



GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

OVERVIEW

PROFILE

Date of Independence: 1960
 Population: 68 million (2009)
 Languages: French (official),
 Lingala, Kikongo, Swahili, Tshiluba
 GDP per capita: \$171 (2009)
Source: U.S. State Department

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BACKGROUND

The installation of an elected government in 2007 presents the greatest opportunity since independence for a stable, representative democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). However, life expectancy is only 46 and nearly 83 percent of all Congolese have only primary schooling or no schooling at all. The new government works diligently to build institutions that can meet citizens' needs, but faces serious challenges from rampant corruption, inadequate infrastructure and human resources, and a limited ability to raise and manage revenue.



With elected leadership in place, Congolese citizens need to see improvements in government performance and accountability, addressing the problems of corruption and impunity. The DRC must establish core governance institutions and practices to respond to tremendous popular pressure to deliver an "election dividend." Newly created institutions have only been operational for a few years and other new institutions still require enabling legislation, budgets, internal procedures and physical structures. As decentralization continues, these institutions will be required to function at the national, provincial and sub-provincial levels. Other institutions, most notably in the justice sector, barely exist after decades of under-investment, corruption and neglect and require extensive reform.

PROGRAMS

USAID democracy and governance programs target four provinces: South Kivu, Katanga, Maniema and Bandundu, with some national policy work carried out in Kinshasa. These programs support the creation of an effective and equitable justice system, promote good governance, protect human rights, fight corruption, strengthen independent media, promote civic participation, enhance political competition, and build capacity of the legislature to function effectively and in consultation with a range of stakeholders. Building capacity among government workers and within civil society is fundamental to the transformation of each of these areas of governance.

RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Promoting the rule of law is a key long-term priority in the DRC as the judiciary continues to suffer from a lack of independence, resources and public trust, leaving the most vulnerable members of society with no recourse for justice. Despite these challenges incremental changes have made steps toward greater judicial independence and effectiveness. With USAID support, the Judicial Council adopted its internal regulations and drafted a five-year strategic plan and the Ministry of Justice adopted a new organizational structure, streamlining functions and clarifying management responsibilities. USAID has also helped bring legal services and courts to remote populations, train local associations in court monitoring and human



rights, and raise public awareness on the Law on Sexual Violence. The development of an independent and accountable judiciary will improve overall institutional effectiveness and help to combat corruption and impunity.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The DRC is undergoing a radical transition. The new Constitution establishes a forceful decentralization policy and raises the bar significantly for citizen participation and civil rights. USAID’s long-term objectives are to decentralize authorities and ministries, train thousands of civil servants, improve management, accountability and capacity of legislatures and local governments, and forge connections between government and citizens at the national, provincial, and sub-provincial levels. Success in these areas will extend state authority to post-conflict areas, create conditions for a healthy balance of power, balance national reforms for long-term democratic development with immediate local access to services, and sustain gains from investments through upcoming local and national elections.

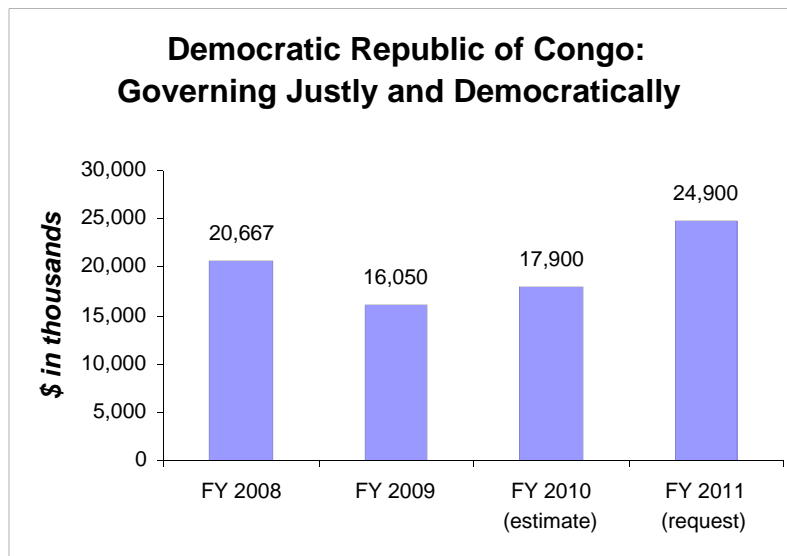
POLITICAL COMPETITION AND CONSENSUS BUILDING

Laws passed in 2009 and 2010 established a permanent national elections commission and defined the boundaries of sub-provincial administrations, increasing electoral constituencies from 187 to nearly 6,000 and enabling the commission to complete preparations for local elections using new administrative jurisdictions. However, one million Congolese become eligible voters each year, requiring recurrent voter registration and education. In response, USAID assistance supports civic education to increase public awareness and voter turnout, promotes women’s participation and assists the commission in providing timely local elections, and preparing for future election cycles.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Many of the DRC’s civil society organizations lack strong organization, independent funding bases, and devoted memberships. Many are also aligned with politicians or political platforms. Media outlets and organizations, though numerous, have weak institutional capacity and a depend on private and political interests. USAID programs support increasing civic participation, particularly to monitor the implementation of constitutionally-mandated governance reforms for justice, decentralization, local governance, and elections. USAID also works with civil society organizations, media outlets, and other groups to support press freedoms, deliver civic education programs, improve access to information, monitor public offices, advocate for the public interest, and mobilize local constituencies for change.

FUNDING



On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need around the world since the Marshall Plan.