



U.S. Ambassador Marquardt to Highlight Education and Environment Projects in Toamasina

October 5, 2007 -- U.S. Ambassador R. Niels Marquardt will visit the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP) and the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) regional environment programs in Toamasina.

Ambassador Marquardt will meet with 20 vulnerable young girls – orphans, physically disabled, and economically disadvantaged - benefiting from the AGSP program in the CEG Tananambo and Fanandrana. He will also meet with local organizations working with the USAID eco-regional programs and visit private sector companies.

The goal of the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP) is to encourage motivated young girls to stay in school. The AGSP currently provides scholarships to 1,000 girls in three regions of Madagascar; Antananarivo, Toamasina and Fianaratsoa. The total budget for the AGSP in 2007 was \$189,600. Similar support is expected through 2008. The AGSP is an example of one of the United States Government's education development initiatives, creating an environment for young girls to excel, succeed and participate in their country's development.

USAID is working closely with the Government of Madagascar to conserve biologically diverse forest ecosystems by improving sustainable natural resource management and environmentally sensitive development. In an effort to assist the impoverished rural population of Madagascar, USAID has taken a linked approach that focuses on natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, water quality and availability, economic growth, health, and capable, good governance. In October 2002, USAID launched the Eco-Regional Alliance in an effort to coordinate its partners in the environment sector to obtain the maximum impact.