

**USAID Development
Information Services**

**USAID CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**
(Response to an Information Request)

April 2006

USAID Development Information Services
Information Request Response
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Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination
Office of Development Evaluation and Information
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Washington, D.C. 20004

USAID CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

General Overview

In the early 1990s, allocations for civic education programs were roughly \$10-20 million a year. By the end of the decade, they exceeded \$30 million annually. Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean remained fairly steady throughout the decade, rising slowly from about \$2 million per year at the beginning of the 1990s to about \$8 million in FY 2000, equaling slightly more than 20 percent of total funding for civic education.¹

The Civitas Exchange Program, administered by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of State, and USAID, provides leaders in civic education opportunities to learn from and assist each other in improving education for democracy in their nations. The program addresses the full range of civic education activities from the development of educational policy, standards, curricular frameworks, and materials to teacher education, classroom implementation, and research and evaluation. Projects and partnerships are active in Venezuela, Panama, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica.

Country Programs

Bolivia

As part of USAID's support for the December 2005 presidential and congressional elections and the July 2006 Constituent Assembly elections and referendum on autonomy, technical assistance and training is provided to a network of civil society organizations in coalition building, monitoring, and voter education campaigns, with a focus on indigenous populations. Intensive civic education activities are supported, including technical assistance to the media to improve professional reporting of electoral processes, and national public opinion polls and surveys are conducted to gauge political perceptions and candidate support.

USAID also supported the launching of a democratic training course for indigenous leaders, aimed at developing their capacity to objectively analyze and evaluate political proposals, policies and issues, and replicate the training in their communities. Five participants in the course established a citizen group under the new law, and ran as candidates in the December 2004 municipal elections. Furthermore, USAID assisted the Congress in creating a new culture of information sharing, consultation and accountability between political representatives and their constituents through practical constituent outreach mechanisms.

¹ USAID. 2002. *Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned*

Columbia

As part of a larger anti-corruption program, grants are provided to citizen groups who monitored GOC local government projects, and financing is provided for the development of civil society organization web sites, newsletters and bulletins to enhance the free flow of information regarding citizen anti-corruption activities.

Dominican Republic

USAID supports NGO efforts to increase voter confidence in the electoral process, improve the competitiveness of elections through candidate debates on key governance issues, and decrease potential for fraud through close monitoring and reporting throughout the entire electoral period.

Ecuador

USAID programs to support free and fair elections educate citizens on political rights, strengthen their oversight capacity of accountability practices by elected officials, and support other related activities aimed at promoting active citizens in democratic practices. USAID works with CSOs to promote democracy, advance political reforms, and provide election support for the 2006 presidential and congressional elections to ensure vulnerable groups such as youth, women, indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians can participate fully in the electoral process. USAID support was central to free and fair elections in 2002 and 2004, which included assistance to non-governmental organizations to develop civic education campaigns and demand accountability of elected officials.

Through the Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL) of the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights (IIDH), USAID supported the design and implementation of a National Training Program for more than 270,000 members of the 34,618 polling boards. CAPEL and the TSE involved more than 30 Ecuadorian universities and educational centers, and 305 professors, and used the universities' facilities for training. USAID also supported the design and implementation of the first National Observers and Auditors' Training Program for Representatives of Political parties and independent movements.

El Salvador

USAID assists the Legislative Assembly is becoming more open and transparent to CSOs and citizens in general. Legislative Commissions held hearings, forums or seminars on topics such as CAFTA; prevention of workplace hazards; and protection of the environment, thus increasing citizens' participation in the legislative decision-making process. The Assembly's civic education team reached 11,717 students and teachers to educate them about the legislative process. San Salvador's Constituent Services Office established a hotline, leading to increased public access to the institution.

Haiti

The Media Assistance and Civic Education Program (RAMAK) in Haiti aims to increase citizen awareness of rights and responsibilities under the 1987 Constitution and to

strengthen the ability of journalists to report on issues related to democratic development. A civic education soap opera (Kadejak) that spotlights issues of governance, police function, justice, and non-violence was launched in 2003 and is now broadcast nationwide via community radio stations.

Honduras

USAID supported a public information campaign on the new Electoral Law as part of a wider voter education effort leading up to the 2005 elections.

Jamaica

As part of a broader program to bring together CSOs and the media, USAID plans to provide a grant to Jamaica's only community radio station to boost production capabilities and to launch civic education and advocacy programming.

Nicaragua

In preparation for the November 2006 elections, USAID is working on electoral law reform, voter registration and voter list updates, massive civic education campaigns, technical assistance to the CSE, and donor coordination. USAID also supported media campaigns to inform the public on new laws and how to access public information or public defender services.

Panama

USAID supports CSO initiatives on topics, such as public awareness of the cost of corruption, civil service career, civic education, ethics code for different sectors of civil society, and bringing scrutiny to procurements, concessions, and licensing transactions.