



Office of Transition Initiatives

KENYA



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) Kenya program started in June 2008 to help contribute to a stable Kenya. The program assists state and non-state actors to enable broad-based recovery from the 2007–08 election-related violence and take prompt steps to address the underlying causes of instability. In August 2009, OTI revised its program objectives, adjusting focus toward efforts to stimulate and promote political reform. In pursuit of this goal, the program aims to enable public institutions to undertake reforms and to manage instability and uncertainty, while also mobilizing the public, youth, and key change agents to organize for change and demand accountability. The OTI program is implemented by Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), which conducts small-grants activities, and the State University of New York (SUNY), which supports the work of the Kenyan Parliament.

OTI MISSION STATEMENT

To support U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crisis. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilization needs.

ACTIVITIES

Civic Education – During the year, grants focused on building grassroots-level awareness of accountability and responsibility issues within government. The most visible activity revolved around the book *It's Our Turn to Eat*, which details Kenya's endemic corruption. OTI helped to initiate distribution of the book with the intention of provoking Kenyans to increase pressure on the political leadership to undertake the necessary comprehensive reforms called for in the National Peace Accord. OTI also continued its support to parliamentary live broadcast activities through the construction of a press and media center. Situated in the Parliament complex, the center has helped legislators speak directly to the public through live radio and TV broadcasts of proceedings.

Accountability – OTI activities also sought to address potentially destabilizing issues. The program supported a traveling photo exhibition based on the book *Kenya Burning*, which catalogued images of the post-election violence and its aftermath. The exhibit spurred constructive debate and discussion on factors underlying Kenya's contested 2007 elections. The program also aims to raise public awareness of, and stimulate discussions about, the culture of impunity existing within the Kenyan political establishment. OTI's Ending Impunity – Pay Your Taxes grant highlighted the situation by enlisting small organized groups to place stickers promoting accountability on vehicles and in public places.

Youth Empowerment – Activities in the area of youth empowerment seek to prevent young people from resorting to violence and harness their energy for positive change. One grant provided primary school teachers with an opportunity to learn about, design, and foster nonviolent methods of resolving conflict. Through this activity, Peace Builders Kids Clubs were formed in 130 schools in Eldoret district.

FAST FACTS

Start Date: September 2007
Budget: \$10.9 million (FY09)

USAID/OTI

<http://www.usaid.gov> –
Keyword: OTI

COUNTRY SITUATION

Peace and Security – A general sense of peace and security has returned to Kenya since the post-election upheaval, but the government has been unable to pass legislation creating a local tribunal to try the perpetrators of the violence, despite threats by the international community to move prosecutions to The Hague. The potential for conflict remains, and there are signs that groups in Kenya are arming themselves as the 2012 election cycle approaches.

The Mau Forest – Land encroachment in the Mau forest is one of the most contentious issues in Kenya. The Mau forest complex is one of five key water catchment areas in Kenya. Reduction of forest cover has led to dwindling water levels in Kenyan rivers. Debates and decisions to evict settlers from the forest have led to mounting tension within the Rift Valley region, with local Members of Parliament defying eviction deadlines and threatening to cause chaos if the settlers are not compensated by the government. In the meantime, the destruction of the forest continues at an alarming rate.

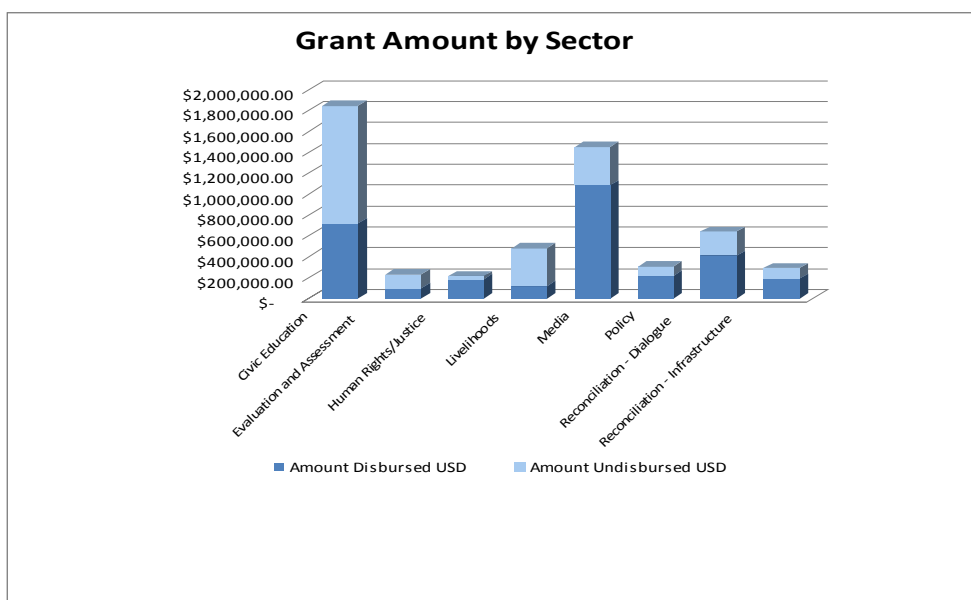
Water, Power, and Food Shortages – Failing seasonal rains and an ongoing drought have lowered water levels in Kenyan rivers and reservoirs and, consequently, have reduced the power-generating capacity of dams. Nairobi has experienced water and power shortages, and the government has had to ration services. Meager rainfall has also contributed to poor harvests in the Rift Valley, which is considered the breadbasket of Kenya. In addition, farmers are concerned that rising costs will negatively affect food production.

Agenda 4 – The parties to the 2008 accord that ended the post-election violence agreed to initiate a set of reforms set forth in Agenda 4 of the agreement. However, to date there has been virtually no progress toward implementing these reforms despite their importance for maintaining political stability in Kenya. The coalition government's ability to effectively respond to urgent and emerging issues facing the country has decreased, resulting in heightened anxiety for most of the Kenyan population. The past year provided the Kenyan Government with a window of opportunity to enact key reforms required for a peaceful general election in 2012. Yet the pace of reform has been extremely slow, and political parties are realigning themselves in advance of the elections.

The National Census Controversy – In August, the Kenyan Government conducted a national census, the fifth since the country's independence. However, unlike previous counts, this census was marred by controversy over the issue of identifying Kenyans by tribe. Such information is especially sensitive, given the central role that tribal politics played in the 2007–08 post-election violence. Many Kenyans fear that political leaders will use the census data to favor the majority tribes at the expense of the minority. The final census figures will be released in six months; experts believe that Kenya's population exceeds 40 million.

GRANTS SUMMARY

To date, OTI, through its implementing partner Development Alternatives, has funded 122 small-grant and technical assistance activities totaling \$5.4 million. The chart below breaks down funding by sector.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- 28 October 2009 - Youth voices conference on the reform agenda. This OTI initiative will prompt youth to air their views on matters impeding Kenya's growth and stability.

HIGHLIGHTS

Media Coverage and Strengthening – The mainstream media followed a number of OTI activities this year; most notable were efforts to promote the controversial book *It's Our Turn to Eat* and the *Kenya Burning* exhibition.

- ***It's Our Turn to Eat*.** The book recounts the experiences of Kenya's former anti-corruption boss, and the furor surrounding the book could be attributed to its thoroughness in implicating political leaders who were caught with their hands dirty. Following grants from OTI that helped break a de facto ban on the corruption-exposing tome, booksellers have begun to order it and bring it into the country for sale and distribution. In supporting the publication, OTI sought to raise the public's awareness of the culture of impunity in Kenya, and show the depth and breadth of corruption in the country.
- ***Kenya Burning*.** To coincide with the first anniversary of the peace accord and to shed light on suppressed tensions, the GoDown Arts Center, a multiethnic arts organization, compiled a montage of dramatic pictures in the book *Kenya Burning*. The photos serve as a testimony that violent response to disputes does not spare any segment of society. GoDown also organized, and USAID funded, a traveling exhibition for the photos. More than 3,000 people attended the exhibition in its first 3 days, and the public response was emotional. By raising awareness of the scale and nature of the violence, GoDown and USAID aim to accelerate dialogue and reconciliation—and spur communities and leaders to reform.



A boda boda (bicycle taxi) operator carries a banner for *It's Our Turn to Eat*, a book detailing corruption in Kenya.

Parliamentary Media Center and Keeping Communities Informed – Kenya's first-ever parliamentary media center opened on June 24. The newly equipped TV and radio studio, which is supported by OTI working through SUNY, has enabled the Parliamentary Broadcasting Unit to produce TV and radio programs from the floor of the legislature and air the proceedings live throughout the county. The unit is also broadcasting legislative committee meetings. Events from the legislative floor on September 17, when people across Kenya were watching as the Parliament rejected the President's nominations for the directors of the Anti-Corruption Commission, demonstrate the potential for these live broadcasts. The vote was important because it sent a message that the Parliament intended to exercise its authority, and the broadcast was historic because it gave average Kenyans an opportunity to see—in real time—what was happening in Nairobi.

In conjunction with the parliamentary media project, eight viewing centers were set up in the northern Rift Valley. The centers are providing citizens with places to watch the parliamentary proceedings and stimulating discourse on the implications of proposed legislation. Consequently, citizen awareness of political happenings in Nairobi is increasing. The centers—which in some areas have brought people together for the first time since the 2007–08 violence—also provide daily newspapers, books on topical issues, and recordings of parliamentary sessions, and heightened awareness is prompting citizens to question their representatives about their voting records.

Reconciliation and Empowerment – OTI is supporting reconciliation at a number of levels, especially within government, schools, and communities.

- **Peace Committees.** In 2009, the Nakuru District Peace Committee (DPC) began its work coordinating conflict prevention and peace-building activities in the Rift Valley district. The committee, which received operations and communication support from OTI, aims to serve not only as a model but also as the secretariat for all of Kenya's DPCs.
- **Community Coordination.** Reconciliation in Kenya's Rift Valley took a positive turn following intervention of the Rural Women's Peace Link, a community mobilization group that, with OTI support, helped spur youth involvement in the process. The group is supporting the Wareng Youth for Peace and Development

Initiative, which is including young people from each of the communities in Keses (Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Luhya, and Kisii) in its efforts to bring positive change to the region and serve as a model for others in the country.

- **Promoting Reconciliation through Schools.** The August 7th Memorial Trust and OTI have established peace clubs in Kenyan schools to help children in communities that felt the effects of Kenya's post-election violence learn and take the message of peace and reconciliation home to their parents. The project aims to challenge attitudes of mistrust and encourage those who were displaced to resettle. Peace club members organized drama and music activities for parents, and these activities have, in turn, created opportunities for parents to share experiences with their neighbors as part of the process of healing.



Athletes from Supportive Hearts International celebrate their victory in Taiwan.

OTI/Kenya

- **Athletics as an Alternative to Violence.** An OTI grantee, Supportive Hearts International, made OTI proud when 14 out of 16 of its hearing-impaired athletes won medals at an event in Taipei, Taiwan. The athletes won a total of six medals for Kenya: four Gold, one Silver, and one Bronze. Supportive Hearts, a nongovernmental organization formed after the post-election violence, encourages youth to use athletics as an alternative to violence.

PROGRAM APPRAISAL

OTI continues to operate in four high-priority areas of the country that saw significant election-related violence: Eldoret, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Nairobi. The program remains well-positioned to have an impact on political stability and reform in Kenya as the 2012 election cycle approaches.

OTI is increasing its commitment in Kenya, a move that is reflected in a major increase in the 2010 program budget. The Kisumu field office will expand its efforts in Nyanza province, and program operations will begin in central Kenya and the coastal region. In addition, USAID Kenya is reaffirming—through a \$1 million commitment—OTI's current youth empowerment activities, which seek to foster political and economic opportunities for Kenyan youth.

NEXT STEPS

Priorities for the next quarter include the following:

- Expanding OTI's operations and grant-making capacity to make good use of additional resources; and
- Exploring new ways to stimulate and support reform efforts consistent with Agenda 4 of the 2008 peace agreement.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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