



USAID | LIBERIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

OVERVIEW

PROFILE

Date of Independence: 1847
Population: 3.49 million (2008)
Language: English
GDP per capita: \$185 (yr)
Source: U.S. State Department

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BACKGROUND

Peaceful elections in 2005 and the inauguration of Africa's first female head of state in 2006 ushered in a period of hope and high expectations for Liberia's recovery and development after decades of poor governance and destabilization. The consequences of 14 years of brutal conflict constitute huge challenges to the recovery, reform, and rebuilding process. The Government of Liberia, with the support of international partners—of which the United States is the largest bilateral donor—is slowly restoring public confidence in political, social, economic, and judicial institutions while addressing the regional disparity and bad governance that contributed to the conflict.



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS

USAID supported Liberia's 2005 elections process, and in an effort to build sustainable election management, is supporting all aspects of the electoral process leading up to the 2011 elections. With USAID assistance, civil society organizations are increasing advocacy activities related to elections, corruption, conflict mitigation, and human rights. Support to rule of law focuses on training law students, lawyers, judges and court personnel to improve the quality of the justice system. USAID also works to create policy conditions needed for the economy to grow.

RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Effective rule of law is essential for overcoming political exclusion by enabling citizens to feel empowered rather than threatened by government, as well as enabling economic activity and investment take root. A poorly functioning justice sector will further erode the already tenuous confidence Liberians have in the Government's ability to settle disputes and handle criminal matters. The Liberian judicial system has made considerable efforts to improve internal functions; however challenges remain, such as poorly trained judges, uneven access to justice, disharmonies between the traditional and formal systems and technical weaknesses in the court system. USAID programs support continuous training of magistrates, judges, and other judicial sector personnel through a judicial training institute.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

One of USAID's key goals is to assist the Government of Liberia to meet growing public expectation regarding progressive reform of economic policy, the delivery of services to both the urban and rural populations, and strict accountability for the use of public resources. The results of good governance will build Liberian citizens' trust and confidence in the government, increase service delivery, buttress stability, and enable private sector investment and development. USAID programs focus on through designing, implementing and institutionalizing public administration reforms, including training staff in financial management, procurement, anti-corruption reforms, and legislative branch modernization.



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POLITICAL COMPETITION AND CONSENSUS-BUILDING

The free and fair 2005 election was a historic and symbolic event that marked the beginnings of a fragile peace in Liberia. The October 2011 elections were a critical step in continuing political development. Holding credible elections in Liberia and undergoing complex reforms to ensure a competitive and fair process is important for broader goals of peace and stability. USAID supports strengthening the capacity of the National Election Commission and provides elections activities that discourage corruption by establishing procedures for transparent elections management from voter registration to the announcement of results and handling of election related disputes.

CIVIL SOCIETY

One of the many challenges of post-conflict reconstruction is the re-establishment of trust in governmental institutions. Civil society organizations, especially nongovernmental organizations, have worked predominantly in the area of service delivery, filling the gap for a virtually ineffective government. Civil society also has a responsibility and a unique opportunity to engage in the process of governing.

The independent media also comprises a key pillar of a dynamic democracy. Independent media in Liberia are inadequate with poor training for journalists and other media personnel, weak financial resources, and poor research facilities. Both civil society and the media can serve as effective vehicles for the delivery of civic and voter education messages. Therefore, the development of both is vital to rebuilding citizens' trust in their government and political processes. USAID's civil society efforts focus on building the capacity of select civil society organizations, particularly those focused on women and youth.

FUNDING

