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## Office of Transition Initiatives

### Lessons Learned

# TRANSITION PROGRAMMING

*Programs of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) specialize in quick-impact interventions designed to create or preserve political space and help set the stage for more profound longer-term change. With a focus on the short-term political context, OTI programming differs from traditional development through its operational modality, tactical approaches, flexible tools, resources, systems, and organizational culture uniquely adapted to support rapid response in transition, reconstruction, and stabilization environments. These lessons, excerpted from [OTI's 15 Year Report](#), come from experiences in 49 country programs.*

- ❖ Coordination within USAID and with other U.S. Government agencies is critical to success.
- ❖ A country's own political will for transition is key. OTI interventions cannot create it or substitute for its absence.
- ❖ Working in dynamic political environments requires equally dynamic and adaptive performance management processes.
- ❖ In countries prone to ethnic violence, programs often must be tailored to local realities and target strategic regions outside capital cities, where conflicted communities are more frequent and central governments have less control.
- ❖ Support "action research" and don't commit rigidly to a single strategic course. Constantly re-visit initial assumptions, re-evaluate program objectives, and re-target when necessary.
- ❖ Look beyond the "usual suspects" for local partnerships, including spontaneous groups of active citizens that can often be more energized and effective.
- ❖ Seize windows of opportunity to support local actors to advance peace and democracy, but recognize that creative initiatives are made more effective through sustained effort and support.
- ❖ Empower field personnel to make on-the-spot program decisions, which enable quick, responsive, and relevant interventions at the local or regional level, but also demands logical, defensible strategic rationales for proposed actions.
- ❖ Funding flexibility and staff deployment-readiness are essential for quick program startups.
- ❖ Top-down approaches to democracy and peace are inherently fragile. Support for enlightened leadership must be complemented by grassroots efforts to build stakeholders among the general population.
- ❖ The process is as important as the product. Every project is an opportunity to put democratic principles into practice and achieve positive change in public perceptions about a country's political transition.
- ❖ Assume a "venture capitalist" approach where appropriate by starting small, taking risks, and growing good ideas. Building synergy across activities and regions can produce catalytic results.

For more information please visit [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) Keyword: OTI