SUPPORTING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN ETHIOPIA

"The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty." – Woodrow Wilson

Ethiopia's "human development index" score has steadily increased over the past decade, but its "participation and human rights" score has remained stagnant. While election of new leadership of the ruling party has brought forth a surge of optimism in most quarters that democratic space will expand, stability is still fragile as ethnic and identity-based conflict prevails. During 2018, the new prime minister set forth an ambitious development agenda, yet many citizens feel that progress has been slow and that they have not yet reaped the benefits they had anticipated. Increased freedom of expression – while generally a positive step – has also opened some long-held grievances between ethnicities and regions and resulted in incidents of bloodshed and significant population displacements. In light of the changes underway, USAID's Democracy and Governance Office has adjusted its overall objectives to prioritize assisting Ethiopia to implement its reform agenda, further increase democratic space and improve human rights.

While addressing domestic challenges, Ethiopia also faces potential instability from external threats, including conflict in neighboring countries. The most pressing challenges include helping the government in its efforts to change laws that had placed restrictions on freedom of expression and association, opening space for civil society organizations to contribute to Ethiopia's progress and providing technical assistance to help Ethiopia prepare for free and fair elections in 2020.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR ETHIOPIA?

Stability, good governance, and rule of law are essential for continued economic growth and social development in Ethiopia, one of the poorest and populous countries in the world. With its rising economic growth and a growing youth population, Ethiopia's current transition to a democratic and inclusive state – where citizens have a voice and where democratic institutions are strong and independent of the executive – is crucial.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES?

As a key partner to the United States in the region, Ethiopia plays a significant role in fostering regional peace and security. With Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan in turmoil, Ethiopia's role in the region to maintain stability - be it though providing troops to peacekeeping missions in South Sudan or taking on Al-Shabaab in Somalia - is critical. Ethiopia's successful transition to a stable multi-party democracy remains a long-term U.S. foreign policy objective and a focus of our diplomatic engagement. Democratization is most likely to be advanced by persuading all levels of the leadership to undertake civil and political reforms that will eventually transform the government into a multi-party democracy.

PROGRAMMING

We promote American democratic values in Ethiopia and stress that well-functioning governance structures, trusted institutions and an open political system with a robust role for civil society can only serve to strengthen the country's stability. Through engagement with government actors and communities on conflict resolution, our work seeks to ensure that local actors are better equipped to maintain the peace in their communities. Key current activities:

Enhancing the Status of Human Rights Protection and Systems of Good Governance in Ethiopia: This activity strengthens the ability of Ethiopian law enforcement authorities to improve the security sector workforce by enhancing accountability structures and setting standards for operating procedures. Via the bi-annual Joined-Up Justice Forum, the activity also provides a platform for justice sector and law enforcement professionals to discuss and reach consensus on common issues connected to their role in interpreting and enforcing the law.

Local Capacity Development: This activity strengthens the capacity of local Ethiopian organizations, providing assistance in the areas of organizational and financial management, activity management, and monitoring and evaluation skills.

Strengthening Institutions for Peace and Development II: Establishes and strengthens partnerships between government and communities to understand and address issues that can lead to conflict. It also avails technical assistance to relevant institutions for peacebuilding.

Sustained Dialogue: This conflict management and mitigation activity brings together students of diverse identities to interact and engage constructively in a safe space, in order to break down barriers to trust and understanding, and build collaboration around common causes.