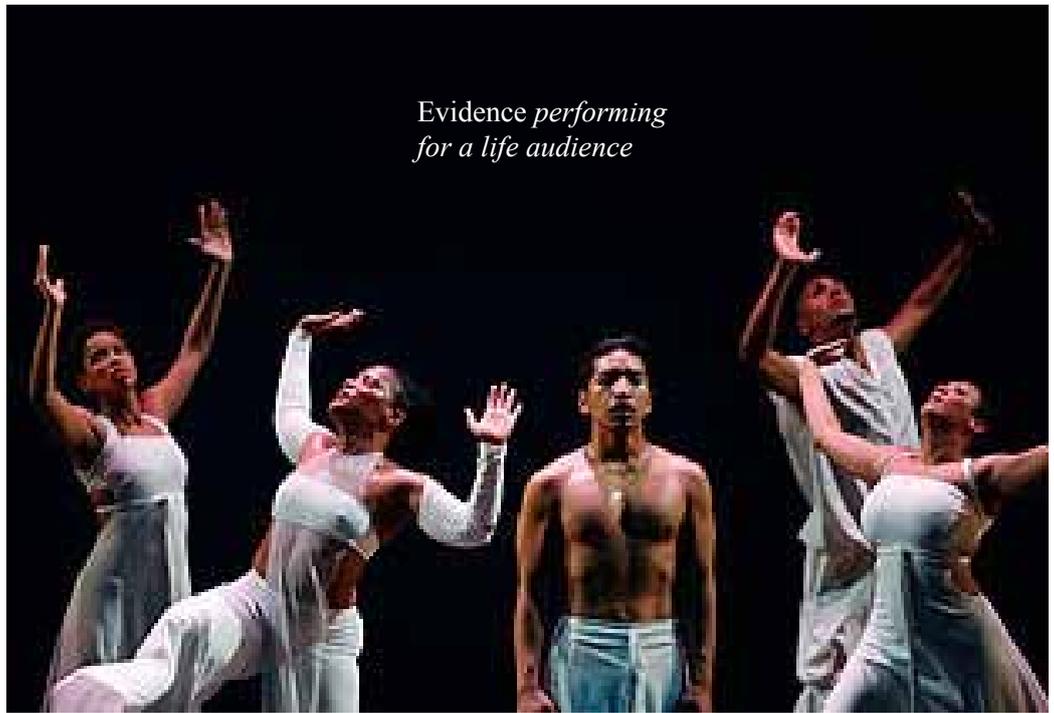
Arts Theatre and at MUSON Centre.

Evidence opened its Lagos program on Saturday, March 6, at Terra Kulture, a respected cultural center and art gallery, with a workshop for over 40 children, aged 5-11, from different socio-economic backgrounds. The dancers led the children in dance step demonstrations. This was followed by a Q& A in which Ronald Brown answered questions from both participants and parents on the company's trip to Nigeria and about his career as a choreographer. Later that afternoon, the company held a master class, lecture and dance demonstrations for dancers from the Society for the Performing Arts in Nigeria (SPAN) at three SPAN facilities.

The following week, *Evidence* held workshops with the Lagos State Chapter of the Dancers Guild of Nigeria, the National Troupe, the Ijodee Dance Company, and Spirit of David at Lagos' National Arts Theatre. *Evidence* also held a workshop with the National Association of Nigerian Theater Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), which was attended by notables from the Nigerian film sector (Nollywood). The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and other professors welcomed *Evidence* as they held a master class for over 50 students at the University of Lagos, Department of Creative Arts. *Evidence* concluded its visit with SPAN-arranged workshops for teenagers with special needs. In all, their workshops engaged over 250 participants.

During the evenings of March 10 and 12, *Evidence, A Dance Company* gave performances to capacity crowds at Lagos'

National Arts Theatre and MUSON Centre, respectively. Their dances thrilled the hundreds of spectators who attended both events. In fact, the performance at the MUSON Centre, which seats over 300, was standing room only. Overflow visitors were able to watch the program via video projection in the main lobby. Among those in attendance were the Acting General Manager of the National Arts Theater, the Artistic Director of the National Troupe, the Chairman of the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON), the Chairman of Entertainment for the MUSON Centre, and the President of the Society for the Performing Arts



Evidence performing for a life audience

in Nigeria. Also in attendance were many highly placed representatives from the cultural and arts sectors, the media, members of SPAN and Spirit of David, primary, secondary and university students and the general public. ❖

United States Government Launches Flagship Program in Bauchi State

U.S. Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Dr. Ray Kirkland, and the Governor of Bauchi State, Mallam Isa Yuguda, recently launched USAID’s development program in Bauchi State with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in Bauchi.

The United States of America, acting through USAID, will provide approximately US\$169 million to undertake activities in Sokoto and Bauchi states over a five-year period. To implement these activities, USAID will partner with the Government of Nigeria to tackle the most critical social and economic development issues that have confronted the country.

USAID’s program in Bauchi State is being boosted with some new projects. The “Two States High Impact Project”, which began six months ago, is an integrated maternal, newborn, and child health initiative which uses high impact and low-cost interventions to reduce maternal and child deaths. The “Northern Education Initiative” will strengthen state and local government systems that lay the foundation for delivering quality education services

and improving access of 15,000 orphans and vulnerable children to basic education, preventive health education, psychosocial support, and health referral services. The “Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy and Development” program will promote democratic local governance, building capacity to assume greater roles in addressing the needs of the citizenry with a view to improving the delivery of basic services.

The United States of America, acting through USAID, will provide approximately US\$169 million to undertake activities in Bauchi and Sokoto states over a five-year period.

USAID’s partnership with Bauchi State has, over the years, yielded positive results in strengthening routine immunization, maternal and child health, reproductive health and family planning. This partnership has also been instrumental in reducing polio in Bauchi. ❖

Visiting U.S. Navy Band Strengthens U.S.-Nigeria Cultural Ties with Music

Thrills Audiences in Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos

The U.S. Mission in Nigeria hosted the U.S. Navy Band for several activities in Nigeria marking Black History Month and National Week events. For these programs, the U.S. Navy Band held performances at various private and public locations in Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos.

For the students of Elbetos Private School Gwarimpa, Abuja, they got more than they bargained for when the school's Valentine's Day picnic at Abuja Millennium Park featured something unexpected—first rate musical entertainment provided by none other than the visiting U.S. Navy band, "Top Brass." The open air musical event was organized by the U.S. Embassy in Abuja to entertain the general public as part of weeklong activities marking American Black History Month 2010 in Abuja.

Similarly, at Bingham University Abuja, the Navy Band performed for about two hundred and fifty students



U.S. Navy Band leader Willie Harris tries his hands on an African Talking Drum.

and faculty of the university. Present at this performance were the Vice Chancellor of Bingham University, the Registrar and Director of Academics amongst others.

The Band's performances also received resounding ovations at Cherryfield College, Jikwoyi. The principal John Tripton, a Briton by nationality, stated that he appreciated the band's performance, which actually made him realize some of the things he was missing by being away from home. The students and faculty at Bingham University had several questions for the band ranging from the types of instruments played to the cost of procuring some of the instruments.

This year's Black History Month theme is the history of black economic empowerment, recognizing the lives of successful black men and women. At the invitation of the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Navy band "Top Brass" is celebrating Black History month from another angle—playing American popular music and noting how it has been profoundly influenced by the African-American experience on mainstream American song.

At Millennium Park, Top Brass started its performance with a slow beat and then picked up the pace steadily, playing favorites such as the old gospel tune, "Just a Closer Walk with Thee," as well as "Dead Man Blues," "St. James Infirmary," "Hello Dolly," "HM Jollies," a Beach Boys medley, and "When the Saints Go Marching In." Dressed in their crisp red uniforms and white shirts, about 30 self-choreographing



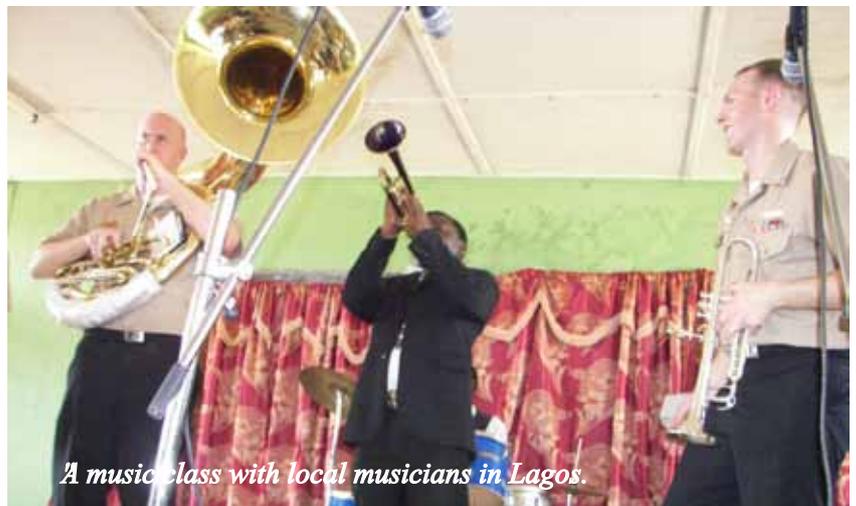
Roger Stracher entertains school children with the sousaphone.



After a resounding performance at the Wuse Market in Abuja, the crowd joins the Cultural Affairs Officer Victoria Sloan (second right) to celebrate the Top Brass"Band.

students of Elbetos Private School danced to the music directly in front of the band, interacted with the musicians, and became part of the concert themselves, charming the band and onlookers alike.

Deji Akintola, a PhD student of music at the park, described music as a healing process. “The open air performance by the Navy band confirms music as a universal language for both the young and the old,” said Akintola. ❖



A music class with local musicians in Lagos.



Top Brass"Band engage their Nigerian Navy counterparts in a jam session in Lagos.



Another jam session with local musicians in Lagos.

PEPFAR PMTCT:

Strides in HIV/AIDS Prevention

By Olayinka Balogun with additional reports from Mission HIV/AIDS Prevention team

“With the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission [PMTCT] program, HIV positive women get courage to have children”. These were the words of Mrs. Elijah, an HIV positive mother and wife, on the possibilities of an HIV-free generation.

Mrs. Elijah is one of the more than 2.5 million adults and children (ages 0-49) in Nigeria at the end of 2007 that were living with HIV according to the UNAIDS Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic 2008. The human immunodeficiency virus or HIV is the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, the disease more commonly known as AIDS.

Research shows that the HIV epidemic in Nigeria is complex and differs broadly by region. In certain states, the epidemic is more concentrated and driven by high-risk behaviors, whereas in other states, there are more generalized epidemics that are sustained largely by multiple sexual relationships in the general population. Youth and young adults in Nigeria are particularly susceptible to HIV infection, and young women are at higher risk than young men.

Prevention is Critical

About 2.7 million new infections occurred in the world in 2007 according to the UNAIDS 2008 report with 7,400 persons testing positive to HIV on a daily basis. In some areas there are five new infections for every two persons newly placed on antiretroviral drugs for HIV treatment.

Mrs. Elijah (carrying her HIV-negative daughter), displays some of the bead-work she makes and sells for a living.



New infections continue to outpace substantially the world's ability to add people to treatment, adding new impetus to programs to prevent new infections in the first place. While tremendous progress has been made in providing care and treatment to those already infected with HIV, too many are still not receiving the help they need. Without effective prevention for those not yet infected, we will not be able to close the gap and provide treatment to all who need it.

According to Adrienne Parish, Coordinator of the U.S. President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Nigeria program, PEPFAR supports greater

HIV awareness, including HIV counseling and testing. PEPFAR also supports prevention activities that address sexual transmission, the transmission of HIV through unsafe blood and medical injections, and mother-to-child transmission.

PMTCT Programs Protect the Next Generation

For HIV positive mothers and expectant mothers, nothing is more important than preventing their babies from becoming infected with HIV. For many mothers, PMTCT programs are helping them ensure that the next generation is HIV free.

PMTCT stands for Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission

PEPFAR PMTCT

Strides in HIV Prevention

of HIV. PMTCT programs provide comprehensive pre and post-natal care, treatment and support. They are designed to reduce significantly the risk of pregnant HIV positive women infecting their children either during pregnancy, labor, delivery or breastfeeding. Without treatment, around 15-30% of babies born to HIV positive women will become infected with HIV during pregnancy, labor, and delivery, and a further 5-20% will become infected through breastfeeding.

PEPFAR is focused not only on pregnant women but also on all women of child bearing age. PEPFAR programs target prevention of HIV infection in women of reproductive age, prevention of unintended pregnancies through family planning counseling, integration of HIV care, and treatment and support for women found to be positive and their families by the use of antiretroviral drugs, safer infant feeding practices and other interventions.

Universal Access Remains Elusive



Adrienne Parish, Co-ordinator of the U.S. President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Nigeria program

The theme of the World AIDS Day 2009 is “Universal Access and Human Rights”. Universal access exists when a minimum of 80% of persons requiring access to HIV prevention, treatment or care actually receive it. Strong health systems and continuing synergy with investment in HIV programs are essential to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care services in Nigeria.

Despite significant progress since 2003, national coverage of PMTCT remains very low in Nigeria, with only 11% of Nigerian's eligible for services actually receiving them. Many factors contribute to low coverage. “Indeed, the coverage of most key preventive and curative health services in the country is relatively low. Access to health services is limited further by rural-urban and socio-economic disparities in coverage. PMTCT services also experience this challenge of low coverage” said Parrish.

Even where services are available, they are not always utilized. Mothers may be unaware of the possibility for HIV testing, may worry about possible stigma, or may not know how to access PMTCT services. Low Anti-natal Clinic (ANC) attendance, low facility based deliveries, and disparities in the distribution of health care workers across the urban-rural divide have also been identified as barriers to the effective provision of HIV/AIDS services (including HIV testing and counseling and provision of treatment drugs) in lower tiers of health facilities.

PEPFAR Expands PMTCT Access

PEPFAR is working hard to expand access to PMTCT services, while working with the Government of Nigeria to ensure the long-term sustainability of PMTCT programs.

“PMTCT services in Nigeria are mainly donor driven. PEPFAR supports a significant proportion of the total number of service outlets offering PMTCT services across Nigeria and currently supports at least 641 sites”, said Dr. Nancy Knight, Country Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Nigeria. By comparison, there were only 11 PMTCT sites in Nigeria in 2003, she added. (The PEPFAR-Nigeria program began in 2004.)

According to Dr. Knight, through September 2009, Nigerian women have received needed services for PMTCT under the PEPFAR program in connection with more than 1.5 million pregnancies. For those that tested HIV positive, the program has in many cases helped them deliver babies who remain HIV free. PEPFAR has also increased access to the HIV treatment drugs for HIV positive pregnant women in Nigeria. With PEPFAR's support, Nigeria has been able to enhance treatment from giving just a single dose Nevirapine to HIV positive women at the point of delivery, to the current practice of providing a more efficacious combination of anti-retroviral drug regimens to prevent HIV infection in newborns.

“But there are still many more women who could benefit from PMTCT services. PEPFAR is working together with the Government of Nigeria and other international donors and other stakeholders in Nigeria to expand access to more women” she said.

Early Infant Diagnosis Key to Newborn Treatment

As PEPFAR seeks to improve the uptake and quality of PMTCT services in Nigeria, one of the key areas of focus is the expansion of PMTCT services to secondary and primary level facilities, which are closer to communities, and strengthening the integration of PMTCT services into existing maternal and child health (MCH) services. Early Infant Diagnosis (EID) programs are critical to identifying HIV infected infants early in their life and to providing them an entry point to care and treatment services.

Infants exposed to HIV because their mothers are HIV positive will not necessarily become infected with HIV.

In the past, testing infants for HIV infection before they were 18 months old was unreliable. HIV antibodies from the mother are passed during pregnancy to her child and persist for a period of time after birth, and this can be taken as HIV infection in the child. This can make it difficult to diagnose correctly whether the newborn is infected with HIV.

The past difficulty in early diagnosis forced a significant delay in treating those children who were later found to be HIV positive, giving the disease significant time to progress. With the EID program, families of HIV exposed infants can know the definitive sero-status of the infants as young as 6 weeks old in Nigeria. Infected children can be appropriately enrolled into care and treatment

earlier, before the disease has a chance to progress.

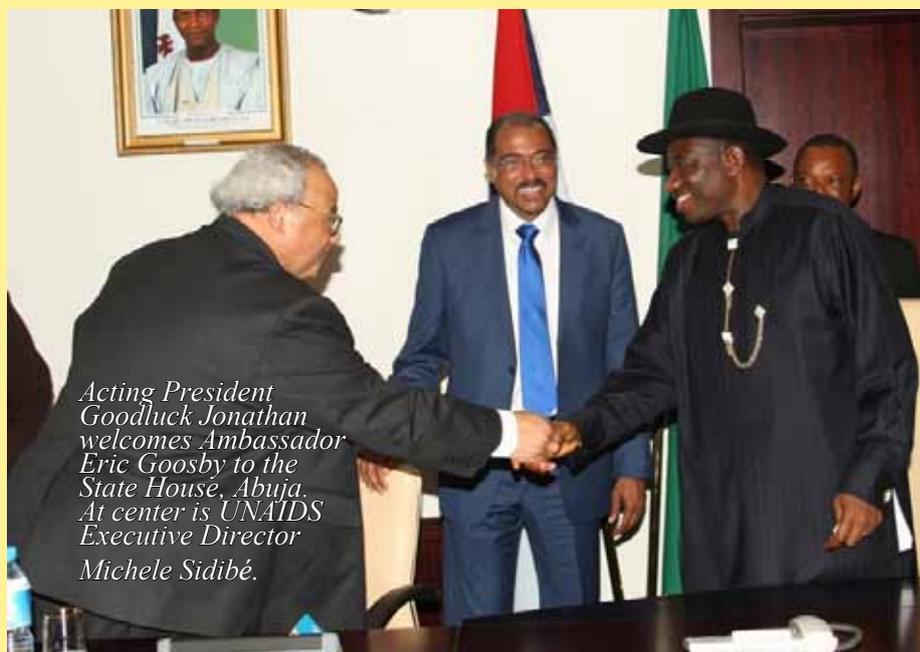
“With the support of PEPFAR-supported laboratories and a well developed national manual, EID is being scaled-up across the country following a national plan. This will ensure that HIV exposed infants are linked early into pediatric care and treatment in keeping with WHO [World Health Organization] recommendations” Knight adds.

“EID has been very helpful to us” says Mrs. Esther Agyo, chief Nursing Officer in charge of the Wuse General Hospital Abuja ANC Clinic. “EID has enabled our mothers to continue attending ANC and PMTCT services since they will learn the status of their babies as early as six weeks.” ❖

AMB. GOOSBY INSPECTS PEPFAR SITES IN NIGERIA

Ambassador Eric Goosby, the United States Global AIDS Coordinator, visited Nigeria from February 21-24. His visit highlights the strategic partnership between the people of the United States and the people of Nigeria in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Ambassador Goosby leads all U.S. Government international HIV/AIDS efforts. In this role, Ambassador Goosby oversees implementation of the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), as well as U.S. Government engagement with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Ambassador Goosby held meetings with Acting President (AgP) Goodluck Jonathan, legislators, implementing partners and civil society leaders. At a press briefing in Abuja, Ambassador Goosby shared his vision for PEPFAR in the next five years of the program and



Acting President Goodluck Jonathan welcomes Ambassador Eric Goosby to the State House, Abuja. At center is UNAIDS Executive Director Michele Sidibé.

explored opportunities to strengthen U.S.- Nigeria partnership to ensure a sustainable, long-term response built on Nigerian leadership. Ambassador Goosby's visit coincided with the visit of UNAIDS Executive Director, Michele Sidibé, reflecting the strong international collaboration among

Nigeria, the United States, and other international partners. PEPFAR's efforts during the first five years were instrumental in getting services out quickly to those in need as part of an emergency response. ❖

Electricity Generation Nigeria and the United States Sign MOU



After the signing of the IPPAN Power MOU, Ambassador Sanders congratulates former Minister of State for Energy Nuha Wya.

United States Ambassador to Nigeria Robin Renée Sanders and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Nigeria Mission Director Ray Kirkland, recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Independent Power Providers Association of Nigeria (IPPAN), represented by its President Bart Nnaji. The MOU formalizes an agreement between the United States Government, working through USAID, to support the production of electricity by the private sector in Nigeria.

In her remarks, Ambassador Sanders noted the United

States Government is pleased to assist Nigeria's private sector and government to increase electricity production to 10,000 megawatts by 2011. The Ambassador said that "the United States Government is honored to help Nigeria find a way to generate the electricity demanded by the Nigerian people, through the private sector."

Under the MOU, technical



assistance will be provided to IPPAN by the USAID-funded Nigerian Energy and Climate Change Project (NECC). NECC will enhance IPPAN members' capacity to develop commercially viable projects using indigenous resources and clean technologies. NECC's will support the use of flared gas to produce electricity, promote the expansion of renewable energy projects to reduce the impact of climate change, and expand the sister utility partnership between the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission, and the U.S. National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners to improve the regulatory environment for electricity generation in Nigeria. ❖



<http://flta.fulbrightonline.org/home.html>

2010 Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program

- For young English graduates (**not older than 29 years at the time of application**), who can teach Hausa or Yoruba to students in the United States
- The deadline for submission of online application is **June 1**.

Thinking of Applying?

Eligibility Criteria:

APPLICANTS MUST:

- be no younger than 21 and no older than 29 at the time of application
- reside in the country of nomination at the time of application
- possess the equivalent of a U.S. Bachelor's degree with a good academic record, Master's degrees are highly desirable at many institutions
- have formal academic training or professional experience in teaching and must have a sincere interest in teaching their native language and culture to students in the U.S.
- be teachers of English or training to become teachers of English (if applying in a less commonly taught language); prior teaching experience is preferred
- be fluent in English, as demonstrated by a score of no less than 550 (Paper Based TOEFL); 213 (Computer Based TOEFL - CBT); 79-80 (Internet Based TOEFL - IBT) or 6.0 (Overall Score International English Language Testing System - IELTS)
- clearly demonstrate maturity, dependability, integrity and professionalism
- be outgoing and dynamic individuals with a great sense of humor.

Visit <http://apply.embark.com/student/fulbright/flta> to create an account and begin the application process

- **In addition to the online application**, candidates must submit original transcripts for all institutions attended and 3 reference forms from their referees separately either by post or bring them personally to the Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive, Abuja **Attention:** Ibrahim Dan-Halilu

IRC Membership News

The mission of the Information Resource Centers (IRCs) is to advance the Mission's Public Diplomacy goal of having American values respected in Nigeria by identifying, partnering with, and strategically disseminating information to Nigeria's institutions and contacts that influence policy and public opinion on issues central to U.S. interests.

Vol. 3 No. 4

April 2010



President Obama, together with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Commerce, will host **"A New Beginning: The Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship"** at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, D.C., on April 26 and 27. Participants from over 40 countries on 5 continents have been invited to participate. The Summit will highlight the role entrepreneurship can play in addressing common challenges while building partnerships that will lead to greater opportunity abroad and at home. Get all the associated materials from the following sources:

- Summit Website: <http://www.entrepreneurship.gov/summit/>
- CONX: Links to videos, webchats and theatre experience. <http://www.connectsolutions.com/entrepreneurship/>
- America.gov: Articles, Delegates, Speeches, videos... http://www.america.gov/entrepreneurship_summit.html
- Facebook Page: Continue the conversation <http://www.facebook.com/PSE2010>
- "New Enterprise" – An America.gov Blog <http://blogs.america.gov/ip/category/presidential-summit-on-entrepreneurship/>

Nigerian Woman Seeks "Tangible" Results at Entrepreneurs' Summit: Omowale Ogunrinde wants to bring expertise back home

(This article is part of a series on delegates to the April 26–27 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship.)

By Charles W. Corey, Staff Writer

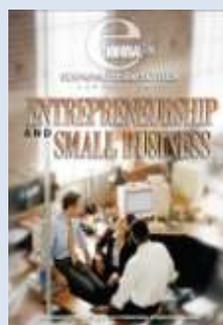
Washington — Omowale Ogunrinde, executive director of the Foundation for Skills Development, headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria, is looking forward to attending the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship April 26–27 in Washington, not just as an observer, but as a significant participant who will be able to network and bring key skills and knowledge back home to improve the lives of people in her country.

Ogunrinde spoke to America.gov April 20 before leaving for the summit as one of three delegates from Nigeria. She is one of 23 African delegates (including 11 women) from 10 African nations who will attend the event. Speaking from Nigeria, she said: "I am happy that I am part of the program and am actually looking forward to bringing back something tangible to my country. I hope that it will go past the state of just being an observer so that we will be able to establish partnerships" and meaningful business relationships.

Read further from <http://bit.ly/c4xq6t>

Free eBooks

Entrepreneurship and Small Business



Small businesses built the United States in the country's first century. Today the flexibility of small businesses provides lessons for big business. Small businesses contribute to the U.S. economy not only in innovation and adaptability, but also in job creation for women and minorities and in economically distressed areas. Download your free copy at <http://bit.ly/a110d5>

Principles of Entrepreneurship



Economists and business people differ in their definitions of entrepreneurship. Most, however, agree that entrepreneurship is vital for stimulating economic growth and employment opportunities in all societies. This is particularly true in the developing world, where successful small businesses are the primary engines of job creation and poverty reduction. This series of 21 one-page primers discusses the essentials for building and running a business from the planning stages to marketing a product.

Author Jeanne Holden is a free-lance writer with expertise in economic issues. She worked as a writer-editor in the U.S. Information Agency for 17 years. Read online <http://bit.ly/dz5lhY>

Online Survey: Use of IRC Membership News

(Closes on May 14, 2010)



We are in the process of improving the content of this Online publication. Kindly fill this online (<http://bit.ly/ircnevaluation>). This will help us ascertain your needs. We thank you for taking time to do this for us in order to better serve you.