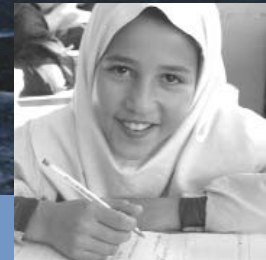


U.S. Agency for International Development

Office of Transition Initiatives



Special Tenth-Year Edition

A Decade of Transition

1994–2004

U.S. Agency for International Development
Office of Transition Initiatives

CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction
- 7 Origins
- 13 Methodology
- 19 Operations
- 31 Lessons Learned and Outlook

Working in some of the world's most dangerous and sensitive regions, OTI seeks to mitigate conflict, promote reconciliation, and support democratic transformation.

Introduction

When the Cold War came to an end, foreign assistance agencies were faced with a growing challenge: responding to transitions from authoritarianism and violence to democracy and peace. Foreign aid programs and bureaucracies were struggling to find the right balance between emergency relief provided for humanitarian purposes and development assistance provided to spur long-term economic and social advancement. Neither USAID nor its counterparts in other donor nations were equipped to provide the type of rapid, flexible, political assistance needed to stabilize emerging democracies and cement fragile peace accords.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) was created in 1994 to bridge the gap between relief and development and provide short-term political assistance to countries in crisis. Located within the Agency's humanitarian bureau, OTI represented a new model of aid programming. Like a USAID field mission, the office commanded the funds and technical capacity to implement programs directly. Like a central office, it was headquartered in Washington, D.C., and given worldwide scope. And like its sister unit, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), OTI was charged with responding rapidly to dynamic situations and unfolding emergencies, in effect acting as the first responder to political upheaval.

Today, OTI's programs in Iraq and Afghanistan help the U.S. Government by promoting positive political change from the ground up. Working in some of the world's most dangerous and sensitive regions, OTI seeks to mitigate conflict, promote reconciliation, and support democratic transforma-

tion. OTI reaches out to local communities, whose constructive participation in political processes can be key to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, oppression, and violence. It did so in Haiti, where ongoing turmoil and economic instability threaten the prospects for new elections; in Sudan, where ethnic cleansing—declared as genocide by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell—has sullied the prospects for a negotiated peace settlement; and in Sri Lanka, where peace brokers are hoping to end years of bloodshed.

OTI strives to identify issues that will make or break the success of transitions and fund activities that will create the impetus for broad-based change. Examples of the types of activities OTI undertakes include

- drawing people together across ethnic, political party, and religious lines to work toward common goals
- providing materials for small infrastructure repair projects as a means of encouraging communities to hold government officials responsible for responding to local priorities
- facilitating sustained communication and cooperation between newly elected officials and their constituents
- providing computers and communication equipment to help emerging civil society organizations collaborate and coordinate with each other
- encouraging measures to bring military and security forces under civilian democratic control
- providing basic furniture, equipment, and short-term technical assistance to key government ministries to rapidly restore critical services



- backing local human rights groups and war crimes investigations
- providing fax machines, internet connections, and conference facilities for emerging civil society organizations
- supporting production and development of get-out-the-vote ads, local anticorruption campaigns, and public service announcements
- opening women's centers to offer job skills, networking, counseling, and legal aid
- repairing printing presses and broadcast towers to support independent media and increase access to balanced information
- assisting local peacemakers to prevent conflict and promote ethnic reconciliation
- providing community-focused reintegration assistance for ex-combatants and war-affected youth

Central features of OTI operations are its on-the-ground presence, short-term focus, flexible resources, and unique organizational culture. OTI is not a conventional donor; it is a partner in what should be a seamless field operation. Its staff live in various locations around each country, working directly with local communities to help them devise innovative project ideas. OTI seeks to enter countries at the cusp of change, when the operating environment is secure enough for personnel to move around safely, and before traditional development activities have had an opportunity to take hold.

OTI's preference is for quick-impact interventions that can catalyze broader change and leverage additional resources, usually within two to three years. The goal is to generate positive momentum through an array of high-visibility activities that

provide tangible benefits of peace, improve the lives of average people, build confidence in the future, and buy time for longer-term political and economic reforms to take place.

OTI specifically encourages its staff to experiment with new approaches and take calculated risks, weighing the consequences of error against those of inaction. Given special flexibility by Congress, OTI continually adapts its programs to the changing needs of sometimes volatile operating environments, targeting resources where they are likely to have the greatest impact. Since OTI is designed to complement, not replace, existing aid programs, it seeks to leave countries as soon as crises end or when others can manage them effectively on their own.

On the tenth anniversary of its creation, OTI

remains one of the smallest offices in USAID. Yet OTI has played an important role within the Agency and the foreign policy community in developing new strategies and tools for promoting security, stability, and democracy in postconflict situations. OTI's staff and programs have supported high-level efforts to prioritize strategic responses to nontraditional threats, and its approach is reflected in USAID's plans for fragile states and in the January 2004 White Paper, *U.S. Foreign Aid: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century*. In a world where some of the greatest threats to U.S. national security come from weak and failed states that provide fertile ground for terrorists, OTI offers one example of rapid, reliable, relevant, and cost-effective assistance that can make a lasting difference as part of a coherent overall U.S. strategy.



Transition Lessons, 1994–2004

- Coordination within USAID and with other U.S. Government agencies is critical to successful outcomes.
- In countries prone to ethnic violence, programs often must target strategic regions outside capital cities, where ethnic rivalries and local conflict are more frequent and central governments have less control.
- A country's own political will for transition is key. OTI interventions cannot create it or substitute for its absence.
- Effective transition programming requires longer-term development to continue the momentum beyond OTI's program.
- Funding flexibility and staff deployment-readiness are essential for quick program startups in countries that are urgent foreign policy priorities.
- Top-down approaches to democracy and peace are inherently fragile. Support for enlightened leadership must be complemented by grassroots efforts to build stakeholders among the general population.
- Even in the best transition cases, setbacks are common and steady progress is often elusive.
- The process is as important as the product. Every project is an opportunity to put democratic principles into practice and achieve positive changes in public perceptions about a country's political transition.



Photo by Michel DuCille, reprinted with permission by The Washington Post, © 1999

OTI has defined four key criteria for engagement: the country's importance to U.S. foreign policy, the existence of a "window of opportunity" for democratic development, the likelihood that OTI's efforts would have a significant impact, and the assurance of an acceptable level of risk.

Origins

OTI began its first programs in 1994, after developing a strategic plan, conducting several country assessments, and hiring a handful of staff.

As he left office in 1993, Lawrence Eagleburger, Secretary of State under President George H.W. Bush, urged USAID to find ways to move more quickly to address key foreign policy priorities to remain relevant to national security decisionmaking. Thirty years earlier, Eagleburger had created the impetus for the creation of OFDA when he urged the U.S. Government to improve its capability of responding to natural disasters. Incoming Administrator Brian Atwood, already familiar with many of the difficulties USAID faced in addressing postcommunist transitions, rose immediately to the challenge. In August 1993, three months after his confirmation, Atwood sent to Capitol Hill a proposal for a USAID Office of Crisis and Transition Management. Its mission would be to respond to urgent, short-term requirements that humanitarian relief, peacekeeping operations, and long-term development programs did not address, such as the reintegration of demobilized combatants, the restoration of basic infrastructure, and the promotion of civil society and electoral reform. To carry out these activities, the Administrator proposed a special crisis-waiver authority as well as core funding and staff.

Congress received the proposal with some skepticism. Legislators were concerned, on the one hand, that funds for the new office would be diverted from the popular yet financially stretched OFDA and, on the other, about providing blanket authority to use funds for such politically explosive purposes as police training. Existing laws prohibited most aid to foreign police, and USAID had not previously been involved in military downsizing and demobilization, demining operations, or civil-military relations, all of which were contemplated as tasks for the new office. In addition, the initial concept paper envisioned that the office would promote greater UN effectiveness and greater burden-shar-



ing by other donors, raising jurisdictional objections from the Department of State. These misgivings were quickly allayed. Within weeks, Congress approved the inclusion of long-sought language allowing OFDA funds to be used for “reconstruction” and added \$10 million to OFDA’s budget for transition activities in the upcoming fiscal year.

OTI began its first programs in 1994, after developing a strategic plan, conducting several country assessments, and hiring a handful of staff. With a mission of bringing “fast, direct assistance to the acute needs of priority nations emerging from political, economic, and/or social distress,” the young office identified Angola and Bosnia as initial priorities and continued to monitor Liberia and Haiti. OTI has defined four key criteria for engagement: the country’s importance to U.S. foreign policy, the existence of a window of opportunity for democratic development, the likelihood that OTI’s efforts

would have a significant impact, and the assurance of an acceptable level of risk. As it turned out, Bosnia was deemed too dangerous for immediate operations; instead, programs began in Angola that spring and in Haiti that fall.

OTI's initial programs garnered some immediate successes, but their overall impact was limited. Observers generally gave high marks to OTI's effort in Haiti, where some 13 field offices were opened in the space of five months to help decentralize authority and shift the political culture from intimidation to participation. With its extensive outreach beyond the capital, OTI supported small infrastructure repair and democratic governance in neighborhood communities. It also subsidized local vocational and technical schools to retrain former security forces in civilian occupations. Yet once OTI concluded its program three years later, few of its activities were continued and many gains were temporary.

From this experience, OTI learned its first important

lesson: effective political transitions take time, and an effective handover is critical if impact is to be lasting. OTI must begin with the end in mind, and start preparing its exit strategy from the outset of every program. This means that OTI must work closely with the rest of USAID to ensure that the office's short-term objectives are part of the overall country strategy, its activities well coordinated, and its approach understood and enthusiastically supported by USAID mission staff. A decade later, OTI is back in Haiti, this time working in close cooperation with the mission to help Haitians achieve a more permanent democratic transformation.

The record in Angola was similarly mixed. At a time when the peace process was proceeding, OTI enhanced the UN's ability to plan for demobilization and built the capacity of U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct demining activities. OTI also discovered the value of working with the media to promote conflict resolution, supporting news broadcasts by the Voice of America that reached almost two-thirds of the population.



Ultimately, however, it became clear that the Angolan government was not sufficiently committed to fundamental reform. The 1994 Lusaka Peace Protocol collapsed, closing the window of opportunity.

From these modest beginnings, OTI grew quickly. In FY 2001, congressional appropriators established a separate budget line item for OTI, separating it from OFDA and providing specific statutory authority for the first time. Under the law, repeated each year in annual appropriations measures, funding for Transition Initiatives (TI) may be used “to support transition to democracy and long-term development of countries in crisis,” including “assistance to develop, strengthen, or preserve democratic institutions and processes, revitalize basic infrastructure, and foster the peaceful resolution of conflict.” The TI budget line item has remained relatively steady at approximately \$50 million, supporting operations in about a dozen priority countries each year. Congress must be notified at least five days prior to beginning a new program of assistance.

Over the years, OTI has conducted programs in 30 countries. In addition to its own TI funds, OTI receives funds from other accounts, such as Economic Support Funds and Development Assistance, which are provided voluntarily by other offices. Such transfers have nearly tripled OTI’s current program budget. For example, the large supplemental appropriation for Iraq in FY 2004 suddenly brought OTI’s total budget to \$226 million. Although these funds come with restrictions that do not apply to OTI’s direct appropriations, the fact that they can be used to support many OTI activities helps demonstrate what can be done within existing parameters.

Defining the Gap

For a number of reasons, traditional USAID missions were not always able to respond to the complex challenges of the post-Cold War environment. First, the budgeting cycle required that activities be



chosen years in advance and justified individually to congressional oversight committees. Bureaus and missions had little or no contingency funding to address unanticipated needs, and funds not obligated by the end of a fiscal year had to be returned to the U.S. Treasury. Second, because of foreign service assignment cycles and diplomatic considerations, the opening and closing of a mission was a major undertaking, requiring months or years of planning and negotiations over everything from construction and security standards to furniture and leases. The Department of State and Congress, sensitive to the political signals that a reduction in presence might send, often rejected proposals to close USAID missions or “graduate” countries from assistance. USAID’s own procurement system made it difficult to hire staff and purchase goods and services in short order and nearly impossible to award grants to small, foreign NGOs unable to meet U.S. Government accounting requirements. Finally, concerned about creating impressions of favoritism and political interference, development professionals

often sought to avoid thorny issues of conflict and governance.

To surmount these internal challenges to effective transition assistance, it was deemed necessary to create a new mechanism outside existing bureaucratic structures. Although greater flexibility was requested—and remains needed—for the Agency as a whole, attempts to revise the basic legislation, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, were unsuccessful. Congress insisted on its prerogative to preapprove individual USAID programs, projects, and activities, and internal efforts to reduce red tape and simplify the procurement system faltered. By giving OTI new staff, new authorities, and new methodologies, Congress and USAID freed the new office of constraints that stymied rapid response by other parts of the Agency.

Specifically, what OTI offered were

- small, in-kind grants to emerging local NGOs or informal community groups that did not meet USAID's standard grant criteria
- a quick startup in countries where there was no formal U.S. presence
- funding that could be easily shifted from one country or project to another and that was available at any time during the fiscal year
- rapidly deployable staff who were familiar with programming in postconflict environments
- a management system that rewarded innovation and risk-taking

During the period that OTI began its operations, USAID embarked on two other initiatives with related purposes and scope. The Center for



Democracy and Governance, then part of the Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, and the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI), housed within the Bureau for Africa, were both designed to remedy perceived gaps in USAID's ability to respond to the critical challenges of the decade: democracy and conflict. The center developed new areas of expertise for the Agency, conducting research and education on how to maximize development effectiveness by strengthening civic participation, expanding transparency and accountability, and supporting electoral reform. Its staff was centralized, performing a planning and support role for missions rather than directly implementing country-specific projects. GHAI, a more limited effort, sought to focus the attention of East African missions on the problems of conflict and food security, promoting rapid transitions from relief to development. As a Presidential Initiative, GHAI was coordinated with numerous U.S. Government bureaus and departments and pursued in cooperation with a host of governments, both inside and outside the region. Both efforts complemented, but did not duplicate, the work of OTI, since they operated largely within existing authorities and structures.





Because Congress gave OTI unusual budgetary flexibility, it demanded that funds be used only as a short-term bridge between relief and development, where no other resources were available.

Methodology

OTI recognizes that transitions may take five to ten years or more to complete, so it depends upon USAID missions to continue addressing transition needs after its departure.

Human Resources

To support its ability to respond quickly and flexibly, OTI has developed a number of innovative operating mechanisms and principles. First, the office established a roster of specialists known as the “bullpen,” who agree to work up to 120 days per year on short notice anywhere in the world. When a window of opportunity opens, OTI calls on the bullpen to conduct assessments and design country strategies, enabling OTI to scale up quickly without creating a permanent bureaucracy. Since many of those in the bullpen have worked on OTI programs in the past or have expertise in conflict-prone environments, they are familiar with the special challenges of transition programming. Within the bullpen are former USAID mission directors and others with significant management experience.

Second, since OTI was allotted only a small number of direct-hire slots, which limited the number of foreign service officers and civil servants it could hire, most of its employees are temporary contract workers known as personal services contractors, or PSCs. While this structure deprives OTI of the institutional knowledge and professional relationships that direct-hire staff would bring, it enables OTI to shape its staff to the task at hand. The reliance on PSCs also allowed OTI to develop its own organizational culture and philosophy with substantial input from the PSCs themselves, raising employee morale and promoting a sense of unity.

Time Frame

Because Congress gave OTI unusual budgetary flexibility, it demanded that these funds be used only as a short-term bridge between relief and development, where no other resources were available. To



address these concerns, OTI developed an informal time limit of two to three years per country, giving missions sufficient time to adjust their operations to the new situation. While some early programs lasted substantially longer, OTI has sought to reduce the time it spends in each country by improving cooperation with bureaus and missions and developing handoff strategies right from the start. OTI recognizes that transitions may take five to ten years or more to complete, so it depends upon USAID missions to continue addressing transition needs after its departure.

The time limit is also helpful in maintaining OTI’s rapid response capacity. So long as its budget remains relatively constant, older programs must close to make room for new ones. By setting an exit date, OTI can ensure that its short-term activi-

ties do not duplicate or substitute for longer-term development efforts. Knowing that it has only a brief period within which to demonstrate an impact also helps keep OTI's activities focused and its structure nimble.

Furthermore, in postconflict contexts, the window of opportunity to make a difference can be narrow and the risk of a return to war high. After a ceasefire or peace agreement, hopes run high for a peace dividend—immediate tangible signs of progress and improvement in everyday life. To respond to local political imperatives and U.S. foreign policy objectives, OTI must quickly deliver on promises and show results. Programs in high-profile crisis countries typically implement hundreds of small grants within the first year.

Targeting

Although OTI has worldwide scope, it chooses its interventions carefully and strategically. While there are many opportunities to carry out effective aid programs and a long list of unmet needs, OTI targets its resources where they can have the greatest positive impact. OTI does not limit itself to postconflict situations; it also seeks to prevent and mitigate setbacks to democracy and outbreaks of ethnic violence. In some countries, its mission has been to help stabilize newly elected governments or recently negotiated ceasefires. In other countries, OTI has sought to forestall the breakdown of democratic institutions or promote the conclusion of a peace accord.

Unlike traditional aid programs that aim at economic and social development, OTI's focus is



overtly political. Its basic assumption is that progress on health, education, and economic growth will be difficult in transitional and postconflict environments, absent stable and accountable governance. By helping local partners to change attitudes and behavior patterns—particularly those that affect political participation—OTI encourages the development of an institutional framework within which long-term development can succeed.

To gauge whether to start a program in a new country, OTI has developed four criteria for engagement:

1. Is the country important to U.S. national interests?
2. Is there a window of opportunity?
3. Can OTI's involvement significantly increase the chances of success?
4. Is the operating environment sufficiently stable?

Of these criteria, the window of opportunity—a country's ripeness for transformation—is the most difficult to define. For OTI, the window is normally perceived as a high level of political will among

those with sufficient power to serve as agents of peaceful democratic change. In most cases, that means either having an internationally recognized government or administration that is committed to fundamental reform and has control over most of the nation's territory, or having in place a negotiated peace settlement that is being respected by all major parties. In cases such as Serbia, however, it may mean having a well-organized and broad-based opposition—supported by the majority of the population—that seeks to gain power through constitutional and nonviolent means. Making these judgments is an art, not a science, and decisions are influenced by the level of foreign policy importance attached to a particular transition.

Field Focus

Another core element of OTI's methodology is its field focus and community-based approach. OTI staff around the world work with local partners—such as fledgling NGOs, informal student groups, local entrepreneurs, and rural villagers—to implement specific, short-term projects. While many USAID missions are prevented by budget and staffing restrictions from establishing a presence outside capital cities, OTI generally seeks to reach out to a wider population by opening suboffices in smaller cities and towns. OTI personnel, augmented by implementing partner staff, act as community organizers, facilitating the development of networks and lines of communication among citizens, between elected officials and their constituents, and across ethnic and political divides. OTI staff seek out promising new leaders and organizations that can become engines of reform, while identifying potential “spoilers” and creating a stake for them in the success of democracy and peace at the local level. OTI reaches out to populations who have been marginalized and excluded, such as women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, rural populations, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Although OTI's programs are carefully targeted to the geographic areas where they can have the great-

est impact, OTI seeks to maximize the number of direct participants and beneficiaries at the grassroots level.

Whereas the grant programs of many public and private donors are accessible only to organizations sophisticated enough to understand the application process, submit appropriate proposals, and meet rigid qualification criteria, OTI seeks to award its grants to new and untested local partners. Rather than conducting competitions that can take months to decide, OTI helps groups with good ideas put together quick and effective action plans. OTI then offers them in-kind support, often in the form of office equipment, building supplies, or professional services. By procuring these items directly, OTI avoids the problem of transferring cash to organizations lacking the administrative and bookkeeping capacities to manage it properly. By targeting items to specific projects and uses rather than providing core budget support, OTI ensures that its assistance is being used for intended purposes. By keeping the grants small—typically between \$5,000 and \$50,000—OTI limits the level of exposure and risk. And by helping the organization establish a track record of effectiveness in carrying out individual projects, OTI draws the attention of other potential funders who can continue the support.

This method of operation requires rapid immersion in the community by a group of talented individuals familiar with local politics and customs. Rather than waiting to be approached for assistance, OTI and contractor personnel are expected to seek out local partners and opportunities to foster change. The proposal process is highly abbreviated, and OTI helps grantees develop two- to three-page project descriptions. In most cases, funding decisions are made within days, not weeks or months. In addition, OTI affords great flexibility to its country representatives, authorizing them to approve subgrants of up to \$100,000 on the spot. In this way, OTI can award hundreds of grants in each country every year.

Impact

OTI searches for projects and activities that will have tangible effects. In uncertain times, traumatized populations need assurance that the risks of change are worth taking. Whether repairing small infrastructure, supporting new ways for communities to relate to each other and their leaders, or creating opportunities for individual advancement, OTI seeks to ensure that its projects have a visible, positive impact on the everyday lives of ordinary citizens.

Measuring impact over such a limited period can be difficult, especially when the urgent business of transition work remains unfinished. To maximize results, OTI has put in place systems for monitoring and evaluation that give real-time feedback and enable midcourse adjustments and corrections. OTI country programs normally conduct strategic reviews every six months to ensure they remain focused on the most critical transition issues. Field officers collect data regularly, conduct followup assessments of projects, and enter results into OTI's database. OTI country teams submit weekly and monthly reports with updates on conditions on the ground and the status of individual grants and projects. Although OTI grants a high degree of flexibility and authority to its country representatives, its Washington staff conduct thorough oversight and frequent field visits to ensure that resources are being spent wisely and managed responsibly. The headquarters staff report to Congress regularly with news from the field and updated program information.

Contracting

Another element that has enabled OTI to respond rapidly and flexibly in conflict-prone environments is a contracting mechanism known as SWIFT, or Support Which Implements Fast Transitions. SWIFT, in its original concept and the version issued in 2003, is an indefinite quantity contract under which prospective partners pre-compete for a

chance to help implement future OTI programs on the ground. Bidders, including nonprofit organizations and commercial development firms, must demonstrate their ability to initiate OTI-style programs in new countries within 72 hours of a contract award. After a full and open competition, a small group of finalists is selected or prequalified. Each time OTI proposes to begin a new program, this group is notified. Within days, finalists must submit a detailed startup plan, and a winner is chosen for that country. There are currently six companies prequalified to participate in SWIFT II: ARD Inc.; Casals & Associates; Chemonics; Creative Associates International Inc.; Development Alternatives Inc.; and PADCO.

OTI's mission calls for fast, efficient startup that capitalizes on a window of opportunity to speed economic, political, and democratic transitions. OTI encourages a decentralized model for working with partners in the field. Rather than one centralized project manager who provides technical oversight from a central location, OTI field staff work closely with implementing partners to respond to quickly changing conditions. OTI makes use of flexible and innovative contracting instruments designed to foster teamwork between OTI and its partners in the management of field programs. Throughout the life of the program, OTI regularly revisits and updates its strategy to ensure that projects developed for funding are directly related to achieving current U.S. foreign policy objectives. OTI and implementer staff work with the USAID mission to set program priorities, adjust country strategies, and identify potential grantees. When possible, the OTI office is housed within the USAID mission and U.S. embassy, but in some instances OTI has been the first or even sole official U.S. Government presence in the area.

The advantages of the SWIFT mechanism are that it allows rapid action, broad flexibility, and a high degree of responsiveness to foreign policy priorities. Funds committed to a SWIFT contract may be redirected from one program area to another at any



time, as situations demand—from small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation to strengthening the independent media to job training for ex-combatants. New country programs can be started as soon as USAID identifies a need. Although OTI pioneered the development of SWIFT, the contract was designed so USAID missions could use it without OTI's participation.

While SWIFT is a valuable tool, it must be used with great care. It requires politically adept, hands-on direction, rather than arm's-length oversight. Because of its scale and capacity requirements, SWIFT has not been particularly accessible to U.S.-based NGOs, which may carry out valuable transition activities in OTI program countries but are not equipped to manage multimillion dollar projects. SWIFT is also expensive to use, since the contractor charges a fee for each subgrant and overhead expenses for each employee. The mechanism is most appropriate in cases where a large number of small, in-kind grants and procurements are desired. It may not be cost effective as a pass-through for large technical projects, such as a public works program or a policy reform initiative.

Since SWIFT is not appropriate in every circumstance, OTI has conducted a number of its programs outside those parameters:

- In Colombia, where conditions were too dangerous for USAID personnel outside major cities, OTI worked through the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, and the Salesian Missions to support the reintegration of displaced persons; foster dialogue among the government, civil society, and neglected communities; and help prevent children from being recruited into insurgent forces.
- In Sierra Leone, OTI partnered with World Vision and Management Systems International to develop a remedial education program for ex-combatant youth who had received no schooling during years of war and displacement.

Flexibility

OTI's capacity for rapid, flexible response does not rest solely on its authority to spend its TI funds "notwithstanding any other provision of law," an authority it shares with OFDA. Although this provision is extremely helpful, enabling OTI to hire staff without an extended period of competition and work in countries that might otherwise be ineligible for assistance, it would be meaningless without the other methodologies outlined above. USAID missions that have programmed regular Development Assistance funds through the SWIFT mechanism, emphasizing the importance of political transformation, have seen similarly rapid results. OTI has received funds from accounts that do not contain this broad waiver and used them to similar effect. In several countries, OTI has provided technical assistance to help missions carry out transition programs without the use of OTI funds. Thus it is largely OTI's organizational culture, strategic vision, and unique contracting mechanisms that have ensured its continued flexibility.



In postconflict settings, one of OTI's favored approaches is to support community-based projects that not only respond to urgent reconstruction needs but also bring neighbors together in a constructive, democratic fashion.

Operations

Working in some of the world's most dangerous and sensitive regions, OTI seeks to mitigate conflict, promote reconciliation, and support democratic transformation.

During its first 10 years, OTI conducted operations in 30 countries. Programs have been spread evenly across the globe, with eight in Latin America, nine in Africa, six in Europe, and seven in Asia and the Near East. Average program size, excluding Iraq and Afghanistan, was approximately \$5 million per year, and average duration was just over three years. Some of OTI's most successful programs—in Indonesia, Serbia-Montenegro, and Sierra Leone—lasted four to five years, effectively buying time for longer-term political reforms to take place. New programs in Iraq and Afghanistan, funded from emergency supplemental appropriations, dwarf previous efforts, with a budget for Afghanistan of \$66 million over three years and \$180 million for Iraq to date.

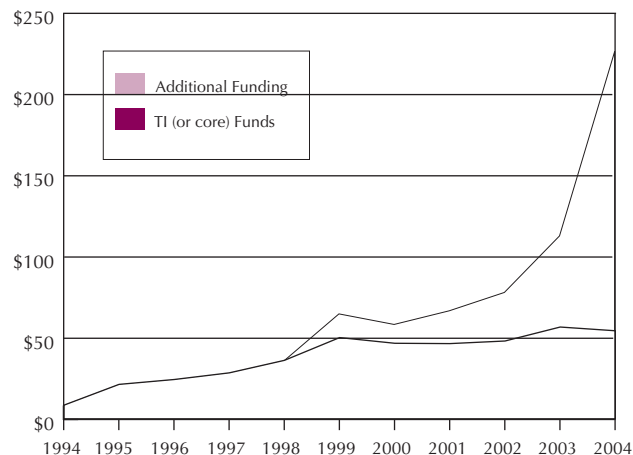
Community-Based Projects

Several thematic areas predominate in OTI's transition work. In postconflict settings, one of its favored approaches is to support community-based projects that not only respond to urgent reconstruction needs but also bring neighbors together in a con-

structive, democratic fashion. The value of these projects is primarily one of process: encouraging the vocal and meaningful participation of those traditionally excluded from decisionmaking, opening up channels of communication between elected officials and their constituents, and bringing together communities that previously fought or avoided one another. For local communities, such projects bring tangible improvements through infrastructure repair and improved access to services. Because they are invested in the projects from the start, deciding on the priority areas and contributing their own time and labor, local communities feel empowered by the process. Yet there is no single formula for successful community-based projects; they have taken on various appearances in different operating environments:

- In Kosovo in 1999, where there were no functioning institutions of local governance, OTI and contractor staff worked in seven municipalities around the province to maximize the number of Kosovars participating in setting priorities and making decisions about their future. By organizing town hall-style meetings, OTI encouraged the development of Community Improvement Councils, each comprising 12–15 people who reflected the political, social, and intellectual diversity of local populations. With the experience gained in representing their communities and addressing urgent priorities, many council members were later elected to public office, bringing moderate, democratic voices to Kosovo's often volatile political life.
- In East Timor, which was devastated by departing Indonesian troops following a 1999 referendum calling for independence, community-based projects put people to work and repaired damaged infrastructure. The Timorese, like the

OTI Budget 1994-2004 Core and Additional Funding



Kosovars, had long been ruled from afar and had little experience in self-governance. They also had few resources of their own to begin reconstruction. In a period when the UN had yet to become fully operational, OTI was able to organize massive road-clearing and construction efforts that provided temporary employment for approximately 50,000 men and women across all 13 districts of the island nation. This Transitional Employment Program was considered one of the speediest and most effective assistance programs in the post-referendum period, not only pumping resources into a cash-starved economy but providing training and skills applicable in future employment opportunities.

- In the Philippines, when the rebel Moro National Liberation Front reached a peace agreement with the government after years of negotiations, OTI directed its efforts at Muslim areas of Mindanao to demonstrate a peace dividend and create incentives for other Muslim insurgents to lay down their weapons. Working in small, often isolated fishing and farming villages, OTI provided equipment such as wagons to haul crops to market, concrete slabs for solar drying, and weighted nets for fish pens. In return, the communities agreed to provide space, storage, and maintenance for the equipment, while the local government contributed road-building supplies and vocational training. As a result of OTI's intervention and the government support it eventually gained, several Christian mayors and government officials began to visit Muslim villages, learning to work directly with their own constituents.

Media

Working through the media has helped local counterparts parlay a small OTI investment into country-wide influence and a catalyst for broader change. In

many transitional countries, there is little history of free, independent, and responsible media or objective reporting. OTI helps budding radio stations and newspapers that demonstrate a commitment to democratic values by purchasing or repairing equipment, sponsoring special supplements or new program development, training journalists, building broadcast towers, or distributing windup radios. Depending on needs, OTI-sponsored media projects might focus on providing humanitarian information to displaced populations, developing balanced coverage of sensitive political issues, or spreading the news about successful reconstruction and reform efforts that call attention to tangible signs of progress and build confidence in a peace process:

- In Serbia-Montenegro, following the ouster of President Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000, OTI sponsored public information campaigns to encourage citizens to combat corruption and hold former officials accountable for war crimes. By funding the publication and distribution of newspapers, newsletters, and other written materials; the creation of public service announcements; and the provision of urgently needed equipment, operations support, and legal advice; OTI helped local activists counter nationalist demagoguery and build public support for prosecuting Milosevic as a war criminal.
- Following the signing of the Pretoria Peace Accords in April 2003, OTI supported efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo to increase the availability of balanced information nationwide. OTI provided two transmitters and four new relay stations to Radio Okapi—run by the UN peacekeeping operation—thereby expanding its broadcast capability to nine locations and making it a truly national network. Radio Okapi's local language radio programs have disseminated information about humanitarian assistance, the peace process, and demobilization and reintegration, while engaging Congolese

countrywide in debates of national importance. OTI also supported a radio show in Bukavu focusing on the effects of war on youth. Broadcast in the country's war-affected eastern provinces, the radio show was written and produced by an ethnically diverse group of young people, including former child soldiers. In 2004, UNICEF/One World awarded the team the Children's Lives, Children's Voices Award for the world's best radio program produced by, for, and about children.

- To support the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia, OTI began in 1996 to help local partners develop media messages designed to reshape hardline, nationalist attitudes and promote respect for human rights and basic freedoms. Focusing its assistance on alternative media in underserved areas of the country—where most journalists said OTI was their only source of funding for equipment and operating expenses—OTI worked with Bosnian media outlets to produce public service announcements, distribute copies of official texts, and conduct informational call-in shows.

Conflict Resolution

Countries that have experienced violence and civil war are at great risk for a return to violence. To support countries negotiating a transition to peace, OTI programs usually include activities designed to address conflict dynamics, including attitudes, behaviors, grievances, and conditions that can cause disputes to escalate into armed confrontation. These activities range from efforts to strengthen formal bodies charged with hearing and responding to grievances to those that build the capacity of local communities to manage their own conflicts, and from efforts to ensure that services and resources are distributed more equitably to those that challenge stereotypes. While every OTI project is intended to advance peaceful political transition, a

number of activities are specifically designed to promote reconciliation and peaceful resolution of conflict:

- In Nigeria during 2000–01, OTI sponsored the creation of a nationwide conflict management network, educating 1,200 trainers to teach techniques for avoiding, mitigating, and resolving disputes. Conducted in partnership with over 90 Nigerian NGOs, OTI's efforts included facilitating dialogues, third-party consultations, joint problem-solving workshops, and local peace commissions. In conflict-prone areas, OTI helped establish local councils of elders and community leaders representing the various ethnic and religious factions. When an incident threatened to spark widespread violence, the councils would come together to agree on a joint action plan and work within their individual communities to prevent tension from escalating.
- During 2000–02 in Indonesia, OTI worked to transform violent conflict into peaceful dialogue and meaningful reform in crisis areas such as Aceh, Papua, West Timor, Maluku, North Maluku, and Central Sulawesi. By providing conflict management skills training for local community leaders and sponsoring events to promote positive interaction among dissenting parties and ethnic groups, OTI empowered Indonesians to transform the structures and relationships that had led to violence in the past. OTI's local partners developed advocacy campaigns and public service announcements calling for peace during election campaigns. In Aceh, OTI supported the work of a third-party mediator, the Henry Dunant Centre of Switzerland, to facilitate peace negotiations between the Free Aceh Movement and the Government of Indonesia. OTI also helped prominent Achenese NGOs publish calls for both sides to respect the ceasefire.

- In Sierra Leone, one of the key threats to peace after the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999 was the return to communities of thousands of ex-combatants, many of whom had been forcibly recruited as children. Without basic education or job skills, they knew how to survive only through violence and intimidation. OTI's Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program created a nationwide, nonformal, remedial education network for ex-combatants and war-affected youth, helping them to develop skills and attitudes that would enable them to lead peaceful and productive lives. Nearly 50,000 participants gained literacy and math skills while learning about self-reliance, farming, health, civic participation, and resolving interpersonal conflicts.
- When tensions rose across western Macedonia in November 2002 and threatened to derail the peace process following a move to rename several public schools after Albanian political and military figures, OTI swung into action by reengaging communities where it had previously worked. Within weeks, many local conflict mitigation efforts were underway, including an "Educators' Dialogue" among ethnic Albanian and Macedonian teachers, a multicultural project involving over 200 youths, media reports on positive interethnic collaboration in schools in affected areas, and public statements against ethnic segregation by respected leaders in both communities. OTI's rapid response helped to prevent the conflict from reigniting.

Civil Society

In countries where civil society institutions were historically weak or suffered grave damage during periods of intimidation and armed conflict, OTI has empowered NGOs to play a meaningful role in the political process. Whether by providing basic office equipment, supporting innovative project ideas, sponsoring workshops and conferences, or building new alliances and coalitions, OTI helps local NGOs

develop the professionalism and confidence to build popular support and conduct effective advocacy. OTI's local NGO partners tend to be small, emerging organizations, frequently staffed by volunteers who do not yet have a track record with other donors and lack experience in developing proposals:

- In Angola, where a nascent political transformation appears to be underway after nearly 30 years of civil war, indigenous prodemocracy forces remained weak and scattered. OTI established a small grants program promoting civil society advocacy. With a grant from OTI, the local NGO Bismas das Acacias encouraged market women subjected to harassment and extortion to use self-defense, take legal recourse, and hold local authorities accountable for protecting their rights.
- Croatia's national elections in January 2000 marked a critical turning point for the country, offering a choice between hardline nationalism and moderate, representative democracy. OTI supported nascent NGOs working to educate voters and monitor elections, helping a non-partisan NGO coalition—composed of women's, youth, ethnic minority, and environmental groups—to put together a get-out-the-vote campaign. The elections resulted in a major defeat for the hardline ruling party after the highest turnout of eligible voters—estimated at 73–78 percent—since the 1990 vote for independence. In addition to ushering in an opposition government for the first time in 10 years, these grassroots organizing efforts brought new prominence to the role of civil society in a democratic system.
- In Venezuela, voter demands for a presidential recall referendum led to a tense standoff between opposition and presidential forces. To prevent the political crisis from deteriorating into repression and violence, OTI provided training and technical assistance to strengthen the political party system; educate voters; and



support a free, fair, and peaceful electoral solution. Activities included the organization of civic forums to promote constructive exchanges between opposition and government groups, support for election monitors, and reaching out to build ties between disparate groups to reduce political tensions.

Women and Girls

The empowerment of women and girls has been a priority in OTI programs. This recognizes that equal participation in a country's social, economic, and political life is not only a matter of human rights and basic justice, but also important in reducing corruption, promoting conflict resolution, and improving living conditions for the general population. For these reasons, it is perhaps not surprising that women often predominate in civil society organizations that OTI seeks as partners. In all its programs, OTI works to advance the participation of women in decisionmaking and community affairs. It also supports programs specifically designed to meet the needs of women and girls:

- One of OTI's earliest programs was in Rwanda, beginning in 1994, to advance the postgenocidal recovery project. In three years, under the

Women in Transition program, OTI made 1,800 small grants to women's associations—in 11 out of 12 provinces—to support self-help activities in areas such as agriculture, livestock, job creation, and shelter. The project brought women together across ethnic lines to begin the healing. It benefited women who had been traumatized by rape, extended displacement, and the extermination of male family members.

- In Afghanistan, OTI has been working closely with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to construct 14 provincial women's centers that will be used for training on a range of topics relevant to their needs. Afghan women's NGOs are being assisted through vocational training and income-generation programs, benefiting individual women while increasing the capacity of small and relatively inexperienced NGOs themselves. OTI helped to rehabilitate the offices of Ariana, a national women's NGO based in Kabul, which provides educational and vocational courses to women and girls. OTI also awarded two grants to the Afghan Women's Network to enhance the participation of women in the emerging political process and help them achieve economic independence. In addition, OTI's grants to a local relief coalition launched a women's literacy campaign as part of its support to nine public libraries in eight provinces.

- Across Iraq, OTI has opened 22 women's rights centers to assist widowed, impoverished, and vulnerable women as they improve their lives and those of their children. Open to all women, the centers offer nutrition and health classes, literacy programs, democracy and civic education, and internet cafés used to teach computer skills and promote networking. The rights centers provide an opportunity for women to prepare themselves as leaders and valuable participants in the reconstruction of a free Iraq.

Human Rights

Another priority for OTI has been addressing human rights in countries going through transition. Reprisal killings, poor protection for internally displaced populations, unresolved property disputes, and the lack of accountability for past abuses can all threaten a government's legitimacy. From its earliest programs in Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia, OTI small grants have supported the efforts of local human rights organizations to provide social services to victims of abuse and their families and advocate on their behalf. Increasingly, OTI has begun to focus on the prevention of human rights abuses and the protection of vulnerable populations in conflicts. OTI human rights advisors, in collaboration with other USAID offices and U.S. Government agencies, respond to immediate humanitarian needs resulting from conflict, with particular emphasis on mitigation of and recovery from egregious abuses, such as widespread killings, torture, and sexual and gender-based violence. OTI's programs help create mechanisms for ensuring legal rights and justice for victims of abuse.

■ In Darfur, Sudan, OTI is fully engaged in the U.S. Government response to what is viewed by many as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today. The government of Sudan and its militia proxy forces have waged a campaign of ethnic cleansing that has forced Darfurians from their homes while inflicting on them widespread atrocities, serious food shortages, deliberate blockages of humanitarian aid, and destruction of shelter and medical care. OTI human rights advisors have collaborated with USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team and supported activities that provide accurate and timely documentation of the atrocities, pave the way for a future transitional justice mechanism, and help humanitarian NGOs mitigate abuses and treat survivors.



■ In Iraq, OTI funded a wide range of activities to support human rights and transitional justice. OTI provided critical support to the Ministry of Human Rights and the newly established Iraqi Property Claims Commission to build capacity and trust in Iraqi institutions that enforce the rights of the people. To assist Iraqis in accounting for past atrocities, OTI provided support for identification and protection of mass graves, establishment of the Iraqi Special Tribunal, development of forums to address human rights abuses under the previous regime, and the provision of medical and social services for victims of past crimes and their families.

Peace Processes

Even in war-weary nations, the transition to peace can elicit resistance and skepticism from groups who fear their interests will be compromised. The absence or misrepresentation of information, the failure to plan for possible setbacks, and the exclusion of key constituencies can all spell doom for a well-intentioned peace effort. In a country where a peace process is underway, OTI has sought to improve the chances for success by ensuring that the population understands what will be required, has a voice in the negotiations, and receives tangible benefits from the agreement. Such activities

may be undertaken while talks are being held or after an accord is signed, depending on the operational environment.

- Two decades of political turmoil and a violent insurgency in Peru left thousands dead or missing and unaccounted for. In 2001, Peru's government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to investigate human rights abuses. OTI provided technical assistance and training to TRC members and staff. For instance, OTI supported the production of a manual on effective investigation of mass graves for judges and prosecutors seeking to interpret evidence from human remains in Ayacucho, the central Andean region most affected by political violence. OTI also provided media advisors and supported a series of local NGO activities to help maximize the impact of the TRC.
- In Sri Lanka, the opportunity to achieve sustainable peace has been at risk due to political fracturing and instability within both the government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. OTI supported multireligious participation in an important Buddhist festival in a Sinhalese border village that has been isolated from its Tamil and Muslim neighbors following two decades of armed conflict. As part of an integrated series of activities highlighting the benefits of peace, OTI supported a propeace banner, sticker, and leaflet campaign; a series of live radio interviews with war-affected pilgrims; and an opinion survey by university students that put pressure on policymakers by highlighting the public's continued desire for a nonviolent solution to the conflict.
- Since 1983, an estimated 2 million Sudanese have died as a result of protracted conflict,

drought, and famine. Until the recent outbreak of deadly violence in the western Darfur region, however, positive developments in the ongoing North-South peace process within Sudan raised hopes that Africa's longest war could be finally resolved. Without balanced and reliable news coverage, the people of southern Sudan remain vulnerable to those who would prolong the conflict. To expand access to information about the peace process and build popular support for a negotiated political settlement, OTI supported local-language radio service in Nuer, Dinka, Juba-Arabic, English, and Arabic, which is broadcast across southern Sudan and accessible through the internet. The radio programs provide information about the peace talks, conduct civic education, and discuss governance issues.

- In Burundi, OTI provided small grants to support the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord through the active and informed participation of citizens. Recognizing that the negotiated transfer of the presidency in May 2003 from an ethnic Tutsi to an ethnic Hutu was critical for the successful implementation of the agreement, OTI funded peace walks, radio programs, billboards, t-shirts, and banners as part of an information campaign to encourage Burundians to support the peaceful transfer of power. OTI also supported a series of radio programs that engaged Burundians through call-in shows and field interviews all over the country, encouraging citizens to resist violence and support the peace process.

Good Governance

One of the keys to stable peace is having a well-managed, accountable government that adheres to basic democratic principles, respects human rights, is responsive to the needs and concerns of its

citizens, and is able to deliver services in a timely and effective manner. New processes and mechanisms that reduce corruption and bureaucratic red tape may need to be established. In countries recovering from significant destruction due to war or natural disaster, even the most basic supplies—paper, desks, chairs, windows, and computers—can make the difference between stability and government collapse. To strengthen the capacity of transitional administrations to respond to urgent needs, OTI has developed activities that range from the purchase of building materials and office equipment to the provision of training and technical advice and the development of anticorruption campaigns and good governance initiatives.



- OTI is working to expand the capacity of the new Iraqi government at many levels by improving communication between government officials and constituents, developing direct links between local and national authorities, and increasing accountability for government decisions and processes. Initially, grant activities focused on ensuring that government entities had the proper facilities, equipment, and supplies to carry out their functions. OTI subsequently expanded activities that helped Iraqis learn about their rights and responsibilities in a democracy. By participating in OTI-sponsored workshops, conferences, opinion polls, and town meetings, Iraqis have an opportunity to voice their views and express their expectations for the new government in a constructive way.
- Although an estimated 2.1 million persons remain displaced in Colombia from a conflict that has raged for more than 50 years, the fear of being singled out for retribution has caused most IDPs to seek refuge anonymously in new communities. Unfortunately, such silent population movements strain resources in host communities and impede efforts to identify and

deliver services to vulnerable groups. In cooperation with several humanitarian organizations, OTI supported small infrastructure projects in areas where internal displacement was overwhelming local capacity and generating social tensions. In addition, OTI designed and managed an overall program for the USAID mission for meeting the needs of IDPs and helping them become economically integrated into their new communities.

- In Liberia, mass looting prior to the installation of UN security forces in Monrovia literally stripped down government institutions to their walls and foundations. Government offices are unable to function when the most basic materials are missing. Based on the “ministries in a box” model used in Iraq and Afghanistan, OTI is providing key government offices with standardized packages of desks, chairs, computers, and office supplies that help them get operational immediately.
- One of the most important governance issues during transitions is establishing or strengthening civilian control over the country’s armed

forces. As Nigeria transitioned from a military to a civilian administration in 1999, OTI organized a number of workshops with the newly elected legislature, the Ministry of Defense, and civil society organizations to clarify roles and responsibilities and develop a national action plan that would reestablish military accountability to civilian leadership. Similar efforts to address the balance of civilian-military relations have been undertaken in Indonesia, East Timor, and Peru.

Partnerships

OTI was initially conceived as a radical departure from the standard operating procedures and philosophies that guided long-term development assistance. During its early years, OTI recruited staff for their expertise in a particular crisis country and postconflict operating environments, not their knowledge of USAID's customary ways of doing business. This allowed for new thinking in OTI, but at times it led to tensions and misunderstandings within USAID. Having in-country staff who did not report through the mission director—and who were engaged in political activities often more closely coordinated with the U.S. embassy than the mission—aroused suspicion and distrust. Furthermore, the fact that OTI's preliminary funding came from the OFDA budget created a perception that OTI was diverting resources from disaster victims.

After the experience in Haiti in 1994–97, where successful local initiatives were discontinued once OTI staff left the country, OTI recognized the importance of working more closely with and through other USAID offices, bureaus, and missions. By ensuring that its goals and objectives were incorporated into mission strategic plans and that both embassies and USAID missions were fully apprised of and supportive of its activities, OTI began to win broader understanding and cooperation. Today, OTI



invites personnel from regional and policy bureaus to participate in initial country assessments and program design. Most recently, OTI has conducted joint assessment missions with USAID's newly established Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, which provides technical assistance and support to USAID missions. In many countries, OTI representatives sign memoranda of understanding with mission directors that outline roles and responsibilities and establish regular channels of communication. More missions have added special transition objectives to their strategies. As a result, OTI's activities are not only reflected in mission strategies, they may be beginning to be captured in monitoring and evaluation efforts. More recently, OTI has worked to develop formal exit strategies from the time its staff enter each country. In this way, missions will have sufficient time to develop plans to continue projects that show favorable results and deserve support from long-term development funds after OTI's departure.

After 10 years of refining and improving its operations, OTI finds itself being asked to begin programs in more countries than its resources allow. It works particularly closely with the Department of State, which has often used OTI's programmatic instruments to translate diplomatic and foreign policy goals into tangible improvements on the ground. OTI has also worked fruitfully with other U.S. Government departments and agencies, including the National Security Council; the departments of Defense, Energy, and Justice; and the government-funded Voice of America broadcasting service. Aside from its colleagues in the U.S. Government, OTI works with a wide variety of U.S. and international partners to implement its programs. At the local level, OTI has collaborated with thousands of secular and faith-based community organizations, including civic groups, service providers, advocacy groups, and educational institutions. OTI's mission is to support and strengthen those that advance peace and democracy in their own countries, providing the resources and training to enable them to become effective agents of change. The best and most innovative project ideas invariably come from these grassroots representatives, and OTI, with occasional guidance, helps bring them to life.

Whether through SWIFT or other contracting agreements, OTI depends on its private-sector counterparts (NGOs, universities, and commercial firms) to provide quick startup capacity and technical



expertise. OTI's implementing partners hire international and local staff, set up and manage field offices, provide security and housing for employees, and administer small grants, procuring the equipment and services that local groups need to carry out their projects. Without the logistical support of its implementing partners, OTI would be unable to respond rapidly to evolving situations and new political imperatives in transitional countries. Due to these partners' support and ingenuity, OTI remains able to respond to windows of opportunity when they arise.

OTI Partners	
Casals & Associates	http://www.casals.com/
Chemonics	http://www.chemonics.com/
Coalition for International Justice	http://www.cij.org/
Creative Associates International Inc.	http://www.caii.net/
Development Alternatives Inc.	http://www.dai.com/
Education Development Center Inc.	http://main.edc.org/
Fondation Hironnelle (with the UN Mission to Congo)	http://www.hironnelle.org/
Halo Partnership	http://www.halopartnership.org/
Harvard School of Public Health	http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/
Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government	http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/
International Organization for Migration	http://www.iom.int/
International Republican Institute	http://www.iri.org/
International Rescue Committee	http://www.theirc.org/
Internews	http://www.internews.org/
National Democratic Institute	http://www.ndi.org/
PACT	http://www.pactworld.org/
PADCO	http://www.padcoinc.com/
Physicians for Human Rights	http://www.phrusa.org/
Ronco Consulting Corporation	http://www.roncoconsulting.com/
Search for Common Ground	http://www.sfcg.org/
Social Impact	http://www.socialimpact.com/
The Carter Center	http://www.cartercenter.org/
United Nations Development Programme	http://www.undp.org/
United Nations High Commission on Human Rights	http://www.ohchr.org/english/
Voice of America (VOA)	http://www.voanews.com/
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	http://wwics.si.edu/



Perhaps most emblematic of the way that attitudes toward OTI have changed over the years is the creation of a new humanitarian “backstop” within USAID’s foreign service, encouraging more officers to develop expertise in transition work.

Lessons Learned and Outlook

OTI has validated the rising importance of political transition work and established USAID as an international leader in this field.

Since OTI strives to make a critical difference in a country's future, identifying issues that will make or break the success of a political transition and funding activities that will create the impetus for broad-scale change, there is a temptation to claim credit when all goes well or attribute blame if conflict returns. In Serbia, where OTI supported student activists who played a major role in Milosevic's downfall, some OTI assessments overlooked the painstaking work that other offices and donors had undertaken to prepare the way for the success of the Otpor student movement. Conversely, OTI conducted extremely effective and innovative programs in countries such as Haiti, the Philippines, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, yet each of those countries has continued to experience political turmoil and conflict.

Obviously, OTI alone does not have the power to secure a particular outcome in a given country. Its programs can support local leadership and reform movements, but cannot create or replace them. OTI's chances of sparking positive change are therefore far greater when its resources are proportionate to the task at hand and its efforts are reinforced by USAID, the Department of State, and the international community at large.

Looking back over the past 10 years, perhaps OTI's greatest success has been to demonstrate that USAID can do things differently. Frustration with the Agency on the part of those who may not understand or value long-term development has led to dispersion and fragmentation of foreign assistance resources, giving other departments and agencies a larger role in aid decisions that USAID once managed. OTI showed that USAID can be not only fast and flexible, but also politically relevant, responsive to national security concerns, and capable of carrying out timely projects designed to advance diplomatic goals. In this way, OTI is con-



vincing skeptics of USAID's added value, strengthening alliances with the Department of State, the National Security Council, and Capitol Hill.

OTI has also helped USAID to fill a gap in its own resources, adding a transition capacity to its already well-defined programs for emergency response and long-term development. By creating a new tool for short-term assistance, OTI has validated the rising importance of political transition work and established USAID as an international leader in this field. It has been at the forefront of efforts to redesign U.S. Government assistance to meet the challenges of the 21st century, advancing USAID's capacity to address weak and failing states and respond to urgent national security requirements. While short-term programs are not a solution to all challenges facing transitional countries and must not be seen as a substitute for long-term development, they now constitute an important component of USAID's comprehensive approach.

To create a rapid response mechanism within an agency with limited financial flexibility and an

abundance of bureaucratic hurdles, OTI developed a new political culture by attracting young, high-caliber, politically savvy staff who understood security issues and felt comfortable working in conflict environments. Whereas USAID has been forced over the years to shift from a technical to a supervisory focus, OTI retains its hands-on, field-driven approach and its operational capacity to implement projects directly.

This political culture has served OTI well, in terms of flexibility and innovation. OTI staff have taken on a host of politically charged issues—such as reintegration of ex-combatants, mine awareness and removal, civil-military relations, political party training, and media support—with sensitivity and sound judgment. OTI has created not just one model for transition assistance, but dozens of new approaches. From community improvement projects to local conflict resolution to the Humanitarian Protection Team, OTI has pioneered ideas that can be replicated and expanded around the globe.

OTI's Future

Maintaining the balance between OTI's core values and its performance—staying fast and flexible while working as part of a larger team—is perhaps the greatest challenge for OTI's next 10 years. As OTI grows, there is the need to develop management systems and procedures that ensure optimal performance and appropriate supervision. OTI will need to remain responsive to administration foreign policy priorities while maintaining its unique niche and spawning new and creative ideas. Much of OTI's success has sprung from its refusal to adhere to convention and its willingness to question common assumptions. Providing a structure to nurture this spirit of creativity and openness will require a continued willingness to engage in honest self-reflection.

Already OTI has had an impact on the way that USAID operates. Work pioneered by OTI in local

media development and community improvement projects has been mainstreamed throughout the Agency and funded through an array of other sources and mechanisms. OTI's focus on scenario-based contingency planning has been taken up by regional bureaus, which are now building more flexibility into their long-term strategies. Conflict, once relegated to OTI as a specialty issue, has become an Agency-wide crosscutting priority. OTI made many contributions to the development of USAID's thinking on fragile and failing states. Perhaps most emblematic of the way that attitudes toward OTI have changed over the years is the creation of a new humanitarian "backstop" within USAID's foreign service, encouraging more officers to develop expertise in transition work.

For its achievements, OTI has won a wide variety of supporters, within and outside USAID. Former Administrator Brian Atwood said, "Establishing OTI was the best thing I did at USAID." USAID/Russia Mission Director Terry Myers, who worked with OTI in Indonesia, thinks every mission with a crisis should have OTI. Supporters on Capitol Hill ensured that OTI would be given a prominent role in programming funds in Iraq, where the security environment poses exceptional challenges for aid operations. InterAction, an alliance of more than 160 U.S.-based humanitarian and development NGOs, included OTI among its seven key accounts meriting additional funding.

Despite the fact that OTI is overtly political in its objectives, its programs have earned broad bipartisan appeal. Stabilizing fragile democracies and building momentum for peace are goals all can agree on, and OTI has chosen its interventions carefully. By keeping Congress informed of its activities and focusing its efforts on empowering ordinary citizens, OTI has earned the trust of skeptics and the respect of observers. The initial vision and promise has proven remarkably durable over the first 10 years, moving OTI from a successful experiment to an integral tool for USAID.

U.S. Agency for International Development

Office of Transition Initiatives

Special Tenth-Year Edition

A Decade of Transition



For more information, contact
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington DC 20523-8602
Telephone: 202-712-0730
Internet: www.usaid.gov