



Africa

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2006 Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

"If they think they can stop me from speaking against injustice, corruption and misgovernment ..., then they are mistaken. It will not stop me."

--Trevor Ncube, Zimbabwe journalist harassed by government

Many countries in Africa made significant headway along the road to democracy, bringing new hope to the region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) held its first democratic and credible presidential and legislative elections in more than 40 years, and democratic elections in Benin, Madagascar, and Mauritania brought renewed optimism to the region. As countries moved toward greater democratic governance, U.S. assistance focused on building political plurality, ensuring voter registration, and providing election monitoring. In Uganda, the United States supported Ugandans' decision to adopt a multiparty political system by funding programs to enhance voter participation and political pluralism, and improve the administration of presidential and parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, institutionalizing democratic reforms across the continent continued to be a major challenge.

Key human rights problems, principally armed conflict, remained throughout Africa. In Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic (CAR), DRC, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, U.S. priorities included ending the violence that threatens so many lives and livelihoods, protecting vulnerable populations from further suffering, and bringing peace and stability to the region. In June, The Gambia was suspended from eligibility for assistance from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. Government-owned corporation that delivers targeted assistance to developing countries, after restricting civil liberties and press freedom in the wake of a springtime failed coup.



Despite the May 5th signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), genocide continued in Darfur. In 2006, the United States led the international community in diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to stop the violence and protect the lives of millions of innocent civilians through peace negotiations, action at the UN Security Council, and aggressive promotion and support of a robust, international peacekeeping force in Darfur. The U.S. continued its role as the world's largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Sudan.

In Zimbabwe, where the ruling party maintained its monopoly on the executive branch, the United States encouraged the efforts of the Parliament, the judiciary, and local government to exercise some independence. A U.S.-sponsored program to strengthen parliamentary committees helped increase debate from both opposition and reform-minded ruling party members and encouraged greater transparency through public hearings on legislation. U.S. programming also provided much-needed training for local government leaders in Sierra Leone's recently reconstructed public infrastructure, helping town and district councils take on greater responsibilities for local governance issues, including health and agricultural services, as the central government continued to develop.

A vibrant and involved civil society is one of the best long-term guarantees of democratic stability. Throughout Africa, the United States worked to strengthen civic education in communities, support the development of civil society, including nascent nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and labor movements, and diversify the sources of information available to communities. For example, U.S.-funded grants supported local NGOs who educated communities on human rights, HIV/AIDS, reconciliation, and peace building throughout Liberia.

U.S. programs promoted free, economically stable, and socially responsible media in the region. African journalists participated in professional exchange program visits to the United States. In the DRC, the United States held twelve workshops and an internet training course to help nearly 500 journalists improve their political reporting. U.S.-sponsored programs also helped promote the free flow of independent and objective information in Zimbabwe, Chad, Burundi, Mauritania, Liberia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia.

In response to the corruption that continued to plague many countries in the region, the United States made the development of modern, efficient, and transparent legal systems an assistance priority for Africa. In Chad, the United States provided technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Management College to promote accountability in projects financed by oil revenues, and funded a budget-training workshop for parliamentarians. The United States also financially supported anticorruption efforts in Zambia, Chad, Liberia, and The Gambia.

United States support for human rights protections, including the rights of women, minorities, and the disabled, mirrored the growing demands for personal and political freedoms in the region. Swaziland passed its first constitution in 32 years that provided for an independent judiciary and gave equal legal rights to women, although the citizens of the country wait for its full implementation. The United States worked throughout the region to improve awareness of human rights principles among military and law enforcement agencies, to ameliorate conditions in prisons, educate women and minorities of their legal rights, and build linkages among human rights organizations. In Uganda, the United States supported an extensive project to improve the rights and status of women that included mentoring sessions between female members of Parliament and more than 300 prospective female candidates for local and national office.

The variety of religious expression in Africa provides a unique showcase for interfaith and interethnic tolerance. In many countries with sizable Muslim populations, an interfaith gathering to mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan has become an annual embassy event. The United States promoted religious freedom through speeches and by gathering for occasions such as Iftar dinners to engage in dialogue with Muslim leaders in various African countries. The United States has worked extensively in Nigeria on the problems of interreligious violence and constraints on religious freedom, meeting with political and religious leaders at both the national and local levels to gain a better understanding of existing tensions.

Throughout Africa, the United States devoted substantial resources to prevent trafficking in persons and a range of labor rights abuses. These programs provided educational opportunities and job training for at-risk youth, expanded cooperation among law enforcement bodies, and helped victims reintegrate into their home communities. For example, the United States funded a cross-border antitrafficking awareness program in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and continued to expand educational opportunities for nearly 10,000 children either employed or at risk of being employed in the worst forms of child labor. Kenya, Angola, DRC, Zimbabwe, and Guinea, among others, also received U.S. support for human rights protection programs, including initiatives to combat sexual violence and abuse of women.

Countries with accountable governments, political and economic freedoms, and respect for individual human rights enjoy a strong advantage in building prosperous, healthy, and educated populations. It is no coincidence that conflict, chaos, corrupt and oppressive governments, and humanitarian crisis often co-exist. The United States will continue to promote democracy and advance human rights in Africa to help the countries of the continent further develop the groundwork for peace, security, and stability.

Strengthening the Electoral Process in Cote d'Ivoire Before the 2007 Presidential Elections

The upcoming presidential elections in Cote d'Ivoire offer its people a critical opportunity to work together to reinvigorate the political process and develop a common vision for the country's future. The U.S.-funded NGO IFES is working in Cote d'Ivoire to provide timely election assistance in the lead up to the October 2007 presidential elections. With the goal to establish a solid foundation for peace and stability in the country, and thereby bring greater stability to the region, the project is creating a framework for credible elections by increasing the capacity of relevant stakeholders to conduct legitimate elections and building public confidence in the electoral process. Holding free and fair elections will mark a milestone on Cote d'Ivoire's path toward national unity and strong democratic institutions.

The IFES program is providing crucial electoral assistance through a range of activities to support free and fair elections in Cote d'Ivoire. The national-level commissioners of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) are receiving training and materials in fundamental election administration skills to enhance their capacity to effectively conduct elections. The IFES project is also promoting dialogue among key national and international electoral stakeholders through roundtables focused on identifying priorities for the upcoming election, including establishing an electoral timetable, registering voters, and building public awareness among potential voters of the critical role played by credible elections in promoting a sustainable democratic process. Additional efforts to strengthen the electoral process include working with key stakeholders to establish a coordinated strategy for electoral assistance, and formulating public information campaigns to improve civic participation in elections.

Angola

Angola is a constitutional republic in transition since its 27-year civil war ended in 2002. Legislation provides for decentralization; however, the government remained highly centralized and dominated by the presidency. UN observers considered the 1992 presidential and legislative elections to have been generally free and fair; however, the government's continued delay of elections since then has undermined citizens' rights to elect officials. The government's human rights record remained poor, and serious problems remained, although there were improvements in a few areas. Other human rights abuses included unlawful killings by police, military, and private security forces; torture, beatings, and harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; corruption and impunity; arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention; an inefficient and overburdened judiciary, resulting in a lack of due process; restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, and assembly; forced evictions without compensation; and discrimination and abuse against women and children.

The U.S. strategy for improving human rights and democratic governance in the country focused on preparing citizens for free and fair national elections, promoting good governance, strengthening civil society and political parties, supporting a vibrant, independent media, advocating for human and civil rights, promoting transparency, and supporting the rule of law. To reach these goals, the United States partnered with the government, international and local NGOs, faith-based organizations, and private corporations.

The establishment of strong democratic norms and institutions is a critical component of U.S. policy in Angola. In late December the presidentially appointed Council of the Republic recommended scheduling legislative elections for 2008 and presidential elections in 2009. During the year, the United States supported projects that helped prepare the electorate, civil society, and political parties for participation in the electoral process. U.S. Government funds supported programs that increased political tolerance and strengthened national reconciliation, such as hundreds of town hall meetings that brought together over 70,000 citizens and political leaders to discuss concerns in their respective communities. The United States also supported training and technical assistance for political parties at the national and provincial levels on platform development, message delivery, and constituency relations. Political parties received training in their roles during the pre-election period and in supervising the voter registration process. U.S. funds also supported the expansion and consolidation of various national election networks to broaden citizen involvement in the election process. These networks trained election advocates, hosted community debates, and opened small information centers that provided election information to more than 19,000 potential voters. The United States supported projects that helped train civil society and political parties to observe and monitor the registration process and strengthen the national networks coordinating the observation of voter registration throughout the country's 18 provinces.

The United States focused on supporting independent media and developing journalistic professionalism during the year. In coordination with the Syndicate of Angolan Journalists and the Inter-Ecclesiastical Committee for Peace in Angola, the U.S. Government funded workshops that trained journalists on election coverage, news writing and reporting, ethics, and professional conduct. Three senior journalists who participated in the International Visitors Leadership Program in the United States shared their experiences with colleagues on economic reporting, conflict resolution, and ethics. The U.S. Government also donated books on journalism to the Ministry of Mass Communication and the two independent media associations in the country. The United States facilitated a UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization grant for the Syndicate of Angolan Journalists to continue its work on professional development and capacity building. The United States also supported the independent media organization MultiPress, which produced more than 3,000 news broadcasts, information spots, debates, and interviews on key democratic governance issues such as press freedom, rights to education, freedom of information and transparency, political and electoral processes, and civic education. The Voice of America broadcast news and information from MultiPress, which had stringers in all 18 provinces.

The United States also facilitated debates on the new press law for journalists, government officials, and visiting senior U.S. officials. In Benguela and Bengo provinces, U.S. officials hosted roundtable discussions with local journalists, including the provincial directors of mass communications, about the state of the media, election reporting, and civic education. In discussions with high-level government officials and the Ministry of Social Communications during the year, the U.S. Government continued its advocacy for the expansion of independent radio broadcasts to the provinces, including those of the largest nongovernmental radio network, Radio Ecclesia.

To support civil society, the U.S. Government funded a small grants program that supported local projects and strengthened the technical and management capacity of local NGOs. The United States also continued to fund conflict mitigation and peace-building activities at the local level. These programs helped create and train community development groups that worked in partnership with local government administrations, police, and political parties to define and address their specific needs and priorities. These U.S. Government-funded programs conducted 58 radio programs, 16 civil society organizational meetings, and 24 dialogue sessions. The U.S. Government also funded a civil society capacity-building program, which developed and implemented over 500 conflict and reconciliation programs and directly impacted over 13,000 participants, including 3,500 women.

To combat corruption and foster transparency, the U.S. Government continued to work with the Ministry of Finance to strengthen its management of the government's budgeting process through the Fiscal Programming Unit. Staff from the unit and senior technical officers from other government ministries received two weeks of intensive training in macroeconomic and fiscal programming techniques followed with continuous on-the-job training. According to the 2006 Fiscal Balance Report, the program reduced discrepancies in fiscal accounts. The program also supported the development of management tools for standardizing budget statistics into quarterly and annual reports that adhered to international reporting standards.

To strengthen the rule of law, the United States funded the Commercial Law Development Program, which provided training and consultative services to judges and court clerks. Over the past five years, the program has assisted the Ministry of Justice by training court clerks to improve court administration in the provincial and municipal courts of Benguela, Lobito, Huila, Cabinda, and Luanda. This training provided technical skills to ensure random assignment of judges and helped establish a system for the tracking of cases and the continuous accountability of documents. The U.S. Government, the Ministry of Justice, and the Portuguese Government worked during the year to provide the hardware, software, and training necessary to computerize the case management system in Luanda's provincial courts. By the end of the year, the system was functioning successfully in the Palacio Dona Ana Joaquina Criminal Court building.

Throughout the year, the U.S. Government continued to focus on human rights, consistently underscoring the important connection between support for human rights and strong, transparent government institutions. The U.S. Government regularly discussed human rights issues with government officials at all levels, as well as with the international community and local NGOs. U.S. officials frequently traveled throughout the country to discuss human rights issues. The U.S. Government continued to monitor the human rights situation throughout the country, focusing on Cabinda, Lunda Norte, and Lunda Sul provinces, and encouraged human rights training for police, military, and other government representatives. The U.S. Government sent 25 police officers to International Law Enforcement Academy training and assisted returning officers to conduct in-service training for colleagues. U.S. Government funds supported international organizations and local NGOs that provided human rights and professional training to the police and military. The U.S. Government also funded local partners who worked on more than 400 cases of illegal detention and secured the release of approximately 30 persons.

To address trafficking of persons in the country, the U.S. Government worked to raise awareness of the issue through dialogue with government officials and the

international community and also participated in several roundtable discussions on trafficking.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a parliamentary republic. In November 2005 President Blaise Compaore was elected to a third term with 80 percent of the vote in elections characterized by observers as generally free despite minor irregularities but not entirely fair due to the ruling party's control of official resources. Some in the opposition also contested the legality of the president's candidacy. The government's human rights record remained poor, but there were improvements in some areas. The following human rights problems were reported: use of excessive force against civilians, criminal suspects, and detainees by security forces, resulting in deaths and injuries; societal violence; abuse of prisoners and harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; official impunity; occasional restrictions on freedom of the press and freedom of assembly; violence and discrimination against women and children, including female genital mutilation; trafficking in persons, including children; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and child labor.

The United States focused its strategy to promote democracy and human rights in the country on diplomatic and programmatic measures to support free and fair elections of municipal leaders in April and on preparations for legislative elections scheduled for May 2007. The U.S. Government also acted to promote the government's compliance with international human rights norms, emphasize accountability and transparency in governance, increase the efficacy of political parties, and advocate further easing of political tensions.

The U.S. Government extended its efforts to promote democracy in multiple areas. To support the smooth performance of political processes, it conducted two seminars that addressed the electoral law and procedures for challenging questionable election results. The seminars were attended by political parties and civic associations that promote democracy. The United States also funded a program to increase the efficacy of political parties and promote interparty dialogue with a view to maximizing the ability of opposition parties to compete in the April municipal elections and the legislative elections scheduled for 2007 by upgrading their political and organizational skills. The program generated good will among civil society groups and political parties while garnering respect from the government and the ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress. The program involved participants from the entire political spectrum, including members of the ruling party as well as both the moderate and radical opposition.

The U.S. government also promoted democracy through programs to expand public participation in elections, including the production of television commercials that encouraged voting and explained the electoral process. In preparation for the 2007 elections, U.S. officials visited Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city in the country, to meet with political parties and civil society organizations to build support for free and fair elections and encourage greater participation by women. The U.S. Government also funded several educational workshops for children on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

To make the April municipal elections as transparent as possible, the U.S. Government allocated funds to conduct polling. The United States also provided funding to three organizations to monitor the municipal and 2007 legislative elections; the organizations presented their reports to the public on the municipal elections.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, the U.S. Government provided media professionals with opportunities to exchange ideas with their international counterparts. As part of the International Visitor Leadership Program, the U.S. Government sent three journalists and a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, and civic education to the United States to meet with Americans and others in their respective professions. The U.S. Government also funded a project to promote female journalists and citizens' rights to government information.

The U.S. Government worked to expand respect for the rule of law by encouraging professionalism in the country's armed forces. The United States provided training to military personnel and civilians on maintaining civilian control over the military in a democracy and the legal implications of the war on terror.

One of the U.S. Government's main priorities was to ensure that major human rights abuses be prevented and eradicated. To achieve this goal, the United States allocated funds to produce radio programs on human rights and to translate a human rights declaration into local languages. The United States fostered respect for women's rights by encouraging the development of the judicial system to include the rights of women, funding several workshops to instruct women on their rights and the importance of obtaining personal legal documents, such as national identification cards. The United States also provided funding to a local organization to strengthen efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation.

The U.S. Government sponsored a number of workshops and discussions on religious differences and the importance of encouraging religious tolerance and sponsored a summer camp for Koranic school students to promote interfaith understanding. U.S. officials regularly met with the Muslim community for discussions and exchanges. During the month of Ramadan, U.S. officials in the country hosted three Iftar dinners, during which a Muslim U.S. official shared experiences as a follower of Islam in the United States. The U.S. Government also selected Muslim participants for the International Visitor Leadership Program to learn about the functioning of Islam in a democratic society. During the year the president of the Muslim Students Association was chosen for the program. This association includes the universities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso as well as the teachers' college in Koudougou and all secondary and primary schools in the country.

The U.S. Government worked to combat child labor and trafficking in persons. It funded a program to combat child labor in the mining sector with the International Labor Organization as an implementing partner. In addition, the U.S. Government funded several projects in the fight against human trafficking. An NGO rehabilitated and reintegrated 1,043 repatriated children in two U.S.-funded centers. The same NGO is also producing a documentary on local antitrafficking laws. The U.S. Government funded the translation of French-language antitrafficking films into local languages and sponsored a targeted trafficking awareness campaign in vulnerable areas. During the year the U.S. Government reached the midway point in a multiyear project to reduce child trafficking by creating locally relevant curricula in rural schools. For the 2006-07 school year, approximately 2,016 students were enrolled in the program in five provinces where trafficking is prevalent.

Burundi

During the year Burundi continued its political transition from minority rule to democratic, majority rule via negotiations and elections. In 2005 it adopted a new constitution and conducted local and legislative elections, which resulted in the inauguration of Pierre Nkurunziza as the first democratically elected president since 1993. Throughout the year conflicts continued between government forces and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, the sole remaining rebel group, although the overall security situation improved. On September 7, the government concluded a cease-fire agreement with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, but the two sides continued to negotiate provisions for implementation of the agreement at the end of the year. The government's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers improved, and it fulfilled its obligations with international organizations involved in refugee issues. However, the government's human rights record remained poor. Despite improvements in some areas, security forces continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses, including: summary executions, torture, and beatings of civilians and detainees, some of which were politically motivated; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, including of political prisoners and detainees; prolonged pretrial detention; lack of judicial independence and efficiency; restrictions on freedoms of the press, assembly, and association; official corruption and impunity; societal violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons; and child labor.

U.S. human rights and democracy goals included helping to build a just and lasting peace based on democratic principles, protecting human rights, and relieving human suffering. These goals were supported by U.S. efforts to strengthen newly created and newly elected governing bodies, decrease corruption, strengthen civil society, promote media and speech freedoms, support ethnic, political, and regional reconciliation, support victims of torture, and reintegrate ex-combatants and former child soldiers.

The U.S. Government supported democracy building in the country. It funded training for parliamentarians and political party leaders through the Woodrow Wilson Center's Burundi Leadership Training Program, which gathered together 95 key leaders from across an ethnically diverse group of several organizations and eight political parties. The program focused on: rebuilding the personal relationships between ethnic groups that had broken down during the war years; restoring a firm consensus on power sharing; and improving communication and negotiation skills among the elite. The program also worked to develop leadership techniques and decision making, communication, and negotiation skills. The U.S. Government also facilitated the production and broadcast of programs to promote democracy by funding five independent radio stations and the government's radio and television conglomerate. Additionally, the U.S. Government funded the NGO Development

Assistance, Inc. to assist newly elected governing bodies and officials to govern in an effective and transparent manner.

The U.S. Government promoted a free media and funded seminars for the media. The United States sponsored a visit by an American journalist who conducted seminars on press freedom, journalistic ethics, and media-government relations for approximately 30 local journalists, 150 students from a private university, and government officials.

U.S. efforts included the promotion of civil society. The U.S. Government promoted a constructive relationship between elected government officials and civil society by improving understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. The United States also funded programs that supported community associations and local civil society organizations in forwarding democracy, human rights, women's rights, the return of war victims and former combatants to civilian life, and the training of local officials and citizens in conflict prevention, mitigation, and mediation techniques. The U.S. Government also funded the NGO Global Rights, which worked to strengthen civil society to manage and mitigate land conflict, and encouraged the participation of civil society organizations in legislative reform and the peace process.

U.S. officials stressed to senior government officials the importance of due process and respect for human rights, particularly following the high-profile arrests of a former president, vice president, and senior leaders of media and opposition parties charged with threatening state security.

The U.S. Government worked to reduce the number and effects of serious human rights abuses. In the provinces of Gitega, Ruyigi, and Karuzi, U.S. assistance to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Federation of Red Cross/Crescent Societies, VOA, and four NGOs aided thousands of returning refugees and internally displaced persons to reintegrate into their communities. The U.S. Government also financed a variety of smaller projects that promoted human rights in general and advanced the interests of women and children. The United States funded programs that supported human rights monitoring and advocacy on issues related to torture and provided medical, legal, and psychological support to approximately 1,700 victims of torture and rape. The United States financial and material support to independent and government radio and television stations allowed them to produce programs focused on human rights issues, community reconciliation, and conflict mitigation. The U.S. Government regularly raised the government's poor human rights record in meetings with government officials and continued to advocate for increased respect of internationally recognized human rights on the part of the government and security forces.

The U.S. Government worked to combat the practice of child soldiering. The United States funded the third year of a three-year regional initiative to demobilize and rehabilitate child soldiers and reintegrate them into their former communities. The program focused on drafting legislation, instituting appropriate procedures, and monitoring mechanisms, as well as strengthening government institutions that dealt with child soldiering. The program facilitated and supported the economic reintegration of 800 child soldiers through education, training, financial support, and community strengthening. It also aimed to enhance information sharing on child soldiers in the region. During the year the U.S. Government also funded a local NGO to assist child soldiers and human trafficking victims. The organization focused its assistance to child soldiers on the provision of vocational training and psycho-social counseling.

The U.S. Government promoted religious freedom as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. officials maintained regular contact with leaders and members of various religious communities.

Cameroon

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. Despite the country's multiparty system of government, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement has remained in power since it was created in 1985. In 2004 ruling party leader Paul Biya won re-election as president. The election was flawed by irregularities, particularly in the voter registration process, but observers believed the election results represented the will of voters. The government's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit numerous human rights abuses. Security forces committed numerous unlawful killings and regularly engaged in torture, beatings, and other abuses, particularly of detainees and prisoners. Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening. Authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained anglophone citizens advocating secession, local human rights monitors and activists, and other citizens. The law provides for the arrest of homosexuals and persons not carrying identification cards. There were reports of prolonged and sometimes incommunicado pretrial detention and infringement on citizens' privacy rights. The government restricted citizens' freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement. Official corruption and impunity were problems. Societal violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons, primarily children; discrimination against indigenous Pygmies and ethnic minorities; and discrimination against homosexuals also were problems. The government restricted labor rights. Child labor, slavery, and forced labor, including forced child labor, were reported to be problems.

The government took significant steps during the year to improve citizens' understanding of their specific human rights and protections through publication of its own human rights report. The government also conducted training sessions throughout the country on the provisions of the penal code scheduled for implementation in 2007.

The United States promoted its goal of strengthening democratic institutions and improving respect for human rights by actively engaging officials from all levels of government, local and international NGOs, and members of civil society and the media.

The United States worked to support democratic processes in the country. In preparation for the municipal and legislative elections slated for June 2007, the U.S. Government continued to work with key officials to ensure the timely and effective implementation of the independent electoral commission. U.S. officials met repeatedly with high-level members of the government, including President Biya, to urge that concrete action be taken to reach the government's stated objective of holding free and fair legislative and municipal elections in 2007. The United States worked with donors and the government to reform the electoral process, especially the effort to register voters and develop a new electoral code by 2007. U.S. officials attended high-level working-group meetings, whose participants included members of the UN Development Program and European Union, to coordinate policy on finance, governance, and assistance expenditures in support of the election. The United States provided support for an October meeting of a parliamentary caucus on environmental protection, which brought together lawmakers, NGOs, and citizen groups to address good governance and environmental issues. In November politicians attended a two-day event sponsored by the U.S. Government on midterm elections in the United States, which included a pre election watch, post-election wrap-up, and a discussion of the issues with the ambassador and other U.S. officials.

The United States promoted citizen involvement in the democratic process. In a November address the ambassador stressed the need for science-based decision-making in government and the public's right to know the reasoning behind policy decisions. The U.S. Government funded local NGOs working to promote civic education in electoral law and to train student leaders in advocacy, lobbying, and nonviolent strategies to effect change.

The U.S. Government promoted continued media development by providing grants to two nationwide media associations for extended training with a journalism expert. The United States cosponsored training for journalists on investigative reporting, ethics, and news reporting, as well as two workshops on editing with a journalism expert. During each training session, the role of the media and corruption was discussed. The U.S. Government also gave several grants to media organizations to discuss issues including the environment, women, and political involvement.

Following the 2000 law authorizing the creation of private radio and television stations, the U.S. Government continued to press the government to issue licenses during the year. The United States also supported completion of the development of a labor standard agreement for journalists.

The United States supported civil society by awarding grants to support local NGOs implementing projects promoting good governance and the rights of women and children.

To promote due process and respect for the law, the U.S. Government funded a local NGO that helped to disseminate the new criminal procedure code. One of the major U.S. priorities was to push for the elimination of corruption in all aspects of life. To this end, the ambassador held press conferences and frequently raised the issue with government and civil society actors. In a December speech delivered before the prime minister and cabinet, the ambassador praised the early ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption as a strong indicator of the government's commitment to making progress against corruption and called for additional progress.

The United States worked with the military and police to curb human rights abuses. To foster more professionalism in the security forces, the U.S. Government sent

members of the armed forces to military schools in the United States, where they studied civil-military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination to civilian authorities, and a broad range of other legal and human rights topics. The program included additional opportunities for engagement in outside programs. The United States also funded the International Law Enforcement Academy, which provided law enforcement instruction to local law enforcement authorities.

The U.S. Government funded several local NGOs involved in human rights issues, including one that provided an education program on the eradication of female genital mutilation to the Arabe Choa tribe of the Far North Province. U.S. Government support for the World Food Program's food assistance to primary schools in the extreme north and Adamaoua Province allowed 82,500 students from underprivileged households to attend school, in particular girls during the last three grades of primary school. The U.S. Government also provided aid to refugees, estimated to number 30,000. The United States provided a grant for assistance to a center to rehabilitate refugees who were victims of torture.

To support religious tolerance, the ambassador continued the annual tradition of hosting an Iftar dinner at his residence.

The United States sponsored several efforts to eliminate child labor. The U.S. Government continued to fund the West Africa Cocoa/Agriculture Project to eliminate child labor. At the end of the three-year project, the program had withdrawn 1,600 children from hazardous work in cocoa farms and prevented another 379 children from entering the workforce. In addition, the program provided education to more than 800 parents to enable them to seek income-generating activities and provided direct assistance to start such activities. The program also created a common initiative group of small holder tea farmers who produced and labeled their tea "Child Labor Free." Approximately 35,000 people have been directly sensitized about child labor in various project sites. On June 16, to raise awareness of the issue of child labor, the U.S. Government organized a high-profile fashion show, the screening of a labor documentary, and a handicrafts fair to demonstrate the value of teaching youth useful, viable skills. During the fashion show, rescued youth modeled apparel created by former child labor victims.

The United States worked to combat trafficking in persons. It implemented an antitrafficking program from April through March 2006 through Nkumu Fed Fed, a network of women's associations that fights against child labor, child violence, and child trafficking. The project addressed traditional practices that disadvantage young women and children, particularly in rural communities where employment and female literacy are low and poverty is rampant.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic is a constitutional republic governed by a strong executive branch and weak legislative and judicial branches. In 2005 the country held presidential and legislative elections that resulted in the election of General Francois Bozize, the country's former armed forces chief of staff, as president; in 2003 Bozize seized power in a military coup. National and international observers judged the elections to be generally free and fair. Fighting between rebels and government security forces resulted in numerous civilian killings and, along with widespread banditry and kidnappings by unidentified groups, caused the displacement during the year of approximately 185,000 persons. Analysts estimated that only 2 percent of the country's territory was under state authority. The government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in some areas, the government's respect for human rights deteriorated overall, and serious problems remained. Human rights abuses reported during the year involved the following: unlawful killings, torture, beatings, rape, and other abuses of suspects and prisoners by security forces; military impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces; prolonged pretrial detention and denial of a fair trial; restrictions on freedom of the press and movement; official corruption; societal violence, including female genital mutilation and discrimination against women and indigenous people (Pygmies); restrictions on workers' rights; and forced labor, including by children.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on supporting democratic institutions and practices, encouraging transparency and accountability in government actions and policies, endorsing respect for the rule of law, and advancing a more active role for civil society in the political process. After two and a half years of suspended operations due to security concerns, the U.S. embassy in Bangui, the capital, resumed operations in January 2005, but it continued to operate with a very limited permanent American staff during the year.

To strengthen the political process and promote democracy, the United States promoted good governance and transparency, increased civic education, and made efforts to strengthen the parliament, which was composed of largely inexperienced legislators and was susceptible to pressure from the executive branch. To support the parliament and help educate voters, the U.S. government funded a targeted radio series explaining the role of elected deputies. Under this program, a private radio station organized a series of live broadcasts called Your Seat in Parliament to promote open dialog among citizens from rural areas and their elected deputies in the National Assembly. The broadcasts, aired during a two-week period by Bangui-based and regional radio stations, explained the role of an elected deputy, how to get services from a deputy, and how to contact and visit the parliament. For the second straight year, the public diplomacy radio program proved to be a significant success in reinforcing democracy and helping newly elected deputies better understand their roles.

To help build an independent and professional media, the United States supported the country's association of journalists and newspaper owners. The United States supported this association by funding a five-day workshop for 15 provincial journalists. The workshop emphasized the value of creating articles of national interest from local stories; explained how to edit articles to conform to the norms of national newspapers; trained aspiring journalists in provincial towns to identify, write, and self-edit quality news stories; and allowed journalists to discuss professional ethics and freedom of the press. Furthermore, U.S. officials discussed press freedom concerns with local newspaper editors, radio broadcasters, and other journalists and raised these concerns, including reports of security forces threatening members of the media, with government officials. Government officials were receptive to U.S. concerns about press freedom, there were fewer reports of security forces intimidating journalists than in the previous year, and several journalists said press freedom had improved.

To support civil society U.S. officials met often with NGO leaders during the year, exchanged information about human rights abuses committed by security forces, and echoed NGO concerns in meetings with government officials. The U.S. embassy also evaluated the capacity and needs of domestic human rights NGOs to determine where U.S. embassy resources would have the greatest impact in strengthening civil society.

To promote respect for the rule of law, the United States supported the government's efforts to address the country's deteriorating security situation and impunity--particularly military impunity--through regular meetings with high-level officials.

To assist the government in addressing human rights abuses, U.S. officials worked closely with the government, local human rights NGOs, and other stakeholders to raise awareness of abuses committed by security forces and societal discrimination and violence. U.S. officials visited prisons and detention centers in the capital to monitor the treatment of several political detainees and then raised concerns about harsh detention conditions and the need for due process with the prosecutor general, the minister of justice, and other government officials. In addition the U.S. Government provided resources to organizations assisting displaced persons in the country. Furthermore, the U.S. embassy worked with ministers, parliamentarians, local NGOs, and domestic media to disseminate a French translation of the U.S. Government's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Following a roundtable involving U.S. officials and approximately 40 domestic journalists, two local newspapers published the report in installments over the course of several weeks.

To promote respect for labor rights, the United States encouraged the government to allow trade unions to function independently and continued to monitor child labor. Through a dialogue with high-ranking officials, the U.S. embassy helped raise the government's awareness of trafficking in persons and aided the government in creating a strategy to combat it. By year's end the government had prepared a national action plan to combat trafficking in persons. The U.S. embassy also made efforts to increase awareness of child labor and the problems faced by street children by discussing the issue with labor unions, the UN Children's Fund, and government officials.

Chad

Chad is a centralized republic; on May 3, President Deby was reelected to a third term in a seriously flawed election that was boycotted by the opposition. A referendum manipulated by the ruling party removed presidential term limits in 2005. Deby has ruled the country since taking power in a 1990 rebellion. Political power remained concentrated in the hands of a northern oligarchy composed of the president's Zaghawa ethnic group and its allies. The executive branch effectively dominated the legislature and judiciary, thereby eliminating potential challenges to a culture of impunity for the ruling minority. During the year the security situation sharply deteriorated as a result of fighting that involved rebel groups, government forces, armed militias, and civilians, mostly near the country's borders with Sudan and the Central African

Republic. By year's end hundreds of persons had been killed and injured, almost 50,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and more than 230,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur had sought refuge in the country, an estimated 110,000 citizens had been displaced by a security vacuum in the east, and numerous villages in the east and southeast of the country had been destroyed.

The government's poor human rights record deteriorated further during the year. Security forces committed numerous serious human rights abuses. The following human rights abuses were reported: limitation of citizens' right to change their government; extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings, and rapes by security forces; impunity for human rights abuses committed by members of the security forces; politically motivated disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions and lengthy pretrial and post-sentence detention; executive interference in the judiciary and lack of judicial effectiveness; official infringement of privacy rights including illegal searches, confiscation, and wiretaps; limits on freedom of speech and the press and freedom of assembly, including harassment and detention of journalists; widespread official corruption; violence and societal discrimination against women, including the widespread practice of female genital mutilation; child abuse; slavery; trafficking in persons; and forced labor, including the use of child soldiers and other types of forced and abusive child labor.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in the country focused on strengthening the institutions necessary for a stable democracy, such as civil society and a free, fair, and professional press. The U.S. Government focused on government institutions by promoting a more professional military, promoting transparency in governance, strengthening the National Assembly, engaging directly with key government officials, and improving interaction between the government and human rights groups. Efforts were also made to strengthen the credibility and capacity of civil society groups and governmental institutions in addressing human rights abuses, including involving them in visits of high-level U.S. Government officials. The U.S. Government encouraged human rights groups and other civil society organizations to become a resource for both the government and citizens on human rights issues.

The support of free and fair elections and civic education were an important part of the U.S. strategy for democracy promotion. U.S. officials met throughout the year with members of the political opposition to encourage active political dialogue and raised the need for such dialogue and credible elections at the highest levels within the government and ruling political party. The ambassador's Independence Day speech stressed the importance of free and fair elections as key to building a viable democracy. The U.S. Government implemented a program to improve the teaching of civic education in schools by funding the printing of 35,000 locally edited civic education textbooks. It also facilitated dialogue by creating opportunities for activists and government officials to interact in professional and social settings to discuss, among other things, the importance of democratic governance. In addition, approximately 25 U.S. officials and Chadian employees of the U.S. embassy monitored polls in N'Djamena during the May 3 presidential election.

Strengthening press freedoms and the media's ability to promote human rights and good governance was a high priority. The ambassador regularly continued to highlight press freedom and other human rights issues with government and civil society officials and during public ceremonies. The U.S. Government provided equipment and training to print and broadcast journalists. Thirty private and public press organizations received material support, including computers, generators, and motorbikes, to enhance their ability to cover key events. The U.S. Government also financed the creation of a private radio station in the far north, which has been broadcasting since February 2005, and actively supported the Arabic media, including three radio stations, six newspapers, and a nightly television news show.

The U.S. Government also highlighted the importance of professional collaboration for media. Journalists benefited from three training programs held in the country as well as in Nigeria and Cameroon. In addition, a prominent journalist participated in the Edward R. Murrow International Visitor Leadership Program on investigative journalism and ethics.

The U.S. Government worked to support the growth of civil society. It provided self-help grants to a number of civil society organizations throughout the year to support community initiatives.

The U.S. Government worked to promote the rule of law in the country. U.S. support for fiscal transparency included technical assistance to the Oil Revenue Management College, the mechanism that reviews projects financed by oil revenues to promote accountability. To promote transparency in other aspects of government budget management, a budget-training workshop was held October 17-20 for 80 parliamentarians, and computers and office equipment were provided to improve the National Assembly's ability to control and monitor the government's budget operations.

The continuing humanitarian crisis in Sudan deeply affected the country. The United States, which is the largest donor to humanitarian efforts, contributed personnel to the Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on Darfur and participated actively in the implementation of the Darfur Humanitarian Cease-fire Agreement, which includes regular meetings of a joint commission. The U.S. Government remained a key interlocutor between the government, Sudanese rebel groups, and the African Union on the Darfur peace process. The U.S. Government facilitated the work of human rights organizations and NGOs working to protect refugees. The U.S. Government also supported legal assistance for victims of human rights abuses through local human rights NGOs and selected a leading human rights activist, the president of the Chadian Human Rights League, for the International Visitor Leadership Program on human rights and good governance.

The U.S. Government used direct contact with soldiers, including training and visits by U.S. officials and the sharing of information on human rights violations with high-level government officials, to emphasize the importance of working together on human rights. The annual U.S. publication of the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices was used as a basis for collaboration. To date, government officials have been candid and responsive. Visiting congressional and military delegations supported the U.S. human rights agenda. The professionalization of the security forces was a key component of U.S. strategy for improving the country's human rights record. The U.S. Government funded 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. The U.S. Special Forces trained 170 members of the military during the year and provided follow-up training to an additional 170 members initially trained in 2004.

The U.S. government continued to provide support for the rights of women and children and worked to eliminate female genital mutilation. U.S. support to a local NGO resulted in the drafting and enactment of a law that criminalized the practice. In 2004 the U.S. government funded an education program to publicize and distribute copies of the law; the program was completed in 2006. In addition, U.S. officers hosted a child protection network that brought together concerned government officials, police, and NGOs on a range of issues affecting children. Congressional visitors also met with the key officials and NGOs on women's issues.

The U.S. Government encouraged public awareness of human rights. It promoted civil rights and civil liberties through civil rights education and a radio broadcast on human rights issues and civil liberties. This program was shared with other radio stations and translated into several local languages to help increase public awareness of basic human rights.

U.S.-Muslim outreach continued with a program for bilingual education with a respected local organization that promotes cross-cultural understanding. Two members of the High Islamic Council attended an international visitor program on leadership in the Muslim community. The program exposed Muslim leaders to Islam in the United States and focused on religious tolerance and interfaith cooperation.

The U.S. Government supported the government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and child labor, bolstering the government's efforts to protect victims of trafficking and enhance law enforcement's capacity to respond to trafficking cases. During the year the U.S. Government funded a UN Children's Fund project to create a child protection network to rescue and rehabilitate child herders, child domestics, and victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The U.S. government also covered the production costs of a locally made film that depicted the plight of child herders in the country.

Congo, The Republic of the

The Republic of the Congo is ruled by a government in which most of the decision-making authority is vested in the president, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who was elected in 2002. Independent monitors determined that the 2002 presidential elections and parliamentary elections for the Senate and the National Assembly did not "contradict the will of the people," although there were irregularities. While the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of security forces, uncontrolled and unidentified armed elements remained active in the Pool region, despite an ongoing demobilization and reintegration program.

The government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements, serious problems remained. There were reports that security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings, rapes, beatings, physical abuse of detainees and citizens, arbitrary arrest and detention, looting, solicitation of bribes, and theft. Mob violence, including the killing of suspected criminals, was a problem. Prison conditions were poor. The judiciary continued to be overburdened, underfunded, and subject to political influence, bribery, and corruption. Interference with personal privacy, as well as limits on freedoms of movement and the press, continued. Discrimination and violence against women; trafficking in persons; ethnic discrimination, particularly against Pygmies; and child labor also were problems.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy in the country focused on strengthening and building democratic institutions with the government, press, NGOs, and international organizations. The U.S. strategy for promoting human rights included U.S. support for numerous programs to reduce discrimination against indigenous persons, repatriate refugees, and provide medical care in the war-torn Pool region.

The United States continued to train community members to be more active, informed, and engaged in democratic decision making at the local, provincial, and national levels. In addition, efforts were underway to prepare for elections in 2007 and 2009.

Through demarches, discussions with the government, and cooperation with the international community, U.S. officials continued to stress the need for the government to increase transparency in accounting for oil revenues and other public funds. The U.S. Government partnered with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to promote anticorruption programs and fiscal transparency. The United States criticized systematic violations in the trial proceedings of anticorruption activists Christian Mounzeo and Brice Mackosso, who were arrested because of their investigation into the lack of transparency in the petroleum sector. U.S. officials delivered demarches at every level of government to encourage due process and discourage political interference in the trial.

The United States supported ongoing programs to better track and promote understanding of human rights. To build general awareness the U.S. Government focused its efforts on youth, women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. Other U.S. grants supported human rights education for the minority Pygmy population and protection of their environment and way of life.

Through civil-military dialogue and military training exchanges, the United States encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism, and respect for human rights. During the year programs continued to reintegrate rebel militia members into civil society and to disarm combatants who remained active in the Pool region, although progress was slow. The U.S. Government continued to support an English-language training program for military officers to provide the basis for other types of military training. The United States also sponsored the training of 12 law enforcement officials in midlevel leadership, cyber crime, and investigation.

To promote worker rights, the United States funded the third year of a three-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization to demobilize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate child soldiers into their former communities. The program involved education, training, financial support, and community strengthening. The initiative focused on legislation, procedures, monitoring mechanisms, and expertise of government institutions to address child soldiering. The program continued to facilitate and support the economic reintegration of former child combatants.

Congo, The Democratic Republic of the

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a nominally centralized republic. Following five years of devastating civil war, the three-year transitional period drew to a close with multiparty presidential and National Assembly elections on July 30 and presidential runoff and provincial assembly elections October 29. The elections, which international observers considered credible, were the first democratic elections in more than 40 years and involved the participation of more than 17 million voters (out of 25 million registered). The transitional government continued to make moderate progress in unifying and stabilizing the country, but several armed groups continued to operate outside government control, primarily in the east, despite government efforts to disarm, detain, or integrate them. In all areas of the country, the human rights record remained poor, and numerous serious abuses were committed. Unlawful killings, disappearances, torture, rape, and arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces increased during the year, and the transitional government took few actions to punish violators. Other serious problems were harsh and life-threatening conditions in prison and detention facilities; prolonged pretrial detention; lack of an independent and effective judiciary; and arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and home. Security forces continued to recruit and retain child soldiers and to compel forced labor by adults and children. They also continued to abuse press freedom, particularly during the election campaign. The transitional government continued to restrict freedom of assembly and movement, government corruption remained pervasive, and security forces restricted NGOs. In addition, societal discrimination against women and ethnic minorities, trafficking in persons, child labor, and lack of protection for workers' rights continued to be pervasive.

The US Government employed a multifold strategy to promote human rights and democracy. The US Government provided technical, logistical, and material support to the transitional government and the Independent Electoral Commission to promote free and fair elections. The strategy also advanced accountability for human rights abuses through support for legislation against trafficking in persons and sexual violence and for the development of a legal framework to end impunity. It worked to build government capacity to consolidate peace, deter conflict, and prepare for the transition to democratic governance. The US government also provided assistance to victims of human rights violations and training and education programs to combat the pervasive culture of impunity.

The United States undertook several efforts to strengthen the political process and promote democracy. The US Government continued to participate in the International Committee to Accompany the Transition and several multidonor commissions that guided the electoral process. The electoral law, drafted with assistance from US technical experts and adopted by the transitional parliament, established a legal framework for universal suffrage, vote secrecy, and the direct election of the president and members of the national and provincial assemblies.

The United States supported several initiatives to raise voter awareness of the democratic process. US programs reached more than two million voters nationwide through community seminars, workshops, and other civic education activities. More than 650,000 citizens benefited from a two-month voter outreach and training campaign conducted through riverboat stops along the Congo River.

US funding supported the electoral commission's organization of nationwide elections in July and October. US assistance provided the commission with security surveillance systems, communications equipment, voter education materials, ballot boxes, and voting booths, in addition to facilitating transportation of materials to various locations in the country. US programs also helped train more than 40,000 local NGO election observers and more than 100,000 political party poll-watchers. Furthermore, the United States provided funding to many prominent international election observation missions that fielded more than 200 election monitors. During the July elections, 40 US officials served as observers around the country, and 20 US officials monitored polls in Kinshasa during the October vote.

To promote media freedom and independence, the United States held a series of workshops throughout the country to help journalists improve their political reporting. Twelve workshops in Kinshasa, as well as a computer/Internet training course in the interior, assisted nearly 500 journalists. The United States provided funding to the High Media Authority--the country's quasi-governmental media watchdog--that enabled the organization to reconstitute archives that were destroyed after its headquarters was looted in July. One journalist traveled to the United States to attend the Edward R. Murrow International Visitor Leadership Program.

The United States assisted several local NGOs to promote the culture of democracy and human rights. One US-funded, Kinshasa-based organization produced educational skits on democratic principles for television broadcasts. Other groups supported by the United States developed radio broadcasts and other printed materials highlighting voter rights and the role of women and youth in society.

During the year an additional Democracy Resource Center opened in the central Kasais Region, bringing the number of such US-funded centers to six throughout the country. The centers became hubs for local NGOs to gain access to electoral information otherwise unavailable to them. In addition, US-supported NGOs mobilized civil society leaders to work toward reducing political tensions prior to national elections, encourage voter participation, and disregard messages of so-called election "spoilers" inciting hatred and violence.

The United States took several steps to facilitate strengthening the rule of law. US-sponsored technical experts contributed to the drafting of several key pieces of

legislation ultimately passed by the transitional parliament. In addition to the Electoral Law, legislators passed the Law on Sexual Violence and the Law on the Independence of the Judiciary. These laws increase human rights protections, identify crimes of sexual violence punishable by law, and codify judicial independence. Other legislation drafted during the year with the help of US assistance included laws on the rights of the political opposition, the creation of the High Magistrates Council, and further legislation on the development of new court systems. These bills were expected to be introduced in the new parliament in 2007.

The United States supported training that provided logistical and technical assistance to local anticorruption committees that engaged civilian, judicial, religious, and military authorities in the anticorruption effort. Activities in this sector continued to reduce economic barriers to transport and commerce along the Congo River and sought to end the misuse of public resources and the culture of criminal impunity.

The United States focused much of its efforts on assisting the government and NGOs in addressing human rights abuses and aiding victims of those abuses. The United States participated in several multidonor commissions that addressed human rights abuses by the military. In addition, multiple US-funded NGOs provided legal support and other services for survivors of gender-based violence. US grantees expanded support to more than 10,000 female survivors of torture, rape, and abduction, particularly to assist victims in pursuing legal and judicial strategies. Other activities by US grantees included strengthening technical capacity among prosecutors, building public and official awareness of such crimes, and advocating an end to sexual and gender-based violence through policy reform. In Maniema Province, one US-funded NGO helped torture victims receive legal assistance during the year and organized workshops to disseminate copies of legislation and international agreements on human, women's, and children's rights. Another US-funded NGO in South Kivu Province aided 246 victims of sexual violence by providing medical help, trauma counseling, and training in human rights advocacy and education.

A variety of national and international NGOs received US technical assistance and training to deal with the growing problem of separated and abandoned children. Many of these youths were stigmatized and unable to reintegrate into their communities because they were once child soldiers, gang members, internally displaced, child laborers, accused of witchcraft, or have disabilities. The United States worked to prevent child abandonment by establishing Child Protection Networks, assisting economic development in at-risk areas, and rehabilitating schools.

The United States funded a regional initiative to demobilize and rehabilitate child soldiers and reintegrate them into their communities. During the year approximately 7,000 former child combatants were demobilized, in part through this initiative. This program addressed the many needs of child soldiers through legislation and monitoring mechanisms and by strengthening the capacity of government institutions to help former child combatants. It also supported the economic reintegration of former child combatants through education, training, financial support, and community-strengthening.

Activities to enhance labor rights received support through US funding of initiatives that promoted industrial harmony and conflict resolution. One program worked with employers, the government, and unions to settle differences and disputes.

Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire is a democratic republic. In 2000 Laurent Gbagbo, candidate of the Ivorian People's Front, became the country's third elected president. The election, which excluded two major parties, was marred by significant violence and irregularities. The country remained divided between the government-controlled south and the rebel New Forces-held north. The government's human rights record remained poor. The following human rights abuses were reported: restriction of citizens' right to change their government; arbitrary killings, including summary executions, by security forces, pro-government militias, and student groups; disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment by security forces, pro-government militias, and a student group; deplorable prison and detention center conditions; security force impunity; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair public trial; arbitrary interference with privacy; police harassment and abuse of non-citizen Africans; restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, peaceful assembly, association, and movement; official corruption; discrimination and violence against women; female genital mutilation; child abuse and exploitation; trafficking in persons; forced labor, including by children, and child labor. Rebels were responsible for arbitrary killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention, rape, and ad hoc justice.

The U.S. strategy to promote human rights and democracy included support for national reconciliation, strengthening of the democratic process and civil society, and combating trafficking in persons and child labor. The ambassador regularly engaged the president, all political parties, and rebels to advance the political process, reconcile the country, and support free and fair elections scheduled for October 2007.

To promote democracy, the United States supported UN efforts to extend the mandates of the president and prime minister for another year and to enhance the authority of the UN high representative for elections. The United States funded a program in the troubled western region to promote reconciliation and alternative dispute resolution and continued to sponsor an NGO's efforts to strengthen the electoral commission and to provide technical advice on reforming voter registration.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, U.S. officials cosponsored digital video conferences, book discussions, and roundtables for reporters and editors on the responsibilities of a free press. The ambassador frequently met with the press to discuss media freedom and human rights, met with winners of the nation's top journalism award, and underscored U.S. support for a free press. The United States sponsored a roundtable with leaders of local press and media monitoring organizations to discuss a code of conduct for the media and political parties and to ensure that media coverage of elections was balanced and did not generate political violence, press intimidation, or social instability. The U.S. Government continued to fund a training program for editors and journalists to encourage professionalism and to help depoliticize an often vitriolic press. U.S. officials hosted a gathering that resulted in the creation of a local NGO, which promoted training and professional development for a new network of female journalists. The U.S. Government provided extensive training on HIV/AIDS reporting for radio stations.

To help public and private sector leaders strengthen civil society, the U.S. Government utilized the international visitors program to send two members of the National Assembly to the United States on an exchange program that focused on legislative duties and the protection of minorities. During the year NGO activists, community leaders, and professionals participated in a variety of U.S. outreach programs on conflict resolution, civic education, transparency and good governance, and women and development. The programs involved the distribution of articles and books on human rights and democracy to key contacts throughout the country. The United States sponsored the activities of a local NGO and funded training seminars on leadership development for 60 female community leaders in Korhogo and Abengourou who sought electoral office. The United States also supported a group of civil society leaders in the creation of a local NGO that promotes democratic citizenship, volunteerism, and community development at the grassroots level.

Combating corruption in the judicial system is a key criterion for restoring the country's eligibility for preferential U.S. trade benefits. Senior U.S. officials have repeatedly stressed concern over corruption to high-level government representatives, including the president. After a case of judicial misconduct was resolved during the year, U.S. officials stressed that resolving cases was insufficient and that the climate of corruption at all levels of the government and the judiciary must end. The U.S. Government also worked closely with a local export promotion agency to underscore U.S. concerns about corruption and child labor in the cocoa producing sector.

To promote human rights, the U.S. Government supported a sensitization and training program for community educators to combat female genital mutilation in the Abidjan region and in Korhogo in the north. The United States sponsored a program to provide training in health care and basic business management and education for young girls in Bouake who were forced to drop out of school because of the war. It also funded a project to open a new counseling center in Abidjan to provide rape victims, students, orphans, and displaced persons with medical, psychological, and legal assistance. U.S. officials led a round-table discussion on the rights of disabled persons with disabled activists, municipal authorities, and community leaders.

After the 2002 rebellion, the government targeted persons perceived to be supporters, who often were Muslim, for reprisals. Strong efforts by religious and civil society groups have helped prevent the crisis from becoming a religious conflict. U.S. officials hosted an interfaith roundtable with 50 women on ways to promote peace, reconciliation, and religious and political tolerance. The U.S. Government sent three religious leaders – a Muslim imam, Catholic priest, and Protestant minister – to the United States on an immersion program on religious tolerance in America, with emphasis on the separation of religion and state.

To combat child labor and trafficking, the United States funded a local NGO that provided literacy and vocational training to 40 young girls in Youpougon who were trafficked into prostitution. The U.S. Government continued to fund a child labor monitoring system that required the government to certify that cocoa beans and their

products have been grown or processed without any of the worst forms of child labor. The ambassador and other U.S. officials frequently spoke out against child labor and trafficking in conversations with government officials and rebel leaders. The U.S. Government also continued to fund programs to end child labor in the cocoa and fishing industries and a project to help remove children from the worst forms of child labor and to enroll them in school. The U.S. Government also supported a local NGO that promoted school enrollment and prevented child labor in a village in Oume district in the south-central region.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is nominally a multiparty constitutional republic. All branches of government are dominated by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and his inner circle, largely comprised of members of a sub-clan of the Fang ethnic group. The 2002 presidential election was marred by extensive fraud and intimidation, and the international community widely criticized the 2004 parliamentary elections as seriously flawed. During the year a law criminalizing torture was passed, reports of abuse decreased, and mid-level police officers received their first training on human rights; nevertheless, the government's human rights record remained poor, and the government continued to commit and condone serious abuses. The following human rights problems were reported: abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; torture, beating, and other physical abuse of prisoners and detainees by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; impunity; arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention; harassment and deportation of foreign residents; judicial corruption and lack of due process; restrictions on the right to privacy; severe restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; restrictions on the right of assembly, association, and movement; government corruption; violence and discrimination against women; trafficking in persons; discrimination against ethnic minorities; restrictions on labor rights and child labor; and forced child labor.

The first resident U.S. ambassador in more than a decade arrived in the country in November as a tangible symbol of increased U.S. interests in the country, including promoting respect for human rights and democratic reform. Increased engagement was fostered during the year through visits by other high-level U.S. diplomatic officials, including the assistant secretary of state for Africa, and senior U.S. military officers.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights aimed to strengthen the key government and civil institutions necessary for democratic progress. The strategy focused on addressing social needs, supporting anticorruption efforts, and promoting fiscal transparency in government ministries. In addition, the United States worked with opposition parties, civil society, and the press to strengthen their ability to contribute to the expansion of democracy and the promotion of human rights in the country. The United States pursued these objectives through active engagement with the government, opposition parties, the media, and community representatives.

To promote democracy, U.S. officials met with senior officials of all political parties and attended the national party congresses of the ruling party and opposition groups. U.S. officials urged the president and cabinet ministers to broaden political participation in the next election, and the U.S. Government awarded a grant to support an NGO's planned programs to promote electoral reform. U.S. officials also discussed the democratic process with diverse student groups and distributed election-related materials.

U.S. efforts to encourage press freedom occurred in an environment of tight government restrictions on the press and widespread self-censorship of journalists. Privately owned and independent media continued to be nearly nonexistent in the country, and there were no daily newspapers, bookstores, newsstands, or public lending libraries, except for the Spanish Cultural Center libraries in Malabo and Bata. U.S. officials met frequently with press association members, encouraged networking with international journalists' associations, distributed supporting materials, hosted workshops, and utilized public speaking opportunities to convey the importance of the media's role in building a democratic society. The U.S. Government hosted a two-day media workshop on topics including improving writing skills, generating a societal demand for news, and the effects of self-censorship. At a seminar at the National University, the ambassador spoke on the role of the media in developing democracies. A biweekly journal sponsored by the government began to include some articles that were more balanced and included constructive criticism of government practices for the first time.

There were no human rights NGOs in the country, and the process to register an NGO remained difficult. During the year U.S. officials underscored the importance of a vigorous civil society in public statements and in conversations with government officials. The United States engaged actively with UN organizations to promote human rights and with the government's Center for Human Rights and Democracy and the Interministerial Commission on Human Rights. The U.S. Government also facilitated the work of other bilateral and multilateral partners to enhance the capacity of civil society to ensure that activities were complementary and not duplicative or contradictory in message.

In support of the rule of law, two prominent U.S. judges visited the country and met with the president of the Supreme Court, the justice minister, and others to discuss judicial training needs and possible areas of cooperation and exchange. To curb corruption, U.S. officials regularly stressed the importance of transparency in public finance and the management of the oil sector at the highest levels of government. U.S. officials obtained government support for and participation in a two-day workshop on transparency and antibribery conventions and laws. National officials at the highest levels were present, and for many it was their first introduction to the country's own ethics law for public officials. U.S. officials distributed publications on good governance and engaged officials at all levels on the long-term economic benefits of a just application of the rule of law, particularly benefits related to the growth of a business environment.

U.S. officials also advocated on behalf of companies, organizations, and individuals subject to harassment, illegal seizure of property, and extrajudicial detention. In one case, such intervention resulted in a U.S. company recovering vehicles that had been seized illegally. Separate interventions also resulted in the release of citizens illegally detained for either political or personal vendettas.

The U.S. Embassy provided an outlet for vigorous and continuous on-the-ground promotion of respect for human rights, addressing violations such as torture, allegations of killings by security forces, and women's and minority rights. The ambassador regularly communicated U.S. concerns to government officials regarding individual cases of reported abuse of human rights. The interventions contributed to the president's June release of over 40 prisoners, many of whom were "prisoners of conscience" (political prisoners), in connection with his birthday celebration. Intervention by the U.S. Embassy -- and subsequently Amnesty International -- also influenced the release of four political activists detained illegally in October and reportedly abused in an attempt to extract confessions. According to credible international sources, the total number of political prisoners was between 50 and 100 at the end of the year. The government continued to refuse prison access to U.S. officials; however, the U.S. Government's known interest and communication with friends and relatives of prisoners reportedly helped maintain improved conditions for most prisoners, especially in the new facility at Black Beach prison.

During the year police began taking human rights training and classes that introduced them to the concept of community service for the first time, facilitated by the U.S. Government and conducted by a U.S. firm. The United States also helped the government to acquire and manage technical assistance with the goal of ensuring that social projects were planned, funded, and implemented in a manner that was transparent, efficient, and accountable to the citizens and government. This program, slated to last until 2008, was funded by the government and focused on accelerating investment in health, education, women's issues, and sanitation.

To promote religious freedom, U.S. efforts were focused on encouraging separation of church and state in private discussions. Unlike in previous years, churches were not compelled to display ruling party posters in places of worship.

During the year the government requested U.S. assistance in training security officers to implement the national antitrafficking strategy. The United States coordinated an assessment visit by a U.S. trafficking expert and awarded a small grant to the UN Children's Fund to assist the government's efforts to quantify the problem.

Eritrea

Eritrea is a one party state that became independent in 1993 when citizens voted for independence from Ethiopia. The People's Front for Democracy and Justice, previously known as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, is the sole political party and has controlled the country since 1991. The country's president, Isaias Afwerki, heads the party, the national legislature, and the military. The government continuously postponed presidential and national legislative elections; national elections have never been held. Despite international efforts to resolve the situation, an ongoing border dispute with Ethiopia seriously hindered international trade, affected the government's external relations, and was used by the government to justify severe restrictions on civil liberties.

The government's human rights record worsened, and the United States designated it as a Country of Particular Concern for the third consecutive year. The government continued to commit numerous serious abuses, including: abridgement of citizens' rights to change their government through a democratic process; unlawful killings by security forces; torture and beatings of prisoners, some resulting in death; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; executive interference in the judiciary and the use of a special court system to limit due process; government infringement on privacy rights; government roundups of young men and women for national service; arrest, incarceration, and torture of family members of national service evaders, some of whom reportedly died of unknown causes while in detention; severe restrictions on basic civil liberties, including freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion, particularly for religious groups not approved by the government; restrictions on freedom of movement and travel for diplomats, humanitarian and development agencies, and UN Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia personnel; government circumscription of NGO activities; insufficient resources devoted to countering violence and societal discrimination against women and the widespread practice of female genital mutilation; governmental and societal discrimination against members of the Kunama ethnic group and homosexuals; and limitations on workers' rights.

The U.S. strategy to promote respect for human rights and democracy included increasing access to information, providing opportunities for dialogue, and increasing understanding of human rights. The government, however, actively resisted U.S. efforts, ordered two U.S.-funded NGOs to cease operations during the year, and tightened restrictions on movement by foreigners, which prevented U.S. officials from working outside the capital. The government maintained there would be little or no change in its human rights practices until the country's border dispute with Ethiopia was resolved.

The U.S. Government sought to increase citizens' political and economic participation. It funded four NGOs to support community development programs that extended opportunities for grassroots participation by working with parent-teacher associations, water associations, and local health committees. In an effort to build support for democratic reform and human rights among citizen leaders, U.S. officials held regular functions for alumni of U.S. exchange programs to promote discussion of U.S. culture, democracy, human rights, and other issues. The U.S. Government arranged speaking engagements featuring U.S. speakers and broadcasts of the Africa Journal. The U.S. government recruited government officials and others for the International Visitor Leadership Program, although the government insisted on pre-approving all selections for the program.

In a country with no independent media, the U.S. Government worked to provide citizens with access to information. Through the American Center and three American Corners in Dekemhare, Keren, and Masawa, the U.S. Government provided access to materials on U.S. values, policies, and culture, as well as daily press releases and free access to the Internet. The United States also provided media materials to embassy contacts.

In conversations with officials at all levels, U.S. officials repeatedly stressed that addressing the government's human rights abuses--particularly widespread arbitrary arrests and restrictions on basic liberties--was vital to improving bilateral ties. However, following the July 2005 government request that the United States terminate all development activities in the country, U.S. development operations were phased out, and only a small humanitarian liaison office remained. The termination of U.S. development activities, many of which directly or indirectly supported the U.S. human rights strategy, resulted in fewer resources and opportunities to address human rights through programmatic means. Nonetheless, the U.S. Government increased its outreach by adding a new American Corner in Dekemhare, extending Internet access hours at the American Center, and focusing resources more closely on women, youth, minorities, and Muslim majority communities in Asmara. The United States funded programs to support the education of women and children, including funding a library for the deaf and a program through the NGO Self Help that provided training for indigent women.

U.S. officials worked to engage a wide range of government officials and members of minority religious groups to promote greater respect for religious freedom. The U.S. Government maintained sanctions in response to the government's continuing severe violation of religious freedom. U.S. officials consistently emphasized the importance of religious liberty for all faiths, including religious minorities.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a federal republic under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front coalition. In the May 2005 parliamentary elections, the ruling party won a third consecutive five-year majority, but opposition parties gained a large number of seats yielding the most pluralistic federal and regional parliaments in Ethiopian history. Post-election violence, however, led to the detention of a large number of opposition political figures and to charges of treason against some of their leaders. The country made notable strides during 2006 in increasing participation by opposition political parties in the federal parliament and in advancing political reforms through dialogue. At the same time, the government's human rights record remained poor in many areas. Human rights abuses reported during the year included the following: unlawful killings; beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of those suspected of sympathizing with or being members of the opposition; detention of thousands without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists for publishing articles critical of the government; restrictions on freedom of assembly and of association; violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation; exploitation of children for economic and sexual purposes; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities and against religious and ethnic minorities; and government interference in union activities.

U.S. strategy focused on several key goals: 1) strengthening democratic institutions by encouraging opposition leaders to participate in them, rather than boycotting; 2) advancing political reform and reconciliation by fostering dialogue between government and opposition representatives; 3) working with other donors to provide long-term assistance to strengthen the country's democratic institutions; and 4) obtaining the release of the thousands of detainees rounded up in late 2005 and during the year.

The U.S. Government played an active role in encouraging greater participation by opposition political parties in the federal parliament and in advancing political reforms through dialogue. U.S. officials also conducted mediation efforts between the government and opposition leaders to encourage a reopening of the political dialogue that had begun prior to the November 2005 violence. In part due to the diplomatic efforts of U.S. officials, most of the elected opposition members were seated in parliament by year's end, and an active interparty dialogue on key democratic reforms took place. The United States funded studies that provided a sound empirical basis for negotiations with government officials.

The United States and other donors began a coordinated program to support the House of Peoples' Representatives. The United States provided orientation training to all new members of parliament and specialized training to leadership, female members, and support staff. The training focused on improving the body's representational, legislative, and oversight functions, as well as developing good working relations between the ruling and opposition parties. The United States and other donors conducted a series of assessments and consultations to develop a five-year program of multilateral support to the house and the nine regional state councils. The United States also contributed to multi-donor assessments of the National Electoral Board, proposing both an initial program of reforms to improve the conduct of local elections and longer-term activities designed to bring the board's capacity up to international standards by the 2010 national elections.

The U.S. Government used the full range of diplomatic and programmatic support to promote media freedom and freedom of speech. In conjunction with the interparty dialogue on democratic reform, the United States funded studies leading to guidelines for a draft press law/ freedom of information act consistent with international legal and regulatory standards. The U.S. Government facilitated dialogue among media stakeholders on the draft press law, the proposed formation of a national press council, and a media code of conduct. The United States provided training in investigative reporting for professionals working for state media outlets in the Amhara Region and provided an English language fellow to teach at Addis Ababa University's graduate school of journalism. Public diplomacy funds allowed journalists, academics, religious leaders, and other opinion leaders to participate in international visitor exchanges. During the November visit of the head of the Voice of America's Horn of Africa Service, U.S. officials hosted a discussion on the journalistic profession and freedom of speech with local journalism students.

The United States sought to strengthen civil society's capacity to engage local government institutions effectively to improve the planning, implementation, transparency, and accountability of development projects and service delivery. For example, the establishment of the Community-Government Partnership Program enabled over 45,000 Parent Teacher Association members and education officials to receive training in school management, including rehabilitation of schools. The U.S. Government funded democracy and human rights projects that reached an audience of more than 10 million in seven of the country's 11 administrative regions. The United States provided funds to various local NGOs whose goals included human rights education, public dialogue, building sustainable government-civil society conflict management partnerships, accountability, and good governance.

To support the rule of law, U.S. officials issued public statements and lobbied the government for the release of political detainees, an effort that resulted in the release during the year of thousands of protesters and political activists and most opposition leaders detained after the 2005 elections, with the exception of nearly 200 senior opposition party leaders, media, and NGO representatives charged with treason and other serious crimes. The U.S. Government encouraged a group of local elders to open talks with the government to promote reconciliation and to obtain the release of the remaining prisoners. The United States called for a fair and speedy trial for high profile opposition leaders charged with treason, and a U.S. official attended nearly every trial session. The U.S. Government also funded a contract with an international NGO to monitor and evaluate the trial. U.S. officials visited the detainees and on one occasion intervened to obtain emergency medical care for one of them.

The United States assisted the government in developing the capacity to provide professional law enforcement services based on democratic principles and respect for human rights. The U.S. Government continued to fund a training and assistance program to enhance professional investigative and forensic capabilities, assist in the development of academic instruction for law enforcement personnel, improve the administrative and management capabilities of law enforcement agencies, improve police-community relations, and strengthen the capability to respond to new crime and criminal justice issues. In collaboration with a local NGO, the U.S. Government sponsored a historic countrywide meeting in Addis Ababa of all justice and security bureau officials, as well as prison administrators of the federal government from the nine regional states to discuss the granting of pardons. As a result of this effort, over 10,000 prisoners had been granted pardons by year's end.

The United States worked to address the serious problems of societal discrimination against persons with disabilities, violence against women, abuse of children, and trafficking in persons. A U.S.-funded project implemented by a local NGO began airing a 26-week radio series that advanced the rights of persons with disabilities. Another project by a local partner NGO supported the country's first-ever hot line to assist women facing discrimination and abuse. The U.S. Government also implemented three projects that addressed gender-based violence and sought to improve women's social and economic status. One successful project increased awareness of the dangers to women's and girls' health associated with female genital mutilation. The project results were significant: several hundred community members were persuaded of the ill effects of the practice and spoke out against the harmful traditional practice. Six Muslim leaders have committed to incorporate messages against female genital mutilation in their Friday sermons.

The U.S. Government promoted religious freedom and tolerance. Public diplomacy outreach to the Muslim community included a series of seminars at local universities to promote religious tolerance, a conference for university administrators to discuss rising religious violence on university campuses, and work with student leaders and faculty on the causes of religious and ethnic-based student violence.

The United States continued to fund a program focused on the large numbers of trafficking victims in country. The program included antitrafficking campaigns for the general population and government officials and included components on prevention, prosecution, and protection. The program strengthened the institutional capacity of concerned government authorities, local NGOs, and civil society to develop a labor migration policy and antitrafficking law for the prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers. Shelter, medical care, counseling, clothing, and hygiene items were provided in Addis Ababa to support the return and reintegration of trafficked victims.

Gabon

Gabon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency led by President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba and the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG). Legislative elections in December resulted in continued dominance by the PDG, which won two-thirds of the seats and another 16 seats for allies in a generally free and fair election. All parties participated in the election after the government met several opposition demands for electoral reform. In November 2005, Bongo, president since 1967, was reelected for a seven year term in an election marred by irregularities. The government's human rights record remained poor, although there were improvements in several areas. The following human rights problems were reported: limited ability of citizens to change their government; use of excessive force, including torture, on prisoners and detainees; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; an inefficient judiciary susceptible to government influence; restrictions on the right of privacy; restrictions on freedom of the press, association, and movement; harassment of refugees by security forces; widespread government corruption; violence and societal discrimination against women and non-citizen Africans; trafficking in persons, particularly children; and forced labor and child labor.

To promote human rights, U.S. strategy focused in part on diplomatic engagement regarding the legislative elections. The strategy also emphasized making the media more independent, fair, and professional and professionalizing the military. The strategy included advocacy and programs to combat trafficking in persons, especially of children.

To advance the political process and democracy, the ambassador met regularly with donor country counterparts to formulate a common strategy to encourage democratic reform. Prior to the legislative elections, U.S. officials discussed the importance of free and fair elections with national and local election officials, ruling party and opposition leaders and supporters, and other diplomatic missions.

To promote good governance, U.S. officials participated in monthly meetings with the official donor community and worked to ensure that support for good governance was a priority.

In advancing media freedom and freedom of speech, U.S. officials met frequently with members of the National Communications Council and other officials to discourage the closure of media outlets and to promote freedom of speech and of the press. The U.S. Government also helped fund a local media association's workshop on the management of a free and independent press.

To support freedom of association, U.S. officials attended labor conferences and met with labor representatives.

To strengthen rule of law, U.S. officials cooperated with other donor countries and international financial institutions to help combat corruption and promote transparency.

The U.S. Government worked with local officials to reduce human rights abuses. These efforts targeted law enforcement and military personnel. The U.S. Government maintained regular contact with the National Police and gendarmerie and sent officials from both organizations to the International Law Enforcement Academy to participate in an executive development program that included courses on human dignity and trafficking in persons. To increase respect for human rights within the military, the United States worked to foster professionalism by sending members of the armed forces and other government representatives to military courses in the United States and seminars sponsored by the African Center for Strategic Studies. These courses addressed civil-military relations, military peacekeeping operations, military subordination to civilian authorities, and a broad range of other legal and human rights topics. The United States continued its African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program to train a third local army battalion designated to serve in peacekeeping missions. Training included a special focus on human rights issues, civil-military relations, and the rule of law.

U.S. officials regularly discussed human rights with government officials and NGOs at all levels, and attended seminars and conferences promoting human rights and democracy. The U.S. Government worked with a new NGO dedicated to eliminating the practice of ritual child killing and funded a conference to raise awareness and develop a plan of action to fight the practice. The U.S. Government supported women's rights by funding an NGO that lobbies to protect widows from being evicted from their homes. The United States sponsored scholarships to help girls in needy families from both urban and rural areas complete primary education, with some resources specifically allocated to students in remote regions. During the year a pilot program was begun to reach out to marginalized Baka (Pygmy) children, who are often prevented from attending school.

The U.S. Government worked to promote respect for religious freedom. It maintained regular contact with all major religious groups, including Muslim organizations and U.S. missionary groups, to help reinforce the already tolerant religious environment.

Labor unions were among the strongest NGOs, and U.S. Government representatives met with union leaders and regularly attended labor conferences to promote free association and the importance of unions in a democratic society. The U.S. Government made combating trafficking in persons a high priority. The ambassador and other U.S. officials approached government officials at all levels, including parliamentary leaders, ministers, and the president, to discuss the need for further concrete

measures to combat trafficking. Recognizing the logistical difficulties faced by law enforcement agencies in housing, feeding, and eventually repatriating trafficked victims, the U.S. Government, in collaboration with the UN Children's Fund, helped the government to set up centers for trafficked children and provide training for new social workers. The U.S. Government also launched a successful media campaign, including television commercials, T-shirts, and billboards, to sensitize the population to the plight of trafficked children; maintained close contact with activists and NGOs working on the issue; and sponsored the creation of a national network of NGOs to combat child trafficking.

Guinea

Guinea is a constitutional republic in which effective power is concentrated in a strong presidency. President Conte won reelection in 2003 in an election boycotted by the opposition and criticized by international observers as neither free nor fair. The government continued to implement certain political and macroeconomic reforms begun in 2004, but serious human rights abuses occurred during the year. There were restrictions on the right of citizens to change their government. Security forces unlawfully killed, beat, and abused civilians, particularly detainees. Prison conditions were inhumane and life threatening. Impunity of alleged perpetrators of killings and abuse remained a problem. There were arbitrary arrests, prolonged pretrial detentions, and incommunicado detentions. The judiciary was subject to corruption and executive influence. The government infringed on citizens' privacy rights and restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement. Violence and societal discrimination against women, prostitution of young girls, and female genital mutilation were problems. Progress was made in combating trafficking of persons, but the practice continued, as did ethnic discrimination, antiunion discrimination, and child labor. Authorities took significant steps to improve freedom of the press by implementing a 2005 media liberalization decree and granting broadcast licenses to eight private radio stations, five of which are now operating. The government also agreed to some electoral reforms proposed by political parties and lifted some restrictions on freedom of movement.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on laying a foundation for a peaceful, democratic political transformation through support for constitutional processes, expanding national dialogue, strengthening local government, and decentralization. U.S. assistance programs increased citizen awareness of and demand for government transparency, accountability, and effectiveness by strengthening civil society's capacity to participate more actively in governance and public affairs. Through heightened military and diplomatic engagement, the United States encouraged constitutional civilian-led power transfer and succession. The U.S. Government also sought to encourage the potential stabilizing role of the military through engagement with civilian leaders and to promote civil-military relations, including political discussions and social exchanges, between the military and civilian groups. This dialogue strengthened consensus-building processes at the national, regional, and local levels. A comprehensive U.S. communication and public diplomacy strategy ensured that messages to advance freedom and democracy were included in all activities. The United States also expanded its outreach to youth, women, and Muslim religious leaders.

Promotion of democracy and human rights were the cornerstones of U.S. policy during the year. U.S. officials highlighted these priorities in speeches and meetings. The U.S. Government supported democracy by training citizens, locally elected officials, and representatives of government; by facilitating political dialogue; and by building a better-informed media and electorate. U.S. assistance sought to encourage citizen participation in local governance, supported improved political processes, including efforts to increase transparency in the electoral process, and encouraged NGOs to provide civic education and advocacy for citizen interests. The local governance program and civil society activities increased understanding of the electoral process by generating public interest, informing citizens of their voting rights, and equipping civil society organizations to act as formal election monitors for the upcoming legislative elections. Responding to the coordinated efforts of the United States and other international donors, the government agreed to a process to identify voters and ensure more transparent participation in legislative elections. U.S. funding supported projects that assisted the development of an inclusive voter registry, provided assistance and training to women's groups to increase women's participation in the electoral process, and provided technical assistance to initiate a new electoral commission. Support of civilian-military relations was a major component of U.S.-Guinean security cooperation and contributed to the development of democracy and protection of human rights. In June the U.S. Government sponsored a five-day seminar that brought together 45 high-ranking military officers and civilians from the parliament, political parties, and various government ministries to discuss the role of the military in a democratic society. The participants drafted an action plan to improve coordination between the military and civil society nationwide and formed a joint civilian-military follow-up committee that was extremely active in dialogues on political participation and in mediation between government, civil society, and trade unions. Ongoing U.S. military-to-military programs emphasized appreciation for rule of law and human rights.

US, UN, and European Union diplomatic efforts and program support contributed to the implementation of a presidential decree to open radio and television to private ownership, as well as to promote media freedom and freedom of speech in general. Through various training and capacity-building programs for media organizations, the United States worked to speed implementation of the decree. During the year the government granted licenses that enabled five private radio stations to begin broadcasting; by year's end, these stations were playing an influential role in informing the public. Public diplomacy programs encouraged individuals to express their views freely; to utilize their right to public information, especially information about government actions, policies, and programs; and to understand and utilize their right to change the government. These programs encouraged open discussion on all topics relating to bilateral relations and particularly international concepts of democracy and human rights. The U.S. Government sponsored the participation of NGO activists and government representatives in international visitor programs with human rights and democracy agendas.

In May, to celebrate International Press Freedom Day, the United States hosted a forum on the role of free press in a developing democracy. In conjunction with the Guinean Association of Independent Editors, over 100 journalists from the public and private electronic and print media collaborated to strengthen their capacity to promote democratic reforms. To promote civil-military understanding, the U.S. Government sponsored a workshop for journalists to improve the quality of media coverage of issues related to security and military affairs.

To strengthen civil society, the United States implemented a wide-ranging program involving a nationwide civic education campaign that included a series of town hall meetings, training in election procedures for political party officials in the country's interior, legal training for professional associations, and training on internal democratic governance and advocacy techniques for media professionals. All U.S. activities supported working with and strengthening local organizations. During the year the U.S. Government trained and strengthened over 748 community-based organizations. In addition, the United States worked with seven national civil society and other nongovernmental groups to help implement U.S. programs. Other donors and the government acknowledged that the organizations had increased their capacity as a result.

U.S.-sponsored local governance initiatives provided technical assistance, leadership development, and training to foster active citizen participation and improve performance of community management committees of local service institutions and rural organizations, resulting in increased institutional capacity at various levels of government and increased civil society advocacy capacity. U.S. involvement also produced a capable and registered local NGO and a national association of professional organizations that engaged civil society groups and reached nearly 175,000 persons.

The U.S. Government focus on strengthening the rule of law addressed one of the country's most serious problems: corruption. In November the United States funded a high-ranking 10-member delegation to the Transparency International Anticorruption Conference, which included senior members of government, civil society, and the media. Additional U.S. support enabled two government officials to attend a conference on the UN Convention Against Corruption held in Amman, Jordan. As a result of a U.S.-funded program, a national association of professional organizations was created to review and revise the laws regulating professional organizations. The U.S. Government also trained civil society groups in watchdog and advocacy skills aimed at demanding more accountability and responsiveness on the part of government. One successful result was a parent-teacher association reporting a case of the fraudulent use of education funds. The government official was sanctioned and forced to return the funds to the community for their intended use.

To combat torture and other human rights abuses in prisons, the United States funded a program that focused on the judicial process for approximately 70 percent of Conakry's prison population in preventive detention. Many of these persons remained in prison for years without being charged with a crime or having the opportunity to appear before a judge. During the year the United States worked with an international NGO on the Open Doors at the Central Prison initiative to bring attention to the plight of individuals in this prison and develop partnerships between the Ministry of Justice, prosecutors, attorneys, and judges to improve administration of case loads and speed up adjudication of specific cases of individuals held in pretrial detention.

The U.S. Government also funded projects promoting the rights of women, students, teachers, and victims of HIV/AIDS; combating female genital mutilation; and providing training in conflict resolution and responsible media. During the year one U.S. project focused on women in Fria, a mining town in the Lower Guinea region with the objective of preventing them from becoming victims of violence and provided seed money to establish a clearinghouse for information on issues such as marital abuse, female genital mutilation, forced and underage marriage, sexual harassment, safe sex, and family planning. The United States also financed the Committee for

Entente and Conflict Prevention in N'Zerekore, one of the most conflict-prone areas of the country. The committee launched a grassroots training program to encourage the population to exercise citizenship and practice democracy as they developed sustainable solutions to conflict.

To promote the rights of women and minorities, the United States funded a program to reduce female genital mutilation in the Fouta region by employing an innovative approach to provide basic education on human rights and responsibilities, including democratic governance. The program resulted in the December declaration of 150 communities supporting an immediate end to the practice as well as an end to early and forced marriages. With an estimated population of 150,000, these communities were empowered to make the bold statement supporting the abandonment of old practices in favor of new, collectively agreed behaviors. In March the U.S.-sponsored program for Women's History Month, "Building Communities Through Transformational Diplomacy," brought together young women from the Muslim Youth Association and leading women in politics and business. As a result of the program, participants created a women's club dedicated to advancing women's human rights and political participation.

To promote religious tolerance, the U.S. Government continued its partnership with the General Secretariat of the National Islamic League, with which it met regularly to discuss issues and develop programs of mutual interest. The United States funded a project to involve religious leaders in conflict prevention and resolution. Participants in the project relaunched the activities of the Interreligious Council of Guinea and were working to create a self-sustaining Islamic-Christian Institute. In September U.S. officials hosted an interdenominational Iftar, the first of its kind in the country. With prayers led by prominent members of Muslim and Christian communities, the guests celebrated common themes of tolerance, dialogue, and interreligious and interethnic understanding.

The U.S. Government supported projects to help develop the country's labor movement and combat trafficking. A U.S.-funded project brought together the largest inter-union coalition to implement a joint training and capacity-building program in all regions of the country to educate the coalition's base concerning union rights and freedoms and grassroots organizing. The United States continued its support for the Preventive Activities and Training that Work for at Risk Youth program that provided work and life skills training for 5,000 youths who were at risk of militia recruitment in violence-prone regions, as well as conflict mitigation training for village leaders in the forest region. The Child Labor Education Initiative Technical Assistance Program continued to provide formal and informal life-skills education, enroll children in school, and raise family member awareness to reduce vulnerability of children who were at risk of being exploited for labor.

During the year the United States supported the government's efforts to improve its record on trafficking in persons. U.S. officials continued to work closely on projects, funded in 2005, that focused on preventing trafficking through a national public awareness campaign and protecting street children and other potential victims. To complement these projects, during the year the United States awarded a grant to launch the Strengthening Communities against Trafficking and Exploitation Initiative. In accordance with an action plan developed in partnership with government officials, the initiative was aimed at reducing the number of children trafficked from rural communities to urban centers in Guinea and Mali through a prevention program carried out in both rural and urban areas.

Kenya

Kenya is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. The president is both chief of state and head of government. In 2002 citizens elected Mwai Kibaki of the opposition National Rainbow Coalition as the country's third president. Observers concluded that the elections reflected the popular will and were free and fair. The government in many areas respected the human rights of its citizens or attempted to institute reforms to address deficiencies. However, serious problems remained, particularly with regard to abuses by the police. The following human rights problems were reported: unlawful killings, torture and use of excessive force by police; police impunity; harsh and life threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; executive influence on the judiciary; incidents of disrespect for freedom of speech and the press; government corruption; abuse of and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation; child prostitution and labor; trafficking in persons; vigilante justice; interethnic violence; and lack of enforcement of workers' rights.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused on strengthening the government's efforts to increase the effectiveness of parliament, promote a competitive and fair electoral process in the run-up to and during the 2007 general election, expand media freedoms, address and prosecute corruption, reduce trafficking in persons, train police and prosecutors, and mitigate regional conflicts.

The U.S. Government worked to build sustainable democratic principles and behaviors in the country. Building on the successful administration of the November 2005 constitutional referendum, the United States continued to engage with political leaders and government officials, encouraging them to ensure that campaigning and polling were peaceful, lawful, transparent, and fair. In public statements the ambassador urged citizens to reject narrow regional and ethnic political agendas in favor of a national political agenda in the upcoming election. The United States continued to provide assistance to improve electoral administration, including improving the administrative capacity of the electoral commission to increase, among other things, the use of appropriate information technology to strengthen transparency, competition, and accountability in electoral processes. U.S. efforts were particularly strong during and after July's by-elections in five constituencies in which U.S. officials observed the polling. U.S. observers collaborated with other diplomatic observers to submit a report of their findings to the electoral commission and to release a public statement.

The U.S. Government sent a member of parliament to participate in the International Visitors Program in the United States to observe the U.S. mid-term election. Government officials also participated in a U.S.-sponsored peer-to-peer democracy program. Through the program, members of parliament received a delegation of U.S. members of Congress in July and traveled to the United States in September for a reciprocal visit. The United States also provided funding to a local NGO for a project to encourage youth participation in electoral politics. Support to parliament included strengthening the committee system, especially the key oversight committees. U.S. assistance was instrumental in passage of legislation to create the budget committee, and the United States also provided technical assistance to the new office of fiscal analysis, which oversees the national budget.

The United States supported a strong and free media through outreach to journalists. In May the United States organized the largest conference on press freedom that it had ever held in east Africa. The conference came at a particularly relevant time, as the entire region grappled with media issues, including proposed legislation that would restrict press freedoms. The U.S. Government also trained nearly 60 journalists to report more effectively on human rights and HIV/AIDS. The ambassador released a strongly worded statement against a March government raid on the independent Standard Group, the country's second largest media company. The U.S. Government also organized a highly publicized visit by Senator Barack Obama to the Standard Media offices in August to show solidarity for press freedoms.

The United States worked to highlight the importance of civil society. U.S. officials engaged frequently with members of civil society organizations and assisted organizations that focused on conflict management, peace building, and violence against women and children. The ambassador hosted an event for civil society leaders in September to raise their profile. During a November speech, he applauded the dynamism and vibrancy of civil society.

Curbing corruption continued to be a key U.S. objective. In the aftermath of the official release of information implicating high-level officials in corrupt government procurement scams, the U.S. Government coordinated closely with other donors to convey to President Kibaki the need for aggressive prosecutions and greater legal and political accountability in these cases. Public and international pressure subsequently led to the resignation of three ministers, although two were reinstated in November. In May the U.S. Government revoked the visa privileges of four individuals in connection with multiple corruption scandals. After credible allegations emerged in April that one or more local banks were involved in major money laundering operations, the ambassador and other U.S. officials called on authorities to crack down on the problem and to enact effective antilaundry legislation.

The United States continued to work with the government's specialized unit on anticorruption, economic crimes, serious fraud, and asset recovery. It also supported efforts to enhance the criminal justice sector's consistency and efficiency, with a special focus on the public prosecution department. In July the United States undertook a nationwide assessment of the public prosecutor's department to create a strategy for the development of training programs. In July and August the U.S. Government participated in a peer review of the department, assisting in the development of a code of ethics and a policy manual that is binding upon all prosecutors. The United States also provided small grants to local NGOs for projects to increase citizen participation in the management of government funds.

The United States worked to decrease the instances of serious human rights violations in the country and provided a small grant to a local NGO for a project to raise awareness of respect for human rights through a nationwide art and essay competition.

The ambassador and other U.S. officials frequently engaged with religious leaders for frank exchanges on issues of mutual concern. U.S. officials met regularly with Muslim leaders on the coast, in the northeast, and in Nairobi to discuss their sense of marginalization among Muslim communities and to respond to questions about U.S. policy. In addition U.S. officials have shared Iftar meals with the Muslim community to enhance cross cultural exchanges, and funded computer support for academic exchanges at a Muslim college.

The United States worked to promote acceptable labor practices, including the elimination of child labor. It continued to fund a labor rights organization that promoted independence and good governance of trade unions, national and regional democracy and anticorruption efforts, improvement of industrial relations, HIV/AIDS workplace programs, and implementation of international labor standards. The United States also continued to support a multiyear international project to reduce the incidence of the worst forms of child labor. A total of 20,000 children were targeted for withdrawal and prevention services, and the project aimed to provide access to technical and vocational training for 30,600 HIV/AIDS-affected children working, or at-risk of working, in the worst forms of child labor.

The U.S. Government also worked to combat trafficking in persons. The United States established a forum for donors to coordinate better antitrafficking assistance and supported efforts to strengthen a network for collaborative antitrafficking efforts by the government and civil society. The United States also awarded small grants to two local NGOs for projects which include victims' assistance programs and public awareness of human trafficking among the vulnerable refugee populations.

Liberia

Liberia is a constitutional republic, and in November 2005 Unity Party candidate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was declared the winner of multiparty presidential elections, which domestic and international observers considered free and fair. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, problems persisted in some areas. Deaths from mob violence increased. Police abused, harassed, and intimidated detainees and citizens. Prison conditions remained harsh and incidents of arbitrary arrest and detention occurred. Lengthy pretrial detention, denial of due process, and fair public trial were problems. Liberian National Police officers on several occasions assaulted journalists and a human rights worker. Some incidences of trial by ordeal were reported. Corruption and impunity continued in many levels of the government. There was violence against women, especially reports of rape. The practice of female genital mutilation remained widespread. Child abuse, trafficking in persons, and racial and ethnic discrimination were problems. Instances of child labor were reported, especially in the informal sector. Child neglect and child abuse continued to be problems. There were some instances of ethnic tensions during the year, but none that resulted in violence.

During the year the U.S. strategy to promote human rights in the country focused on supporting programs to consolidate peace, promote economic recovery, and foster respect for human rights while working to combat corruption and strengthen a weak rule of law that undermined peace and security. Through various programs, the United States helped improve police and judicial professionalism, prison conditions, anticorruption and good governance efforts, voter and civic education, child protection, capabilities for combating trafficking in persons, religious freedom and tolerance, and respect for the rule of law. The United States also supported human rights organizations involved in public outreach and promoted human rights education. U.S. officials routinely and publicly highlighted the need for transparency and accountability in all branches of government and worked privately with officials, NGOs, and international organizations to identify areas of concern and encourage systemic reforms.

In support of democracy and the political process, the United States sponsored programs designed to educate citizens, strengthen political parties, advise elected officials and political party leaders as well as the National Elections Commission and supported legislative by-elections throughout the year. U.S. programs strengthened the election process through increased assistance to local political parties, civil society, and the National Elections Commission and supported a consultative workshop that reached 80 percent of the legislature's political parties. Legislators received U.S. Government assistance through training sessions designed to increase knowledge of constituent outreach and long-term strategic planning. The United States supported a strategic planning seminar for the National Elections Commission that included post-election refocusing, commission rightsizing, and planning for local elections that brought together members of the commission, legislators, executive branch members, and political party representatives. The U.S. Government also assisted the Elections Commission audit department in effectively auditing party and candidate campaign finance reports. The United States supported post-election civic education outreach in five counties as well as voter education efforts for the Margibi and River Cess county by-elections, and U.S. officials observed all by-elections during the year. A U.S. Government official spoke at the results of the Margibi county by-election and commended election officials and the political parties on a free and fair election. In January Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and First Lady Laura Bush attended the inauguration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in support of democratic presidential elections.

During the year the United States promoted media freedom and freedom of speech in the country. In collaboration with the Press Union of Liberia, the United States funded media training, which included education and training for reporters to deepen their substantive knowledge on human rights-related issues as well as improve accurate reporting. For example the United States provided budgetary support for the UN Mission in Liberia radio program that broadcast news and educational campaigns related to the peace and development process nationwide. U.S. officials also promoted human rights and democracy messages through taped or live UN radio programming and interviews on anticorruption and human rights. In addition the United States assisted the leading independent station, Star Radio, in establishing ties with three community radio stations outside the capital to broadcast in local languages, giving rural communities access to public service messages on human rights and rule of law. To disseminate information about government policies, the United States supported the establishment of an executive mansion press corps chosen from accredited journalists from major media outlets. The United States funded a program through the University of Massachusetts, Boston to strengthen media institution management and business planning. The United States utilized the U.S. International Visitor and Leadership Program, and internet research training to strengthen media capacity.

The United States supported civil society organizations that promoted human rights, peace, and government transparency, and contributed to peace building efforts through community development, literacy, rural radio programs, and peace councils. For example the United States supported the Liberia Community Peace Building and Development Program, which has mobilized 200 war-affected villages for peace-building, infrastructure, agriculture, and income-generating activities. The Locally Initiated Networks for Community Strengthening Program, also supported by the United States, facilitated grassroots reconciliation and peace constituencies in 70 villages in Lofa County. U.S. officials spoke at a number of civil society workshops and discussed the importance of civil society in a flourishing democracy. The United States supported a program to strengthen non-elite Muslim women's advocacy and civic participation skills to better meet basic needs in their communities. The United States also supported the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program, which seeks to create jobs and provide vocational training and psychosocial counseling for former combatants and other war-affected persons. Through a number of small grants, the U.S. Government supported local NGOs that educated communities on human rights, HIV/AIDS, reconciliation, and peace building.

Following the peace agreement in 2003, the United States, in coordination with UN mission and other implementing partners and donors, allocated significant resources to fund relief and reconstruction and to support police and judicial reform as well as rule of law programs. During the year these programs included a prison infrastructure project, a 10-person U.S. contingent to the UN police, and support for judicial sector reform. The United States supported five justice sector advisors who worked closely with the minister of justice, the chief justice, and the courts within the Ministry of Justice. Through these efforts the newly formed Public Defenders Office was instrumental in obtaining the dismissal of approximately 50 cases from 2004 and 2005 of prisoners held in pretrial detention beyond the legal limit. The United States also encouraged due process by sponsoring and participating in the launch of a youth-oriented campaign to assist the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is responsible for determining the root causes of the civil war.

Corruption remained endemic at middle and lower levels of government due to low civil servant salaries, a culture of impunity, and long delays in payment of wages. The governance and economic management assistance program placed internationally recruited financial controllers and management experts in the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank, other ministries, and state-owned enterprises to encourage transparency and accountability. This contributed to a 50 percent increase in government revenue during the year, allowing the government to improve on timely payment of salaries, pensions, and back wages. The United States worked with the Forestry Development Authority to ensure basic minimum labor standards for the industry, financial transparency, and conditions necessary for lifting UN sanctions on timber exports. The U.S. Government encouraged passage of the national forestry law, a precondition for full lifting of timber sanctions. The United States also assisted the Ministry of Lands, Mines, and Energy by funding a technical advisor to help the country comply with the Kimberly Process, an international certification program designed to prevent trade of "conflict diamonds." Compliance with the Kimberly Process is an important benchmark for lifting UN sanctions on export of Liberian diamonds. The U.S. sponsored programs to establish a legal aid clinic which included development of a training curriculum. In addition the U.S. Government provided subgrants to local NGOs to carry out legal assistance and advocacy for indigent persons and victims of human rights violations, including civic education and public awareness campaigns on national accountability, stability, and human rights. U.S. sponsored programs also supported the distribution of the Liberia Law Reports and Revised Liberia Codes to various organizations, and enlisted a pro bono mediation specialist who developed training materials, a manual, and conducted mediation training and law workshops.

U.S. Government assistance helped rehabilitate several overcrowded and dilapidated prisons.

The United States created a vetting database to register prospective recruits for the country's newly formed armed forces. The vetting process was used to thoroughly screen applicants and ensure that they were not involved in human rights abuses while serving in the previous armed forces. Even after passing extensive checks, recruits were on probation for one year. Each recruit received rigorous training, including 120 hours of classroom instruction on human rights, civilian governance of the military, and the country's history. This training is intended to help ensure that past human rights abuses by the military will not be repeated. In November the U.S. ambassador spoke at the first graduation about respecting civilian control of the military and respecting individual civil rights.

The U.S. ambassador spoke publicly and privately to encourage the legislature and other government agencies to address issues that primarily affect women, such as rape and female genital mutilation, as a national priority. Gender-based violence persisted in the country, and an increasing number of rapes were reported. The United States supported a conference and training on gender-based violence that brought together key representatives from local and international NGOs, the government, UN agencies, and donors. The conference provided the opportunity to develop, adopt, and secure a commitment to implement a comprehensive and multisector strategy and national action plan to combat gender-based violence in the country by relying on the coordination of legal assistance programs. To protect the large number of young, unemployed, and vulnerable women in the country, the United States supported an awareness campaign to help prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. The campaign included providing support to local and international NGOs in the creation of a referral mechanism for sexual exploitation and abuse cases.

During the year the United States promoted religious freedom through speeches and discussions. For example, U.S. officials organized an Iftar dinner to promote a dialogue with the country's Muslim leaders. U.S. officials also reminded the government of the importance of including nondenominational prayers in official ceremonies. In September the United States supported a panel discussion among religious leaders from the Islamic, Christian, and Baha'i faiths.

To combat trafficking and the worst forms of child labor, the United States supported a four-year program to eliminate exploitive child labor in Lofa, Nimba, and Montserrado counties. Through an international NGO, the United States funded a cross-border antitrafficking awareness program that reached out to communities in the country and Sierra Leone. U.S. officials encouraged the government to form a national antitrafficking task force, which the president appointed in October.

Madagascar

The Republic of Madagascar is a multiparty democracy governed by President Marc Ravalomanana, who was elected to a second term in December, and his party, Tiako-I-Madagasikara. The presidential election was generally free and fair, although international and domestic observers noted the need for a number of electoral reforms. The following serious human rights problems were reported during the year: use of excessive force by security forces to disperse demonstrators, resulting in death and injuries; harsh prison conditions, which resulted in deaths; arbitrary arrest of demonstrators; lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; official corruption; restrictions on freedom of religion; societal discrimination and violence against women; trafficking of women and girls; and child labor, including forced labor.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key governmental and civil institutions. Democracy and governance sector programs worked to strengthen civil society; increase access to information; raise the skill level of journalists and media managers; promote women's rights; increase government transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs; and strengthen the government's capacity to address corruption. The United States worked in close coordination with the government to combat trafficking in persons and supported grassroots human rights initiatives.

The United States partnered with international donors to encourage free, fair, transparent, and peaceful presidential elections. The ambassador met with each of the 14 presidential candidates and wrote articles promoting democratic election processes. The United States funded five billboards and 3,000 posters that encouraged presidential candidates and citizens to peacefully accept election results. Some journalists attended U.S.-sponsored workshops on responsible election reporting. Both the ambassador and an American expert invited by the United States spoke about the importance of empowering opposition parties. The U.S. Government translated a civic education guide into Malagasy, distributed 10,000 copies to government, education institutions, NGOs, media, and the private sector, and sponsored the author to conduct nationwide speeches and workshops. The guide inspired a U.S.-sponsored weekly civic education program on the national radio station, which ran from July through October, as well as workshops throughout the country, daily call-in programs at local radio stations, and a public outdoor radio quiz. In November the United States also sponsored weekly national radio call-in shows on the national public radio station and eight private stations featuring high-profile government officials on voter education issues. The United States funded a media-monitoring project that showed the government fulfilled its responsibility to provide all candidates with equal access to public media. Civil society organizations around the country benefited from U.S.-sponsored technical election observation training. The U.S. also provided capacity-building training to the country's largest consortium of national election observers. The United States funded 2,000 local election observers and 25 U.S. teams, who were deployed to polling stations nationwide. The funding also extended the visits of international pre-election and election-day assessment teams. U.S. officials sent several local leaders to the United States under various international visitors programs to study transparency and good governance, engaging emerging Muslim leaders in the political process, and state and local government.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, U.S. officials in the country organized election-related programs for a weekly discussion group for English-speaking journalists to broaden their sources of information, as well as Internet chats for journalists on various democracy-related topics. World Press Freedom Day activities included a U.S.-produced nationwide live call-in television and radio show on the media. In May the United States sponsored two prominent local journalists to participate in a regional conference in Nairobi on the role of the media in a democracy, and some journalists participated in training with international experts on election reporting. The United States also sponsored the attendance of a journalist to a reporting tour for foreign journalists on women's empowerment and a workshop on journalism techniques in the south of the country. U.S. officials sent a local leader to the United States under the international visitors program to study investigative journalism.

During the year the U.S. Government sponsored programs to promote freedom of information. One of the most successful programs involved the creation of Radio Meva Ankarana, a rural radio station in the northern town of Antsaravibe, which transmitted human rights programming and health and environmental messages. The United States supported a multisector information service in eight focus regions to link civil society decision makers and government partners to sector-specific information sources. For the second year in a row, the U.S. Government's radio-corridor coordinator ensured greater access to radio in remote regions of the country. The coordinator's role included the dissemination of independent radio programming that included educational programs relevant to local populations.

The United States funded civil society groups working to improve human rights. Their efforts included support for a women's rights initiative that conducted public outreach activities to approximately two million people. This initiative also trained civil society organizations to implement advocacy action plans, and many organizations actively participated in public consultations with the Ministry of Justice. In addition the women's initiative trained 35 magistrates, who set forth a number of resolutions for the enforcement of international and regional conventions to finalize draft legislation proposals.

The United States provided anticorruption assistance to government organizations and civil society. U.S. funding supported the creation of a regional office of the anticorruption bureau to facilitate citizens' access to anticorruption mechanisms. The United States reinforced the capacity of anticorruption civil society organizations, including the local chapter of Transparency International and the Anticorruption Coalition. Other civil society organizations benefited from advocacy training on budget preparation and implementation at the communal level to promote public finance transparency and accountability, as well as communications training to implement anticorruption awareness campaigns. Anticorruption materials, including five different types of manuals, were produced and distributed to approximately 90,000 students and teachers of primary and secondary schools.

To promote respect for human rights, the United States regularly participated in a multilateral/donor country human rights working group, which conducted outreach to improve public understanding and discourse on fundamental human rights. This served as a significant forum for officials and civil society to discuss human rights issues, including citizens' rights to elect a government, health and the environment, prison conditions, good governance, and the rights of persons with disabilities. In December the working group conducted a series of awareness and educational activities for International Human Rights Week. A U.S.-funded NGO also began construction on a former community center to provide a place for residents to access more information about human rights. The United States worked to build the capacity of civil society groups, including organizations that dealt directly with the promotion of media freedom, freedom of speech, the rights of women and children, the rights of prisoners, the rights of people with disabilities, and the right to vote.

An arcane system of citizenship laws and procedures has created a significant number of stateless persons in the country. A large majority of these people are Muslims of Indo-Pakistani origin, many of whom have pending naturalization requests. During the year the ambassador regularly raised this issue with government officials and encouraged them to reform the laws and process the pending applications.

To promote religious freedom, in October U.S. officials hosted an Iftar dinner to recognize a traditional Muslim custom and increase awareness of religious understanding. In December the ambassador also wrote an opinion editorial, which was placed in several newspapers, stressing the importance of religious tolerance.

The U.S. Government continued to advance antitrafficking initiatives in close collaboration with the president's special antitrafficking committee. During the year the committee continued its comprehensive review of existing trafficking-related legislation, expanded its nationwide information campaign, and persisted in its efforts to rehabilitate child prostitutes in welcome centers. To support these efforts, the U.S. Government conducted an in-depth study of sex and labor trafficking in the country. A baseline survey conducted during the year to measure the public's understanding of trafficking issues will be used to tailor awareness-raising activities. The United States also worked with police to publish a training manual on the protection of minors for distribution to police brigades around the country.

Mauritania

Mauritania is a highly centralized Islamic republic ruled by a military junta led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Vall. On November 19 and December 13, voters turned out in large numbers to elect legislative and municipal representatives in elections deemed credible by international and domestic observers. In August 2005 the military overthrew former president Taya in a bloodless coup and established the ruling Military Council for Justice and Democracy, which dissolved the parliament and appointed a transitional government. In October 2005 the junta and transitional government released an election timeline that scheduled presidential elections in March 2007 and a return to civilian rule by May 2007.

The government's human rights record remained poor; however, there were some significant improvements. At year's end the military continued to control the government, limiting citizens' ability to change their government. Other abuses included harsh prison conditions, official impunity, arbitrary arrest, prolonged pretrial detention, executive influence on the judiciary, and restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion. There was a widespread public perception of governmental corruption and a lack of access to government information. Discrimination against women and female genital mutilation continued. Trafficking in persons, ethnic and racial tensions, and the political marginalization of largely southern-based ethnic groups were problems. Involuntary servitude, particularly in remote regions of the country, and child labor in the informal sector occurred.

Since the 2005 coup, the United States has limited its engagement with the military junta and suspended most non-humanitarian programs, including international military training, antiterrorism assistance, training in international criminal investigation, and foreign military financing. However, the United States has strongly supported the democratic transition and focused its strategy to promote democracy and human rights on ensuring free and fair elections. The strategy included a robust regimen of diplomatic engagement with the government, international partners, and the UN. In addition to actively promoting this democratization process, the U.S. strategy incorporated respect for fundamental human rights, developing civil society and responsible media, promoting religious freedom and tolerance, and combating forced labor, child labor, and trafficking in persons.

The United States repeatedly raised human rights and democracy issues at every level with the government throughout the year. In February a high-level delegation of U.S. officials also discussed human rights and democracy with military council leader Colonel Vall, various ministers, and representatives of political parties and civil society. The United States funded assistance projects in the areas of good governance, literacy, and the rights of women and children.

The United States funded and implemented programs to enhance the capacity and role of political parties and civil society in the preparation for elections. These programs involved town hall meetings concerning the role of women and youth in the political process, as well as various debates and training seminars on the role of political parties in shaping government policy, including election planning. Activities assisted NGOs in becoming more engaged in the current transition to democracy by actively serving as agents of change.

The United States actively engaged with the government, political parties, civil society, and media to support the democratic transition. The United States funded programs to train hundreds of national election observers and sent over 50 U.S. observation teams to monitor the June 25 constitutional referendum and the November 19 and December 3 municipal and legislative elections. The United States, the UN, and international partners successfully pressed the government to reopen voter registration lists in advance of November's elections, resulting in the registration of an additional 85,000 citizens.

In an ongoing effort to support an independent and responsible press, the U.S. Government celebrated World Press Freedom Day on May 3, bringing together more than 60 journalists to discuss media exchange programs, the new press freedom law, and the evolving role of the country's journalists. On October 25 and 26, the United States sponsored a two-day training workshop for a dozen television journalists. The workshop, one of the first of its kind in the country, focused on journalistic ethics, broadcast tradecraft, and techniques for effective electoral media coverage.

During the year the United States awarded international visitors program grants to two leading journalists working for independent newspapers. The program for an Arabic-speaking journalist on the "Role of Media in the US" included visits to various U.S. media outlets and with political and civil society actors and high ranking U.S. officials. A francophone journalist whose work reaches underserved ethnic communities was given the opportunity to visit leading schools of journalism in the United States and participate in an international symposium on challenges facing media professionals. In addition the ambassador regularly invited journalists to accompany him and provide news coverage of his frequent travels, highlighting the many U.S. development and human rights promotion projects as well as efforts to actively encourage the democratic transition.

Throughout the democratic transition, the United States has promoted respect for freedom of association and assembly for all participants in the democratic process. The United States promoted the development of stronger civil society associations and worked to bridge the divide between civil society groups and political parties by encouraging partnerships as the most effective means of influencing the democratic process.

In support of rule of law, U.S. officials visited various prisons and met with hundreds of inmates. Following these visits, the United States worked with prison and government officials to improve prison conditions and pressed for judicial reforms to ensure that each prisoner receives access to legal council and a fair and speedy trial.

The U.S. Government funded and implemented programs to promote the role of women in government. Various training workshops focused on developing the capacity of female candidates to run successfully for elected office. The United States funded a public outreach campaign designed to educate voters on the important role of women in a democracy. U.S. officials voiced strong support for a decree passed by the government on July 6 to require all political parties to reserve 20 percent of positions on their legislative and municipal candidate lists for women.

The United States discussed religious freedom and tolerance with senior government officials and religious leaders. U.S. officials also engaged religious leaders in discussions denouncing terrorism and the use of Islam as a justification for terrorist acts.

Antitrafficking efforts supported by the United States during the year included a grant to help expand the capacity of four NGOs dealing with human trafficking victims. The United States aggressively investigated reports and allegations of slavery and slavery-related practices throughout the year. U.S. officials also emphasized the need for the government to provide statistical evidence of its antitrafficking activities to the public.

Mozambique

Mozambique is a constitutional democracy. President Armando Guebuza was elected in December 2004 in what national and international observers judged to be generally free and fair elections, despite some irregularities. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, the ruling political party since independence in 1975, heavily

influenced government policymaking and implementation. Although there were improvements in a few areas during the year, serious human rights and societal problems remained, including: police use of excessive force resulting in unlawful killings and injuries; lynchings and mob violence; extremely harsh and life-threatening prison conditions resulting in several deaths; arbitrary arrest and detention; lengthy pretrial detention; lack of transparency and official corruption; police harassment and arbitrary detention of journalists; widespread domestic violence and discrimination against women; abuse and criminal exploitation of children, including child prostitution; trafficking in women and children; discrimination against persons with disabilities and HIV/AIDS; child labor in the informal sector and forced child labor; and poor enforcement of labor legislation.

During the year, the United States carried out several programs to strengthen the country's democracy by supporting improvements in national institutions and in governance. U.S. Government support for key government agencies and civil society groups through its 2005 human rights and democracy fund resulted in a draft freedom of information law which was submitted to the National Assembly. Parliamentary debate and approval of the law is expected in 2007.

The United States continued to fund a five-year project to help the municipalities of Nacala, Monapo, Gurue, Vilankulos, and Chimoio to strengthen the quality and level of broad-based citizen participation and engagement in municipal governance, increase the accountability of and quality of services provided by municipal governments, and strengthen systems to combat corruption and increase accountability at the local level.

With the help of the U.S. Government, the country made progress on press freedom issues, as evidenced by the willingness of journalists to cover politically sensitive cases. In addition, several NGOs noted that fewer journalists were detained and that the government increased its efforts to divulge information to the public, compared with previous years. Nonetheless, many journalists continued to practice self-censorship. The U.S. Government supported radio and print organizations to enhance media independence. Through its Partnership for International Journalism Program, two local journalists traveled to the United States. In Zambezia and Nampula, the two most populous provinces, the United States supported the production of radio programs in local languages on topics such as the constitution, conflict resolution, and respect for human rights.

To strengthen democracy and good governance, the United States continued its emphasis on anticorruption programs, including activities with both the government and civil society. The United States worked to improve the performance of the Central Office for the Combat of Corruption in the Office of the Attorney General by providing funds to train prosecutors in investigative skills. The United States also supported technical assistance and scholarships for students in the areas of law and auditing. A report on corruption in the country, which was prepared by outside consultants with U.S. funding and released in March, has become an important part of the dialogue about corruption in the country. It was frequently noted in the media and noticeably expanded the parameters within which corruption and mechanisms for combating corruption are debated.

U.S.-funded anticorruption programs supported citizen awareness campaigns by encouraging citizens to denounce corrupt behavior and publicizing the corruption reporting process. With U.S. Government assistance during part of the year, an anticorruption NGO operated corruption reporting centers in several provincial capitals. The centers received approximately 100 citizen reports of corruption and directed them to appropriate institutions for investigation. The visitors program funded travel to the United States for two government officials to attend a conference on transparency and good governance.

U.S. officials met often with a local NGO that monitored prison conditions, allegations of torture, and other serious human rights abuses. In August the United States also hosted a public roundtable on domestic violence and child abuse.

The United States conducted activities to promote religious freedom and tolerance, particularly with respect to the Islamic community. Through its international visitors program, two local Muslim leaders traveled to the United States during the year. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the United States hosted several Iftaar dinners in the country to demonstrate support for and respect for religious observances.

The United States continued to actively advocate for the drafting and passage of the country's first antitrafficking in persons law. Specifically, the United States worked with a woman's rights NGO to provide technical assistance to government officials drafting the law. The country is a source country for an estimated 1,000 women trafficked to South Africa each year for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, children were taken to South Africa to work on farms under extremely harsh conditions. Despite an interest in combating such trafficking, the government had limited resources and consequently had made little progress on prevention or prosecution. The United States also laid the groundwork for linking antitrafficking efforts to existing HIV/AIDS activities in the country's main transit corridors. The United States also organized and hosted a trafficking forum to coordinate information and efforts among the government, embassies, and NGO community. Since the first forum, several have been hosted by other governments.

In May, with support from U.S. funding, the civil society organization Civic Education Forum opened the country's first permanent shelter for trafficking victims near the South African border outside the town of Moamba. The Moamba District government donated 20 hectares of land to be used to grow food for the shelter. During the ceremony the Civic Education Forum announced it would start screening for victims of trafficking among the 800 to 1,000 illegal immigrants repatriated by South African immigration authorities every two weeks.

Through its human rights and democracy fund, the United States supported a program to disseminate information about the 2005 Family Law, about which few women in the country were informed. The project raised awareness of the provisions of the new law, with a particular emphasis on domestic violence.

Nigeria

Nigeria is a federal republic composed of 36 states and a capital territory. In 2003 President Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party was reelected to a four-year term after being declared the winner in elections that were marred by what international and domestic observers characterized as fraud and serious irregularities, including political violence. The elections also resulted in the ruling party claiming 70 percent of the seats in the national legislature and 75 percent of the state governorships. An extended legal challenge to the election verdict ended in July 2005 when the Supreme Court upheld the election result.

The government's human rights record remained poor, and government officials at all levels continued to commit serious abuses. The most significant human rights problems included the abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; politically motivated and extrajudicial killings by security forces; the use of excessive force, including torture, by security forces; vigilante killings; impunity; beatings of prisoners, detainees, and suspected criminals; harsh and life threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention; executive influence on the judiciary and judicial corruption; infringement of privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement; domestic violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation; child abuse and child sexual exploitation; societal violence; ethnic, regional, and religious discrimination; and trafficking in persons for the purposes of prostitution and forced labor. The government's record on democracy, the rule of law, corruption, prevention of internal conflict, and the welfare of its citizens remained problematic. The executive branch also ignored court verdicts related to the impeachments of various governors. The legislative branch passed relatively little legislation. The government established institutions to tackle rampant corruption, but with one exception – the former inspector-general of police, who received a very light sentence for corruption – those institutions have not brought trials of senior officials to either conviction or acquittal. National debate centered on whether the 2007 presidential election will be free and fair, as the government moved slowly to register voters and prepare other critical aspects of the elections.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aimed to build an accountable, transparent democracy with respect for human rights, a robust civil society, rule of law, good governance, and conflict resolution mechanisms. In addition, the strategy focused on the need for the government to improve the political environment to hold free and fair elections and to strengthen rule of law. Corruption, ethnic and religious violence, respect for the constitution, and concerns over judicial independence were among many themes addressed by U.S. officials in the country.

The United States funded programs to improve democracy and governance through planning for successful elections in 2007. Working through three partner NGOs, the U.S. Government implemented a three-year program that resulted in the training of 55 voter registration master trainers, the revision and printing of 20,000 copies of the voters' registration manual for nationwide distribution, the training of 195 domestic election monitor trainers, and the negotiation of a political party code of conduct to

reduce campaign violence.

The United States actively engaged with the government to promote successful elections in 2007. U.S. officials met regularly with officials at every level of government to stress the importance of timely and orderly elections and to offer technical assistance. U.S. officials traveled around the country to give a series of speeches highlighting the U.S. experience with elections to provide a model for the country's democratic transition and made a number of clear public statements outlining expectations for elections.

The U.S. Government undertook multiple efforts to support media freedom. It funded an NGO in the north of the country that promoted sound human rights reporting. The program included a comprehensive training regimen for selected reporters and concluded with a ceremony and award presentation to the reporter who made the greatest achievement in human rights reporting over the course of the year. When journalists Rotimi Durojaiye and Gbenga Aruleba were on trial for sedition, a U.S. official attended each hearing in their case and continued to monitor it. U.S. officials met with the Nigeria Union of Journalists to discuss issues of press freedom and hosted a weekly press briefing that provided journalists the opportunity to question government leaders and exchange ideas with one another. The U.S. Government maintained an information resource center in the country, which was available to journalists to provide research facilities, and offered Internet research training classes to teach journalism skills.

To strengthen civil society in the country, the U.S. Government funded a program to build the advocacy and participation skills of non-elite Muslim women to enhance their ability to meet the basic needs of their communities. The United States also regularly distributed information on human rights, rule of law, and related topics to members of civil society through its information resource centers. Targeted audiences included journalists, academics, businessmen and women, civic organizations, teachers, students, government officials, the military, clergy, and traditional rulers. Information provided under the program included U.S. and nongovernmental publications, such as academic and think tank reports. The centers also distributed information throughout the country through the American Corners program, which sponsored corners in nine cities, with three more slated for opening in the near future. American Corners also served as a venue for official and unofficial Americans to speak about human rights, good governance, rule of law, and related themes.

With U.S. support, the Publish What You Pay coalition successfully engaged with the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative process, appearing and presenting comment at several public meetings convened by the initiative's secretariat. The secretariat staffed the position of civil society organization liaison officer to further institutionalize civil society engagement. The U.S. Government worked with civil society groups as implementing partners in numerous programs, and U.S. officials demonstrated support for freedom of assembly by attending many meetings of such organizations.

As part of an effort to promote rule of law, the United States continued to sponsor a successful community policing pilot project in Kaduna with the Nigerian Police Force. The project promoted tactics aimed at crime reduction, while improving police responsibility, professionalism, and performance. A major portion of the program focused on respect for human rights, covering such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings. A number of "train the trainer" activities were integrated to ensure the program's sustainability. The program also included donations to the police force of bicycles, handcuffs, flashlights, and other basic equipment.

To reduce human rights abuses, the United States, as in previous years, sponsored a senior leader seminar attended by Nigerian military leaders, in which a plenary session was devoted to human rights. The "Next Generation of African Military Leaders" course, conducted in April and May and attended by military leaders, also included a human rights component, demonstrating to participants that respect for human rights enhances military professionalism and civil-military relations. The United States provided human rights training for all members of the military who received U.S.-sponsored military training. U.S. officials regularly met with local, state, and federal officials to discuss human rights trends in policymaking and law enforcement. They also worked closely with civic and international NGOs on such issues as workers' rights; religious freedom; prison conditions; and women's, children's, and minorities' rights. The U.S. Government also sponsored speakers on the rule of law, religious tolerance, and democratic governance at major universities, think tanks, and American Corners in major cities outside the capital. International Visitor Leadership Program grantees participated in programs on human rights and democracy. Several Humphrey exchange program grantee candidates participated in projects on the rule of law, human rights, democracy, and investigative journalism.

Programs to prevent human rights abuses by managing conflict included sensitizing community and opinion leaders, youth groups, and faith-based organizations about the benefits of peaceful coexistence; establishing conflict early warning networks; and providing humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons. Working through local implementing partners, the United States established regional councils on conflict mitigation and management in Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers, and Delta states. These programs engaged 3,154 youth in structured sports activities, trained 4,763 persons in conflict mitigation, and established 36 "peace zones" and 74 "peace clubs" in schools and other institutions. To support the work of conflict mitigation organizations in the country, two studies were produced on factors that escalate conflict and on opportunities for youth employment. In addition, conflict mitigation services were provided for communities engulfed by pre-election violence, and corporate and government entities working in volatile environments such as the Niger Delta were provided with conflict mitigation training and technical assistance in integrating conflict sensitivity in their programs and processes.

The United States worked extensively on the problems of interreligious violence and restrictions on religious freedom, meeting with national and local political and religious leaders on multiple occasions to gain a better understanding of existing problems and to advocate resolution. U.S. officials gave speeches across the country calling for reconciliation and traveled extensively to work with state officials and Muslim and Christian leaders to promote peace and end discrimination, including by holding interfaith celebrations of tolerance. As part of their efforts to promote religious tolerance, U.S. officials sponsored a series of Iftar dinners during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in Abuja and throughout the north. During trips to host Iftars, U.S. officials also engaged with local Christian leaders. In Zaria, the U.S. Government supported a forum on interreligious dialogue during Ramadan. U.S. officials participated in radio programs on religious tolerance, and a new position was created at the embassy for a U.S. official designated to reach out to the predominantly Muslim population in the north. In addition, the U.S. Government supported a program to engage Shari'a criminal judges on adopting a modern interpretation of Shari'a that is compatible with human rights and democracy while remaining genuinely Islamic.

The United States worked with local and international partners to strengthen respect for labor rights. The U.S. Government funded a project of the International Labor Organization to review the country's draft labor legislation before its planned introduction to the National Assembly in 2007. The bill would strengthen worker rights, collective bargaining rights, and child labor protections, bringing the labor law up to international standards. The country cooperated with the International Labor Organization on a countrywide program to reduce the worst forms of child labor. Another program supported an 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 employees and to help the institute become a center for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration training for both labor and industry representatives. The United States sponsored activities to mitigate the causes and consequences of human trafficking by, for example, disseminating antitrafficking materials through public media and skills-training programs. U.S. officials held press briefings and participated in workshops to increase public awareness and build societal capacity to recognize and address the dangers of human trafficking. The United States also funded four local NGOs that were working toward these goals with police, local officials, the media, and schoolchildren.

Rwanda

Rwanda is a constitutional republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Rwandan Patriotic Front took power in 1994 and formed a government of National Unity that functioned during the transitional period following the civil war and genocide until 2003, when President Paul Kagame was elected to a seven-year term in largely peaceful but seriously marred elections. Significant human rights abuses occurred, although there were important improvements in some areas. Limits on political party activities continued to restrict citizens' rights to peacefully change their government. There were reports that security forces committed extrajudicial killings and tortured and abused suspects with impunity. Prison and detention center conditions remained harsh despite positive measures taken by the government. Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, including street children and other "vagrants," and members of Jehovah's Witnesses. Prolonged pretrial detention, limits on judicial independence, unfair public trials, and the holding of former political figures--including former president Pasteur Bizimungu--remained problems. There continued to be limits on freedom of speech, press, and association. Government corruption and restrictions on civil society remained problematic. In addition societal violence and discrimination against women, trafficking in persons, child labor, and restrictions on labor rights continued to be problems.

The U.S. strategy focused on strengthening local government, supporting the professionalization of the military and security forces, and directly engaging the government on human rights issues. The strategy aimed to increase civil society participation in national dialogue, support the decentralization of local government functions, and

assist efforts to make government institutions more responsive to citizens. The United States sought to increase long-term stability, both in the country and in the region, by promoting reconciliation, respect for the rule of law, conflict resolution, and human rights.

To promote democracy, the United States sponsored public outreach for political parties and university students that focused on democratic institutions and good governance, including best practices. For example the U.S. Government sponsored three offices in universities around the country that provided students with access to computers and articles about democracy and good governance. To promote multiparty democracy, U.S. officials organized two digital video conferences on U.S. mid-term congressional elections for approximately 60 students, civil society representatives, parliamentarians, and government officials.

To promote freedom of speech and press, the United States provided training and development to journalists and government officials through the International Visitor Leadership Programs. Training focused on the role of the media, grassroots outreach, coalition building, democracy, transparency, and good governance. In May the United States organized a workshop for government communications officers on how to work effectively with the media. In October the United States sponsored a workshop on media management for directors and senior managers from approximately 20 independent newspapers and radio outlets. The U.S. Government also sponsored a one-day workshop in Kigali for journalists on HIV/AIDS reporting as well as sent two journalists to a week-long HIV/AIDS reporting conference in Zambia.

To strengthen civil society, the United States supported projects that partnered civil society organizations with private and public sector actors. The United States continued a five-year project initiated in 2005 to support 14 civil society organizations through small grants, primarily directed at creating employment opportunities and encouraging interaction among elected leaders, civil society organizations, and the general population. To improve community-based reconciliation efforts the United States supported over 50,000 small coffee farmers in the establishment of a cooperative-owned coffee processing stations that brought together victims of the genocide and category three perpetrators, those who committed only property crimes and have already served time or confessed. The United States continued to support a variety of small and mid-sized programs to develop conflict mitigation skills, encourage reconciliation, and to address youth and gender issues.

While the government's campaign against "divisionism" and "genocidal ideology" continued to affect local NGOs working on human rights issues, more were active at year's end than in the previous year. U.S. funding assisted local NGOs focused on human rights and development issues to produce publications and organize public discussions on sensitive issues, including political parties and population pressure.

The United States supported the country's efforts to reform the judicial sector and provided legislative assistance to develop comprehensive land management policies. The government qualified for a U.S. Government program designed to improve its performance on ruling justly, investing in its people, and economic freedom. The government also worked with a team of U.S. officials on strategies and programming designed to promote political rights, civil liberties, and rule of law.

The United States continued to support the community-based justice system (Gacaca process). Assistance for improved information technology and data entry helped the Gacaca headquarters to communicate efficiently with provincial coordinators facilitating timely public access to accurate information. Furthermore, the United States promoted peace and reconciliation by empowering women to improve the socio-economic conditions of families.

The United States was a forceful advocate in support of human rights and democracy in the country. U.S. officials raised concerns about human rights abuses with high-level government officials, NGOs, and international agencies. The United States utilized a wide range of diplomatic tools, including close monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses; technical assistance and training to promote government accountability and respect for human rights; providing programs to strengthen institutions, NGOs, and civil society; and proactive engagement by U.S. officials in individual cases of concern. During the year the United States and the government held several high-level reviews of human rights problems with officials from the Ministry of Justice, internal security, local government, national police, prosecutor general, High Council of the Media, local civil society, and human rights NGOs.

The United States continued to fund a project that targeted over 30,000 HIV/AIDS-affected children involved in the worst forms of child labor. The project provided vocational training, legal support, income-generating activities, increased access to education through awareness campaigns, and other support for the children, their communities, and related institutions. In collaboration with UN Children's Fund, the government supported programs specifically designed to alleviate poverty in families where poverty was most often cited as the primary cause of child labor. The United States continued to support the government's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and protect the rights of women and children.

The United States continued security assistance programs in the country, including military education and training programs in the United States and in the country. The programs benefited seven battalions and focused on human rights, rules of engagement, rule of law, and civilian control of the military. Those who received training included soldiers who served as UN and African Union peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region, the Comoros, Haiti, Liberia, and Ivory Coast. During the year a police inspector attended the FBI National Academy, where training included sessions on human rights and democracy. United States law enforcement personnel also trained 25 government police investigators in investigation techniques and 20 police officers in the appropriate application of force.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is a constitutional republic with a directly elected president and a unicameral legislature. Following the 11-year civil war that ended in 2002, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was reelected president, and his Sierra Leone People's Party won a large majority in parliament. Many international monitors declared the elections generally free and fair; however, there were numerous reports of irregularities. The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens. However, there were serious problems in a number of areas: security force abuse, including rape, and use of excessive force with detainees, including juveniles; police theft and extortion; poor conditions in prisons and jails; official impunity; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged detention, excessive bail, and insufficient legal representation; restrictions on freedom of speech and press, although fewer than in the previous year; government and chiefdom detention and harassment of journalists; harassment of opposition party supporters by ruling party members; widespread official corruption; societal discrimination and violence against women; female genital mutilation; child abuse; trafficking in persons, including children; forced labor, including by children; and child labor.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in the country emphasized enhancing democratic governance and consolidating peace through transformational diplomacy. U.S. programs were designed to increase citizens' expectations of transparent, responsive government as well as to build the government's capacity to deliver services at all levels. Specific U.S. goals included strengthening key government and civil institutions, encouraging greater citizen participation in the political process, and addressing the climate of corruption that undermined progress. While engaging high-level government officials on these critical issues, U.S. officials also provided assistance to local and international NGOs to facilitate programs to improve human rights and democracy and promote reforms in the areas of decentralization, civic education, child labor, and combating human trafficking.

During the year the United States promoted and supported government efforts to decentralize and become more transparent and accountable, thereby reducing factors, including ineffective leadership and endemic corruption, which had contributed to the country's civil war. One area of focus was the rebuilding of local government institutions, which were abolished in the 1970s but reinstated in 2004. U.S. programs provided much needed training for local government leaders, who lacked a basic understanding of the responsibilities of public servants. During visits outside the country's capital, Freetown, local government officials told U.S. officials that U.S. programs had been instrumental in helping them to define clearly their responsibilities and improve their performance. There were promising signs that town and district councils were assuming greater responsibility for local governance programs, including health and agricultural services, as the central government continued the process of decentralization.

U.S. programs sought to promote good governance and the development of a stable political process by supporting local and international organizations working to expand civil society. In anticipation of presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for July 2007, the United States provided direct assistance to local and international organizations to build the country's institutional capacity for conducting and monitoring electoral processes, providing civic education, promoting political parties' compliance with the election law, mitigating conflict, encouraging a responsible media, and strengthening civil society organizations.

U.S.-sponsored programs also helped promote responsible journalism and democracy in the country's media. For example, the U.S. Government funded a three-day workshop led by an American journalist in Freetown, who instructed local journalists on writing styles and interviewing techniques and conducted two radio interviews on

the importance of democracy and freedom of speech and the press. Another U.S. program sponsored 25 journalists from the towns of Bo and Kenema for a one-day training workshop to emphasize the importance of fair and balanced reporting and journalistic integrity.

The United States provided support for NGOs and civil society in the country through programs that included films, lectures, and discussions on an array of topical subjects, including civil rights, women's rights, the role of civil society, and politics in a democracy. These programs served to create a forum for free discussion by students, journalists, civil society organizations, academics, and civil servants.

The United States also supported broadened community-based political processes. This included working to enhance the responsiveness and institutional capacity of newly-formed local government councils and civil society by promoting open debate, improving the expertise of local ward committees, providing effective advocacy skills to community based organizations, building linkages between national and local institutions, and informing citizens of their rights and responsibilities.

The United States continued funding local NGO projects that promoted judicial accountability, including the monitoring of criminal proceedings at the Anticorruption Commission and in lower courts. The U.S. Government funded a local NGO program to train 460 civilian prison monitors to evaluate prisons and detention centers and ensure that conditions in these facilities met minimum national and international standards.

The United States was the largest contributor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has a UN mandate to bring to justice persons with the greatest responsibility for alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in the country between 1996 and 2002. The court was scheduled to complete the trials for nine of the defendants by 2008; the trial of Charles Taylor is scheduled to begin in June 2007 in The Hague. U.S. Government officials communicated regularly with senior special court officials to determine how the United States could most effectively support the court's efforts. The United States funded a project to collect and analyze war crimes and human rights violations data to support the work of the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Poor civil-military relations have been an impediment to democratic governance. To address this, U.S. assistance enabled the training of military and civilian personnel at the Washington-based African Center for Strategic Studies. The trainees participated in a number of courses designed to increase capacities in leadership within the Ministry of Defense, counterterrorism, and antiproliferation of small arms.

U.S. Government programs supported the expansion of educational opportunities for young women and addressed gender-based violence, which was a common occurrence. U.S.-funded studies found that lack of money for school expenses was a common barrier that limited educational opportunities for young girls, and that rural families, often out of economic desperation, selected male family members over females to attend school. Through the Africa Education Initiative and the U.S. ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program, the United States provided educational scholarships to send 2,000 young women to primary school. Gender-based violence remained a concern, and U.S. funds sent a leading advocate against female genital mutilation to the United States on an international visitor program. U.S. programs also provided support to former practitioners of female genital mutilation to help them find alternative income-generating activities.

To counter the exploitation of child laborers in the country's alluvial diamond fields, the United States provided assistance to government ministries and senior officials to promote management and monitoring of the diamond industry, encourage legitimate investment, and reduce opportunities for criminal activity, including smuggling and exploitation of child workers. U.S. programs also supported efforts to design and implement a project to expand educational opportunities for nearly 10,000 children either employed in or at risk of being employed in the worst forms of child labor.

With U.S. funding, a national antitrafficking task force met regularly and drafted a comprehensive plan of action to sensitize communities to this problem and combat trafficking in persons in the country. The U.S. Government also provided funding for an antitrafficking project that will provide protection and shelter trafficking victims to help prevent further victimization.

Somalia

Somalia has been without effective governance institutions since 1991. During the year the area that was traditionally considered the territory of the Somali state was fragmented into regions in part or whole presided over by four distinct entities: the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), centered around Baidoa; the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts (Islamic Courts) in Mogadishu and the surrounding regions; the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in the northwest; and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in the northeast. In Somaliland presidential elections were held in 2003 and deemed credible and transparent; parliamentary elections were held in September 2005. In Puntland the unelected parliament selected General Mohamud Adde Muse Hirsi as president in 2005. Fighting between warlords and the Islamic Courts escalated from early in the year until June, when the Islamic Courts gained control over Mogadishu and much of southeast Somalia, following a military conflict. In December Ethiopian forces entered the country in support of the TFG and drove the Islamic Courts militias and administration from Mogadishu. At year's end the Islamic Courts were in disarray, and the TFG extended its territorial control into Mogadishu. Civilian authorities, outside of Somaliland and Puntland, did not maintain effective control of the security forces in any area of the country.

The country's poor human rights situation deteriorated further during the year, exacerbated by ongoing conflicts, the absence of effective governance institutions or the rule of law, and the widespread availability of small arms. The following human rights problems were reported: abridgment of citizens' right to change their government; unlawful and politically motivated killings by clan militias; kidnapping, torture, rape, and beatings; harsh and life threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; impunity; denial of fair trial; limited privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; discrimination and violence against women, including rapes; female genital mutilation; child abuse; recruitment of child soldiers; trafficking in persons; abuse and discrimination against clan and religious minorities; restrictions on workers' rights; forced labor, and child labor.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy in the country focused on strengthening civil society and democratic institutions, enabling the rule of law and local governance, and mitigating conflict. Since 2005, however, the U.S. Government has suspended some programs because U.S. officials were not permitted to travel in the country to monitor programs. Nevertheless, U.S. officials maintained contacts with stakeholders throughout Somalia and continued to support democracy programs through implementing partners.

During the year the U.S. Government carried out several programs to strengthen democracy and local governance. U.S. officials continued to encourage Somaliland's political leaders to develop democratic institutions and to participate in reconciliation efforts.

To promote media freedom, the U.S. Government supported radio programs that addressed political topics and societal concerns. The United States also supported media associations and conducted activities to increase respect for media laws.

To strengthen civil society in the country, the United States engaged a broad cross section of citizens by supporting 30 civil society organizations and media groups that actively promoted peace, social and economic development, and democratic governance. Civil society groups became key partners through community-level programs to improve maternal health, broaden access to education, increase security, and manage conflict. The U.S. Government supported a program to strengthen non-elite Muslim women's advocacy and civic participation skills to enable them to better meet basic needs in their communities. The U.S. Government also continued to support the Dialogue for Peace Project, an innovative field research project, which resulted in 33 meetings of more than 800 citizens to map regional and national conflicts and to establish the causes and key players involved. In addition the United States also funded the establishment of five research centers in Kismayo, Baidoa, Beledweyne, Burao, and Galkayo that promoted peace and reconciliation.

Sudan

Sudan is a republic governed according to a power-sharing arrangement established by the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That agreement ended a 22-year civil war between the North and South and established an interim government of national unity. The government's mandate extends until scheduled elections in 2009. Presidential and parliamentary elections were last held in 2000; they were marked by serious irregularities, including official interference, electoral fraud, insufficient

opportunities for voters to register, and inadequate election monitoring. Following the 2005 agreement, an interim national constitution was promulgated, and the first legislative assembly in the South convened. An orderly succession in keeping with the interim constitution took place when, following the death of John Garang, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Salva Kiir was appointed first vice president of the Government of National Unity and president of the government of Southern Sudan.

The government's human rights record remained poor during the year. The long list of human rights abuses was headed by continuing genocide in Darfur for which the government and janjaweed bore responsibility, although all sides to the conflict there bear responsibility for the ongoing violence. Other abuses included: extrajudicial and other unlawful killings by government and allied forces; inhumane treatment of citizens by security forces; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention, including incommunicado detention of suspected government opponents; executive interference with the judiciary and denial of due process; infringement of privacy rights; abrogation of the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement; harassment of internally displaced persons and local and international human rights and humanitarian organizations; violence and discrimination against women, including the practice of female genital mutilation; child abuse, including sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers, particularly in Darfur; trafficking in persons; discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities; denial of workers' rights; and forced labor, including child labor, by security forces and both aligned and non-aligned militias in southern Sudan and Darfur.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused on promoting the implementation of the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement, which was possible due to U.S. diplomatic engagement and financial and technical support, and on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the struggle between northern and southern Sudan and created an infrastructure for democracy. As the most significant financial donor to peacekeeping activities and the largest supplier of humanitarian assistance, the United States led international efforts to resolve the country's ongoing conflicts and to assist victims. The U.S. Government also provided financial and technical support to the African Union Mission in Sudan. U.S. programs were directed toward building upon these steps forward by promoting: accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses; conflict resolution at the community level; respect for fundamental human rights; reduction of violence against women in Darfur; press and religious freedom; and efforts against trafficking in persons. U.S. officials stressed to government officials at all levels and all regions the importance of human rights benchmarks, emphasizing press freedom and religious tolerance, an open political process, and freedom of speech, movement, and assembly. U.S. officials met regularly with opposition politicians, political leaders from around the country, religious leaders, human rights activists, and members of the media to develop the most effective strategies for democracy building and human rights promotion.

The U.S. democracy assistance focused on supporting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement's protocol of power sharing, which calls for an autonomous Government of Southern Sudan and general elections in 2008-09. The United States continued to provide training and technical assistance to components of the regional government in the South its Office of the Presidency, cabinet, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs, and Ministry of Public Service. U.S. democracy promotion efforts included support for local authorities and organizations. The U.S. government provided training and technical assistance to democratic political parties represented in the nascent Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly. It also provided assistance for the completion of the southern portion of the national census, whose population figures will be used to adjust the North-South power-sharing percentages in the Government of National Unity and to determine district boundaries for the 2009 elections. Additionally, the United States sponsored civic education programs on the peace agreement and citizens' rights, roles, and responsibilities and provided assistance for research on public opinion to help inform political leaders about the public's views of the peace process.

The United States worked toward the goals of ending the conflict and human rights abuses that accompanied it and protecting victims; to do this, the U.S. Government adopted several approaches to conflict resolution. Senior U.S. officials traveled to the region many times, including two trips by the president's special envoy for Darfur. The U.S. observer team to the Abuja peace talks on Darfur contributed significantly to the attainment of the Darfur Peace Agreement by two major parties to the conflict: Minni Minawi's Sudan Liberation Movement and the Government of National Unity. The United States pressed non-signatory groups to accede to the accord. The U.S. Government encouraged efforts by the international community to broaden support for the agreement among political and military leaders of hold-out rebel factions.

The U.S. Government worked to promote conflict resolution and security in the region. U.S. officials focused particular attention during the year on the need to implement the human rights provisions of the Interim National Constitution. The United States continued to provide funding and assistance for peace mechanisms in the South, including direct support to grassroots peace processes and strengthening local groups seeking peaceful solutions to problems throughout the South and in Abyei, Southern Blue Nile, and the Nuba mountains. In March the United States funded the travel of an expert from the United States Institute for Peace to the country to speak on conflict resolution. The expert traveled to different regions, offering workshops and training on conflict resolution techniques.

The United States continued to provide strong support to the efforts of the African Union Mission in Sudan to curb violence and report on ceasefire violations, including human rights abuses. The United States provided extensive financial support and technical assistance, including transporting, training, housing, and equipping African Union troops. The United States also continued to provide substantial, ongoing financial support for the UN Mission in Sudan. U.S. support for development and governance was accompanied by substantial U.S. humanitarian assistance for Darfur and the rest of the country. In the UN Security Council the United States supported a presidential statement issued in May authorizing immediate planning for a transition from an AU peacekeeping force in Darfur to a UN force and in August supported a presidential statement authorizing United Nations deployment to Darfur.

To promote media freedom and freedom of speech, the United States continued to fund independent media and piloted a program that distributed radios to communities with limited access to independent media. Funding also continued for the Sudan Radio Service, which broadcast in 10 local languages and provided access to news, civic education, and health messages. The United States provided training for journalists from the Juba Post, Sudan Vision, Al Sahafa, and Al Sudani newspapers. To foster dialogue about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Abyei Boundaries Commission report that defines the 1905 Ngok Dinka boundary, which constitutes the Abyei area, the United States provided support to NGOs for disseminating summaries of the protocols of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

To improve the level of professionalism among journalists, the U.S. Government arranged travel to the United States for five print journalists and two radio journalists. They were given tours of several cities that included briefings by small, medium, and large news organizations, journalism schools, and community organizations. Upon their return home, the journalists wrote columns and editorials about their U.S. experiences, democracy, and human rights. U.S. officials conducted a series of meetings with local media outlets to discuss freedom of the press. The United States also protested the suspension of newspapers and harassment of journalists when it occurred.

The United States supported a large-scale program to address root causes of the widespread violence against women and girls in the region. The initiative sought to improve physical safety of vulnerable populations, provide immediate services to victims, and address the root causes of the violence through activities in key strategic areas: combating impunity by improving access to justice; enhancing human rights monitoring and advocacy; increasing access to accurate information through better media; enhancing protection and decreasing women's risk through humanitarian activities; and building grassroots capacity to address these issues. As part of the initiative, the United States supported the creation of a Darfur-wide network of pro bono lawyers, supported the training and deployment of domestic human rights monitors, and sponsored income-generation activities to reduce women's exposure to violence.

The U.S. Government worked to promote religious freedom. U.S. officials continued a dialogue with the government on this subject, stressing the need for the allocation of land and building permits to facilitate church construction. U.S. officials also regularly engaged the government-supported Sudan Inter-Religious Council to push for these same goals and engaged Christian and Muslim leaders in dialogue about religious freedom. This effort included a discussion on Shari'a law in post peace Sudan, led by a notable American anthropologist. Commissioners of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom visited the country from January 11 to 21 and met with high-level interlocutors to discuss the status of religious freedom, focusing especially on Christians living in Khartoum. The U.S. Government also funded a visit by an American imam to speak about religious tolerance, the experience of Muslims in the United States, and respect for minority groups. The imam met with an interfaith council, a jurisprudence council, and political party figures.

To combat trafficking in persons, U.S. officials met with the government sponsored Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children and other officials to push for the return of abducted persons in accordance with international protection principles. The United States continued to promote the committee's outreach programs and to encourage the government to provide the committee with needed funds. U.S. officials also continued to follow the government's efforts to combat the problems of children trafficked for soldiering and camel jockeying.

Swaziland

Swaziland is a modified traditional monarchy with executive and some legislative powers vested in the king, Mswati III. The first constitution in 32 years, which went into effect on February 8, confirms most of the king's powers but provides for an independent judiciary. The king rules in conjunction with a partially elected parliament and an accompanying structure of published laws and implementing agencies. The most recent parliamentary elections, held in 2003, were not considered free and fair. Political power remained largely with the king and his circle of traditional advisors, including the queen mother. While the civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, there were instances in which security forces committed abuses. The government's human rights record was poor, and government agents continued to commit serious abuses, including: abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; arbitrary killings by security forces; police use of torture, beatings, and excessive force; police impunity; arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; limits on freedom of speech and of the press; restrictions on freedom of assembly and association; prohibitions on political activity and harassment of political activists; restrictions on freedom of movement; discrimination and violence against women; poor enforcement of women's rights; child abuse; trafficking in persons; societal discrimination against mixed race and white citizens; antiunion discrimination; and child labor.

The U.S. strategy to combat human rights abuses and bolster democracy focused on highlighting the importance of respect for the rule of law, supporting the prime minister's anticorruption program, strengthening the rights of women and children, and improving respect for internationally recognized workers' rights. U.S. goals included strengthening civil society and pressing the government to register political parties.

To promote democracy U.S. officials routinely and publicly stressed the importance of the constitution and discussed the need for the government to address its more problematic issues, including the separation of powers and the legalization of political parties. U.S. officials distributed copies of the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence to numerous civil society organizations. The U.S. Government provided funding to the Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civil Organizations to draft and print a trainer's manual on the constitution and to train 750 people countrywide on constitutionalism, good governance, and citizen participation in national issues.

The United States distributed copies of the Handbook of Independent Journalism to the majority of journalists in the country, and the pamphlet Edward R. Murrow: Journalism at its Best to students in the University of Swaziland's department of communications. The U.S. Government funded one journalist's study tour of media operations in the United States and sent another journalist to study the U.S. political system through the International Visitors Program.

During the year the U.S. Government conducted activities to strengthen civil society. U.S. officials met with leaders of NGOs, providing them with potential funding leads and information on U.S. institutions and processes. U.S. officials also advocated freedom of assembly and association through conversations with high-level government officials and NGOs.

To promote human rights, the United States worked to reduce instances of abuse, rape, and sexual harassment suffered by women because of their subordinate role in society. A regional African NGO collaborated with the U.S.-funded Women's Legal Rights Initiative to develop an advocacy manual to guide individuals and groups in advocating for human and civil rights.

The U.S. Government worked to improve the rights of persons with disabilities during the year. U.S. officials contributed to a workshop hosted by the Federation of Organizations of the Disabled People in Swaziland for members of parliament. The federation invited the Lesotho minister of justice, human rights, law, and constitutional affairs and a member of the national parliament in South Africa to speak at the workshop; both officials have a visual disability. The workshop sensitized legislators on the importance of equal rights and opportunities for all and discussed the development and integration into society of people with disabilities. U.S. officials also participated in an 18-part educational video in sign language on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights produced by the Swaziland National Association of the Deaf. The association continued to run the video on local television throughout the year.

Increasing government and business community interest in labor issues was a vital part of the U.S. strategy to promote workers' rights. The U.S. Government funded the Federation of Swaziland Employers and the Chamber of Commerce to publish an updated compendium of the country's labor laws, a project that was completed in November. The United States also funded a multiyear regional program designed to improve labor systems in southern Africa through social dialogue.

The U.S. Government funded two multiyear initiatives in the region to combat child labor, which is a particular problem because the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country, the highest in the world, has left a large number of children orphaned and vulnerable to exploitation. The first program targeted the worst forms of child labor in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland, and the second was designed to combat exploitive child labor through education in southern Africa. As part of these projects, a conference on child labor was held in the country in November.

Tanzania

The United Republic of Tanzania is a multiparty republic consisting of the mainland and the Zanzibar archipelago. The union has a unicameral parliament and is headed by a president, who is also head of government. Zanzibar, although integrated into the country's governmental and party structure, has its own president, court system, and legislature and continued to exercise considerable autonomy. In the December 2005 union presidential and legislative elections, Jakaya Kikwete was elected president, and the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party made significant gains in parliament. Observers considered the union elections to be largely free and fair. The 2005 presidential elections in Zanzibar were more contentious; despite significant improvements in administration of the elections, there were serious irregularities and politically motivated violence particularly in the urban areas of Zanzibar. The government's overall human rights record remained poor, and serious human rights abuses occurred during the year. Police and prison guards used excessive force against inmates or suspects, at times resulting in death, and police impunity was a problem. There were continued reports of societal killings of elderly individuals suspected of being witches. Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening. Police routinely conducted searches without warrants, were often corrupt, and at times failed to bring detained individuals before a judge in the period of time required by law. The judiciary suffered from corruption in the lower courts. Freedom of speech and press were partly limited, governmental corruption remained pervasive, and authorities restricted the movement of refugees. Societal violence against women and girls persisted, including female genital mutilation. Trafficking in persons and child labor were problems.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights was to help establish a more accountable, representative, and effective government based on institutions that actively promote rule of law, human rights, and democratic pluralism. To forward this strategy, the United States facilitated the government's efforts to reduce corruption; promote parliamentary independence and civil society; and increase awareness of human rights, child labor, and trafficking in persons.

The United States sought to promote democracy through diplomatic engagement and financial and programmatic support. U.S. funding supported a multiyear project to strengthen the National Assembly's representative, lawmaking, and oversight functions. This project increased the capacity of key parliamentary committees, improved the ability of committees to analyze international treaties and protocols, and helped parliamentarians draft a handbook on best practices, which was distributed to all committee members. In collaboration with a local NGO, the U.S. Government also sponsored a women's leadership workshop to increase the capacity of female leaders in government.

The United States worked to support civic education activities in the country. After the 2005 Zanzibar elections, the U.S. Government provided civic education courses to more than 1,000 people in Zanzibar to promote understanding of multiparty democracy. The U.S. also provided civic education courses to hundreds of Masai women to increase their participation in the democratic process.

The United States worked to support media freedom and a free press. To enhance journalists' investigative skills, the U.S. Government organized a training workshop for 30 journalists and hosted a roundtable discussion on the role of media in combating corruption with media owners, journalists, and editors. The U.S. also sent three journalists to the United States through the International Visitor Leadership Program. The journalists spent three weeks in the United States studying investigative journalism.

The U.S. Government provided vital support to the government's anticorruption efforts, strengthening the government's capacity and the legal framework to prosecute corruption cases. The U.S. Government's multiyear, multi-agency effort was a large factor in the November passage of the Anti-Money-Laundering Bill, a key step toward creating a Financial Intelligence Unit. To improve the legal environment for prosecuting corruption, the United States organized a workshop for journalists and

government officials on the importance of protection for "whistle blowers." The U.S. Government also supported President Kikwete's efforts to increase the effectiveness of the Prevention of Corruption Bureau, sending its top leadership to train with the New York City Department of Investigation to develop a strategic action plan for the bureau. The Threshold Program also trained over 30 magistrates on anticorruption legislation and how it can effectively be used in court. Partnering with civil society organizations, the United States also implemented 11 public expenditure tracking systems in districts throughout the country. The roll out of these tracking systems enabled citizens to begin holding their government accountable for the delivery of public services.

The U.S. Government supported the improvement of the country's judicial system. The United States created a legal aid network to increase access to the justice system for the rural poor. It continued to provide funds to support a forensic laboratory that improved police investigation skills, sped up investigations, and reduced the number of wrongful arrests and convictions. The U.S. Government continued to provide the police force with training on civil disorder management to improve the ability of the police to manage peaceful protests and other large gatherings.

The United States worked to reduce human rights abuses against women and children. It supported programs to reduce rape and other sex and gender-based violence in refugee camps, where approximately 287,000 refugees, primarily from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, were living. For example, the United States funded an NGO that launched a four-year program in September to combat child labor. The project will work in five remote districts of the country to withdraw 4,975 children ages 12 to 17 from exploitive labor and prevent 5,100 children ages five to 11 from engaging in exploitive labor. The U.S. Government also provided local education courses to teach Masai women about their rights, including the right to forgo female genital mutilation.

Through the International Labor Organization, the United States continued to support a multiyear program to reduce the number of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor through advocacy and targeted support for vulnerable children. The educational component of the program was known nationwide and has been adopted by the Ministry of Education.

The United States worked with government officials, NGOs, and the International Organization for Migration to raise awareness about trafficking in persons and to encourage prosecution of traffickers. In May the ambassador and the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Public Safety and Security signed an agreement to provide training and technical assistance for investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating allegations of human trafficking. The United States provided antitrafficking assistance for prevention and victim protection, including continued support of a shelter for victims of trafficking and materials for a public awareness campaign. U.S. assistance also enabled the International Organization for Migration to conduct psycho-social training on human trafficking for health care providers and social workers to improve identification of and sensitization about working with trafficking victims. Moreover, the U.S. Government sponsored a training course for journalists to increase and improve reporting on trafficking.

The Gambia

The Gambia is a multiparty, democratic republic. In September President Alhaji Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh was re-elected for a five-year term in an election that international observers considered partially free and fair with some irregularities. A failed coup plot in March resulted in a more restrictive environment, and the government's respect for the human rights of its citizens declined during the year. Arbitrary arrests and detentions increased, particularly after the discovery of the coup plot. Security forces harassed and mistreated detainees, prisoners, opposition members, journalists, and civilians with impunity. Prisoners were held in incommunicado detention, faced prolonged pretrial detention, and were denied due process. The government infringed on privacy rights and restricted freedom of speech and press. Women experienced violence and discrimination, and female genital mutilation remained a problem. Child labor and trafficking in persons also were problems.

The U.S. strategy and goals for promoting human rights and democracy included diplomacy and training to promote respect for democratic freedoms, the rule of law, and the promotion of human dignity within the government, political parties, military, and police. The United States also provided opportunities for key sectors of civil society, such as the media, to enhance their awareness of and respect for human and civil rights.

To promote the political process and democracy, U.S. officials maintained an active dialogue with all political parties and with civil society representatives, stressing the importance of free and fair elections. U.S. officials also engaged with a U.S.-based NGO in its visits to the country to improve the effectiveness of political parties and civil society organizations and enhance the democratic process. The U.S. Government encouraged regular dialogue and meetings among the donor community to avoid duplication of effort and ensure effective allocation of resources in election support, and it served with other donors on a steering committee headed by the country's electoral commission. The United States also sponsored an NGO program to train election observers throughout the country and a program to form a civil society coalition that will continue to serve as a permanent structure for election monitoring and observation. In addition, U.S. officials conducted observation missions for the May parliamentary by-elections and the September presidential election. The United States funded a major construction and renovation project for the National Assembly that dramatically improved the working spaces of its members.

To promote press freedom, U.S. officials consistently stressed that freedom of speech and the press are essential parts of a democratic society. The United States funded a workshop for journalists to improve the quality of election coverage and reporting and used grants and an international visitors program to support independent media. The U.S. Government provided a printing press to the Gambia Press Union to facilitate the continued publication of independent journals. U.S. officials maintained close relationships with many journalists, and all media representatives, regardless of political affiliation, had access to U.S. officials for interviews and reports and were invited to cover U.S. events.

The United States actively supported NGOs and civil society groups through grants and representational events. In a U.S. event for International Human Rights Day, official remarks focused on the importance of NGOs and civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights. U.S. officials also attended events hosted by NGOs and civil society organizations including an NGO forum that coincided with the 40th Ordinary Session of the African Commission and the launch of a girls' empowerment group.

Following the attempted coup, political prosecutions increased, and due process suffered as a result of several cases of lengthy pretrial detention, incommunicado detentions, and detentions without charge. The U.S. Government frequently stressed the importance of the rule of law and adherence to due process. The U.S. Government stressed the importance of a transparent judicial process in prosecuting cases related to corruption, and the ambassador took every opportunity to stress to government officials the importance of an independent judiciary in a democratic society. Through an international visitor program, a prominent jurist was given an in-depth look at the American judicial system. To support anticorruption efforts, the U.S. Government conducted a seminar and meetings with media representatives, legal professionals, government officials, and civil society organizations to discuss the impact of corruption on development and methods to combat it.

During the year the United States raised questions related to allegations of torture, disappearances, and other human rights abuses in discussions with members of the government, military, civil society, and other partners. The United States encouraged the government to ensure greater respect for women's rights and to maintain harmony between the various ethnic groups. At a reception honoring International Human Rights Day, U.S. officials highlighted the important role that NGOs play in fostering widespread awareness of the international standards for human rights. To support more professionalism in the security forces and prevent human rights abuses by the military, the U.S. Government provided funding for several officers and civilian officials to attend military and education training in the United States throughout the year. The United States also funded regional training and workshops for military officials and civilian officials.

To reinforce religious freedom and understanding in the country, where religious harmony is the norm, the U.S. Government hosted an Iftar dinner during Ramadan that was attended by many Muslim spiritual leaders as well as members of the minority Christian clergy.

To promote labor rights and combat trafficking, U.S. officials attended a ceremony marking the implementation of the 2005 Children's Act and had discussions with the government and local partners on child labor issues. The United States also provided financial support and guidance to the government to improve its record in combating trafficking. The United States funded a local NGO to assist efforts to protect and promote children's rights through a popular media campaign encouraging awareness of child trafficking.

Togo

Togo is a republic governed by President Faure Gnassingbe, who assumed office in April 2005 after an election marred by severe irregularities. President Gnassingbe replaced his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema, who was in power for 38 years until his death in February 2005. Eyadema and his political party, Rally of the Togolese People, were strongly backed by the armed forces, dominated politics, and maintained firm control over all levels of the country's highly centralized government. The civilian authorities generally did not maintain effective control of the security forces. The human rights situation in the country improved; however, serious human rights problems continued, including the inability of citizens to change their government; beatings and abuse of detainees; government impunity; harsh prison conditions; arbitrary and secret arrests and detention; lengthy pretrial detention; executive control of the judiciary; frequent infringement of citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on the press, including the closing of media outlets; restrictions on freedom of assembly and movement; harassment of human rights workers; female genital mutilation and violence and discrimination against women and ethnic minorities; trafficking in persons, especially children; and child labor.

The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights focused on strengthening key government and civil institutions through diplomatic and programmatic engagement. The United States raised the importance of human rights through sustained communication with government officials, opposition leaders, civil society, international financial institutions, and other international donors. In addition, the U.S. strategy included using public diplomacy to promote local NGOs, strengthen political parties, and improve the human rights record of the military through military training programs.

To support democracy, the United States actively supported the formation of the government of national unity and encouraged all parties to work together to prepare for the upcoming elections. The United States continued to press local officials to fulfill previous democracy and human rights commitments and to end military impunity, provided technical assistance and training to promote democratic ideals, and also encouraged all principal players to constructively engage in the political process. U.S. funding supported a number of civic education radio programs, with emphasis on explaining the election process and electoral laws, as well as on discussing the role of media, civil society, government entities, and youth in an election.

The United States conducted several programs to enhance media freedom. Conferences, debates, and seminars were held on topics such as the role of media in a democracy, the relationship between the media and government, and how to effect nonviolent political change to promote media liberties and freedom of speech. Two local journalists were selected to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program. The United States also provided small grants to several radio stations to broadcast democracy education programming focused on democratic political process, citizens' rights and duties, the constitution, and women in politics. The U.S. government sponsored several media workshops to promote collaboration among independent journalists and organized a 10-session videoconference training program for journalists led by experts based in Paris.

To promote civil society, the United States supported NGOs in their work to educate women about their rights and potential for leadership roles and to instruct teachers, administrators, and students about human rights and civic education.

To promote the rule of law, transparency, and the presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings, the U.S. Government and the Togolese Bar Association organized a series of roundtable discussions and presentations. The United States supported the government's judicial reform project through various forms of assistance and financed periodicals that publicized legal information. U.S. funding supported civil society projects to combat corruption.

To promote human rights, the U.S. Government supported campaigns to promote women's rights and continued a series of seminars encouraging women to participate in the political process. The United States and the government conducted a sub-regional project on HIV/AIDS workplace education designed to combat discrimination in the workplace against people living with AIDS. The United States supported NGOs in their efforts to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation. U.S. assistance also funded a manual on prisoner rights that was produced and distributed throughout the country, including to prisons and libraries. The U.S. Government directed security assistance to professionalize the military and expand its sensitivity to human rights issues.

To promote religious freedom, the U.S. Government provided scholarships to Muslim high school boys and girls to learn English and to study about religious freedom in the United States. U.S. officials discussed religious freedom issues with the government, and the United States also sponsored a series of radio broadcasts in Muslim areas on religious freedom.

To promote the rights of children, the United States supported several training sessions on the 2005 antitrafficking law and on protection for trafficking victims. Attendees included members of the security forces, local government authorities, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, students, and journalists. During the year the United States provided financing to the country's antitrafficking network of NGOs to produce a variety of print, radio, and television advertisements addressing trafficking issues.

Uganda

Uganda is a republic led by President Yoweri Museveni, who continued to dominate the government. On February 23, the country held its first multiparty general elections since President Museveni came to power in 1986. The election generally reflected the will of the people, although serious irregularities occurred. The government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) entered into peace talks in July to end the 20 year war in the north of the country. On December 16, the government and the rebels extended for the second time a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, begun in August, until February 2007. This agreement has improved the security situation, encouraging hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to return to or near their homes. The conflict in the Karamoja region between the government and armed Karamoja cattle rustlers intensified during the year, resulting in over 100 deaths and the displacement of thousands of civilians. The government took steps to improve human rights during the year, including parliament's passage of comprehensive labor legislation and the army's increased professionalism and respect for human rights. However, the government's human rights record remained poor, and serious problems remained, including: election violence and irregularities; unlawful killings by security forces; disappearances; security forces use of torture and abuse of suspects; vigilante justice; harsh prison conditions; official impunity; arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on the right to a fair trial and on freedoms of speech, press, and association; abuse of internally displaced persons; restrictions on opposition parties; corruption; violence and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation; violence and abuse of children; trafficking in persons; violence and discrimination against persons with disabilities; forced labor; and child labor.

The U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights in the country included the institutionalization of multiparty democracy and transparent government, promotion of civil society, increasing respect for human rights, and combating child labor, trafficking in persons, and violence and discrimination against women. High-level U.S. officials, including the ambassador, raised these issues in public speeches, interviews, and in meetings with national and local officials.

The United States strongly supported the adoption of a multiparty political system and helped strengthen political parties during the transition. The U.S. Government funded programs to enhance voter participation, political pluralism, and the effective administration of the presidential and parliamentary elections. One U.S. program trained political parties to develop organizational structures, party constitutions, and campaign platforms. U.S. funds also sponsored national polls to measure public opinion on political issues and candidates. Workshops instructed political parties on how to use the polling data to focus outreach efforts and improve party messages.

The United States supported the electoral process by strengthening the electoral commission. A U.S. program trained over 100 commission staff and assisted in developing more effective voter education manuals and leaflets. U.S. funds also helped support a national campaign to update and expand voter rolls by upgrading the commission's information technology system, which resulted in the registration of an additional two million voters. U.S.-funded programs contributed to voter education in the run-up to the general election, and one program organized issue-based debates featuring national politicians from different political parties. Facilitators helped ensure that politicians presented and debated their plans to address poverty reduction, corruption, education, and the insurgency in the north. The debates occurred in six major cities and were broadcast on the radio. The United States also funded the publication of a parliamentary report card to promote transparency in government and voter scrutiny of elected leaders. The report card scored members of parliament on their attendance, voting record, and participation in debates.

The United States encouraged respect for constitutional checks and balances through strengthening the legislature, government accountability institutions, and public participation in policy-making. A U.S. program organized training for all parliamentary committee clerks on their new role in a multiparty parliament. U.S. assistance played a key role in facilitating a draft bill on the rights of persons with disabilities. The U.S. Government also funded local NGO programs designed to develop grassroots

participation in governance.

To promote media freedom, the United States supported and encouraged radio stations outside the capital city to report on issues of national and community interest. Through the continued sponsorship of an annual radio-reporting award, the United States encouraged professionalism in journalism and responsible media. The U.S. Government sponsored the travel of 16 journalists to participate in international visitors and exchange programs in the United States, as well as a media conference in Kenya, all of which focused on media freedom, ethics, responsibility, and best practices.

The United States continued to provide support for civil society. U.S. officials, including the ambassador, met regularly with international and local NGOs to discuss challenges facing the country and share ideas about how to support citizens. Local NGOs representing indigenous communities and special interest groups, including women, youth, disabled persons, and workers, received small grants from the United States to raise awareness and expand their services.

The United States supported activities to strengthen the rule of law. One program published a series of compendiums of judicial opinions, which provided attorneys, judges, law students, and human rights organizations with a valuable reference tool of up-to-date legal developments for court arguments. The U.S. Government hosted a training workshop for judges and judicial staff to promote effective enforcement of intellectual property rights, an important tool in helping the judiciary to perform independently of the executive, swiftly adjudicate cases, and prevent corruption by customs officers. U.S. officials promoted honest, accountable, and transparent government institutions during the year by raising these issues in both public and private engagements with government officials, the judiciary, and civil society.

A major focus of the long-term U.S. strategy to protect and strengthen human rights has been to provide assistance to the victims of the brutal rebel insurgency in the north of the country. U.S. Government assistance helped fund reception centers for children rescued from the LRA, most of whom had suffered horrific abuse including torture, rape, and forced labor while in captivity. The reception centers provided psychosocial rehabilitation and facilitated the reunion of victims with their families and communities. U.S. assistance continued to support several overnight shelters to protect displaced children from rebel abduction and, as the security situation improved during the year, to escape domestic abuse and other societal problems. The United States continued to promote a dialogue of peace and reconciliation among citizens in the region. One program organized stakeholder meetings for cultural and religious leaders to discuss how to maintain harmony in communities where former rebels were reintegrated. Another project helped civil society and local government leaders train to more effectively advocate for issues important to displaced northerners.

For the 1.5 million displaced during the LRA insurgency, U.S. humanitarian assistance improved access to essential services, including food, water, sanitation, and education. U.S. military projects in conflict-affected areas included drilling boreholes, building clinics, and rehabilitating infrastructure. The United States also sponsored a civil-military relations seminar to promote human rights awareness among army officers in the country. Seminar participants, including civil society leaders and officers from the security forces, discussed methods to improve human rights protection and justice for victims.

An extensive U.S. Government program to improve the status of women included training women to compete for elected office. This program developed a manual used to train more than 300 female candidates in local and national races. The program also organized mentoring sessions between female members of parliament and prospective female candidates. Another U.S. program funded a women's group in the north to promote awareness about gender-based violence and women's right to justice. U.S. assistance also supported efforts to promote the awareness and protect the rights of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, including women and children affected by the conflict and HIV/AIDS.

The United States encouraged the government to combat trafficking in persons and protect labor rights, including the rights of children, during the year. U.S. diplomatic efforts supported passage of a comprehensive national labor law in May. The U.S. Government funded four extensive child labor programs that rescued children from the worst forms of child labor, reunited them with their families, and provided them with informal, transitional, or vocational training. Two of the programs also targeted educational interventions for children made vulnerable by conflict or HIV/AIDS. Ongoing U.S. assistance in the north helped enroll 2,403 formerly abducted children in schools or vocational training. A U.S. funded antitrafficking program organized a national working group composed of government officials and NGO representatives. The working group drafted a new antitrafficking law, which female parliamentarians selected as one of five key areas of concentration in the legislature. The program also sponsored training sessions for judges, prosecutors, and police on enforcing antitrafficking laws.

Zambia

Zambia is a republic governed by a president and a unicameral national assembly. On September 28, President Levy Mwanawasa won a second term of office in an election that international observers and civil society organizations characterized as peaceful and transparent, although there were irregularities. The government's human rights record remained poor, although there were improvements in a few areas. Human rights problems included: unlawful killings, torture, beatings, and abuse of criminal suspects and detainees; life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention, and long delays in trials; interference with privacy; restrictions on freedom of speech and press and intimidation of journalists; restrictions on assembly and association; government corruption and impunity; violence and discrimination against women; child abuse; trafficking in persons; discrimination against persons with disabilities; and limited enforcement of labor rights and child labor laws.

The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for the country focused on supporting the demonstrated will of leaders both inside and outside of government to undertake reforms, improve democratic governance, and increase the professionalism of law enforcement agencies. The United States continued to support the country's fight against corruption and assisted efforts to improve fiscal responsibility in government. U.S. programs focused on increasing citizen participation in governance, strengthening governmental checks and balances, and bolstering efforts by the government and civil society to eliminate trafficking and improve the rights of women and children.

To promote democracy and transparent governance, the United States funded several NGOs and a UN organization that provided technical and material support for the September 28 presidential and parliamentary elections. Such support included voter education campaigns, the promotion of political debate among candidates, and assistance in the registration of a record 3.9 million voters. U.S. officials led coordinated election observation efforts and deployed 27 observers to polling stations throughout the country. The U.S. Government also hosted a workshop for female candidates on communication skills and other issues related to running an effective campaign.

To promote media freedom, the U.S. Government sponsored training on media independence, freedom of speech, and investigative journalism techniques. In advance of the presidential and parliamentary elections, the U.S. Government hosted workshops for journalists on election reporting and then organized a televised program in which the trainers and a studio audience discussed free and fair election reporting. The U.S. Government also continued to provide journalists with Internet training to improve reporting skills.

To assist in the government's anticorruption efforts, the United States provided assistance to the country's corruption task force, which coordinated the work of investigators and prosecutors in a wide range of landmark corruption cases. U.S. officials assisted the Ministry of Justice to reform legislation on asset disclosure and forfeiture. The U.S. Government also supported ministry initiatives to develop a new evidence code, provide protection to whistle blowers, and promote plea bargaining. Together with the governments of four other nations, the United States continued to support the Parliamentary Reform Project and its goal of transforming the National Assembly into an effective, independent legislature. During the year the reform project resulted in an increase in constituency offices, which promoted accountability by increasing citizen access to their parliamentary representatives. The reform project also increased the effectiveness of parliamentary committees by providing training in financial oversight and increasing access for civil society groups. Other ongoing activities included public forums on electoral reforms, youth workshops on good governance, and programs to educate rural women on their property rights and inheritance.

The U.S. Government supported training that had a significant human rights component for law enforcement officers. Nearly 40 security officials received training abroad at international law enforcement academies, and the United States trained an additional 90 law enforcement officers in the country.

U.S. officials met with a wide spectrum of religious representatives to promote inter-religious dialogue and collaboration. U.S. officials focused on outreach to the Muslim community, meeting with groups of Muslim men and women, providing Internet training, and hosting other programs. For example, the U.S. Government arranged a

digital video conference in which a respected Muslim leader in the United States and a resident interfaith audience discussed the need for religious tolerance. The U.S. Government also funded a Muslim women's group that sought to promote religious tolerance through dialogue.

The U.S. Government continued to fund the second phase of an ongoing program to combat exploitative child labor through education and also funded a program to strengthen the government's ability to design, implement, and monitor initiatives to address the worst forms of child labor. The United States raised trafficking issues at all levels of government, sponsored local organizations that educated citizens on trafficking, and hosted trafficking awareness programs. One such program involved 90 representatives from various youth organizations and included a lively and informative discussion led by three local experts on the problem. Another program attended by 40 leaders affiliated with local antitrafficking organizations featured a four-hour panel discussion on trafficking in the country. The U.S. Government sponsored the visit of a legislative drafting consultant to help local authorities draft comprehensive antitrafficking law and policy. The United States also funded an intergovernmental regional antitrafficking program and allocated funds for police units charged with protecting trafficking victims.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is constitutionally a republic, but the government, dominated by President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) since independence, is now authoritarian. The 2002 presidential election and the 2005 parliamentary elections were neither free nor fair, and the government and its supporters intimidated voters, disqualified opposition candidates, constrained campaign activities of the opposition, and distributed food in a partisan manner. During the year the political opposition and civil society continued to operate in an environment of intimidation, violence, and repression. In December President Mugabe and his loyalists in the ruling party proposed extending his term for two years by deferring presidential elections to 2010, rather than holding them in 2008 as scheduled.

The government systematically violated human rights, and official corruption and impunity were widespread. Security forces selectively harassed, beat, and arbitrarily arrested opposition supporters and critics within human rights organizations, the media, and organized labor. The judiciary was subject to executive influence and intimidation. A government campaign of forced evictions, which left 700,000 people homeless during Operation Restore Order in 2005, continued, albeit on a lesser scale. The government regularly used repressive laws to restrict freedom of assembly, speech, and press. In an attack on the independent media, the government jammed broadcasts of the popular Voice of America Studio 7 program, one of the few sources of uncensored news throughout the country, and seized radios belonging to listening groups in rural areas. The economy continued to decline, with skyrocketing prices, widespread shortages, and rapidly deteriorating social services, primarily due to the government's command and control economic policies.

The U.S. strategy for fostering democracy and human rights in the country is three-fold: to maintain pressure on the Mugabe regime; to strengthen democratic forces; and to provide humanitarian aid for those left vulnerable by poor governance. The U.S. Government utilized diplomatic efforts, public outreach, and technical and financial assistance to advance these goals. To maintain pressure on the regime, the United States emphasized international cooperation and coordination. U.S. officials engaged multilaterally and bilaterally to expand international support of sanctions against government and ruling party officials responsible for human rights violations. A growing number of like-minded donors now agree that fundamental political and economic changes are a prerequisite to reengagement by the international community with the government. U.S. officials regularly communicated to the ruling party the importance of lifting political restrictions and curbing human rights abuses. To encourage greater public debate on restoring good governance in the country, the United States sponsored public events that presented economic and social analyses discrediting the government's excuses for its failed policies.

To further strengthen pro-democracy elements, the U.S. Government continued to support the efforts of the political opposition, the media, and civil society to create and defend democratic space and to support persons who criticized the government. U.S. officials observed parliamentary by-elections and rural district council elections in several towns and cities throughout the country during the year. The observers concluded that the ruling parties' restrictive registration procedures, partisan distribution of government food aid, and inappropriate pressure by traditional leaders served to unduly influence the election results.

The United States promoted freedom of speech and of the media during the year. U.S. officials participated in ceremonies commemorating World Press Freedom Day and delivered remarks on the relationship between freedom of expression and economic prosperity. The U.S. Government sponsored programs and supported organizations that promoted the free flow of independent and objective information, including several township newspapers that disseminated reports and advised residents of their rights. Voice of America's Studio 7 radio station provided uncensored and balanced news to citizens throughout the country and worked to expand its listener base during the year. Citizens had access to independent information through the U.S.-sponsored American Corners program, which operated libraries throughout the country, and a newsletter that provided information and articles on key U.S. policies and priorities. U.S. programs provided funding to NGOs that collected and circulated information on civil society, human rights, and government actions. The United States sponsored two Fulbright scholars during the year: one helped improve a leading undergraduate journalism program by facilitating workshops designed to foster freedom of the press, while the other taught conflict resolution and mediation at one of the country's top universities. Two journalists participated in U.S.-sponsored professional exchanges in the United States.

The United States supported the efforts of civil society to create and defend democratic space. The U.S. Government funded international and local NGO programs that promoted a wide variety of causes, including social welfare, democratic processes, human rights, peace-building, women's and youth empowerment, and public advocacy. For example, a recipient organization involved members of all political parties, traditional leaders, and other local leaders in the establishment of peace committees that encouraged open dialogue on local issues by all community members. One grantee hosted a series of community forums in rural areas that provided a platform for discussing women's issues. Another grantee supported workshops to develop youth leadership skills necessary to confront social injustice through nonviolent strategies. The U.S. Government also sponsored an NGO leader on an exchange program to learn about activism by civil society groups in the United States.

The United States continued to promote rule of law in the country. Although the ruling party maintained its monopoly on the executive branch, other institutions—including Parliament, the judiciary, and local government—were at times able to exercise some independence. The United States encouraged the capacity of these entities to govern and, in some cases, directly supported their efforts. For example, a U.S.-sponsored program to strengthen parliamentary committees resulted in increased debate in Parliament—both from opposition and reform-minded ZANU-PF parliamentarians—and encouraged greater transparency through public hearings on legislation. In an unprecedented development, several bills that contained particularly repressive or ill-defined sections were publicly debated and sent back to committee for redrafting. Support for the portfolio committees also served to provide a greater check on the executive branch, as ministers and other high-ranking officials were held more accountable for their policies through vigorous questioning by committee members. U.S. funding and support enabled local citizen groups and select local authorities to improve transparency, accountability, and municipal service delivery. For example, local authorities throughout the country received training in financial management skills, including the use of participatory budgeting methods that requires public involvement throughout the entire process.

The U.S. Government was committed to combating human rights abuses during the year. U.S. officials continued to raise the country's human rights record in international fora and bilaterally with other governments. Statements by U.S. officials, including highly critical commentary on human rights abuses, corruption, and gross economic mismanagement, received prominent coverage in the local media; however, government-controlled outlets often distorted the message. U.S. officials emphasized in all substantive contacts with government and party officials the importance of ending human rights abuses in the country. The U.S. Government widely circulated human rights-related reports among civil society, government, and party officials. The United States supported programs providing critical assistance to human rights defenders and members of civil society who suffered abuse and torture at the hands of the government. One U.S.-sponsored program helped civil society organizations develop a rapid response support network for frontline human rights defenders and enhanced their ability to capture, document, and disseminate information about abuses. A prominent human rights lawyer participated in a U.S.-sponsored international visitor exchange program focused on promoting human rights in government policy.

The United States continued to be among the largest contributors of humanitarian assistance in the country. These programs provided persons who were vulnerable or displaced—including those affected by the government's continuing campaign of forced evictions—with critical resources during the ongoing crisis, regardless of their political affiliation. U.S. Government assistance included support to the UN World Food Program, the International Organization for Migration, and NGOs.

In support of religious freedom, the United States widely disseminated relevant reports on religious rights, and U.S. officials privately and publicly emphasized concern regarding intimidation and harassment of religious leaders who criticized the government. The United States supported efforts by religious leaders to highlight human rights abuses and flawed economic policies and to sustain a dialogue to improve the country's political situation. The U.S. Government hosted an event in which a returning international visitor's program participant gave a speech and moderated a discussion session comparing local religious pluralism with that of the United States.

The U.S. Government continued to encourage the protection of worker rights. In response to the arrest and beating of 15 leaders of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, U.S. officials publicly condemned the government's brutal reaction to the peaceful assembly of its citizens. The United States funded programs on labor issues, including support for an NGO that assisted trade unions in responding to and representing their members' interests and sponsorship of a labor leader's participation in a professional exchange program. The United States encouraged efforts by the government to combat trafficking in persons and supported a local NGO providing assistance to child trafficking victims. U.S. officials met with government representatives to share best practices and promote cooperation in combating trafficking. U.S. officials widely disseminated relevant reports and participated in local and regional meetings on trafficking.

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