

Title: **Modern Technology in an Ancient Culture: Bridging the Digital Divide in Mali**

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Department: **Communications for Development**

Description: **An Imam in one of Mali's oldest and culturally richest cities gets connected to the Internet**

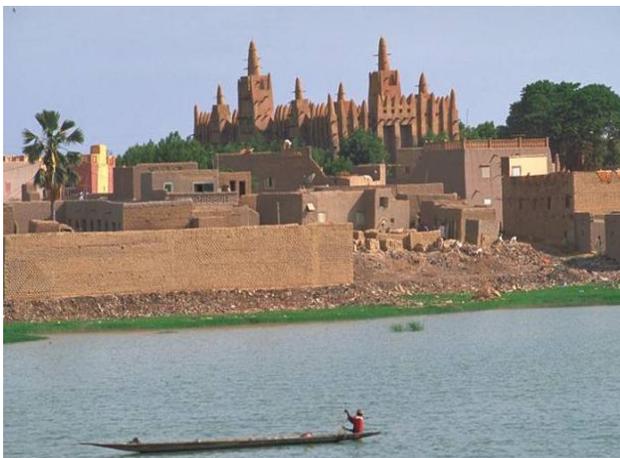
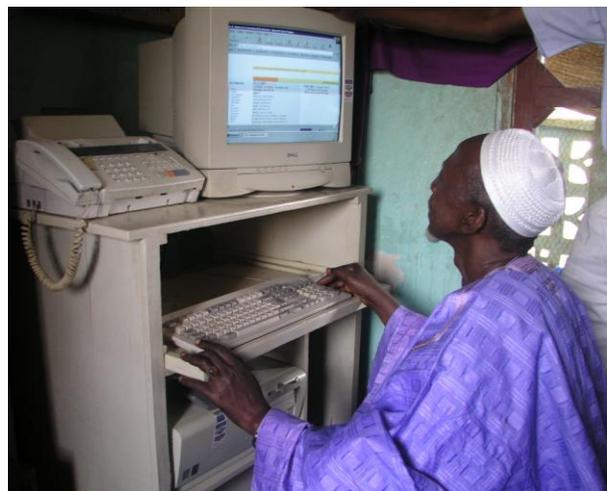
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Content:

Djenné, Mali, is known internationally for its UNESCO World Heritage mud-brick mosque, its archaeological site of Djenné-Jeno—a city of 10,000 mysteriously abandoned in the 14th century....and now its wired Imam! As of February 12, 2004 and thanks to the efforts of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Imam Almamy Korobara now has a live connection to the Internet. USAID provided computer equipment and a one-year Internet subscription for the Imam, an influential



religious and spiritual leader who heads the Moslem community in one of Africa's most important Islamic cities. The Imam of Djenné, a solid ally of the U.S. and a champion of USAID-funded activities in the area, has developed close relationships with the current and several recent U.S. Ambassadors. The equipment and connection will allow him to access the wealth of information offered on the web, and to promote Djenné's rich historical, cultural and religious heritage. "I now

realize that the Internet is not just for people working in offices; it is also very useful for religious leaders as well as for their communities” Imam Korobara said, while admiring the power of his new tool. “I know that many good things have been done by Americans in Mali; now I am discovering that the same is true throughout the world”. Djenné, inhabited since 250 B.C., is also the site of a USAID-funded Community Learning and Information Center (CLIC), which both the Imam and the mayor have strongly supported, as well as a highly-successful USAID-assisted community radio station which will host the CLIC. Combined, these actions put Djenné in the forefront of Malian communities committed to providing citizens with relevant and timely information, and using new information technologies.