The scope and impact of USAID/EA’s regional portfolio was apparent in September during the signing of several new assistance agreements. For example, USAID is expanding its work with the East African Community (EAC) to promote increased regional integration and development and to continue important work to improve conservation and management of the Mara River Basin. Over three million dollars has been provided to the EAC to help remove barriers to the movement of people, investment and services in the region. Resources are allocated for implementation of the EAC Customs Union and Common Market, to reduce the cost of transit in the region, increase access to clean water and sanitation, and protect biodiversity in the Mara River Basin.

Left to right: Ambassador Juma V. Mwapachu, Secretary General of the East African Community; U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania and the East African Community Alfonso E. Lenhardt; and USAID/East Africa Regional Director Larry Meserve, at the signing ceremony in Dar es Salaam. Photo: U.S. Embassy Tanzania

USAID is continuing its work with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) through an Integrated Partnership Assistance Agreement to promote increased regional economic growth, integration and stability. The Agreement supports COMESA’s Mission to “endeavor to achieve sustainable economic and social progress . . . particularly in trade, customs and monetary affairs, transport, communication and information, technology, industry and energy, gender, agriculture, environment and natural resources.” The latest amendment to the Agreement was signed in September 2010 and added $16.7 million dollars to generate results in the areas of Trade, Transit, Agriculture, Climate Change and Conflict Mitigation.

Since the first USAID-COMESA bilateral agreements were signed in 1998, our partnership has supported implementation of the COMESA Free Trade Area which significantly reduced tariffs on goods traded between 14 of its 21 Member States. USAID has also facilitated private sector participation in the design of the COMESA Common External Tariff, a key element of the new Customs Union. With USAID support, the African Cotton Textiles Industry Federation engaged closely with COMESA to ensure that duty will be applied to inputs from outside the region in a way that promotes industrial competitiveness. In an effort to increase trade in agriculture, USAID has worked closely with COMESA to harmonize sanitary and phytosanitary requirements for the trade of maize and dairy within the region. USAID assistance has also contributed to a large increase in intra-COMESA trade over the last decade. In 2000, the value of intra-COMESA trade was just over $3 billion. By the end of 2008, total intra-COMESA trade had expanded to just over $14.3 billion, in spite of the global financial crisis.

USAID also continues to support implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP); CAADP is an African driven initiative to expand agricultural trade and production, and eight COMESA member states (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda) have signed investment compacts to date.

An agreement with the East, Central and Southern African Health Community (ECSA-HC) promotes continued efforts to strengthen regional maternal child health and advocacy, specifically, to: a) advocate for changes in pre and post natal care country guidelines to help reduce maternal and newborn deaths; b) promote implementation of new approaches for increasing sustainable maternal, newborn and child health financing and governance; c) support the development of regional food fortification standards; and d) develop tools for monitoring family planning activities. By improving maternal and child health care practices at the community level, USAID and ECSA hope to see a reduction over time in illness and death rates among the region’s women and infants.
New Assistance Agreements Promote Improved Regional Integration, Health care, Access to Quality Education and Conflict Mitigation

In partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development’s Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (IGAD/CEWARN), USAID is working to avert and secure peace in the region with an emphasis on the Somali Cluster. Conflict often arises due to a lack of or breakdown in communication. USAID and CEWARN are implementing an Information Communications Technology for Peace (‘ICT4Peace’) activity to ensure information flows to and from conflict prone areas. CEWARN has made progress in responding to local regional conflicts: communications equipment provided under ICT4Peace has been used to report incidences of conflict, enabling local peace committees to mitigate and prevent new conflicts in the region.

USAID’s 2010 support to Djibouti is the largest since 2003. Agreements between the Government of the United States and the Republic of Djibouti will promote health care, education, democracy and good governance. Resources will continue to support the Ministry of Health’s efforts to eradicate polio and control Tuberculosis. Over the past three years, USAID’s support to the National Tuberculosis Program contributed to a doubling in the number of TB diagnostic and treatment centers, and Djibouti moving from having the world’s second highest to third highest TB prevalence rate in the world. A new program will support good governance in the health sector by improving systems and procedures within the Ministry, including financial capacity and service delivery. Education resources focus on the quality of teaching and learning. USAID has supported an Education Information Management System that helped to produce reliable statistics, illustrating significant education achievements over the last few years including an increase in the number of children and girls enrolled in primary school. USAID is also working with the Government of Djibouti, the Electoral Commission, political parties and civil society on the planned March 2011 Presidential and Regional Council elections. The first of four international observation missions will visit Djibouti in October and others will follow. With assistance from USAID/Washington the total 2010 budget for Djibouti is approximately $11 million, nearly doubling last year’s contribution and making it the largest contribution since USAID re-opened seven years ago.

Only Two Mentoring Sessions Can Make Miracles Happen!

“I could not believe to get a job as soon as I started the business training just after seven days ago,” said Fatima, a trainee who was enrolled in business and entrepreneurship information sessions sponsored through the USAID-Education Development Center (EDC) Shaqodoon (Somali for ‘jobseekers’) program. Shaqodoon provides training to out of school youth through local and international NGO and private sector partners and ensures that these trainees gain appropriate livelihood opportunities.

Over a period of two weeks in July and August, Fatima learned valuable networking skills and news about the growing business environment in Puntland. She also attended mentoring sessions where she was encouraged to apply tirelessly for jobs that she considered to be relevant to her previous or newly acquired skills and competencies.

“I have never got any mentoring or counseling sessions before. It seems to me this should have been a regular feature or component in all types of trainings including secondary education,” said Fatima. She continued, “The English sessions also taught me new techniques of how to win new job interviews. All this guidance gave me great confidence in myself and as a result of making good trials to win a job I succeeded to be finally recruited by a local NGO as an administrative assistant,” says Fatima happily.

Mothers and their children at the launch of a new program with the Ministry of Public Health and HIV/AIDS called “Let’s Help Them Grow” to prevent malnutrition in young children in Burundi. The program plans to assist 50,000 women and children under two years of age in Cankuzo and Ruyigi Provinces over the next five years.

Fatima is now working as an administrative assistant.

Photo: EDC

Photo: USAID/Djibouti

Photo: U.S. Embassy/Burundi
Flotea Massawe finds international success through her “Marvelous Flotea” product line.

Then USAID’s East and Central Africa (ECA) Trade Hub discovered Flotea in 2005 and provided her fledgling company with technical assistance in design and marketing.

After refining her product, the ECA Trade Hub sponsored Flotea to participate in four trade shows across the United States, most recently at the 2010 New York International Gift Fair. While attending these events, Flotea spoke at workshops, networked with U.S. buyers and developed a company website, view at: http://www.marvelous.co.tz. To fill her growing orders, Flotea needed to expand. Through a U.S. African Development Foundation grant, she enlarged her factory and now employs nearly 200 hundred women to create her popular pillows, bags, runners and table mats.

Today, Flotea is supplying her “Marvelous Flotea” products to the high-profile New York designer Rachel Roy and U.S. department store, Macy’s. Flotea’s Kuba cloth clutch sporting fabric woven in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now exported throughout the United States. “The clutch has created a chain of women in three different countries linked together to help alleviate poverty by providing employment opportunities for African women,” says Flotea. She has gone from making 200 pieces a month with an annual income of $120 to producing 2,000 to 3,000 pieces a month with an annual income of $100,000. Nearly 50 percent of her sales come from exports to the United States, India, and Japan.

Flotea credits the ECA Trade Hub for giving her access to a global market, saying, “You are the ones who held my hand in entering the U.S. market. Thanks again for trusting my dreams.”