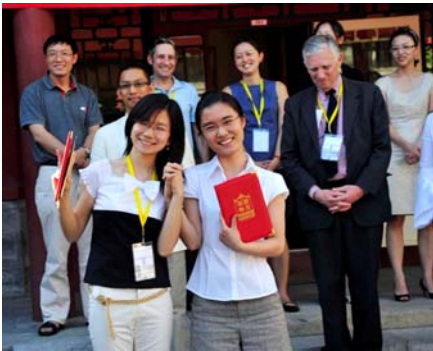




SUCCESS STORY

Modernizing China's Legal System

Law school contest fuels interest in alternative dispute-resolution techniques



Winners of the first Law School Student Negotiation Competition clasp their hands to celebrate victory.

USAID's educational partnerships with Chinese law schools, legal scholars and judges are introducing new techniques for resolving disputes, increasing the effectiveness of China's judicial system.

China's first-ever Law School Student Negotiation Competition was held in Beijing. An international panel of 12 judges, law professors and scholars joined the contest to give feedback to the students about their negotiation techniques.

The competition, held in a *siheyuan*, or courtyard villa, was hugely successful. Students and instructors expressed interest in participating in future negotiation training sessions, perhaps in workshops or classes at their institutions.

"The competition helped participants understand the importance of negotiation in resolving disagreements and conflicts, not only in business but in their social lives, as well," said Professor Zhi-Xue Zhang of Peking University's Guanghua School of Management.

"The competition is a milestone for promoting negotiation education in universities in China," Zhang added.

The competition, part of the larger USAID-supported Enhanced Judicial Education in China Project, is one of several activities designed to introduce alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms into the Chinese judicial system.

Through events such as this, USAID's partnerships with Chinese judges and legal schools are helping to modernize the Chinese legal system, making it more responsive to the demands of the 21st century.

Back in Beijing, requests from other law schools to join in future competitions are already arriving. It is virtually certain that a second Law School Student Negotiation Competition will take place next year.

As these students graduate and take their new-found knowledge into the Chinese legal system, it is likely that alternative dispute-resolution techniques will gain prominence throughout China, giving plaintiffs and defendants another way to resolve their differences.