



OFFICE OF TRANSITION INITIATIVES

Dynamic Solutions for an Evolving World

DCHA
OTI

OFFICE OF TRANSITION INITIATIVES

USAID
USAID



This Page:
OTI works in Honduras to mitigate pervasive gang violence.

AFP/Orlando Sierra/Honduras

Opposite Page:
In Afghanistan, OTI is strengthening ties between local actors, customary governance structures, and the national government.

AFP/Tauseef Mustafa/Afghanistan

AFP/Aref Karimi/Afghanistan

Cover:
Libyans celebrate the anniversary of the Libyan uprising in Tripoli.

AFP/Mahmud Turkia/Libya

Back Cover: USAID/Sri Lanka



DYNAMIC SOLUTIONS FOR AN EVOLVING WORLD

The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is part of the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). OTI helps local partners advance peace and democracy in countries experiencing crises. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance by targeting key political transition and stabilization needs.

DCHA Assistant Administrator Nancy Lindborg leads USAID's resilience policy to help areas of chronic poverty experiencing constant shocks to emerge from crisis, reducing vulnerability and facilitating inclusive growth.

With hundreds of experts in nine offices managing \$2 to \$3 billion in programs annually, DCHA brings together a wide range of technical expertise and operational capabilities essential to crisis prevention, response, recovery, and transition efforts around the world.



The United States faces great challenges in 21st century statecraft. Encountering political upheavals and natural disasters, the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is more important than ever in providing the U.S. Government an instrument to effectively engage in contingency environments.

As a unique and highly specialized office, OTI is a fast, responsive, and flexible tool in advancing U.S. foreign policy. We work in the most *critical* crises at the most *critical* times to make *critical* differences that help countries transition from conflict and turmoil toward peace and democracy.

Our programs put comparatively small amounts of money on small targets, stressing speed, calculated risk-taking, and innovation. We believe it is better to be 80 percent right at the right time than 100 percent right too late. From inception in 1994, OTI has developed a unique and effective operational model.

Over its 20-year history, OTI has played a key role in places important to U.S. foreign policy and continues to make a significant impact by implementing catalytic programs to strengthen the resilience of our partners and beneficiaries, keeping transitional countries on a positive trajectory.

We look forward to continuing our proud tradition in the coming years.

ROB JENKINS

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF TRANSITION INITIATIVES



OTI Country Selection

OTI closely tracks developments in countries throughout the world and selectively conducts assessments to determine whether or not a country's current circumstance meets OTI's criteria for engagement. In consultation with U.S. Government counterparts, strategies and programs are designed to meet the unique needs of each situation. There are no set responses and once started, programs adjust to better address changing political dynamics as they unfold.

OTI strives to limit its programs to two to three years to seize important windows of opportunity during a transition period. When appropriate, OTI passes its programs to USAID Missions, host governments, or donors, among others.



CRITERIA FOR ENGAGEMENT

IS THE TRANSITION SIGNIFICANT TO U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS?

In consultation with USAID Missions, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and with the consent of Congress, OTI seeks to focus its resources where they will have the greatest impact on U.S. diplomatic and security interests.

IS THERE A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY?

OTI can neither create a transition nor impose democracy, but it can identify and amplify the efforts of key individuals and groups who are committed to peaceful, participatory reform.

IS OTI'S INVOLVEMENT A CRITICAL COMPONENT FOR A POSITIVE TRANSITION?

OTI ensures that its programs neither duplicate nor substitute other U.S. Government efforts, reserving its resources for those situations in which it can make a unique contribution.

IS THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT SUFFICIENTLY STABLE?

OTI is an operational office with staff working on the ground at the community level. OTI's comparative advantage lies in its experience working in some of the world's most sensitive and dangerous places. There must be enough stability to enable programming to reach outside of the capital to implement and monitor OTI-managed activities.

OTI supports stability programs in conflict-prone communities throughout volatile areas in Pakistan.

USAID/Pakistan



SUPPORTING HISTORIC TRANSITIONS:

OVERVIEW



OTI was created in 1994 to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance during windows of opportunity to build democracy and peace. OTI often enters countries on the cusp of change and sets the stage for traditional development programs to take root. OTI programs supply positive momentum to both help a country's transition and avert potential crises that threaten internal, regional, or international peace and stability.



POST FALL OF BERLIN WALL: CREATION AND GROWTH OF A NEW OFFICE

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, countries across the globe entered a period of dramatic political change. USAID established OTI as the U.S. Government's mechanism for meeting the rapid-response assistance needs of the new era, such as jump starting democratic transitions, mitigating conflict, and stabilizing war-torn nations. During this period, OTI played a significant role in many successful political transitions around the globe, including in the Balkans, Rwanda, Indonesia, and Haiti.



POST SEPTEMBER 11TH: SCALING THE MODEL

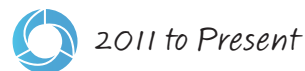
The attacks of 9/11 led to significant and widespread changes in U.S. foreign policy, with an increased focus on countering terrorism and extremism, and stabilizing fragile states whose instability threaten the entire world community. To address these emerging policy priorities, OTI implemented large-scale programs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, and Sudan. OTI programs built resilience in high-pressure conflict environments within these countries by empowering communities, gathering information on the ground, and looking to local solutions.



ARAB SPRING TO PRESENT: CREATIVE PROGRAMMING FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Sparked by the December 2010 protests in Tunisia, the Arab Spring created a wave of popular movements that toppled a number of autocratic regimes with potentially far-reaching consequences.

Today, OTI continues to serve as a catalyst for positive political change in places like Tunisia, Burma, Syria, and Mali, in support of the aspirations of people around the world. Using new technologies and innovations in programming, OTI is helping to translate this window of opportunity into a real prospect for greater political openness and improved governance informed by a newly empowered generation of youth and women.



AFP/Stringer/Syria

OTI IN THE WORLD

ACTIVE PROGRAMS (SEPTEMBER 2013)

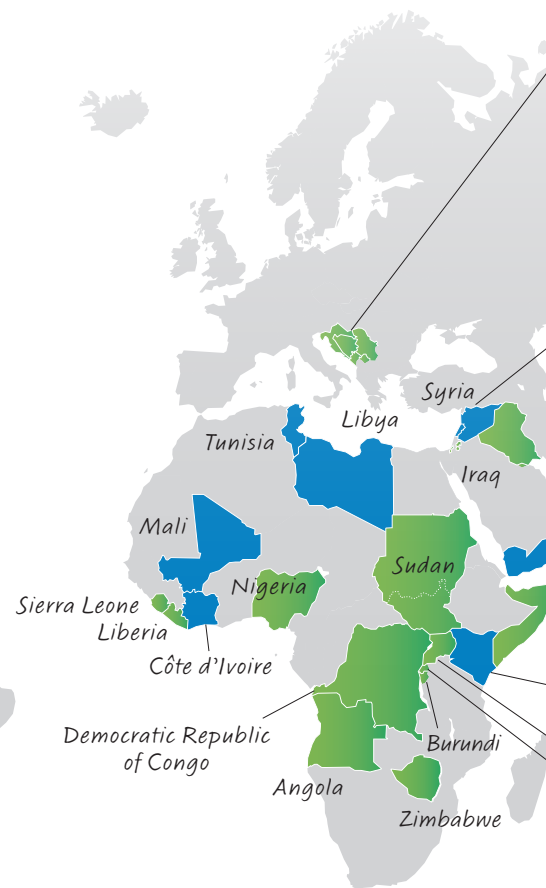


Active Programs



Closed Programs

The boundaries and names used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the U.S. Government.



HONDURAS

In the world's deadliest country, OTI supports civil society engagement and community revitalization to reduce violence.

HAITI

Fostering reconstruction and rehabilitation in the wake of the devastating 2010 earthquake, OTI builds resilient communities, increases government effectiveness, and strengthens citizen engagement with the government of Haiti.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

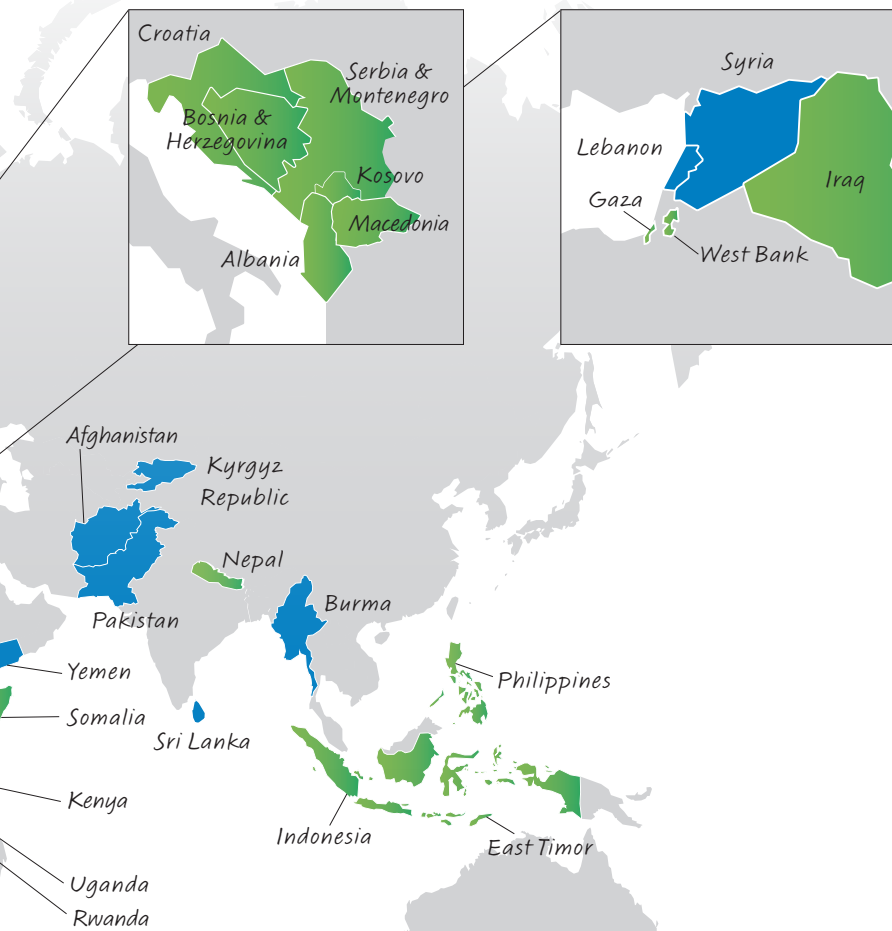
To mitigate serious political, social, and security challenges emerging from 2011 post-election violence and civil war, OTI's program improves public confidence in the post-conflict recovery process through enhanced governance and effective community initiatives.

TUNISIA

In the aftermath of the January 2011 fall of Tunisian President Ben Ali, OTI supports citizen engagement in the political transition and encourages equitable, responsive, and legitimate governance.

MALI

Following the expulsion of extremist groups from northern Mali in 2013, OTI supports broad-based, community-driven reconciliation efforts as well as activities aimed at increasing citizen confidence in the democratic process.



KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

During a period of political and ethnic unrest, OTI responds to ongoing and emerging sources of instability and tension in communities while enhancing inclusive, responsive, and transparent governance.

AFGHANISTAN

OTI increases resilience in areas vulnerable to insurgent exploitation by strengthening ties among local actors, customary governance structures, and the national government.

PAKISTAN

OTI supports stability and development programs in conflict-prone communities throughout volatile areas in Pakistan.

SRI LANKA

Following the end of more than two decades of civil war, OTI promotes increased social cohesion, economic security, and community resilience in the eastern and northern provinces.

BURMA

In response to significant political reforms, OTI addresses urgent transition needs and fosters greater participation in peace and reform processes through support to civil society and other key stakeholders.

LIBYA

In post-Qadhafi Libya, OTI amplifies citizens' voices and increases participation in new democratic processes.

KENYA

Reacting to inter-ethnic violence, OTI contributes to a stable Kenya by supporting institutional reforms and public demand for an accountable government across ethnic lines.

LEBANON

OTI strengthens social cohesion through quick impact programming to mitigate tensions between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.

SYRIA

In response to the ongoing conflict, OTI supports Syrian efforts to mitigate suffering, rehabilitate service delivery, and enable an inclusive, peaceful, and participatory political transition.

YEMEN

OTI supports government and civil society actors to engage in an inclusive and peaceful political transition through targeted assistance in key rural and urban areas.

OTI's Unique Approach

OTI has a hands-on approach to managing the life of its programs and often works directly with newly-established local partners. OTI provides critical support to local organizations with geographic mapping, data visualization, and analysis, while ensuring resources are present to address problems or prevent relapse into violence.

FLEXIBLE INSTRUMENTS: OTI procurement mechanisms are tailored to meet the changing needs for contingency operations, preserving the critical principle of competition while allowing quick program start-ups in new countries and grants to small indigenous organizations. OTI can set up operations within days and begin programming in a few weeks.

CULTURE: OTI works in fluid environments that demand field-based leadership. OTI supports this with a culture of calculated risk-taking, political orientation, and agile response, continually incorporating best practices and lessons learned.

FUNDS: OTI utilizes the Transition Initiatives account with special authorities granted by Congress for rapid spending where it is most needed, and leverages additional funding to expand programming around the world.

REACH: OTI programs outside a country's capital city and sets up offices and activities in neglected, crisis-prone areas. Often as the only U.S. Government presence in these regions, OTI verifies assumptions and provides in-depth local analysis to policy-makers.

EXPERTISE: OTI brings specialized expertise in areas such as civilian-military relations, conflict management, and media development.

PIONEERING INNOVATIVE SYSTEMS FOR CRISIS & CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

OTI as an Innovative Force:

For over twenty years, OTI has developed specialized systems to increase both creativity and effectiveness in crisis environments.

The **OTI GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION UNIT** provides technical expertise in map making, spatial analysis, interactive data visualization, and graphic design.

The **OTI WORLDWIDE ACTIVITY DATABASE** is an integral part of OTI's unique business model, capturing detailed information about all of OTI's global activities in real time.

The **OTI BULLPEN** provides a surge capability of senior field and management advisors who can be deployed quickly based on the needs of a program.

OTI performs intensive **MONITORING AND EVALUATION** with periodic strategic reviews, rolling assessments, and program performance reviews that enable situational awareness for strategic pivots in fluid environments.

OTI ANYWHERE is an internal web-based platform for knowledge sharing and organizational learning for OTI staff and implementing partners.

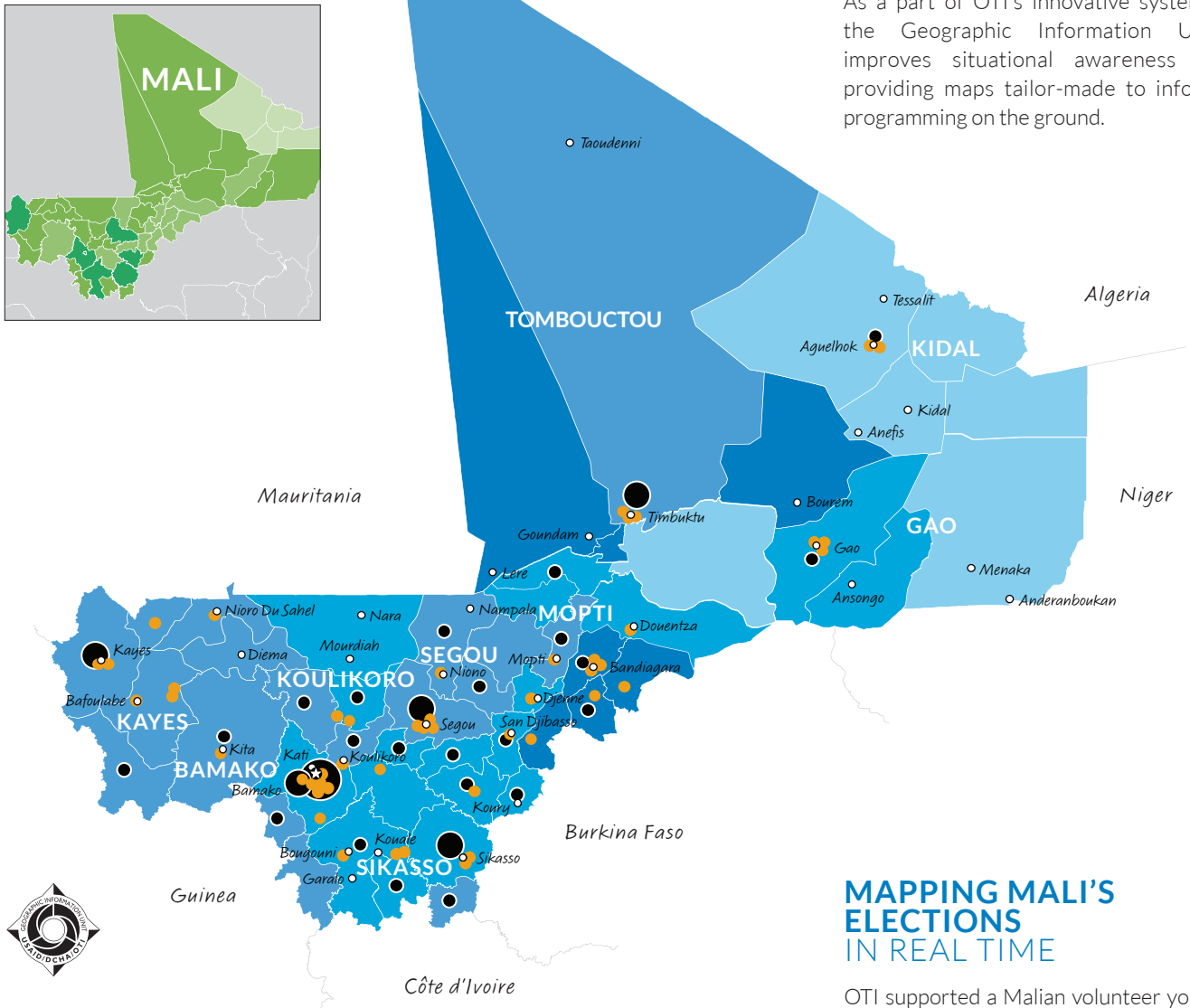
The **OTI SUPPORT UNIT** facilitates closeout of programs and handover to USAID Missions and host governments.

OTI's **POLICY CORPS** informs a wide range of policies including civilian-military coordination, countering violent extremism, operating in non-permissive environments, gender programming, and responding to the Presidential Directive on Atrocity Prevention.

OTI staff work directly with **IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS** both in the field and in Washington, D.C. to manage programs through a one-team approach.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION UNIT

As a part of OTI's innovative systems, the Geographic Information Unit improves situational awareness by providing maps tailor-made to inform programming on the ground.



MAPPING MALI'S ELECTIONS IN REAL TIME

OTI supported a Malian volunteer youth group, SOS Démocratie, to create an elections-related hotline and mapping platform, allowing Malians to obtain information about the electoral process and report incidents of fraud, violence, or intimidation during the presidential campaign and on election day. Citizens could report incidents by phone or text messaging that were then documented and plotted on an open-source map for real-time elections monitoring. Volunteers working the hotlines were fluent in four Malian local languages, making the hotline more accessible to citizens throughout Mali, regardless of their literacy capacity. The hotline received over 8,000 calls.

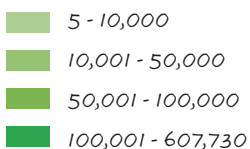
LEGEND

Map Created: August 8, 2013
Data as of August 2, 2013

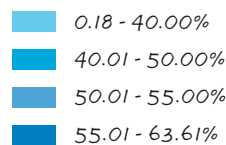
Sources: USAID, SOS Démocratie/Jokkolabs, Direction Générale des Elections

The boundaries and names used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the U.S. Government.

NUMBER OF VOTERS WHO CAST A BALLOT PER CERCLE*



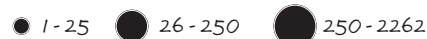
% OF REGISTERED VOTERS WHO VOTED PER CERCLE*



OTI ELECTION ACTIVITY



NUMBER OF CALLS BY CERCLE*



*"Cercle" is French for an administrative unit.



Left: AFP/Joel Saget/Mali

Right: An OTI funded cultural festival promotes reconciliation in post-civil war Sri Lanka.

USAID/Sri Lanka

Opposite Page Left: OTI fosters inclusive reform and peace-building processes in Burma.

AFP/Soe Than Win/Burma

Opposite Page Right: USAID/Sri Lanka



OTI CORE PRINCIPLES

Through a hands-on management and monitoring structure, OTI and implementing-partner field staff are constantly assessing, adapting, and acting based on changing political situations. With a political focus and intensive management of country program strategies and activities, OTI programming often straddles the space between humanitarian response and longer-term development.

POLITICAL FOCUS:

- OTI focuses on transforming perceptions and cultivating buy-in to peace processes.
- OTI supports non-traditional local change agents for peaceful political transitions.

FIELD-DRIVEN:

- OTI country representatives drive programmatic decisions.
- OTI's iterative programming enables immediate local pivots based on constantly changing dynamics.

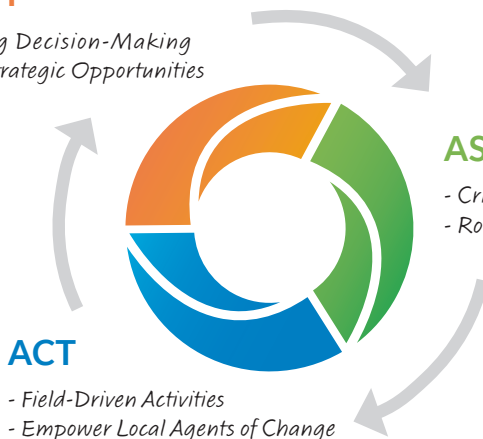
INTENSIVE MANAGEMENT:

- OTI administers daily oversight with implementing partners who provide a platform for action and flexibility.
- OTI staff in Washington, D.C. are responsible for contract management, which allows the field staff to focus on implementation.

ACTION RESEARCH MODEL OF PROGRAMMING

ADAPT

- Ongoing Decision-Making
- Target Strategic Opportunities



ASSESS

- Criteria for Engagement
- Rolling Assessments

ACT

- Field-Driven Activities
- Empower Local Agents of Change

LEARNING & INNOVATION:

- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation occurs throughout the program cycle and informs strategic changes based on new information.
- New technologies help analyze data and capture best practices to improve institutional learning.



DEFINING SUCCESS

OTI views success in two primary ways:

- 1** Positive change in public attitudes, perceptions, or behaviors.
- 2** How well and how rapidly programs respond to both U.S. foreign policy imperatives and local political developments.

Success depends on the ability to adapt program designs and activities in dynamic environments to meet emerging needs.

OTI BY THE NUMBERS

TRANSITION INITIATIVES ACCOUNT

The Transition Initiatives (TI) account was created by Congress in the 2001 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, to provide “assistance to develop, strengthen, or preserve democratic institutions and processes, revitalize basic infrastructure, and foster the peaceful resolution of conflict.”


The TI account is administered by the Office of Transition Initiatives, USAID, pursuant to Section 491 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which authorizes assistance to be provided notwithstanding any other provision of law. Although rarely used, this “notwithstanding authority” affords OTI extraordinary flexibility to respond to political crises and foreign disasters.

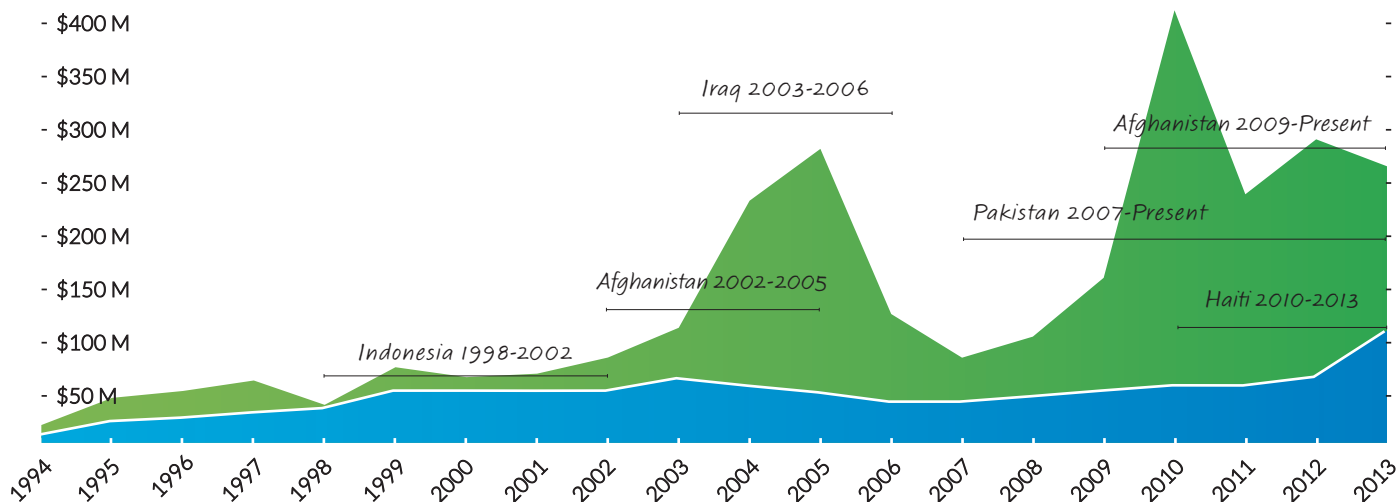
OTI also receives non-TI funding from numerous sources including Complex Crises Funds and Economic Support Funds.

HISTORY OF OTI FUNDING (1994 – 2013)

In Fiscal Year 2013, OTI managed \$261 million in support of 15 country programs. These funds included \$106 million (41%) in TI funds and \$155 million (59%) in non-TI funds. The graph below reflects how changes in OTI’s funding are determined by U.S. foreign policy objectives.

 *Transition Initiative Funds*
Fiscal Year 2013 TI Funds: \$106 M

 *Additional Funds*
Fiscal Year 2013 Non-TI Funds: \$155 M



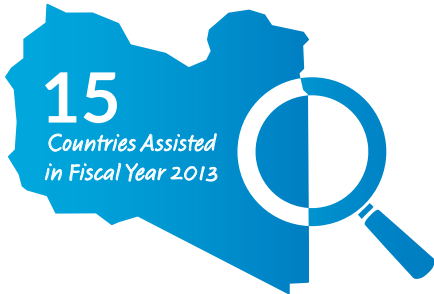
 **2.5 B**

Total funds managed by OTI since 1994

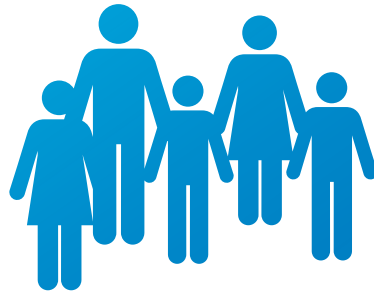
25,000+



Approximate number of activities OTI has implemented since 1994



15
Countries Assisted
in Fiscal Year 2013



2,250 Activities
Implemented in
Fiscal Year 2013

**PROGRAM
ENGAGEMENT**



- 3.3** Average Length (in Years)
- 0.8** Shortest (in Years)
- 8.4** Longest (in Years)
- 56** Total Program Engagements in 44 Countries
- 12** Average Number of Program Engagements Per Year

LARGEST PROGRAMS BY FUNDING (September 2013)

1	Iraq	2003 - 2006	\$406,257,000
2	Afghanistan	2009 - Present	\$283,933,000
3	Pakistan	2007 - Present	\$252,826,000
4	Haiti	2010 - 2013	\$140,879,000
5	Sudan	2003 - 2010	\$132,000,000
6	Afghanistan	2001 - 2005	\$67,708,000
7	Kenya	2008 - Present	\$66,905,000
8	Yemen	2010 - Present	\$59,529,000
9	Lebanon	2007 - Present	\$55,793,000
10	Colombia	2007 - 2011	\$50,000,000

**LARGEST PROGRAMS
BY NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES
(September 2013)**

1 Iraq
2003 - 2006
5,058 Activities

2 Pakistan
2007 - Present
2,645 Activities

3 Afghanistan
2009 - Present
1,265 Activities

4 Sudan
2003 - 2010
1,122 Activities

5 Yemen
2010 - Present
1,013 Activities

6 Haiti
2010 - 2013
961 Activities

7 Colombia
2007 - 2011
935 Activities

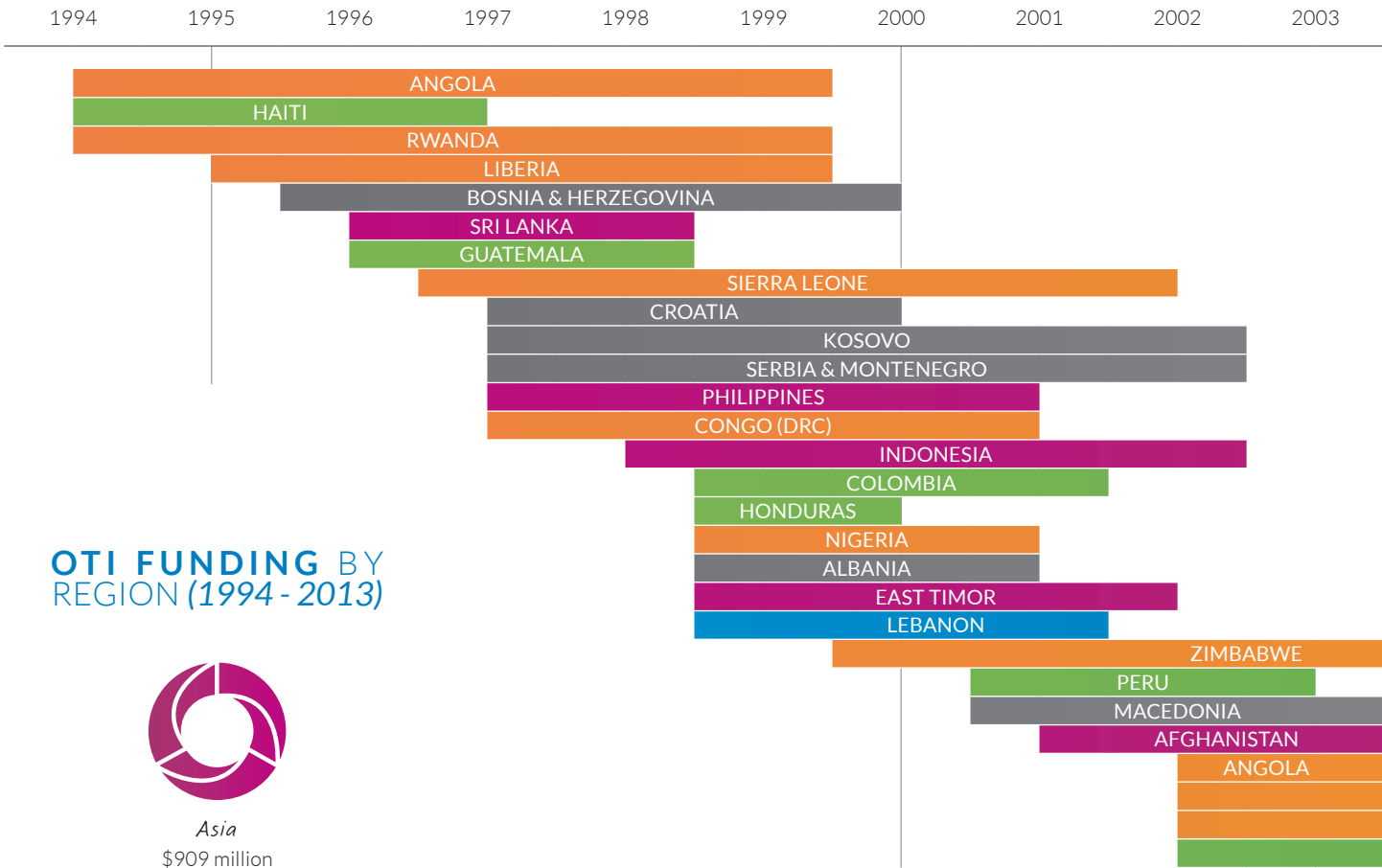
8 Kenya
2008 - Present
730 Activities

9 Sri Lanka
2003 - 2007
726 Activities

10 Afghanistan
2001 - 2005
721 Activities

**Throughout the Life of
an OTI Program:**

Average Number of Activities - 625
Average Activity Size - \$46,000



Asia
\$909 million



The Middle East & North Africa
\$603 million



Africa
\$477 million



Latin America & the Caribbean
\$396 million



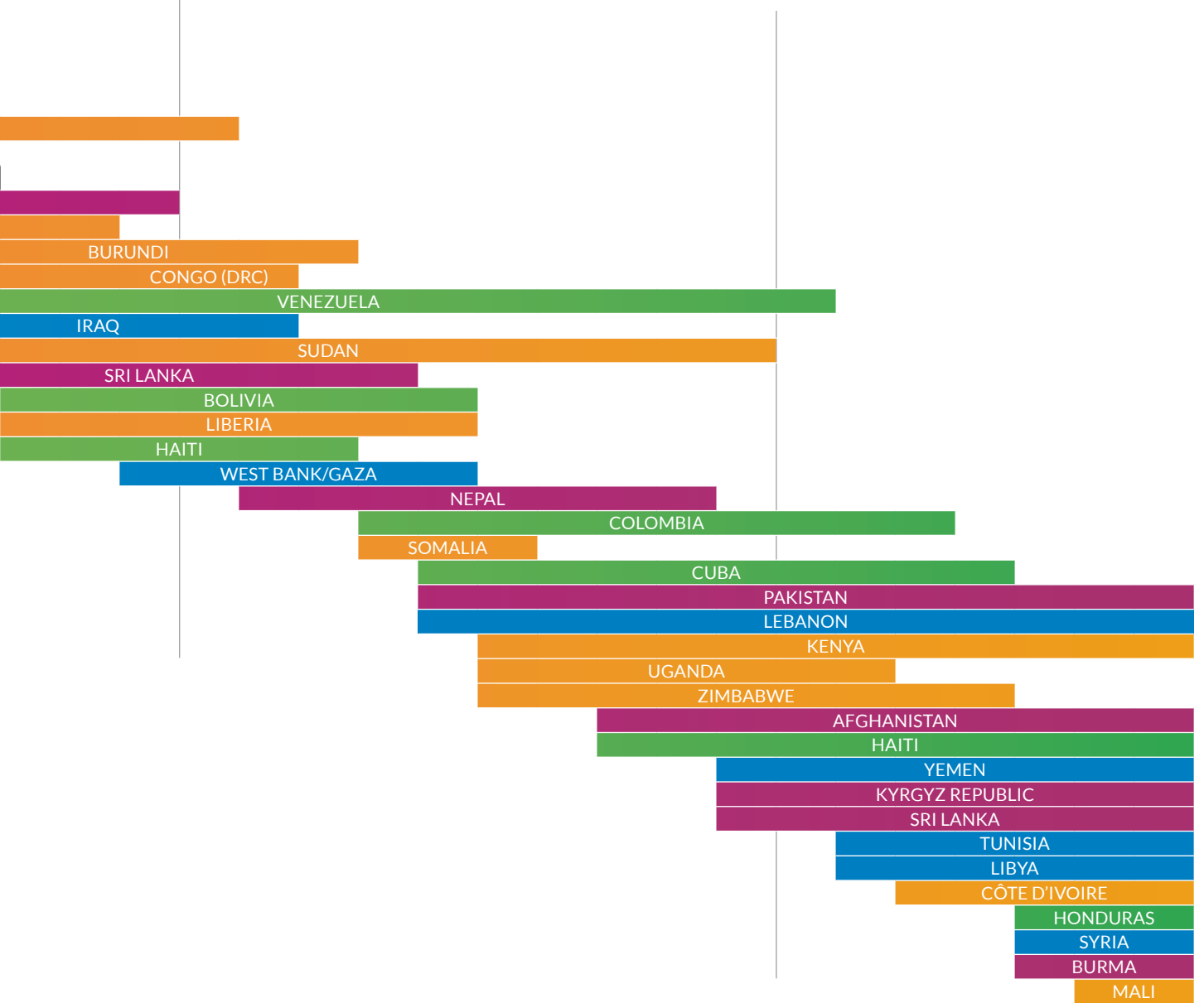
Europe & Eurasia
\$114 million

2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

OTI ENGAGEMENT

TIMELINE OF COUNTRIES

20 Years Spanning the Globe





Surrounding the presidential elections in Mali, OTI works with diverse civil society members and community organizations to fortify democratic systems and values.

AFP/Eric Feferberg/Mali



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Activity Case Studies

OTI activities are shaped by the principle that foreign assistance should nurture resilient local institutions, systems, and capacities that enable developing countries to manage challenges effectively.

In the field, OTI's partners range from indigenous non-governmental organizations, host country government entities, U.S. private voluntary organizations, international agencies, businesses, and consulting firms, to educational institutions.

OTI specializes in rapid impact interventions designed to preserve political space and build confidence to set the stage for more profound, longer-term change. OTI programming differs from traditional development programming in operational systems, field presence, partner management, planning cycles, tactical programming tools, and organizational culture.

Since 1994, OTI has supported political transitions by engaging local leaders and communities who facilitate a process for longer-term stability and peace in their countries. With over 25,000 activities since 1994, the following pages provide a window into the breadth of OTI's mission by highlighting program activities from Haiti, Kenya, Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tunisia, and Libya.



HAITI:

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN A NATION DEVASTATED BY NATURAL DISASTER

The ground began shaking at 4:53 PM on Tuesday, January 12, 2010. That minute changed the landscape of the country and countless lives: 300,000 were killed, another 300,000 were injured, and 1 million Haitians were left homeless. The 7.0 magnitude earthquake and its aftershocks left the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere in ruins. Within 72 hours, a four-person team of OTI senior program advisors arrived in Port-au-Prince, launching a relief and recovery program that aimed to improve community stabilization, increase citizen engagement, and enable the government of Haiti to function while laying the groundwork for longer-term development.

Upon arriving in Haiti, the OTI team identified rubble removal as a prerequisite to further development and organized citizens to remove hundreds of thousands of tons of rubble left in the earthquake's wake. These cash-for-work programs provided urgently needed income to Haitians who had lost their homes and livelihoods. OTI also

mobilized quickly to provide temporary office space so that the government of Haiti could begin to function again, while investing in more permanent rehabilitation of infrastructure. OTI helped the government set up a temporary press center to deliver messages to citizens and the international community about relief and recovery efforts, and later worked to strengthen the communications capacity of government officials and journalists. This access to timely information helped reduce growing frustration and unrest. During the November 2010 elections, the Haiti program worked with the government's provisional electoral council, local partners, and international donors to educate voters, increase voter turnout, support the production of the

first-ever televised presidential debates, and promote a transparent and accountable democratic process by training election monitors.

Striving to prepare local governments and community-based organizations for longer-term U.S. Government and international economic investment, the program moved to a new phase in July 2011. The program then focused on the development corridors of Port-au-Prince, Cap Haitien, and St. Marc. Throughout the lifetime of the program, OTI exhibited hallmark flexibility, implementing more than 950 activities related to economic development, public safety, resettlement of displaced families, community revitalization, public health, governance, and education.

To help the Haitian government lead its nation through crisis and rebuild its economy, OTI's Haiti Recovery Initiative removed 750,000 metric tons of rubble - half of USAID's total and one-third of all rubble removed in Haiti in 2010.

KENYA: BUILDING PEACE BY FOSTERING NEW LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kenya's December 2007 presidential election set off devastating violence, largely waged between the Kikuyu, Kalenjin, and Luo ethnic groups. Over 1,000 died and hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes and communities. Inter-ethnic marriages and friendships dissolved as interaction between the area's ancient tribes seemed impossible in the face of simmering anger and mistrust.

Identifying women as organized and visible leaders in a Kenyan push for peace and reconciliation, OTI partnered early on with Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL), a group which focused on the causes, rather than the consequences, of the violence. With only a small grant of \$9,000 from OTI, RWPL organized dialogue forums for 200 youth and elders from disparate ethnic groups to discuss the ramifications of the conflict and identify follow-up activities to stabilize the region. These forums highlighted youth as critical custodians of community justice and peace-building systems. From this initial activity, youth who took that philosophy to heart developed the Wareng Youth for Peace and Development Initiative.

"OTI chose to support our youth organization when no one else would. Our objective is to ensure peaceful co-existence regardless of our political and tribal affiliation."

-Fred Yego, Chairman, Wareng Youth Initiative



Following the constitutional referendum supported by OTI, a young boy reads the new Kenya constitution.

USAID/John Langlois/Kenya

Working closely with Wareng Youth Initiative's Chairman Fred Yego and 75 members, OTI delivered a follow-on, in-kind grant of office equipment to set up operations and launch peace-building efforts around the region. The RWPL agreed to serve as an advisor to the new organization while the Kenyan government provided office space for the Wareng group.

"Incubating a new community-based organization in partnership with both the local government and a more established local organization illustrates one way OTI builds sustainability into its activities," said Yego.

With USAID's support, Wareng has ensured that the youth networks under its umbrella organization build a critical mass of people who can motivate youth to say no to violence and yes to inter-ethnic tolerance.

The groups under Wareng supported non-violent elections in 2013, contributing to a more peaceful electoral outcome.

“There is no other way but to get united and support the local government for bringing security and stability to the district.”

*-Abdul Qadar Khan,
local community leader*

AFGHANISTAN: STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

In Afghanistan, a country that has endured years of violence and insurgency, OTI works to connect government and community leaders to build stability and democratic governance.

By strengthening ties between local communities, customary governance structures, and the government of Afghanistan, OTI empowers community-based structures to mitigate sources of instability coming from militants who are fighting to impose by force social norms and laws that the majority of Afghans oppose.

Despite the significant role Afghan tribal leaders play in maintaining local stability, they have been marginalized, especially in areas where local government reach is limited or non-existent. Inter-tribal disputes and inadequate governance can negatively affect the stability of

an area, district, or entire province. The disconnect between the local government and tribally-organized constituencies hampers the government of Afghanistan's ability to counter insurgent influence.

Grounded in the principle that durable stability is a result of local empowerment, initiative, and leadership, OTI designs and implements clusters of small activities in Afghanistan through a process-oriented, community-driven approach. Both the activity development process and the project outcome improve linkages within the community and strengthen its perception of the government.

These Afghan agents of change work for a future where girls can go to school, citizens can safely and freely choose their leaders, and parents can build better lives for their children.

Many of these visionary Afghan men and women have carried on with their mission despite risks to their personal safety.

OTI's Community Cohesion Initiative conducted a series of cohesion *jirgas* (community meetings) that successfully brought together government and customary leaders along with community representatives to jointly identify security and development challenges in their areas, recommend solutions, and agree on common goals. The Community Cohesion Initiative field teams tailor the meetings to ensure that important issues are not only discussed, but solutions and recommendations are jointly agreed on and documented. This dialogue with participating leaders strengthens public confidence in the government of Afghanistan's ability to deliver services based on local needs.





Opposite Page Left: AFP/Shah Marai/Afghanistan
Right: AFP/A. Majeed/Afghanistan
This Page: USAID/Kyrgyz Republic

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC: INNOVATING WITH TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE ACCESS TO RELIABLE NEWS

Biased and unreliable media is a serious hindrance to democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic. False information and widespread rumors by political entrepreneurs fueled the April 2010 violence in Bishkek and June 2010 inter-ethnic violence in the south.

In mid-2011, OTI began working with Door Media, an independent local media outlet producing daily domestic news audio podcasts online and by phone through its Kush Kabar news platform. OTI's support expanded the platform to a wider audience while building its capacity as a reliable and objective news source.

The new partnership improved Kush Kabar dramatically. Within four months, the monthly audience increased from 1,000 to 3,000 callers, all receiving timely regional news. The partnership also strengthened Kush Kabar's editorial process. Previously, journalists and editors struggled to deliver relevant news. After the project, Kush Kabar's editors could deliver important news themes to its 16 journalists in one short message service (SMS).

The application of SMS technology to the project significantly reduced the time needed to coordinate and collaborate, and encouraged transparency and healthy competition.

"Once a journalist from Issyk-Kul sent out a story, but a journalist in Osh texted me to say that he had reliable information that could prove the inaccuracy of his colleague's story," an editor reported from Kush Kabar.

As a result of increased information-gathering capacity, the journalists were able to provide better quality news to the public: 90 percent of news content developed during the partnership was produced by Kush Kabar and not copied from other news agencies. Door Media also changed its process for acquiring news, paying journalists for the quality — not quantity — of stories, thereby creating a more accurate flow of information.

This effort to build the Kush Kabar platform is part of OTI's larger initiative in the Kyrgyz Republic to help media outlets produce better content through the use of technology, technical assistance, and media audience research. Together, these projects aim to increase access to reliable and objective information for citizens as a way to mitigate the impact of political rumors and inform citizen decision-making and government accountability during the democratic transition.

OTI connects international and local partners to create innovative solutions. Open Society Institute and Internews were integral in helping USAID support the work of Kush Kabar and Door Media.



AFP/Gamal Noman/Tunisia

TUNISIA: WOMEN IN A TRANSITIONING WORLD

Despite Tunisia's catalytic role in the Arab Spring and its regional distinction as a leader in protecting and promoting women's rights, women continue to be under-represented in the political sphere, particularly in the interior area of the country. With an upswing in social conservatism, many Tunisians fear that the erosion of women's rights is a sign that the political transition is going in a negative direction.

In order to counter this trend, OTI partnered with two women's associations in the Kasserine governorate to commemorate International Women's Day and highlight the important role that women have to play in society. Over 100 women of various ages and ideologies convened to hear well-known Tunisian activist Ms. Sihem Ben Sedrine speak, and to discuss issues important to them as they relate to the ongoing constitutional drafting process within the National Constituent Assembly. The forum sparked lively discussions that increased solidarity and improved networks among participants, which will help women engage in the broader political arena.

"I saw a very high level of consciousness [among the participants]," Sedrine said after the forum. "We need this kind of discussion. The biggest challenge facing us is how to engage women in the democratic transition. This forum gave us the opportunity to have a voice, and the discussion was free and the ideas were great. This is very positive."

The forum is just one example of many activities OTI has supported in Tunisia to increase political participation of marginalized groups, including women, and to assist Tunisians pursuing the democratic development of institutions and society. This project demonstrates a key lesson learned from OTI's two decades of transition programming: even modest amounts of strategically placed resources can make a difference. In a short period of time, a critical mass of targeted, small grants can help, if not solidify, a democratic transition.

"We've been excited to have the opportunity in Tunisia ... in Libya, and in many other countries through the Middle East and North Africa to work aggressively with partners, and to make sure that we reach local society, local change agents. We support civil society organizations ... that work to expand access to democratic processes."

*-USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, March 7, 2012
Remarks at the Council
on Foreign Relations*

LIBYA: SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURIAL YOUTH TO LEAD THE WAY TO PEACE

In February 2011, the regime of Muammar Qadhafi met popular protests in eastern Libya with brutal violence, which led to a revolution that ultimately brought his autocratic 42-year reign to an end. In its wake, Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC) was formed to develop a road map for establishing a democratically elected government.

media tool, and more than 150,000 visitors have viewed their page.

Further engagement with H2O enabled a bus tour to more than 20 cities throughout Libya. On the tour, the H2O team distributed booklets on the transitional road map and conducted surveys to document popular demands

"Our goal was to give every voice a chance. We explained to people that we didn't care if they were pro-Qadhafi or a leader in the opposition, we just wanted to make sure they had a chance at expressing their concerns about the constitution."

-H2O Team Member



To strengthen NTC-led reforms, OTI supports inclusive transitional political processes by partnering with local civil society organizations such as H2O, a Tripoli-based youth group. With assistance from OTI, H2O developed a graphic of a building, giving a simplified visualization of the transition road map, with each floor representing a stage of the path toward democracy. With this graphic in hand, H2O visited five campuses on their campaign, providing 8,200 students with a better understanding of their country's transition process. To expand their reach, the youth group put up billboards, distributed t-shirts, and set up click advertising on Facebook (www.facebook.com/H2OLY). H2O was the first Libyan organization to use this social

for the new constitution. The bus tour reached remote areas that have been historically marginalized, allowing voices in desolate parts of the Libyan desert and mountain ranges, as well as populated areas, to be heard at the national level.

Youth civil society organizations played a critical role in educating the populace in the lead-up to the National Assembly elections in July 2012. In collaboration with the NTC and with a small grant from OTI, H2O created a voter education booklet to use during a four-day voter education campaign for students. The August 2012 inauguration of the newly elected 200-member assembly marked the first peaceful transfer of power in Libya since independence in 1951.



LESSONS IN TRANSITION PROGRAMMING

OTI's 20 years of experience implementing more than 25,000 activities in nearly 60 engagements has generated invaluable lessons learned. The U.S. response to crisis and conflict will be more effective by understanding and incorporating the following principles in support of democratic political transitions.

- Coordination within USAID and with other U.S. Government agencies is necessary to success.
- In political transitions and conflict environments, a rapid response is critical to building citizens' confidence in their local and national government.
- 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 political violence, programs must be tailored to local realities and target strategic regions, often outside capital cities, in communities where the central government has less control.
- Do not commit rigidly to a single strategic course. Constantly re-visit initial assumptions, re-evaluate program objectives, and re-target when necessary.
- Seek expansive, non-traditional local partnerships including spontaneous groups of active citizens that can often be energetic and effective in bringing about positive change.
- 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.
- Funding flexibility and staff deployment-readiness are essential for quick program start-ups.
- 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 activity is an opportunity to put democratic principles into practice and achieve positive change in public perceptions about a country's political transition.
- Assume an entrepreneurial approach where appropriate by starting small, taking calculated risks, and growing good ideas. Building synergy across activities and regions can produce catalytic results.

OTI helps rehabilitate Haitian communities
ravaged by the 2010 earthquake.

AFP/Thony Belizaire/Haiti





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More information on USAID/OTI programming is available at: usaid.gov, keyword search: Political Transition Initiatives



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