



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN RWANDA

Since the genocide in 1994, Rwanda has made remarkable progress in developing national and local institutions of government, maintaining security, promoting reconciliation and strengthening the justice system. Despite progress, weaknesses in democracy and governance remain, including a weak civil society, low capacity of the media, issues of media freedom, concentration of political power, and need for increased political space, reconciliation and improved technical capacity of government officials.

GOVERNMENT AT A GLANCE

- Government type: Republic
- Date of independence: July 1, 1962
- President: Paul Kagame
- Constitution: Adopted in 2003

RESPONSE AND RESULTS

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided nearly \$2.6 million in Fiscal Year 2009 to support the Government of Rwanda's initiatives for local government and decentralization, strengthen civil society organizations and promote reconciliation and conflict mitigation.

In July 2008, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Board approved Rwanda's Threshold Country Plan. The ensuing Threshold Program will be implemented by USAID and the U.S. Department of Justice in partnership with the Government of Rwanda. It will address Rwanda's MCC Ruling Justly indicators in the areas where Rwanda falls short, namely political rights, civil liberties and voice and accountability. It will do so by strengthening the capacity and independence of the judiciary, strengthening opportunities for civic participation, building the capacity of civil society organizations, increasing the professionalism of the media, and supporting efforts by the Rwandan National Police to monitor and improve internal police performance.

USAID supports Rwanda's decentralization process through the Twubakane Decentralization and Health Program. Twubakane strengthens the financial and management capacity of local governments and communities in order to ensure improved health delivery services at decentralized levels. In FY 2008, each of the 12 targeted districts directly received \$100,000 to provide better health care in local communities. In addition, USAID supports reconciliation and reduces the potential for conflict through a program that promotes increased dialogue and debate on important and sensitive national topics.

To promote the rule of law in Rwanda, USAID supports provision of legal aid services to the poor and other vulnerable groups, helping to ensure equitable access to justice. In addition, USAID helps to strengthen the legislative process, supporting Rwanda's Ministry of Justice and other parts of government in their effort to improve the quality of legislation and ensure that the laws supporting people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS are adequate. Finally, USAID supports activities that assist the General Prosecutor's Office and the Rwandan judicial system in general to reduce the backlog of pending cases that have accumulated in the national courts due to personnel shortages following the restructuring of the judicial system in 2004-2006.

To help Rwanda build a political system that offers meaningful political choices to its citizens while maintaining a spirit of national unity, USAID supports a political party strengthening project. The project supports and reinforces mechanisms to promote interparty dialogue and builds political parties' capacity to organize, communicate and reach out to constituents at the grass-roots level.

Building civil society and reducing gender disparities requires an educated population. USAID provides scholarships to disadvantaged, but academically talented, girls and boys. Scholarship recipients are often orphans of war or HIV/AIDS and have limited financial means. In addition, USAID has recently launched a project to assist Rwandan young people develop the skills and attitudes necessary to find jobs or create their own employment, as well as to maintain healthy lifestyles and participate constructively in their communities. The project will also build the capacity of local youth workforce development organizations and seek to contribute to emerging Government of Rwanda policy implementation in this area.