



DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE

LEGISLATIVE/PARLIAMENTARY STRENGTHENING

Strong, effective, and independent legislatures are critical democratic institutions. Over the past 30 years, USAID has supported parliaments and legislatures in over 70 countries to assist them in making the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, to more effectively perform their fundamental tasks of representation, lawmaking, and oversight. Independent legislatures are critical to democratic resilience. They provide a check on executive power, safeguard against democratic backsliding, and play a key role in economic growth, security, and development. They are a driving force in budgeting and fiscal oversight, advancing reform agendas, and increasing government openness and accountability. They serve as a critical link that translates citizen voice into policy action.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: USAID programs focus on assisting legislatures to become more effective and efficient institutions through a mix of technical assistance, skills enhancement, and the development of legislative and information technologies. For these capacity building efforts to succeed in such an inherently political institution, USAID uses political economy analysis to understand local context and the incentives of local actors who influence the legislature's development. USAID interventions can be broken down into four main categories:

Institutional Support: Support for legislative support services such as libraries, research units, budget offices, committee staff, and encouraging best practices for legislative administration and management.

Enhancing Oversight Capabilities: Oversight of government decision makers ensures that the decisions and actions of the government stay within the bounds of the law, strengthen the democratic process, and enhance public trust in the government. USAID programming aims to ensure that the host country governments use their powers and resources appropriately and in ways that respond to the needs and interests of all members of the community. Technical assistance can be provided to oversight committees or indirectly through autonomous accountability institutions (such as anti-corruption commissions) which are dependent on legislatures to support their oversight mechanisms.

Issues-Based Support: Assistance focuses on advancing key policies of shared interest that further development outcomes. Often these types of programs simultaneously support other branches of the government with reforms, such as improving access to justice, working with committees to demand clarity on budget or debt decisions, or improving health or education outcomes. Programs often include expert technical assistance leading to new draft laws or amendments to accomplish these reforms.

Public Awareness and Increased Citizen Representation: In addition to increasing the capacity of legislative institutions, USAID programs also focus on improving the role and effectiveness of civil society and media in the legislative process. USAID assistance often includes increasing the ability of advocacy groups to participate in legislative proceedings, broadening citizen access to and interaction with the legislature, improving media coverage of legislative proceedings, and enhancing the capacity of think tanks and academic institutions to provide in-depth information and policy analysis in the legislative process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Kevin Gash, Governance (GOV) Team
Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C. 20523
Email: kgash@usaid.gov

Internal Website: <https://pages.usaid.gov/DCHA/DRG/grol-intro-page>

External Website: <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/promoting-good-governance>

USAID and the HDP

USAID has supported the **House Democracy Partnership (HDP)** since its inception in 2005. It is a bipartisan commission of the U.S. House of Representatives which supports efforts to build the capacity of legislatures in emerging democracies. The commission engages in peer-to-peer exchanges between members and staff of the U.S. Congress and legislators and staff in partner countries which contributes to buy-in for sustained engagement with the USG and its partners and amplifies USAID investments.

HDP creates spaces for reform-oriented peers to come together across cultures and countries to connect and learn more about their shared responsibilities and democratic practices as well as nurture and nourish the community of democratic actors worldwide. The HDP has partnerships with legislatures in 21 countries and is implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) through the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) under a 5 year \$9.1mn award