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## Office of Transition Initiatives – Venezuela

July 2009

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In August 2002, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched a program in Venezuela in response to the political crisis that led to an attempted coup of President Hugo Chavez. The OTI program intends to maintain democratic stability, build confidence among and between political leaders and civil society, and strengthen the country's fragile democratic institutions. The OTI program is part of a larger U.S. Government effort to promote democratic stability in Venezuela. The program supports the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, and human rights organizations across the political spectrum to provide an opportunity for open debate and dialogue to occur.

### PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The OTI program is designed to build citizen confidence in democratic processes through targeted support to Venezuelan civil society organizations and political parties. Assistance aims to protect democratic space—supporting civil society organizations that promote and protect the rights of the Venezuelan people in order to increase participation and foster effective community activism. The program also supports projects that strengthen political parties to be representatives of their constituents and the people, and reaches out to all political parties on a nonpartisan basis. In addition, OTI builds the capacity of Venezuelan human rights organizations by exposing them to successful strategies and lessons learned from similar organizations in the region.

During the last several ballots for president, local government offices, and constitutional referenda, the OTI program has worked on three primary goals: protect the vote, inform the vote, and get out the vote. The three-pronged effort has included training and organizing citizens, through local NGO leadership, to participate in constitutionally mandated election monitoring; assisting local NGOs in their efforts to provide forums for local debates that educate citizens on the issues that affect their interests (e.g., human rights, security, and participation); and supporting national Get Out the Vote campaigns. OTI works exclusively through local NGOs, regardless of political orientation, in support of their efforts to further democracy.

### FAST FACTS

Start Date: August 2002  
Budget: FY09: \$2 million in TI funds; \$5 million in ESF  
Partners: Development Alternatives, Inc.; Pan American Development Foundation; International Republican Institute; National Democratic Institute; Freedom House  
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