



## USAID Democracy Highlights

USAID democracy and governance programs provided assistance in 65 countries on four continents. The Agency has four objectives to achieve its goal of building sustainable democracies: strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights; more genuine and competitive political process; increased development of politically active civil society; and more transparent and accountable government institutions.

Our **rule of law** programs enhanced the fairness of the administration of justice in 36 countries.

- USAID-funded legal advice centers in South Africa filed more than 10,000 cases, resulting in collection of more than \$1,085,000 on behalf of their clients.
- As a result of USAID support to the Bolivian Office of Public Defenders, in 1994, after only two years of institutional existence, public defenders obtained the release of 3,442 detainees of 6,045 judicial cases they handled.

USAID supported the **monitoring of elections** in 21 countries. Programs increasingly emphasized support to indigenous monitors, a cost-effective strategy fostering sustainability and credibility.

- A USAID-supported Peruvian NGO grew from a staff of 3 to more than 9,000 volunteers in only four months. For the first time in Peruvian history these citizens independently and directly verified the results and quality of a national election.

USAID programs helped **expand media effectiveness and independence** in 22 countries.

- In Russia the media began to bring uncensored news to viewers, as exemplified by the reporting of differing views of the war in Chechnya.
- In Zambia, private sector journalists accounted for 45 percent of working journalists in 1995, up from 24 percent in 1993. In addition, the state monopoly on electronic media was broken in December of 1994 when Zambia's first privately owned radio station began broadcasting.

The Agency increased **local government participation** in 34 countries.

- USAID's work to improve the public administration capabilities of Philippine local government units resulted in an 80 percent increase in local revenue collection.
- 1995 marked the first time a Paraguayan city held public budget hearings. Local officials saw the benefits of such hearings during USAID-sponsored exchange visits with officials from Dade County, Florida. The forum allowed for meaningful participation; 50 proposals presented by the attending citizens were adopted.



### 3. Building Democracy

**I**N AN ERA of unparalleled political change, scores of nations are making the painful transition from repressive, autarchic regimes to democratic governance. USAID is in the forefront of this great wave, helping countries, where invited, build democratic institutions and strengthen the societal underpinnings essential to their success. In 65 countries on four continents, the Agency is helping guide the people and their leaders toward open, representative government.

Assistance in democracy and governance has obvious benefits for countries in transition. But it is in the U.S. national interest as well. Democratic countries are less likely to engage in war, generate large refugee flows, or disintegrate into complex crises, which then consume significant donor resources.

Some examples illustrate how democratic development directly benefits U.S. economic and security interests:

Not even a decade ago, much of Latin America and the Caribbean was characterized by dictatorship and military government, violence, conflicts, and closed economies. Those conditions brought on chronic, large-scale illegal migration to the United States. Today, almost all governments of this region are democratically elected. The

level of conflict has reduced dramatically, and refugee flows from the region have slowed considerably. In addition, U.S. exports have made substantial gains: during 1985–94, the annual increase in U.S. exports to Nicaragua averaged 17.9 percent; to Argentina, 22.5 percent; to Brazil, 11.2 percent; and to Chile, 16.9 percent.

Racism, economic controls, and labor oppression dominated Southern Africa, a region with considerable mineral deposits and trade potential. These conditions moved the United States to divest, disinvest, and impose sanctions in that region—bringing to a halt normal trade relations. Today, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and most significantly South Africa have all progressed through the early stages of democratic transition. The region is open to, and encouraging of, U.S. investment and trade.

For decades, the states of Eastern Europe were part of a politically authoritarian, economically closed, and militarily hostile bloc. Today, countries of the region operate on a democratic basis, and U.S. exports to the region have grown dramatically. During 1985–94, U.S. exports to Poland grew by 11.3 percent a year and to Hungary by 14.1 percent. Even more remarkably, a number of countries in the region have indicated their

desire to become security allies with the United States through NATO. Albania and Hungary have both demonstrated their willingness to help the United States and NATO in the Serbian–Bosnian conflict.

By contrast, in some countries whose political situation has deteriorated, no similar rise in U.S. exports has occurred. In the same period (1985–94), for example, U.S. exports to Burma, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zaire have all experienced negative or no growth.

These examples are not intended to suggest that democracies in these regions are without serious problems, or that democratization is a sufficient or even necessary condition for increased U.S. exports. International trade is far too complex for such simple connections to be made. But they do suggest there are some positive links of substantial advantage to U.S. economic interests.

Another direct benefit of the democratization process concerns the environment. As chapter 5 demonstrates, problems associated with pollution, deforestation, diminishing biological diversity, and possible global climate change are all transnational and global. They are of immediate concern to citizens of the United States. New political openings in many countries enable the United States more easily to provide training, technical assistance, and public education in environmental matters. Such aid has helped Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, for example, deal with grave soil and air pollution. It has helped countries in Asia and Latin America find alternatives to wholesale deforestation.

In addition, the whole endeavor of building civil society is creating a demand for better environmental and natural resource management policies and practices and encouraging community management of natural resources. Formulation of monitoring, advocacy, and public interest organizations is essential to sustained interest in environmental protection.

To maximize progress toward achieving the Agency goal of building sustainable democracies, and in light of limited resources, USAID programs are targeted in four priority areas (see table 3.1). Their objectives are

- Strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights
- More genuine and competitive political processes
- Increased development of politically active civil society
- More transparent and accountable government institutions

This chapter discusses accomplishments in each area and notes what still needs to be done to consolidate that progress and continue striving to achieve the overall goal of building sustainable democracies.<sup>11</sup>

## Measuring Program Performance

USAID assistance in democracy and governance is relatively new. And whereas other sectors rely on decades of research and information collection, in democracy and governance USAID is helping define the boundaries of assistance and methods for determining the impact of democracy and governance assistance. Given the incremental, complex, and nonlinear nature of political change, the Agency faces considerable challenges in measuring the success of democratization programs.

Increasingly, the Agency is refining and using structured performance measurement tools. During the past year, USAID staff developed a straightforward yet comprehensive framework for guiding programming (see figure 3.1). In addition, the Agency's program performance database tracks country-level strategic objectives and program outcomes, their indicators, projected results, and actual results for all programs.

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<sup>11</sup> Map 3.1 shows the current status of democracy in the countries where USAID has programs. *Source:* Freedom House *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1994-95*, New York, 1995.





**Table 3.1 USAID Programs with Democracy and Governance Objectives in 1995<sup>a</sup>**

	<b>Africa</b>	<b>Asia/Near East</b>	<b>Europe and the New Independent States</b>	<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number of programs</b>	29	18	26	20	93
<b>Number with DG objectives</b>	14 (48%)	10 (56%)	24 (92%)	17 (85%)	65 (70%)
<b>Objective 2.1: Strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights</b>	<i>Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia</i> (7)	<i>Bangladesh, Cambodia, Egypt, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka</i> (7)	Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (16)	<i>Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay</i> (16)	46 (50%)
<b>Objective 2.2: More genuine and competitive political processes</b>	<i>Burundi, Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia</i> (7)	<i>Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia</i> (3)	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (18)	<i>Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua</i> (5)	33 (36%)
<b>Objective 2.3: Increased development of politically active civil society</b>	<i>Benin, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia</i> (10)	<i>Bangladesh, Cambodia, Egypt, Indonesia, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Yemen</i> (10)	Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (24)	<i>Belize, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru</i> (11)	55 (59%)
<b>Objective 2.4: More transparent and accountable government institutions</b>	<i>Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, Swaziland, Zambia</i> (7)	<i>Bangladesh, Cambodia, Egypt, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka</i> (8)	Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Rep., Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine (17)	<i>Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru</i> (12)	44 (47%)

<sup>a</sup>Sustainable development countries are in italics. Table presents all programs with an approved Strategic Plan, submitted by June 1995, that identify democracy and governance as a strategic objective or target of opportunity. Countries that are working in this arena and are either in the process of submitting a democracy and governance strategy or have a smaller program not classified as a strategic objective include Angola, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Jordan, Mali, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, and the West Bank–Gaza.



# Strengthened Rule of Law and Respect for Human Rights

The first Agency objective in democracy and governance is strengthened rule of law and respect for human rights. Rule of law protects citizens against arbitrary use of state authority and against the lawless acts of other citizens. It ensures that all citizens are treated fairly and are not subject to the whims of the powerful.

Internationally recognized human rights provide a framework for citizens to interact with each other and with the state. Human rights guarantees include security of person and property; freedom of speech, assembly, movement, and religion; the right to due process; freedom to work at a job of one's choosing for a salary one is able to negotiate; and equality for women and other marginalized groups.

Without rights, and a legal system that protects those rights, citizens do not have the

opportunity to defend their interests and to have them weighed in public policy formulation. Furthermore, the existence of professional and equitable legal systems abroad directly benefits U.S. citizens and corporations by laying the foundation for equal and predictable treatment under the law. USAID's approaches to strengthening rule of law and respect for human rights include ensuring legal protections of citizens' rights and interests, enhancing fairness of the administration of justice, improving timeliness of the administration of justice, and increasing citizen pressure for conformity with international human rights standards (see figure 3.2).

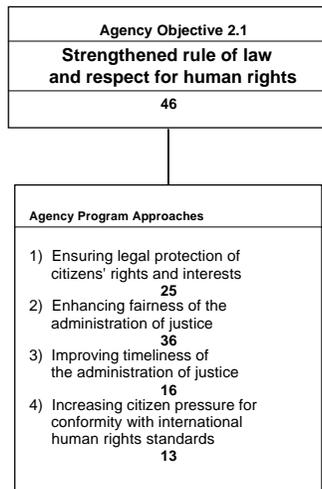
## Program Performance

Several strategies for ensuring legal protection of citizens' rights and interests have been successful. In newly emerging democracies, USAID often directs its efforts initially on the basic instrument of any democracy—its constitution.

In 1990, virtually all African countries were operating under constitutions that were vestiges of documents inherited from the former colonial power. These documents had been amended, usually on an ad hoc basis, to suit the needs of a series of increasingly authoritarian governments. Consequently constitutional and ordinary laws increasingly infringed on basic human and civil rights and produced unsustainable patronage-based governance.

As an outgrowth of the democratic revolution that has occurred in Africa since the early 1990s, constitutional reforms have been promulgated in more than 17 African countries. These new or amended constitutions are providing improved protection of both human and civil rights and have in various ways diluted the power of the central state, in some cases dramatically. These constitutional changes have strengthened and opened the possibility for strengthening democratic institutions. Legislatures, courts, and civil society groups are increasingly invoking constitutional law as they play out their respective roles. This phenomenon could not have occurred under the authoritarian regimes that dominated until 1990.

**Figure 3.2**  
Number of Country Programs  
Contributing to Agency Objective 2.1



Malawi provides one example of USAID's role in constitutional development. In 1993 Malawi's leadership began to move from a single-party dictatorship toward a multiparty system. This presented the women of Malawi with a unique opportunity to have a voice in the constitutional process. USAID support, both formal and informal, was critical to their success. Initially, USAID assistance enabled women delegates to attend a preelection All Party Conference. At the close of this conference, seven of Malawi's political parties endorsed the concept of constitutionally established equal rights. One month later, at the first national constitutional conference, women leveraged this commitment to gain support for inclusion of women's rights in the bill of rights. They also recommended equal representation for men and women in the senate.

As the constitutional-drafting process proceeded, the USAID Mission in Malawi served as an informal link between the drafting commission and women's groups. This ensured the women timely knowledge of potential changes to the draft constitution. That knowledge enabled them to successfully defend four separate challenges to the provisions for women in the bill of rights and equal representation in the senate. One year later, at a conference held to address proposed amendments to the constitution, the women, in alliance with local chiefs, successfully resisted a ruling party proposal to abolish the senate. The final result of these activities is a gender-sensitive constitution that provides equal rights and equitable representation.

Once a fundamental legal framework is in place, USAID programs often direct attention to the quality of personnel and systems in place for rendering justice. Strategies for training personnel in the judiciary and attorneys general offices emphasize increasing access to and knowledge of the law, independence, ethical standards, and investigative and prosecutorial capacity.

In 1993 and 1994, Russia began reinitiating jury trials in nine regions after a hiatus of more than 70 years. Responding to this initiative, USAID supported workshops where judges and lawyers were trained in the fundamentals of trial by jury and the adver-

sarial process, and (at conferences for legal professionals) where issues—such as jury selection, evidence, ethics, and criminal procedure—were addressed. This initiative received support through a growing public awareness generated by working with the media to publicize utilization of jury trials. Its success has led four additional regions in the country—including Moscow City and St. Petersburg—to reinstitute jury trials beginning in January 1996.

In 1993, Honduran public prosecutors presented fewer than 700 criminal cases to tribunals, none involving public corruption. With USAID assistance, the Honduran attorney general's office was created. During 1995, more than 12,000 criminal prosecutions have been presented around the country. For the first time in the history of Honduras, corruption charges have been pressed against 73 high- and middle-level government officials, including national and local political and judicial officials.

But a functioning judicial system alone is not sufficient for fair administration of justice. Citizen access is also essential. One strategy for increasing access is to improve the government's ability to provide representation for citizens. Many programs in the Latin American and Caribbean region emphasize the importance of expanding and upgrading public defenders' offices to help indigent defendants and reduce the large number of detainees languishing in prisons (see box 3.3).

In addition to governments, civil society organizations, particularly legal advocacy groups, have a strong and increasing role in promoting access to judicial systems. They are inexpensive to support and largely self-directed. They empower citizens by increasing both knowledge of their rights and access to the justice system.

The South Africa Mission has funded 60 legal advice centers. In addition to providing legal education, these centers filed more than 10,000 cases that resulted in the collection of more than \$1,085,000 in money and property on behalf of their clients. The Mission also supported the South Africa Legal Defense Fund, whose network of attorneys handled cases involving women's right to inherit

### Box 3.1 Ensuring Public Security in Haiti

USAID's involvement in Haiti has affected a number of sectors of Haitian society. One is the justice sector.

The Agency's goal in its administration of justice program in Haiti is to improve the effectiveness, accessibility, and accountability of the Haitian justice system. Through USAID funding, Haiti for the first time in its history has a police force under civilian control. This force, which will eventually number 5,000, is being trained by the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program of the U.S. Department of Justice. USAID funds the project. Public security being of primary concern to the restoration of democracy, the existence of a capable civilian police force is essential for the short-term departure of U.S. and UN forces from Haiti and the long-term stability of democracy.

In addition to creation of a civilian police force, USAID developed a training program for the 500 judicial officers (prosecutors and judges) throughout Haiti. It has also established a judicial training school in Port-au-Prince. More than 50 civilian police have been trained by former U.S. Department of Justice personnel in maintaining order and control in the courthouse and in providing security for judges, prosecutors, witnesses, and accused. This program has improved the image and functioning of Haiti's courts.

USAID has also funded technical assistance to the Ministry of Justice. The assistance goes toward creating procedures for monitoring court operations and toward developing capacity for a case-tracking system and continual supervision and inspection of judicial offices. USAID funds also support renovation of decrepit court facilities.

Finally, USAID is contributing to a prison reform program. It includes training prison personnel, renovating prison facilities, and ensuring timely detention hearings.

property and complex constitutional law issues, such as the right to bail and use of racial classifications.

Programs addressing the *fairness* of the administration of justice often concurrently direct attention to *timeliness*. USAID programs work on improving case management, including streamlining and automating the process. Case-tracking systems are one tactic aimed at increasing timeliness.

In Panama, for example, officials were in the past not held accountable for the cases they handled. The USAID Mission and Panamanian government agreed that it was necessary to establish targets for current and future resources to improve the justice system. The government not only met these targets but exceeded them. At the end of 1994, courts handling 77 percent of Panama's criminal case load began using a new standardized case-tracking and statistical control system developed with USAID assistance. By March 1996 the system will cover the country. There are already signs of improvement in the timeliness of criminal processing by the courts,

despite the relative newness of the system. The percentage of cases processed within legally prescribed deadlines has increased. This is particularly impressive given that case loads were increasing during that same period.

Case-tracking systems often support the protection of human rights but are not necessarily sufficient by themselves. USAID also supports human rights ombudsmen, improvements in the investigative process, and programs to strengthen the ability of the media and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to raise human rights issues.

Although USAID has had many successes, there have also been instances in which valuable lessons were learned when programs were not implemented as planned. For example, with the assistance of USAID/Guatemala, a long-awaited computerized human rights case-tracking system finally came on-line. However, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (OHRO) failed to use the system aggressively to investigate human rights abuses. This led the Mis-

sion to condition further technical assistance on OHRO's taking a demonstrably more proactive role in investigation. Other donors have followed USAID's lead in conditioning assistance on OHRO's performance. The Mission is appropriately holding the Guatemalan government accountable for continuing enforcement of agreed-to reforms.

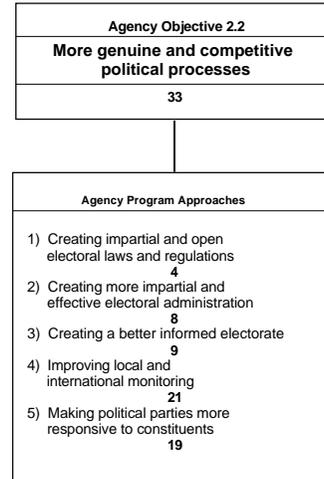
## More Genuine and Competitive Political Processes

The second Agency objective in democracy and governance is more genuine and competitive political processes. When elections are manipulated, poorly managed, or held only after lengthy and unpredictable intervals, participation, competition, and the will of citizens are all compromised.<sup>12</sup> USAID plays an important role in helping to ensure free and fair electoral contests around the world and to enhance competition. USAID's approaches to achieving this objective include creating impartial and open electoral laws and regulations, creating more impartial and effective electoral administration, creating a better informed electorate, improving local and international monitoring, and making political parties more responsive to constituents (see figure 3.3).

### Program Performance

The constitution, laws, and regulations establish the framework for elections in a given country. They can be written in such a way as to encourage fairness, openness, and participation by all elements of society—or they can create unfair advantages. In several instances, USAID has supported technical advice concerning reform of the legal and

**Figure 3.3**  
**Number of Country Programs**  
**Contributing to Agency Objective 2.2**



administrative framework governing elections. This has yielded significant results:

*Russia.* Major legislation on elections to the state дума and the presidency were signed into law. Substantial segments of the new law were drawn directly from advice provided by USAID-funded NGOs and were based on weaknesses they detected in previous elections. Of the 21 recommendations made by one NGO, 12 were implemented in their entirety and another six in part. These reforms included balloting and vote-counting procedures, processes for reporting and disseminating results promptly at the local and national levels, and voting procedures for military personnel and absentee voters.

<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the countries reflected in figure 3.3, USAID-supported NGOs undertook election and political party-related work in, or with representatives of, more than 20 other countries. They include, in Africa: Benin, Botswana, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe; in Latin America and the Caribbean: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela; in Asia and the Near East: Nepal and West Bank-Gaza; and in Europe: Albania. With the notable exceptions of Ghana and the West Bank-Gaza, most of these undertakings were relatively limited.

*South Africa.* A USAID-sponsored organization helped determine why people were not registering for the 1995 local government elections and what was wrong with the registration system. As a result, the South African government extended the registration period, allowed simultaneous intensification of voter education, and expressed greater flexibility about voting without preregistration. These adaptations helped make the elections far more inclusive and less conflictual than had been anticipated.

*Dominican Republic.* Possibly the most interesting example of long-term impact emerges from the Dominican Republic, where the 1994 election was seriously flawed. USAID provided technical assistance to the election commission and funding for election observation. After considerable pressure, the election commission set up an investigation into the irregularities. The investigation report of the troubled election was ignored by the election commission. Mounting pressure from the civil society and the United States led to a political accord that called for limiting the president's four-year term, no presidential re-election, and other constitutional changes, including the judiciary. Congress passed the accord with some modifications, and the new Presidential elections are set for May 1996.

If election results are to reflect the popular will, citizens must understand the issues and must be able to determine which candidates represent their interests. In addition, citizens need to know how and where to vote, and sometimes they need to know, or be reminded of why, voting is important. USAID supports activities of NGOs and the media to improve citizen understanding, and to address gender-specific obstacles that limit women's participation in the electoral process.

Voter education programs specifically tailored to local circumstances continue to have positive effects on public participation in elections. Such outcomes become even more important in countries where citizens disheartened by the poor economic performance of their new governments have shown a tendency toward political apathy. In Uganda, for example, a comprehensive Agency-supported voter education program contributed

to an 87 percent voter registration rate and a ballot spoilage rate of only 3.4 percent.

The Agency has also been at the forefront of implementing innovative methods to educate and encourage active electoral participation. The emphasis has been on women and young people, who traditionally are less involved in electoral politics.

For example, in collaboration with its partners, USAID in 1993 launched the Women in Politics project to increase women's political participation in Asia. The project supports indigenous initiatives that encourage women to participate in all aspects and at all levels of public decision-making—as voters, advocates, and leaders. In Mongolia the project's support for leading women's NGOs has recently culminated in establishment of the Women's Coalition. It brings together 20 women's NGOs for the purpose of influencing the parliamentary elections that will be held in June 1996. In particular, the Women's Coalition educates voters, seeks to put more women into elected positions, and presses for inclusion of gender issues in the platforms of all the political parties.

Another example of innovation is occurring in the West Bank–Gaza. Although elections there have not yet taken place, the Agency is working to develop a strong voter education program. USAID-supported voter education programs are targeting women, youth, and ex-political prisoners. The Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, for example, has prepared and presented democracy materials for women. The Palestine Center for Peace and Democracy has conducted 153 workshops for students at 134 high and vocational schools. And the Center for Palestine Research and Studies is using polls to encourage informed communication between citizens and politicians.

In countries that are in transition to democracy or in the early stages of democratic consolidation, monitoring can play an important role in applying pressure on those conducting the election to do so in an honest manner. Monitors can also increase public confidence in the privacy and importance of the vote. Establishing nonpartisan local monitoring capacity is critical and increasingly emphasized by USAID. In contrast to

international monitors, indigenous monitors are able to track election preparation well before elections are held, cover more polling places, and understand where deception is likely and how it occurs. Moreover, emphasis on local monitoring helps create a sustained capacity that can be applied to elections whenever they occur, at both local and national levels.

*Armenia.* In the recent election, three organizations wanted to monitor the elections separately. With U.S.-sponsored facilitation, an umbrella coalition of the three, Vote Armenia, was formed. The coalition developed a monitoring plan, negotiated it jointly with the government and international agencies, and trained 1,200 election monitors, who were deployed throughout the country. Although the election was far from perfect, distortions were reduced by the presence of the monitors, and the members of Vote Armenia gained both experience and confidence. At the same time, costs were reduced and the coalition was able to judge the freeness and fairness of the election independently.

*Peru.* The Agency helped a Peruvian civic organization organize an election observation and quick-count program for the April 1995 national elections. Over four months, this NGO grew from a staff of 3 to a national network of 47 regional committees and 9,000 volunteers. In a highly charged political environment, it provided the general public, as well as political parties, with election-day reports and early results, indicating that problems encountered were insufficient to undermine the integrity and results of the electoral process.

This was the first time in Peruvian history that citizens have independently and directly verified the results of an election and assessed the quality of the process. Moreover, the NGO addressed specific cultural constraints for women in rural areas and designed its activities specifically to encourage participation of women as voters, as members of electoral boards, and as participants in training events.

*Bangladesh.* Fairness of elections is one of the greatest issues in current Bangladeshi politics. Indeed, the opposition political par-

ties have resigned from the current parliament and called for appointment of a caretaker government to manage the next parliamentary elections, scheduled for early 1996. To address the issue of free and fair elections, USAID during the past year has supported the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance. It is a coalition of almost 50 Bangladeshi NGOs devoted to election monitoring at both the local and national levels. As part of its assistance, USAID recently trained 35 regional coordinators who will build local chapters of the alliance throughout the country.

Moreover, the Agency has built a coalition of donors on this issue. Through USAID's leadership, the coalition consists of Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UN Development Program, and the United States.

As evidenced in the Bangladesh example, whenever possible, for reasons of effectiveness and economy, USAID seeks close cooperation with other donors, especially UN agencies. USAID programs have established a strong track record of taking the initiative in this regard. For example, in Mozambique's recent post-civil war election, not only did all U.S. government agencies cooperate to great effect, USAID took a lead role in a multi-donor advisory commission that developed voter education materials and trained party officials and nongovernmental monitors. Some 32,000 poll watchers were trained to staff 7,000 polling stations. The success of that election is considered to have helped democracy in Mozambique and also to have boosted U.S. efforts to stabilize Southern Africa's political and economic systems.

More active and effective political parties increase the vitality of competition and give citizens greater choices. Much of USAID's support for political parties occurs in the context of elections. In Thailand, for example, the USAID Women in Politics Program provided political party training to more than a thousand women in five northern provinces before the 1995 local elections. Of the 289 women who ran, two thirds had received training, and 109 (34 percent) were elected. The number of women holding office

in these provinces increased from an average of 1 percent before the elections to 14 percent afterward.

Similarly, USAID/Argentina supported training for women in politics. Of 343 women who received training, 111 had been engaged in politics before training; after training, this number increased to 168. Thirty-seven of these trainees have been elected to political office.

Parties can also play an important role in managing conflict successfully. Working on a nonpartisan or multipartisan basis, USAID supports building the capacity of political parties to analyze policy issues and to interpret and incorporate the wishes of their constituents in developing and promoting platforms. The South African election, in which USAID support assisted four previously disenfranchised parties, provides one among a number of recent examples of the utility of this type of assistance.

In addition to strengthening parties for election participation, USAID aims to reduce interparty hostility and to enhance parties' role in peaceful political conflict resolution. In Côte d'Ivoire, USAID assistance contributed to the establishment of a forum that brought together no fewer than 82 political parties. This was the first time such a comprehensive gathering of political actors had occurred. The forum drafted a code of conduct that curtailed infringements of party regulations and reduced interparty tensions.

Similarly, in Haiti, the election, while flawed, was relatively free of violence and intimidation despite a highly polarized environment. Critical to this achievement was USAID's support for a public debate between the parties. The debate was peaceful and well publicized, and it served to keep the parties engaged in the election process and focused on issues.

USAID has learned the importance of, and therefore gives more emphasis to, programs conducted after elections. The Agency also now gives more emphasis to the period between elections when there is still time to make carefully considered improvements in laws and regulations and in voter information and attitudes. After the recent election in Peru, for example, the Agency continued as-

sistance to various nonpartisan civic organizations concerned with elections. In Venezuela, civic education continued after the election in order to help voters better understand the roles of their newly elected representatives. USAID/Nicaragua is already providing voter registration assistance for the 1996 election. Widespread registration is seen as crucial to democratic progress in that country.

The Agency continues its efforts to find and refine methods for making a greater impact at less expense. Toward this end it undertakes such activities as putting more emphasis on training trainers, who in turn train others, relying more on local organizations; and cooperating more effectively with other donors. USAID activities in Mozambique and Peru provide successful examples of these efforts.

The Agency also continues to bring election officers together on a regional basis to facilitate learning and sharing of lessons and experience as a cost-effective way of educating and providing support for election officials and NGOs. In Africa, for example, USAID supported a colloquium for African electoral administrators, establishment of the African Association of Election Authorities, and a pan-African workshop on designing democracy materials. Similar conferences have been held in Europe and the Americas.

## **Increased Development of Politically Active Civil Society**

The third Agency objective in democracy and governance is increased development of politically active civil society. A strong civil society is crucial to democracy. "Civil society" is the broad term given to voluntary associations of all sorts; it inhabits the area between individuals and the state. Nongovernmental organizations constitute a vital channel for sharing information and for the formulation and representation of interests. Their collective nature helps ensure that their members' interests are weighed by policymaking bodies. In addition, collective action helps protect individual members from

arbitrary and capricious governmental retaliation.

With their assorted political interests, organizations monitor government performance and create strong pressure for accountability. They inculcate democratic values, giving people practice in democratic principles and creating opportunities for new leaders to rise. USAID democracy programs designed to strengthen civil society generally focus on civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in or having the potential for championing adoption and consolidation of democratic governance reforms. USAID's approaches for strengthening these CSOs as well as civil society in general include encouraging legislation promoting the organization and operation of CSOs, strengthening civil society's oversight of state institutions, increasing effectiveness of CSO management, increasing democratic governance within CSOs, increasing CSO participation in policy formulation and implementation, increasing acceptance of democratic values, and expanding more effective and independent media (see figure 3.4).

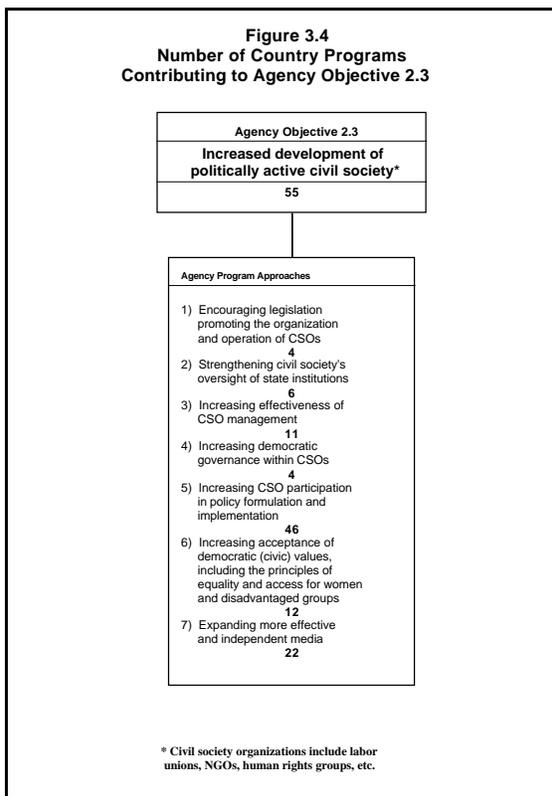
## Program Performance

Democratic governance requires societal participation in policymaking and policy implementation. Civil society organizations provide a means by which ordinary men and women can affect decisions made in the public realm. Increasing CSO participation in policy analysis, formulation, and implementation is the most common aim of USAID's civil society programming. USAID strategies include supporting development of networks of civil society organizations; improving the organizations' capabilities in management, planning, advocacy, fundraising, and policy analysis; and creating forums that provide increased opportunities for the organizations to engage government in policy dialogue.

Because strengthening organizations in civil society is both an objective and a means of promoting democracy, support for civil society organizations is frequently a strategy for achieving results under other democracy objectives. Enhancing good governance requires strengthening the organizational capacity of society to demand greater accountability from political and bureaucratic institutions. Similarly, rule-of-law programming includes support for human rights and other legal assistance organizations. And civic education projects are often closely tied to efforts to promote broad and meaningful participation in elections.

USAID investments in civil society organizations that target particular issues can generate spillover effects that contribute to systemic reform. In Thailand, for example, the growth of environmental CSO activism strengthened the call for more fundamental democratic reforms. The Agency began working with environmental advocacy groups in 1990 as part of its new democracy program. This effort aimed at improving CSO skills in coalition building, strategic planning, media projection, fundraising, and policy advocacy.

Many of these USAID-assisted environmental CSOs became active in organizing forums to protest against the military regime that seized power in 1991. Later they engaged themselves in educating the public on election issues and monitoring the election process. In addition, CSO calls for empower-



ing community resource management are reinforcing demand for government decentralization. The government's proposed constitutional amendment to introduce a freedom of information act also reflects persistent environmental CSOs' pressure for public hearings on infrastructure projects.

The foregoing example, as well as others throughout this chapter, detail activities of civil society organizations that specifically aim to further democratization. However, even more broadly, USAID and others donors have recognized that progress in addressing major development issues (such as broad-based economic growth, management of natural resources, and population growth and health needs) *depends* on the generation of indigenous social activism and advocacy. The Agency's support for civil society organizations therefore cuts across its sectors of program emphasis—economic growth, environment, and population, health, and nutrition, as well as democracy and governance.

For example, CSO activities often target particular sectoral reforms, such as private sector development or environmental protection. USAID's Implementing Policy Change project has worked with business associations to develop market-based economic policies that expand opportunities for the private sector and encourage greater interregional trade and cooperation. In Uganda, the Manufacturers' Association has received assistance from the Implementing Policy Change project for its annual forum. The forum brings together academics, private sector leaders, and high-level government officials to formulate economic policy reforms that are liberalizing the country's trade and investment regime. Across the Sahel, the Implementing Policy Change project has worked to improve the management, planning, and advocacy skills of a coalition of private sector business networks. These networks, after only a few years' existence, have already persuaded governments to reduce tariff rates, liberalize investment policies, and reduce commercial tax rates. The relaxation of policies has led to new jobs and an improved quality of life in the region.

The Philippines provides another example of an Agency program in economic

growth that utilizes civil advocacy organizations to achieve their objectives.

An agribusiness coalition in the Philippines has recently affected economic policy decisions in a way that will lead to broader based, market-driven economic growth. The USAID Mission had been working over the past two years with agricultural groups to encourage policy analysis and deliberation of important issues within the agricultural community. During that time a draft executive order on tariffs was released. It would have given special incentives to a few industrialists and increased packaging input costs for most farmers.

Alarmed at the prospects, the groups with whom USAID had been working forged a new coalition. In a public hearing, they used the tools and experience gained with USAID support to protect the interests of small farmers and to gain a modification of the executive order. USAID support was crucial to the emergence of a new consensus on agricultural policies that will make Filipino farmers more competitive in the market emerging as a result of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

A major function of civil society is to spread democratic values so widely that they become the norm and govern relationships among individuals and between state and nonstate actors. Widespread acceptance of democratic values is of course vital to the sustainability of democracies. USAID directs its interventions at expanding knowledge about and belief in democratic principles through civic education programs. One mechanism for providing information and a check on the behavior of public institutions is to develop independent, competent, and diverse media. USAID works with media organizations, through training and technical assistance, to improve the quality of their work. The Agency also assists media entities in improving their financial, management, and planning skills.

Since 1992, USAID/Zambia has provided assistance to privatize state-owned print and broadcast media. It has also supported development of legislative and regulatory reform to improve the availability of public information and ensure freedom of ex-

pression. As a result, several private newspapers are now publishing. Private sector journalists now account for 45 percent of working journalists, up from 24 percent in 1993. In addition, the state monopoly on electronic media was broken in December 1994 when Zambia's first privately owned radio station began broadcasting. Six additional applications for privately owned electronic broadcast media are now pending. While there have been incidents of government interference in the affairs of one newspaper in retaliation for critical reporting on some powerful

politicians, for the most part the record has been positive. Open and critical discussion of politicians and policies is now common in Zambia's media (see also box 3.2).

In Nicaragua, USAID matching grants to media broadcast organizations to purchase better equipment has stimulated an increase in public affairs broadcasting on both radio and television. Interviews, debates, and call-in programs have helped inform citizens on major political issues, including constitutional reform and the new military code. As a result, as the government develops and im-

### **Box 3.2 Democracy Consolidated in Mali**

By 1992 the people of Mali had suffered through nearly 30 years of increasingly authoritarian regimes that had maintained their power through a strategy of elite cooptation and coercion. The strategy was based on an unsustainable system of patronage bolstered by an increasingly harsh system of political coercion. These systems produced a repressive environment in which an independent media and civil society were not allowed to develop; opposition political parties were banned; the legislature and judiciary were weak, corrupt, and used as tools of the regime; and the military's main role was to maintain internal stability and the regime. These systems were based on social, economic, and financial policies that produced economic stagnation and decline, and eventually generated social and political unrest.

In 1991 violent student demonstrations, culminating in a thousand deaths, led to a military overthrow of the regime. In the context of the democratic revolution in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the military set up a broad-based national transition government whose primary mandate was to guide the transition to democracy. One of the first decisions of the transition government was to establish a National Conference as the primary mechanism for designing a new democratic system of governance. The National Conference's mandate was to draw up a new constitution and set the rules, procedures, and structures for national elections.

Responding rapidly to the emerging situation, USAID took the lead in supporting the National Conference. The Agency became its primary source of financing and technical assistance. USAID also provided financial and technical support to the National Election Commission and supported voter education program.

The transition government and the National Conference were remarkably successful in carrying out their mandates. A liberal democratic constitution was completed on schedule and ratified through a national referendum. National elections were successfully conducted in 1992. Now, less than four years after the revolution, a dramatic change has occurred in Mali's political system. Repression is no longer a tool used to control the masses.

Mali now has more than 500 new NGOs registered and more than a thousand other civil society groups engaging in various forms of self-governance at the national and local levels. It has a competitively elected a parliament actively engaged in reviewing, revising, and drafting new legislation and in overseeing the performance of the executive. The country has seen an explosion (more than 80) of daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers and periodicals, and people receive information from more than 25 national and regional radio stations.

During this period, Mali has become one of the star performers in Africa under the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program in that it has met or surpassed all its reform targets. More important, political and economic reform are beginning to boost economic growth. These changes are evidence of serious democratic consolidation processes under way in Mali. Most important, none of this would have happened had the transition not occurred.

plements new policies, it has been giving greater weight to public opinion. In addition, the Agency has supported journalism training, and that has led to a noticeable improvement in objective reporting over the past year.

As their independence has increased, Nicaraguan journalists' associations have become more vocal in support of reporting that is free from government interference. For example, journalist unions recently prevented a purge of moderates from party-owned media. The Nicaragua program is an outgrowth of a nine-year regional activity to strengthen the media in Central America. That project, now in its final stages, is establishing a self-sufficient training faculty in Panama, funded and managed by Central Americans.

The International Media Center in Ukraine, with assistance from a USAID-funded grantee, broadcasts the news four times daily on state television. This is the first independently produced television news program to be broadcast throughout Ukraine.

With USAID funding, small television studios in Russian provincial cities have been linked into a growing network of producers and broadcasters, sharing programs, spreading know-how, and bringing uncensored news to their viewers. The importance of an independent media was exemplified in the accurate reporting presented on the war in Chechnya, exposing differing points of view in that military operation.

## More Transparent and Accountable Government Institutions

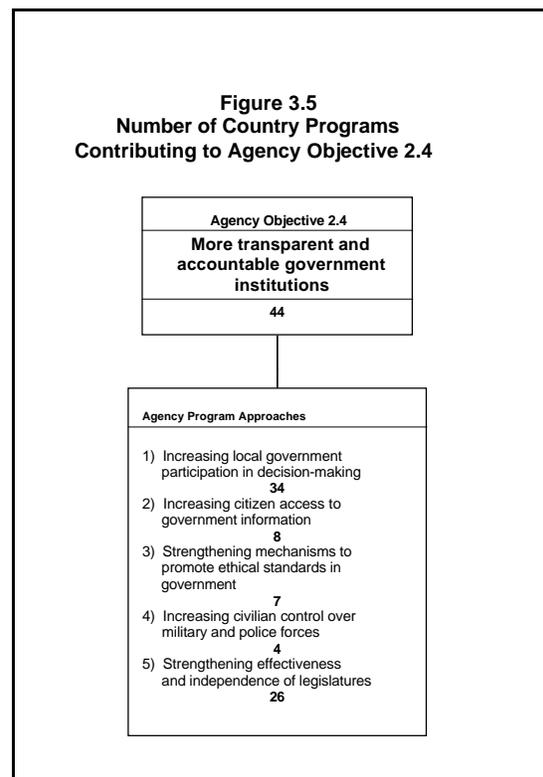
The fourth Agency objective in democracy and governance is more transparent and accountable government institutions. The behavior of formal state actors can support or undermine developmental and democratic processes. Strengthening performance, respecting ethical standards, consulting broadly to ascertain citizen interests, sharing information and acting in an open manner, diffusing power by sharing decision-making with local government entities (and with citizens by increasing the space for self-governance)—all these help ensure that government

decision-making is impartial and informed and that follow-up implementation is competent. Such behavior supports the long-term sustainability of political institutions and people's confidence in democratic principles.

Accordingly, USAID supports development of more transparent and accountable government, utilizing the following approaches: increasing local government participation in decision-making, increasing citizen access to government information, strengthening mechanisms to promote ethical standards in government, increasing civilian control over military and police forces, and strengthening effectiveness and independence of legislatures (see figure 3.5).

### Program Performance

Decentralization can increase the competence of public agencies by lightening the burden of those at the center and allowing those closest to an issue to make decisions. It enables citizens who are most concerned about an issue to influence the decision-making by putting the source of the decision closer to them. Dispersing power also reduces the political stakes and minimizes, or at



least scatters, opportunities for corruption and political patronage. At the same time, it leads to greater community self-reliance. In its work to promote decentralization, USAID stresses devolution of authority to local governments, improving the effectiveness of those units and increasing community involvement in local government decision-making and service delivery.

USAID's approach to supporting decentralization differs from country to country depending on the capabilities and system of government in place. Enabling legislation may be a necessary first step. In Central America, for example, mayors historically have not been granted revenue collection and retention authority. In the rare instances where they have, tax rates have often been based on outdated formulas. In Honduras, USAID assistance to the municipal association enabled it to advocate policy reform, increasing municipal revenue and expenditure authority. Subsequently, the Honduran government passed decentralization legislation, and Honduran municipalities now have more fiscal autonomy than any others in Central America.

In Bolivia, USAID assistance has been instrumental in helping formulate and implement that country's landmark Popular Participation Law of 1994. This law transfers substantial political and budgetary authority from the federal government to the municipal level and empowers citizen organizations and oversight committees to participate in the disbursement and monitoring of municipal budget allocations.

Once legislation is enacted, meaningful implementation may require concerted effort. The Philippines, since the passage of the Local Government Code in 1991, has initiated one of the most far-reaching and ambitious decentralization programs in the world. Under authoritarian President Ferdinand Marcos, local development meant divide and control. The new local code calls for 40 percent of national revenues to be transferred to local government units and provides local governments great latitude in developing municipal and regional tax codes and investment policies.

Few communities were adequately prepared for these responsibilities. In particular, in light of pressure on the national legislature from civil servants who preferred the old centralized bureaucracies, the communities needed to effectively represent their interests to the legislature.

USAID's local government project responded across the board. It helped specific local government units look at new solutions. It studied fundamental policies such as personnel management. It gathered data on successes to show that although things were difficult, meaningful progress was being made. And it helped the local councils reestablish themselves as effective representatives of their members. The Agency's efforts to improve the public administration capabilities of local governments have resulted in an 80 percent increase in local revenue collection. This increase has helped reduce the national government's control over local decision-making and to reform a budgetary process formerly prone to political patronage and abuse.

In Latin America, the Agency's efforts in local governance and municipal development have aimed to strengthen local governments through policy dialog. In particular the Agency encourages dialog that expands the role of local governments in development activities and promotes community participation in local decision-making. For example, USAID's Women in Local Development project, carried out in nine countries, increased participation of women in local governments and local governments' capacity to respond to the needs of women.

Recent reforms in Asunción, Paraguay, provide a detailed picture of the decentralization process. Paraguay only recently emerged from a decades-long dictatorship that severely limited free association and expression. In Asunción in 1995, with modest amounts of technical and advisory assistance from USAID, the new, reform-minded mayor held the country's first public budget hearing. The mayor had been convinced of the usefulness of hearings in contacts between the governments of Asunción and Metro Dade County in Florida. These city-to-city contacts

were developed by USAID to transfer municipal management lessons learned in the United States to Latin America.

Before the open budget hearing, radio spots and posters exhorted people to participate. More than 400 people from various socioeconomic backgrounds attended, and more than 100 spoke. Proposals considered viable at the hearing were presented to the municipal council, which approved more than 50 of them. The council will issue a public document informing Asunción's citizens of the decisions made and soliciting further feedback. USAID is now providing assistance to Paraguay's capital in establishing a performance-based budget system. Asunción's hearing received extensive nationwide media coverage. Shortly after it took place, Coronel Oviedo, an important secondary center in Paraguay, announced it too would hold open hearings as part of its budget process.

USAID has been at the forefront of anti-corruption efforts in Latin America and has raised awareness of the costs of corruption across the hemisphere. Last year, this increased awareness yielded the Summit of the Americas' "No to Corruption" initiative. As part of the initiative, USAID is taking a lead role in coordinating donor assistance to improve financial management across the region.

Argentina provides an example where USAID has followed yet a different tack and is supporting citizen action against corruption. It works with an Argentine NGO to spark local action. At last count, 113 schools and NGOs were carrying out their own anti-corruption programs. This is up from 34 in 1993, and more than three times the number targeted by USAID.

In many new democracies, the military retains considerable political and economic influence and can threaten fragile democratic gains. Redefining the role of the armed forces in ways that subordinate them to civilian authority therefore makes a pivotal contribution to sustaining democracy and promoting overall development on a path responsive to citizen needs and desires. Despite occasional attempted military coups and some leaders' use of alliances with the military to further

their ambitions, a number of countries have made significant progress in whittling away military prerogatives and in increasing military professionalism. The Global Bureau's Center for Democracy and Governance manages a particularly successful regional program in Latin America and is now considering expanding it to other parts of the world.

Instituting civilian control is a long-term process with few quick fixes. Decreasing the size of the armed forces by supporting demobilization of excess troops and reintegration of ex-soldiers into civilian society is a critical step in the process. The larger the number of troops, the more potential the military has to interfere in political life and threaten civilian government.

USAID programs in support of demobilization and reintegration have been effective. In Mozambique, the Agency supported demobilization of 91,000 soldiers. When restless soldiers at demobilization sites started rioting on the eve of the 1994 elections, the Agency organized transportation home, thus defusing a potentially dangerous situation. In addition, USAID established provincial information and referral centers, which help ex-combatants resolve problems associated with reentering civilian life.

In Uganda, USAID supported a multi-donor initiative to reduce the size of the military. The Agency funded severance packages for 10,000 former soldiers and provided an agricultural technology and credit program to 2,000 veteran households to help ex-combatants return to farming.

And in El Salvador, ex-combatants characterized the USAID-supported reintegration program as among "the best of all" donor efforts. It is considered a model program by the UN (see also chapter 6, Providing Humanitarian Assistance).

One important lesson USAID has learned in supporting demobilization and reintegration programs is that severance pay encourages demobilization. Lump-sum severance payments are preferable because continuing subsidies are very expensive to administer. What's more, they tend to reinforce the former status of ex-combatants and relieve them of the need to find alternative

employment. Severance pay is not, however, a substitute for other kinds of assistance. Additional programs—loans, technical assistance, and training—are needed to make a successful transition possible, especially when soldiers have spent years in the military and have no other skills.

Expansion of the armed forces into non-traditional roles should be avoided, however. In Latin America, the armed forces were used to fight narco-trafficking and promote economic development in order to provide a legitimate role, but this has sometimes led to heightened corruption as well as gains in power.

Another lesson learned is the importance of not singling out veterans for benefits; assistance should be provided to the broader community. In Uganda, noncombatant families receive agricultural assistance just as do the veterans. This helps minimize community resentment at receiving no help, while soldiers, who often caused great suffering, appear to be rewarded.

It is important to develop the military's trust in civilian competence in defense matters. This can be done only by creating civilian specialists and making information available. In many transition countries, there initially were few civilians knowledgeable enough to engage military leaders in a constructive discussion about military requirements and to exercise oversight. Across Latin America, USAID has provided training to more than 150 defense policy specialists. The Agency has also helped make information about the region's militaries much more widely available.

Nicaragua provides an interesting case study of the importance of information and dialog. After the 1990 election of Violeta Chamorro as president, many viewed the continuing presence of the Popular Sandinista Army, headed by General Humberto Ortega, as a threat to Mrs. Chamorro's efforts to build a democratic society. To address the sensitive questions of civil-military relations in Nicaragua, USAID first supported an evaluation of the state of relations at the time. The resultant report was widely distributed and then discussed by key political actors and

military representatives in a USAID-sponsored forum.

At the forum, General Ortega announced he would retire as chief of the armed forces in accordance with a new military law passed by the national assembly. He declared further that he would agree to formation of a legitimate Ministry of Defense. USAID's efforts to build consensus on issues central to military reform thus contributed to development and passage of a reformed military code (enacted in 1994). It takes important steps toward greater civilian control of the military and establishes a more circumscribed role for the armed forces in Nicaraguan society.

The final institution USAID concentrates on in developing transparent and accountable governments is the legislature. Well-functioning legislatures play a critical role in democracies. They provide a forum for discussion and negotiation of competing interests. They give citizens access to the policy process. And they act as a check on executive branch behavior. Unfortunately, legislatures in newly democratizing countries tend to be organizationally and technically weak, and they are often dominated by the executive branch. In particular, legislatures may rely on the executive branch for research and information, or the executive branch may often draft legislation, with the legislature having only limited capability to amend it.

A key USAID strategy, therefore, is to make available information and analysis to legislators and to improve bill-drafting skills. Independently provided information and analysis are essential if the legislature is to serve as a check on the executive branch. Moreover, well-drafted, well-researched bills tend to garner greater support and are more likely to be enacted. Among other interventions supported by USAID are 1) creating stronger committee structures (see box 3.3), 2) linking representatives more closely with constituents and public interest groups, and 3) developing parliamentary and administrative skills so that legislators can work more effectively within the institution.

In Costa Rica, USAID is working to institutionalize the research center it created to provide training and information services to the legislature. The center has produced sev-

### **Box 3.3 Strengthening Bolivia's Legislative and Judicial Branches**

The Bolivian National Congress's lack of organizational capacity and independent sources of information hobbled its effectiveness, making it a rubber stamp for the executive branch. In response, USAID helped build a professional nonpartisan internal legislative assistance capability: the National Center for Congressional Research. The research center provides budget and bill-drafting information and research services to congress, enabling its members to make informed decisions. The center's budget analysis office has produced data that legislators find so useful it cannot now keep up with demand. In the past year, the number of committees using its services doubled.

In recognition of the research center's value, the congress passed an almost unanimous resolution in October 1995 that recognizes the center as a permanent integral unit of the congress. That body is now more assertive. USAID had targeted a 2 percent increase in significant laws originating in congress for 1994; the actual increase was 14 percent. Since 1993, congress has passed major pieces of legislation that further democratization. These include laws on decentralization, judicial reform, and popular participation in governance.

USAID complements its support to the legislature with support to the Ministry of Justice. Through the ministry, the Agency provides training and material support to the Bolivian Office of Public Defenders. After only two years of institutional existence, public defenders in 1994 obtained the release of 3,442 detainees of 6,045 judicial cases they handled. They obtained the release of 1,174 of 5,255 police detainees as well.

The public defenders are also playing an important role in filing for releases of inmates who have been denied justice through prolonged detention. They are supported by a recently approved law to abolish prison-for-debt. In the nine months since the law was passed, the public defense has obtained the release of 322 inmates who had already served their criminal sentences but remained in prison indefinitely because they could not pay their debts.

While moving to fortify government institutional actors, the Mission has not neglected civil society, including potential victims of a system that historically has been poorly and capriciously applied. The Agency supports a grass-roots NGO that provides basic legal education to approximately 2,700 poor people in La Paz. The NGO consists of law students and professors who train poor women, students, and prison inmates. The knowledge has enabled inmates to exert pressure on their lawyers to ensure that their rights are protected to the fullest extent.

eral publications, including guides to legislative procedure and legislative oversight. It also offers frequent workshops. It has, for example, provided training to legislative staff in constitutional law, strategic management, and parliamentary procedure. The legislature now generates both *more* legislation and *better quality* legislation than the executive branch. Bills are more likely now to gain cosponsors because they are solidly researched and well drafted. Cosponsorship in turn helps secure passage of the legislation.

USAID support has yielded similar results in Paraguay. The bicameral legislature there is proactively exercising oversight of the federal budget, investigating corruption, and pressing for privatization, decentralization, and improved protection of the environment.

### **Conclusion and Continuing Challenges**

USAID assistance has effected major improvements in the rights of citizens and the quality of governance; still, more progress remains to be made. Continued assistance is needed in all geographic regions in 1) maintaining and building on the progress that has been made in consolidating democracy; 2) completing the transition to a freely, fairly, and competitively elected national government; and 3) initiating the transition process in key countries suffering from significant internal instability.

The challenge in helping develop democratic institutions is made all the more difficult in the present environment of severely declining resources. Thus, USAID must be-

come even more strategic in applying declining resources among highly diverse and competitive needs. This implies difficult choices. Those choices will be made within given boundaries:

First, USAID will continue to operate on the principle that democratization must be driven and led by the countries requesting assistance. This has been a main element of the Agency's democracy and governance activities. It will remain the cornerstone.

Second, since important elements of democratic governance—particularly con-

flict prevention and mitigation—often transcend country boundaries, USAID will expand the use of regional program initiatives and management approaches.

Third, because of the diversity of the problem mix in democratizing countries, USAID will continue to apply the full range of tools available for promoting democratization.

And fourth, to strengthen impact, USAID will increase emphasis on coordinating with other donors.