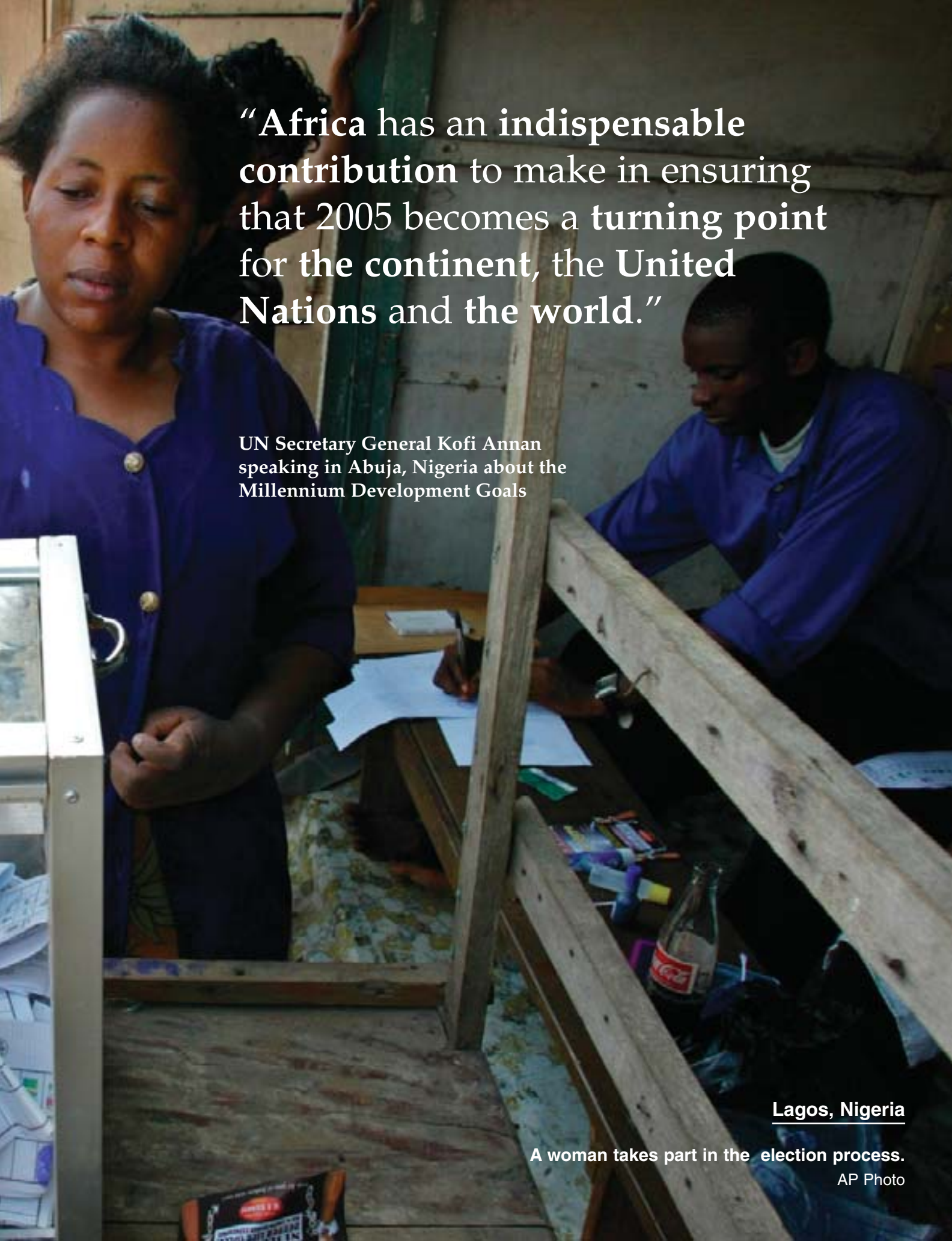


Africa





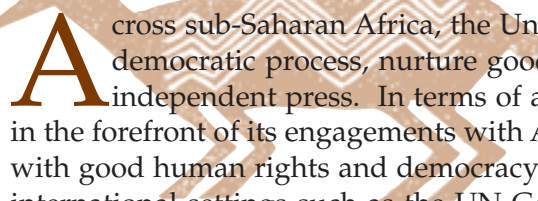
“Africa has an indispensable contribution to make in ensuring that 2005 becomes a turning point for the continent, the United Nations and the world.”

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan speaking in Abuja, Nigeria about the Millennium Development Goals

Lagos, Nigeria

A woman takes part in the election process.

AP Photo



Across sub-Saharan Africa, the United States promotes initiatives that increase participation in the democratic process, nurture good governance and encourage democratic institutions such as an independent press. In terms of advocacy, the United States places democracy and human rights in the forefront of its engagements with African governments. The United States also encourages nations with good human rights and democracy records to set examples of leadership, both in the region and in international settings such as the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a centerpiece of the U.S. policy in Africa and includes strong emphasis on democracy and human rights. AGOA encourages democratic rule by granting trade benefits to countries that make sustained efforts in addressing democracy, good governance, human rights and labor issues. The Millennium Challenge Account, President Bush's landmark initiative to prioritize accountability in foreign assistance, stands to benefit Africa with unprecedented assistance programs. Through this comprehensive and holistic approach, the United States is confident that those countries still ruled by governments that do not respect human rights will soon feel the tide of freedom spreading throughout the world.

The series of elections in Ghana, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Mali send a signal that the people of Africa are prepared to cast their ballots in favor of governments that are accountable to the governed and respectful of human rights.

In December 2004, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army moved toward peace by negotiating and then signing an agreement ending over two decades of civil war in Sudan. However, in Darfur, the Department of State between July and August 2004 dispatched a documentation team to conduct interviews with Sudanese refugees who fled the violence in Darfur and sought shelter in camps along the Chad/Sudan border. Based in part on the information gleaned by the documentation team, Secretary of State Colin Powell in September 2004, labeled the violence in Darfur as "genocide," and stated that the "Government of Sudan and Jinjaweed bear responsibility." The United States has committed many resources to improve the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur.

In Zimbabwe, members of civil society, the media and the political opposition continue to press for democratic reforms and respect for basic human rights. In Cote d'Ivoire, the African Union and the international community continue to press the Government to adhere to the framework for peace and democracy agreed to by the Government of Cote d'Ivoire and the New Forces in the Linas-Marcoussis/Accra III framework.

The United States continues to work closely with the nations of sub-Saharan Africa to overcome these difficulties. The people of Africa have already benefited from institutional reform and sustainable development. Sustained African commitment and U.S. support will strengthen the foundation to further promote democracy and human rights.

Darfur Documentation Project

In 2004, reports of violence continued to come from Darfur but due to lack of direct access to the region, the international community was left unaware of the frequency and type of atrocities taking place. The United States Department of State, through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), assembled and dispatched a team to conduct interviews with Sudanese refugees living along the Chad/Sudan border who had been displaced by the violence in Darfur.

The team included members of DRL, the Bureau of Intelligence of Research, USAID and experts from two non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Between July and August 2004, the team conducted interviews in some of the most remote and inhospitable territory.

The documentation team achieved its twin objectives of producing an initial assessment of atrocities committed in Darfur based on 200 interviews and a more detailed assessment based on approximately 1,136 interviews. The team coordinated its efforts with the UN High Commission for Refugees and established its base of operations in Abeche, Chad. Each team was comprised of four to five interviewers, interpreters and drivers. Members of the team camped near refugee camps for three to four days at a time before moving to another location in order to reach a broad population of refugees.

On September 9, 2004, Secretary Powell, based on information gathered in the field and other information available to him, concluded, "Genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and Jinjaweed bear responsibility and that genocide may still be occurring."



Angola

The Republic of Angola is a country in transition following its 27-year civil war that ended in 2002. The legacy of a colonial war and protracted civil war characterized by poor governance, corruption and the need for greater technical capability and capacity within government ministries, has limited the capacity of the Government to provide basic services to most citizens. Government reconstruction efforts increased in 2004, but limited institutional capability and capacity have adversely affected the sustainability of many projects and raised the concern of opposition political parties and the international community. Although there were improvements noted in a few areas during 2004, serious concerns remained regarding the Government's overall human rights record, such as allegations of unexplained disappearances and restricted freedom of the media to broadcast outside the capital. Elections have been scheduled for 2006.

The United States strategy for improving human rights and democratic governance in Angola has four main goals: strengthen civil society, prepare for upcoming elections, support independent media, and support the rule of law. To reach these goals in 2004 the Embassy partnered with several international and local non-governmental organizations to foster Angolan civil society input on human and civil rights issues, worked with World Learning to build advocacy capacity and information dissemination of civil society, worked with the International Republican Institute (IRI) to train political parties on democratic political strategies, worked with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to help civil society understand their role in the upcoming elections, advanced the dissemination of independent information through the training of local journalists, and utilized the United States Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) to improve judicial administrative capacity and respect for due process.

The establishment of strong democratic norms and institutions is a critical component of United States policy in Angola. Angolan President Jose Eduardo

dos Santos confirmed the commitment of the Angolan Government to hold elections in 2006 during a May 2004 meeting with President Bush.

Due to continued commitment by the Angolan Government to developing democratic processes, the Mission allocated a significant portion of its Economic Support Funds (ESF) to support NDI and IRI in efforts to establish a strong political and electoral environment. In FY04, NDI and IRI continued to prepare civil society organizations and political parties for national elections. NDI supported the expansion of a civil society-coordinated national election network. This network, currently active in 8 of Angola's 18 provinces, is critical for broadening citizen involvement in the election process. IRI held numerous training seminars that focused on strategic planning, message delivery, and constituency relations. All political parties that have seats in the National Assembly, including the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), participated in 2004 IRI events. Heavy media coverage of IRI training for the opposition party Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) provoked MPLA complaints and threats of reprisals against UNITA. The Embassy is working closely with IRI to emphasize the untapped opportunities for all Angolan political parties.

Civil society networks also focused on preparations for the upcoming elections. A local non-governmental organization (NGO) was a leader in these efforts. Separate conferences on the electoral process and national reconciliation and reconstruction brought together a number of civil society leaders to discuss these important issues. These events were crucial for starting the educational process necessary for elections. The continued development of these groups as viable political actors is critical for free and fair elections in 2006 and long-term democratic consolidation.

The Embassy continued its efforts to support independent media in 2004, including support of four training seminars for journalists. With almost 100 participants in four different provinces, these seminars focused on the challenges facing Angolan journalists, objectiveness necessary to educate the citizenry and how to best cover the upcoming

elections. The Embassy also provided English language training to over 100 Angolan citizens, many of whom are journalists.

The Angolan Government's hesitation to permit nationwide FM broadcasts by its largest non-governmental radio network, Radio Ecclesia, has yet to be resolved and remains a continuing concern. The Embassy pursued high-level efforts to support Radio Ecclesia's expansion to the provinces, including discussions with President dos Santos, the Ministry of Social Communications, and the MPLA's Director of Information Policy. During a May 2004 Voice of America interview, President dos Santos stated that Radio Ecclesia could broadcast nationally. Nevertheless, Radio Ecclesia is still unable to broadcast nation-wide on FM. The United States Ambassador worked closely with a group of like-minded diplomatic counterparts to find a solution to outstanding issues, especially the amount of local content necessary for regional stations.

The Embassy also utilized the 2004 U.S. presidential elections as a training opportunity for Angolan journalists. The two individuals selected for this event used their visit to the United States to gain knowledge on media coverage of elections. The Embassy also continued its support of Voice of America's "Linha Directa" service. During the final portion of the year, this service was transferred to the local media outlet that had been working as Voice of America's implementing partner in Angola.

Efforts to improve the legal system are a critical factor in the political and economic development of Angola. The United States Government-supported CLDP legal assistance project with the Ministry of Justice provided consultative services to Angolan lawmakers, regulators, and judges. Focusing on procedural issues, CLDP proposed and implemented new case management techniques, including random assignment of judges to make corruption less likely. CLDP facilitated a conversation between the Portuguese Government and the Angolan Government regarding sharing of technologies for future automation of case management of the Angolan judicial system. Numerous visits to Luanda by CLDP teams

helped establish them as a strong partner for the Ministry of Justice. The Embassy plans to use this success to leverage complementary programming by other donors.

The focus on human rights throughout 2004 underscored the important connection between the protection of human rights and a strong relationship with the United States. The Embassy regularly discussed human rights issues with government officials at all levels and attended human rights events. The Ambassador attended a December 10 Human Rights Conference organized by the National Assembly, and made regular visits outside the capital during which human rights issues were discussed.

The Embassy continued to monitor the human rights situation in Cabinda province and to encourage civilian and military officials to further control troops stationed there. Church leaders – critics of the presence of troops in Cabinda and supporters of increased autonomy – commented to the Ambassador during her visit on January 19, 2005, that their careful record of human rights abuses continued to show a decline in incidents over the last year. This trend began with the installations of a new governor and military commander. In 2005, the Embassy plans to continue personal advocacy by the Ambassador and other Embassy personnel with Cabindan officials, continue its public-private partnership with Chevron-Texaco to improve public services in Cabinda and will propose military training on human rights.

The Embassy helped local NGOs implement awareness programs on human rights and promote government response to key human rights issues such as children rights to education, land rights and rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. These NGOs reached out to local citizens through town meetings, seminars, print media and local radio broadcasts. Some of the most successful of these initiatives were radio programs focused on topics such as the importance of accepting those with HIV/AIDS and a monthly publication of educational newsletters on various human rights issues to a circulation of 56,000.

Throughout FY04, civil society organizations (CSOs), with U.S. financial or logistic support, organized 190 debates, workshops, and community meetings that reached 19,579 Angolans. Through these programs and 1,333 formal meetings between CSOs leaders and government officials, coalitions made notable contributions to the Angolan public policy process in 2004. Presidential ratification of a land tenure law and National Assembly passage of an HIV/AIDS law highlighted the ability of CSOs to help shape national policy. Since civil society efforts to help shape the land law were not completely successful, continued efforts are underway to address disputed provisions of the legislation. The Angolan Government has increasingly recognized the relevance of these coalitions' activities and the contributions they make in developing policies.

During 2004, the Embassy also focused on children's issues, especially health and education. The Ministry of Education's recognition of the civil society coalition "Ensino Gratuito Ja" as a national development partner helped institutionalize the role of civil society in improving education. Health programs focused on the needs of children, including the prevention and treatment of malaria and continued to provide basic health care for those unable to access limited government resources.

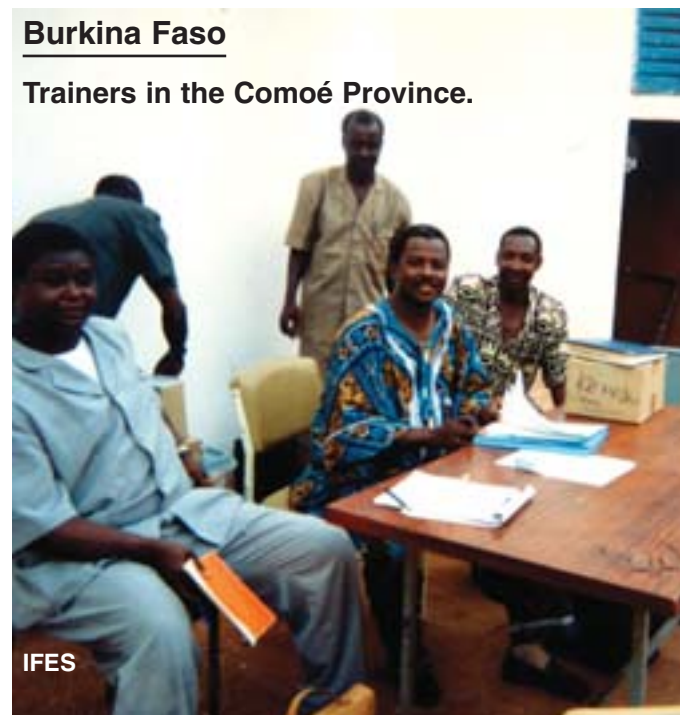
Burkina Faso

The overall trend for human rights and democracy in Burkina Faso is guardedly positive, though there are numerous areas for concern and improvement. Political rights, particularly the right to change their government, are not fully exercised, the judiciary is subject to executive influence and individual members of security forces continue to commit human rights abuses. To address these issues, the U.S. Embassy in Burkina Faso initiated a number of program and advocacy support to draw attention to international human rights norms, to emphasize accountability and transparency in government, enhance capacity building of political parties and further ease political tensions. The focus for many of these efforts is the 2005 municipal and presidential elections. Several of the Embassy's regular inter-

locutors have noted that they see the American Embassy as the best and strongest advocate in the country for human rights and democracy.

The United States funded programs focused on enshrining democracy in Burkina Faso by stressing capacity building of political parties and promoting inter-party dialogue needed to maximize the competitiveness of the November 2005 presidential and municipal elections, a core focus of our strategy to promote democracy and human rights. The United States provided a grant to carry out these actions.

The present program is aimed at upgrading the political and organizational skills of opposition parties (103 in total, of which 14 are represented in the National Assembly), who captured 49 percent of the seats in the May 2002 parliamentary elections. This program has been a success, especially in generating good will from civil society and political parties while also garnering respect from the Government and the ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). The program has involved participants from the entire political spectrum, including members of the ruling CDP party and members of the moderate and radical opposition. All have appreciated the current program of inter-party dialogue and training on party platform and message formation. U.S. funded



programs played a key role in the success of the 2002 elections and are expected to do so again in the crucial 2005 Presidential and municipal elections.

As part of the International Visitors Program (IVP), in 2004 and 2005, the United States sent a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, civic education and journalism to the United States.

United States funds have been used to sponsor programs on the rights of persons with disabilities, produce radio programs on human rights, democracy and the electoral process, support local associations that promote human rights, development of the judicial system and the rights of women and sponsor awards for journalists who have published articles involving investigative journalism.

The United States also used funds to help Burkinabe journalists create an alert system to notify each other and the public whenever a journalist is harassed. This system demonstrated its utility when the police briefly detained two editors. In response to a public outcry, they were released within a day of their arrests.

The United States has provided training to military personnel and civilians on maintaining civilian control over the military in a democracy.

Furthering the U.S. policy of promoting religious freedom, the United States has sponsored a number of workshops and discussions exploring different religions and the importance of tolerance. The United States also sent three participants on an IVP about Islam in a democracy, and participants reported that the visit positively influenced their attitudes. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section also regularly meets with Burkina Faso's Muslim community for discussions and exchanges. The United States recently provided scholarships to a number of Muslim secondary students to study English. During the recent month of Ramadan, the U.S. Embassy hosted an Iftaar dinner where an American-Muslim employee shared his experiences as a Muslim in America.

In addition, the United States funded several projects in the fight against trafficking in persons. A Burkinabe non-governmental organization (NGO) will rehabilitate and reintegrate 70 repatriated children in two U.S.-funded centers. The same NGO is also producing a documentary on local anti-trafficking laws. Additionally, the United States is midway through a multi-year project intended to reduce child trafficking by creating locally relevant curricula in rural schools. By providing children with skills that are of immediate benefit to rural families, the United States should be able to reduce the incentive to traffic in children.

Through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, the U.S. Government provided funding for several notable projects. The United States funded the transmission of public service announcements to help educate Burkinabe women about their rights and how to seek help if they are abused, in addition to several workshops on children's and women's rights,

Burundi

The Government of Burundi, led by President Domitien Ndayizeye, continues to implement the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of August 2000, as well as accords signed with rebel groups. The Arusha Agreement calls for a return to elected government, protection of minority rights, respect for individual rights, reform of the army and an accounting for the crimes of the past.

The Arusha Agreement specified that the transitional period would end on October 31, 2004, with an election of the first post-transition president by an elected Senate and National Assembly. On October 20, 2004, the Government of Burundi approved an interim Constitution that provided for the continuation of transitional institutions until a constitutional referendum could be held. Burundi's Independent Electoral Commission scheduled the referendum for February 28, 2005.

On December 31, 2004, President Ndayizeye signed laws establishing integrated army and police forces that incorporate the National Council for Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) and other former

rebel groups. One rebel group – the PALIPEHUTU-FNL – continues armed opposition to the Government. The United States has called upon the PALIPEHUTU-FNL to renounce violence and to join the peace process.

Burundi's last democratically elected president was assassinated by army elements in 1993, an event that triggered mass violence, displacement of civilians and a decade-long crisis. Since 1993, the United States has advocated the return to democracy and constitutional rule while providing humanitarian assistance to Burundi.

The Transitional Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Transitional Government continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses. Security forces continued to commit numerous arbitrary and unlawful killings. There were credible reports of disappearances, and the security forces continued to torture, beat, rape and otherwise abuse persons. Despite some improvements, prison conditions remained very poor in general and sometimes life threatening. Impunity and the continuing lack of accountability for those who committed past abuses remained serious problems. Arbitrary arrest and detention and lengthy pretrial detention were problems, and there were reports of incommunicado detention. The court system did not ensure due process or provide citizens with fair trials. The Transitional Government controlled the media and restricted the freedoms of speech, association and movement, and at times it restricted the freedoms of press and assembly. Violence and discrimination against women continued. The use of child soldiers was a problem, though considerable progress was made with the demobilization of 2,913 former government and rebel child soldiers. Discrimination against the indigenous Twa population and state discrimination against Hutus remained problems. Societal discrimination between the Hutus and Tutsis continued. Incidents of ethnically motivated property destruction and killing occurred throughout the country. Rebels also continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses against civilians, including killings, kidnappings, rapes, theft, extortion, the forcible recruitment and employment of children as child soldiers, and forced labor.

The United States human rights and democracy goals in Burundi include helping to build a just and lasting peace based on democratic principles, protecting human rights and relieving human suffering. To protect individual rights during the ongoing conflict, the Embassy has regularly raised specific cases and broader patterns of abuses with leaders of both the Government and rebel groups. USAID Director Andrew Natsios visited Burundi in September and highlighted human rights and democracy concerns with Burundian President Domitien Ndayizeye and Vice President Alphonse-Marie Kadege. Director for Central Africa in the Bureau of African Affairs Alan Eastham visited Burundi in the wake of the August 13 massacre of Congolese refugees at the Gatumba transit center. Mr. Eastham visited the site of the massacre, met with survivors and discussed the massacre and other human rights concerns with the president, vice president and leaders of the major political factions in Burundi.

United States programs in 2004 included a grant to Search for Common Ground and local human rights groups. This program provided for medical, legal and psychological support to victims of torture and rape, as well as for human rights monitoring and advocacy.

In addition, the United States provided funding to Search for Common Ground and Global Rights to fund democracy and human rights projects as well as support local civil society organizations. To support civil society and women's rights, Search for Common Ground funds the Women's Peace Center, a grouping of women's associations. Search for Common Ground also supports local radio stations which produce and broadcast radio shows on human rights, conflict resolution and democratic principles.

Global Rights has created networks of local civil society actors to lobby parliamentarians to support legislation that gives the force of law to provisions of the Arusha Agreement. For example, Global Rights supported local groups that advocated for a bill, signed into law in December 2004 that establishes a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The United States provided a grant to IFES to provide training, electoral materials and technical support to Burundi's Independent Election Commission for the holding of a constitutional referendum and subsequent local and national level elections.

In the provinces of Gitega, Ruyigi and Karuzi, the United States provided financial support to two non-governmental organizations to assist victims of war as well as former combatants returning to civilian life. Returning refugees and internally displaced persons were assisted in reintegrating into their communities. Former rebel and army soldiers, including child soldiers, were provided with vocational skills training as well as training on human rights and conflict resolution.

The United States also finances a variety of smaller projects that advance the interests of women, children and the Twa minority group while promoting democratic values, good governance, human rights, conflict resolution, acceptable prison conditions, peace and reconciliation.

Cameroon

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. Despite the country's multiparty system of government, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) has remained in power since the early years of independence and the president has ruled since 1982. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary has been subject to significant executive influence and has suffered from corruption and inefficiency. Despite significant improvement, Cameroon's human rights record remained poor. Police continued to commit numerous abuses and to use arbitrary arrest and detention. Child labor and trafficking also remained problems in 2004. To strengthen Cameroon's democratic institutions and improve respect for human rights, the United States has actively engaged officials from all levels of the Cameroonian Government, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) members of civil society and the media.

In preparation for the presidential elections, which took place in October 2004, the United States primary focus was on developing a more free, fair and transparent electoral process and preparing the media to effectively cover the elections. The United States sent the largest observer team and covered all ten provinces to observe during the days preceding the election and on election day itself. The United States and most international and domestic observers agreed that, despite some irregularities, the election results expressed the will of the people. The United States continued to take advantage of the opportunity to work with donors and the Government on ways to reform the electoral process, especially the registration of voters. Such work takes advantage of the period of several years until the next elections. Near the end of 2004, the Embassy's overall priorities shifted from the promotion of democracy toward promoting good governance by highlighting the negative impact of corruption on all aspects of life in Cameroon.

United States personnel met repeatedly with high-level Cameroonian officials, including President Biya, to encourage that concrete action be taken to reach the Government's stated objective of holding a free and fair election. The Embassy attended a donors' working group initiated by the Embassy in 2003, to coordinate policy and assistance expenditures in support of the election. The Ambassador attended meetings on Cameroon's elections and successfully lobbied reluctant donors for additional funding for electoral reform. On the legislative side, the United States worked with members of the Government and the National Assembly to strengthen the National Elections Observatory (NEO), and to encourage it to take an active role in observing and overseeing the election. With the election over, the Embassy continued to work with donors, NEO and the Government on the changing role of the NEO and election reform in general.

In order to promote democracy and decentralization, the United States has worked to develop the capacity of local government leaders. The United States organized a one-day seminar for twenty-five mayors and other elected officials on public involvement in democracy. Additionally, the

United States held several interactive dialogues on democracy and human rights with Washington and other African posts through the African Network Digital Video Conference (AFNET) program.

To complement the U.S. programs with local government leaders and the press, the United States organized two workshops to train leaders in civil society on political organizing and the local registration process for NGOs. The United States also awarded two grants to local NGOs for elections related projects. The United States awarded one NGO a grant to distribute an elections guide in seven local languages nationwide, provide training in approximately 250 villages on elections procedures, civic responsibility and the application of electoral law, and hold a seminar to train print and radio journalists on coverage of elections. The United States awarded another grant to distribute a series of educational posters in French, English and seven local languages related to election themes, such as encouraging people to vote and explaining voter's rights. The group plans to hold meetings in five provinces of Cameroon to train local authorities, opinion leaders and youth groups to participate in the elections education campaign. The United States conducted a series of civic education conferences throughout all ten provinces in the run up to Cameroon's presidential elections.

United States officials regularly worked together with Cameroonian government officials, the media, NGOs and other representatives of civil society to improve the democratic and human rights environment throughout the country. The United States has also been involved in a number of high profile public outreach efforts to help develop a free press, advance democratic reform and lower the effects of corruption on Cameroon's development.

The United States has been active in developing an independent and professional media in Cameroon. In the run up to Cameroon's presidential election the Embassy conducted numerous training seminars and workshops for journalists that focused on effective election reporting which were attended by more than 200 journalists, media unions and

media owners. The Embassy also conducted several workshops on investigative journalism that were widely covered by the local media, increasing their impact.

Despite the 2000 law authorizing the creation of private radio and television stations, media licensing remains a problem in Cameroon. The Embassy has continued to work closely with the Ministry of Communications to make progress on this issue, which is expected to be resolved in 2005. One tangible result of the Embassy's collaboration with the Ministry of Communication was the establishment of a "Media House" that works as a liaison to Cameroon's many ministries for the local and international media.

The United States awarded a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant to support local NGOs implementing projects on promoting a fair judicial system, democracy and civic responsibility, and the rights of disabled persons and ethnic minorities. One of the DHRF projects funded was to empower Pygmies to better resist exploitation by other tribes by educating them on their rights as citizens and help them obtain appropriate identification documents such as birth certificates and national identification cards. Since identification cards are required when registering to vote, aiding the Pygmies to obtain these documents also enabled them to actively participate in public affairs and elections. Another DHRF project involved designing a civic education program for primary and secondary school aged children. The objective of the program was to educate young people on their civic responsibilities and to help them become responsible citizens who will be more likely to participate in the economic, social and political life of their country. A third DHRF project sponsored a program to analyze the role of assessors (assistant judges) in the judicial system and build their capacity so that they will be better able to fulfill their responsibilities.

In order to increase respect for human rights, the United States worked closely with the military and police to curb abuses by law enforcement. In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the Defense Attaché's Office worked to foster more professional security forces by sending members of the

Cameroonian Government to military schools in the United States. These professional education courses addressed civil military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination to civilian authorities as well as a broad range of legal and human rights topics including the Law of Land Warfare. The United States used funds toward the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program for the Cameroonian military through the Expanded-IMET program.

In the area of religious freedom and tolerance, the Public Affairs Section organized a series of discussions and digital videoconferences on "Islam and Religious Tolerance" and a speaker on "Contemporary Islam in Africa," both of which received national media attention. The Ambassador also reached out to the Muslim community of Cameroon by hosting an Iftaar dinner during the holy month of Ramadan.

The United States worked to advance women's rights and the rights of disabled persons throughout the year. The United States organized a variety of seminars that included a workshop on "Women as Political and Economic Leaders" and a AFNET program on "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibilities" which involved approximately 300 women leaders. In conjunction with the Embassy's HIV/AIDS Task Force, the Public Affairs Office conducted a series of regional leadership workshops for young women. Through a DHRF grant, the United States helped a local organization of disabled persons to organize a six-day training seminar for 30 leaders of disabled persons' organizations in an effort to improve their management skills and allow them to more effectively defend the rights of the disabled. The goal of the project is to facilitate the social and economic integration of the disabled in Cameroon by building the operational capacity of organizations dedicated to their advancement.

In an effort to combat trafficking of women and children, the Embassy assisted the International Labor Organization in Cameroon in obtaining two grants from the United States to develop new anti-trafficking legislation and train local law enforcement and the judiciary on implementation of the new legislation.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic's human rights record remains poor. On March 15, 2003 former Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Francois Bozize declared himself President, suspended the Constitution, and dissolved the National Assembly. During this period, pro-government and rebel forces engaged in widespread looting, beating, and assaults on civilians.

The country is now in a period of political transition, seeking to recapture democratic governance. Bozize has appointed cabinet members from across the political spectrum, including respected oppositionists, established the parliament-like National Transitional Council, completed a national dialogue, and published a roadmap for a return to constitutional government. In January 2004, Bozize followed through on recommendations stemming from the national dialogue, publishing an electoral calendar setting legislative and presidential elections for early 2005, and stating his intent to create an independent commission to oversee the process. The Independent Electoral Commission has since been created, and is working closely with the UN Development Program (UNDP) to ensure proper oversight and conduct of parliamentary and presidential elections in March 2005. In December 2004, a popular referendum overwhelmingly approved a new Constitution for the country.

Although the Bozize Government has made some positive progress, instances of extra-judicial killings, harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without trial, and infringements on privacy continue. Violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation, child prostitution, discrimination against indigenous people, trafficking in persons, and child labor also continue.

The United States also continues to investigate avenues for providing humanitarian aid and promoting democratic processes as permitted by U.S. law.

Bangui, Central African Republic

People waiting in line to vote.



AP Photo

Suspended in 2003 due to the unstable security situation throughout the country, normal Embassy operations will resume in January 2005 with the arrival of a Chargé d'Affaires. In accordance with U.S. law, the Government remains largely ineligible for assistance from the United States. However, U.S. efforts to encourage the Government to improve its human rights and democracy records are diverse and ongoing. The 2004-2005 U.S. strategy for human rights and democracy in the Central African Republic focuses on supporting the Government's stated intention to return to democratic governance, and calls for concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvement in human rights.

The United States is pursuing an ongoing dialogue with other donor countries to draw attention to the severity of the situation and to explore efforts to reduce the prevalence of human rights violations. Officials monitor closely instances of violations, and continue to investigate avenues for providing humanitarian aid and promoting democratic processes as permitted by U.S. law. Supporting the electoral process is arguably the most strategic support any partner can offer the people of the Central African Republic at this critical time in their history.

The United States will continue to encourage the Government to implement policies that lead to a decrease in human rights violations throughout the country.

Chad

The Government of Chad's human rights record remains poor. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings and continued to intimidate the public. The judiciary remained subject to executive interference. Corruption is a problem. Violence and societal discrimination against women is common. The Government restricted freedom of the press by harassing and detaining journalists. Landmines remain a key problem in northern Chad, where over one million mines are left over from the civil war. The lack of respect for women's rights and trafficking in persons are problems.

President Idriss Deby has ruled Chad since taking power in a 1990 rebellion. He was reelected president in May 2001. Fraud, vote rigging and local irregularities marred the 2001 presidential election and the April legislative elections. Currently, the Government is proceeding with amendments to the Constitution to allow unlimited presidential

terms. If the public referendum on the amendments passes, Deby would be able to stand for election again in the next presidential elections in 2006. Chad deserves credit for hosting over 200,000 refugees from Sudan fleeing the war and genocide in the Darfur region of that country.

The United States human rights objectives in Chad include strengthening respect for rule of law, professionalization of Chad's security forces, bolstering the judicial system and the independent media, the transparent management of the country's oil revenues, outreach to the Muslim community, advancing women's issues and support for efforts to resolve the humanitarian crisis in eastern Chad. United States strategy for improving Chad's human rights situation focuses on engaging directly with key government officials and improving interaction between the Government and human rights groups. Efforts are also being made to strengthen the credibility and capacity of civil society groups and governmental institutions in addressing human rights abuses, including involving them in the visits of high-level U.S. Government officials. One goal of the United States is to help human rights groups and other civil society organizations become a resource for both the Government and Chadian people on human rights issues. In the absence of a USAID mission, the United States seeks funding from a number of sources to find ways to meet its goals. An example of a low or no cost way of facilitating dialogue is creating opportunities for activists and government officials to interact together in professional and social settings. A reception in honor of a Chadian human rights activist who won the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Prize was attended by government ministers, human rights activists, journalists and opposition politicians.

To strengthen the Chadian media's ability to promote human rights and good governance, Economic Support Funds are being used to provide equipment and training to print and broadcast journalists. A Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) grant funded the creation of a private radio station in the far north. A training workshop was held for Arabic media with a speaker from Voice of America. The Embassy interacts regularly with the Chadian media and

facilitates coverage of U.S. Government events. The promotion of civil rights and civil liberties is being funded by the HRDF. The funding for a bi-weekly radio broadcast covering a wide range of human rights issues and civil liberties and civil rights education will be the first of its kind in Chad. The program "The Right To Know" will be shared with other radio stations and translated into several local languages to help increase public awareness of their basic rights. The talk show will be supported by town hall meetings in several cities to encourage discussion between citizens and their local government and security officials on their rights.

Human rights activists and government officials acknowledge that strengthening Chad's weak judicial system is critical to addressing human rights violations in a systematic and meaningful way. To this end, the United States is using ESF to provide manual typewriters and copies of relevant legal codes to the courts as well as training for magistrates. The Public Affairs Section sponsored an International Visitors Program (IVP) on the U.S. judicial system. HRDF is being used to support legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses through a local non-governmental organization. Several government ministries expressed support for the program and offered their assistance if needed.

United States support for good governance and transparency also included an IVP on Grassroots Democracy for Young Leaders, a speaker program on the links between good governance, accountability and transparency, and a book program on how to fight corruption. In addition, the U.S. Treasury continues to provide technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Management College, the accountability mechanism that is reviewing the projects financed by Chadian oil revenues. The Ambassador hosted a U.S. election coverage event that was widely attended by government officials, Chadian political parties and journalists. At this event and in meetings between Chadian government officials, Embassy officers and visiting delegations emphasized the importance of the election process in sustaining democratic transitions.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan deeply affects Chad. Over 200,000 refugees have sought safety in eastern Chad and the United States is the largest donor to the ongoing humanitarian efforts. In July and August, the United States undertook a comprehensive survey of Sudanese refugees in Chad, which resulted in the Darfur Atrocities Report and Secretary Powell's finding that genocide is occurring in Sudan. In addition, the Embassy is an active participant in the implementation of the Darfur Humanitarian Cease-fire Agreement, which includes monthly meetings of a Joint Commission. The United States has contributed personnel to the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur and remains a key interlocutor with the Government of Chad, the rebel movements and the African Union on the Darfur peace process. The United States has also facilitated the work of human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) working on protection issues for refugee women and children.

The Embassy has provided several grants for the purpose of eliminating the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Its support to a local NGO resulted in the drafting and enactment of a law that criminalizes FGM, and in FY 2004, it funded an education program to publicize and distribute copies of the law. The Public Diplomacy Section held a panel discussion on female genital mutilation and gender and development in an effort to promote women's rights. The visit of an American imam to eastern Chad also promoted a better understanding of women's rights and equality issues under Islam. In addition, Embassy officers engaged government and NGOs on trafficking in persons and began planning to facilitate a child protection network to bring together concerned government officials, police and NGOs on a range of issues affecting children. The promotion of girls' education has also been a focus of the United States efforts during the 2000-2004 period, using funds from the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program to encourage the education of girls. During the 2003/2004 school year, an estimated 5,000 elementary school girls and their families received support under this program, and the rate of female attendance at the 60 pilot schools where the program was implemented increased

significantly. In addition, Embassy employees are funding school tuition for a group young girls. Congressional visitors have also met with key officials and non-governmental organizations on women's issues.

The United States is using direct contact with Chadian soldiers, including training and visits by U.S. officials, and the sharing of information on human rights violations with high-level Chadian government officials to emphasize the importance of working together on human rights. The annual human rights report is being used as a basis for collaboration. To date, government officials have been candid and responsive. Visiting Congressional delegations have supported the United States human rights agenda.

The professionalization of Chad's security forces is a key component of the U.S. strategy for improving the country's record. Department of Defense programs include the International Military Education and Training and Counter Terrorism Fellowship Programs at U.S. military facilities, where training on human rights is incorporated into the courses. United States Marines trained 170 members of the Republican Guard in June and July in Chad. In addition, 48 Chadian police officers and immigration officials received anti-terrorism training in the United States and Chad. All training candidates were vetted through the Department of State's screening system to ensure compliance with the Leahy Amendment. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section held a public seminar on the role of the military in a democracy. The United States also funds de-mining activities in northern Chad.

The United States Muslim outreach programs continue. The United States supported a program promoting bilingualism with a respected local organization that promotes cross-cultural understanding. A week-long speaker program in Abeche, eastern Chad, with an American imam sparked a great deal of interest and exchange of information with Chadian Muslims. This visit advanced religious freedom through the promotion of dialogue between faiths and among Muslims on key human rights issues. The Embassy funded micro scholarships for 75 chil-

dren as part of its efforts to reach out to underserved populations.

Congo, Democratic Republic of

The Democratic Republic of the Congo emerged in 2002 from a war that claimed more than three million lives. With the assistance of the international community, the former government, rebel groups, civil society, and the political opposition formed a transitional government in 2003. The Transitional Government is preparing for democratic elections in 2005, the first elections in more than 40 years. The Transitional Government has made some progress in unifying the country; however, the country remains effectively divided into two zones: territory under the control of the Government (areas that remained under the nominal control of the Kinshasa-based Government throughout the conflict) and most of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is territory under marginal government control (areas controlled by various rebel groups during the conflict). Echoes of the war still haunt Congolese civilians, especially in the east, where they continue to be chased from their homes, attacked by various armed groups and government soldiers, and subjected to widespread human rights violations. A prominent U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) estimates that more than 31,000 people die each month in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, making it the deadliest humanitarian crisis in the world. The UN estimates that 2.2 million Congolese are internally displaced, and 360,000 are refugees.

In western parts of the country, the human rights record remained poor, and numerous serious abuses occurred; in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, conditions were even worse. Armed groups and government soldiers continue to commit numerous, serious abuses, particularly in North and South Kivu, Maniema, Equateur, northern Katanga, and the Ituri District of Orientale Province. Armed men committed massacres, summary executions, practiced cannibalism, mutilation, kidnapping, and torture. These men also burned and looted villages, extorted money and belongings from impoverished

rural communities, and held civilians, NGO workers and the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) peacekeepers for ransom. Particularly violent and widespread rape, forced labor - including sexual slavery - and the recruitment of child soldiers were severe problems. Armed groups attacked local and international NGOs and killed MONUC peacekeepers, usually with impunity.

The United States is responding to the human rights and democracy crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo via a multi-faceted approach that includes the provision of support to the Transitional Government and its efforts to organize elections. The approach also includes assistance to victims of human rights violations, training and education programs to support a change in the prevailing social climate, efforts to restore the crippled justice system, and military education programs through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program to begin the long process of unifying and professionalizing the Congolese military.

In 2004, Secretary of State Powell and then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice spoke to President Joseph Kabila by phone several times emphasizing U.S. support for the Transitional Government and the need for continued progress on political reform, security sector reform and human rights concerns. Additionally, President Kabila and other Congolese leaders met on numerous occasions with senior State Department officials who stressed the importance of adhering to the election schedule established by existing peace accords.

The United States is one of 14 members that comprise the International Committee to Accompany the Transition, a unique body that advises and assists the Transitional Government. The Embassy also works closely with MONUC and the Congolese Independent Electoral Commission to develop the most transparent and effective system possible for conducting elections. The United States is working with appropriate international agencies, as well as Congolese ministries and commissions to implement the national Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) plan.

Mission staff visited all 11 provinces during the year and used discussions with local officials, student groups, NGOs, church organizations and members of the local media to underscore the importance of democratic elections, basic human rights, religious tolerance and inter-community reconciliation.

The United States sponsored a program to create stability in war-torn areas; the program includes training for 16,800 people in 280 communities on tolerance, the promotion of the rights of women and people of other ethnicities and religions, and democracy and governance. This program supported independent media by funding Radio Okapi (a nation-wide network) and five community radio stations. The United States allocated funds to two international NGOs to reintegrate former combatants into their communities and provided a staff member and extensive technical support to the national DDR program.

The United States used funding to meet key benchmarks in the transition process such as improving local security and stability, including human rights; drafting key legislation, such as the constitution; and strengthening the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), political parties and key parliamentary subcommittees.

The United States provided expert technical and logistical support through IFES and the National Democratic Institute to support the development of a sound electoral system and improved political party capacity. As a result, the IEC became operational at the national level, and the groundwork was laid for the Elections Law itself. Five Democracy Resource Centers are now operating in Kinshasa and four important provincial locations, providing vital information and training on the transition process, particularly on elections, to thousands of Congolese citizens in provincial capitals and isolated areas.

Global Rights (GR), with support from the United States, helped organize a series of national seminars bringing together Congolese politicians and civil society - especially women and youth - to ensure that popular input was included in key electoral, human rights, and justice-related legisla-

tion. Global Rights also created Strategic Rights Groups in five of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's provinces; these groups are intended to serve as permanent mechanisms for advocating human rights and justice sector reform with government authorities at the local and national levels.

In addition, GR increased pressure for access to justice at the provincial level and reduced criminal impunity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by focusing on the rights of vulnerable groups and by selecting cases of appalling violence against women and children to be submitted to appropriate regional bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The United States supported a community stabilization and conflict management program that has engaged thousands of participants, including ex-combatants, in community rehabilitation projects. The U.S. Government is assisting communities in former conflict zones to productively reintegrate ex-combatants and resolve local conflicts occurring during the transition. Through the International Foundation for Education and Self Help, 2,000 ex-combatants are being reintegrated in 50 communities, 4,000 jobs were created, and local capacity to mediate conflict was strengthened in 75 communities, producing a positive impact on over 60,000 residents of these communities. As of February 2005, more than 900 ex-combatants had been registered and 400 were engaged in reintegration projects.

The United States has been actively working to combat sexual violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2001. In January 2004, the Embassy conducted an assessment mission, published an extensive report entitled "Sexual Terrorism: Rape as a Weapon of War in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," and developed a broad gender-based anti-violence strategy. The United States Agency for International Development provides funding to experienced international organizations that work with local NGOs, health structures, and community-based organizations to provide support to survivors. The International Rescue Committee supported 12 local NGOs in North and South Kivu,

which provided health, psychosocial, socio-economic reintegration, and judicial services to rape victims. Since mid-2002, the project has assisted over 10,000 victims of rape, their families, and their communities, and it aims to assist another 7,000 over the next 18 months. Over the past year and a half, with U.S. support, a local organization called Action for Rights' Education (AED) won 57 of the 60 rape cases it brought to court, including eight convictions against members of the military. In late 2004, AED received a grant to expand its services in South Kivu.

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), with support from the United States, provides psychosocial and socio-economic reinsertion activities for rape victims in Maniema and the Ituri District of Orientale Province. As of February 2005, it had assisted over 3,000 rape survivors, ranging in age from 3 to 84. Cooperazione Internazionale planned to assist another 5,000 survivors over the next 18 months. CARE recently started a new project in Maniema to provide health clinics with medicines and improve doctor and nurses' treatment and counseling skills. Global Rights is working to improve rape victims' access to the judicial system.

World Vision and Save the Children received a Displaced Children's and Orphans' Fund grant to help street children, many of whom have been accused of sorcery.

The United States provided IMET funding for military education programs. For example, in 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense began the process of re-establishing an English language lab in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sent officers to military training in the United States, and conducted on-site surveys to develop seminars on civil-military relations and the role of the military in a democracy.

The Embassy sent a number of International Visitors Program participants to the United States to participate in democracy and human rights-related programs; the focus of the programs included conflict resolution and human rights, the role of the media in the United States, and transparency and good governance. Through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, the Embassy

also provided technical assistance to local organizations that taught people about democracy, human rights and the national transitional government. Groups developed teaching materials and trained trainers in church groups and schools; produced radio broadcasts, books, and pamphlets; and developed programs to protect prisoners' rights. An excellent civic education module for high school students, which was developed by an Islamic human rights organization using democracy funds, is currently being distributed to schools in several provinces.

Embassy officials met with the Government several times to promote progress in trafficking-in-persons issues, especially the trafficking of children associated with armed groups. For example, embassy officials worked with UNICEF to encourage the Government to finalize official demobilization certificates for child soldiers. The United States also provided a grant to the International Labor Organization in four countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to help former child soldiers return to civilian life.

Congo, Republic of

The Republic of Congo is ruled by a government in which most of the decision-making authority is vested directly in the executive branch. Denis Sassou-Nguesso was elected president in March 2002, and in May and June of that year legislative elections were held for the Senate and the National Assembly in all jurisdictions except for the Pool region, where most of the 1997-2002 civil war was fought and instability occurred. Both the presidential and legislative elections were determined "not to contradict the will of the people" by independent monitors.

In March 2003, the Government signed a peace accord with the rebel forces known as Ninjas of Pasteur Ntumi, and the country has been relatively stable with a fragile calm since that time. Uncontrolled and unidentified armed elements have remained active in the Pool region, despite an ongoing demobilization and reintegration (DR) program.

For most of 2004, the Government's human rights record improved, but major challenges and problems still remained. There were reports that security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings as well as summary executions, rapes, beatings, physical abuse of detainees and citizens; arbitrary arrest and detention; looting; solicitation of bribes; and theft. Prison conditions were poor. The judiciary continued to be overburdened, under-funded, and subject to political influence, bribery and corruption.

Promoting respect for human rights served as the basis for U.S. Embassy programs with the Government, press, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations.

To promote good governance, the Embassy provided a grant to a local NGO to conduct seminars on anti-corruption education for regional government officials and administrators. It also organized a Public Diplomacy Speaker Program on anti-corruption for 30 government and NGO officials.

Through demarches, discussions with the Government and cooperation with the international community, the Embassy continued to stress the need for the Government to increase transparency in accounting for oil revenues and other public funds. After initial difficulty, the Government met minimal requirements for a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF).

In order to build general awareness of human rights among the population, the Embassy focused its efforts on youth, women and minorities. The United States used the Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) to support programs on the rights of key minority groups, such as the Pygmies, and on prevention of trafficking in children. Other United States grants provided funds for educating the minority Pygmy population about their rights, and protecting their environment and traditional ways for the next generations. Other programs included anti-corruption seminars; sessions on refugee assistance; job training for women and orphans; food production, shelter and school supplies for internally displaced persons in the Pool region; and projects combating trafficking in persons.

Through civil-military dialogue and military training exchanges, the U.S. Government encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism, and respect for human rights. A high commission was established in 2002 for the reinsertion of former rebel militia members into civil society and, for some, into the military. In 2004, reinsertion programs continued and a new disarmament program began to address the Ninja combatants from the March 2003 accords. The March 2003 peace accords included a commitment from President Sassou that former Ninja militia would receive amnesty if they laid down their arms. The Embassy continued to support an English-language training program for military officers intended to facilitate other types of training.

To promote worker rights, the United States funded a two-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities.

Cote d'Ivoire

The Ivorian political crisis deepened in November 2004 with the Government of Cote d'Ivoire's decision to resume hostilities against rebel forces in the north. The bombing of a French garrison during these attacks and the retaliatory destruction of much of the Ivorian Air Force by French troops resulted in several days of anti-French rioting in the country's commercial capital, Abidjan, and other locations around the country. The cease-fire line established after the 2002 coup attempt continues to divide the country geographically and politically. Both the Government of Cote d'Ivoire and the rebel New Forces (NF), who control the northern half of the country, have continued to commit serious human rights abuses in a climate of increasing impunity. There were credible reports of pro-government death squad activity, extrajudicial killings and disappearances. Security forces frequently resorted to lethal force to combat widespread violent crime and sometimes beat detainees and prisoners. The Government generally failed to bring perpetrators of abuses to justice, and

members of the security forces operated with relative impunity. Prison conditions improved but remained harsh and sometimes life threatening. Arbitrary arrests and detention were common; numerous persons, including opposition members, journalists and military officers, were detained for long periods without trial.

The judiciary system did not ensure due process. Police harassment and abuse of non-citizen African immigrants continued. Privacy rights continued to be restricted severely. The Government restricted freedom of speech, assembly, movement and the press. Discrimination and violence against women, abuse of children and female genital mutilation remained serious problems. There were incidents of violent ethnic confrontation; societal discrimination based on religion and ethnicity remained a problem. Child labor as well as some reports of forced child labor and trafficking in children and women also persisted.

The NF's human rights record was extremely poor. The rebels in the north summarily executed persons, killed numerous civilians, arbitrarily arrested and detained persons and conducted arbitrary *ad hoc* justice. The rebels severely limit freedom of movement within and from the territory they hold and forcibly conscripted persons, including child soldiers. Rebels and mercenaries committed par-

ticularly grave abuses in the western region of the country and in the north.

The promotion of human rights is one of the highest priorities for the United States in Cote d'Ivoire. The United States strategy to support human rights and democracy encompasses supporting the national reconciliation process, strengthening civil society and reducing the impunity that prevails throughout the country. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials frequently press these themes with interlocutors in the Government and the NF and throughout Ivorian society. The United States long-term objective is to help Cote d'Ivoire consolidate its democratic multiparty system in which all Ivorians have a voice and which is characterized by good governance, respect for fundamental human rights, an independent judiciary and a strong civil society.

To that end, the United States has focused on promoting implementation of the January 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords (LMA), which led to a cease-fire and set out the key actions that must be carried out in order to resolve Cote d'Ivoire's crisis peacefully.

To press for LMA implementation as the basis for reconciliation on which to build democracy and respect for human rights, U.S. officials have main-



Port Bouët, Cote d'Ivoire

Civic Education Campaign launch in Port Bouët.

IFES

tained an extensive dialogue with the Government and all political parties and factions. The Ambassador is a key member of the UN Monitoring Committee for LMA implementation and regularly presses the Ivorian President, the rebel NF and all other political parties to implement LMA as the way toward reconciliation and free and fair elections in 2005. United States officials frequently lobbied the Government, civil society representatives and others on the need for enhanced protection of human rights and encouraged efforts to build democratic institutions. The United States has issued strong public statements on human rights and condemned the Government's November attacks on the NF-held northern region of the country, receiving widespread local press coverage.

The United States also continued its support of the Women Leaders' Caucus, numbering 156 ministers, parliamentarians, businesswomen, lawyers and teachers, which is working to strengthen the peace-making efforts of women's groups, increase the number of women elected to public office, enhance women's roles in civil society and play a role in negotiating an end to the country's crisis.

The local press has often worked to aggravate grievances and inflame tensions in Cote d'Ivoire, both before and after the outbreak of rebellion in September 2002. The United States is using a grant for a multi-layered media project focused on projects to professionalize the media to make media reporting more impartial and balanced.

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, in practice the judiciary is subject to executive branch, military, and other outside influences. Although the judiciary is independent in ordinary criminal cases, it follows the lead of the executive in national security or politically sensitive cases. There are credible reports that judges submit to political pressure and financial influence. The judiciary is slow and inefficient. To help foster greater understanding of the importance of an independent, impartial judiciary, the United States organized a roundtable discussion on "Justice and the State of Law." Participants in the discussion included the Minister of Internal Security, a Justice from the Supreme Court,

Ministry of Justice officials, law professors, law students and others. The United States also organized a WorldNet dialogue on "Corruption in Public Administration" and a discussion on *Marbury v. Madison* to promote the rule of law.

At the UN, the United States played an instrumental role in the adoption of two UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) concerning Cote d'Ivoire: UNSCR 1528, in February 2004, which called on all parties to prevent further violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and established the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire to enhance UN support for the peace process, and UNSCR 1572, in November 2004, which condemned the Government's air strikes against rebel forces in the north, imposed an arms embargo on Cote d'Ivoire and called for sanctions on individuals in Cote d'Ivoire who undermine the peace process, are responsible for serious human rights violations, publicly incite hate and violence, or violate the arms embargo. Since the adoption of UNSCR 1572, the United States has played an active role in the process of identifying the individuals who should be subject to these sanctions.

To help build compromise and understanding in divided and crisis-ridden Côte d'Ivoire, in 2004 the United States organized a discussion to mark Martin Luther King's birthday and to promote his philosophy of non-violence and a round table discussion on anti-terrorism for 88 senior security officers - gendarmerie and police commanders - members of the National Assembly, government officials, leaders of Human rights organizations, leaders of religious bodies and journalists.

The United States used the International Visitors Program to broaden the experience of Ivoirians who can make a difference in democracy and human rights. The United States sent eleven Ivorian political figures to the United States to participate in a program on conflict resolution. Two Ivorian legal experts were sent to the United States for a workshop on human rights issues. Additionally, one Ivorian political figure participated in a session in the United States on transparency and another came to learn about the American political process. For the 2004-2005 cycle, the United States put forward prominent

speakers for programs on "U.S. presidential elections – The Primaries," "Human Rights Issues," "Role of the Media in the United States," "Regional Stability and Conflict Resolution" and "U.S. Society and Political Process: A Project for Emerging Muslim Leaders."

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects that right. However, after 2002, the Government has targeted persons perceived to be perpetrators or supporters of the rebellion, who often were Muslim. Strong efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped prevent the crisis from becoming a religious conflict. To help support these efforts, the United States organized an Iftaar dinner for Ivoirian Muslim leaders, at which the Ambassador and other embassy officials discussed with the Ivoirian guests the different ways religious leaders can help resolve the conflict.

The United States continued to fund a multi-year International Labor Organization (ILO) program on Commercial Agriculture that targets Cote d'Ivoire's cocoa industry along with those of four other major West and Central African producers. The United States funded another ILO program targeting child trafficking for exploitive employment in nine West and Central African countries including Cote d'Ivoire.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea nominally is a multiparty constitutional republic. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has ruled since seizing power in a 1979 military coup d'etat. One-party rule formally ended with the 1991 introduction of a multiparty system. Nevertheless, Obiang's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) remains overwhelmingly dominant in politics and the economy, as does the majority Fang ethnic group and Obiang's Mongomo sub-clan. Obiang was re-elected in a December 2002 election marred by extensive fraud and intimidation. In the legislative and municipal elections of April 2004, the opposition Convergence for Democracy Party won only two seats in the national legislature. Of the other 98, 68 were retained by the ruling PDGE and 30 by a coalition of six "loyal" opposition groups.

The Government's human rights record remained poor, and the Government continued to commit serious abuses. United States intervention has resulted in positive developments, such as the release of a half dozen persons detained without charge. The position of "second vice prime minister over human rights and public administration" was created to improve and monitor the human rights situation in the country. Ricardo Mangué Obama Nfube was instrumental in drafting and securing support for the anti-trafficking legislation in parliament. He also established the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights and began to revitalize the Moribund Center for Human Rights and Democracy by appointing a young, new director whose goals include an automated database of reported human rights abuses and cases of trafficking in persons. Security forces continued to abuse their power, although in some cases, persons were relieved of duties when abuses came to international attention. Physical abuse of approximately 20 prisoners and suspects was reported directly to Embassy officials, and citizens claim that such abuse is a very common practice; there were also instances of arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention, particularly following the attempted coup d'etat in March 2004. It was reported that approximately 300 non-Equatorial Guinea citizens of primarily West African and South African origin were detained or removed from homes during a sweep after the coup attempt. Hundreds reportedly took asylum in their embassies until arrangements were made for them to be repatriated. Most undocumented persons were incarcerated until they were deported.

Most abuses connected to the coup took place in a three week period following the failed attempt. Until the president gave an address demanding an end to the abuse of foreigners (which included the looting of homes, destruction of identity documents, abuse of women and demands for money), some security forces were out of control. Victims had little faith in the justice system, feared reprisals from government agents and many did not press charges.

The presidency continued to dominate all sectors of the Government. The judicial system remained subject to executive pressures and repeatedly

failed to ensure due process; however, there were exceptions. For example, the Supreme Court overturned a lower court ruling that had reportedly favored a relative of the ruling family. In the trial of the mercenaries involved in the March 2004 coup attempt, none received the death penalty requested by the prosecution.

The Government continued to severely restrict press freedom; however, international journalists were finally permitted to fully cover the trial of the mercenaries involved in the March 2004 coup attempt. Local journalists work primarily for state-controlled media and practice self-censorship to keep their jobs.

There were no effective domestic human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but the United States has engaged actively with UN organizations promoting human rights and the Government's new Inter-Ministerial Commission on Human Rights. In 2004, a series of workshops began both on the island and mainland to educate official and civil leaders about responsibilities under the UN Conventions on Human Rights and Rights of the Child.

The Government continued to permit the International Committee of the Red Cross to access penal facilities in the country, including visits to the mercenaries held in the infamous Black Beach Prison. Prison conditions continue to be life-threatening: no meals are provided, many prisoners are kept in shackles and subjected to abuse, access to medical care is very limited (usually only available when a prisoner is near the point of death) and no rehabilitation for re-entry to society is provided. Despite laws to the contrary, persons are detained routinely without charges.

On July 15, an extensive investigation by the U.S. Senate revealed the misappropriation of at least \$35 million of oil revenues from foreign oil companies by President Obiang, his family, and other senior government officials since the mid-1990s when the country started exporting oil. The report found that in many cases the money went straight into accounts controlled personally by the president and his close associates. The Government has refuted the allegations of oil revenue misap-

propriation. Oil companies have paved roads in Malabo, upgraded the island's electricity generating system, and funded a variety of health and environment projects designed to improve citizens' well being. However, there has been some concern regarding the use of irregular payments made by oil companies into bank accounts controlled personally by the president and the ruling elite. Most of the oil wealth remained in the control of the Government with little distributed to the majority of the population, which remained poor. There was some evidence, including several infrastructure projects, which the Government started to use the country's oil wealth for the public good.

The expansion of democracy and the promotion of human rights remain the United States primary objectives in Equatorial Guinea. Efforts to achieve these objectives were accomplished by active engagement with the Government, the opposition, the media and community representatives. To speed progress towards these objectives, the U.S. Embassy was reopened in Malabo in October 2003. In 2004, the United States funded and implemented public diplomacy programs aimed to further aid the development of Equatorial Guinea's historically weak civil society. United States officials established an amiable relationship with the new university in Malabo, and looked towards establishing an American Corner and partnership links with American universities. United States officials encouraged American companies' cooperative involvement to reinforce the U.S. message on the importance of transparency, rule of law and respect for human rights, and worked with international organizations to further reinforce the message.

The October 2003 re-inauguration of the small U.S. Embassy was a tangible symbol of U.S. commitment to concrete democratic development in Equatorial Guinea. A single officer, who acts as Chargé d'Affaires in the Ambassador's absence, staffs the Embassy. The U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon concurrently remains U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea. Embassy Yaoundé personnel have continued to be actively engaged in all substantive and administrative areas, including on the human rights agenda.

The Embassy provides an outlet for more vigorous and continuous on-the-ground promotion of respect for human rights and democracy. The chargé immediately assumed an important, publicly visible role in regularly and directly communicating U.S. concerns to local government officials. In-country representation allowed Embassy officials to observe and report local activities directly and accurately. Subsequently, U.S. officials were able to address issues in Equatorial Guinea in a more precise and expedient manner.

United States personnel made regular visits to the island and mainland in 2004, including monthly visits by the Ambassador to both Malabo and Bata. The Ambassador and other officers have an ongoing dialogue with officials on the need for the development of true civil institutions and respect for justice and human rights. The Ambassador raised concerns with the president and high-level ministers over trafficking in persons, transparency, good governance and fair judicial practices. He also continued to condemn torture and harsh prison practices. The Ambassador and other U.S. officials also held public and private meetings with members of Equatorial Guinea's small opposition movement to address their concerns, and subsequently challenged national security officials over unlawful detention of political activists.

Equatorial Guinea suffers from an outdated media infrastructure and has no independent/private media. The United States coordinated a series of media training workshops designed to promote interest in and government support for independent media. United States officials met several times with senior officials, including the Minister of Information and the Director General of the National Radio and TV in an effort to facilitate an affiliation agreement between the Government and the Voice of America. In all of their meetings with government officials, U.S. personnel have reiterated the importance of enhancing the country's media profile to include independent/private media and finding ways to use the national/public media outlets for the broadcast of independent voices.

The United States continued efforts to actively encourage effective and transparent management of the country's oil wealth for equitable social and economic development. A serious engagement with the Government, international organizations, the diplomatic community, and civil society representatives began in 2004 on the use of government revenue to address identified humanitarian needs of the Equatoguinean poor and disenfranchised. This was initiated through a grant from the United States that developed a needs assessment and working relationship with stakeholders, including U.S. industries resident in Equatorial Guinea.

In meetings with high-level Government officials, U.S. officials pressed for improved transparency in public finance and the management of the oil sector. Results are forthcoming. Following high-level statements of commitment to transparency in the oil and gas sector, Equatorial Guinea has worked seriously (with technical assistance from the World Bank) to qualify to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative; the Government has also expressed interest in participating in the G-8 Transparency and Good Governance Initiative.

Last year, U.S. funds provided an NGO with a grant to excavate and install two high-quality, durable community wells in two villages. The wells save villagers from having to travel approximately three kilometers to obtain potable water. The United States also provided funds to a group of nuns, who were highly involved in girls' education, to provide books, uniforms, educational materials and room and board to needy girls. These programs - in an effort to promote civic participation and sustainable rural development - provide real aid to grassroots communities that have been left behind in the country's recent oil boom.

Equatorial Guinea permits freedom of religion by law. The country is predominantly Catholic, with a number of traditional religions as well. Any new church that wants to establish itself must be approved first through the Ministry of Justice, Religion, and Penal Institutions. This process could prevent the entry of undesired religious groups, but no such cases have come to the

Embassy's attention. There are some mosques in the country, and Muslims generally are not discriminated against openly. Some government officials have made public statements to the effect that proselytizing is unwelcome in the country.

United States engagement with Equatorial Guinea resulted in the country developing and passing a strict law addressing trafficking in persons in that country. Through U.S. engagement, especially from the direct engagement of the U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, the country is more aware of trafficking issues and is taking measures to address them.

United States officials based in Yaoundé and Malabo maintained a positive working relationship with American oil companies in Equatorial Guinea and have encouraged cooperative efforts between the companies and the Government. Beyond promoting health, education and environmental assistance programs, these companies act as positive role models for transparent employer operations, with clear hiring policies and good labor relations. Furthermore, the companies have reinforced U.S. messages on transparency, rule of law and human rights. The companies all strongly reject allegations emanating from the Riggs Bank investigation that they have engaged in illegal or unethical practices in Equatorial Guinea.

Eritrea

Respect for human rights and democracy suffered a major setback in 2001 when the Government of the Eritrea arrested, without charges or due process, individuals who voiced their opposition to government policy. The Government also proceeded to shut down the nascent free press, arrested most of the country's independent journalists, and postponed national elections indefinitely. In October 2001, two Foreign Service National employees of the U.S. Embassy were also arrested and continue to be held without charge. The Government's human rights record remains poor. Arbitrary arrests, lack of due process and poor prison conditions are also major concerns. The Government's national military service program, for all males aged 18 to 40, was originally estab-

lished to last 18 months but in most cases has been prolonged indefinitely. The military has also been found to use violent methods to round-up persons suspected of evading national service.

In 2002, the Government barred certain religious denominations from holding services and has arrested and imprisoned adherents of these groups sporadically since that time. Since 2002, the Government's respect for religious freedom for religious minority groups has continued to decline. In 2004, Eritrea was designated by the United States as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). Eritrea's Constitution, which contains safeguards of basic human rights, was ratified in 1997, but has not been implemented. The legislature has not met since 2002 and the courts, particularly "special courts" run by the military, remain under executive influence. Elections of judges to community courts were largely free and fair. However, elections for regional assemblies were held in 2004 but voting was not done by secret ballot and the Government did not allow campaigning beyond the posting of names and photographs.

The United States has maintained an active dialogue with government officials on human rights and democracy despite general suspicions with what the Government of Eritrea perceives as unacceptable meddling in its internal affairs by foreign powers. Government officials, most of whom participated in the successful 30-year fight for independence from Ethiopia, state that they have always envisioned a democratic Eritrea that fully respects its citizens' human rights. They point to their performance from 1993 - 1998, a period during which Eritrea enjoyed a flourishing free press, respect for religious liberty and fewer cases of arbitrary arrest.

In their conversations with Eritrean officials at all levels, the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission and Embassy officers make clear in the strongest terms that the United States sees national security and human rights as complementary, not issues in conflict with each other. Embassy officials continually make the point that addressing the Government's human rights violations – particularly ending the open-ended nature of national

service and widespread arbitrary arrests - will be vital to improving Eritrea's disastrous economic and food security situation. In this connection, Embassy officers also consult regularly with European diplomats, who have undertaken a formal dialogue with the Government in the context of the EU-Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) Cotonou agreement.

The Government's inaction regarding concerns that the United States has raised about its commitment toward democracy and human rights has led to limits on some U.S. assistance. United States officials have made clear that demonstrated improvement with respect to democracy and human rights could lead to increased cooperation with the United States. The Embassy is cautiously optimistic about a renewed bilateral dialogue begun in early December 2004, which addressed human rights concerns, as well as possibilities for future cooperation.

The Embassy's strategy to promote respect for human rights and democracy also included efforts to extend access to information throughout the country. The Embassy provides free access to materials on U.S. values, policies and culture, as well as free access to the Internet (a rare commodity in Eritrea) at its Information Resource Center (The American Center) in Asmara and two Embassy-sponsored "American Corners" in libraries outside the country's capital. In 2004, the Embassy opened American Corners in the predominantly Muslim cities of Keren and Massawa.

The United States, which was instrumental in bringing the Internet to Eritrea, provides technical assistance to increase the capacity and reliability of Eritrea's telecommunications link to the rest of the world in order to expand the availability and efficiency of Internet access. The Embassy distributed materials regarding U.S. policy and daily press releases. In a country with no independent media, these tools have proven vital in promoting democracy and appreciation of human rights through greater access to information from the outside world.

In an effort to build support for democratic reform and human rights among Eritrea's opinion leaders, the Embassy holds regular functions for alumni of U.S. Government exchange programs to promote discussion of U.S. culture, democracy, human rights and other issues. The Embassy also arranges regular speaking engagements featuring U.S.-based speakers, and broadcasts of the "Africa Journal." In addition, the Embassy recruits Eritrean government officials and others for the International Visitors and Voluntary Visitors Program. The Embassy's Security Assistance Office offered courses for Eritrean military officers in democracy and human rights through the Expanded International Military Education and Training Program, although no officers took advantage of these courses in 2004.

In addition to this important dialogue, Embassy officials continue to engage a wide range of Eritrean officials and members of minority religious groups in an effort to promote greater respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Government's designation of Eritrea as a CPC in 2004 provided an opportunity to reemphasize the importance of religious liberty for minority faiths and to engage Eritrean officials about the possibility of U.S. support for the creation of mechanisms promoting interfaith dialogue, as well as support for low-key visitors who can address legal and other aspects of respecting minority religious rights.

The Embassy's strategy is also designed to contribute to political and economic devolution so that citizens can exercise more control over their affairs. The Embassy has implemented programs that promote the devolution of political power and economic resources by providing resources and expertise to strengthen the development of community-based organizations. Three USG-funded non-governmental organizations continue to provide humanitarian assistance and community development programs that extended opportunities for grass roots participation by working with parent-teacher associations, water associations and local health committees.

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Government continued and expanded its effort in 2004 to devolve authority to regional and district governments as part of its policy of ethnic federalism. Ethnic conflict, lack of human capacity, and unfamiliarity with democratic concepts complicated this process. Ethiopia saw some improvements in the area of human rights, but serious problems remained. Federal and local police forces lacked proper training, and continued to employ excessive force, resulting at times in numerous killings. Arbitrary arrest and detention were sometimes used. The judiciary remained overburdened and lacked capacity, resulting in lengthy pre-trial detentions. The Government continued to restrict freedom of the press and assembly. Trafficking in persons (TIP) remained a serious problem as well as societal discrimination and violence against women, although the Government has formed a task force and begun to address some TIP issues.

United States Embassy officials consulted with host government officials, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), opposition political party members and other embassies, to identify constructive means of intervention. A significant element of U.S. Government strategy in promoting human rights and democracy is building the capacity of host country government and community leaders. Workshops, seminars and other training sessions are important elements of this approach.

To promote democracy and political freedoms, the Embassy, working with other embassies, engaged local officials and the National Election Board (NEB) regarding complaints from opposition political parties about harassment of their members by ruling party members. The Ambassador also met with NEB senior officials to underscore U.S. interest in preparations for the May 2005 national elections. Embassy representatives traveled to eastern Ethiopia to observe local district-level referendums, which would determine the districts' state affiliation. Embassy officials met regularly with

opposition party officials regarding allegations of illegal detentions, harassment and torture of opposition party supporters by local ruling party cadres, following up with police and others.

The 2004 U.S. elections provided an excellent opportunity for programming on democracy, which included a large-scale event for hundreds of secondary students from the capital area as well as programming targeted at the country's political and social elite. The Embassy has also been a strong voice for freedom of the press, providing training to journalists and participating in the international community's response to the country's draft press law.

The United States continued to fund a program conducted by the Federal Supreme Court to help build the capacity of Ethiopia's judicial system. In 2004, the Federal Supreme Court trained 1,157 Supreme Court, High Court and First Instance Court judges, as well as 15 Addis Ababa Municipal Court judges on the Ethiopian Civil Procedures Code. More than three thousand judges nationwide, including 226 women judges, have benefited from this training since the program's inception.

In 2004, the Embassy funded a total of 13 Democracy and Human Rights-related projects. For example, one project enabled the Addis Ababa Muslim Women's Association to hold a series of workshops and discussion groups to stimulate awareness of women's rights vis-à-vis Ethiopia's Constitution and Shari'a law in the Muslim-populated Afar region of eastern Ethiopia.

The Ambassador and other officers have been vigorous advocates for human rights by raising the issue in various speeches and public statements. The Ambassador engaged government officials, privately at times, to seek clarification on government actions that could infringe upon human rights.

Visiting senior U.S. officials, including, State Department Africa Affairs Bureau Assistant Secretary Constance Newman and USAID

Administrator Andrew Natsios, have also raised human rights in their discussion with senior Ethiopian Government officials, including the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, among others.

To call attention to problems of ethnic violence, the Embassy engaged the Ethiopian Government at several levels, including with the Minister of Federal Affairs, to ensure that proper investigations were conducted in the wake of December 2003 ethnic violence in Gambella. In addition to tracking the Gambella investigations during 2004, the Embassy, working with the federal and local government, initiated two conflict mitigation programs designed to reduce the risks of violence and improve human rights protection by building local and NGO capacity to prevent and mitigate conflict.

The Embassy provided funding to support training and technical assistance to the Ethiopian Federal Police. The funding is being used to establish and support projects designed to improve the capacity of the federal police to effectively train recruits in basic policing skills. The skills-based recruit-training project will include modules on human rights and police ethics. United States funding will also be used to assist the federal police with developing a community-oriented policing strategy designed to improve police-citizen relations. Ethiopian law enforcement officials also receive human rights training as part of their courses of study at the U.S. Government funded and supported International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone.

As part of U.S.-Ethiopia military-to-military cooperation, United States training programs provide Law of War and Human Rights training as part of the curriculum of peacekeeping instruction given to the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). Under the U.S. African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program, U.S. contractors and military have trained four ENDF battalions, including battalions which are currently deployed on UN peacekeeping missions in Burundi and Liberia.

The U.S. Ambassador met regularly with religious leaders to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. The Embassy worked closely with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Mekane Yesus Church, the Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church and the Missionaries of Charity Sisters to support HIV/AIDS programs.

To combat the trafficking of women and children from Ethiopia to the Middle East, the U.S. Government continued to oversee a grant to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to educate high-school students in Addis Ababa and other localities about the dangers of trafficking in persons. IOM experienced some delays in implementing this project. Major accomplishments in 2004 included establishment of a radio program to increase public awareness of illegal employment brokers, providing support to repatriated victims and making counseling available at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to those considering seeking employment outside of Ethiopia. A 24-hour hotline was established in Addis Ababa to provide confidential counseling and support information.

The Embassy pressed the Government to lift its suspension on licensing adoption agencies. The efforts bore fruit when the Government issued licenses to two adoption agencies, thus discouraging efforts of illegal adoption brokers. The Embassy and the Government have an excellent working relationship regarding curbing illegal adoptions. Whenever the Embassy identifies a suspected illegal adoption broker, the Government, with its limited resources, investigates and, if necessary, shuts down the broker's operation.

The U.S. Government and the Centers for Disease Control collaborated with host government officials in curbing discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. To commemorate World Aids Day, the Embassy sponsored a number of activities in Addis Ababa to highlight the problem and encourage people to combat such discrimination.

Gabon

Gabon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) has remained in power since 1968 and has circumscribed political choice. PDG leader El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, president since 1967, was reelected for a seven-year term in a 1998 election marred by irregularities. President Bongo is the longest serving head of state in Africa. In July of 2003, parliament passed a constitutional amendment removing the provision that had limited the president to two terms in office.

The Government of Gabon's human rights record remained poor. Although there were some improvements, serious problems remained. Security forces reportedly beat and tortured prisoners and detainees, arbitrary arrest and detention remained concerns, and the judiciary remained subject to government influence. Forced labor, child labor and trafficking - particularly in children - remained problems.

Gabonese opposition parties remain small, disunited, under funded, and marginalized. New parties are difficult to form, and many older parties have been co-opted to support the ruling party. The United States maintains contacts and consults regularly with all major opposition groups in Gabon, monitoring and reporting on their ability to participate freely within the Gabonese Political system, while encouraging the Gabonese leadership to increase efforts on democratization.

Gabonese media outlets have been subject to government control and censorship, with some private newspapers and television stations shut down or suspended by the Government. Embassy officials discussed the suspension of a TV and radio station for allegedly violating community decency standards with the Gabonese Government, which later reversed the suspension.

The Gabonese legal system is slow, inefficient, and subject to corruption. The United States has encouraged greater transparency and respect for human rights in contacts with Gabonese law

enforcement agencies and also encouraged information sharing in weapons smuggling and child-trafficking.

Six mid-level law enforcement officers were sent to the United States for training that included human rights components. The U.S. Coast Guard conducted a training seminar for 30 Gabonese sailors on ship-boarding which included a block of instruction on respecting human rights while performing law enforcement activities.

Gabon had no known cases of restrictions placed on the free exercise of religion in 2004, but the Embassy maintains contact with all major religious groups in Gabon, including U.S. missionary groups, to support and reinforce the already tolerant environment in Gabon.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Gabon has made the problem of child trafficking a high priority. The Ambassador and Embassy personnel have continued to approach government officials at all levels, including parliamentary leaders, ministers, and the President, to persuade them of the need for concrete measures. The United States has also maintained close contacts with activists and the non-governmental organization (NGO) community concerned with this issue. The United States provided a vehicle for use in conjunction with a UN International Children's Emergency Fund-operated hot-line for the rescue of trafficking victims. A law prohibiting trafficking in persons was passed by the National Assembly in 2003; it was passed by the Senate and Cabinet, promulgated, and signed into law by the president late in 2004.

The United States made available a grant to a Gabonese NGO to conduct a seminar for community leaders, journalists, and public health officials in conjunction with the Minister of Health in the area of protecting the rights of HIV/AIDS victims and their family members.

The Gambia

The human rights situation in The Gambia improved significantly in recent years. United States engagement on human rights encouraged the more favorable environment. After President Yahya Jammeh took power in a non-violent coup in 1994, his military Government restricted freedoms, committed extrajudicial killings and harassed political opponents. There were credible allegations of torture and mistreatment at that time. Most foreign observers did not recognize the legitimacy of the 1996 presidential elections, which failed to meet democratic standards. However, in late 2001 and early 2002, The Gambia completed a full cycle of presidential, legislative and local elections, all of which were deemed by international observers to have been generally free and fair, despite some shortcomings. In March 2002, the United States determined that a democratically elected government had assumed office in The Gambia and thus lifted Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act that had imposed sanctions as a result of the 1994 coup. Effective January 1, 2003, the United States also granted The Gambia eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) based on the criteria set forth in the law, including a commitment to democracy and human rights. AGOA eligibility was renewed in 2004 and again in 2005.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Security forces harassed or otherwise mistreated journalists, opposition members and detainees. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems and there were reports of a case of incommunicado detention. Prolonged pre-trial detention was a problem. Detainees were denied fair and expeditious trials by a slow, inefficient and corrupt court system that was at times subject to executive branch pressure. The Government at times infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government limited freedom of speech and the press by intimidation and restrictive legislation. Some journalists practiced self-censorship. There was at least one attempt to restrict freedom of assembly in 2004. On December 22, organizers of a solidarity march by journalists to protest the

shooting death of newspaper publisher Deyda Hydera were told that the procession would only take place on condition that no one outside the media fraternity was asked to join. The march took place with paramilitary police on the roadside to prevent other sympathizers from joining in. Violence and discrimination against women were problems. The practice of female genital mutilation remained widespread and entrenched. Child labor persisted, mainly on family farms, and there were some instances of child prostitution. There were reports of trafficking, and the Government took positive steps to eradicate the problem, including the establishment of a multi-agency taskforce to combat trafficking in persons.

The United States established a frank, constructive dialogue with the Government of The Gambia on human rights and other sensitive topics using the successful presidential election in October 2001 as well as the legislative and local elections in 2002 as a foundation. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy promotes three core values: democratic freedoms, the rule of law and human dignity. The United States emphasizes that the restoration of democratic rule and respect for human rights will bring the benefits of improved relations with the United States.

The United States uses all the opportunities at its disposal to promote the democratization process and respect for human rights in The Gambia. These include the public diplomacy program, various military assistance programs, Economic Support Funds, the Democracy and Human Rights Fund and the USAID regional programs for West Africa on HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution and business initiatives.

The United States continues to make strong efforts to promote and consolidate democracy in view of the upcoming 2006 presidential election and subsequent legislative elections. In 2004, the United States supported the Government decentralization program by providing training on good governance and the provisions of the new Local Government Act to about 100 newly elected ward council members. The United States helped the Independent Electoral Commission set up a website that will enable all Gambians, especially those

outside the country, to participate in all national elections. The United States is developing a program to assist all political parties and the IEC in preparing for the elections.

Because the legislature remains a relatively weak branch of the Government, the United States used a grant to support democracy by providing the offices of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the clerk and the permanent staff with training, equipment, supplies and other improvements that will help increase the National Assembly's ability to play its full constitutional role.

United States engagement with the Government produced significant dividends in 2004 with the repealing of the controversial National Media Commission Act. While the Embassy public praised the Government for this move, it also expressed its concern at the passage of new laws that could negatively affect the country's independent media and urged the Government and the media to work together to ensure free and responsible news reporting.

United States officials have easy and frequent access to government officials at all levels. The United States also maintains contacts with the opposition, the media and civil society. It coordinates with other diplomatic missions, as appropriate, when addressing specific human rights concerns and issues of good governance.

United States advice on accountability and transparency in government likely contributed to the anti-corruption campaign begun in late 2003. This campaign has focused on the most egregious cases of corruption inside the Government and in business circles purportedly close to the Government. It has resulted in the dismissal and arrest of several allegedly corrupt officials, the conviction and imprisonment of a prominent political figure and the deportation of a highly influential business tycoon. The anti-corruption campaign, dubbed "Operation No Compromise" has continued with the setting up of a Presidential Commission of Inquiry to probe the assets of all former and serving ministers and senior government officials. The Commission's hearings have already led to further investigations into corrupt activities. Moreover,

the anti-corruption function has been added to the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The United States funded a civic education campaign being carried out by the National Council for Civic Education and disseminated by City Limits Radio. The campaign has been explaining the Gambian Constitution to the general public using simplified language. The "All About the Constitution" programs have reached a large audience as they are broadcast in the two main local dialects.

The United States resumed non-lethal military assistance immediately after Section 508 sanctions were lifted in an effort to foster more professional security forces and reduce the tendency for human rights abuses. Military officers are educated on their proper role in a democracy through programs such as Expanded International Military Education and Training, which highlights civil-military relations.

Religious harmony is the norm in The Gambia. To bolster religious freedom and understanding, the Embassy hosted several Iftaar dinners during Ramadan that were attended by many Muslim spiritual leaders as well as members of the minority Christian clergy. The Embassy also hosted a forum for Muslim clerics to discuss the International Visitors Program tour of the United States made by a prominent imam.

United States efforts to end discrimination against certain disadvantaged groups include funding for a national women's non-governmental organization (NGO) and the local chapter of the Special Olympics. The women's NGO project is aimed at orienting council members on their role and responsibilities under the 1999-2009 National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women, which will enable them to participate more fully in national decision-making processes. The United States is supporting the introduction of the Special Olympics curriculum into schools at all levels as a way to encourage disabled children.

The United States has provided sorely needed assistance for workshops and training seminars, purchasing office furniture and equipment for an

NGO that has been effective in creating awareness about sexual exploitation, which is one of the most serious challenges to children's health, education and general well being.

Guinea

The Republic of Guinea held presidential elections on December 21, 2003, reelecting President Lansana Conte to a third term. After all major opposition parties boycotted the elections because of concerns over the transparency and fairness of the electoral process, President Conte ran virtually unopposed. A few arbitrary detentions of politicians and military personnel occurred in the period prior to elections. The Government of Guinea's human rights record remains poor, with areas of serious concern. Political rights and freedom of speech remain curtailed. Although there are no political prisoners in the country and serious violations have been few, human rights violations continue to occur. There were four unlawful killings by security forces during 2004. Civilian and military security forces beat and otherwise abused civilians. Members of the security forces committed abuses, often with impunity. Prison conditions were inhumane and life threatening. Arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention were problems. The Government restricted freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association and infringed on freedom of movement. Violence and societal discrimination against women, prostitution of young girls, female genital mutilation (FGM), ethnic discrimination, child labor and reports of trafficking of women and children continued.

The United States has a multi-faceted human rights and democracy strategy in Guinea, including programs tailored for specific aspects of human rights and democracy. It also includes widespread communication about human rights and democracy with various levels of Guinean society, including the Government, political parties, civil society, local government and the military.

The United States influences the democratic process at the grassroots level by training citizens, locally elected officials and representatives of gov-

ernment technical services and from the top-down by facilitating dialogue and building capacity to respond to citizen demands at the national level. The United States supports efforts to liberalize the media and to promote civil society through civic education. The United States funds activities to increase citizen participation and promote better and more transparent governance at the local level. The United States also funds activities promoting dialogue between political parties and encouraging greater participation of women and youth in political parties. The United States assistance targets three areas; increased citizen participation in local governance, support for improved political processes and capacity-building for civil society organizations to provide civic education and better advocate for citizen interests with the administration.

The U.S. two-year program for Strengthening Civil Society fortifies civil society organizations and builds coalitions. The initiative supports facilitating dialogue and advocacy for reform on critical issues of national interest. The program also provides training in citizens' rights and responsibilities through civic education campaigns.

The Ambassador consistently presents human rights and democracy as a cornerstone of U.S. policy in Guinea, emphasizing the need for progress on these issues in his speeches and meetings with interlocutors. The Ambassador continued to urge the Government, opposition parties and civil society to begin earnest political dialogue to consolidate and build democracy and stability in Guinea. The United States consistently reminded government interlocutors about their obligation under multiple international treaties and agreements concerning refugees, and praised them for hosting up to 700,000 refugees over the last 14 years. In addition, the United States retains close ties and meets regularly with opposition parties, political dissidents and local and international human rights non-governmental organizations.

The United States promotes democratic values in virtually all its presentations, Fulbright scholar exchanges, and engagement with the media and library. This year, they showcased a humorous, yet incisive play on corruption by a group of university students.

The United States Local Governance program improves local governance through active citizen participation. Technical assistance and training is provided to assist development planning and strengthen leadership of local governments. Civil society organizations are also strengthened in cooperative and business development to foster economic viability and to improve their advocacy for transparency.

The United States Budget Support Initiative provides budgetary assistance to the Government. A Treasury official, placed within the Government Ministry of Finance, provides technical training and support, and advocacy for a more transparent budget process and for budget plans that are responsive to the needs of the people.

United States public outreach programs are based on respect for the right of individuals to express their views freely, the right of the public to have access to information, especially information about government actions, policies and programs, and the right of a people to choose their leaders. These programs encourage open discussion on all topics relating to United States - Guinean relations and particularly American concepts of democracy and human rights. United States support for democracy and human rights is also expressed by sending Guineans on International Visitors Programs related to human rights and democracy.

In 2002, the United States provided military training to a full battalion (approximately 800 troops) from the Guinean Armed Forces. One full week of the training was devoted to human rights, treatment of refugees and other non-combatants and the role of a military in a democracy. The training reinforced these themes throughout the six-month program. In 2003 and 2004, the United States continued to emphasize the benefits of good governance and a responsible military through numerous engagement activities. The training modules present the Guinean military with materials to demonstrate its proper role within a democratic society. To reinforce the training, the civil-military seminars and modules target Guinea's military leadership to build appreciation of the rule of law and human rights.

The Guinean Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Government reportedly favors Muslims over non-Muslims.

Relations between the various religions generally are amicable. However, in some areas, strong social pressure discourages non-Muslims from openly practicing their religion, and the Government tends to defer to local Muslim sensibilities.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

The United States has funded projects promoting the rights of women, students and teachers and victims of HIV/AIDS, combating FGM, and providing training in conflict resolution and responsible media over the past two years. The United States has also funded projects researching the role of the press in local elections and providing Internet access to legal documents.

Funding continued to flow from United States for the multi-year International Labor Organization project to eliminate the worst forms of child labor from the cocoa sector of commercial agriculture. Guinea is one of five countries participating in the regional project.

The United States three-year Basic Education on Human Rights and Responsibilities plan empowers human rights based education in 120 rural villages and urban centers, using methodology and materials adapted to the socio-economic context of the participants. The United States sponsored two government officials for anti-trafficking consultations in the United States as part of the International Visitor's Program.

Guinea Bissau

At the beginning of 2004 the human rights and democracy situation in Guinea-Bissau was gradually improving. The Transition Government, formed after the September 2003 coup that ousted autocratic President Kumba Yala, made some improvements, including allowing the Supreme Court to elect its leadership and resume hearing cases and allowing civil society, labor and the press to freely assemble and express opinions.

March elections brought a democratic government to power, led by Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior, who took office in May. The parliament, which had ceased to function in November 2002, took up normal business. The Gomes Junior Government actively engaged Bissau-Guineans and the international community in a dialogue aimed at restoring democracy and protecting human rights. As illustrated by the October 6, 2004, military mutiny, during which time soldiers murdered the Chief of Defense and his aide, serious problems threaten these efforts. The primary threat to human rights and democracy in Guinea-Bissau continued to be a bloated, outdated military that does not always respect civilian authority. Impunity and corruption remained problems, although less so than in previous years. Prison conditions remained poor. Violence and discrimination against women, female genital mutilation (FGM), child labor and child trafficking occurred. The other major obstacles to human rights and democracy in Guinea-Bissau were a weak economy and fragile democratic institutions.

With extremely limited resources (no funding available in 2004 for bilateral USAID, Democracy and Human Rights Fund, Special Self-Help, or other programs), the U.S. strategy for supporting human rights and democracy is to encourage free and fair elections and support the democratic Government of Guinea-Bissau; strengthen nascent democratic institutions such as the parliament and courts; and encourage the Bissau-Guinean military toward reform and respect for civilian authority.

The United States responded to the Bissau-Guinean military's undemocratic behavior by care-

fully coordinating with the international community. Following the October 6 mutiny, the international community, represented by the UN Secretary General's Representative in Guinea-Bissau, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, and the Economic Community of West African States, was best placed to help the Government of Guinea-Bissau ease tensions in the country. The United States supported these efforts by sharing information with international partners and preparing public statements in support of Guinea-Bissau's democratic Government.

The United States also responded to the mutiny by identifying the appropriate long-term strategy toward the Government, the military and civil society. The Gomes Junior Government is widely recognized as the most competent and well-meaning Government Guinea-Bissau has had in 30 years since independence from Portugal. The Government requires support to retain legitimacy, gain full control of the military, and develop the economy to promote stability.

Since the 2003 coup, the U.S. Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau and other Dakar-based officials met frequently with the Transition Government, pressing the Bissau-Guineans to hold legislative elections. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, sent a team to observe the March legislative elections and concurred with the other international election observers' assessment of the elections as free and fair. In recognition of this democratic advance, the United States lifted bilateral sanctions against Guinea-Bissau that had been imposed following the 2003 coup. Through frequent face-to-face contact with the new leaders of Guinea-Bissau, the United States now continues to remind the Bissau-Guineans of their commitment to hold a presidential election in 2005. The United States also urges political, military, and ethnic leaders not to interfere with the presidential election.

The United States has funded a program to strengthen Guinea-Bissau's Parliament. In 2004, the United States re-initiated the International Visitors Program in Guinea-Bissau, sending a Guinean-Bissau participant on a well-received regional program on democracy and citizen partic-

ipation. This allowed the participant to make contacts in the United States for bolstering human rights activities in Guinea-Bissau as well as to share experiences with participants from Angola and other countries that have faced challenges similar to those in Guinea-Bissau. The participant, a human rights activist and lawyer, continues to be a strong voice for human rights and democracy.

The United States has renewed efforts to maintain working contacts with these local media outlets by providing them with regular press releases and information. Guinea-Bissau has several newspapers read by a small group of educated elite, numerous community radio stations and a local television station. Unlike in previous years, Guinea-Bissau's media operated without government restriction or interference.

The rule of law has improved significantly since September 2003, with the presidency no longer impeding the work of parliament, courts, the Government and the press. However, weaknesses remain, including a military that sometimes operates outside its legal authority, unprofessional police who sometimes abuse their authority and courts that do not have sufficient resources or capacity to act. Also, in many rural areas state institutions do not exist. In these areas, locals occasionally resort to traditional justice or vigilantism instead of formal legal remedies.

The United States is particularly concerned about Bissau-Guinean women and children's rights. FGM is still a common practice in many parts of Guinea-Bissau. One local non-governmental organization has achieved some success in sensitizing local communities about the dangers of this practice, providing alternative means of initiation and social acceptance for women and girls and providing alternative employment for those who practice FGM.

As the aggressor in the October 6 mutiny, Guinea-Bissau's military requires reform and downsizing to transform it into a "republican army." The United States is pursuing a strategy of cooperation aimed at pushing the Bissau-Guinean military toward reforms and away from de-stabilizing activities. The United States is planning programs

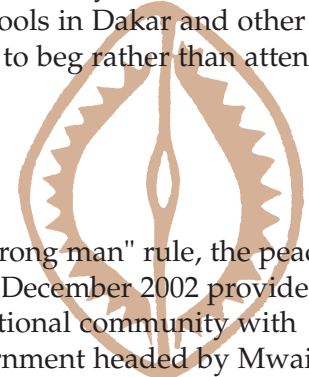
on civil-military relations and military justice to teach the Bissau- Guinean military how to behave in a democratic society. The United States can begin implementing these programs as soon as the Government formally indicates its political will to cooperate in these areas.

Animism, Islam and several denominations of Christianity have followers in Guinea-Bissau. Relations among these groups are good and there is no evidence of government interference in the free practice of religion. The United States maintains ties with representatives of all these groups. In fact, the United States hosted events to bring Guinea-Bissau's Muslim community together in 2004.

In all employment sectors in Guinea-Bissau there are occasional strikes concerning wages, due to Guinea-Bissau's dire economic situation. Though evidence is only anecdotal, many Bissau-Guinean boys sent to Quranic schools in Dakar and other regional cities are forced to beg rather than attend school.

Kenya

Following 24 years of "strong man" rule, the peaceful political transition in December 2002 provided Kenyans and the international community with hope that the new Government headed by Mwai Kibaki would enact meaningful reforms to create a new constitution, combat corruption, jump-start the economy, and improve human rights. Few of these hopes have been fulfilled. The Government has passed anti-corruption legislation and removed some allegedly corrupt judges. The Government successfully prosecuted, and then released, one mid-level official for corruption, but to date, there have been no arrests or prosecutions of senior officials involved in any number of large-scale corruption cases. The constitutional review process is mired in political in-fighting, unemployment is close to 50 percent and more than one-half of all Kenyans continue to live on less than one dollar a day. Despite some progress, Kenya's human rights record remains troubled. The Government has made some improvements in prison conditions, but overcrowding, long periods



of pre-trial detention, and physical abuse of prisoners by guards continued to be major problems. The police still arrest people arbitrarily, abuse detainees, and occasionally commit unlawful killings. Although the Government arrested and prosecuted a number of police officers for abuses, most officers who committed abuses were neither investigated nor punished. Female genital mutilation, child labor and trafficking in persons (TIP) also continue to be problems.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy consists of combating corruption, resolving conflict, and strengthening electoral processes, rule of law, civil society and the media. To build on the success of the 2002 general election, the United States continued to support the electoral process in Kenya. The United States, through USAID, continues to work with IFES, which received a grant during the reporting period to improve the capacity of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK). The program focuses on improving the ECK's use of information technology in administering elections and in ECK internal operations. Embassy staff continued to use private meetings and public engagements with Kenyan government officials to urge improvements in democratic institutions and human rights practices.

A cornerstone of U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Kenya is strengthening the rule of law. A key objective is the adoption of a new Constitution (to replace the 1963 authoritarian constitution) that includes a better balance of authority among the executive, legislative and judicial branches and provides for devolution of authority to sub-national units of government. During a visit to Kenya, Secretary of State Powell urged the Government of Kenya to follow through with its promise to implement a new Constitution.

In 2004, the United States continued to assist civil society organizations. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has been working for the past three years under a U.S. Government grant. The ICJ continued to utilize public perceptions of the Kenyan judiciary as a lobbying tool to advocate for judicial reforms as well as press for an empowered and independent judiciary in the new Constitution. Through a U.S. Government

grant awarded in 2003, the Federation of Women Lawyers continued their work during the reporting period to improve the legislative and policy framework for women's rights. In 2004, the Embassy supported the creation of a Resident Legal Advisor to work with specialized prosecution units in the Kenyan Government targeting anti-corruption and counter-terrorism investigations and trials. The United States was also an active partner in the Government-led sector wide reform program known as the Governance, Justice and Law and Order Sector (GJLOS). This five-year initiative promotes respect for justice, integrity, human rights and the rule of law.

In 2004, the United States also provided assistance to help strengthen the Kenyan Parliament, in particular parliament's committee system, its capacity for analysis, investigation and decision-making, and its links with civil society. To this end, the United States provided a grant to the State University of New York. Now in its fourth year of implementation, the program strengthens parliamentarians' ability to effectively represent the will of the Kenyan people, participate in policy reform and serve as a check on the executive. This program was complemented by grants to civil society organizations, which provided technical assistance and research to parliamentarians. For example, the Institute of Economic Affairs received a grant to improve parliamentarians' ability to effectively analyze the budget. Before these programs began, the Kenyan Parliament was seen as a rubber stamp. It now acts more independently and is increasingly serving as a check on the executive.

A closely related U.S. objective is helping Kenya make further progress in the fight against corruption. In 2004, the Government completed its appointments to the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission, which has the mandate to investigate and root out corruption. A U.S. Government grant to Transparency International's Kenya chapter was in its fourth year of implementation. Similarly, the Center for Governance and Development was in the second year of a two-year U.S. grant to address corruption and bad governance in Kenya by working with the parliament and stakeholders to help draft legislation to further the democratic process.

The U.S. Embassy, with considerable support from U.S. Government agencies, supports press freedom and other democracy and human rights objectives through a number of its annual programs. In Fiscal Year 2004 more than one-half of the Embassy's annual allotment of 20 international exchange visitors participated in programs that fit broadly under this rubric, including two East African regional small group projects. Similarly, Fulbright Fellowship grants supported three Kenyan and two American scholars doing research or pursuing degrees in peace studies, conflict resolution, women's rights or legal systems. The Embassy's Information Resource Center featured outreach projects on responsible media, U.S. courts, trafficking in persons and state and local government. In 2004, with Embassy support, the new Kenyan Government established a press spokesman's office to help articulate government policy and field requests for access to government information.

After a temporary decline in the early months of 2004, ethnic violence—some of it politically motivated—increased again in late 2004 and early 2005. In addition, inter-communal violence occasionally crosses borders with Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. To address this problem, the Government has been helping warring factions in Sudan and Somalia resolve their differences and has been working to promote national unity within the context of non-ethnically based political diversity. Within its conflict management program, the United States supported the Addis Ababa-based Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN). Activities by CEWARN activities in Kenya have focused on building capacity among government and non-governmental organizations to address conflict in the cross-border area of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda (the Karamoja cluster), and in the cross-border area of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia (the Somali cluster).

Two of the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) awards implemented in 2004 were for resolution of conflict among cattle raiders in the Northern Rift Valley and among warring ethnic groups in the Tana River area of Coast Province. Three additional HRDF grants

were awarded to grassroots organizations in Kenya. These awards targeted improvements in the legal and human rights of young women slum dwellers in Nairobi, Maasai women in southern Kenya and Muslim women in Nairobi. Four additional HRDF grants got underway in the fall of 2004. Three address women's rights, the other conflict resolution in North Eastern Province. In addition, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor drew upon the Human Rights and Democracy Fund to support a women's political empowerment project that equipped women candidates in Kenya with the skills necessary to run effective political campaigns.

The Ambassador and other Embassy officials met frequently with religious and other civic leaders to foster an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. The Embassy maintains regular contact with a diverse groups of religious communities and utilizes these contacts to promote dialogue on religious freedom throughout the country.

Another focus of U.S. Government attention was on labor practices. The U.S.-funded American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) helped local trade unions strengthen capacity and consolidate gains achieved in 2003. Workers in Kenya's Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are now free to join unions and the first-ever collective bargaining agreement in an EPZ was signed with the assistance of ACILS.

The United States also funded the International Labor Organization to implement the Time Bound Program for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. The program will identify, withdraw and rehabilitate children working under hazardous conditions and provide families with viable alternatives to child labor. The Solidarity Center-Kenya, in conjunction with Kenya's Coalition of Trade Unions, received a grant from the United States to focus on raising awareness within trade unions of the human trafficking problem in Kenya.

The Embassy designed the various components in its strategy to be complementary. Better governmental checks and balances and an improved judi-

cial system help combat corruption and create a more attractive environment for badly needed economic investment. Together the components of the U.S. democracy and human rights strategy in Kenya are helping the country achieve better governance and a better way of life for Kenyans.

Liberia

Liberia is a republic. The current National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), which is not an elected government, was agreed upon as part of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) signed in Accra, Ghana, on August 18, 2003. The CPA followed months of intense fighting between the troops of the former Government of Liberia, and the rebel groups Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). The deployment of international peacekeepers by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), on October 1, 2003, signaled the effective end to the war and began a new era in Liberia. Former President Charles Taylor stepped down on August 11, 2003, and his vice president and successor stepped down on October 14, 2003. The NTGL was established that day and is headed by Chairman Gyude Bryant.

Under the Taylor Government, the state security forces (military, paramilitary, militia and police) committed numerous, serious abuses, including unlawful killings, excessive use of force, and torture. Police officers committed arbitrary arrests and detentions and beat persons in custody. Prison conditions were extremely harsh and life threatening. Fair and expeditious trials were problematic due to an inefficient, understaffed and under-funded judiciary, which was dominated by the executive branch and subject to corruption. The abuse of children, particularly in the form of forced conscription as child soldiers, was a problem. Women were raped and forcibly conscripted. LURD and MODEL also committed many abuses.

In 2004, although many of the former practices of the police have been curtailed, some serious abuses continued under the NTGL. The NTGL did not

have much presence beyond the capital and its immediate environs until the second half of the year. Through the first quarter of 2004, LURD and MODEL controlled significant towns and territories within Liberia. Liberians not under the protective umbrella of UNMIL still faced abuse by elements of LURD, MODEL and former government troops. There were reports of arbitrary arrests and detentions, extrajudicial killings, rapes and other abuses.

In April, demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) of ex-combatants began in earnest. By June, UNMIL had deployed throughout Liberia with its full complement of up to 15,000 peacekeepers and 1,100 international police (CivPol). Through CivPol, UNMIL is currently training and supporting an interim police force, since the Liberian National Police (LNP) force has been disarmed. UNMIL is also training a new Liberian Police Service. On October 31, DDRR exercises were completed, and on November 3, LURD, MODEL and ex-GOL were formally dissolved as military entities.

In support of national elections for Liberia's transition to democracy, the United States has awarded grants to various programs run through implementing partners. These programs are designed to help strengthen political parties, support voter registration, train polling place officials, and otherwise support preparations for elections scheduled for October 11 2005. The United States, through USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, is providing a grant to help develop the capacity of the NTGL and civil society organizations to encourage transparency and good governance and to promote human rights. The United States is contributing funds to activities designed to strengthen democratic institutions and rule of law. The United States is funding a program that establishes community development committees and community radio stations.

The United States has highlighted corruption-related issues repeatedly and publicly throughout the peace implementation process and in meetings with the NTGL and other interested parties. The United States has supported the establishment of a

Treasury Department Residential Advisor Program to work with the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank and other relevant ministries to encourage transparency and the fight against corruption.

Since many of the human rights abuses occurred within the security and justice sectors, U.S. strategy focused on assisting UNMIL and the NTGL with DDRR and on training the Liberian police force. The United States is also addressing human rights issues by concentrating programs in areas such as political party development and the education of the public on civic responsibility and human rights.

United States officials routinely highlighted publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions. As part of peace implementation, U.S. officials worked privately with Liberian officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations to identify areas of concern and encourage systemic reforms. Following the departure of Taylor and the signing of the CPA, the United States allocated significant resources to fund relief and reconstruction and to support police and judicial reform as well as rule of law programs, in coordination with UNMIL and other implementing partners and donors.

The United States is supporting a wide variety of programs designed to consolidate the peace and foster respect for human rights. The United States is providing significant assistance to Liberia through, among others, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Office of Food For Peace, Office of Transition Initiatives, as well as through USAID development assistance.

The centerpieces of the U.S. efforts to create a sustainable peace are the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) and Women and Child Soldier Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program (WCRR), which are designed to provide an alternative to the industry of war and its contingent human rights abuses for the ex-combatants and others. LCIP is designed to promote the social reintegration of more than 20,000 ex-combatants and others. At year's end, more than 8,000 ex-combatants were participating in the program. The United States is also directing funds toward

assisting up to 10,000 former child soldiers and women ex-combatants. WCRR is being implemented through cooperative agreements with the International Rescue Committee, Christian Children's Fund and Save the Children UK. The United States contributed to DDRR initially through a contribution to the UN DDRR Trust Fund as well.

The United States is directing monies for rehabilitation of the forest sector and is providing another large grant to help the NTGL install the Kimberly Process, an international certification process designed to prevent the trade of so-called "conflict diamonds" for weapons.

Madagascar

President Marc Ravalomanana was elected in 2001 but did not take office until May 2002 due to disputed election results that led to widespread violence. Democracy has been consolidated through parliamentary and municipal elections over the past two years. The Government generally respects the rights of its citizens; however there were still problems in some areas. Arbitrary arrests and detention occurred. Journalists practice self-censorship and the Government at times limited freedom of assembly.

The Embassy advanced democracy and human rights through its monthly Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), democracy and governance activities, and support of technical assistance programs with special Ambassadorial funds. These activities reached a broad cross-section of the Malagasy population. The Human Rights Working Group conducted outreach designed to improve public understanding of basic human rights. Embassy programs strengthened civil society, facilitated national reconciliation and supported women's rights. The Embassy worked in close coordination with the Government of Madagascar to combat trafficking in persons, and funded other grassroots human rights initiatives through the Ambassador's Human Rights and Democracy Fund.

The Embassy continues to coordinate and chair the monthly HRWG. In 2004, the HRWG

remained a significant forum for official and civil society to discuss wide-ranging human rights issues. The standard format is a focused presentation on a single subject, followed by an opportunity for attendees to introduce and discuss matters of current interest. At each meeting, the Embassy provided additional information on U.S. policy that pertained to the day's main topic(s). Topics discussed during the year included freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and guaranteeing children's rights through nationwide birth registration. In December, the HRWG conducted a series of awareness and educational activities for International Human Rights Week. The HRWG also has been active in lobbying the Government of Madagascar on human rights. For example, the Malagasy Constitution requires the Government to create apolitical organizations that promote and protect human rights. However, the governmental National Commission for Human Rights has been inactive since the 2002 political crisis, when its members' terms expired. Throughout 2004, the HRWG actively lobbied for the Government to reinstate the commission.

The Embassy strengthened the capacity of civil society groups, including organizations that deal directly with human rights issues such as violence against women and freedom of information. The Embassy also worked with leading civil society organizations to establish the country's first National Civil Society Organization Platform. The platform's objective is to ensure better coordination, encourage greater communication, and strengthen the voice of civil society as an advocate and government partner. One component of the new platform deals specifically with human rights.

The Embassy continues to address ethnic tension by supporting a conflict resolution program known as Fihavanana, from the Malagasy word for solidarity and community consensus. During 2004, Fihavanana activities were implemented in all of the country's six provinces and ranged from grassroots meetings to inter-provincial teleconference debates. Reconciliation activities included creation of the country's first Christian-Muslim platform for dialogue in the province of Mahajanga, one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse areas. In 2004 a "lessons learned"

assessment of the Fihavanana program revealed that lack of access to information made citizens vulnerable to political manipulation. The Embassy intensified efforts to increase information access to address this source of conflict.

In 2004, Madagascar was selected as a focus country for the Women's Legal Rights Initiative in the Africa region. The U.S. Government commissioned the nation's first study on women's knowledge of their rights. Violence against women, a topic rarely discussed in Malagasy society, was highlighted as a common occurrence. This was a very important step as the survey showed that Malagasy women unanimously asserted that violence against women is a "private affair" that is shameful to reveal in public, and local authorities typically consider domestic violence a personal matter, only intervening when the "peace is disturbed."

In June 2004, Madagascar was placed on the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Tier Two Watch List. Working in conjunction with the Government of Madagascar, the Embassy developed a national action plan to combat TIP. At the Embassy's request, the President's Chief of Staff established a special inter-ministerial committee devoted to combating trafficking. This committee adopted the Embassy action plan verbatim as Madagascar's anti-trafficking program. Subsequently, the Government of Madagascar began a comprehensive review of existing anti-TIP legislation, initiated an awareness campaign, increased enforcement of laws barring minors from nightclubs, and increased efforts to rehabilitate child prostitutes in "Welcome Centers." During the year the International Labor Organization launched a countrywide multi-year project to combat the worst forms of child labor, specifically in commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, quarry mining and the rural and urban informal sectors.

The Embassy promoted key human rights through Democracy and Human Rights Fund II (DHRF II) grants. In 2004, DHRF II enabled Malagasy non-governmental organizations across the country to initiate programs advocating the rights of the physically handicapped, protecting child rights, and combating sexual tourism. The Embassy's

Public Affairs section sent several Malagasy candidates to the United States under the International Visitors Program to study issues such as grassroots democracy for young leaders, the role of the media in the United States, and the American judicial system.

Mauritania

Mauritania is a highly centralized Islamic republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania's human rights record remained poor in 2004. Although there were improvements in some areas, several problems remained.

Democratic institutions remained rudimentary and the Government circumscribed citizens' ability to change their government. Some members of the security forces reportedly used excessive force, beat or otherwise abused detainees and used arbitrary arrest and detention and illegal searches. The Government continued to refuse to officially recognize some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights organizations.

Discrimination against women continued. Female genital mutilation (FGM) remained a widespread problem, despite some government efforts to halt the practice. Despite government efforts to eradicate the practice, local and international reports continued to say that slavery in the form of involuntary servitude persisted in some areas, and that former slaves continued to work for former masters. Child labor in the informal sector was common. The Government ratified a revised Labor Code during the year that imposed substantial criminal penalties for forced labor and related practices.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Mauritania is to promote democratization and respect for fundamental human rights, develop civil society and responsible media, promote religious freedom and tolerance and combat forced labor, child labor and trafficking in persons. The United States raised human rights and democracy on a high-level with the Government throughout 2004. In his April 2004 visit to Mauritania, Congressman James Gibbons discussed the U.S. Government's continued interest in human rights

with several Mauritanian government Ministers. Then-Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner raised human rights concerns with the Mauritanian Ambassador to the United States. In addition, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs visited Mauritania in January 2004, and raised human rights issues with Mauritanian officials, in particular trafficking in persons and how to promote democratic development. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Kozak raised human rights and democracy issues with the Foreign Minister of Mauritania on his visit to the United States this year.

United States funds are also being used to implement a program by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to support the development of democratic institutions in Mauritania through the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes. NDI's program is aimed at improving the institutional capacity of NGOs. Activities by NDI will assist NGOs to become more engaged in democratic development programming and to serve as agents of change.

The U.S. Embassy celebrated International Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, for the first time in Mauritania. A day-long conference, attended by senior staff from a wide variety of local newspapers, highlighted the rights and responsibilities of an independent press. A United States-sponsored reporters' writing competition attracted over 40 essays from a local press corps that includes less than 20 regular newspapers. These essays discussed the merits of democracy, freedom of the press and social and religious tolerance.

The United States funded a project to compile all of Mauritania's laws, for the first time, into a single reference book which was then distributed to lawyers nationwide. The United States sponsored the participation of reporters from two independent Mauritanian newspapers in a 2004 International Visitors Program (IVP) program on "The Democratic Process" conducted by the State Department's Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau. Both reporters followed the run-up to the U.S. presidential elections and, upon their return

to Mauritania, briefed their counterparts on the electoral process in the United States.

In January 2004 the United States sponsored a seminar on civil-military relations. Seminar moderators challenged participants, including senior military leaders and the Secretary-General of the Defense Ministry, to understand each other's perspectives and roles in a developing democracy. The program was well received and publicized, including at least two news stories on national television and radio. The United States reviewed human rights records of members of military and security forces who participated in training conducted by U.S. civilian or military personnel. United States Embassy personnel based in Nouakchott used the opportunity presented by these Leahy Amendment reviews to discuss with senior security and military officials the importance of protecting human rights in the conduct of law enforcement or military activities, and of requiring human rights training for security and military personnel.

Officials from the United States and various U.S. visitors discussed religious freedom and tolerance with senior government officials and religious leaders. The United States also engaged religious leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS, developing a close working relationship that also provided opportunities to discuss and promote religious tolerance. The United States sponsored a dialogue between generations of Mauritians, moderated by several imams, in which prominent Mauritians discussed issues of terrorism, religious tolerance, and the applicability of Islam to these concerns. In March 2004, the U.S. Embassy sponsored a Muslim professor at an American university to speak before several audiences and the press about religious freedom in the United States, including that enjoyed by followers of Islam. In May 2004, the United States sponsored an American professor to speak about democracy and the rule of law.

Democracy and Human Rights Fund grants gave the United States the opportunity to sponsor assistance projects in the areas of workers' rights, combating FGM and violence against women, and the victim care and retraining for young female vic-

tims of household violence. Throughout the year, U.S. officials encouraged the Government to adopt and implement key international agreements on trafficking of persons. The Bureau for Combating Traffic In Persons provided a \$180,000 grant to train Mauritanian law enforcement officials in anti-trafficking in persons techniques and methodology, and to compile, translate and disseminate to Mauritanian legal officials all of the country's laws and conventions against human trafficking, slavery, and forced labor. United States officials aggressively investigated reports and allegations of slavery and slavery-related practices. Embassy officials urged the Government to engage the International Labor Organization (ILO) in a technical mission to assist Mauritania in implementing its obligations under the ILO conventions against forced labor. The ILO mission completed its work this year and the report is pending. Embassy officials also emphasized the need for the Government to make statistical evidence of its anti-trafficking activities publicly available. In July 2004, Mauritania ratified and publicly promulgated a revised Labor Code that significantly upgraded workers' rights in some areas, in line with current ILO standards. This new Labor Code included clear definitions of forced labor and related crimes, as well as applicable criminal penalties for those found guilty of such violations.

Mozambique

Mozambique has made progress in strengthening its democratic institutions, but the country remains vulnerable to corruption and human rights safeguards are weak. In December 2004, Mozambique held its third general (presidential and legislative) election. President Joaquim Chissano, who had held office since 1986, did not run for re-election. Armando Guebuza of the FRELIMO party was elected president with 64 percent of the vote. Mozambique under FRELIMO has moved away from its Marxist beginnings to become an increasingly open society. The trend toward openness generally continued in 2004, as evidenced by greater freedom of the press and media coverage during the election. Government performance remained weak in other areas, however, such as independence of the court system



Maputo, Mozambique

Election trainer giving instructions to voters.

AP Photo

and anti-corruption efforts. Human rights abuses were not widespread, but there were notable areas of concern such as discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS and trafficking of women and children to South Africa.

In 2004, to help Mozambique improve its democratic and human rights performance, the U.S. Embassy carried out a range of programs: strengthening Mozambique's electoral process, supporting anti-corruption efforts with key government agencies, and providing support to upgrade the police and military, among other initiatives.

The December 2004 general election was the focal point for U.S.-funded democratization programs throughout the year. To strengthen Mozambique's ability to establish credible election results, the U.S. provided support to the Carter Center and other non-governmental organizations, in coordination with Mozambican civil society, to establish a parallel vote tabulation system. Also, Mozambican election observers received training through U.S. supported NGOs. The U.S. Embassy sent 17 election observers to eight provinces and provided funding for Carter Center observation efforts.

To strengthen Mozambique's democratic institutions, the U.S. Embassy increased its emphasis on anti-corruption programs, including activities with both the Government and civil society. The U.S. worked to upgrade the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) in the Attorney General's office by providing funds to train prosecutors and to establish new offices in Beira and Nampula, the second and third largest cities in Mozambique (previously the ACU was confined to the capital, Maputo). The Embassy also provided a local NGO with a grant to carry out a two year anti-corruption campaign, with a focus on mass media activity and the formation of anti-corruption reporting centers in major cities. The U.S. Embassy used its Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to support a local NGO in drafting a Freedom of Information Act for Mozambique, since the very limited amount of public information available makes it possible to hide government corruption.

Mozambique made progress on press freedom issues, as evidenced by very open general election coverage and the willingness of journalists to cover politically sensitive cases. Many television, radio, and print media news outlets still cannot be classified as fully independent from government or political party control. The U.S. Embassy used funding to support greater independence through grants to radio and print media organizations.

The U.S. Embassy continued its activities to foster a more professional police force, which is expected to be less prone to commit human rights abuses. The U.S. Embassy provided assistance for management training and curriculum development to Mozambique's Police Sciences Academy (ACIPOL). This help was provided primarily by a long-term International Criminal Investigative Training Program (ICITAP) advisor. Funding also was used to upgrade facilities at the academy. The first ACIPOL class graduated in 2004. The U.S. Government provided assistance for ten high-ranking police officers and ten prosecutors from the Attorney General's office to participate in courses at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) regional center in Botswana.

There was progress in Mozambique in 2004 in protecting women's rights. In August the Government approved a family law that clarifies property and child custody rights for women, particularly women in common-law marriages. The U.S. Embassy used DHRF program assistance to support the work of NGOs focused on human rights issues confronting women. The U.S. Embassy used the International Visitors Program (IVP) to send a group to the United States to participate in a "Women as Political Leaders" seminar. The U.S. Embassy also used the IVP to send a children's human rights advocate to participate in a trafficking in persons course in the U.S. Upon the return of the IVP participant, the U.S. Embassy organized a human rights seminar for members of civil society.

In 2004, the U.S. Government continued working to improve labor relations in Mozambique by establishing a formal labor mediation program. The U.S. Embassy also hosted seminars on Mozambique's labor law that included participation by all stakeholders.

Nigeria

Notwithstanding the elaborate legal structures in place, Nigeria has not made much progress on human rights since multiparty general elections in 2003 that were marred by fraud and irregularities. The Government's record on democracy, the rule of law, corruption, trafficking in persons, preven-

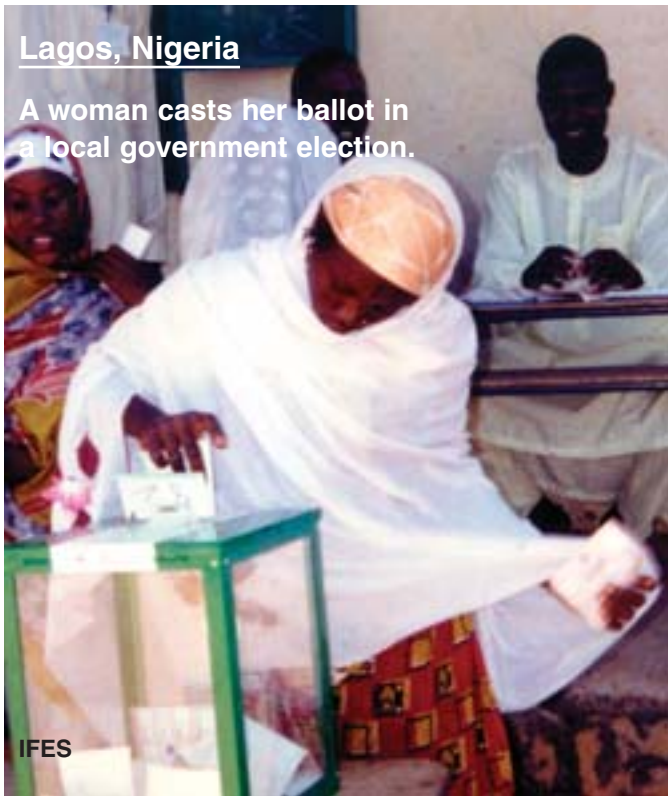


tion of internal conflict and the welfare of its citizens remained problematic, although overt violence related to electoral politics declined in 2004 compared to the previous year. Nationwide local government elections during 2004 were largely ignored, with turnout of less than ten percent but announced results of often more than fifty percent of registered voters. In general, the announced results overwhelmingly favored whichever party was in power in each state.

Credible judicial reviews of challenged results from the 2003 elections were often hampered by lack of cooperation from the executive branch. The legislative branch passed relatively little legislation. Nigeria agreed to a G-8 Transparency and Anti-Corruption Compact at the Sea Island Summit in June, and is a participant in the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). The Government established institutions to tackle rampant corruption, but as yet those institutions have not brought trials of senior officials to either conviction or acquittal. Religious and ethnic divisions beset Nigeria, and the Government sometimes has been as much a part of the problem as of the solution. Growing poverty and poor governance in many areas around the country have added tension to the political climate.

Lagos, Nigeria

A woman casts her ballot in a local government election.



The United States human rights and democracy strategy seeks to assist efforts in Nigeria to build an accountable, transparent democracy with a robust civil society, respect for human rights, rule of law, governance, and conflict resolution. United States officials routinely comment on the need for the Government to improve the environment for free and fair elections and to strengthen rule of law. Politically motivated violence, corruption, ethnic and religious violence, flaws in the electoral process and concerns over judicial independence were among many themes pursued by U.S. officials in Nigeria.

United States officials regularly met with local, state, and federal officials to discuss human rights trends in policymaking and law enforcement, especially regarding respect for integrity of the person, trafficking in persons, respect for civil rights, refugees and internally displaced persons. They also worked closely with many civic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on such issues as worker rights, religious freedom, prison conditions, and women's, children's, and minorities' rights. The International Visitors Program brought representatives from

NGOs, the host government and civil society to the United States for a variety of programs, including human rights advocacy, leadership development for women, trafficking issues, and women's participation in politics.

The United States combined programs to improve democracy and governance through increasing transparency/accountability and institutionalizing peaceful political processes, strengthening the rule of law through increasing access to justice, revising legal frameworks and institution building, managing conflict through mitigation and peace-making, and mitigating the causes and impact of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. United States Government activities to improve governance included elections support, political party and legislative strengthening, and increasing civil society's capabilities to advocate for policy reform and monitor government operations. Activities to strengthen the rule of law included: management and dissemination of court information, codification of judicial ethics, and expanded access to justice by means of alternative dispute resolution.

The United States is funding an American NGO in northern Nigeria in a program to promote good human rights reporting. The program includes a comprehensive training regimen for selected reporters, and is capped by an annual ceremony and award presentation to the reporter who has made the greatest achievement in human rights reporting over the course of the year.

The United States sponsored a community-policing program in the Nigerian Police Force with the Kaduna command as a pilot project. Community policing promotes tactics aimed at crime reduction, while it improves the professionalism, responsibility and performance of the Nigerian Police Force. A major portion of the program focused on respect for human rights, covering such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings.

The United States sponsored one Expanded-International Military Education and Training seminar conducted by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies that focused on con-

ducting domestic security operations in accordance with the rule of law and human rights. A Counter-Terrorism seminar attended by Nigerian officers also contained human rights training. All students who receive military training in the United States are also exposed to human rights training as part of their curriculum.

The United States worked extensively on the problem of inter-religious violence and religious freedom, meeting with national and local political and religious leaders on multiple occasions to gain a better understanding of the problems and to advocate resolution. United States officials gave speeches across the country calling for reconciliation, and traveled extensively to work with state officials and Muslim and Christian leaders on promoting peace and ending discrimination, including holding inter-faith celebrations of tolerance. A Christian pastor and Muslim imam from Kaduna that USAID trained in Vermont in 2003 then trained members of the Kaduna Peace Committee in 2004. The United States paid for radio and television programs where the pastor and imam could discuss conflict issues in Kaduna and Kano. In 2004 the pastor and imam received the prestigious Common Ground Award from the well-known NGO Search for Common Ground, in recognition of the success of their peacemaking efforts.

United States programs to manage conflict included sensitizing community and opinion leaders, youth groups and faith-based organizations about the virtues of peaceful coexistence, establishing conflict early warning networks, and providing humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons. The United States sponsored activities to mitigate the causes and consequences of human trafficking included: providing support and shelter for trafficking victims, providing skills training to facilitate re-integration within the community and disseminating anti-trafficking materials via public media. Nigeria continued to receive U.S. funding for a program transitioning veterans into civilian occupations. The United States continued support for a hostel for human trafficking victims.

Nigeria had an International Labor Organization country-wide program to reduce the worst forms of child labor (especially in commercial sexual

exploitation, domestic service, and the informal sector); another program supported the initiative in West Africa to eliminate hazardous child labor from cocoa production.

Additional funds supported an effort to help the government-sponsored Michael Imodou Institute for Labor Studies to upgrade its capacity to train workers about their rights as citizens and workers, and to help it become a center for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration training for both labor and industry representatives.

Rwanda

In May 2003, a countrywide referendum resulted in the approval of a new Constitution, which provides for a multiparty system but provides few protections for parties and their candidates. In August and September 2003, the country held its first multi-candidate national elections since independence in elections that were peaceful but seriously marred. During 2004, there was a contraction in civil and political space in Rwanda. There was no significant political party activity during 2004, and local elections were not considered free and fair. Although the independent print media continued to face harassment, causing two editors and three journalists to flee the country, the Government granted licenses to four independent radio stations.

The judiciary was non-operational for most of the year as the country implemented judicial reforms. A Foreign Service National (embassy employee), who was arrested in April 2002 in connection to the case against former President Pasteur Bizimungu, was finally brought to trial in March 2004, and sentenced to five years in prison in what was widely considered to be a political trial. In June, the parliament released a report that accused human rights groups, journalists, churches, and local government officials of "genocide ideology"; the Government subsequently justified arbitrary arrests and the effective dismantling of the country's independent human rights organizations as part of its campaign against "divisionism." The status of the Local Defense Forces continued to be a concern.

To address these problems, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy seeks to increase the capacity of Rwandan civil society through the decentralization of local government functions. At the same time, it supports activities designed to make government institutions more responsive to citizens. The United States seeks to promote long-term stability, both in the country and in the region, through the promotion of reconciliation and judicial transparency. Finally, it aims at strengthening respect for human rights among Rwandan officials and opinion leaders.

Strengthening human rights and democracy involves U.S. officials in Washington and the entire Embassy, from the Ambassador to first-tour officers, and reflects a collaborative effort among the State Department's reporting officers, USAID, the Defense Attaché's Office, the Public Diplomacy Section, the Center for Disease Control and the Diplomatic Security Service. To implement its strategy, the Embassy utilizes a range of diplomatic tools, including monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses, providing technical assistance and training to promote government accountability and respect for human rights, and enhancing capacity-building to strengthen Rwandan institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

The Embassy sponsored public outreach for political parties and university students on democratic institutions including best practices. In addition, Rwandan professionals participated in International Visitors Programs (IVP) in the United States on print journalism, the role of the media, grassroots outreach and coalition building and democracy and transparency and good governance.

The United States funded the Associates in Rural Development (ARD) Legislative Capacity Strengthening Project which supported citizen advocacy that helped the national parliament increase its engagement with constituents. Citizen organizations learned how to effectively represent constituent views. Reflecting the increased engagement, committees of the Chamber of Deputies are now open to the public. The two chambers of parliament implemented joint proce-

dures for voting on bills, and established formal procedures to receive visitors to the parliament. The growing independence of the parliament is encouraging.

The U.S. supported civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote pluralism and public dialogue. The CSOs organized district-and provincial-level town hall meetings to create opportunities for direct contact and information exchanges between citizens and government officials. The majority of the town hall participants were women. In other evidence of increased public dialogue, citizen visits to both houses of parliament and provincial, district and other government offices increased.

With the Ministry of Local Government, and in partnership with ARD, the United States supported a fiscal decentralization project to support democratic local government and decentralization. The United States developed the manuals of two main systems covering Budget and Treasury. At least 85 percent of the districts in the country are consistently producing the new accounting reports.

The Coexistence Network, a forum specifically designed to allow national and international NGOs and government representatives to openly debate difficult and controversial topics, received a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant. The grant provided funding to expand the concept outside of Kigali City.

In March, the visiting U.S. Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs raised human rights concerns with Finance Minister Donald Kaberuka. The U.S. delegation to the April commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Genocide, led by the Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes and USAID's Deputy Administrator, raised democracy and human rights concerns with President Kagame. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs had multiple occasions to raise democracy and human rights concerns with a variety of Rwandan officials.

The U.S.-supported International Rescue Committee (IRC)/Kibungo's community radio station began broadcasting in 2004 and is one of four

new stations serving the country. The project facilitated the creation of ten listeners' clubs that provide feedback on broadcasts.

Through its Human Rights and Democracy Fund, the Embassy is supporting a number of human rights related projects. It provided a grant to a local human rights NGO providing training to secondary school students. During 2004, this NGO produced materials and posters on sexual-and gender-based violence that were praised by the Rwandan Ministries of Education and Gender.

The U.S. Government provided funding for a children's after-school center through another local NGO. The NGO helped the children produce comic book-style treatments of social themes, such as drug abuse, the difficulties faced by girls who want to attend school, and strategies for dealing with conflict. These books have stimulated debate and discussion on difficult issues and encouraged positive models of conflict resolution.

To encourage the participation of women in decision-making, DHRF grants were given to the Foundation for Justice and Development and to NGOs specializing in women's rights and communication. One NGO trained women's groups in communications skills and encouraged women in listeners' groups to participate more actively in a new community radio station. Another trained representatives from women's groups in family law issues from which women had been traditionally excluded, such as property rights or visitation and custody rights.

Following a three-year suspension, the U.S. Security Assistance Program in Rwanda was reinstated by the State Department in 2003, and Rwanda received a complete International Military Education and Training program (IMET) budget for 2004. The newly reinstated program emphasized the need to respect human and civil rights as well as civilian control of the military and promoted understanding of the proper role of a military in a democracy. In 2004, the Embassy organized a seminar taught by U.S. military officers; the seminar assisted in strengthening the civilian and military justice systems and vividly illustrated the need to respect human rights.

In addition, members of the Rwanda Defense Forces attended IMET courses in the U.S. which explored such important topics as the development of a professional army, civil-military strategies for internal development, military peace support operations in support of law of land warfare, defense management, and democracy and decision making.

The United States was actively engaged in programs designed to build the capacity of both civil society organizations and local government institutions. To improve community-based reconciliation efforts, the Government of Rwanda's Genocide Survivors Fund, with U.S. Government support, funded secondary education to approximately 26,744 students; primarily children orphaned by the Genocide who are currently in secondary school.

The U.S. Government also funded IRC's sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) program, which trained 551 judges in the rural justice system, Gacaca, in 2004. These trainees used SGBV training materials to train others at the district, sector and cell level. The training of 43,260 Gacaca judges in matters related to SGBV at the sector level is continuing under the supervision of the Government of Rwanda's National Service of Gacaca Courts. Prior to the sensitization campaign, only 55 percent of genocide survivors were willing to testify regarding crimes of sexual violence. Genocide survivors have created 106 networks, one in each local government district, with two facilitators in each of the 1,545 administrative sectors of Rwanda. The United States also provided material support to the National Service of Gacaca in the form of computers and database-management training.

To strengthen democratic national governance institutions and enhance reconciliation and peace, the United States supported the National University of Rwanda's partnership with University of Maryland, College Park. The partnership has produced graduates in computer science and has supported distance education modules on science and mathematics in secondary schools.

Through the World Links/Dot-Com primary schools computerization project, U.S. Government funds contributed to the development of basic computer literacy among Rwandan youth and primary school teachers. A computer was offered to each school that had electricity and teachers were trained in troubleshooting, teaching techniques and the integration of information and communication technology. The electricity challenge prompted parents to take the initiative to contribute money to connect more than 20 schools to the national grid.

To strengthen civil society, the United States supported CARE's Civil Society Strengthening Project to assist 16 partner CSOs with training to make them more effective and sustainable. Training enabled CSOs to improve on a broad range of functions, including the defining of objectives, resource acquisition, financial management, program design, and monitoring and evaluation. Strengthened organizational capacity attracted new members, particularly women, and increased CSOs' membership fee revenues.

The project supported civic education on good governance, human rights, citizen participation, and advocacy. Through a training of trainers approach, 1,032 trainers in civic education trained 17,742 citizens through 1,139 civic education workshops in 59 districts. A Government of Rwanda initiative to develop a single civic education manual for all organizations undertaking civic education in the country restrained the ability of some partners to implement civic education activities.

Embassy officials met with religious leaders and members of a wide range of religious communities to promote interfaith dialogue and discuss religious freedom. The important issue was also a subject of regular meetings with local and international NGOs involved in peace reconciliation efforts.

In recognition of the tenth anniversary of the 1994 Genocide, the United States pledged \$1 million to assist Rwanda in addressing the ongoing legacy of that tragedy. Half of the money has been designated to support Rwanda's justice sector, while the other half will support reconciliation projects. The

United States remains committed to assisting in Rwanda's recovery while at the same time supporting its development into a full-fledged democracy.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone continues to recover from the devastating 11-year civil war that ended in January 2002 and the egregious human rights violations that accompanied it. The return to peace allows Sierra Leoneans to turn their attention to economic and agricultural development, the fight against corruption in public and private sectors, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the decentralization of state power. In May, the first local elections in 32 years were held in 311 wards nationwide. Although turnout was relatively low and there was later evidence of significant electoral fraud, the elections themselves were peaceful and an independent report determined that "there was no proof that the outcome of any particular election was actually changed by the fraud."

The Government generally respected the rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in several areas. In 2004, one man died in police custody. Security forces raped women and children; members of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) were accused of murdering a prostitute. Although conditions in some prisons improved, many detention centers were overcrowded and unsanitary, resulting in numerous deaths. Members of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) continued to arrest and detain persons arbitrarily. There were reports of extortion by police. Prolonged detention, excessive bail and insufficient legal representation remained problems. The Government at times limited freedom of speech and the press during 2004. The criminal libel law received extensive public attention during the year when a Sierra Leonean journalist was sentenced to a two-year jail term for seditious libel.

Instability in border areas, as well as occasional incursions into the country by Liberian combatants who sometimes raided villages for food continued during 2004. Violence, discrimination against women, and prostitution remained prob-

lems. Female genital mutilation (FGM) remained widespread. Abuse of children was a problem; however, numerous children who fought as child soldiers participated in reintegration programs during the year. There were reports of trafficking in persons (TIP), and new TIP legislation was sent to parliament. Residents of non-African descent faced institutionalized political restrictions. Forced child labor continued to be a problem.

The United States focused well in advance on programs to make the May 2004 elections successful. The United States sponsored three speakers in Freetown and outlying provinces, including the hard-to-reach diamond district, to encourage voting and candidacy for women. These efforts paid off, as U.S. officials traveling upcountry frequently encounter women who have won seats in district and town council elections.

The United States also created an umbrella body on election issues made up of international donors, National Election Commission officials, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The weekly meetings, which were held in the Embassy's Information Resource Center, ultimately had a positive influence on election policy and execution and helped spur election monitoring. The umbrella group showed continuing vitality as it took the lead in supervising post-election analysis and education efforts.

In the weeks preceding the election, the United States also worked with media partners to create a "Meet the Candidate" national radio show. Candidates who completed a position-paper questionnaire were given free radio time to outline their platform to constituents. This was a first for Sierra Leone, as candidates normally do not run on substance, but on popularity alone.

The Embassy sponsored a popular three-day journalism workshop that had as its underlying purpose creating conditions to overturn Sierra Leone's criminal libel laws. The Ambassador opened the workshop with a speech strongly condemning the criminalization of libelous speech or writing, a message that he repeated to numerous Sierra Leonean officials throughout the year.

The primary U.S. priority in Sierra Leone remains the consolidation of the peace as the UN peace-keeping mission draws down, and Sierra Leone's army and police force assume responsibility for security. Achievement of this objective requires the promotion of stable, democratic governance, transparency and the broader participation of Sierra Leone's people. All U.S. personnel made a concerted effort to support the preparation for and conduct of the local elections in May.

An overly centralized government made up of weak and corrupt leaders was one of the major elements that led to the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone. The United States strongly supports the efforts of the Government to decentralize and to increase transparency and accountability. The United States spent considerable funds in 2004 to support district-level governance. In addition to direct support for the local elections, this assistance provided nation-building skills training to over 300 community leaders and other participants. The training included good leadership and democratic community representation practices as well as training for community members in understanding their own responsibilities in the post-war era.

The United States also made significant advances in stimulating Sierra Leoneans' collective awareness of their human rights, justice, and corruption. The United States contributed money to mobilize civil society on anti-corruption issues and expand access to justice. As a part of this program, the Lawyers' Center for Legal Assistance developed a community paralegal training manual. The United States also sponsored training for 117 paralegals who developed sample work plans for monitoring cases of human rights abuses, and replicating basic human rights training in their communities. After the training, paralegals reported significantly more cases to the police, such as early or forced marriages, domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and traditional wife inheritance. Other paralegals who attended the training sought and received permission to monitor conditions in the Sierra Leone Police detention cells. After the visit, the paralegals alerted the

District Magistrate and human rights organizations to the appalling state of the facility and moved officials to address these issues.

The United States continues to participate in the UK-led effort to remake the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and SLP into effective forces under civilian authority. Three American military personnel (two officers and a chief petty officer) embedded in the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) provided experienced military advice, guidance, and training, contributing to IMATT's capabilities. Exceptionally poor civil-military relations have been a chronic impediment to democratic governance in Sierra Leonean society. The Defense Attaché organized several conferences to promote improved civil-military relations for the RSLAF and civilian members of the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Defense.

The United States remains the largest financial contributor to the Special Court of Sierra Leone, providing Economic Support Funds (ESF) for the past three years. The Special Court has a mandate from the UN Security Council to bring to justice those with "the greatest responsibility" for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in Sierra Leone since 1996. The Ambassador and his country team are in regular contact with senior Special Court officials to determine how the United States can most effectively support the court. Successful implementation of the Special Court's mandate will send a strong message throughout the African continent that the culture of impunity is ending.

Sierra Leone is religiously diverse: 60 percent of the population is Muslim, 30 percent is Christian, and 10 percent is animist. There is a high degree of religious tolerance both by the Government and by society at large.

The United States provided ESF to support the Amazonian initiative movement to reduce the incidence of FGM in northern Sierra Leone through education about the dangers of this traditional practice. Although the practice has deep cultural resonance and is still widespread, this largely taboo subject is becoming a topic of discus-

sion as parents and girls question the safety of the practice. Traditional practitioners in women's secret societies are seeking viable alternatives for what is for many a primary source of income.

Although the Government increased the minimum wage from \$9 (21,000 Leones) per month to approximately \$16 (40,000 Leones) per month, the increase was the first since 1997 and still did not provide civil servants with a decent standard of living. On numerous occasions the Ambassador addressed the need to provide workers with a living wage to the president, vice president and other high-level Government officials.

Bonded and child labor continue to represent serious human rights abuses in Sierra Leone's alluvial diamond fields. Through strong intervention from USAID, the United States continues to address these and other issues in an attempt to make diamond mining a legitimate, more transparent, more humane and effectively monitored activity.

Somalia

Somalia has been without a central government since its last president, dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, fled the country in 1991. The human rights record remained poor, and serious human rights abuses continued. Factional violence and clan-based fighting continued throughout the country, resulting in numerous deaths. In October 2002, a reconciliation conference was convened in Kenya under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with the goal of producing a transitional governing entity capable of reestablishing governance and stability inside Somalia.

The Somalia National Reconciliation Conference concluded in October 2004 following the formation of a 275-member clan-based Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA). In October, the election of a Speaker of the Assembly took place, followed by the election of a Transitional Federal President,

Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. The President later appointed Ali Mohammed Ghedi to serve as Prime Minister. A cabinet was named in December. All these Transitional Federal

Institutions (TFI) were to function for a five-year period. As of end of 2004 the TFI's had not yet relocated from Kenya to Somalia.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Somalia is to achieve national reconciliation, nurture democratic institutions and the rule of law, and mitigate conflict. Since the United States does not have diplomatic representation in Somalia, the "Somalia Unit" at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is responsible for Somalia. Embassy officers continued to encourage participation in Somali reconciliation efforts to develop countrywide democratic institutions, and also addressed human rights violations on an individual basis when aware of them. In 2004, the Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) for a project promoting conflict resolution at the local grassroots level. As of September 2004, Embassy Nairobi's Somalia Unit has been actively engaged in the Somalia Reconciliation Process.

The self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, in northwestern Somalia, held presidential elections in April 2003. As of December 2004, parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place on March 29, 2005. The United States maintains informal contacts with Somaliland authorities, as it does with a number of other Somali groups, including the semi-autonomous region of Puntland and northeastern Somalia. The United States does not have an official relationship with Somaliland and, therefore, did not provide direct electoral assistance to the Somaliland authorities. However, the United States did provide technical financial assistance to non-governmental organizations for political party development activities through the International Republican Institute. United States officials visiting Somaliland have encouraged Somaliland's political leaders to develop democratic institutions. One of Embassy's strategic objectives for Somalia has been to strengthen Somali capacity for local governance and conflict mitigation. In 2004, the U.S. supported a civil society expansion program in Somaliland. This program is designed to provide technical support and funding to local organizations and communities that have the capacity to implement developmental services in cooperation and collaboration with local authorities. The pro-

gram aims to increase the capacity of selected civil society organizations to design and implement sustainable projects that improve maternal health, access to education and livelihood security. Civil society groups are now key partners in carrying out conflict awareness and management programs. The United States provided a no cost extension to the War-torn Societies Project (WSP). This is an innovative field-oriented research-cum-action project, which seeks to help create an environment conducive to the consolidation of peace and sustainable development. WSP supports three local participatory research organizations, one in Somaliland, one in Puntland and one in Mogadishu for south-central Somalia that are designed to be successor organizations to the project.

Sudan

Last year was a momentous year in Sudan, with the world's attention focused on the crisis in Darfur as well as the peace negotiations between the Government in the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in the South. The negotiations to end the civil war in the South led to a peace agreement at year's end, but progress was overshadowed by events in Darfur. The United States actively worked to bring the North-South negotiations to a close and to try to resolve the ongoing crisis in Darfur. The Government's overall human rights record remained poor and, although there were improvements in some areas, serious abuses continued. Authorities did not ensure due process in civilian or military courts. The Government continued to infringe upon citizens' privacy rights and freedom of speech, assembly and religion. Restrictions on press freedom continued, as the Government suspended or closed publications and arrested editors and journalists who were critical of government policy.

The situation in Darfur deteriorated during the year. Government and government-supported militia committed serious abuses, including bombing and razing hundreds of villages. Based on a study conducted between June and August, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that up to 70,000 civilians were killed or died as a result of the conflict. In addition more than 1.5

million civilians were internally displaced, and over 200,000 refugees fled to neighboring Chad by year's end. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 9, Secretary of State Powell concluded, "genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and Jinjaweed bear responsibility and that genocide may still be occurring." The situation in Darfur received significant international attention, including visits by the Secretary of State and the Secretary-General of the UN. Numerous other official visitors and Members of Congress traveled to Sudan during the year and met with top government officials to press for improvements in Darfur. The United States led international efforts to improve the situation in Darfur, working within the UN, with the African Union and bilaterally.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Sudan supported conflict resolution, promoted respect for fundamental human rights and combated trafficking in persons. During the past year much of the U.S. effort in Darfur was geared towards ending the human rights abuses occurring there. Embassy officers stressed to government officials at all levels the importance of human rights benchmarks throughout Sudan to improve bilateral relations and to facilitate the eventual loosening and lifting of economic sanctions, emphasizing press freedom, religious toler-

ance, an open political process, and freedom of speech, movement and assembly. The Chargé d'Affaires, in conjunction with Western donor Ambassadors, used the Joint Implementation Mechanism (JIM) to elicit meaningful commitments from the Government to eschew forced relocations of internally displaced persons and to establish a JIM sub-commission for dealing with specific humanitarian issues.

The Chargé d'Affaires and other embassy officers and official Washington visitors maintained continuous dialogue with a variety of interlocutors, not only on Darfur but also on the full range of human rights issues. Embassy officers met regularly with opposition politicians and political leaders from around the country as well as with religious leaders, human rights activists and members of the media. The Embassy ran its own programs to explore how freedom of expression manifested itself in the United States, including an event during one of the U.S. presidential debates, and the Embassy supported other programs during the year that promoted democracy and human rights. A Public Diplomacy grant supported a UN University of Peace Conference on the Roots of Conflict in Darfur, which focused on human rights issues. The Chargé d'Affaires and Washington visitors held numerous press conferences and interviews for local, regional and international media.

Sudan

Refugee children outside Tine in eastern Chad bordering western Sudan.



AP Photo/Andrew England

Chad

A Sudanese woman cradles her daughter, left, and the daughter of her sister, who was killed by gunmen in their African village.



AP Photo/Karel Prinsloo

The Sudanese press suffered from suspensions, arrests and harassing lawsuits. The Embassy actively monitored press freedom, delivered statements to the newspapers and the Government protesting press suspensions and detentions and met with those involved. The Embassy conducted a series of meetings with local media outlets to discuss freedom of the press during the year and organized two seminars on freedom of the press and journalistic ethics. To better support the establishment of independent media in southern Sudan, the United States awarded a cooperative agreement to establish a local-language short wave radio service for southern Sudan and provided a grant to the "Sudan Mirror", the first independent newspaper in southern Sudan.

In FY 2004, the United States supported humanitarian assistance and protection activities in Darfur and programmed Disaster Assistance Response Team protection officers as part of its humanitarian relief efforts. The United States spent additional funds to support programming in other areas of Sudan, including programs to promote the peace process in the South that included peaceful return of displaced populations to their places of origin.

Embassy officials work closely with the Sudan Inter Religious Council and the Sudan Council of Churches to help foster inter-religious dialogue

that would contribute to a stable peace. The Embassy also promoted several public diplomacy outreach programs discussing religious freedom. The United States continued to provide funding, assistance and support to the Civilian Protection Monitoring Team (CPMT), the Nuba Mountains Joint Monitoring Mission and the Verification Monitoring Team. The CPMT objectively documents military attacks against civilians occurring in warring areas and brings them to the attention of the Government, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the international community. Incidents have decreased significantly since the monitoring began in 2002. The CPMT posts its reports on the Internet (www.cpmtsudan.org) and provides them to local media for publication. The 12-nation Nuba Mountains Joint Military Commission continued to monitor Government and SPLM adherence to a cease-fire in the Nuba Mountains. The United States also provided funding to support the African Union's (AU) monitoring efforts in Darfur. The AU's mission in Darfur deployed troops in an effort to curb the violence and report on ceasefire violations, including human rights abuses.

The government-sponsored organization, the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWAC), continued its efforts to facilitate reintegration and family reunifi-

cation of abductees. Embassy officials met with CEAWAC officials and continued to push for the return of abducted persons and to promote CEAWAC outreach programs to further its work.

Swaziland

Swaziland is a modified traditional monarchy with executive, legislative, and limited judicial powers ultimately vested in the King. The 2004 municipal elections and the 2003 parliamentary elections increased representative government; however, political power continues to rest largely with the King and his circle of traditional advisors, including the Queen Mother. Political parties are banned. The Court of Appeals, which resigned in protest in 2002, was reconstituted in November 2004. However, the King and other government officials infringe on the judiciary's independence by influencing court decisions. The Government's human rights record is poor, and it continues to commit serious abuses. Police use excessive force on occasion, and there are reports that the police tortured and beat suspects. Lengthy pretrial detention and impunity are problems. Legal and cultural discrimination, violence against women, and abuse of children remain ongoing problems. Worker rights remain limited.

In light of these concerns, the U.S. strategy to combat human rights abuses and bolster democracy consists of highlighting the importance of respect for the rule of law, developing ways to improve administrative efficiency within the judicial system, increasing women's political awareness, and improving respect for internationally recognized workers' rights. Embassy officials also worked to improve public understanding of constitutional principles and democracy.

Swaziland is at a turning point on the issue of the rule of law. The draft constitution, the first since the prior one was abolished in 1973, is currently undergoing legislative review and will likely be ratified in 2005. Members of the international community, including the United States, and local civic groups representing a variety of interests, have concerns with both the drafting process and the text of the proposed Constitution. The

Constitution could play a critical role in addressing several key concerns, including separation of powers. The Embassy sent five important political stakeholders, including representatives of banned political parties, to the Third Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy. In the continuing dialogue with political figures and civil society, Embassy officials underscored the importance the Constitution could play in Swaziland, and urged the Government to use an inclusive process to address central issues such as separation of powers, political parties and respect for human rights.

In November 2004, the Court of Appeals reconvened after a two-year absence. It immediately threatened to disband upon learning the Government had yet to abide by one of the two court decisions precipitating the original crisis in 2002. U.S. and domestic pressure convinced the Government to allow the return of the Macetjeni and KaMkhweli evictees, and the Court of Appeals continued to hear cases until its normal recess at the end of 2004. In response to the crisis, the Embassy placed a statement in Swaziland's largest daily newspaper, reaffirming the Embassy's support for the rule of law and human rights for the people of Swaziland.

Earlier in 2004, the Embassy used Economic Support Funds to support judicial skills training in the areas of human rights, judicial ethics, case flow management and legal drafting, as well as practical training on mediation and information technology skills. The Embassy sponsored a visit by Former Ambassador to Gambia, George Haley. Drawing on his extensive legal affairs background, he discussed integral ways that legal systems promote and protect civil rights. In addition, two of Swaziland's top judicial leaders visited the United States to see first-hand how the U.S. judicial system works and how courts are managed.

Women and children are traditionally disadvantaged groups in Swaziland. The Embassy used Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) resources to bolster respect for and improve the rights of women and children. Half of the Embassy's total DHRF allotment supported a training program for pastors focusing on the rights of women and children, as well as methods for

providing counseling and support services to victims of abuse. The Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Fund provided scholarships for over 800 disadvantaged girls in elementary and high school. The U.S. Government supported a well-respected Women's Legal Rights Initiative (WLR) for Southern Africa out of Swaziland. The Embassy sent a prominent non-governmental organization representative to the United States to participate in a program dedicated to leadership development for women and hosted a conference with the U.S. Permanent Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Constance Morella, on the role of women in American politics and U.S. elections.

Increasing government and business community interest in internationally respected workers' rights is a vital part of the Embassy's strategy to promote human rights. The Head of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions attended a workshop in the United States highlighting the role of civil society in a political system. Representatives from the American Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service came to Swaziland to conduct workshops on labor-management relations. The president of the Swaziland Federation of Labor toured the United States, focusing on U.S. organized labor.

The U.S. Government also funded two important labor initiatives in the southern African region. One is a regional project that works in Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia to improve the capacity of governments to enforce labor laws. The second supports countrywide concerted actions against the worst forms of child labor in Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa. The American Institute for Research, through a grant from the U.S., is conducting a project to combat exploitive child labor among children in vulnerable situations, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS in the same five countries.

Tanzania

While there have been improvements with respect to human rights in recent years, the Government of Tanzania's overall human rights record remains poor, and serious problems remained. In the lead-up to the 2005 elections, respect for political freedoms declined. Members of the police and security forces tortured, threatened and mistreated suspected criminals. The judiciary is inefficient, understaffed and subject to corruption, limiting the right to fair and expeditious trials. Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. There was an increase in the number of instances in which the Government refused persons seeking asylum or refugee status, forcibly returned refugees to countries where they feared persecution. Trafficking in persons (TIP) and child labor remained problems.

Tanzania is a multiparty state, although it is dominated by the long-ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party. President Benjamin Mkapa's term will end in October 2005. Zanzibar, although integrated into the country's governmental and party structure, has its own president and legislature and exercises considerable autonomy.

The U.S. democracy and human rights strategy aims to improve respect for human rights and to foster an environment for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005. Following the 2001 post-election violence, the United States has focused on decreasing tensions on Zanzibar between the CCM party and the main opposition political party, the Civic United Front. In 2004, embassy officials met frequently with representatives from both parties. Embassy officials also met regularly with Zanzibar's Joint Presidential Supervisory Committee and the Zanzibar Electoral Commission to voice continued U.S. support for the bipartisan "Muafaka" reconciliation accord.

In 2004, the U.S. Government supported the creation of a Zanzibar permanent voter registry called for in the reconciliation agreement; the registry is an important prerequisite for free and fair elections in 2005. Economic Support Funds (ESF) supported the purchase of equipment for the per-

manent voter registry on Zanzibar. ESF funds were also used to fund a local non-governmental organization (NGO), the Tanzania Elections Monitoring Committee, which is observing the registration process on Zanzibar.

Following violent confrontations at a few voter registration sites on Zanzibar, which left a teenage student dead and several others injured, the Chargé d' Affaires met with the president of Zanzibar to urge the Zanzibar Government to ensure that voter registration could continue, according to established procedures and in an environment of peace and security.

The Embassy's democracy assistance program focuses on long-term efforts to build civil society and parliament for a more robust, accountable democracy. The United States supported a multi-year project to strengthen the national parliament's representative, lawmaking, and oversight functions. In the budget presentations this year, parliamentary members more effectively exercised their oversight function by questioning and amending several requested appropriations.



Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Well-organized voting at a local school.

IFES

To ensure that all Tanzanians are able to exercise their right to vote in the 2005 elections, the Embassy targeted potentially disenfranchised voters, persons with disabilities and the youth. The Embassy awarded a grant to a local Tanzanian NGO to conduct a civic and voter education seminar for blind and visually impaired Tanzanians. This group wants to improve the participation of blind persons in the coming 2005 elections by enabling more blind persons to register to vote, contest seats in local government councils, municipal bodies, and the parliament, to attend campaign rallies, and to ask candidates political questions or present critical issues for discussion during campaign meetings. The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) is conducting workshops on civic-peace education for religious and youth leaders to ensure that the youth understand the electoral process and their role as citizens/voters. The GNRC will also work with religious leaders to focus on the electoral process and on the role of religious leaders in promoting free, fair and peaceful elections and in enhancing good governance.

The United States also works to strengthen civil society organizations involved in advocacy for policy changes. After the passage of the controversial 2002 NGO Act, civil society organizations successfully lobbied to have the Government amend the law, a process that was ongoing as of February 2005.

The U.S. Embassy worked to support a free press. In 2004, the Embassy donated computers to press clubs in Tanzania to help them conduct research for news articles. The U.S. Embassy also hosted a workshop on investigative reporting for local journalists. In addition, the project targets journalists for International Visitors Programs (IVP) concerning human rights issues.

Judicial backlogs and limited police investigation skills hinder the right to fair and expeditious trial, a factor that aggravates severe prison overcrowding. The U.S. State Department provided funds to support a forensic laboratory that will improve police investigation skills, speed up investigations, and reduce the number of wrongful arrests and convictions.

The Embassy also pursued more targeted outreach for government policymakers. Under the IVP, an outspoken female politician accompanied local ruling party officials on a conflict resolution study tour. The Embassy honors Martin Luther King by naming a "Drum Major for Justice" laureate each year. The prestigious award receives widespread publicity and attracts senior level government attendance. In 2005, Gertrude Mongella, president of the Pan-African Parliament, received the award for her pioneering work supporting woman rights.

The U.S. Government has consistently engaged the Tanzanian Government on the issue of refugee protection for the approximately 400,000 Great Lakes refugees in Tanzania. Demarches were made during the year to urge the Government to continue their tradition of hosting refugees. In addition, the State Department supported programs to decrease the amount of rape and domestic violence in the refugee camps.

The U.S. Government continues to support a large multi-year program through the International Labor Organization (ILO) to reduce the worst forms of child labor in Tanzania. The Timebound program, used by the ILO, focuses on reducing the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor through the use of advocacy and targeted supported for vulnerable children. An additional U.S. Government program provides an educational component to the Timebound program.

The U.S. has been active in raising awareness about trafficking in persons. This year the Embassy hosted a digital videoconference that attracted senior policy makers, civil society, and the press. The resulting news coverage helped inspire the Government to move faster to target traffickers. Embassy officials also met with members of civil society and government officials and traveled to rural source areas to better understand and document the nature of human trafficking in Tanzania. The Presidential Anti-Trafficking Initiative identified Tanzania as a focus country and will provide \$2 million dollars of anti-trafficking assistance. The Chargé d' Affaires met with President Mkapa to gain government support for working with the United States on these anti-trafficking programs.

Togo

In February 2005, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, Africa's longest-ruling strongman, died after 38 years in office. The military moved quickly to install Faure Gnassingbe, Eyadema's son, as President, ignoring the constitutional provision that the leader of the National Assembly would serve as interim president until new elections are held within 60 days. The National Assembly changed the Constitution retroactively to allow Gnassingbe to serve out the three and a half years remaining in his father's term, until 2008. Deep distrust between the regime and opposition prevails. In April, the Government entered into formal consultations with the EU, agreed to 22 democracy and human rights-related commitments and made modest progress in implementing them. The Government released approximately 500 prisoners in August, including several detainees described by human rights groups and opposition parties as political prisoners. It also revised the draconian press code, eliminating prison sentences for most transgressions but substantially increasing the fines for many offenses.

Significant continuing problem areas in human rights include strong-arm methods by security forces, harassment of journalists, violence and discrimination against women and trafficking in children. There were a few instances of prisoners dying while in detention, and of security forces beating civilians with impunity. The Government jailed and at times abused political opponents and critics. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, and long periods of pretrial detention were common. The judiciary did not ensure fair and expeditious trials. Prison conditions remained very harsh. Favoritism among certain ethnic groups remained a problem. The Government limited workers' rights to collective bargaining, and child labor was a problem.

Promotion of democratic reform and improvement in the human rights environment is United States top priority. The United States has worked to raise the profile of human rights in its contacts with government officials, opposition parties, civil society, international financial institutions and other donors. Specifically, the United States has

pressed for energetic fulfillment of the Government's 22 democracy and human rights related commitments to the EU, and encouraged all key players to remain engaged constructively in the political process. In meetings with former President Eyadema and several of his cabinet ministers, the Ambassador regularly raised concerns about specific human rights cases.

The Embassy used U.S. election events, such as the presidential debates, as the basis for general discussion of democracy, freedom of the press, and civil rights. The United States used funds to support a range of initiatives. It brought together teachers, parents and students for a workshop on democracy and civic education for girls. One program emphasized the importance of participation of women in politics. This funding was also used to support a project emphasizing the need for women to have identification documents to assure access to government services and a project that addressed the problem of sexual harassment in schools. Additional activities included educating students about electoral laws and peaceful resolution of election-related conflicts, and funding the production of 3,100 copies of a prisoners' rights guide.

The United States devoted much of its effort in 2004 to the promotion of democracy. It organized a well-attended, week-long workshop entitled "Relations Between the Media and the Government." In addition, the United States organized a variety of events promoting HIV/AIDS awareness, addressing de-stigmatization and discrimination.

The United States issued small grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies to provide HIV/AIDS training to 150 illiterate women, and to translate - from English into French and local languages - television ads aimed at de-stigmatizing AIDS victims. Often international visitors from Togo were sent to the United States on programs addressing democracy and good-governance issues.

Limited security assistance allocations for Togo are dedicated to professionalizing the military and expanding its sensitivity to human rights issues. International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds were used, for example, for a seminar in Togo focused on the rule of law in peace-keeping operations. In order to convey the image of a just military sensitive to humanitarian concerns, the U.S. military's European Command funded the building of wells in addition to the construction of an HIV/AIDS clinic and a secondary/middle school. IMET funds were also used to develop the English language capacity of military officers, thereby enabling them to participate in a wide range of courses. In 2003, the United States allocated monies toward a five-year program to combat child trafficking, which is a serious human rights issue in Togo.

Togo's Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and this right is generally respected. The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. The United States discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

In 2004, the United States funded a program that assisted with the reinsertion of a number of returned children into their families, provided educational support to 4,000 children, pressed for passage of anti-trafficking legislation, helped establish a coalition of NGOs involved in the fight against trafficking, and provided training to parents on the importance of keeping their children in school.

The United States purchased and donated equipment for a new office in the Ministry of Labor dedicated to the fight against child trafficking. Togo also participates in a sub-regional project of the U.S. Department of Labor/International Labor Organization for HIV/AIDS Workplace Education. This multi-year project is designed to combat discrimination against people living with AIDS in the workplace.

Uganda

The Government of Uganda made important progress in democratization last year when, under court pressure, it relaxed restrictions on the operation of political parties. A referendum in 2005 is expected to endorse the Government's push for a multiparty system. However, democratization could suffer a setback if members of the ruling National Resistance Movement are successful in removing presidential term limits from the Constitution. Under the current constitution, President Yoweri Museveni must step down after he completes his current term in early 2006. President Museveni has been in power since 1986. Uganda has never had a democratic handover of power from one leader to another. Both the parliament and the judiciary have shown independence, but neither institution is strong enough to serve as a counterbalance to the powerful executive. Constitutional changes proposed by President Museveni's cabinet, which are scheduled for a vote this year, would make the executive still more powerful. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Torture and detention by security forces were a serious problem. Political party activity was subject to both legal and administrative restrictions. Corruption is a significant problem. In Northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is responsible for having abducted more than 21,000 children during its 18 year campaign of terror.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in Uganda promotes democratization, respect for human rights, honest and accountable institutions, decentralization and transparency. The strategy also combats domestic violence, child labor, and trafficking in persons. The Ambassador and other mission officials regularly addressed these issues in public forums, and in meetings with a wide range of local and national government officials. The Ambassador held meetings with the president specifically to discuss constitutional issues and corruption. Two visiting U.S. senators, Mary Landrieu and Sam Brownback also raised many of these issues with President Museveni and cabinet-level officials.

Uganda's Parliament, which will take up a series of highly controversial political questions in 2005, was a particular focus of mission outreach. In meetings with Members of Parliament from across the political spectrum, the Ambassador and his team stressed the importance of respecting the Constitution and strengthening the balance of power between different branches of government.

The United States funded programs that enhanced understanding of democracy and respect for human rights at the grassroots level. The United States also conducted seminars on democracy and human rights issues for Uganda's opinion leaders and sponsored travel under the International Visitors Program for community leaders and government officials. The United States contributed to efforts to combat child labor and trafficking in persons.

To support Uganda's continued democratization, the United States targeted significant resources to strengthen parliament. Funds were used to improve the capacity of parliament and parliamentary staff to carry out their representative, legislative and oversight responsibilities. Assistance to the Parliamentary Budget Office and to key parliamentary committees enabled lawmakers to better research issues and influence pending bills. Field visits to several districts by parliamentary committees, supported by the United States, improved parliament's oversight of government-funded programs and strengthened constituents' access to their representatives. The United States also funded a multi-month media campaign designed to broaden lawmakers' knowledge on key issues, including conflict corruption.

Another major focus of U.S. support was the promotion of political pluralism (including the development of political parties) and support for the electoral process. The International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and IFES all carried out the programs to support these objectives. IFES, for instance, provided training to electoral officials and helped evaluate and revise key election manuals. IRI and NDI engaged political and civic organizations to strengthen their capacity to participate effectively in the political process.

The United States sponsored programs and supported organizations that promoted freedom of speech and press. United States funds supported Uganda's first nationwide celebration of World Press Freedom Day. In major cities around Uganda, more than 130 journalists, government officers, Members of Parliament and academics participated in discussion on the state of press freedom in Uganda and on the pending Freedom of Information Act.

Good governance at the local level is also important for Uganda's democratization. United States-funded programs built the capacity of local government officials to better manage local revenues and central transfers, and to improve service delivery to local communities. This initiative helped eight local governments improve revenue collections, six of which collected more than 50 percent of local revenue targets. To complement training in better revenue collection, the United States also funded the training of local officials on planning, budgeting, and funds accounting.

An important focus for the U.S. strategy to protect and strengthen human rights has been assistance to the victims of a brutal insurgency in northern Uganda. The United States helped fund several "reception centers" for children and adults who had been abducted recently by the LRA. Most had suffered torture and other abuse and had been forced to become soldiers and sex slaves. The United States funded reception centers that provided basic shelter, psychosocial counseling and other assistance to returnees. The United States also supported efforts to reunify formerly abducted children with their families, and to reintegrate them into the local community. The United States supported efforts to promote dialogue and reconciliation in northern Uganda, and worked with a variety of NGOs to improve their capacity in human rights, peace building, and community-resilience programming. For example, the United States funded the training of 50 paralegals to raise awareness on human rights, resolve community disputes, and refer human rights violations to higher courts. These initiatives supplemented extensive humanitarian assistance, including a major contribution to the World Food Program to provide food to displaced persons.

To promote the status and rights of women in Uganda, the Embassy awarded a Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant to an organization that trains volunteers to prevent domestic violence. The grant recipient estimates that the project will reach more than 7,000 women. A second DHRF grant was awarded to a local NGO to help victims of "acid violence," the practice of dousing individuals with acid as retribution in interpersonal conflict. Typically, women are the principal victims. The money from this grant is being used for the production and distribution of training manuals on legal, medical, and social support for survivors. In a separate activity, the United States sponsored a two-day retreat for female NGO, parliamentary and academic leaders on women's leadership. The participants reviewed political party manifestos for inclusion of women's issues and began development of a training program for new women political leaders. A follow-on session was scheduled to advance these strategies further.

In support of religious freedom, the United States supported programs to involve faith-based organizations in all aspects of U.S. programming. Special emphasis was put on involving Muslim leaders in democracy projects. One DHRF grant sponsored training organized by the National Association of Imams and Duats to educate Muslim leaders and clerics on their role in an evolving democracy. The training also addressed broader issues of religious tolerance, human rights, and democracy in a diverse society. A second DHRF grant was awarded to a local Muslim NGO to organize a series of workshops on democracy, Islam, and good governance. These workshops targeted more than 150 Muslim and non-Muslim youth leaders.

The United States also funded several programs to combat child labor and trafficking in persons. Ongoing U.S. assistance to programs in northern Uganda have supported the screening and rehabilitation for 2,846 victims of LRA abductions. Most of these abductees were children. A U.S. program administered by the International Rescue Committee assisted in the reunification of more than 2,000 former abductees and child soldiers with their families and equipped over 1,700 children with education and vocational skills. The

United States also funded four different programs to combat the worst forms of child labor. The "Building Foundations for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor" initiative strengthened the technical skills and capacity of the Government and NGOs to implement policies to prevent the worst forms of child labor, including reintegrating children back into their home communities. A separate initiative focused on withdrawing and rehabilitating child laborers in commercial agriculture, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work and the informal sector. Children in communities that are ravaged by HIV/AIDS throughout Uganda and that are disrupted by war in the north are at risk of being attracted to the worst forms of child labor. Recognizing this, the United States is also funding a regional education initiative to provide affected children with non-formal and transitional education, as well as a sector program of the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor, which is intended to provide assistance to HIV/AIDS orphans and affected children and enhance community awareness of the negative effects of child labor. The United States is also funding a four-year HIV/AIDS workplace education program.

Zambia

After restoring multiparty politics in 1991, the Republic of Zambia has been governed by the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, the party of both President Levy Mwanawasa (from January 2002) and his predecessor, Frederick Chiluba (1991 through 2001). Zambia has made strides toward democratic governance that protects human rights, but many challenges remain. The December 2001 election that brought President Mwanawasa into office was tainted by alleged irregularities and remains the subject of a legal challenge. Parliamentary by-elections from 2002 through 2004 have shown continuing weaknesses in Zambia's electoral system, but there have been signs of improved performance by the Electoral Commission. The Government's human rights record remains poor. There are frequent reports of human rights abuses committed by Zambian law enforcement officers, including unlawful killings

and physical abuse of criminal suspects and detainees. Arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention and long delays in trials were problems. The Government restricted press freedom. Violence and discrimination against women remained widespread. Child abuse, child labor and discrimination against persons with disabilities were problems. Workers' rights were limited. There were reports of trafficking in persons.

In view of Zambia's poor human rights record, and building on the demonstrated will of leaders both inside and outside of government to undertake reforms, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Zambia focuses on democratic governance and the professionalism of law enforcement agencies. An inter-agency working group chaired by the Ambassador coordinates U.S. democracy and governance activities undertaken in Zambia.

United States efforts to foster democratic, transparent and fair governance in Zambia include support and technical assistance for legal and institutional reform. In the area of institutional reform, the main focus is the Parliamentary Reform Project (PRP) initiated by Zambia's National Assembly. Following the successful conclusion of a one-year pilot project, the United States continued its commitment, with the Governments of four other nations, to provide funding to support this three-year project. The goal of the PRP is to help the National Assembly become an effective, independent legislature that can act as an equal partner in the governance of Zambia, rather than a rubber stamp for the executive branch. In 2004, the PRP contributed to a greater level of activity within the committees of the National Assembly. The committees held more frequent public hearings and were more effective in holding the executive accountable, especially with respect to spending. The project also improved communications between voters and parliamentarians through establishment of several constituency offices on a pilot basis. The National Assembly is now seeking to establish such offices in all constituencies.

In 2004, the Embassy used its Democracy and Human Rights Fund to help the judiciary procure computers and other equipment to support elec-

tronic record keeping. This should improve the efficiency of judicial administration and, ultimately, support speedier delivery of justice.

The United States supports training with significant human rights components for Zambian law enforcement officers. Through 2004, 211 Zambian police officers had received training at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana. These courses included significant human rights components.

In an effort to improve the professional standards of Zambia's law enforcement agencies, the Embassy continued its commitment to support the Police Public Complaints Authority (PPCA). In 2004 the PPCA continued to hear complaints and ordered disciplinary action against the officers involved. The Government has endorsed the PPCA's power to order such action, including dismissal in some cases, but the police are sometimes slow to follow the PPCA's instructions. In 2004 the PPCA also conducted a broad public awareness campaign to educate people about their rights, including broadcasts of radio advertisements in five languages.

Embassy officials met with a wide spectrum of religious representatives to promote inter-religious dialogue and collaboration on several issues. The U.S. Ambassador appeared on national television on several occasions with religious leaders and has been active in supporting inter-denominational efforts to increase HIV-AIDS awareness. The U.S. Government also hosted a local Islamic scholar for a three week International Visitors Program.

The U.S. provided assistance to Zambia's Task Force on Corruption, which coordinates the work of investigators and prosecutors in a wide range of landmark corruption cases. This work helps the Zambian Government and civil society establish an improved climate of accountability, the best defense against corruption. In 2004, investigations completed by the task force led to indictments against former military commanders, senior civil servants, and managers of state owned enterprises that are now on trial for offenses including abuse of office and theft. Former President Chiluba and senior officials from his administration are also on trial over a range of corruption charges.

Child labor and child prostitution are Zambia's most serious manifestations of trafficking in persons. In 2004, the Ambassador engaged Zambian cabinet ministers on the subject of trafficking in persons. As a result, the Government acknowledged that trafficking was a problem and began to take action. Parliament passed comprehensive child labor legislation that addressed trafficking and child exploitation. The Government also formed an inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee and began to implement a strategy to provide shelter and protection to street children, including prostitutes. Furthermore, police successfully intervened in several cases of suspected trafficking.

Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe's human rights record remained poor and it continued to commit abuses. Since its disputed victories in the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has pursued repressive policies designed to maintain its dominant position in the country. In the run-up to parliamentary elections scheduled for the spring of 2005, the regime has closed independent newspapers, harassed opposition and civil society activists and passed repressive legislation.

In 2004, over the objection of opposition leaders, parliament passed a spate of repressive legislation, including a bill that restricts non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and bans foreign funding for NGOs engaged in human rights or governance activities and a bill that the president recently signed imposing harsh criminal penalties on journalists for not registering with the Government. Under regional and international pressure, the ruling party has embarked on modest electoral reforms. However, despite the opposition's decision to participate in elections, these reforms fall short of complying with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) standards for free and fair elections. Moreover, the Government continues to bar the opposition from access to certain media outlets, and the only independent daily newspapers remain closed. Independent weeklies and a semi-independent daily continue to operate.

Although the ruling party maintains its monopoly on power, Zimbabwean civil society remains a vibrant force in the country, despite ever-greater restrictions. Other institutions, including the judicial system, retain limited independence. For instance, Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), was acquitted on charges of treason. Nevertheless, political manipulation of the judicial system by the ruling party remains commonplace. The Government ignores the decisions of the courts when it is in its perceived interest to do so.

The Government continued to use the state media to denigrate Western, especially U.S. and U.K. criticisms of human rights violations as a neocolonial effort to quash Zimbabwe's sovereignty. However, the Government's anti-Western rhetoric moderated during the last half of 2004, one of several signals that the regime wanted to reduce Zimbabwe's international isolation and to seek international assistance in restoring its economy.

The return of a stable political environment that respects the rule of law and allows democratic institutions to function is crucial to improving the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. The United States must support and sustain democratic elements and institutions in Zimbabwe to build the base for democratic change in the future. The United States efforts are important to creating an atmosphere that enables political participation and gives voice to those who call for an end to human rights abuses.

The U.S. human rights strategy in Zimbabwe focuses on supporting civil society and the democratic opposition that are dedicated to expanding democratic space. Resolving Zimbabwe's political turmoil is necessary for improvement of its human rights situation. The United States continues to communicate to the ruling party the importance of improving the political situation, including cessation of human rights abuses. United States financial and travel sanctions on key Zimbabwean officials expanded to additional ruling party and government officials. Statements by U.S. officials received prominent coverage in the government-controlled and quasi-independent local media. United States diplomats emphasized in substan-

tive contacts with government and party officials the importance of reducing human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The Embassy widely circulated its human rights-related reports among civil society, Government, and party officials. United States officials continue to engage governments in the region and urge them to bring pressure on the regime to support good governance and respect for human rights.

In response to human rights abuses, the United States gathered information about cases of alleged abuses. In addition, U.S. diplomats interviewed victims of political violence. United States diplomats maintained a visible presence at significant events, such as trials, including the treason trial of Morgan Tsvangirai, the president of the MDC. United States officials observed parliamentary by-elections and the pre-election environment in contested areas. The State Department sponsored a Zimbabwean student on a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship to study human rights law.

The United States disseminated information in order to counter Government propaganda. The Embassy provided access to information and supported efforts to increase public debate. The Embassy provided support to local citizen groups and local authorities to improve transparency and municipal service delivery. The United States funded a program to strengthen good governance, which has resulted in an increased debate in parliament and stronger participation by the committees in amending legislation drafted by the Executive. The United States hosted a Zimbabwean on a Humphrey Fellowship to study independent media and two Zimbabwean journalists on an International Visitors Program (IVP) to learn how NGOs can support freedom of the press. The Embassy sponsored six other IVPs on programs related to human rights, democracy, leadership and two others on the role of civil society.

To encourage respect for the rights of women, children, minorities, and people with disabilities, the United States supported programs by NGOs on a variety of social welfare issues. A Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) grant helped furnish a center for victims of rape, abuse and

domestic violence who are pursuing legal action. The Embassy sponsored teleconferences between speakers from the United States and audiences of Zimbabwean women interested in women's rights. An American judge participated in a dialogue with Zimbabwean jurists and activists on sexual harassment.

In support of religious freedom, the United States widely disseminates relevant reports on religious rights. United States officials privately and publicly emphasize concern regarding intimidation and harassment of religious officials who are critical of the Government. The United States supports efforts by religious leaders to sustain dialogue to resolve Zimbabwe's political situation.

The United States funded a Solidarity Center program to support workers' rights. The program sought to help trade unions respond to and better represent the interest of their members. A grant to the Academy for Educational Development supported an HIV/AIDS workplace education program.

The United States promoted efforts by the Government to combat trafficking in persons. United States officials met with government representatives to convey U.S. interest in the issue and promote cooperation and sharing of best practices. United States officials disseminated relevant reports widely and participated in local and regional meetings to address the issue.

