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FACT SHEET

THE INTERNATIONAL JUDICIAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE: A RESOURCE FOR USAID MISSION RULE OF LAW PROGRAMS

The United States Judicial Conference, chaired by the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, is the policy-making body of the U.S. federal courts. It is responsible for establishing policies relating to the administration of the federal court system. The International Judicial Relations Committee (IJRC), one of the Judicial Conference's 25 standing committees, responds to requests for assistance to foreign judiciaries by U.S. Government agencies, including USAID.

The IJRC helps USAID missions' democracy and governance offices in two different ways. First, missions benefit from the breadth and depth of subject-matter expertise of federal judges, court administrators, and specialists within the US federal court system. Members of the federal judiciary provide support on all aspects of the judiciary within a rule of law and democracy portfolio. Second, missions benefit from the worldwide perception of sitting U.S. federal judges as the vanguard of one of the most advanced and sophisticated legal systems. The direct in-person modeling and training highlights rule of law issues in a way difficult to achieve through other means.

IJRC's work over the past 14 years in many countries shows how missions could utilize the expertise of the members of the federal judiciary in support of their rule of law and democracy programs:

- 1) As a means of initiating momentum for legal reform or regenerating momentum that has flagged: Members of the federal judiciary have played a crucial role in generating needed discussion by offering the comparative experience of the United States.
- 2) As a means of providing subject matter expertise on a discrete issue: USAID missions have successfully used the expertise of federal judges and court administrators to address specific problems, such as budget and constitutional interpretation issues, over the course of a one-week period. The imprimatur of a member of the federal judiciary has fostered local support.
- 3) As a means of establishing long-term relationships with counterparts that cut across the contracts of implementing partners and that can ultimately form the foundation for long-term reform: The IJRC has been most successful with this in Russia, where federal judges have developed one-on-one relationships with their counterparts, which date back to the early-1990s.
- 4) As a means for maintaining dialogue with justice actors or visibility in the sector in the absence of a project: Where there is no justice sector project or the prospect of one in the immediate future, having a judge participate in conferences, trainings, and high-level meetings has helped USAID missions remain engaged with decision makers in the justice sector.

Members of the federal judiciary donate their time pro bono. Thus, the only expenses incurred are those for transportation and per diem. These expenses are either financed by a USAID Mission through a contractor or grantee or split between a Mission and the Rule of Law Division of Office of Democracy and Governance in USAID's Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA/DG/ROL).

For more information on incorporating the US federal judiciary into USAID Rule of Law programming, contact Tamaira Rivera, USAID's IJRC Liaison, 202-502-1881, tamaira_rivera@ao.uscourts.gov.