



Office of Transition Initiatives

KENYA



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.

FAST FACTS

Start Date: September 2007
Budget: \$6.4 million (FY09)

USAID/OTI

<http://www.usaid.gov> –
Keyword: OTI

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) Kenya program started in June 2008 to help contribute to a stable Kenya by addressing some of the effects and causes of the violence that followed the 2007 election. The program targets the strengthening of national identity over ethnic identity. In pursuit of this goal, 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. 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.

ACTIVITIES

Civic Education – Grants this quarter focused on building grassroots level awareness on 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 to civil society and media groups and it is hoped that public interest in the book will increase pressure on the political leadership to undertake the necessary comprehensive reforms called for in the National Peace Accord. Also this quarter, OTI continued its support to parliamentary live broadcast activities by awarding a grant to the Center for Community Dialogue and Development to facilitate discussions around issues emerging from the parliamentary debates.

Community Structures for Accountability – One of OTI's primary goals is to address potential political instability factors. OTI seeks to motivate political elites to support the creation or reinforcement of community-level structures that allow the Kenyan people to more effectively put pressure on their leadership. Building on the success of the Nakuru District Peace Committees, OTI is supporting the Rift Valley Commissioner to establish a Provincial Peace Forum. The creation of this body was proposed in the Kenya draft policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management to serve as the principal peace structure at the provincial level.

Youth Empowerment – To prevent young people from resorting to violence and to harness their energy for positive change, OTI focuses on youth empowerment. One set of grants aims to provide youth with better economic opportunities through skills training or improved access to financing. Building on the success of dialogues previously undertaken by the New Hope Women's group in the Langas slum, another grant engaged youth from the area in a clean-up activity and helped them receive municipal approval to collect and dispose of garbage.

COUNTRY SITUATION

Grand Coalition Government – Kenya’s coalition government is holding, although tensions over reform issues continue to fuel polarization. In addition, there is much uncertainty on the question of whether a new constitution will be in place prior to the 2012 general elections.

Migingo Island – This small rocky island in Lake Victoria nearly brought Kenya and Uganda to war. While the island appears to be in an area of the lake demarcated for Kenya, Ugandan officials raised the Ugandan flag there. The dispute escalated when the officials evicted some 400 Kenyan fishermen from the island for refusing to pay an “annual operation fee.” Following diplomatic activity, the two countries agreed to conduct a survey of the island and resolve the boundary dispute within two months.

The Reform Process – The government has made limited progress on implementing the reforms recommended by the National Peace Accord that was signed in February 2008. For example, the Constitutional Review Committee of Experts was only recently sworn in, and the body is facing operational and logistical problems as it works to deliver a new constitution. International donors have pledged support to the committee to enable it to begin executing its mandate and enhance its ability to respond to the challenges of constitution making during the political transition period. In addition, Parliament has set up the Interim Independent Electoral Commission (IIEC) and commissioners were sworn in March. The IIEC will spearhead electoral reform activities and compile a new voter register in preparation for the constitutional referendum. The IIEC is also expected to come up with a program for voter education and to conduct by-elections for parliamentary seats that have fallen vacant since the last general election in December 2007. Finally, civil society organizations have continued to pressure Members of Parliament (MPs) to join the ranks of tax-paying citizens. The MPs continue to argue that they should not be required to pay taxes because, historically, they have had to use their salaries to meet constituent needs.

National Cohesion and Integration – Civil society and religious leaders continue to pressure the government to expedite implementation of the Agenda 4 recommendations of the February 2008 Peace Accord. The recommendations address national healing, and 2009 is seen as offering a critical window of opportunity for initiating reconciliation processes. However, political leaders have lost many opportunities to promote national healing as their coalitions took strong stands on various issues, including matters of reconciliation. For example, a recent burial ceremony organized for the victims of the Kiambaa Church arson in January 2008 was shunned by political leaders from the Rift Valley. The boycott raises questions not only on whether any progress has been made toward national cohesion but also about the country’s vulnerability to renewed conflict.

Insecurity and Extra-Judicial Killings – During the quarter, the level of crime increased in Kenya, especially in Nairobi. One media outlet released a report indicating that the number of killings of ordinary citizens by the police was on the increase. Several militia groups are still in existence and spread out across the country. Most of these groups were formed before or during the electioneering period and received additional financial assistance or armaments during the post-election violence. The groups continue to pose a security risk in the country.

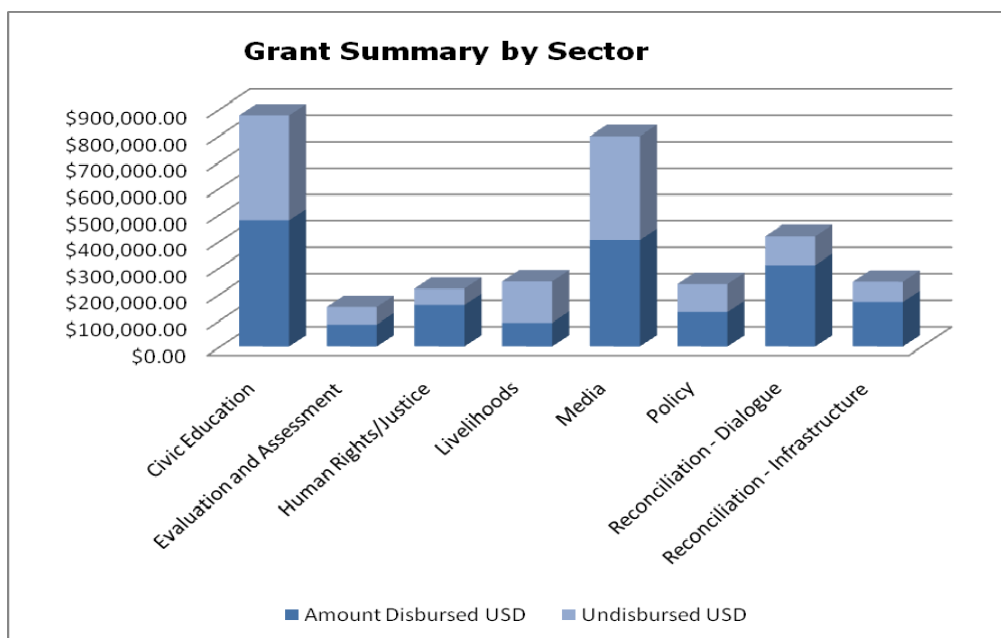
Youth Unemployment – One of the key forces driving conflict in Kenya is youth unemployment. The Government of Kenya has established a National Youth Development Fund to provide support for youth entrepreneurship. However, because of stringent eligibility requirements, only a small number of applicants receive funding. A recently initiated project, called Kazi Kwa Vijana (employment to the youth), is viewed by many young people as a short-term measure that provides employment for only a few well-connected individuals. One of Kenya’s daily newspapers echoed this view when it published an article revealing corruption, financial mismanagement, and other improprieties in the administration of the project.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| 4–6 August 2009 | - | Eighth African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum: Realizing the Full Potential of AGOA through Expansion of Trade and Investment |
| 5–6 August 2009 | - | Ministerial discussions regarding the AGOA forum |
| 24–25 August 2009 | - | Census in Kenya (to be taken during the night) |
| 27 August 2009 | - | By-elections for parliamentary seats |

GRANTS SUMMARY

To date, OTI, through its implementing partner Development Alternatives, has funded 88 small-grant and technical assistance activities totaling \$3.6 million. The chart below breaks down funding by sector.



HIGHLIGHTS

Burnt Forest Market Reopens – Burnt Forest was a locus of extreme violence in late 2007 and early 2008. The main marketplace was destroyed and largely abandoned because of lingering animosities between the town’s two primary ethnic groups. Following the violence, the groups set up markets in separate areas. Support from OTI allowed the Rural Women’s Peace Link (RWPL) to conduct community dialogue and reconciliation meetings, where it was agreed that the central market should be rebuilt. Subsequently, the Burnt Forest Town Council signed an agreement to manage the market in partnership with the RWPL. For one year, the parties are operating the market with a focus on promoting reconciliation and implementing peace activities. The council will take full responsibility for the market’s operations after the first year. The inhabitants of Burnt Forest are now patronizing a marketplace that they see as a symbol of hope and that marks a new beginning for the entire community.



The renovated Burnt Forest Market is again open for business.

OTI/Kenya



Boda boda operators in Kisumu put stickers calling for equitable taxation on their bikes.

Fighting Impunity and Unfair Taxation – Two OTI grants, Marshalling People’s Power and End Impunity—Pay Tax, had a secondary impact in Kisumu. When the municipal council levied a tax on boda bodas (bicycle taxis), operators poured into the streets by the thousands to protest. The drivers chanted: “No Reforms, No Taxation.” The protesters stated that they would pay the tax only if total reforms, including reforms to institutions like the council, are implemented to ensure that the taxes are used properly for community benefit. They also said that they would not pay taxes unless MPs take a leading role and pay their taxes. The Kisumu Council immediately suspended the policy while it consulted on the matter. For the drivers, it was an empowering success: No stone was thrown and no tear gas was fired.

Targeting Youth – Youth remain forceful actors in the transition process, particularly at the local level, and OTI continues to devote significant resources to activities targeted at young people. For example, the Marithiano Youth Group in Eldoret, a high-priority area, is making a 5 to 15 minute radio documentary using equipment funded by OTI. In addition, the group is seeking ways to generate income and support other activities. Following an OTI project that helped the group receive approval to collect and dispose of garbage, the members have taken the initiative to respond to the municipality’s call for bids to provide garbage collection services throughout Eldoret.

Parliamentary Media Center – Kenya’s first-ever parliamentary media center opened on June 24. The center provides a place where parliamentarians and other officials can hold formal press conferences. The media and press center is located inside the Parliament building and provides live radio and television feeds of legislative proceedings. OTI-funded video and audio production equipment was shipped from the United States to Kenya under a cooperative agreement with SUNY-Albany. The center was inaugurated at a ceremony attended by U.S. Ambassador Michael Ranneberger.

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 (Kibera).

During the quarter, a number of OTI activities received media coverage or were recognized by other organizations, including the following:

- *It’s Our Turn to Eat*. Radio and print coverage of OTI’s support for the book has been extensive. The initiative has received attention from the BBC, Voice of America, Reuters, and National Public Radio as well as from bloggers and commentators on Yahoo, Guardian, and Facebook.
- Parliamentary Media Center. Publications reporting on the activity ranged from the *Nairobi Star* to the *Standard* newspaper.
- The Constitutional Committee of Experts. OTI’s \$180,000 in emergency in-kind assistance enabled other donors to release more than \$1 million for committee activities. Commenting on OTI’s effort, a representative from a non-U.S. donor in Nairobi said, “Your assistance was timely and exactly what the committee needed to get started.”

NEXT STEPS

Priorities for the next quarter include—

- Reviewing strategies for responding to local needs and national-level political developments;
- Facilitating the annual Program Performance Review, a peer review of the program managed out of OTI/Washington; and
- Monitoring and, if necessary, responding to Kenya’s upcoming census and the two by-elections.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Brendan Wilson-Barthes
Africa Program Manager
Tel: (202) 712-5072
E-mail:
bwilson-barthes@usaid.gov