



## DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

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PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*Under the Rule of Law Stabilization program, village elders and community leaders improve their dispute resolution skills so that decisions are consistent with Afghan law and human rights standards*

### BACKGROUND

In the years since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has drafted a new constitution and organized presidential, parliamentary and provincial council elections, in partnership with its international allies. As part of the 2014 transition timeframe, the Afghan government is focused on building self-sustaining capacity to provide basic services to citizens; establishing a more effective, accountable, and transparent administration at all levels and implementing measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice and increasing the rule of law. Capacity building increases effectiveness and sustainability. In order to implement this, USAID and the Afghan government have facilitated improved delivery of government services and representation at the sub-national level. A sustainable merit-based hiring process has been put in place to revise appointments of deputy governors and sub-governors and to fill civil service positions.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

USAID's democracy and governance projects support participatory processes that involve citizens in national and sub-national governance. Projects promote more accountable and transparent governance, which encourages national unity and serves the needs of the Afghan people. USAID helps develop the capacity of key institutions, including the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, and target ministries and institutions of the executive branch such as the Independent Directorate for Local Governance and the Civil Service Commission. USAID also supports the development of Afghan civil society and media organizations to advocate for society-led reforms.

### RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

In concert with the Afghan government, USAID is building the capacity of the judiciary and university law faculties, as well as strengthening the judiciary's public legal outreach program. It also supports traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms that foster links between the formal and informal justice systems. Corruption issues are addressed through a range of projects including strengthening the capacity of the High Office of Oversight, by providing ethics training to civil servants and the judiciary and by promoting the enforcement of anti-corruption laws and regulations. Through several direct grants to Afghan organizations, USAID is strengthening the capacity to fight against corruption, promote greater access to justice and raise public awareness of human rights and rule of law issues.

USAID supports traditional dispute mechanisms by building community elders' knowledge of Afghan law and human rights norms; working with Afghan partners to encourage implementation of alternatives to social practices that negatively impact women and children and strengthening the connections between state actors and informal systems. In addition, the program continues to support the formal justice sector by providing professional training to judges and

### DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE SNAPSHOT

- Trained more than 500 judges and strengthened the Supreme Court's ability to manage its caseload more transparently and efficiently
- Improved the National Assembly's capacity to provide more effective oversight of the budget and legislative processes
- Created more than 115 district community councils and trained 8,052 community council members on management, good governance, conflict resolution, peace-building, and disaster risk reduction
- Trained 16,000 civil servants (26 per cent of whom are women) in core administrative functions
- Funded more than 50 community radio stations and trained more than 11,440 journalists



## DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE (continued)



PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*A voter displays an inky finger after the August 20, 2009 election, which was only the second time in its war-torn history that Afghanistan voted to elect a president*

strengthening the courts' capacity to manage and budget, thereby further preparing Afghanistan for transition.

### GOVERNANCE

The overarching U.S. Government objective is to help promote a more-capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan. The emphasis is on service delivery, income generation and governance reforms, as well as capacity-building to build a base for sustained progress after transition.

USAID programs on governance focus on several areas, including the provision of technical assistance and resources to national, provincial, district and municipal government entities; mechanisms to reform and train the civil service; establishment of operational budgets at the provincial level; technical support to the Afghan Parliament and assisting elected officials and civil society groups to conduct public outreach, respond to citizens' concerns, and direct service delivery efforts. The governance portfolio works to strengthen linkages between different levels of government and to strengthen government systems and processes.

### ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL COMPETITION

USAID supports civic and voter education programs, the strengthening of political parties and electoral reform through the Independent Election Commission and civil society partners, as well as by promoting a legitimate, sustainable, voter registry system. USAID also supports issue-based coalition-building and works on a sub-national level with provincial governors, members of provincial councils, religious leaders and community organizations on strategic-planning, civic education and advocacy efforts.

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

USAID promotes the development of a strong and active civil society sector to help Afghan citizens more effectively participate in the political process, solve community problems, and advocate for good governance. Programs seek to improve the laws that regulate non-governmental organizations, develop capacity, networks for democratic processes, citizen mobilization and policy engagement.

USAID supports the development of Afghanistan's media as critical to promoting the free exchange of information vital to the democratic process. USAID is building the capacity of broadcast media through equipment upgrades; hands-on journalism training; the development of Afghan media policy and regulatory framework; and empowering local voices.

Assistance for activities that promote gender equality and the development of women's civic and political leadership is a priority component of multiple civil society, governance, rule of law, and political processes programs.

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