

Remarks
Ambassador Lewis Lukens
USDA-CPI- Food for Education Event
Doumga Rindiaw, Matam
January 22, 2014

(As prepared)

Monsieur le Ministre de l'Education,
Madame la Directrice de l'Agence Nationale de la Petite Enfance et de la Case des Tout-Petits
(ANPECTP)

Monsieur le Gouverneur de la Région de Matam,
Monsieur l'Inspecteur d'Académie de Matam,
Messieurs les Inspecteurs de l'Education et de la Formation,
Mesdames, Messieurs les Chefs de service,
Monsieur le Chef du village de Doumga Rindiaw,
Monsieur le Représentant Résident de Counterpart International,
Chers invités,

Friend from Douma Rindiaw, I say hello!: **Banndiraabe Doumga Rindiaw mi salminii oon!**
(Bahn-dee-rah-bay Doo-ngah Reen-njau mee sal-mee-nee-on!)

I am honored to be here at Doumga Rindiaw (Doo-mgah Reen-njau), home of 60 preschoolers, ages three to five.

These children are just starting out on their young lives. We in the U.S. Government would like to help these children stay strong and stay in school. One way to help them is provide hot meals and a comfortable place to learn, which is the rationale behind the program we are here to acknowledge, U – S – D – A – Counterpart International, McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

I understand many of the parents here are farmers, skilled at growing corn, millet and vegetables such as okra, onions and sweet potatoes, all of which contribute to nutritious meals. Thank you for your hard work as farmers. Your hard work is an important contribution to your society.

Let me give you some background on the program we are celebrating today. Initially, the United States Department of Agriculture contributed 2.9 billion FCFA (\$6.0 million) under the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program to provide three years of funding for a school canteen program in Matam. Counterpart International administered the activities, which began in 2007 and stretched to 2012.

USDA then contributed another 4.2 billion FCFA (\$8.8 million) to help children stay in school. It supported the current second phase of the program for three more years in Matam. Activities began in 2012 and are slated to end in 2015.

This second phase includes American contributions of tons of vegetable oil fortified with vitamin A, and bulgar fortified with soy and lentils. Over three years, we will provide almost ten million meals to just under 22,000 elementary students in 130 elementary schools -- and almost 4,000 preschoolers in 44 preschools.

An attractive environment also makes students want to come to school. I am so pleased to officiate today over the handover of 70 classrooms, 40 concrete fences, 1,960 desks for children and 70 desks for teachers worth just under 1 billion CFA (\$1.9 million). This handover comes under the second phase of the USDA-Food for Education program for Matam.

Under Food for Education, Doumga Rindiaw (Doo-ngah Reen-njau) now has two brand-new classrooms, a concrete fence and desks for the children and teachers. I have enjoyed touring your “new school” and seeing the children dine on U.S. contributions of food, “food for education” that is! The future is our children. Our children are the future.

Banndiraabe on njaaraama! (*Bahn-dee-rah-bay/ on njah-rah-mah!*) Friends, I say thanks!