



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# AT FREEDOM'S FRONTIERS

## A DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK





It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and every culture, with the goal of ending tyranny in the world. All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know, the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for liberty, we will stand with you.

*President George W. Bush  
Second Inaugural Address, January 2005*

The goal of our statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. Attempting to draw neat, clean lines between our security interests and our democratic ideals does not reflect the reality of today's world. Supporting the growth of democratic institutions in all nations is not some flight of fancy; it is the only realistic response to our present challenges.

*Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice  
Washington Post, December 11, 2005*



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# Foreword

**W**e live in a time of unprecedented opportunity for freedom and democracy.

Around the world, millions of citizens are demanding accountable leadership, a voice in decisionmaking, and basic human rights. The recent democratic revolutions that have unfolded from Lebanon to Kyrgyzstan are but the latest evidence of a surging tide. Over the past 15 years, we have seen democratic change—from El Salvador to South

about how durable democracies are built, and we have accomplished much.

Democracy and governance are core elements of Agency goals.<sup>1</sup> USAID has played a significant role in supporting the civic activists and political reformers who have led their countries to greater freedom. After September 11, 2001, the Agency initiated new democracy programs in Afghanistan and Iraq and expanded support for political reform elsewhere in the Muslim world. To fulfill the president's vision, the Agency will continue to leverage knowledge gained from past experience and engage fully to meet future challenges.

Today USAID is the largest democracy donor, implementing \$1.2 billion of programs in FY 2004. Programs are developed in cooperation with the State Department, the National Security Council, and U.S. embassies.<sup>2</sup> USAID knows that building demand for and sustaining democracy is strongly reinforced by economic opportunity and prosperity and healthy, educated populations. That is why we also emphasize these core elements of human

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Africa to Indonesia to the formerly communist countries of Europe and Eurasia. At the same time, we have witnessed backsliding in countries that have yet to realize a democracy dividend and others that have not yet taken the first steps toward democratization.

President Bush has made freedom and democracy a central focus of his administration, and as the major implementer of U.S. democracy and governance programs, USAID is advancing the president's freedom agenda. With decades of experience, we have extensive knowledge

<sup>1</sup> See *U.S. Foreign Aid: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century* (Washington DC: USAID, 2005). PD-ABZ-322

<sup>2</sup> Up to 80 percent of funding for USAID-managed democracy and governance programs is allocated by the State Department.

development alongside our democracy investments.

USAID's expertise in promoting democracy is essential to the success of the president's freedom agenda. Most important are our partnerships with local leaders and organizations promoting reform and democratization. In Washington, we work with the Department of State, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, other U.S. government departments—such as Treasury, Justice, Homeland Security, Labor, and Defense—and with Congress. We also work closely with other partners—including donors, international and regional organizations, business groups, diaspora communities, and civic groups—to apply concerted and consistent pressure and to provide support to reform forces. We will continue to coordinate activities and resources with our implementing partners, targeting them to the most appropriate objectives.

This document provides the strategic framework for USAID support for democratization. The approaches outlined inform and guide our investments and maintain our focus on the highest priorities. *At Freedom's Frontiers* underscores that support for democracy and good governance reinforces opportunities for peace and prosperity. Stronger attention to good governance principles across all USAID programs will strengthen the promotion of democratic transition and consolidation.



# Executive Summary

As a matter of principle, part of strengthening our national security, and an essential element of international development, USAID promotes good governance and the transition to democracy throughout the world. Good governance encompasses commitment to the rule of law, the public good, transparency and accountability, and effective delivery of public services. While democracy is not essential for good governance—and bad governance can occur under formal democratic structures—democracy and good governance together provide the strongest guarantee of security, justice, and economic development.<sup>3</sup>

Although many of the challenges to democracy have remained unchanged for decades, new ones emerged in the early 1990s when USAID began to comprehensively address these challenges. Instead of strong, authoritarian states, the most dramatic threats to democracy in the twenty-first century come from transnational terrorist organizations and fragile states. This document builds upon our experience and sharpens the focus of our approach.

We recognize that democracy must be home-grown. Thus, the centerpiece of our efforts remains our strong and enduring partnership with local actors—

those who face great challenges and who often take great personal risks to lead and support democratic movements. To position ourselves to respond to the full set of challenges to democracy throughout the world, we work with local, U.S.-based, and international actors to

- expand freedom in authoritarian states
- support democratic breakthroughs
- consolidate democratic progress
- build the foundation for stability and democracy in fragile states

We pursue these objectives by working to strengthen the four core dimensions of democracy:

- *Rule of law.* We promote rule of law—the foundation of justice and human rights—through our support for constitutional and legal reform, human rights promotion and protection, judicial independence and reform, and improved administration of justice.
- *Institutions of democratic and accountable governance.* We help strengthen institutions of democratic and accountable governance through our support for anticorruption programs, executive branch capacity-building, strengthening of legislative processes and institutions, security sector reform, and local government and decentralization.

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<sup>3</sup> *Foreign Aid in the National Interest: Promoting Freedom, Security, and Opportunity* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2002). [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PD-ABVV900.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PD-ABVV900.pdf)

USAID and the State Department define democracy and governance programs as “technical assistance and other support to strengthen capacity of reform-minded governments, nongovernmental actors, and/or citizens in order to develop and support democratic states and institutions that are responsive and accountable to citizens. These efforts also include promoting democratic transitions in countries that are not reform minded. Democracy programs promote the rule of law and human rights, transparent and fair elections coupled with a competitive political process, a free and independent media, stronger civil society and greater citizen participation in government, and governance structures that are efficient, responsive, and accountable.”

We strive to tailor our programs to the conditions in each country—mindful of the influence of the regional environment. We integrate elements that strengthen and elevate the voices of disadvantaged populations—women and minorities—because we recognize that true democratic development calls for the informed participation of all citizens. We also build on our comparative advantages of expertise and experience, considerable resources, extensive field presence, flexible approaches and instruments, and strong partnerships. Our assistance to other sectors helps build demand for and sustain democracy. Without economic prosperity and the ability to meet basic needs, democratic advances may be jeopardized.

In sum, USAID has built on our strengths, adapted our capabilities, and set our strategic priorities to support democratic development in the twenty-first century.

- *Political freedom and competition.* We help expand political freedom and competition through our support for democratic political parties, electoral administration, independent media, and civil society.
- *Citizen participation and advocacy.* We help society enter the political process through our programs that engage nongovernmental organizations (particularly advocacy groups), think tanks, labor unions, and independent media.

# Why USAID Promotes Democracy

## Principle

The United States promotes democracy as a matter of principle: people have the fundamental right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Countries that have chosen a democratic path should know that the United States will help them consolidate their democracies. Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile should know we support them. USAID's democracy and governance programs are designed to encourage democratic reformers and the consolidation of democratic gains—to extend the frontiers of freedom worldwide.

## Security

Democracy is central to our national security. Today, the primary threat to our security no longer comes from well-organized states with potent military forces, but from terror networks—some aided by outlaw regimes—operating in failed states or weakly governed regions. Countries that lack political freedom, accountability, and avenues for redress can also breed internal instability and threaten regional and international security. Good governance founded on democratic principles is the best hope for facing those threats. The United States also promotes democracy because consolidated democracies consistently stand as our closest and most reliable partners in global affairs.

## Democracy, Good Governance, and Development

Beyond principle and national security, U.S. support for democracy is grounded in a broader development agenda: democracy, good governance, and development reinforce each other to create a virtuous circle.

*Democracy and good governance.* For democracy to flourish over the long run, competent, transparent, and accountable government institutions are needed. Good governance provides security, operates according to reasonable standards of justice, and provides basic public services. Furthermore, democracy is more likely to be sustainable when it is held accountable by checks on its authority. For example, through competitive elections, democracies have a systematic instrument for removing ineffectual leaders and improving policies. Associations, movements, and the media also monitor public officials and policies. Citizen participation in decisionmaking results in more effective public institutions, peaceful settlement of disputes, and respect for the rule of law. Democracy and good governance typically are mutually reinforcing when they develop together.

*Democracy and development.* Democracy and development are also mutually reinforcing when supported by

good governance. Over the last decade, a consensus has emerged that good governance is integral to achieving development goals: it attracts capital, helps economies grow, improves welfare, and pushes countries along the path toward transformational development. Effective, efficient, and transparent institutions provide a strong platform for successful economic and political development. Democracy broadens social and economic opportunities. At the same time, advances in economic prosperity and public wellbeing can enlarge the middle class and increase the demand for sustainable democratic governance. Since 1960, there has been a strong correlation between economic and social progress and democracy in the developing world. Indeed, developing countries that are democracies have, on average, outper-

formed autocracies in virtually every measure of development.

Developing countries of strategic importance to the United States are more likely to be good partners if they are democratic. In fragile states—those vulnerable to or already in crisis—steady democratization can strengthen both the capability and legitimacy of government institutions. In countries emerging from conflict, democratic reforms offer a path for national dialogue and for shifting confrontations from the battlefield to the political arena. Moreover, efforts to combat transnational problems (such as infectious diseases and environmental degradation) and respond to humanitarian disasters are bolstered when there are effective government institutions and citizen participation.

# How USAID Promotes Democracy

## Focus

To advance democracy worldwide, USAID nurtures democratic openings in places that are not free, encourages democratic progress where it is being made, helps restart progress where it has stalled, and contributes to the foundations of democratic order in countries emerging from conflict. Among the many countries in need of assistance, we focus first on countries of strategic importance to the United States. We also support countries where the commitment to democratic progress is strong and assistance is most likely to be effective. As we monitor progress, USAID responds swiftly to aid reformers, support democratic transitions, and assist countries to consolidate democracy.

## Partnership

The most important USAID partners in supporting the spread and consolidation of democracy are local democrats in both public and private sectors. They face great challenges, and often take great risks, to lead democratic movements. To endure and thrive, a democracy must be home-grown and have strong local support. USAID programs alone cannot produce or sustain democracy; rather, they succeed in providing critical assistance when they support strong national leadership.

Our network of implementing partners—nongovernmental, for-profit, public, international, regional, and local—provides the instruments for delivering assistance. Our partnerships are vital, as are our partners' in-country and cross-regional knowledge and relationships. At the end of the day, however, the partnerships with the country's democratic leaders are central.

U.S. support for local democracy movements cannot come from USAID alone. Development assistance must work in concert with diplomacy and defense, and all U.S. government programs should focus on common priorities. Moreover, diplomatic pressure for better governance is most effective when all major donors and international and regional bodies express similar expectations and coordinate their assistance.

## Local Context and Analysis

There is no single blueprint for democracy—each country's needs, history, and cultural heritage are different. We assess these unique variables and adapt our approaches and emphases to fit the local context. Our country assessments are guided by an analytic framework that identifies opportunities and critical deficits in a country's institutional endowment and political processes.

## Dimensions of Democracy

Experience and research show that democracy has four key dimensions: the rule of law and respect for human rights, accountable and effective institutions, a free and fair political process, and citizen participation. USAID's framework to promote democracy focuses on these dimensions.

- *Rule of law.* No democracy can function without a reasonable standard of justice and protection of human rights based on the rule of law. Protecting the equal rights of all citizens—including marginalized groups—is a critical feature of an effective legal system. Clear rules and regulations and an independent judiciary form the cornerstones of such a system. Our programs assist constitutional and legal reform, judicial independence and reform, the administration of and access to justice, protection of human rights, prevention of crime, and community-based efforts to improve security.
- *Institutions of democratic and accountable governance.* Effective, responsive, and accountable institutions make a democracy work. We provide tools and expertise to strengthen democratic governance within and outside the state. This includes support for the effective and transparent provision of goods and services and creation of conditions necessary for economic growth. We assist in the establishment of avenues for meaningful public participation and oversight, as well as for substantive separation of powers through institutional checks and balances. Support for strengthening key economic institutions and for rel-

evant public and private associations that promote reform is also critical. Anticorruption programs address the Achilles' heel of many developing and democratizing polities. Other relevant programs include strengthening executive, legislative, and local government capabilities, as well as security sector reform. Assistance must be designed with an eye to the appropriate balance between national government and local authorities.

- *Political freedom and competition.* Political freedom, competition, and protection of minority rights are the essence of a democratic state and society. They constitute the vehicles for people to debate public priorities, air alternative solutions, and win support for proposed remedies. The process of contestation allows majorities to determine policies for a given period of time within a broadly accepted constitutional framework that should also protect minority rights. We promote free, fair, and transparent multiparty elections; and we promote representative and accountable political parties committed to democracy.
- *Citizen participation and advocacy.* Durable democratic transitions may be driven by a broad-based civil society movement rather than by reforms introduced from above. Thus, we work with civil society organizations to strengthen appreciation for the important role they play in development and to help them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to participate in public life. USAID programs promote the leadership capacity of marginalized groups—including women and minorities—and elevate

their voice in society. Civil society organizations, particularly the media, are essential to transparency and pluralism. Therefore, we help strengthen independent media, nongovernmental organizations (particularly advocacy functions), think tanks, and labor unions.

These four dimensions of democracy require a minimum consensus on fundamental organizing principles. We support processes to build democratic consensus on questions concerning national identity and constitutional issues that define the state. These fundamentals include state boundaries, national identity, a constitution that defines the extent of state power, and agreement on the relationship between the state, civil society, and the individual.

The four dimensions of democracy noted above—rule of law, good governance, competition, and citizen inclusion—provide a framework for informed analysis of our investment priorities and a solid theoretical foundation for USAID programs.

# USAID's Democracy Promotion Toolbox

The following toolbox provides illustrative and concrete examples of what USAID does to support democratization.

Promoting Justice and Human Rights through the Rule of Law	
<p>Improve laws, institutions, and the judiciary as checks on the executive</p> <p>Support due process, nondiscrimination, and representation of all segments of society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deploy monitors to report on human rights abuses and work on prevention</li> <li>• Support local groups that highlight human rights conditions and bring cases in court</li> <li>• Support law groups that provide legal assistance, mediation, and dispute resolution</li> <li>• Provide expert advice on legal codes, laws, and regulations</li> <li>• Support legal organizations' advocacy campaigns for equitable legislative and judicial rights for women and minorities</li> <li>• Provide support to law schools and bar associations</li> <li>• Build capacity of the judiciary, legislature, prosecutors' offices, and public defenders</li> <li>• Provide training and technical assistance to civilian police forces to enhance their accountability and institutional capacity</li> <li>• Help build capacity of communities to prevent crime and play a role in their own security</li> <li>• Increase access to justice for women and other disadvantaged groups through community mediation programs</li> </ul>

Strengthening the Institutions of Democratic and Accountable Governance	
<p>Effective, transparent provision of goods and services; avenues for participation and oversight; separation of powers with checks and balances</p> <p>Support for anticorruption in all institutions and sectors</p> <p>Effective oversight and democratic functioning of authorities responsible for security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address corruption through aid to independent audit agencies, anticorruption commissions, procurement agencies, ministries, legislatures, civil society groups, the press, and the business sector</li> <li>• Strengthen local governments through development of skills in budgeting, financial management, and provision of basic services</li> <li>• Provide expert advisors on constitution writing and constitutional provision</li> <li>• Improve the effectiveness of ministries, executive offices, and legislatures (train staff, assist policy development and research, strengthen oversight committees, and provide basic materials and hardware)</li> <li>• Support the cultivation of equitable opportunities for women and minorities in senior management positions through civil service reform</li> <li>• Build community participation in oversight activities</li> <li>• Train civilian government offices responsible for military oversight</li> <li>• Support dialogue between police and communities on security</li> <li>• Enhance the capacity of institutions to enforce gender-sensitive legislation and practice.</li> </ul>

## Expanding Political Freedom and Competition

Promote free, fair, transparent multiparty elections

Promote representative, accountable political parties

- Provide expert advice on election administration, election laws, regulations, and electoral commissions
- Support internationally administered elections
- Assist in convening provisional representative assemblies
- Support peace processes that bring conflicting parties together
- Fund and train domestic and international election monitors to help guarantee fairness and transparency of elections
- Train and fund civic groups to conduct parallel vote counts and exit polls to provide a reliable public check on official results
- Assist all major democratic parties, including advice and training on campaign techniques, researching public attitudes, setting party platforms, and strengthening internal structure
- Train democratic activists and leaders to be civic educators and to aid in registration and voting campaigns
- Enhance women politicians' leadership capacity through legislative training
- Bring political actors to the table to discuss and resolve disputes
- Train women and minority candidates and newly elected officials to participate in local and national political systems by strengthening their campaign, public speaking, and advocacy skills
- Facilitate dialogue between political actors and their constituents
- Assist political parties on internal governance, constituent outreach, polling, leadership recruitment, and training
- Help citizens mobilize get-out-the-vote drives
- Provide electoral education to citizenry

## Engaging Society through the Voice, Advocacy, and Participation of Citizens

Promote effective private voluntary associations and a strong civil society

Promote vigorous and independent media

- Provide equipment and training to media in the region or country
- Support production of radio and television programs for public information and civic education
- Train journalists, editors, and media managers to improve reporting (particularly investigative journalism) and business and managerial skills
- Train media managers and activists on media law and advocacy techniques
- Assist local groups to design and launch effective advocacy campaigns and civic education programs
- Support establishment of channels through which the public can bring its views to bear on the governance process
- Help develop civic education curricula on citizen rights and responsibilities, and about concepts such as privacy, responsibility, justice, and tolerance
- Advise local groups on how to organize and generate citizen involvement
- Help strengthen civil society organizations to hold government accountable
- Train minority and women's groups to develop networks of organizations and coalitions for more effective advocacy campaigns
- Assist organizations to develop democratic internal policies and practices
- Support civil society initiatives to improve governance elements of service delivery
- Promote the institutional capacity of legal services organizations targeting women and minorities



# Responding to Today's Challenges in Democracy

The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the greatest expansion of democracy in history. Beginning with Spain and Portugal in the 1970s, the “third wave” of democratization tripled the number of electoral democracies from 40 to 119.

A large majority of countries now, at a minimum, hold regular elections. Despite this remarkable progress, expanding and consolidating democracy worldwide remains a challenge. USAID is working to

- expand freedom in authoritarian states
- support democratic breakthroughs
- consolidate democratic progress
- build the foundation for stability and democracy in fragile states

The challenges and illustrative strategies for addressing each follow. In every case, to be most successful, assistance must be coordinated with instruments of diplomacy, international and regional organizations, and other donors.

## Expanding Freedom in Authoritarian States

There are too many closed and semi-authoritarian states that keep their populations isolated to varying degrees behind high levels of security and limitations on information, association, and participation. The executive usually controls the significant areas of political life both inside and outside the state. These states oppose the freedom agenda and often perform poorly in general development

## Engaging Marginalized Groups in Democratization

Engaging marginalized populations and protecting their basic rights ensures that democracy-building contributes to an empowered, inclusive, and just society. Steady and solid democratization requires the collective participation of all sectors of society—women, youth, minorities, and other marginalized groups—to ensure success. Thus, USAID is working to promote and protect the voices of all citizens and to harness their leadership capacity.

The contributions that women make to the economic, social, and political lives of their nations, communities, families and the next generation make them powerful actors in effective development. Training women to participate in local and national political systems is critically important to increasing their representation and building their collective voice, in national congresses, parliaments, and local assemblies. Working to build the capacity of women-led NGOs to advocate for their legislative and judicial rights helps to heighten awareness that their broad participation in the political process is essential.

Marginalized populations are more likely to participate in the political process when their basic needs are being addressed. Recognizing the link between economic security and civic participation, the focus is on programs that support their economic and social rights, focusing on empowerment by promoting more equitable laws, providing education on fundamental human rights and the rule of law, encouraging networking and promoting basic management skills.

In conflict environments, the role and contribution of women and other marginalized groups requires special attention. Marginalized groups are often disproportionately affected by conflict, having experienced war-related trauma that impedes their reintegration into society. However, if empowered, they can play a catalytic role in facilitating reconciliation. Women are often responsible for protecting the basic survival needs of their families. Their leadership is, therefore, vital to engaging their communities in building a sustainable peace. In conflict ridden and post conflict societies, USAID assists women and minorities to participate in community decision-making efforts, providing reconciliation training to disadvantaged groups, and facilitating access to resources in fragile states as well as improving basic service delivery to traditionally underserved populations.

as well. Many states rated not free<sup>4</sup> have low levels of economic growth, education, public health, and other services, because they are not accountable and are often corrupt and predatory. They are also actual or potential incubators of terrorism, instability, and lawlessness, especially when they collapse.

In such environments, our goal is to bolster credible reform forces wherever they are. Given the limited political space, human rights concerns for our partners, and the poor likelihood of achieving short-term impacts, our engagement in promoting democracy tends to be less visible, longer in duration, and more targeted than our other interventions. Civil society, private sector actors, and the media are our logical partners, and they usually receive the bulk of our assistance. However, USAID works to identify potential reform elements within the state that could also benefit from support.

Semi-authoritarian states offer more opportunities than closed states for progress. There, too, we support reformers wherever space exists. We support constituencies for monitoring and reporting human rights abuses and openings in any sphere that contribute to a pluralistic civil society. Technical assistance to strengthen the rule of

law may be the most fruitful in those conditions.

In both environments, reformers remind us that steadfast U.S. government support and engagement, however limited, sustained them and may even have protected them against greater repression.

## Supporting Democratic Breakthroughs

“Democratic breakthroughs” are dramatic openings for democratization. In recent times, peaceful revolutions, the end to civil war, or a successful struggle for independence have served as breakthroughs. Although breakthroughs often occur after years of sustained struggle against oppressive regimes, they are just the beginning of a potential democratic transition. Therefore, they provide no guarantee of ongoing democratic transformation. It is the hard work of governing that becomes the central challenge once the enthusiasm generated by a breakthrough wanes.

We support the democratization momentum. Assistance is most effective when it responds rapidly to new opportunities. In particular, our support often shifts to a large degree from the private sector and civil society to the new government to help establish and strengthen institutions of democratic and accountable governance. Specifically, we assist the new ministries, the key offices of the president and prime minister, the newly empowered legislature, and the courts. In some cases, support for community security measures while professional security sector institutions are being established and trained is essential. A prominent feature of our assistance are measures to counter grand corruption, which can undermine

any democratic experiment. It is critical that reforms provide tangible benefits to the population early in the government’s tenure; this builds upon and maintains the democratization momentum.

## Consolidating Democratic Progress

Democratic consolidation is a long process. Governance grounded in institutions, rather than driven by personalities, is the defining characteristic of consolidation. As such, many democracies are immature and significant reforms are still necessary. Democratic development is rarely linear, and consolidation is often punctuated by obstacles, stalls, and reversals. “Electoral democracies”<sup>5</sup> remain fragile, and changes in state structures, procedures, and processes may still be needed. The proliferation of crime and corruption is too common in young democracies where institutions are weak and checks and balances on authority are tentative. Democratic reformers, often inexperienced in governing, may not have the expertise to manage institutions effectively. The inability to enforce laws and implement policies contributes to the fragility of many young democracies. Government’s failure to address a host of problems often leads to disappointment with democracy in general and with the reformers in particular. That disappointment, registered at the next election, may lead to retrenchment on democratic reforms. In other cases, too

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4 Freedom House, which annually assesses the state of freedom in all countries as experienced by individuals, defines freedom as “the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and other centers of potential domination.” Therefore, *not free* designates a lack of political rights and civil liberties in a particular country. States that are not free are characterized by significant repression and fear, absence of political rights, and extremely oppressive regimes.

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5 A country is generally considered to be an electoral democracy if it has a competitive, multiparty political system with regularly contested elections that are determined to be free and fair. An electoral democracy may still lack the full range of civil liberties that exist in more mature, consolidated democracies.

many conflicting demands placed on relatively weak institutions may elicit limitations on civil liberties and media that together threaten the durability of these democracies. Many regimes that once appeared to be transitioning away from authoritarian rule retain remnants of the old order.

Our goal is to strengthen democratic consolidation. To do this, our assistance must remain steady, long term, and focused on strengthening the rule of law and institutions of democratic and accountable governance. Our programs support ministries and local governments to improve their effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. Training and technical assistance to the judiciary and police help them address crime and corruption fairly and impartially. Aggressive anticorruption measures are central to bolstering the prospects for democratic consolidation. We also help strengthen political parties to effectively aggregate and represent citizens' interests. Support for a vibrant, politically active civil society provides avenues for citizens to participate in oversight and advocacy. Assistance provided to other sectors—economic policy reform, natural resources, property rights, health, and education—are important to demonstrate the effectiveness of democratic governance and increase individuals' stake in sustaining democracy.

In countries where our focus is to facilitate consolidation, our assistance portfolio must be sufficiently flexible to shift to new areas when sufficient progress is made on the basic components of good governance and to address pressing public challenges to the democracy,

such as rising crime or economic decline when they arise.

## **Building the Foundation for Stability and Democracy in Fragile States**

A particular challenge of our time is rebuilding the political, economic, and social fabric of countries damaged by conflict or collapse and failure—the most seriously fragile states. Peace agreements that hold many of these states together are often tenuous. Research shows that half of all peace accords fail during implementation. The urgency, therefore, is to help reconstitute the state with the ability to establish basic order and security. At the same time, there is no shortcut to the negotiations necessary to build consensus for the future, nor to putting in place the mechanisms that channel grievances into peaceful, political avenues.

In fragile states, our goals are stabilization, reform, and recovery, that is, to provide a foundation for transformational development. We have no illusions about the difficulty in such environments where the government is often the crux of the problem. However, a legitimate and effective government is central to overcoming fragility. In these environments, we need to respond rapidly and flexibly to critical vulnerabilities. Therefore, our focus is on building—or rebuilding—institutions of democratic and accountable governance based on the rule of law, and promoting justice and human rights. The closer a state is to collapse, the more narrowly

our assistance focuses on the primary sources of fragility.

In postconflict states, the first priority is to reestablish order and to work on constituting an effective and legitimate state by building consensus and defining the character of the state. We implement short-term, high-impact activities oriented to these objectives, while establishing the basis for long-term democracy work. Along with helping to form a consensus and establish a minimum basis for the rule of law, elections may be an appropriate ingredient in postconflict transitions. When this is the case, we work with newly elected officials to define their roles and responsibilities, help build democratic institutions, and aid the development of partnerships between state and society to meet the country's basic needs. Accountability, participation, consensus building, and power sharing are built into our programs from the beginning.



# Upgrading Our Capabilities

USAID has extensive experience in democracy promotion. We have long helped promote and build democracies around the world. However, the establishment of the Office of Democracy and Governance in the early 1990s signaled the elevation of democracy and governance to core objectives and competencies of the Agency. Under the auspices of the Office of Democracy and Governance, we have undertaken more systematic analysis of democratization and our own programs to improve the effectiveness of our assistance.

Both the Democracy and Governance Office and the Office of Transition Initiatives act as the hub of technical leadership and operations, and both work to integrate best practices into every aspect of our operations. Their partnerships across sectors and regions mean that democracy and good governance are not pursued in isolation; progress in other sectors plays a complementary, interactive, and often catalytic role in the growth and sustainability of democracy. Linking programs for democracy and governance with programs in economic growth, health, and education can produce results greater than the programs could have produced separately. Progress in these areas helps democratic governments demonstrate the value of democracy to all citizens. That is why offices such as USAID's Global Development Alliance support public-private

partnerships to mobilize the resources of governments, business, and nonprofit organizations—not only for economic growth, but also to lay the foundations of civil society and promote democratic engagement.

USAID's greatest strengths are our field missions and their national staffs. They design and implement programs based on their direct knowledge and experience of the local and regional context. We have a democracy corps of 400 U.S. and foreign national staff, who manage programs in 80 countries. They are on the ground, understand the context, and have direct relations with counterparts inside and outside the host government.

However, today's challenges, and the high priority accorded democracy promotion in U.S. foreign policy, require that we adapt and build on this strong base.

## Setting Strategic Priorities

Working closely with the Department of State and the National Security Council, we ensure that resources go to priorities and that progress is made. We analyze our programs and ensure they are strategically focused on the highest democracy priorities, and we adapt our strategies, goals, and operations as needed.

## Sharpening Our Analysis

USAID has a well-established democracy and governance assessment tool that diagnoses key constraints to democratization and develops a country-appropriate democracy strategy to overcome them. We will continue building on these assessments to sharpen our understanding of today's democratic challenges. For example, we are refining a new and complementary assessment tool to identify the critical vulnerabilities and the priorities for our assistance in fragile states. In addition, cross-country comparisons will provide a clearer picture of what works under what circumstances. Complementary analysis ensures that funding and personnel match the priorities and opportunities for democracy promotion.

## Refining Our Approaches

We will translate the findings of this improved analysis into refined approaches to meet the critical challenges of promoting democracy and good governance, and we will continue evaluating our experiences to ensure we have the most effective and creative tools at our disposal. Although we have an extensive toolbox, we will explore how to put those tools to work more effectively in a range of difficult environments. This may entail fresh combinations of tools, refining existing tools, and even developing new tools. For example, because USAID operates increasingly in high-threat environments like Iraq and Afghanistan, we are developing tools to strengthen community policing, mitigate conflict, and support peace processes. New tools and more strategic use of well-established ones, directed

by improved analysis, enhance the Agency's ability to support the U.S. goal of promoting freedom and democracy worldwide.

## Responding Quickly to Democratic Opportunity

We are expanding our capacity to respond quickly to democratic opportunity and ensure rapid deployment of assistance to societies experiencing a democratic opening, breakthrough, or transition from war to peace. A model for accelerating program design and startup is being put in place. Mechanisms for delivery of democracy programs are being enhanced with rapid response capacity. Staff are being identified for rapid deployment. Contracting and funding flexibility are required in order to provide optimal assistance in a fluid environment. Resources for such rapid response are being identified to accelerate program implementation.

In all of these efforts, we engage a broad range of partners, most importantly the local actors in the host country. Other partners throughout the U.S. government, donor community, and implementing partners are also important to this endeavor. We bring a spirit of inquiry and innovation to these efforts to ensure our programs adapt to quickly evolving requirements.

# Conclusion

Advancing democracy, as the president has said, is the “testing” and the “calling” of this generation. With the spread of democracy linked to our values and our national security, and with democracy at the heart of foreign policy, we are promoting it worldwide. We emphasize the many positive reasons for supporting the spread of democracy anchored in good governance. However, we should not lose sight of the high risk that accompanies failure. History teaches us that authoritarian regimes are more likely to harbor terrorists or actively support terrorism. Fragile governments that do not control their territories offer space for criminal and terrorist groups to base their operations. Any country that suffers from poor governance and lacks political freedoms may be a breeding ground for instability with potential regional and international repercussions. In addition to security risks, failure to support democracy and good governance creates enormous human risks. Egregious violations of human rights, abysmal poverty, and the general inability to live a dignified life are all too prevalent where good governance and democracy are absent.

For all of these reasons, we will continue focusing our efforts on the challenges facing democracy today: nurturing democratic openings, encouraging forward progress, and rebuilding democratic

institutions as the foundations of lasting peace. We will continue to set strategic priorities, respond quickly to democratic opportunity, and update our approaches as needed. USAID will remain at the nexus of principle, security, and development imperatives as it promotes democracy worldwide, in partnership with many others wishing to expand freedom’s frontiers.









## **U.S. Agency for International Development**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the Secretary of State. For more than 40 years, USAID has been the principal U.S. agency to extend assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reforms.

USAID supports long-term and equitable economic growth and advances U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting

- economic growth, agriculture, and trade
- global health
- democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance

The Agency's strength is its field offices located in four regions of the world:

- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia and the Near East
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Europe and Eurasia

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