



Office of Transition Initiatives

VENEZUELA

September 2010

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In August 2002, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched a program in Venezuela in response to the political crisis that led to an attempted coup of President Hugo Chavez. The OTI program intends to maintain democratic stability, build confidence among and between political leaders and civil society, and strengthen the country's fragile democratic institutions. The OTI program is part of a larger U.S. Government effort to promote democratic stability in Venezuela. The program supports the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, and human rights organizations across the political spectrum to provide an opportunity for open debate and dialogue to occur.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The OTI program is designed to build citizen confidence in democratic processes by enhancing access to objective information and debate on key issues and promoting citizen participation. Assistance protects democratic space through support to civil society organizations for campaigns that stimulate debate on key issues and for forums on the tenets of democratic governance and the value of citizen participation. The program also supports projects that offer technical assistance to all political parties on responding to constituent needs. In turn, these political parties support community leaders and local organizations as they strive to increase access to locally elected leaders and improve their ability to exchange ideas with local government. In addition, OTI builds the capacity of Venezuelan community journalists to report on the human rights situation through training and increased exposure to local and international human rights organizations.

During the last several ballots for president, local government, and constitutional referenda, the OTI program has worked with the Venezuelan people on three primary goals: protect the vote, inform the vote, and get out the vote. The three-pronged effort has included training and organizing citizens, through local NGO leadership, to participate in constitutionally mandated election monitoring; supporting local NGOs in their effort to provide forums for local debates that educate citizens on the issues that affect their interests, including human rights, security, and participation; and supporting national Get Out the Vote campaigns. OTI works exclusively through local NGOs, regardless of political orientation, in support of their efforts to further democracy.

FAST FACTS

Start Date	August 2002
FY10 Budget	\$1 million in TI funds; \$6 million in ESF
Partners	Pan American Development Foundation, International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, Freedom House
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