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QUARTERLY REPORT

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“Strengthened Networks of Regional Market Information Systems and Traders’ Organizations in West Africa (MISTOWA)”

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABIP	Agribusiness Information Point
ADP	Agricultural Development Project
AGRIS	Agricultural Information System
ANOPACI	Association National des Organisations des Producteurs en Cote d' Ivoire
APIV	Animateurs des Points Information Villageois
APLS	Association des Acheteurs de Produits Locaux
DMDA	Dawanau Market Development Association
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FACIA	Federation of African Agricultural Input Trade Associations
FECAIDA	Federal Capital Agricultural Inputs Dealers' Association
FEITLS	Federation des Eleveurs Independents et des Transformateurs Laitiers du Senegal
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
GAABIC	Ghana Agricultural Associations Business Information Center
GAFCO	Ghana Foods Company
GAPTO	Ghana Agricultural Products and Traders Organization
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
ISCOS	Institut Syndical pour la Coopération au Développement
MIR	Marketing Inputs Regionally
MIS	Market Information Systems
MISTOWA	Strengthened Networks of Market Information Systems and Traders' Organizations in West Africa
NAMIN	National Agricultural Marketing Information Network (Nigeria)
NAMIS	Nigeria Agri Marketing Information Service
NEPAD	New Partnership for Agricultural Development
PCU	Project Coordinating Unit
PIR	Project Intermediate Result
PO	Producer Organization
RATES	Regional Trade Expansion Support Program
RECAO	Réseau des Chambres d'Agriculture de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Network of Chambers of Agriculture of West Africa)
ReSAAKS	Regional Strategy Analysis and Knowledge Support Systems
RESIMAO	Réseau des Systèmes d'Information de Marché d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Network of Market Information Systems of West Africa)
ROESAO	Réseau des Opérateurs Economiques du Secteur Agro-Alimentaire (Network of Economic Operators in the Food Industry)
ROPFA	Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de

	l'Ouest (Network of Farmers' Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa)
SMS	Short Messaging System
SOCAMAD	Société des Coopératives Agricoles et des Produits de Débe
TA	Traders' Association
TO	Trade Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WACSOFF	West African Civil Society Forum
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

Strengthened Networks of Regional Market Information Systems and Traders' Organizations in West Africa (MISTOWA)

Second Quarterly Report (April – June 2007)

Executive Summary

USAID/WA awarded IFDC a \$14.4 million cooperative agreement in August 2004 to implement a four-year “Regional Market Information Systems and Traders’ Organizations in West Africa (MISTOWA)” project. Agriterra from the Netherlands contributed an additional \$1.4m to support the producers’ component of the project. MISTOWA aims to increase regional agricultural trade and food security by improving and linking the existing regional efforts to generate, disseminate, and make commercial use of market information. The project focuses on removing key obstacles to trade in West Africa including: i) lack of access to timely information on prices and market opportunities ii) inadequate business skills of producers and traders to respond to production and market opportunities and iii) unfavorable trading environment, including tariff and non-tariff barriers (e.g., harassments at the national borders).

In a letter dated July 28, 2006, IFDC-MISTOWA was notified of USAID/WA's decision to adjust funding levels of its programs to respond to new priorities and opportunities across Africa. The original end-of-project date was advanced from September 30, 2008 to September 30, 2007.

Major events of the quarter:

- ✚ **Rural Radio Program Officers trained to use and promote TradeNet:** MISTOWA partner, ANOPACI organized training for radio announcers. The training focused on TradeNet use and developing strategies and programs to communicate market information to the public via radio..
- ✚ **Trade Agent and ABIP Manager trainings extended to new countries:** A total of 137 people were trained to use TradeNet and to manage the Agribusiness Information Points. The trainings were held for the first time in the Gambia and repeated for Niger, Senegal, Benin and Mali.
- ✚ **TradeNet launched to the public in other countries:** MISTOWA partner, Afrique Verte (APROSSA) led an open-air launch of TradeNet to over 150 participants in one of the major markets in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in which TradeNet functions were demonstrated and new users registered to receive alerts. Similar public launches were undertaken in collaboration with partners in Senegal and Togo.
- ✚ **MISTOWA presented at high level fora:** MISTOWA Chief of Party, Kofi Debrah presented the project and its achievements at the 17th Annual World Forum and Symposium at Parma, Italy to an audience of prominent agricultural development practitioners from the international community. He was also invited to Seattle Washington by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation where he discussed the MISTOWA/BusyLab partnership and was involved in other discussions related to the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa.
- ✚ **Field work to survey the impact of MISTOWA intervention on women completed:** Gender specialist, Gisel DOvi completed field work in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Togo to assess how the project has impacted on women.
- ✚ **MISTOWA participated in discussions of AGRIS:** MISTOWA joined several stakeholders at a meeting held in Ouagadougou to discuss the development of an integrated market information system being proposed by ECOWAS. AGRIS will include production statistics, early warning, market and trade opportunities to anchor the NEPAD/CAADAP.

Successes from the interventions during the quarter include:

- **TradeNet highlighted in the 2008 World Development Report:** The innovative public-private sector partnership between MISTOWA and BusyLab that culminated in the development of TradeNet was highlighted as a text box in the forthcoming World Development Report. It reported how the service is providing timely access to information to producers and traders who are using the service to sell more and buy better using their cellular phones.
- **MISTOWA and TradeNet activities published in the print media:** Following the public launch of TradeNet, the print media in these countries published informative articles on MISTOWA's activities. They include a feature article "Bridging the digital divide: The Case of TradeNet" which appeared in the *Daily Graphic* (Ghana), 7 May 2007. Others are "Vendez plus, achetez mieux par Internet et Téléphone portable" from Burkina Faso and published in *L'Observateur Paalga*, No 6875, 27-29 April, 2007 and "Making Agricultural Trade Easy" published in Nigeria by *Broad Street Journal*, April 16, 2007.
- **AMEPROC Agribusiness Information Point in Mali reports significant trade deals:** The Malian association of shea nut and allied products exporters (AMEPROC) reported that they were contacted through the AMEPROC site on www.tradenet.biz and concluded business involving cowpeas, urea, and groundnut worth \$320,000 from buyers in Togo, Burkina Faso and Senegal.
- **Increased intra-regional trade:** Third quarter 2007 intra-regional trade in livestock and food crops monitored for 11 trade associations was estimated at \$8.143 million. In addition, the Fertilizer Association of Nigeria (FEPSAN) imported \$35.385 million of fertilizer into Nigeria in the third quarter. In addition, individual producers and traders reported making trade deals in cowpeas, onion, sheep and goats, tomatoes and urea valued at \$1.517 million in 9 transactions.

Manager's Report

Major activities accomplished in the second quarter of FY 07 are briefly highlighted in this report by PIR. The attached appendices include the performance indicator and country summary tables and trip reports.

PIR 1: Improved market information generation and dissemination

1. TradeNet launched in other countries:

- In Burkina Faso, MISTOWA partner, Afrique Verte (APROSSA) led an open-air launch of TradeNet in a major market in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso during which TradeNet functions were demonstrated and new users registered to receive alerts. Over 150 participants including the media, donors, NGOs, financial institutions and government officials attended. APROSSA rented space and set up a temporary ABIP facility within the market and provided complimentary training for interested users through the end of June 2007.
- In Senegal, MISTOWA partner, FEITLS officially launched their ABIP and 3 satellite kiosks (mini-ABIPs) located in three major markets in Dakar. The event attracted over 100 participants representing the press, local authorities, producers and traders. At each of the sites, TradeNet functions were demonstrated and new users were registered.
- In Togo, the official TradeNet launch combined with the inauguration of ROESAO-Togo's ABIP in Kpalime attracted over 120 local authorities and representatives of the press, producer and trader organizations, financial institutions and technical service providers. TradeNet functions were demonstrated and traders and producers who have used the services to increase trade gave testimonies.

- In Mali, MISTOWA partners, APCAM, Afrique Verte and SasakawaGlobal 2000 and the CLIC organized TradeNet demonstrations during the Commodity Exchange Forum organized by APCAM. About 120 participants registered as new users of TradeNet. Roughly 80 offers to buy and sell over 26,000 tons of produce worth \$128,000 were exchanged.

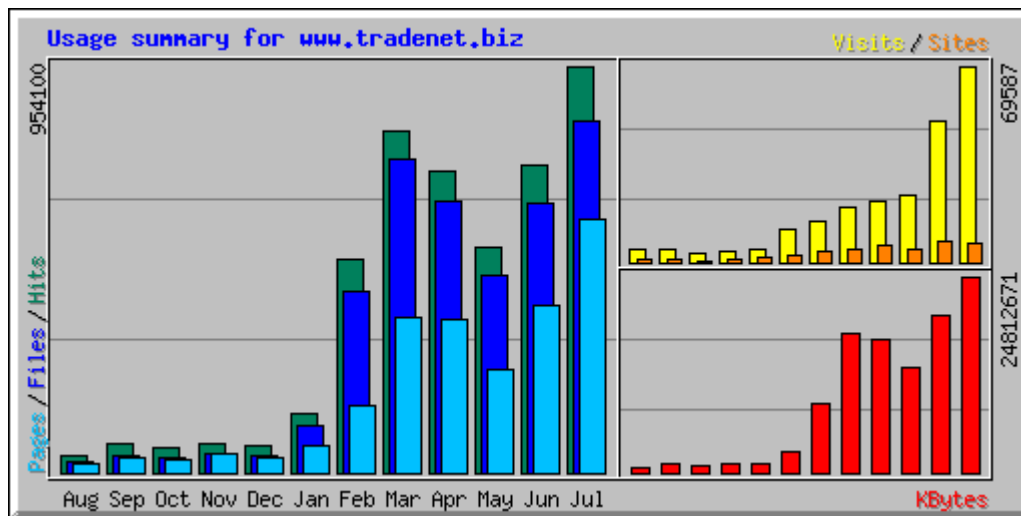
2. TradeNet development and use statistics

TradeNet usage statistics: Statistics for West Africa during the quarter is summarized below and is compared with last quarter's performance. Pages viewed, SMS alerts set up, price requests and alerts posted during the reporting period were almost twice as many as those for the last quarter.

Selected Statistics on the Trade Portal Usage

	Months	April	May	June	Apr- Jun 07 Total	Jan- Mar 07 Total
Statistics tracked						
No. of Pages viewed		357840	243094	394095	995,029	583,689
New SMS alerts set up		118	83	187	388	176
No. of SMS price requests/day		10	33	46	30	12
No. of buy/sell offers submitted/day		32	202	415	216	120
Buy/Sell Offers submitted (tons)		4,770	75,641	3,429	83,840	47,384
Buy/Sell Offers submitted (heads)		0	0	27,940	27,940	1,745
Prices uploaded		8061	7366	8706	24,133	15,090
News stories uploaded		14	30	24	68	93

More detailed usage statistics for www.tradenet.biz; Summary Period: Last 12 Months; Generated 31-Jul-2007 04:50 GMT



Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg				Monthly Totals					
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
Jul 2007	30777	26633	19150	2244	7089	24812671	69587	593661	825653	954100
Jun 2007	24118	21052	13136	1678	7626	19811182	50348	394095	631562	723554
May 2007	17076	15003	7841	762	4559	13220852	23627	243094	465111	529379
Apr 2007	23601	21206	11928	732	6357	16915739	21961	357840	636187	708036
Mar 2007	25838	23760	11777	635	4543	17474327	19690	365093	736590	800988
Feb 2007	17870	15163	5569	518	4252	8772762	14520	155940	424584	500368
Jan 2007	4542	3540	2021	388	2667	2696916	12049	62656	109769	140807
Dec 2006	1988	1329	1152	157	1481	1123704	4867	35717	41227	61641
Nov 2006	2343	1517	1410	130	1203	1226103	3921	42303	45524	70303
Oct 2006	1891	1190	979	107	688	1000359	3329	30355	36901	58638
Sep 2006	2275	1405	1182	157	838	1079129	4718	35461	42169	68277
Aug 2006	1262	775	722	158	987	546648	4910	22393	24053	39124
Totals						108680392	233527	2338608	4019330	4655215

PIR 2: Improved trader and producer skills

1. Training of ABIP information officers, managers and Trade Agents

- ✚ The third in a series of three 3-day agribusiness training workshops was conducted for ABIP information officers, managers or tradeagents in Benin, Mali, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In addition to emphasizing hands-on-training on how to register new users, sign them up for alerts and to use the cellular phone to upload price and offers to the TradeNet platform the training covered more advanced business management topics related to financial management, ABIP promotion and partnership. In the Gambia, a first training was conducted to familiarize producer and traders with Tradenet services.

2. TradeNet promotion in partnership with rural radios

- ✚ MISTOWA partner, ANOPACI organized a training for ANADER-supported Zonal Chiefs and radio announcers working with 15 APIVs/ABIPs in Cote d'Ivoire . The training focused on TradeNet use and developing strategies and programs to communicate market information to the public via radio. Among other accomplishments six radio emission programs were developed to inform the public as to how they can access market information using their cellular phones.

PIR 3: Improved West African trade environment

1. Trade facilitation and prospecting visits

- ✚ MISTOWA partner, PROCOPAS in Togo conducted a three-day trade exchange visit to producer and trader organizations and processing companies in Techiman, Kumasi and Accra, Ghana. Important contacts were made with potential buyers, including Ghananuts (for cashew nut), GAFCO, GAPTO, Afariwaa Farms and Guinness, Ghana Ltd for maize.

2. Reported trade

- Intra-regional trade in livestock and food crops monitored for 11 trade associations during the third quarter of FY 2007 was estimated at \$8.143 million. In addition, the Fertilizer Association of Nigeria (FEPSAN) imported \$35.385 million of fertilizer into Nigeria in the same period.
- Individual producers and traders reported making trade deals in cowpeas, onion, sheep and goats, tomatoes and urea valued at \$1.517 million in 9 transactions during the quarter.

3. Advocacy work

- MISTOWA staff and ROESAO partners in Togo and Benin have succeeded, through advocacy efforts, in acquiring authorization for Beninese traders to travel to/from Benin/Togo to purchase tomatoes and onions. Local authorities have been issuing "laisser passer" to assist buyers' unhindered passage to and from Benin.

Project Management: Grants, M & E and Public Relations Activities

1. Grant administration

- Grant reports were received from grantees. The Grants committee developed a strategy to write an end-of-project grants report.
- Remaining grants funds previously allocated under signed MOU's with equipment and competitive grant recipients were distributed to various partners, completing the grant distribution process.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Former M & E officer, Chris Amedo and Kofi Debrah continue to analyze M & E data from the trade associations selected to report imports and exports of selected commodities. They have also analyzed the volume and value of reported trade deals by commodity and by country of origin and destination. Cumulative trade statistics as of July 31 2007 are:

- \$544,128,531 worth of cross border trade involving cattle, rice, tomatoes, cassava, fertilizer, onion, shea nut/butter and maize recorded by 15 trade associations since October 2004.
- 1,310,198 tons of food crops and 608,037 heads of small (sheep and goats) and large (cattle) ruminants were reported traded by the same trade associations since October 2004.
- Producers and traders supported by the project began reporting trade deals voluntarily since October 2005. The cumulative value of reported trade deals as of July 31 2007 is \$51,427,750. The deals involved trade in cattle, sheep and goats, cowpea, maize, millet, onion, rice, sesame and shea butter within the West African sub-region as well as with the outside world..

Gender specialist, Gisel Dovi completed field work in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Togo to assess how the project has impacted on women and began the analysis.

3. Visitors

Visitors to the the Nigerian office during this quarter included:

- Patrick Hanemann of MCA (Washington DC) doing due diligence for Burkina Faso paid a visit to MISTOWA to understand how the project is helping traders access the West African market.

4. Newsletters

- No Newsletter was published because of budgetary constraints

5. Public Relations and Promotional Activities

- “How to” and other learning and TradeNet promotional materials were distributed at the public launches in Togo, Senegal and Burkina Faso. Apart from articles published by the print media, Voice of America aired news and interviews of the events in Hausa in Ghana, Nigeria and Niger.

6. Reports

Reports produced during this quarter include:

- April, May and June activity reports submitted by MISTOWA coordinators from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.
- Trip reports

Annex 1: Performance Indicator Table

Indicator	Weight	Baseline Year	Baseline Year Data	Progress Direction + or -	FY 2007 Target	FY 2007 Qtr 1 Actual	FY 2007 Qtr 2 Actual	FY 2007 Qtr 3 Actual	FY 2007 Qtr 4 Actual	FY 2007 Actual
<i>a) Annual value of trade of selected products from 15 trade associations supported by MISTOWA increased (\$)</i>	5	2005	120,000,000	+	18,000,000	34,080,409	72,566,618	43,528,289		
<i>b) Annual value of trade of selected products reported as deals by project beneficiaries increased (\$)</i>	5	2005	185,221,152	+	35,000,000	15,712,282	3,926,454	1,517,256		
Total quarterly value (a + b) of selected products increased (\$)	5	2005	305,221,152	+	53,000,000	49,792,691	76,493,072	45,045,545		
Number of countries having compatible MIS	2	2004	0	+	10	10	10	10		
Number of users of MIS	3	2005	103,303	+	134,000	33,295	43,400	60,000		
Number of hits on partner websites	3	2005	117,085	+	2,488	190,582	1,442,163	1,960,969		
Number of individuals trained	4	2004	46	+	600	336	173	255		
Analyses produced for regional organizations	1	2005	0	+	1	0	0	1		

Annex 2: Country Summary Table

FY 2007	Country	Qtr	Training (Men, Women)		Event Participation (Men, Women)		Fund Expenditure	Other
			Men	Women	Men	Women		
1	Benin	1	16	1	18	10	40,500	
		2	14	2	16	11	38,638	
		3	8	1	0	0	8,087	
		4						
2	Burkina Faso	1	34	19	8	12	35,700	
		2	22	8	6	5	30,300	
		3	21	11	90	60	47,200	Includes public launching
		4						
8	Gambia	1	2	0	0	0	3,600	
		2	0	0	1	0	1500	
		3	31	4	0	0	21,000	ABIP training
		4						
9	Ghana	1	35	15			42,160	
		2	14	6	5	3	37,300	
		3	16	4	0	0	11,500	
		4						
10	Guinea	1	0	0	1	1	7500	
		2	0	0	0	0	0	
		3	0	0	0	0	0	
		4						
12	Ivory Coast	1	19	1	0	0	2,500	
		2	11	8			17,500	
		3	30	14	0	0	21,000	ANOPACI Training
		4						
13	Liberia	1	0	0	0	0	0	
		2	0	0	0	0	0	
		3	0	0	0	0	0	
		4						
14	Mali	1	14	5	22	25	17,800	
		2	15	4	1	1	12,500	
		3	20	8	100	80	18,450	TradeNet launch
		4						
16	Niger	1	13	1	6	8	14,000	
		2	12	4	3	1	18,500	
		3	14	5	0	0	9,400	
		4						
17	Nigeria	1	21	8	0	0	3,300	
		2	12	8	30	40	35600	
		3	32	10	0	0	13,700	
		4						
19	Senegal	1	29	11	11	14	48,750	

FY 2007	Country	Qtr	Training (Men, Women)		Event Participation (Men, Women)		Fund Expenditure	Other
			Men	Women	Men	Women		
		2	12	5	4	8	40,200	
		3	14	6	36	30	45,200	FEITLIS Tradenet launch
		4						
		1	1	0	0	0	1,870	
		2	0	0	0	0	0	
		3	0	0	0	0	0	
20	Sierra Leone	4						
		1	11	5	26	35	15,100	
		2	12	4	2	1	12,000	
		3	5	7	45	90	16,800	TradeNet launch
21	Togo	4						
	Total 3rd quarter)		191	70	260	140	212,337	

Annex 3: Case Studies/Success Stories

None reported

Annex 4: Trip Reports

Trip 1: Kofi Debrah's report of a working trip to Bamako, Mali (April 1 - 14, 2007).

Purpose of the trip:

- Participate in a workshop to review a draft World Development Report WDR2008
- Participate in, and make a presentation on MISTOWA at the Crops Outlook Conference and to have discussions with ECOWAS/CILSS/UEMOA on IFDC/MISTOWA's place in the ECOWAP/CAADP implementation
- Participate in, and make presentations on MISTOWA's experience at a USAID/Mali –organized workshop on the Development and Financing of Value Chains in selected commodities in Mali
- Meet current and potential MISTOWA partners (PCDA, TradeMali, Kimberly (USAID/Washington TDY), GTZ/Microfinance; BNDA/TradeNet)
- Discuss staff issues (Toure's departure and consultancy in Cote d'Ivoire)

Major Conclusions

- The WDR2008 writing team is likely to include a text box on MISTOWA achievements in the World Development Report 2008
- RESIMAO (public sector MIS) continues to be antagonistic to TradeNet, and MISTOWA activities in general
- ROESAO has renewed its collaborative interest with MISTOWA. They intend to seek MISTOWA's guidance to create and reinforce a technical secretariat to play a significant role in the ECOWAS/CAADP implementation as partner
- Renewed interest in MISTOWA activities by different categories of potential users including ECOWAS's desire to conserve its achievements and to roll it out within the context of the ECOWAS/CAADP framework

Major persons contacted

- Derek Byrelee and Alain de Janvry (WDR 2008 authors), Karen Brooks, The World bank, John Staaz and Nango Dembele MSU), Dr. Ntare and Koala (IFDC) and 25 other participants
- Dr Timbo, Director, PCDA
- Issa Keita, AMEPROC
- Jean Francois Hoarau, Directeur General Adjoint, BNDA
- USAID – Jean Harmon, Mr Augustine Dembele, and Gaoso
- USAID TDY - Kimberly Hickok Smith
- TRADEMALI - Arouna Diallo
- AFRIKLINKS – Mme Fofana Aminata
- ECOWAS: Dr. Sola Afolabi, Yamar Mbodge, Barage Liman
- UEMOA: Mr Ayasor
- CILSS: Mr M'Beng, Executive Secretary and Dramane Coulibaly, Moussa Cisse
- The Executives of ROESAO

Description of activities

WDR2008 Discussion

The meeting was held by the World Bank, ICRISAT and MSU and brought together stakeholders from research, development and the donor community to review and improve the World development report built around an Agricultural Development theme for the first time since 1982. I was a lead discussant on the

constraints to agricultural diversification. I also had the occasion to do live demonstrations of TradeNet for real time price requests and alerts for selected commodities from Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso. The World Bank team asked, and I sent a one-page write up on the MISTOWA/TradeNet experience that will be considered as text box in the WDR 2008.

The Crops Outlook Conference

MISTOWA has been co-sponsoring the conference with CILSS except for this edition due to budget constraints. About 80 representatives of the public sector MIS, ROESAO from the CILSS countries and including Nigeria attended the workshop opened by Mr. Fousseini Mariko, Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture in Mali and was supported on the podium by Dr. Sola Afolabi (ECOWAS) and Mr. M'beng, Executive Secretary of CILSS.

The traditional pre-conference meetings were held by RESIMAO and ROESAO, respectively and field visits to the markets were organized. Agryhmet presented the food production and security situation in the Sahel. RESIMAO presented Country-specific price situations were presented by the various RESIMAO countries followed by a regional overview by RESIMAO itself. The "bourse" was organized in the traditional way by bringing producers and traders invited to the meeting together to make trade deals. A major concern at the plenary was the lack of reliable statistics on the volume and value of intra-regional trade, to which I responded by giving the example of MISTOWA where traders participate in documenting trade data.

A session on Market Information Systems included presentations of ECOWAS' SIGOA-TOPS, RESIMAO's public sector MIS and IFDC/MISTOWA's public/private sector system. DMDA participants from Nigeria and AMEPROC participants from Mali gave testimonies to the benefits of the TradeNet and general capacity building from which they benefited. The presentations were followed by heated discussions, particularly from the RESIMAO constituency, led by its coordinator, Salif Diarra. For them, MISTOWA has reduced the value of RESIMAO by developing a private-sector MIS that has come into serious competition with theirs and that no sustainable market information system could be built on projects. In response, I reminded them of the original project document which promised to strengthen the existing public sector system and also introduce a private-sector system to provide market intelligence that the traders need. I also reminded them of the over \$150,000 support in equipment grant and training the project spent on RESIMAO to make it more efficient today than before, and that MISTOWA has by far been more efficient, spending about \$10m to generate over \$400m worth of trade deals through its intervention.

Workshop on the Development and Financing of Value Chains in selected commodities

Alain Sy (1000+ project), Ibrahim Toure, Ibrahim Kouyate and I attended the Value Chain Development workshop organized by USAID/Mali and the Abts Associates. The resource person was Anita Campion, CEO of Enterprising Solutions in Washington, DC. The purpose was to discuss ways in which the potatoes, onion, rice and mangoes value chains can be improved and better financed. USAID/Mali specifically invited MISTOWA to present its experience, particularly how it is using cellular phones to connect the actors in the value chain. It appears that information from the workshop will provide the background for an impending RFP for a project to reinforce the value chain of the selected commodities in Mali.

Trip 2: Emmanuel Alognikou and Musa Taylor's report

Purpose of the trip:

- Live radio interview in local language to explain the TradeNet tool and its potential and launch an appeal to listeners to fill the registration forms at the radio station.
- Launching of Tradenet in the Northern Region, Ghana with the support of Caroline Sock Fall and Sarah Bertlett from Busylab
- Targeted technical training on the use TradeNet and associated SMS functions for AgriAgents and ABIP managers
- Rapid survey of Tradenet users on problems in using the platform and testimonies
- Meetings with key MISTOWA-established ABIPs and partners
- Courtesy visits to the President of WAEMU and American Embassy

Major Conclusions

- Tradenet and associated SMS functions continue to arouse current/potential users either organizations or individuals to enthusiasm.
- There will be hands-on training for new AgriAgents in new markets in the Northern Ghana as well as rural radio programme managers so they can embark on awareness and registration drive campaign.
- The President of WAEMU agreed that a project like MISTOWA should not end at this stage and suggested strongly among others that IFDC promotes Tradenet through the WAEMU's West African Regional Channel, with the objective of creating greater awareness especially in the donor community thus clearing the ground for further funding to support MISTOWA-type activities after September 2007.
- There is a good possibility the banks (e.g The Bank of Ghana) will use the Tradenet databases on a pay-for-service basis.
- Constraints to Tradenet use and ABIP implementation have been identified.
- Producer and trader organizations managing ABIPs have renewed their interest in and optimism about sustainability of the ABIPs and requested for further technical support from MISTOWA so as to reach their maturity.

Major persons contacted

- IFDC/1000s+ project: Victor Clottey, Agribusiness Cluster Advisor
- Busylab: Caroline Sock Fall, Business Manager & Sarah Bartlett, Peace Corps & Consultant, Interface Busylab and Tradenet users
- MOFA: Sylvester Adongo, Regional Director of Agriculture, Northern Region
- CARD: Naresh Shukla, Manager
- SEND Foundation: Shaibu Shafiu, Program Officer – Enterprise Development/Micro-Finance & technical staff
- Trade Aid Integrated: Nicholas Apokerah, Managing Director
- Participants in Tradenet training and rural radio programme managers
- IFDC Burkina: Wim van Campen, IFDC Representative in Burkina & MIR Coordinator; Georges Dimithe, Policy Economist MIR; Marie Laurentine Ilboudo, MISTOWA Field Coordinator; Sandrine Tapsoba, MISTOWA Technical Assistant
- APROSSA / Afrique Verte Burkina: Mrs. Placide Compaoré/Koulibaly, Training Coordinator & Moussa Balima, Accountant
- AEBVPCB: Hama Barry, Chairman; Hamado Ouedraogo, General Secretary; Dominique Z. Nombre, Organizing Committee Secretary; Timbila T. Sawadogo, Advisor.
- SIM/SONAGESS: Alain Tagnan, Director MIS Division; Abdoulaye Ilboudo, Coordinator MIS-related Studies; Ms. Benedicte Pemou, Technical Assistant
- WAEMU: Soumaila Cissé, President; Kadjila Labitoko, Cabinet Director; Muslim Maïga, Director Agriculture & Food Security Department.
- CPF: Moumouni Ouedraogo, Permanent Secretary.
- Trade Point / ONAC: Justin B. Bayili, General Director ONAC; Simon Pierre Palenfo, Coordinator Trade Point; Désiré Michel Béré, Marketing Specialist KOMSAYAN.
- IRSAT/ProKarité: Dr. Aladi Werem, Director IRSAT; Dr. Bréhima Diawara, Head Food Technology Department.
- US Embassy: Ms. Sadie Marie Okoko, Economic & Trade Advisor.

Description of activities

We took advantage of the events and working meetings to pay courtesy visits to key partners. The main objective was either to discuss ways for collaboration in Ghana or to review progress made so far in establishing/managing ABIPs and discuss future activities in Burkina Faso.

Live radio programme to explain MISTOWA and TradeNet

Prior to the launching and hands-on training, Musa Taylor was supposed to stop over at Nkawkaw with the intention to give a 30-minute live radio interview in local language at OBUOBA FM, to explain the TradeNet tool and its potential. The live presentation could not come on but he took the opportunity to discuss at length the areas of collaboration between the two institutions in promoting Tradenet for the benefit of the rural producer and trader. Management of the FM station agreed to give free airtime on Mondays from 7:00pm to 8:00pm for live interviews on Tradenet followed by phone in session. Musa took the opportunity to demonstrate online the Tradenet platform and signed up some staff for SMS alerts.

Launching of Tradenet in the Northern Region of Ghana

The successful launching of Tradenet and ABIP concept in Accra in late January 2006 created an increasing interest and strong incentives to effectively make them countrywide revolutionary MIS tools. The launch in the Northern Region is in line with project promotional strategy and expression of interest from several private MIS partners (e.g. SEND Foundation, TradeAID, etc) to use Tradenet. Chaired by Mr. Sylvester Adongo, Regional Director of Agriculture, Northern Region the event was held at the Catholic Guesthouse in Tamale on March 19, 2007. It brought together fifty or so representatives of the media, various development projects/partners, and government officials. MISTOWA/Busylab partnership as well as Tradenet capabilities and functionalities were presented by Kofi Debrah and Ms. Caroline Sock Fall, Busylab respectively. Participants were very excited about the tools and raised very interesting and fundamental queries on further funding to complete product development and for capacity building activities, sustainability of the system, verification and reliability of information posted to the website, etc. Positive reactions from potential users were instantaneous and possible collaboration was discussed.

Hands-on training on TradeNet use for AgriAgents (e-commerce center managers) of SRID/MOFA

This is a follow-up training for a core group of SRID e-commerce center and ABIP managers that collect and upload prices and offers into the platform. Key resource persons were Musa Taylor, Kofi Debrah and Emmanuel Alognikou. The 2-day training took place in a cybercafé in Tamale and was destined to (i) review previous knowledge on Tradenet, (ii) expose participants to its new functionalities and (iii) prepare them for a mass campaign to get people to use it. Problems encountered in using the tools were also discussed. In addition, many delegates who attended the launching the day before joined the group of invited trainees. Because of a limited number of computers only 10 of them were accepted.

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the training and as a practical example of acquiring a better knowledge of the tools they created a Tradenet group entitled "MOFA Tradenet Squad" to exchange further information among themselves. They also went back to their work stations with an assignment to promote Tradenet and register traders and producers for SMS alerts.

Solutions were proposed to solve major constraints to Tradenet use (see Sarah's report as attached). Among others participants were encouraged to negotiate special contracts with cybercafés for continue practice and training and to give more importance to uploading prices and offers via SMS where there is no computer/internet or inefficient connectivity. MISTOWA should provide necessary funds.

Working meeting and courtesy visit in Ghana

SEND Foundation of West Africa: is an international NGO headquartered in Accra, Ghana. In Ghana, SEND implements The Eastern Corridor Agro – Market Information Centre (ECAMIC) project, with the objective to make available agricultural market information to farmers in a timely and accurate manner. Following earlier interest expressed by SEND Foundation in Tradenet and after the launching we met with Shaibu Shafiu and collaborators together with Caroline and Sarah to discuss their willingness to integrate new markets and/or commodities into Tradenet, with regular provision of timely market information. To set the tone of further collaboration with MISTOWA and Busylab, Mr. Shaibu was asked to send a short concept note indicating markets and commodities to cover and TradeAgents identified to serve as such. MISTOWA and Busylab will follow-up with this information and take appropriate actions.

Trade Aid: is a Ghanaian NGO with a MIS component based in Bolgatanga. They are active in the basket, tomatoes, rice and shea sub-sectors in the Northern Region. On the way to Ouagadougou we made a stopover in Bolgatanga and met with Nicholas Akeporah who also expressed interest to collaborate with MISTOWA. The same approach proposed to SEND is applicable to Trade Aid.

Meetings and working visits in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

The composition of MISTOWA delegation for all meetings and visits in Burkina Faso is shown below.

UEMOA: Two courtesy visits were paid to UEMOA. Because of recent restructuring within UEMOA, the objective of the first meeting that took place on March 26 was to introduce Mr. Wim van Campen as IFDC

Representative in Burkina Faso to the new Cabinet Director, Mr. Kadjila Labitoko and the Director of Agriculture and Food Security, Mr. Mouslim A. Maïga and to present to them IFDC activities in the sub-region. The IFDC delegation was composed of key staff from both MIR¹ and MISTOWA² projects. During the visit, the IFDC regional projects (MIR, MISTOWA, 1000s+ and WACIP) were briefly presented to the Cabinet Director, with a little bit focus on Tradenet and demonstration of SMS functions. In addition to MISTOWA project achievements, Dr. Debrah informed them about the end of USAID funds in September 2007 thus the assistance of UEMOA in the research for additional funding to continue project activities. He also clearly introduced issues to discuss with the President the following morning. After these presentations, the UEMOA delegates expressed their great satisfaction of collaboration between MISTOWA and IFDC as well as their strong interest in integrating MIS tools being developed by IFDC in the regional market and food security information system under construction. Finally, information was provided on upcoming launching of Tradenet and ABIPs in Burkina Faso on April 26, with prior invitation to UEMOA.

Accompanied by G. Dimithe, the MISTOWA delegation met with Mr. Soumaïla Cissé, President of UEMOA in the presence of Mr. Mouslim Maïga. Here again Mr. Cissé was very enthusiastic about Tradenet and related SMS functions and ABIP concept after Kofi's presentation and live demonstration. He congratulated IFDC for such a great achievement in a very short time and commented that this is no more and no less a revolutionary regional tool for commodity exchange they have been thinking of. To respond to Kofi's advocacy for UEMOA's involvement and assistance in mobilizing additional funds he showed his availability and urgent need for such an imperative research before current USAID funding ends in September 2007. However, he made it clear that IFDC should advise UEMOA on how, where and when appropriate and concrete actions are needed. In the meantime he suggested that he is reminded to prepare a memorandum on this for the next meeting of the IFDC Board of Directors and offered the use of UEMOA's West African Regional Channel to aggressively and widely diffuse these tools within West Africa and elsewhere especially within donor community. He instructed Mr. Maïga to interact with Boccoum, the UEMOA communications team and IFDC/MISTOWA for further discussions and quick actions. He was finally informed on the upcoming of Tradenet and ABIPs in Burkina Faso.

APROSSA / Afrique Verte Burkina: This is a competitive grant recipient contracted to establish ABIPs in 4 localities in Burkina Faso using as foundation their regional information centers. We congratulated them for significant progress being made in terms of implementation, reporting and ability to find alternative solutions to problems encountered. Reported constraints faced by APROSSA in the implementation of the grant and use of Tradenet as well as proposed solutions were largely discussed. To ensure regular uploading of market information from 5 additional markets, it was decided to provide CFA 25,000 to APROSSA every month as incentives and support to data collection. We also asked them to assist MISTOWA's coordination in Burkina in the preparations of upcoming hands-on training and launching of Tradenet and ABIPs in Burkina scheduled for April 23-26.

AEBVPCB, SIM/SONAGESS, CPF and IRSAT: these associations and institutions are also implementing ABIPs. Here again representatives we met expressed satisfaction of collaboration between MISTOWA and their specific organizations and promised to contribute their own way to sustainability of ABIPs. Since they are at early stages of establishing their ABIPs discussions were focused on setting-up the system. The project coordination in Burkina took advantage of the visits to deliver the equipment under the competitive grant to IRSAT to implement ABIPs within the shea nut/butter producers in Bobo and Pô. In addition, SIM/SONAGESS would be interested in receiving direct support from MISTOWA in terms of capacity building and requested that the project advocates for such a support to public national MIS.

Trade Point / ONAC: ONAC is a public national board for foreign trade implementing Trade Point and representing SIGOA-TOPS. We met with Justin Bayili, Director ONAC; Simon Pierre Palenfo, Coordinator Trade Point and Désiré M. Béré, Marketing Agent KOMSAYAN. Mr. Bayili reiterated his willingness to collaborate with MISTOWA in order to ensure the synergy between Tradenet, Trade Point and SIGOA-TOPS while maximizing benefits for economic operators and producers. He invited MISTOWA to participate in and promote Tradenet at the Fruits & Vegetables National Day. Discussions mainly focused on the review of a competitive grant submitted by Trade Point to establish an ABIP. MISTOWA agreed to provide equipment and internet connectivity to help run the ABIP.

¹ MIR delegation: Wim van Campen & Georges Dimithe.

² MISTOWA delegation: Kofi Debrah, Emmanuel Alognikou, Marie Laurentine Ilboudo & Sandrine Tapsoba.

USA Embassy in Burkina: A courtesy visit is paid to Ms. Sadie Marie Okoko, Economic and Trade Advisor to (i) introduce to her Marie Laurentine as Coordinator of MISTOWA activities in Burkina Faso as a replacement for Sami Traoré, (ii) brief her on project attractive achievements and short term perspectives including the upcoming Tradenet and ABIP launching, and (iii) advocate for possible extra funding from the embassy. Mme Okoko could not hide her wonder at MISTOWA's achievements. She informed the delegation on her intention to go on maternity leave and assured that the acting advisor will follow up with MISTOWA activities.

Trip 3: Claudia Lalumia's trip to Cote d'Ivoire, June 07

Purpose of the trip:

- Assist ANOPACI throughout the PICA/PIV management training in Abidjan
- Meet with Irvin Massinga at US Embassy to brief him about MISTOWA activities
- Discuss on-going and up-coming activities with ANOPACI (agreement with MTN, organization of exchange visit ROPPA platforms to ANPOPACI, their discussions with FIRCA and FARM)

Major persons contacted

- PICA/APIV managers: Participants at the training. See training report and list of trainees.
- Ervin Massinga, Economic Advisor, US Embassy Abidjan
- ANOPACI management team (Innocent, Biatchon, Francois)

Major Conclusions

The PICA training

- The training focused on collecting information on Tradenet technical and user difficulties, discussing the role of the PIV/ABIP manager in facilitating trade deals, and business management topics such as business plan development and financial aspects (elaboration of balance sheet and calculating break even point). We also discussed sustainability and developing partnerships to support the ABIPs/PIVs.
- Several participants had developed very basic and incomplete business plans after the business plan introduction presented at the last training. These were a good start and merit further development, particularly the promotion plans they had developed as part of the overall business plan. The APIVs will continue to work on the promotion and business plans in view of completing something usable.
- We introduced the session on the role of the APIV/ABIP manager in facilitating trade deals. Group work elaborated elements such as how far should the APIV go in trade facilitation, what are the various stages of facilitation and what is the extent of the APIV's involvement at each stage. I plan on developing a grid/guideline for general use and reflection among ABIP managers in Cote d'Ivoire and other countries.
- The session on elaborating the balance sheet was a direct follow-up on topics addressed during previous trainings (budget development, keeping a cash book, elaborating the cash flow budget and statement). An outside consultant was hired to facilitate this part of the training.
- The session on calculating break even point was also contracted out to the same outside consultant who was very good. Participants learned the break even formulas and completed several exercises on calculating break even point in terms of quantity and value, and even learned how to estimate when (the dates) the business would break even. This can be applied to ABIP enterprise management as well as management of other businesses which the APIVs advise.
- For the partnership session ANOPACI had invited a number of pertinent partners including a business development advisor, radio station, and bank representative. Although all confirmed during the week, only the business development advisor actually showed up in the end. The invitee presented the importance of the business plan and advised participants about pitfalls when defending a business plan. The sessions was not that useful in terms of how to develop partnerships for sustainability (as intended) but was interesting in support of the business plan development sessions.

Visit to US Embassy, Ervin Massinga, Economic Advisor

- Innocent Sindikubwabo, Chargé des Projets ANOPACI and I went to meet with Ervin Massinga on the 26th shortly after my arrival. We briefed him about MISTOWA objectives, activities, progress, and results, and introduced him to the Tradenet website. He was very interested and seemed impressed with the website and our progress. I suggested that he look through the site in detail and if necessary ANOPACI

could demonstrate all the functions including SMS alerts, price requests, etc. Innocent showed him briefly how the SMS functions are used and some resulting messages on his cell phone. Mr. Massinga recommended that ANOPACI and/or MISTOWA meet with the Adjoint Resident Representative of UNDP. Mr. Anthony Kwaku-Ohemeng-Boamah, whom he thought would be very interested in MISTOWA's activities and Tradenet, and with Karen Melloul in the Rural Development department of World Bank. He provided us with contact information for these individuals. ANOPACI will follow up. We informed Mr Massinga of the on-going negotiations between ANOPACI and MTN and of the up-coming official launch of MTN/Tradenet services in Cote d'Ivoire.

Discussions with ANOPACI management team:

- **MTN/ANOPACI contract.** MTN marketing and commercial managers are in accordance with the business plan submitted by ANOPACI. The file is being managed by Karim, who is under the Commercial Director at MTN. Karim recently received an award as best employee (n CI) and as a result traveled to South Africa where he met with the Director of MTN for all of Africa and talked about Tradenet and the impending deal with ANOPACI. The MTN Director for Africa expressed that the MTN/ANOPACI contract was one of three highest priority contracts to be signed in Cote d'Ivoire in 2007. In the meantime, the Director of MTN in Cote d'Ivoire resigned in March and his replacement only arrived in May 2007. The New Director MTN Cote d'Ivoire wanted to review the file before it moves ahead to contracting. This is where we are now. To attest to their intentions, at a recent meeting organized by MTN at Hotel Ivoire in Abidjan, Karim announced before over 3000 women traders that MTN would be partnering with ANOPACI to bring a new market information service to the traders. ANOPACI sees this as a very positive sign. Sensitization activities to be carried out at each PIV will be included in the contract between ANOPACI and MTN. ANOPACI is scheduling a sensitization activity in August where the pending (or at that time actual) agreement with MTN will be announced. No actual contract has yet been drafted or submitted to ANOPACI for consideration.
- **Exchange visit for CIC's from ROPPA platforms to ANOPACI.** We discussed dates during which ANOPACI would be available to receive the visitors. In view of lack of dates confirmed by ROPPA, it is difficult to make arrangements for the event. We also discussed possible means of organization and financial management of the event. I expressed that we prefer that ANOPACI be responsible for logistics and justification of related expenses (lodging, per diem, meals) instead of going through ROPPA since ROPPA is not (apparently) able to justify expenses given a short period of time. We will be in touch with ANOPACI after MISTOWA has confirmed the activity with ROPPA.
- **ANOPACI request for FIRCA assistance.** ANOPACI has submitted a proposal to FIRCA for assistance to increase the number of markets covered by each PIV from 5 to 20 by associating them with ANADER agents in major market towns not yet covered by the PIVs. The ANADER agents in these new market towns would act as "trade agents", collecting prices and offers and sending them to the APIV for up-loading onto tradenet (or up-loading the information themselves). In addition, the proposal to FIRCA also includes expansion of ANOPACI reach and number of PIVs from 15 to 22 throughout Cote d'Ivoire. The 7 new PIVs would be established in northern Cote d'Ivoire (including in areas formerly under rebel control and thus not accessible). This assistance would include equipment, training, connectivity, etc. (similar to what MISTOWA did for the additional 7 PIV to attain the current total of 15). There is also a small amount requested to support the ANOPACI coordination office in Abidjan. This proposal was submitted about 10 days ago (around 20th June). ANOPACI has not yet heard back from FIRCA.
- **ANOPACI discussions with FARM project.** The FARM (Foundation pour le Developpement au Milieu Rurale) visited ANOPACI some time ago and is very interested in the MIS they are managing, the idea of the PIV and involvement with Tradenet. FARM is interested in working with ANOPACI to organize a sub-regional workshop on coffee-cocoa production. IVA also seems to want to lead this workshop. ANOPACI is not sure which organization will actually take the lead and how they will collaborate on this activity. FARM will be sending 2 interns to ANOPACI for a period of 3 months (each) to better understand how the PIVs work, the services rendered, etc. and possibly assist in price and data analysis. FARM may in the future be interested in establishing "points de collecte et regroupage des produits agricole" at the PIVs and possibly organizing "bourse" activities similar to those now organized by Afrique Verte. All of this will depend on findings and recommendations made during and after the 3 month intern phase.

Trip 4: Kofi Debrah's trip to Italy and USA

Purpose of the trip:

- Make a presentation at a workshop organized by FAO in Parma, Italy
- Attend a meeting at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle, Washington, USA

Major Conclusions

- MISTOWA's work on helping smallholder farmers and petty traders access the market using ICT tools was very well appreciated by the participants of the FAO workshop.
- IFDC's contribution to shaping the Soil Health Program was appreciated by attendees of the BMGF meeting

Major persons contacted

- Rudy Rabbinger (IFDC Board Member), Doyle Baker, Prahbu Pingali and other participants of the FAO workshop in Parma
- Raj Shah, Roy Steiner, Don Doering and two other BMGF invitees

Description of activities

FAO Workshop

FAO organized a four-session workshop as a side event of the 17th Annual World Forum and Symposium organized by the International Food and Agribusiness Management Association (IAMA) in Parma, Italy from June 23 to 26. I was invited to participate and to share experiences gained by the MISTOWA project on helping farmers gain access to real time information. The FAO meeting was attended by about 50 prominent scientists and participants drawn from the international agricultural development community.

The FAO workshop sessions were 1) Opportunities and Challenges for the Rural Poor 2) Services for the Rural Poor 3) Capacity Building for Market Access and 4) Facilitating Market Linkages. I made a PowerPoint presentation on the topic "Helping farmers and traders to access markets using ICT and related tools: The MISTOWA/TradeNet experience in West Africa" where I described the project, its achievements and early impacts. Questions were asked about scalability and sustainability, but on the whole, our activities were very much appreciated.

Meeting at the BMGF

I proceeded from Milan to Seattle at the invitation of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to participate in the discussion of the Soil Health Program that would be implemented through the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). IFDC's contribution to shaping the program was very well appreciated.

Trip 5: Laudia' Trip to Mali

Purpose of the trip:

- Assist MISTOWA team (Kouyate, Toure, Abdoulaye N'Diaye- APCAM, Mr. Balo-Afrique Verte) throughout the PICA management training in Segou.
- Attend "fora" at CLIC in Mopti
- Visit other partnering CLICs in Kadiolo and Bougouni in preparation for their "fora"
- Visit other PICA partners: APLS, SOGEMAF
- Visit institutional partners to discuss collaboration (RECAO, APCAM, PCDA, Afriqulinks)
- Meeting with BNDA and Ecobank to discuss possibilities for collaboration using Tradenet to extend banking services to producers and traders associations. (Ecobank not possible)
- Meeting with USAID, Jean Harmon (courtesy and up-date on activities)
- Attend "bourse de cereale" organized conjointly by APCAM, Afrique Verte, Global 2000 and others to present Tradenet, collect offers, sign up new users, etc.
- Meet with and collect trade transaction proof from Issah Keita (visit AMEPROC PICA)

- Visit ROESAO headquarters' office and CONOESAM head office (later to discuss recent workshop financed by MISTOWA and outcome)
- Meet with Sarah Gavian and Yves Duplessis to discuss MISTOWA/WACIP/1000+ collaboration/linkages

Major persons contacted

- PICA managers: Participants at the training. See training report and list of trainees.
- Sarah Gavian, WACIP and Yves Duplessis, 1000+
- Global 2000 – Soule Traore, National Coordinator
- APCAM – Foussemi Traore, Secretary General and Abdoulaye N'Diaye
- Afrique Verte – Yacouba Balo
- Afriquelinks – Animata Maiga, Coordinatrice, CLIC managers and community management committee members
- PCDA- Mr Timbo, Director and Syni Fofana, Responsable Secteur Prive et Commercialisation
- AMEPROC- Issah Keita
- BNDA – Jean Francois Hoarau, Directeur General Adjoint
- RECAO – Mr. Kassim Dembele, Coordinateur PRIECA/RECAO
- USAID – Jean Harmon, Mr Dembele, and another staff member

Major Conclusions

The PICA training

Logistics of the training were good. Decent connectivity at SOTELMA cyber in Segou. OMA was unfortunately not present as they had not attended the last training either. All other PICAs were represented. Kouyate, Mama Coulibaly and N'Diaye did a very good job on the Tradenet training part. All trainees were able to practice the various new functions and seemed fairly comfortable with them. The SMS function (price search and alerts) was only working for part of one morning so they did not get to practice this that much. Still some functions do not work (alerts) either due to Tradenet bugs or GSM provider problems. All managers seemed quite strong with respect to comprehension of tradenet. The ones that seem to actually use it most being AV in Segou and Kayes, AMEPROC, APCAM, APLS and SOGEMAF. CLICs understand the site and services but I did not get the feeling that they have started using it yet (they say the fora will aim to explain to PO/TOs the utility of Tradenet and new services it brings to the CLICs). The business management part of the training was basically two sessions (the business plan and financial management – income statement and cash flow statement example based on one of the CLIC's actual financial books). These were interesting but of less practical use since among all the PICAs only the CLICs are actually charging for services (AMEPROC just beginning to do so). The need to create network among the PICAs in Mali (as in other countries) is clear as there is very little communication between them (excepting perhaps among Afrique Verte PICAs).

Afriquelinks – Fora in Mopti and visits to CLICS in Djenne, Kadiolo and Bougouni

Toure and I visited the Program Coordinator, Aminata Maiga, at the Afriquelinks office in Bamako on March 20th to verify our program for the three fora to be carried out in Mopti, Kadiolo and Bougouni. She informed us that only the fora in Mopti could be programmed during my visit because the producers and traders in Kadiolo and Bougouni could only be mobilized on Mon, Tues or Wed, the Mopti fora had already been programmed for Wednesday 28th, and Mon 26th is a Holiday. We resolved to do the fora in Mopti and visit CLICs in Kadiolo and Bougouni to give them lessons learned from the fora in Mopti and advise them on how to organize fora at their CLICs in the near future.

Preparation and participation at Bourse Cereales in Segou

On March 20th, Toure, Kouyate and I went to visit APCAM and Global 2000 to discuss MISTOWA participation at the Bourse de Cereale in Segou (April 3-4). Both institutions welcomed our participation and guaranteed us a spot on the program to present Tradenet, talk briefly about the PICA, etc. When we later met with Abodboulaye N'Diaye and Yacouba Ballo in Segou (during the training of PICA managers) we further discussed our participation and worked out that we would be able to collect information on all participants, register everyone on Tradenet, post all offers to buy and sell on Tradenet, and sign people up for alerts as well.

The fora itself went very well. Kouyate and I arrived the afternoon prior to the event to set up the internet connectivity and ensure our space and how we would set up the area. We were finally able to transfer the Afrique Verte Segou telephone line to get connectivity on site. The morning of the bourse we set up three computers with connectivity and put up the Tradenet banner and MISTOWA posters, arranged hand outs for people to take and sign up sheets to be filled out. The opening ceremony for the bourse was marked by the Minister of Agriculture's presence. After the opening the Minister made the rounds around the stands. Kouyate and I explained tradenet to him and demonstrated how to receive prices and alerts. The minister was very impressed and explained that the President of the republic requests twice per week the regional prices on various commodities, and that Tradenet could be very useful to the Ministry and to the President. He requested that MISTOWA demonstrate tradenet use to his staff of advisors who could then show it to the President of the Republic. We promised that we would be in touch to follow up and schedule the meeting/demo at the Ministry of Ag.

During the bourse Kouyate and I were present to register people and sign them up for alerts. Unfortunately the connection was not very fast and some of the tradenet pages were not working properly. We were able to work at SOTELMA cyber café at night to upload offers to buy and sell. Kouyate finished this work a few days after the bourse and I finished registering the participants as Tradenet users (based on the participants list which everyone signed) by Saturday. Patrice was able to publish offers we had uploaded by the end of day one so many of the participants received offers on their phones throughout the first night of the bourse. People were impressed with this though there were too many offers (a bit of spamming). Near the close of the bourse the organizers presented the offers and the deals concluded. In summary about 14 contracts were signed amounting to approximately 64,000,000 Fcfa. This was reported as better than last year's bourse results. By close of the bourse still others continued negotiations towards additional trade deals. The full report will be drafted and submitted by the organizers.

Visit to APLS, SOGEMAF, and Radio Kenedougou, Sikasso

Toure, Kouyate and I visited APLS and then SOGEMAF on March 30th. In each case it was simply to see the PICA, discuss with the PICA manager and the organization office holders (president, treasurer, etc.) about PICA activities. Neither APLS nor SOGEMAF have really started promoting Tradenet services to their members or the public even though both PICA managers are adept in internet and Tradenet. APLS does send information regularly on prices for cereals from Sikasso, and SOGEMAF regularly places offers to sell livestock but neither has started showing their members how to use Tradenet. SOGEMAF said that they have been posting offers for almost a year and only a few days ago that they receive their first contact from someone in Ghana interested in their offer. We recommended that they start targeting other PICA managers directly based in markets that deal heavily in livestock, and that they target actual contacts registered on Tradenet by sending them personalized e-mails presenting the profile of SOGEMAF and an offer for partnering with the contact. APLS says they have not been posting offers because they are selling almost all their produce inside Mali (in the past to OPAM). Now they are free to sell outside the country. I again stressed that even though they may have enough buyers there in Sikasso or in Mali, that they should not hesitate to put offers on line in case someone from another country is interested in buying at a higher price. People seem to continue to believe that Tradenet services only help people that don't have a local buyer (this is not the case especially if you are looking for an outside buyer who is willing to pay more). At APLS we asked if they could again start providing us with information on trade conducted within Mali. They had started to do this last year but MISTOWA told them we did not need this information, so they stopped recording it. Now that we are again interested in this information they will start collecting it again (they do not have retrospective data to report). SOGEMAF explained to us that they are looking into changing their

status from a “societe” to an organization so as not to be heavily taxed on transactions they are trying to help their members make. They also explained that their aim is to bring buyers to SOGEMAF and members rather than having members have to haul livestock all over the region in search of buyers. We stressed again that Tradenet can help them do this but they need to target specific contacts listed (if indeed they have noted that no one is responding to their offers to sell livestock). APLS (like the three CLICs) all had their sign and price boards delivered and installed very nicely. With both partners we stressed that they must submit their activity and financial reports so that they could access the next “tranche” of funding and we warned that if they do not submit overdue reports soon that they risk losing further finances promised. We also explained to both partners that they are responsible for paying connectivity fees to Radio Kenedougou. Both claimed that they did not understand that they were to pay but rather that MISTOWA already paid that on their behalf out of the grants they received. We explained that this is not the case and that they still owe the radio (now for about 8 months each at 50,000/month). Both agreed without any problem to pay the back pay due to Radio Kenedougou.

After the visits to APLS and SOGEMAF Toure, Kouyate and I went to visit Radio Kenedougou to explain to the Director (his second was present) about the misunderstanding with APSL and SOGEMAF and that they would be coming soon to pay the connectivity fees. The radio understood with no difficulty and reiterated their willingness to collaborate with MISTOWA and her partners to announce prices and offers to buy and sell, and other promotional spots. So far neither APLS nor SOGEMAF has approached the radio to program emissions that would be of interest. We wanted to do an emission but they did not have a slot available that morning. We agreed that hen Kouyate come for the fora in Kadiolo, he would stop and record or do live a radio emission on Tradenet, etc.

Meeting with Kassim Dembele, Coordinateur RECAO/PRIECA

Toure, Kouyate and I met twice with Mr. Dembele to discuss potential MISTOWA support to RECAO for the duration of the project, and “after MISTOWA” what PRIECA and RECAO can do to continue (or what we may be able to do together to continue) MISTOWA-type activities.

Meeting with BNDA

Dr, Debrah, Toure, Kouyate and I met with the Directeur General Adjoint of BNDA to discuss possible collaboration on developing financial services for producers and traders and using Tradenet and PICAs to access clientele, manage loan profiles, etc. We discussed for about 45 minutes and Mr Hoarau was very interested in exploring possibilities as BNDA is just now looking at how they can modernize and use new technologies to enhance/expand their services/outreach. We left him the one page summary of how tradenet services could assist financial institutions for his continued reflection and he invited us to stay I touch if we had further, concrete ideas to propose. MISTOWA senior staff should follow up whenever on next trip to Bamako.

Meeting at USAID

Dr Debrah, Toure, Kouyate and I met with Jean Harmon and her team at USAID. We provided an up-date on Tradenet development, negotiation with GSM providers, recent activities (training trainers and users on tradenet services (especially alerts and other SMS functions). Jean expressed that the project really seems to be getting into a steady stride now and that she is pleased to see this. She did however reiterate her disappointment at the beginning of the project and regret that MISTOWA got a “slow start”. We informed her that though USAID funding is ending in September this year, we are doing everything possible to find other funding sources to continue activities and capitalize on successes to date.