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Youth Leadership Program to Expand in Senegal

Leadership Africa USA announces distribution of more than 100,000 copies of middle school leadership training curricula throughout Senegal

Mr. Alioune Ndiaye, Director of the Cabinet of the Senegal's Ministry of Primary Education, applauded Leadership Africa USA's work with Senegal's middle school students during Leadership Africa USA's launch ceremony announcing the distribution of more than 100,000 copies of its middle school leadership training curricula. The distribution of the leadership training curricula will take place in collaboration with Senegal's Ministry of Education. Mr. Ndiaye, in referencing the conflict-affected Casamance region where the youth leadership program was first piloted, explained that this type of program is necessary for inclusion of all actors in the peace process in the Casamance. He expressed his delight at the expansion of the youth leadership program to all of Senegal's middle school system.

Leadership Africa USA in collaboration with Senegal's Ministry of Education, USAID, including the Africa Education Initiative (AEI), and local partners, began youth leadership training initiatives in Senegal in 2008. Kevin Mullally, USAID Mission Director in Senegal, during his remarks at the launch ceremony, said, "this middle school leadership training curriculum with its focus on youth," is compatible with USAID's mission. He further commended Leadership Africa USA for its "effective and remarkable implementation of a leadership training curriculum."

Mr. Jay Smith, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy in Senegal noted that youth leaders are the tool for attaining community cohesiveness and peace in Senegal, and this is why teachers, principals, and academic inspectors have such an important job in inspiring this change. With support from USAID, the government of Senegal, the University of Ziguinchor, and other partners, Leadership Africa USA worked closely with school administrators and teachers to develop a leadership curriculum for students in middle school -- a formative time in their lives. The youth training initiative started with a pilot program in Senegal's Casamance region where 14,000 students from 20 middle schools received leadership training.

A Student Leadership Essay Writing Competition was held in December 2009 for students in Casamance. The author of one of the winning essays, Ouneissima Alice Noelli Manga of Kafountine Collège, 3e, Bignona, Casamance said that she believes the leadership program

has helped change participants' way of thinking and enabled students to bring necessary changes to their school and community. "I am the first girl to be a leader in the Social and Academic Club. Until now, these positions were closely guarded by boys." Manga urged her fellow students to get involved in leadership roles, adding that she will be happy to see this program extended to all Senegalese schools.

The successful pilot phase and unwavering support from Senegal's Ministry of Education have resulted in the expansion of the delivery of the curriculum to Senegal's entire middle school system where more than 250,000 students will be targeted.

Walker A. Williams, Leadership Africa USA's president, emphasized that leadership matters and that youth leadership training, especially for girls, is a critical catalyst for unleashing the immense potential in Africa.

Leadership Africa USA's mission is to provide Africa's youth the critical leadership skills they need to face the unprecedented challenge of rebuilding post-conflict societies. Our mandate is to develop youth leadership curricula and provide skills training to Africa's youth through public private partnerships.

For more information about Leadership Africa USA and its program in Senegal, please visit the organization's newly redesigned website at www.leadershipafricausa.org.