



Democracy, Rights and Governance

USAID/Roger Steinkamp



Kenyans vote in Kajiado County. Both local and international observers judged the March 2013 election to be free and fair.

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Democracy, Rights and Governance FY 2013 Budget:
\$20 million

Key Partners:

- Ministry of Devolution and Planning
- National Treasury
- Council of Governors
- Parliament (National Assembly and Senate)
- Commission for Implementation of the Constitution
- Devolution Sector Working Group

OVERVIEW

USAID supported the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, the judiciary, political parties, and millions of peace-minded Kenyans, to facilitate the most complex election in Kenya's history. Both local and international observers judged the March 2013 election to have been free, fair and for the most part peaceful, reflecting the will of the Kenyan people. This election has paved the way for rapid implementation of a devolved government as mandated by the new Constitution. The envisioned land reforms, gender equity, electoral reforms, and the devolution of authority and budgetary resources to 47 new county-level governments will address the historical injustices that fueled violence in the past. This new commitment to peace and national unity in Kenya will better enable accelerated and inclusive economic development.

PROGRAM AREAS

USAID support will positively impact the effectiveness of devolution. This will be done by strengthening the governance systems in targeted counties – making them more competent, transparent, accountable and inclusive in their governance and service delivery; supporting the institutions and structures that enable counties to cooperate and advance their interests with the national government; and building civil society organization capacity to be more sustainable and effective at representing citizen interests and aspirations to county governments. By strengthening the capacity of county governments to deliver, USAID will address the supply side of the equation. By enhancing the participation of civil society, USAID will address the demand side. And by supporting systems, USAID will create an enabling environment that will integrate supply and demand. Collectively, these three areas of intervention will support effective implementation of devolution, which in turn will help transform Kenya's governance and economy.

Strengthening the Capacity of County Governments

USAID has been working on devolution since late 2012 through civic education efforts and in 2013 through its US \$4.4 million "Bridge Devolution Program." The bridge program worked to assist Kenya to operationalize newly-devolved government structures throughout the country through the implementation of small grants. USAID devolution support is anchored by its US \$50 million AHADI (Agile and Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions) activity.

AHADI, which means "promise" in Kiswahili, will strengthen the capacity of counties by providing key leaders with training, mentoring and technical assistance. It will build the capacity of civil society to more effectively represent citizen interests and aspirations to county governments, and it will help counties cooperate, and strengthen ties with the national government.

Enhancing the Participation of Civil Society and Creating an Enabling Environment

USAID provides support to elections and political processes by enhancing the role women and youth play in the leadership of their political parties. This will help create a strong foundation for enhanced participation of women and youth in the 2017 elections. USAID also works with the Government of Kenya to develop the comprehensive laws and policies required under the Constitution. In 2013, USAID provided technical support on 55 laws that reached substantive amendment or final vote in the legislature.

USAID activities help to advance constitutional reform by supporting the oversight and legislative role of Parliament, strengthening the voice and advocacy capacity of civil society, and building peace, nationally and locally. Preceding the 2013 elections, USAID provided journalists and editors with training on objective and conflict-sensitive reporting. Journalists received training in interviewing and research skills to professionalize their coverage. Supporting the media to report stories fairly and accurately is an important tactic in USAID's conflict mitigation strategy. USAID activities also monitored social media for hate speech and supported the Media Council of Kenya to develop guidelines for responsible coverage of the 2013 elections. Local media played a large role in maintaining peace during the election period, especially during the period when the Supreme Court was deliberating the election results. Under devolution, strengthening the capacity of mainstream media will continue to be vital for ensuring an informed populace.

USAID'S DEMOCRACY, RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAM IN ACTION

Lucy Kesi is a tireless advocate for the rights of Kenyans living with disabilities. For Lucy, the 2010 Constitution, with its vision of inclusiveness and equity, is a beacon of hope for all Kenyans. Lucy viewed the 2013 general elections as an opportunity to vote for county and national leaders who would work to ensure the vision of the Constitution becomes reality.

"My vote is my voice. Disability is no longer an excuse for those of us not to vote. We have received civic and voter education and know how important it is for us to vote. We will vote," said Lucy Kesi during training for Persons with Disabilities Forum organized by the International Republican Institute (IRI) with support from USAID/Kenya.

Lucy mobilized like-minded people living with disabilities on the coast to be trained as trainers in voter and civic education. USAID supported Lucy and the other training participants to take their newfound knowledge of the Constitution and voters' rights back to their communities.



USAID/Joan Lewa

Through this training-of-trainers system, USAID was able to reach 456,000 individuals from historically marginalized or disadvantaged groups, like people living with disabilities.