



## NEW RADIO PROGRAMS, WIND-UP RADIOS LAUNCH SPREAD COMMUNICATIONS COMPONENT

BUTARE, RWANDA *19 April 2007...* The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) initiative entitled Sustaining Partnerships to enhance Rural Enterprise and Agribusiness Development (SPREAD), announced today the launch of the communications component of the five-year USAID/SPREAD project. In a celebration at the National University of Rwanda, where SPREAD is headquartered, coffee farmers, government and university representatives, and invited guests joined USAID/SPREAD staff and partners for the kick-off.

The radio programs have been designed to educate and empower Rwanda's coffee farmers so they can increase income and add to their quality of life. The broadcasts provide education across many disciplines, including agriculture, health, and finance, which will enable the farmers to move forward with a more advanced level of professionalism.

"Rwandan farmers have been growing coffee for nearly 100 years, yet they don't even know how specialty coffee tastes, where it is sold, who drinks it, or how much money it is worth," said Dr. Timothy Schilling, SPREAD project leader. "SPREAD and our partners are excited to unveil two new nationally broadcast radio programs created specifically to educate Rwanda's coffee farmers and level the playing field. We also will distribute 300 more wind-up and solar-powered Freeplay radios for listening access."

Gatali Callixte, vice dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, said "The National University of Rwanda has been working directly with farmers for decades through projects like SPREAD. Today we are happy with the launch of the two radio programs "Imbere Heza" and "Umurage Urukwiye" produced to educate farmers, which will be aired by our radio station -- Radio Salus."

"Imbere Heza" ("Bright Future") is an educational radio program for coffee farmers spearheaded by Coffee Lifeline Rwanda, a joint venture between Coffee Lifeline International and the Freeplay Foundation. "Imbere Heza" will be aired nationally by National University of Rwanda's Radio Salus and will provide detailed information about coffee processing techniques, international market and pricing information, interviews with importers and roasters of Rwandan coffee, and news from local coffee co-operatives.

"Our pilot project here in Rwanda is very important because it will serve as the model for future projects in other coffee producing countries around the world, eventually allowing farmers to share information for the first time through a global radio web," said Peter Kettler, founder of Coffee Lifeline International. "It has been very gratifying to work with all of our partners toward the goal of empowering farmers through this access to information that will hopefully lead to higher quality coffee, better prices and improved lives."

"Umurage Urukwiye," ("The Brighter Future") is a serial drama created by Population Media Center (PMC) and aired by Radio Salus, based in Butare and Contact FM, based in Kigali. In the fictionalized drama, a coffee farming family figures prominently and addresses many day-to-day challenges faced by real-life farmers. "Umurage Urukwiye" also focuses on health issues that affect all Rwandans.

Dr. Rocha Chimerah, director of Population Media Center-Rwanda, said, "Through the partnership of PMC-Rwanda and SPREAD, we intend to revolutionize coffee farming in Rwanda by creating fictitious characters who will be role models to conservative farmers, with the hope that the latter will change their modes of farming, and embrace modern, more productive methods for the benefit of all Rwandans at large."

Coffee farmers working with SPREAD in cooperatives and privately will receive 300 additional Freeplay Lifeline wind-up and solar-powered radios, also through the Coffee Lifeline Rwanda linkage. Lifeline radios do not require batteries or electricity and are the only radios produced specifically for use in development projects. Used by Rwandan coffee farmers since 2005, Lifeline radios will extend the reach of "Umurage Urukwiye" and "Imbere Heza" to thousands of farmers working with SPREAD.

"We are pleased to donate 300 more Lifeline radios and have been gratified by the positive feedback farmers have given Coffee Lifeline Rwanda so far," said Michelle Riley, senior consultant to the Freeplay Foundation. "By utilizing the Lifelines in listening groups, coffee farmers are assured access to the vital information aired on the two radio programs."

SPREAD is a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Texas A&M University System. It focuses on high-value crop development, broadening agricultural capacity and marketing Rwandan agricultural products internationally. SPREAD also helps address health issues, especially those related to HIV/AIDS.

"Our objective with the SPREAD project is to increase the income and quality of life for rural Rwandans," said Kevin J. Mullally, director of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Rwanda. "This new communications program levels the playing field between the coffee farmer and the coffee buyer. As such, the coffee farmer will take better care of the coffee, resulting in higher quality and better prices for the farmer."

USAID has provided \$6 million for SPREAD and project partners are providing an additional \$3 million. SPREAD is an expansion of ongoing efforts between USAID and long-time partners in Rwanda, including Texas A&M University, Michigan State

University, The National University of Rwanda, and various agricultural and humanitarian organizations.

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**Editor's note: Interviews will be available with representatives from SPREAD, Coffee Lifeline Rwanda, PMC, Freeplay Foundation, Coffee Bike, and participating farmers.**