



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



FORGING JUST AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

The Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative (IPTI) promotes civil society, the rule of law, and transparent and accountable governance in the Indo-Pacific region.

In November 2017 in Vietnam, President Donald J. Trump laid out America's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, in which all nations are sovereign, strong, and prosperous. The U.S. Government has defined the region as spanning from the U.S. west coast to India's west coast, thereby encompassing East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia. The U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific focuses on three vital areas: economic prosperity, governance, and security.

In November 2018, Vice President Mike Pence announced a new Transparency Initiative as part of the U.S. Government's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. This whole-of-government initiative promotes transparent and accountable governance through efforts to counter corruption, encourage strong civil society, support honest procurement and contracting practices, and advance judicial and legal reform.

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THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

The resurgence of authoritarian practices and influences across Asia poses significant risks to sustainable development, partner country sovereignty, and citizen-responsive governance. The authoritarian approach—characterized by corruption, secrecy, political coercion, and rights violations—reduces competitiveness and puts private gain above the public interest. USAID focuses on improving partner country self-reliance in Asia, which depends on strong democratic institutions, processes, and principles. For example, in Indonesia the number of people from marginalized communities seeking legal aid through USAID partners increased more than tenfold between 2017 and 2018; we helped launch a 2018 national plan to combat bribery and corruption in Sri Lanka; and in Nepal, USAID assistance helped pass nine laws in 2018 that improve the efficacy of the electoral process.

USAID'S DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

To promote IPTI's vision for sound, just, and responsive governance in the Indo-Pacific, USAID is assisting partner countries in: (a) promoting the integrity of electoral processes; (b) supporting the independence of media and information integrity; (c) protecting human rights, including civil and political rights; (d) fostering accountability and transparency, including fighting corruption; (e) strengthening the rule of law; and (f) strengthening civil society. We work in the five areas below to align our development investments in areas where democratic institutions, processes, and values are threatened.

INSTITUTIONAL: Non-transparent and unaccountable commercial activities undermine local markets and hamper legitimate investment. USAID's IPTI programs aim to strengthen transparent public accountability in finance and budget, increase public sector transparency and access to information, bolster anti-corruption and enforcement measures, strengthen investment and project safeguards, and bring legal systems and the judiciary up to international standards.

POLITICAL: In Asia, autocratic regimes are eroding democratic processes and limiting political freedoms for millions of people. USAID's IPTI programs work to forge greater integrity of electoral systems and processes; improve political finance regulations; strengthen civil society's capacity to engage in effective policy analysis, debate, and advocacy; and build the capacities of democratic political parties and legislatures.

SOCIAL: Increasing authoritarianism is helping to fuel tolerance for the erosion of fundamental freedoms and is undermining democratic institutions, jeopardizing the long-term stability of our partner countries. USAID's IPTI programs strengthen civic education grounded in democratic principles; foster leadership opportunities for youth, women, and minorities; and expand people-to-people exchanges.

INFORMATIONAL: Many Asian countries are starting to control key information, technologies, and content by advancing a closed, state-centric approach to media and digital governance. USAID's IPTI programs combat the spread of disinformation, enhance media literacy and information integrity safeguards, and strengthen free and open media.

HUMAN RIGHTS: Civil liberties are under threat in Asia with the proliferation of legislation that seeks to curtail fundamental freedoms and restrict the voice of independent civil society. USAID's IPTI programs strengthen human rights by expanding rights protections and advocacy, and building the capacity of civil society to advance fundamental freedoms.