

Governance and CSOs Sample of USAID experience

The State University of New York's Center for International Development (SUNY/CID) excels in two areas which provide significant value added to virtually any Civil Society Strengthening program. The first deals with activities aimed at *strengthening the capacities of parliaments, ministries and local governments to disseminate information and receive and respond to the demands of CSOs*—both within and outside of formal legislative and regulatory processes. The second involves the Center's ability to provide technical assistance and training aimed at *strengthening the analytical and policy advocacy capabilities of CSOs, including think tanks*. The following provides a brief illustrative summary of the Center's capabilities in these two areas.

SUNY/CID is among the world's leading providers of technical assistance and training to governments and civil society to promote and support accountable, transparent and inclusive governance. Using a thinking-and-working politically (TWP) approach developed over its three decades of experience in over 50 countries, SUNY/CID works with USAID Missions and world-renown practitioners and experts to design and implement effective development solutions in a variety of country contexts. And as the portal to the research and expertise of the largest public institution of higher learning in the U.S., SUNY/CID offers access to state-of-the-art research and proven scalable and adaptive programming.

In **Kenya (2000-present)**, SUNY/CID developed an ongoing, structured forum through which the parliamentary committees can receive information and engage in dialogue on key policy issues. Dialogues among the committees and civil society, private sector, and international development partners are further strengthened by coordinating the Parliamentary Initiatives Network (PIN) meetings, a coalition of CSOs that individually and collectively provide high-quality policy analyses and expert information to policy makers. SUNY/CID targets committee activities for opportunities to build formalized and sustainable ties between committee members and the expertise, resources and personnel available in Kenya's diverse private sector. In addition, SUNY/CID facilitates communication between Parliamentary committees and other key agencies, as well as with reform initiatives originating from government such as the Kenya Law Reform Commission, the Public Financial Management Reform program, and the Public Sector Reform Development Secretariat. An example of SUNY's convener role can be seen on the Strengthening Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change in Kenya (STARCK). This grant focused on support to Parliament and, specifically, to the climate change caucus in order to inform and implement policies regarding climate change and supported the Parliamentary Network for Renewable Energy and Climate Change (PANERECC) as well as other climate change stakeholders, increased the national dialogue on climate change and proposed key pieces of legislation on climate change, draught management, minerals & mining as well as natural resource development and management.

The current **Kenya AHADI (2012-present)** program seeks to enhance citizen participation at the local level by clarifying policy and legal frameworks; strengthening sustainable institutional capacity; facilitating sustainable financing for local development; and integrating development planning with expenditure systems. A critical aspect of this program is coordination of improved service delivery in areas of Health, Water, Education, Climate Change and others by improving relevant agencies' ability to plan, budget and finance and administer services

In **Bosnia Herzegovina (2008-present)**, in addition to working closely with the BiH Parliamentary Assembly (BiH PA) and the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH Parliament), SGIP works with target ministries and selected cantonal governments, civil society organizations and other development partners on a range of tasks. Our projects in Bosnia strengthened mechanisms of communication and coordination among institutions at the State, Federation and Cantonal levels and CSOs to enhance interaction in policy development and law making in diverse areas including agricultural policy, environmental protection legislation and social welfare policies.

In **Ivory Coast (2013 –present)** improved National Assembly MP Constituency representation and oversight in a select number of constituencies. This component focuses on the representational function of the Members of Parliament. This component is an innovative effort to reinforce the capacity of members to represent their constituencies and to empower constituents, local CSOs and local political leaders to positively engage with their MPs to achieve improvements in the delivery of government services.

In **Morocco (2004-2008)**, we trained issue-specific, service-oriented and large umbrella organizations on legislative advocacy. CSOs, in turn, conducted training in over 70 activities to educate and mobilize constituents and to build coalitions. Then, a small grants program assisted seven coalitions of 268 CSOs to advocate specific policy initiatives within the parliament; developing issue memoranda for MPs and committees, legislative amendments, and advocacy materials. Concurrently, we trained legislative committee and caucus staff to interact with CSOs. We facilitated hearings, published manuals, and developed committee web sites to disseminate agendas. This program resulted in improved perceptions about advocacy both in the Parliament and within CSOs. CSOs met with MPs and developed a Parliamentary monitoring toolkit that establishes benchmarks and indicators for satisfactory legislative performance.

More recently, in **Uganda (2008-2012)**, under the Linkages Project, SUNY/CID worked with local governments and CSO 'vanguard' partners to make multi-year participatory planning more transparent, inclusive and responsive through regular public-private dialogue. Linkages' goals included building the capacity of these institutions to more effectively identify key local development and national policy issues so that they might carry out their representational functions; increasing democratic participation in political processes; improving institutional transparency and accountability; and, ultimately, increasing and improving essential service delivery to constituents. At the same time, SUNY/CID built more effective stakeholder constituencies across sector-based interests, so as to expand local and local-national networks of partners cooperating around specific practices, advocacy issues, and proposed reforms. SUNY/CID worked with parliamentary committees to develop strategic policymaking plans based on the routine involvement of CSOs with district-level issues and concerns. SUNY/CID also fostered a Parliamentary Initiatives Network, enabling national-level CSOs to share information on hot-topic policy issues and regularly engage with parliamentary committees on these issues. The overall thrust of these initiatives was to regularize state-civil society interaction and move CSOs beyond being mere critics to become well-informed advocates able to articulate specific policy proposals substantiated by objective data in areas of concern, such as HIV/AIDs, natural resource management, peace and security, and others. In addition, LINKAGES was specifically tasked with providing support the Uganda Police Force comprehensive review aimed at transforming the UPF into a relevant, professional, accountable and pro-people establishment.

In **Bangladesh (2010-2014)**, the PRODIP Project focused on assisting Parliament to respond to the expressed concerns of citizens for progress on the issues which matter most to them and,

simultaneously, supporting CSOs in their efforts to articulate these concerns. Working with targeted Standing Committees and their related Ministries, the program focused on Social Welfare, Education, Agriculture, Food and Disaster Management, Labor and Energy issues. Public hearings supported by the project resulted in policy formation and/or reform in areas including labor law reform and agricultural policy. District Public Policy forums provided citizens with platforms for discussions and aggregation and prioritization of interests. A pilot Constituency Office program allowed for closer ties between MPs and the citizens they represented and offer opportunities for reciprocal learning and redress of grievances.

A major component of the SUNY/CID **Mozambique (1995-2002)** project was support for public hearings. The project worked with MPs to prepare hearings and, simultaneously, worked with local NGOs and civil society organizations in the provinces where the hearings were to take place to prepare them for the hearings. In **Zimbabwe (1999-2008)**, committee strengthening and openness activities resulted in a record increase (from 24 to 230) in the number of committee meetings open to the public.

As early as 1996, SUNY used joint training programs to support policy formation and promote citizen-government dialogue. In **Brazil**, a new course on Environmental Public Policy was designed to teach NGOs how to become more effective advocates while simultaneously informing government officials about pressing environmental issues. The course drew upon a cadre of local experts to address the interplay between biological, physical, political, and social forces. Course participants, competitively selected from a mixture of both government and NGO candidates, participated in lectures and group activities.

In sum, SUNY/CID has worked globally to increase citizen voice and, equally important, to facilitate public sector hearing, using a variety of mechanisms and having an impact in a wide breadth of policy areas. Our experience in sub-Saharan Africa is extensive (including Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, etc.). Furthermore, as a university-based center affiliated with the highly regarded Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy and access to the far broader resources of the State University of New York we have a high level of credibility with and a great deal to offer to university research facilities and think tanks as well as a roster of highly qualified experts.