



History

In March 1995, USAID/Botswana became USAID/RCSA (the Regional Center for Southern Africa) with the task of developing, implementing, and managing the Initiative for Southern Africa. The Center was established in Gaborone in order to increase partnership and synergies with the preeminent regional institution- the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The program was developed with the belief that regional integration through collaborative efforts among nations would achieve equitable sustainable economic growth and keep with the policies and objectives of USAID. The program's goal was to promote equitable, sustainable economic growth in a democratic Southern Africa.

This five-year, \$300 million Initiative for Southern Africa was established to respond to opportunities that would contribute to the realization of the region's potential, particularly in areas of economic growth, agriculture, environment, and democracy. In more detail, the Regional Center worked to:

- Strengthen democratic processes and values in Southern Africa, particularly through skills development of legislators, civil society groups, and women's organizations.
- Increase local business development and ownership through access to capital, increase technological and managerial capacity, and create a regional enterprise fund.
- Establish conditions for sustainable increases in agriculture and natural resources productivity of smallholders by increasing institutional capacity, sharing information, improving policies, and developing technologies and approaches.
- Improve the reliability, efficiency, and competitiveness of regional transport and telecommunications infrastructure.

The regional value-added for the RCSA was the potential for offering complementary support to the development programs of bilateral USAID missions in the region. Where possible, the RCSA selected areas of focus that presented opportunities for building on or reinforcing existing bilateral USAID mission activities from a regional platform. This complementary support was either direct, through information exchange, data collection and analysis, or supplemental resources for capacity-building that benefited bilateral USAID missions' implementing partners, or indirect, through the promotion of regional policies or standards that broadly enhance the enabling environment for bilateral USAID interventions at the national level. In addition to technical programming, the regional center also provided support services to bilateral missions throughout the region. These services included assistance from the financial management office, office of acquisition and assistance, regional legal advisors, etc.

In 2000, while continuing to work in the same programmatic areas, the RCSA changed the focus of some activities. The end of apartheid in South Africa and of civil wars in the region favored elections and democratic reform, but these developments needed reinforcement in the face of authoritarian actions by some regimes. Similarly, the region's governments began to embrace free market economic theory, but urgently required encouragement to make the institutional and policy changes that would lure regional and foreign investment. Finally, natural resource management was at a critical juncture. An exploding population demanded food and employment, largely through agriculture and rural resources. The RCSA believed the regional population must be motivated to take responsibility for sustainable management to conserve the common resources, such as land and water, on which the region depends.

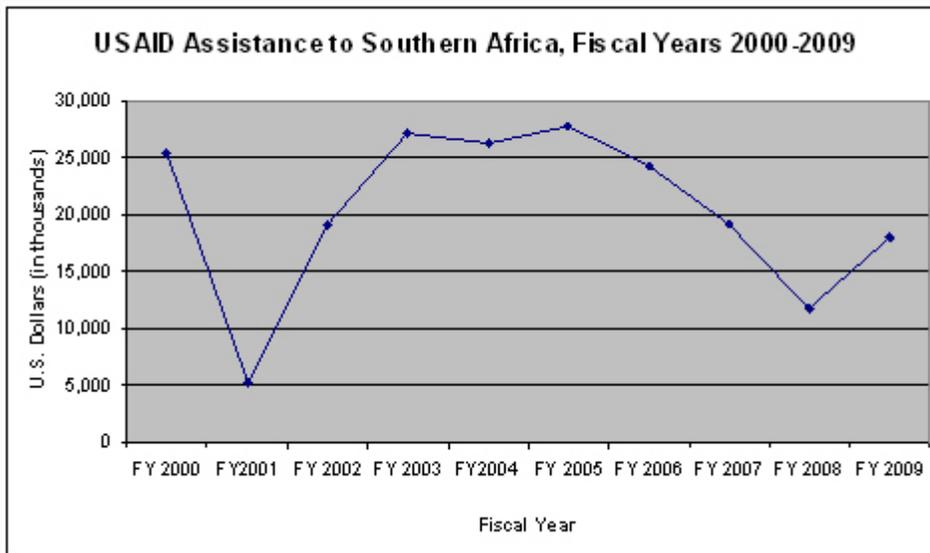
Democracy programs began working with the media, on electoral administration, and on anti-corruption activities, in addition to continuing to work with civil society organizations. The Economic Growth team began to focus on reducing trade barriers and improving regional trade policies, supplementing the infrastructure activities that were already on-going. This work was directly linked to the passing of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) signed into law in May, 2000. The environmental program strengthened community-based natural resource management programs and developed protocols for shared management of resources, while the agriculture focus continued developing technologies to be implemented by smallholder farmers.

Also in 2000, the Regional HIV/AIDS Program (RHAP), located in Pretoria, South Africa, began. The program was developed to implement a cross-border prevention program (Corridors of Hope). As U.S. Government support to the region intensified, the program expanded to strengthen Southern Africa's response to HIV/AIDS by focusing on USAID programs throughout the region. The role of RHAP falls within the context of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) with targets in prevention, treatment, and care. RHAP now provides technical assistance in the region, develops regional programs, and manages PEPFAR programming in the non-presence countries of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

In 2004, USAID developed the current strategy under which they are working. The objectives of this strategy are to achieve:

- A more competitive Southern African economy,
- Rural livelihoods diversification in Southern Africa,
- Improved electoral competition in Southern Africa,
- Improved management of selected river basins, and
- Maximized value of the RCSA services and programs.

When USAID closed its Mission in Botswana, USAID/South Africa took over the responsibility for regional programs and support in Southern Africa and became USAID/Southern Africa. In 2010, the mission will undertake a review of their strategy and consider any new directions and possible modifications that are necessary to meet today's needs.



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